

Day Eight: *Finding Life in Losing It*

“Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.” (Heb. 12:1-2)

There is a joy that awaits us at the end of this 33-day preparation for Marian consecration. It’s the joy of belonging as completely to Jesus in the most perfect way possible here on earth. How? Precisely by belonging to His Mother. Think about it. Who on earth was more entirely given to Christ than His Mother? Her life was totally His; or as St. Louis de Montfort “complains” to the Lord in his treatise *True Devotion*:

“...the majority of Christians, and even some of the most learned among them, do not recognize the necessary bond the unites you and your Blessed Mother. Lord, you are always with Mary and Mary is always with you. She can never be without you because she would cease to be what she is. She is so completely transformed into you by grace that she no longer lives, she longer exists, because you alone, dear Jesus, live and reign in her more perfectly than in all the angels and saints...So intimately is she united to you that it would be easier to separate light from the sun, and heat from the fire” (63).

The joy that awaits us is that by consecrating ourselves to Mary in “slavery of love” we will share in this very belonging—in her preeminent belonging to Christ. We will belong to Christ, we will live for Christ, we will love Christ more perfectly by belonging to her than if we tried to do it on our own.

But for this joy that awaits us we must “endure the cross”. “Jesus who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross” (Heb. 12:2) What is this “cross” that we speak of? The cross of mortification, i.e. sacrifices, penances, austerity.

Mortification must be the daily cross that we pick up throughout the rest of this preparation if we want to see this consecration abound in fruitfulness. “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” (Jn 12:24). We must become the grain of wheat and die to ourselves and our comforts daily.

The word *mortification* finds its roots in the Latin word *mors*, which means “death”. Taking up the practicing of mortification means putting to death our attachment to the “needs” of our body and the pampering that comes through comforts. Simply it’s the giving up of some comfort for love of God. It can be as little as not putting sugar in our coffee to as great as giving up sleep for the sake of prayer.

Our appetites and comforts are not bad in themselves. The problem comes from our attachment to them. Every time we allow ourselves our decisions to be dominated by our “wants” and “comforts” then we lose out on the power that sacrifice can have in our life.

The worldly-minded shun mortification. They think that unrestricted freedom alone leads to life. What they don’t realize is that free reign liberty in satisfying our appetites and needs for comfort actually enslaves us to them. Mortification however guards true freedom of heart. It gives us the

strength to choose that which is most conducive to God's glory and our salvation: two principles which should be at the foundation of all our life decisions.

As Pope Benedict XVI said we were not made for comfort but for greatness. Greatness, however, doesn't just happen. We have to labor for it, and one of the labors that we must take up in order to reach a greatness of soul is mortification. Jesus is very clear about this in the Gospels.

"Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it" (Mark 8:35)

"If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me" (Luke 9:23)

Or, as St. Peter Julian Eymard writes, "Search the life of our Lord; on every page you will find mortification, mortification of body, abnegation, desolation, opposition. Mortification is the essence of our Lord's life and, consequently, of Christianity. To love is good, but love shows itself in sacrifice and suffering."

If we want to share in the love and freedom and joy that is belonging to Christ through Mary, then we must join them in taking up our daily cross of mortification.

As St. Louis de Montfort writes, "If we are to possess incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ, we must practice self-denial and renounce the world and self" (*Love of Eternal Wisdom*, 194).

Further questions to guide your meditation:

Do I live the call to self-denial, the call to take up my cross daily? What sacrifice can I offer to the Lord these next 27 days as a means of showing my desire to belong completely to Him through His Mother? Do I recognize that mortification is just as necessary for my spiritual growth as is daily prayer? Why or why not? What excuses do I make to avoid difficult things such as penances or mortifications? Am I attached to any material comforts to the point that I depend on them in some way for my personal happiness and well-being? How can I detach myself to this thing?

- Today's Prayer -

*Jesus living in Mary,
teach me to be generous,
to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to look for any reward,
save that of knowing that I do your holy will.*