

LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF MONTBERNAGE

1. Dear people of Montbernage, St. Saturnin, St. Simplicien, La Resurrection, and others who profited from the mission which Jesus Christ, my Master, has just given you, greetings in Jesus and Mary.

Not being able to speak to you personally, since holy obedience prevents me, I take the liberty of writing to you on my departure, as a father writing to his children, not to teach you anything new, but to confirm you in the truths I have already taught you.

The Christian and fatherly love I bear you is so great that you will always have a place in my heart as long as I live and even into eternity. I would rather lose my right hand than forget you wherever I may be, whether at the altar, or far away at the end of the earth or even at death's door. You can be sure of my remembrance as long as you are faithful to what Jesus Christ has taught you through his missionaries and through my unworthy self, in spite of the devil, the world and the flesh.

2. Remember, then, my dear children, my joy, my glory and my crown (Phil 4.1), to have a great love for Jesus and to love him through Mary. Let your true devotion to your loving Mother Mary be manifest everywhere and to everyone, so that you may spread everywhere the fragrance of Jesus and, carrying your cross steadfastly after our good Master, gain the crown and kingdom which is waiting for you. So, do not fail to fulfil your baptismal promises and all that they entail, say your Rosary every day either alone or in public and receive the sacraments at least once a month.

3. I beg my dear friends of Montbernage, who possess the statue of our Lady, my good Mother, and my heart, to continue praying even more fervently and not to allow into their district those who swear and blaspheme, sing ribald songs, and drunkards, without doing something about it.

When I say, "without doing something about it," I mean that if you can't prevent them from sinning by reproving them zealously but kindly, at least let some godly man or woman undertake to do penance, even in public, be it only by saying a Hail Mary in the street where they say their prayers, or even to hold a lighted candle in their room or in the church. This is what you have to do and keep on doing and so with God's help persevere in his service. I give this same advice to the other districts.

4. My dear children, you must be living examples to all Poitiers and district. Let no-one work on Sundays or Holydays. Let no-one lay out his wares or even half-open his shop, and so counter the general practice of bakers, butchers, second-hand dealers and other shopkeepers of Poitiers who rob God of his day and are sadly damning themselves in spite of the fine excuses they may offer. I, under necessity, you must do otherwise, then receive the approval of your parish-priest. Do not work, then, in any way on Holydays and God, I promise you, will bless you both in body and soul, and you will never be short of what you need.

5. I ask my dear women of St. Simplicien who sell fish and meat, and other shopkeepers and retailers, to continue giving good example to the whole town by living what they learned during the mission.

6. I ask you all, in general and individually, to follow me with your prayers on the pilgrimage which I am going to make for you and many others. I say, "for you," because I am undertaking this long and difficult journey in dependence on the Providence of God to obtain from him through the prayers of Mary, your perseverance.

I say, "for many others," because I bear in my heart all the poor sinners of Poitou and elsewhere, who are sadly placing their salvation at risk. They are so dear to my God that he gave all his blood for them, and would I give nothing? He undertook such long and arduous journeys for them, and would I undertake none? He went so far as to risk his own life, and wouldn't I risk mine too? Only a pagan or a bad Christian could fail to be affected at the immense loss of the infinite treasure of souls which Jesus Christ redeemed. So pray for that intention, my dear friends, and pray also for me, that my sinfulness and unworthiness do not hinder what God and his holy Mother wish to accomplish through my ministry.

I am seeking divine Wisdom; help me to find it. I am faced with many enemies. All those who love and esteem transitory and perishable things of this world treat me with contempt, mock and persecute me, and the powers of evil have conspired together to incite against me everywhere all those in authority.

Surrounded by all this I am very weak, even weakness personified; I am ignorant, even ignorance personified; and even worse besides which I do not dare to speak of.

Alone and poor (cf Ps 24.16) as I am, I would certainly perish were I not supported by our Lady and the prayers of good people, especially your own. These are obtaining for me from God the gift of speech or divine Wisdom, which will be the remedy for all my ills and a powerful weapon against all my enemies.

With Mary it is easy. I place all confidence in her, despite the snarls of the devil and the world, and I say with St. Bernard, "In her I have placed unbounded confidence; she is the whole reason for my hope." Have these words explained to you for I would not have dared to propose them on my own authority. Through Mary I will seek and find Jesus; I will crush the serpent's head and overcome all my enemies as well as myself, for the greater glory of God.

Farewell but not goodbye, for if God spares me, I shall pass this way again, either to stay for a short while, subject to the obedience I owe to your good bishop who is so zealous for the salvation of men and so compassionate to us in our weakness, or while on my way to some other place; for since God is my Father, wherever he is offended by sinners, there is my dwelling-place.

"Let those who do good go on doing good. Let the unclean continue to be unclean (Rev 22.11). For some the smell of death leads to death, For others the sweet smell of life leads to life" (2 Cor 2.16).

I am all yours,

Louis Marie de Montfort,

Priest and unworthy slave of Jesus in Mary.