



THE FOUR SPIRITUAL PRACTICES OF MARY'S MANTLE CONSECRATION

Mary's Mantle Consecration is a powerful means of obtaining heavenly aid because it incorporates four modes of prayer that have stood the test of time and truth in moving and melting the heart of God. They are the Rosary, fasting, consecration to Mary, and through spiritual reading, striving to live the virtues and to walk in the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. *"The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God."*—St. Gregory of Nyssa

1) THE ROSARY

Participants in the Mary's Mantle Consecration are invited to pray a daily Rosary—at any time of day—over the course of 46 days. Forty-six stars appeared on the mantle of Our Lady of Guadalupe when she appeared to St. Juan Diego in 1531. The number 46 also happens to span the days of Lent from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday. On each of the 46 days, a star is added to Mary's mantle. We adorn her with bright stars because she greatly appreciates our efforts. She is with us in every moment of our journey to consecration.

The Holy Rosary, next to the Holy Mass, is the most powerful form of prayer there is because with each "Hail Mary" we are accompanied by the Mother of God who intercedes for us. St. Pio of Pietrelcina once commented, *"Our Lady has never refused me a grace through the recitation of the Rosary."* Pope Pius IX also said, *"Among all the devotions approved by the Church, none has been so favored by so many miracles as the devotion of the Most Holy Rosary."* In an exhortation to the universal Church, Pope Pius XI wrote, *"The Rosary is a powerful weapon to put the demons to flight and to keep oneself from sin. . . . If you desire peace in your hearts, in your homes, and in your country, assemble each evening to recite the Rosary. Let not even one day pass without saying it, no matter how burdened you may be with many cares and labors."*

2) FASTING

Where miracles and breakthroughs are needed, fasting is required. Fasting causes great good to happen where evil would have otherwise prevailed. When the disciples asked Jesus why they were unable to cast a demon out of a boy, Jesus responded that certain evils can only be erased through prayer and fasting, and these are the kinds of demons that confront our world and the Church at this time. (Translations of the Gospel of Mark 9:29, such as the *Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition*, say: *"And he said to them, 'This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting.'"*)

The suggested fast for preparation for the Mary's Mantle Consecration is bread and water. (For those with health limitations, a modified fast can be observed, such as cutting out desserts, coffee, or eating only vegetables, beans, and/or nuts, and drinking plenty of water.) The number of fasting days depends on the preparation format used (see below) and is never more than once a week, unless more days are personally desired.

Biblical accounts of fasting always refer to the simplification or absence of food. Jesus fasted from food and water for forty days and nights, and He assumes that all of His disciples are fasting. In the Gospel of Matthew, He says, "*When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites*" (6:16a). Biblical fasting ushers in windfalls of grace and precedes great things. Moses fasted for forty days before receiving the Ten Commandments (Ex 34:28). Queen Esther summoned a fast to save the Jews of the Persian Empire from extermination (Est 4:16). At the call of the prophet Jonah, the Ninevites fasted and their lives were spared (Jon 3:5-9). The first disciples fasted for their election and commissioning of Christian leaders (Acts 13:3-4, 14:23). And after His sojourn of fasting in the desert, Jesus' public ministry began.

The spiritual practice of fasting from food reaches into the core of our being, giving us more life in the Spirit and less in the "flesh," thus transforming who we are. Bad habits can be removed by their roots, not simply their branches. Cravings for the things of this world can vanish, as our will comes more under our control.

Among its many benefits, fasting can also offer clear answers to problems, cure addictions, prevent famine and wars, and suspend natural laws. According to St. Basil the Great,

"Fasting gives birth to prophets and strengthens the powerful; fasting makes lawgivers wise. Fasting is a good safeguard for the soul, a steadfast companion for the body, a weapon for the valiant, and a gymnasium for athletes. Fasting repels temptations, anoints unto piety; it is the comrade of watchfulness and the artificer of chastity. In war it fights bravely, in peace it teaches stillness."

3) CONTEMPLATION OF VIRTUES AND THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Mary's Mantle Consecration invites its participants to read the daily meditations in this book, which highlight aspects of a virtue or a gift of the Holy Spirit. This spiritual reading can happen at any time of day.

Mary possessed in her soul every virtue and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit to their fullest human extent. By meditating upon and incorporating these same virtues and gifts more fully into our lives, we become more like the one who possessed them all. Thus we prepare ourselves well for a true and intimate consecration to the Mother of God.

Prayers that emanate from a pure and virtuous heart are most pleasing to God and incline His ear in a direct way. We become more effective prayer warriors when we cultivate the virtues and open ourselves to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit—to wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear or awe of the Lord. Scripture attests to the power of a righteous person's prayer:

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful. Elijah was a human being like us; yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain upon the land. Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the earth produced its fruit. (James 5:16-18)

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." (John 15:7-8)

Beloved, if [our] hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. (1 John 3:21-22)

3) CONSECRATION TO MARY

The end goal of *Mary's Mantle Consecration* and of every authentic Marian consecration is our perfect union with Jesus Christ through a total gift and conforming of ourselves to Our Lady. When we consecrate ourselves to Mary, we give her our bodies, souls, and the value of our good works and prayers—past, present, and future—to use and distribute as she wills. She is the Mediatrix of All Graces, which means that all of God's graces are distributed to the world through her. Thus Mary, in return for our consecration, uses the full power of her intercession to help conform us to Christ.

No one is ever forced to consecrate himself or herself to Our Lady, but we are all called by God to holiness of life, to be saints. We have option "a," to strive for this without Mary's full assistance, or option "b," to become like Christ with the full force of the prayers of the Mediatrix of All Graces. To be consecrated to Mary is a great gift from heaven. That is why popes and saints and mystics have invited us, through time, to make a formal consecration to Our Lady.

Marian consecration began in the 4th and 5th centuries. Early African sermons from this period speak of becoming voluntary "slaves of Mary." By the 8th century, people like St. John Damascene in the east (d. 749) were authoring prayers of consecration to the Mother of God: "*O Lady, before you we take our stand. Lady, I call you Virgin Mother of God. And to your hope, as to the surest and strongest anchor, we bind ourselves to you.*"

In the 17th century, St. Louis-Marie de Montfort (1673-1716) became the champion of Marian consecration through his seminal work, *True Devotion to Mary*, which was discovered after his death. In this spiritual classic, he describes total consecration to Mary as "the surest, easiest, and most perfect means" to becoming a saint. St. Pope John Paul II adopted as his personal motto, "*Totus Tuus*," the words that begin St. Louis-Marie de Montfort's Marian consecration:

"Totus tuus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt, O Virgo, super omnia benedicta."

"I am all yours, and all that is mine is yours, O Virgin, blessed above all."

Some modern scholars say that St. Louis-Marie de Montfort's consecration was to Jesus through Mary, but it was directly to Mary, as were the first texts of Marian consecration in the Church. We need not worry that by giving all that we are to Mary we will lose sight of Jesus, Our Savior, for as St. Louis-Marie de Montfort also said, "The more a soul is consecrated to Mary, the more it is consecrated to Jesus Christ (*True Devotion to Mary*, Section 120)."

Nor should we fear that by giving to Mary our very selves and the merits of our prayers and good works, that our needs or those of our loved ones will be forgotten. Mary, who is intimately aware of the state of the Church and of the entire world at any given moment, uses our offering for the greatest possible salvation of souls, and at the same time, perfectly and remarkably, for our own personal salvation and sanctification. This extraordinary ability to know the state and needs of seven billion souls cannot compare to our extremely limited human sight. This is the vantage point of the Mother of God.

Mary will first and best distribute our merits toward our personal vocation in life. She will lead us to fulfill our obligations to our given state and calling. Not only that, if we forget or have things out of priority concerning who needs more prayers or merits, Mary knows best how to dispense graces to those who most need them.

St. Louis-Marie de Montfort also assured us that it is always meritorious to give away merit. We will receive exponentially more than we offer of ourselves in our act of consecration. To say this in the simplest of terms, we help Our Lady take care of the world, and she takes care of our souls and those of our loved ones better than we ever could.