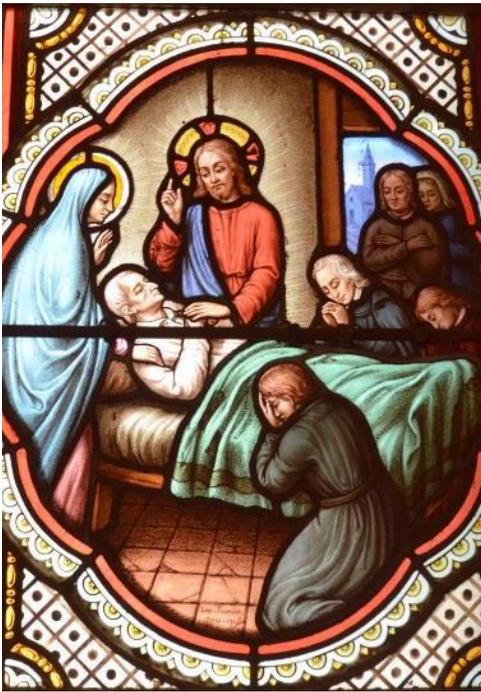




**His glorious death was the image of his life.
As he had lived so he died.
Ripe for God, he passed to heaven,
28 April 1716, aged 43.**



Death of the Saint. Stained glass window by Fournier, 1902. Basilica of Saint Laurent sur Sèvre

TO KNOW HIM

«The Saint-Laurent mission develops effectively, according to the usual rhythm of the Montfortian missions. Nothing suggests the extent to which its leader's pulse has weakened. He has already created the Confraternities of the Virgins and White Penitents in the parish; he has already chosen the place where, at the end of the mission, he will plant the cross of Calvary. And here is a happy and solemn event: Monsignor de Champflour will go on a pastoral visit to Saint-Laurent on April 22. Louis feels moved: he has a bit of the

sensation of hosting his bishop in his own home: he is offered a rare

opportunity to testify loyalty and gratitude to the shepherd who gave him asylum and was a father and friend to him for five years. What direction would Father de Montfort's life have taken if he had not met Monsignor de Champflour? ...

In the afternoon the missionary will preach, in the presence of Monsignor de Champflour: Louis cannot miss it. He climbs the pulpit with faltering steps that frighten the onlookers, and speaks; his feeble voice gradually finds something of its usual fullness: the chosen topic is the gentleness of Jesus ...

Now Father de Montfort lies, devoured by fever, in the inn of the "Green Oak" where, upon arriving, the missionaries placed their residence named "Providence". René Mulot ordered him to give up his nest of bundles and stones to lie down in a bed, and he obeyed. The doctor has come, but he is powerless in the face of this agony: the organism, worn out like an overused dress, no longer reacts. The hours pass slowly for Louis, who knows well that this time he won't get up again ...

On April 27, having been bedridden for four days, Louis sent for René Mulot. This son to whom the great missionary entrusts his soul is now the man closest to Father de Montfort's heart. Louis takes his hands, with the fraternal gesture that more than one of his collaborators has described, a gesture that, without words, says so much. With his voice weakened by a terrible pleurisy, he begs René Mulot to "continue the work": and the priest understands very well what solemn legacy the dying man intends to entrust to him. Feeling lost, he protests the impossibility and declares himself "without energy and talent". But Louis' hand shakes his, burning with fever, as strong as that of a young man, and his voice utters words that René Mulot will never forget: "Have faith, my son, have faith, I will pray for you" ...

Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre knows that Father de Montfort will never

return to the pulpit or the confessional again. On April 28, around four in the afternoon, a small crowd in tears gathers at the missionary's door: they ask to see him, to have his blessing. Louis hears that buzz and, knowing what it is, gently insists: "Let them in". Three times the room is filled with faithful to whom he imparts his blessing, humbly raising the crucifix: so, until the end, dying the hasty death of the apostle, Louis is among his people, close to his own.

The spring day sets, invading with calm rays of sunshine the bedroom of "Providence" where Louis' friends have gathered. Around eight in the evening, the names of Jesus and Mary fade from the lips of Father de Montfort».

(Benedetta PAPASOGLI, Montfort un uomo per l'ultima chiesa [Montfort, a man for the last Church], 464-468, Roma 1991²)

THE GUIDING WORD



Let us listen to the Word of the Lord from the Gospel of John (12:23-33)

«...“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose, I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name”. Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified

it, and I will glorify it again”. The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him”. Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself”. He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die».

LET US MEDITATE FROM PSALM 16 (15)

THE LORD IS MY ONLY TREASURE

Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the Lord: “You are my Lord;
apart from you I have no good thing”.
I say of the holy people who are in the land,
“They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight”.

Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;
you make my lot secure.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant
places; surely, I have a delightful inheritance.

I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.
I keep my eyes always on the Lord.
With him at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

Therefore, my heart is glad
and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,
because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasure at your right hand.

TODAY FOR ME

Death in our culture

«Death has always been looked at with respect and fear, because it is radically contrary to our instinct of conservation. Today, as a general phenomenon, it is the object of attention and curiosity; sometimes it is trivialized by showing it crudely on television. Instead, the discussion of one's own death as well as the question of the meaning of one's life is avoided as if it were a taboo. As if it had nothing to do with our lives!

As for the afterlife, many doubts circulate. In the Western World, several people, despite believing in God, declare that they do not believe in the hereafter, in the resurrection, in heaven, in hell. We worry more about the suffering, which usually precedes death, than about the realities that come after it. A sudden, unconscious death is even considered preferable. Instead, true Christians, first of all, want to make their death precious ...

Christians fear death like all people, like Jesus himself. Faith does not free them from their mortal condition. However, they know they are no longer alone. Obedient to the Father's final call, associated with the crucified and risen Christ, comforted by the Holy Spirit, they can overcome anguish, sometimes even changing it into joy. They can exclaim with the apostle Paul: "Death was swallowed up in victory. Where is your victory, O death?" (1Cor 15:54-55). Thus, death takes on the meaning of a supreme act of trust in life and love for God and all people.

The dying person is a person and dying is a personal act, not just a biological fact. Above all, it requires friendly accompaniment, the support of others' faith, hope and charity. The most suitable environment for dying, as for being born, is the family, not the hospital or hospice.

By freely accepting death to implement the Father's salvific plan, Jesus made it the supreme act of love for the Father and his brethren. He gives believers the opportunity to confidently share his total dedication».

(from CATECHISMO DEGLI ADULTI [Catechism of the adults], La verità vi farà liberi [The Truth will make you free], ns. 1185, 1189 e 1190)

FOR PERSONAL AWARENESS

- "Ripe for God": what do these words stir in me?
- What do I keep, as a gift, from Montfort's life and works?
- At the end of this journey, what does Saint Louis Marie say to me and to my life?



LET US PRAY WITH SAINT LOUIS

O Jesus, when you were dying, you manifested the tenderness of your heart for your Blessed Mother, and you confided to her all your disciples in the person of Saint John. Place me, I beg you, under her protection and give me the heart of a son/daughter to honor and serve her all my life.

O Mother of mercy, remember that your Son on the tree of the Cross confided my soul to you. Show him that you are a good Mother and that you are taking my salvation into your care: "Show yourself a mother".

O Jesus, you have entirely accomplished the will of your Father in everything, and completed by your death the work of our redemption. Grant me the grace before I die to fulfil and accomplish perfectly all the plans which, for your glory and my own good, you have in store for me.

O Jesus, you committed your spirit into your Father's hands before you died. I implore you, receive my soul into your merciful arms at the last moment of my life. Hide it in the tabernacle of your loving heart at that fearful hour when I will be in danger of being lost. Protect me in that divine sanctuary against all the efforts of my enemies. Shower down upon me the marvels of your grace, for you save with your all-powerful arm those who hope in you. Shield me as the apple of your eye against those who resist you and want to upset the plan you have to save me. Hide me in the shadow of your wings from those who persecute me.

(From Dispositions for a happy death, 36, 39, 40)