



Carol R. Younger, Ed.D.

33 Days
to
Morning
Glory

Retreat Companion



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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A *RETREAT COMPANION*? A companion is someone who travels alongside you, a friend or a family member who shares your daily life and brings you the comfort of knowing you and lovingly accepting you as you are. Such a person remembers things you've said, experiences you've had, and people you've known. The companion reminds you of these things to encourage you, sometimes to challenge you, but always to let you know you are loved.

In some ways, a helpful friend or companion is a model for caregivers, nurses, and doctors in the medical field. In the business and education arenas, such people are called "mentors." Sometimes people even hire companions in such fields as sports and health training, where they're called "coaches." The support and assistance of such trained companions is often indispensable for achieving good health, business success, and victory on the field.

But there are other types of companions besides persons. A companion can be a handbook or a guide — for example, a handbook for soldiers or a bird watcher's guide. Journals are also justly called companions because, when we re-read them, they can recall for us significant lessons from the past, shine light on our present situation, and even help us better prepare for the future.

Now, a *retreat* companion is someone or something that accompanies us during a special time of prayer and spiritual growth. Such a companion helps us to pray. In other words, such a companion asks us leading questions and gives us food for thought. Through such aids to prayerful pondering, our companion helps us come to know and love the Lord more deeply and, at the same time, helps us get to know ourselves and where the Lord may be calling us to grow.

As we begin our 33-day retreat in preparation for Marian consecration, we'll be blessed to have lots of retreat companions. First, if we make the retreat in a group, we'll have *all the people in our weekly small group*. Through our discussions and times of group prayer, we'll come to know the goodness of the Lord by getting to know the great gift he gives us in Our Blessed Mother, Mary. Also, our meetings will help us work through obstacles, answer questions, and address difficulties that may come up along the way. Finally, together, we'll come to appreciate Mary's unique role in our spiritual lives and how she brings us to God.

During our retreat, not only will we have human companions but we'll also have *this book* as a retreat companion. This *Retreat Companion* combines many of the things just mentioned. In the writing spaces provided, it's a journal for recording and remembering our thoughts. Through its daily questions, it's an aid to prayerful pondering. In its weekly small-group sections, it's a guide for discussion and further prayer. All this in one short book — what a gift! Now let's learn how to use it.

HOW TO USE YOUR *RETREAT COMPANION*. Using your retreat companion is easy. Just follow these three simple steps:

1. Read the daily section from your retreat book, *33 Days to Morning Glory*, before turning to this *Retreat Companion*.
2. Pray the prayer for the week. (See "Regarding the Prayer for the Week" below.)

3. Read and answer the four daily retreat questions in the space provided after each question. If you need more space, you can use the “Notes” pages at the end of each week or begin writing in a personal journal. Don’t be afraid to answer questions that weren’t asked. The Holy Spirit may have personal spiritual counsel for *you*! Keep track of your random thoughts as well. (See “Regarding the Daily Questions” below.)

REGARDING THE PRAYER FOR THE WEEK. Each week of the retreat features a specific Marian prayer that we’ll pray together at each weekly small-group session. (For example, the first prayer is the *Angelus*.) The prayers reflect the deep, Marian piety that has marked the lives of so many Catholics. These four traditional prayers have been beloved for centuries but, sadly, in our own day, have largely been forgotten.

The Marian prayers for each week remind us of what’s been forgotten and provide communal prayer moments in our small-group meetings. Individually, you’ll pray the given prayer once a day, or more frequently — simply do what’s convenient for you. Just don’t “flame out” at the very beginning of the retreat trying to keep up a prayer marathon! Keep your focus on the most important prayer practice of the retreat, the prayerful pondering. During the retreat, a high quality of prayerful pondering wins out over a large quantity of vocal prayers.

REGARDING THE DAILY QUESTIONS. The questions in this *Retreat Companion* are not meant to be a quiz. You will not be graded on them. Don’t stress yourself about getting the right answer. In fact, it’s not about getting the “right answer” at all. The questions are simply there to help you prayerfully ponder in your heart, like Mary. Such prayerful pondering is the main prayer of the whole retreat.

So, with the questions of this *Retreat Companion* prompting you, you might record in it memories, responses, or even doodles and drawings. Sometimes you might write only: “I agree” or “I never thought of that before.” At other times, you might need to add more sheets of paper to record your thoughts. Then again, you might not write anything but simply continue to ponder the questions in your heart. (Still, we recommend that you write something in the *Retreat Companion*.) Remember, it’s not a quiz. There are no right answers. Moreover, nothing is really “required” except that you strive to ponder the teaching of the daily readings in your heart. Such prayerful pondering will bear fruit for yourself as you prepare for Consecration Day, and it will enrich the whole group because it prepares you to better participate during the times of small group discussion.

Before we continue on to the next section, there’s one very important point about “prayerful pondering:” It’s not something just for quiet time when you’re alone in your room. In fact, many people these days don’t seem to have much time for quiet prayer, especially not 33 days worth! So, what’s meant by “prayerful pondering” is simply keeping and reflecting on the content of the daily reading in our minds and hearts. Such prayerful pondering can be done in the midst of driving kids to school, cutting veggies, or taking a shower. The point is that during these 33 days, we strive to become what St. Ignatius of Loyola calls “contemplatives in action” and imitate Mary who “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk 12:51).

CLOSING THOUGHTS. Preparation for consecration to Jesus through Mary is a time of special grace, and many of the graces of the retreat will come through the process of prayer and reflection. As part of this process, don't be afraid to ask God for understanding, consolation, and the grace to persevere. God wants to give these graces, and they're a sign of his delight that we're taking the time to draw close to the Heart of his mother and to his own Sacred and Merciful Heart.

The more prayer and thought you give to your preparation for Marian consecration, the more you'll get out of it. For example, the more you and your group share your *Companion* thoughts, the deeper will be your spiritual experience of the 33 days and Day of Consecration. As Fr. Gaitley says in his book, these days of retreat are not a vocal-prayer marathon. Rather, they're a time of prayerful pondering, and as we make these days together as a group, they become a journey of communion, a journey whereby we prepare our hearts to become one with the Heart of Mary as she loves Jesus with her own, perfect love.

Finally, I'd like to give praise to the Holy Spirit for his inspiration and consolations and thanks to Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC, Kelly Wahlquist, and Sarah Chichester for their support in writing and editing this companion. Their devotion to Our Blessed Mother reinforces my own. For Mary's gift of our friendship in Jesus, I am very thankful.

Now, as for you who are about to embark on this 33-day retreat journey, I pray that the Holy Angels, at the command of Jesus, bring his grace in abundance for your preparation for consecration to him through his Blessed Mother!

To Jesus through Mary,

Carol Younger, Ed. D.

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord
February 2, 2012

PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR GROUP RETREATS

1. The Retreat Coordinator

R*ETREAT COORDINATOR'S ROLE.* Retreat Coordinators are the people who coordinate a variety of different aspects of the Retreat. For example, they manage the announcement and publicity of the 33 Days to Morning Glory Retreat, schedule and prepare the room locations, may arrange for the pastor to include the retreat participants in special Masses at the beginning and on Consecration Day, may plan a parish reception after the consecration, and more. They select and train the small-group leaders before the beginning of the retreat as well. All this involves working with many key people at the parish, in addition to the participants making the retreat. There are many tips and timelines, descriptions of events, sample announcements, and other support materials on the website www.AllHeartsAfire.org.

The Retreat Coordinator for the 33 Days to Morning Glory Retreat should be thoroughly familiar with the *Retreat Coordinators' Guide* on the HAPP® website, www.AllHeartsAfire.org. The details of the HAPP® programs and the structure of the retreats are also on the website, as are tips on how to share information and answers in a supportive manner.

R*ETREAT COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES.* For details on the retreat coordinator's responsibilities, see the *Retreat Coordinator's Guide* on the AllHeartsAfire.org website. Here is an overview of some of the information provided on the website that will be helpful to the Retreat Coordinator:

- Materials to be ordered
- Overview of the six weeks
- Ways to get the word out about Hearts Afire: Parish-based Programs
- Weekly session format
- Overview of Orientation and the first small-group meeting
- Small-group dynamics
 - The silent participant
 - The talkative participant
 - The sometimes-absent participant
- Small-group Leader's role
- Tips for answering questions
- Ideas for Consecration Day
 - Parish options
 - Individual options
- Parish opportunities for renewal and involvement

R*EGARDING CONSECRATION DAY.* The Retreat Coordinator should plan ahead for the actual day of consecration. If you are the Retreat Coordinator, you might want to read the section of the appendix “Before Consecration” right now. You will find it on page 129. Also, please review the information on concluding the 33 days in the *Retreat Coordinator's Guide* on www.AllHeartsAfire.org. In addition, if people are concerned about not ending the 33 days on the exact consecration date (many dates are posted on the website), tell them

not to worry. They can always continue their preparation by simply pondering in their hearts what they have learned and by daily praying the Rosary or the Chaplet of the Ten Evangelical Virtues of Mary (see pages 172-175 in *33 Days to Morning Glory*).

2. The Small-group Leader

Each small group will need a Small-group Leader. This leader is the hopeful, enthusiastic, dedicated person in a small group who works with the Retreat Coordinator by guiding the conversation within the small group, encouraging others to share, and even calling and e-mailing the members of the small group. At each weekly gathering, the Small-group Leaders arrive early, greet the members of their groups, know who's going to be absent and why, encourage prayer for one another, model answers and sharing, and make the retreat a reality week after week. The Small-group Leader guides the group through the weekly small-group session outline, which is at the end of each week's questions. They begin with "prayer," direct the discussion of the "personal response," and lead the concluding "petition."

3. Retreat Materials Needed

The Retreat Coordinator will need the following:

- *33 Days to Morning Glory Retreat Talks* (DVD set)
- Internet access to visit www.AllHeartsAfire.org for *Retreat Coordinators' Guide*, helpful videos, support materials, and blogs.

Each participant will need the following:

- *33 Days to Morning Glory: A Do-It-Yourself Retreat In Preparation for Marian Consecration*
- *33 Days to Morning Glory Retreat Companion*
- Recommended: Holy Bible (Catholic edition) and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

4. The Weekly Meeting Format

Session Overview:

- 90 minutes (1.5 hours) total time:
 - 15-minute Large-group Opening with a 6-minute introduction talk on DVD, followed by small-group gatherings
 - 45-minute Small-Group sharing (drawing from the daily questions in the *Retreat Companion*)
 - 30-minute talk on DVD that illustrates the key points of each week and keeps them simple and livable

This weekly format is based on your reading the appropriate section of *33 Days to Morning Glory* first and then reading and answering the questions in the *Retreat Companion* that pertain to that section.

Large-group — Opening

(15 Minutes)

You'll begin each session by coming together in a large group. Within that large group, you'll begin with prayers and watch the 6-minute introduction for that session. This is also a great time for the Retreat Coordinator to make any announcements. Allow 15 minutes for this time and the transition of all participants to their small groups. (If the entire group consists only of one small group, then there's obviously no need to break up into smaller groups.)

Small-group — Sharing

(45 Minutes)

Small groups (about 6-10 people, depending on your group and available space) meet for a 45-minute discussion time that follows the small group session outlines at the end of each week. The small-group dynamic is perhaps the most important aspect of the retreat. Within a small-group setting, a true spirit of fellowship in Christ is fostered and developed. Without such friendship and fellowship in Christ, the isolated Christian may become paralyzed in his efforts at evangelization and stagnant in his faith. But with friendships in Christ, the members of his Mystical Body are connected in holiness to Christ and to one another in prayer and so are able to better receive his divine power! (see Mt 18:20). The friendships that you discover and nourish in your small group are important sources of support and encouragement on your journey to a deeper relationship with Christ.

Small-group Leaders: Be sure to read the Weekly Sessions at the end of each week in this *Retreat Companion* before each gathering. There the preselected focus questions for each week are listed. You will also want to register as a Small-group Leader on our website www.AllHeartsAfire.org to receive weekly, helpful tips that will help you make the most of your small-group experience.

The small-group time is divided as follows:

- A. PRAYER: This is the given week's prayer from the *Retreat Companion*. The group should pray it together.
- B. PERSONAL RESPONSE: Particular questions selected from the week will be used for small-group sharing.
- C. PETITION: The Small-group Leader will recite the daily closing invocations of the Holy Spirit within the group, and the members respond.

The above-mentioned prayer, personal-response questions, and petitions are provided in the *Retreat Companion* at the end of each week as the Small-group Session Outline.

Large-group — DVD

(30 Minutes)

Following the small-group discussion and prayer, participants reconvene in the large group for 30 minutes of guided retreat by Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC, on DVD. Each session ends with prayer and Fr. Michael's invitation to make the insights gained and lessons learned

a part of one's spiritual life. After the DVD, the Retreat Coordinator may make announcements and briefly introduce the topic for the upcoming week and its corresponding prayer.

5. Outline of the Entire Retreat

WEEK 1 — Orientation and Introduction

[This week's meeting is different, because materials will need to be distributed and explained.]

WEEK 2 — St. Louis de Montfort

WEEK 3 — St. Maximilian Kolbe

WEEK 4 — Blessed Mother Teresa

WEEK 5 — St. John Paul II

WEEK 6 — Synthesis and Review, Consecration Day

[Note: While we highly recommend that this group retreat be made with others, it can be made with oneself. However, one would forgo the many benefits of the group dynamic. To make the retreat individually, one would need the DVD set and retreat book, *33 Days to Morning Glory*, in addition to this *Retreat Companion*.]

FIRST SMALL-GROUP MEETING

Normally, the questions for each week of the retreat are to be read, pondered, and answered *before* the weekly small group meeting. This week is an exception, because this is likely the first time you've met your *Retreat Companion!*

So, after the opening video from Fr. Gaitley this week (which is longer than usual because it's an orientation talk), you'll break into your small group for prayer and discussion. Then, sometime before the next meeting, you'll answer (or at least consider) the four questions (starting on page 15) that cover your reading for the introduction and the questions that cover your reading for St. Louis de Montfort. In other words, before the next meeting, you'll have about twice the reading and four more questions than usual. If this seems like a lot, don't worry. Just do the best you can, and if you can't get to all the questions, at least try to finish the reading before the next meeting.

SMALL-GROUP SESSION OUTLINE

~ Orientation and Introduction ~

A. Prayer

[Make sign of Cross: ✝]

1. Our Father..., Hail Mary..., Glory Be....
2. *Come, Holy Spirit, and be with us. We wish to contemplate the mysteries of Jesus and Mary in our lives as we prepare to make a total consecration of ourselves to Jesus through Mary. Amen.*

[Make sign of Cross: ✝]

B. Personal Response

My two most important reasons for making this retreat at this time are the following:

1. Personal

2. Spiritual

C. Petition

[Make sign of Cross: ✝]

[Leader] Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

[Group response] Help me to make this retreat with generosity and zeal.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Prepare me to give myself fully to living out this true and solid devotion.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Give me the grace to reject Satan and follow Christ more closely.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me to give myself entirely to Jesus through Mary.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me be generous in giving all I have to Mary.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me to praise you for such a quick, easy, and secure path to holiness!

[Make sign of Cross: ✝]

PRE-RETREAT

Introduction and Orientation

[Read "Introduction" in *33 Days to Morning Glory*, pp. 15-27, and then prayerfully answer the following questions.]

- 1. Recall a special need in your life that you entrusted to the intercession of Mary or a favorite saint. (This is often known as a "special intention.") Maybe you prayed a novena¹ for it. Maybe the intention moved you to ask for help, for a blessing, or for an answer. What prayer or novena did you pray? What did you hope for? Was it for an answer? Were you answered in a way that surprised you? Consoled you? Was there a new insight from that prayer?

- 2. Life is lived so fast in this third millennium. Do you have concerns about putting 33 days into your already-full calendar for consecration preparation? What kind of practical help do you need to see that this really is possible and realistic? Where might you turn to get this help? Will someone else be able to help you find time — for example, through carpooling or help with shopping? Or is it simply a matter of you scheduling your time and priorities more efficiently?

3. Read Luke 2:19, 51. Like Mary, have you ever pondered something that happened to you or to someone else? What was it? Did you ask yourself why it happened to you? What came of that heart pondering? Was it a positive experience?

4. This preparation for consecration is similar to Mary’s heart pondering. There are no additional hours you need to set aside for pondering, because pondering can be done throughout the day. The readings simply fill and prepare your heart because of your prayerful reading of them. What time of day will you set aside for this reading? You can break it up into several sessions of reading each day if you need to. Select several “moments” when you will have the book beside you, and write them down here:

[At the end of each week, we'll provide you with an outline like the one below that complements each DVD session talk. These outlines are meant to help you remember points to ponder as you watch the talks.]

SESSION 1 — DVD NOTES

Orientation

How the Retreat Works:

1. Read = Read the brief section for each day.
2. Ponder = Ponder and reflect on the day's reading with the aid of the *Retreat Companion*.
3. Meet = Meet to discuss what you've pondered all week.

Introduction to Marian Consecration

A. The Goal

B. Three Big Ideas Summarized

1.

2.

3.

C. Three Stages

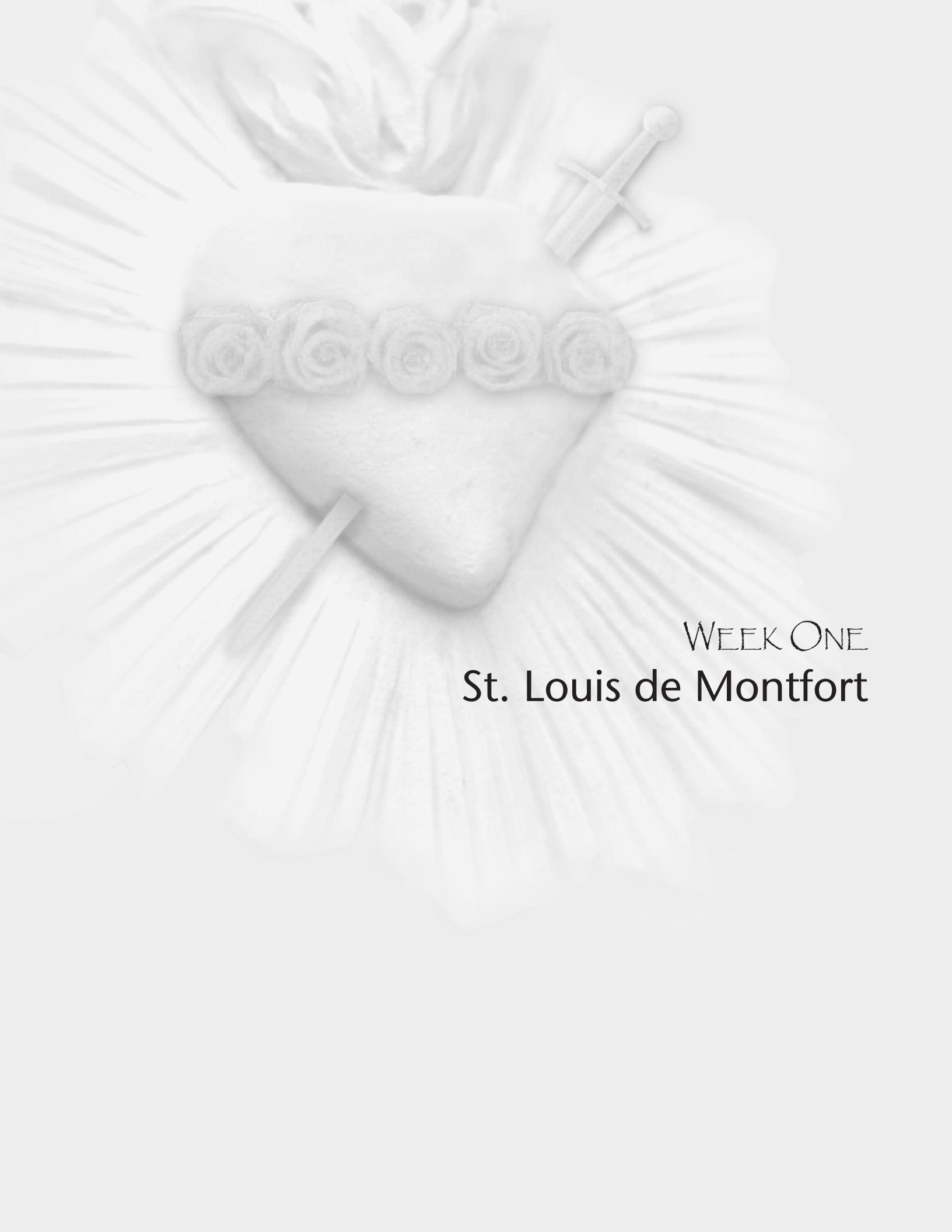
1.

2.

3.

D. Summary of Marian Consecration

Notes



WEEK ONE
St. Louis de Montfort

Prayer for Week One — The *Angelus*

The word “*Angelus*” comes from the first word of the prayer in Latin. This age-old prayer honors the mystery of the Incarnation and is traditionally prayed at 6 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m. A famous painting by Jean-Francois Millet entitled “*Angelus*” recalls for us the deep Marian piety that has permeated the lives of so many of our Catholic brothers and sisters from the past. It depicts two farmers, a man and a woman, standing in a field. The man reverently holds his hat and the woman devoutly folds her hands as they both bow their heads in prayer. It’s the end of the workday, and they’re reminded to pray the *Angelus* by the tolling bells from the church tower in the distant background: three tolls for each invocation and Hail Mary and nine tolls for the prayer at the end.²

The *Angelus* can be traced to the 13th century and has been recommended to the faithful by numerous Popes. In our own day, Pope Paul VI praised and explained it at length in his 1974 apostolic exhortation on devotion to Mary, *Marialis Cultus*. For the next eight days (the Introduction and Week One — St. Louis de Montfort), we’ll begin our time with this *Retreat Companion* with the *Angelus*. It would be wonderful to pray it at noon and at the end of the workday as well. Do whatever is most convenient for you, and don’t lose the focus on our prayer priority: reading the daily text from the retreat book and the subsequent prayerful pondering.

The *Angelus*

(Usually recited while standing.)

V. The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,

R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V. Behold the Handmaid of the Lord,

R. Be it done to me according to Thy word.

Hail, Mary, etc. ...

[With the following words, bow your head out of reverence for the mystery of the Incarnation.]

V. And the Word was made flesh,

R. And dwelt among us.

Hail, Mary, etc. ...

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen

Regina Caeli

(Said during the Easter season in place of the Angelus.)

O Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia,
The Son whom it was your privilege to bear; alleluia,
Has risen as He said; alleluia
Pray to God for us; alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary; alleluia.

R. Because the Lord has truly risen; alleluia.

Let us pray. O God, You were pleased to give joy to the world through the resurrection of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; grant, we beseech Thee, that through His mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

V. Glory be to the Father, etc. ...

Day 1

The Passionate Saint of Brittany

[Each day this week, you will (1) read the appropriate day from *33 Days to Morning Glory*, (2) pray the *Angelus*, and (3) prayerfully answer the four corresponding questions in this *Retreat Companion*.]

1. Consider the place where you grew up and your birth family. The birthplace and the parents of St. Louis de Montfort had an impact on his intense personality and development. Saint Louis then directed all his fiery zeal to the Blessed Virgin Mary, because he understood the importance of laboring to bring souls to Jesus through Mary. What is it about your birth family and birthplace that might contribute to or provide obstacles to your own growth in holiness and desire to belong more completely to the Blessed Mother?

Horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 1.

2. Saint Louis died at age 43, only 16 years after being ordained a priest. In today's world, that may seem like a long time. What circumstances, employments, or relationships have lasted that long, or longer, in your life? (For example: marriage, parenthood, job, parish membership, a ministry.) What benefits do you count because of those years? Were there any difficulties in continuing for that period of time? What would you say to those who might want to imitate you in being faithful to any of those commitments for that number of years?

Horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 2.

3. Saint Louis makes a pilgrimage to Rome, walking the entire 1,000 miles, to ask the Pope for advice. He receives from the Pope the title “Apostolic Missionary” and is commissioned to return to France to preach and teach. What is the longest distance you have ever walked (physically or metaphorically) in order to win something, to accomplish something, or for any reason whatsoever? Were you seeking to help others or was this a private quest? Were you successful?

4. The real question is this: “Do we have a fire in our hearts as we begin our retreat?” Well, do we? Reconsider what may have been your motive to begin this retreat and contemplate total consecration to Jesus through Mary. Have you asked Mary to start a divine fire in your heart for Jesus? What obstacles might she find there that would interfere with beginning that burning desire to love Jesus? How will you overcome them?

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
 Help me to make this retreat with generosity and zeal.*

Day 2

St. Louis’s Influence on the Church

- 1. Saint Louis was a priest with great trust in God. When he found out that a huge monument he had helped to build for more than a year was suddenly to be destroyed, he said to the thousands who had gathered for the blessing, “Let us build it in our hearts. Blessed be God.” What was your reaction to that story? Have you ever experienced a similar, severe disappointment with something that you thought seemed to be pleasing to God? Were you able to bless God in spite of the disappointment?

- 2. Part of Marian consecration involves entrusting ourselves totally to Mary so she can bring us to Jesus. And she does so in union with her spouse, the Holy Spirit, in the best way possible. For her to bring us to Jesus, though, we need to let go of always trying to do everything ourselves and from thinking that everything depends on us. Take your best guess at the following questions: What is the first thing that I need to become detached from? Will it be difficult to become detached from it? Will it take time?

3. Pope John Paul II called reading de Montfort’s book *True Devotion to Mary* “a decisive turning point” in his life. What one or two books have you read (besides the Bible) that have had “decisive” influence on your life, either pointing you in a new direction or toward a new career, introducing you to a new relationship, or deepening your spiritual life? Did you recommend those books to anyone or give them as gifts?

4. No less than six Popes were influenced by the teachings of St. Louis de Montfort. If you had your choice of someone to influence with your life, your friendship, or your thoughts, whom might that be? Why would you want to influence that person? (Choose someone living or someone past or even someone in the future.)

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Prepare me to give myself fully to living out this true and solid devotion.*

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Day 3

De Montfort’s Consecration (Part One)

1. Mary is fully human. She gave her whole self, her whole life, and her whole being to doing God’s will, and she continues to do so from heaven. [See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2622 on Mary’s “*Fiat.*”] The ending prayer from yesterday (“give myself fully”) raises a question: To what, if anything, have I given myself fully in the past? My vocation? Marriage? Friendship? Parenthood? A career? Baptism? Confirmation? Do I know what fully giving myself means?

Horizontal lines for writing.

2. If we were baptized as infants, our baptismal vows were made by others on our behalf. However, we renew our baptismal vows whenever the Easter season comes around. During such times, we’re asked if we reject the devil and all his works and whether we believe in each of the statements of the Creed. How serious is a vow in today’s world anyway? Reflect on the vow you made to God at your Baptism, and on the vows you made on your wedding day (if you are married). Do you know the date of your Baptism? Do you celebrate it?

Horizontal lines for writing.

3. Saint Louis says with the Church that the day of our Baptism is the most significant day of our lives! Can you name some other significant days in your life? (Wedding day, graduation day, awards or recognition received on a special day.) What relationships are reflected in each of these days? Why does our relationship with God make our baptismal day so important? (see CCC, nn. 1265-1270). List some ways we can celebrate baptismal days to keep them as significant occasions in our lives.

4. Mary’s humility humbles Satan even more than the divine power. Are you ready to strive to imitate Mary’s humility? What’s the difference between humility and humiliation? When we don’t seek the former, we sometimes encounter the latter. With which of your family and friends do you find it the easiest to be humble?

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Give me the grace to reject Satan and follow Christ more closely.

Day 4

De Montfort's Consecration (Part Two)

1. We are asked, "Why should we give ourselves to Mary?" What was your first and immediate answer? Was it, "Because she's sinless, totally without sin"? Or was it "Because she belongs totally to God, her whole life is God's"? Or was it "Because she's human like us and has compassion for her own"? Which answer is most important to you in your relationship to Mary? (Of course, they're all important, but which one especially touches you at this moment?)

Handwriting lines for response to question 1.

2. One of the reasons we give ourselves to Mary is in imitation of Jesus, who gave himself to her! When we consecrate ourselves to Jesus through Mary, when we give everything to her, we deepen our relationship with her, a relationship of child to mother. In order to make us safe, secure, forgiven, blessed, and graced by Jesus, her Son, what might she decide for us? Are you anxious about letting her make decisions in certain areas of your life? How might you pray (talk to her) about those decisions?

Handwriting lines for response to question 2.

3. The retreat mentions four intimate aspects of our lives that we give to Mary: first, our body; second, our soul; third, our exterior goods present and future; fourth, our interior and spiritual goods past, present, and future. That’s quite a gift! In fact, it’s the same kind of gift that Mary gave to God when she said, “*Fiat mihi*” (“Let it be done to me”). We can truly say that Mary consecrated herself, in a particularly intimate way, to God alone. Reflect on the idea that our total consecration to Jesus through Mary is in some sense an imitation of her consecration to God. Record your thoughts here:

4. Though after consecration you cannot insist that the graces given to you (in offering your sufferings and prayers) be given to the person you want them applied to, what might you say to Mary as you give her all the merits of your life and works? What freedom is implied in letting her have all the value of your good actions? (By the way, when we consecrate ourselves to Mary, we can and *should* still pray for our loved ones, and Mary really does take care of them — even better than we can. She is not outdone in generosity! Consider endnote n. 17 on page 184 of *33 Days to Morning Glory*.)

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
 Help me to give myself entirely to Jesus through Mary.*

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Day 5

Should We Really Give Mary Everything? (Part One)

- 1. As we begin to contemplate the reality of giving Mary everything, let's remember the generosity of life practiced by priests, brothers, nuns, consecrated single persons, and the faithfully married, all of whom offer themselves to God according to their state in life. The generous giving of oneself is not just for us who are on this retreat — everyone is called in some way to give everything to God. Marian consecration makes it easier, quicker, surer, more perfect ... how?

- 2. One of the benefits of giving everything to Mary is that she augments our gifts and makes them more perfect. (Recall St. Louis's analogy of the peasant and the king on page 41 of *33 Days to Morning Glory*.) Which of your gifts would you especially like to become more perfect before God gets it? What would you ask of Mary to perfect it?

3. Mary is not outdone in generosity. How can this be so? What gifts does she have that allow her to be the most generous of human beings? She sends the most generous graces on the people we love as we continue to pray for them before, during, and after the consecration, and she adds her intercession as Queen of Heaven. How generous are you? How many generous people do you know, and what are they generous with? Their time? Their money? Their willingness to be compassionate? Are these qualities of generosity ones you practice?

4. Mary loves to give the gifts of Jesus to others. Read the story of the wedding feast of Cana in John’s Gospel, chapter 2. List all the merciful gifts of Mary recorded in that story (there are many, not the least of which is the wine). Pretend you are the bridegroom or the bride. What would you say to Mary after the miracle is made known to you?

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Help me be generous in giving all I am and have to Mary.

Day 6

Should We Really Give Mary Everything? (Part Two)

1. As we closed yesterday, we asked Mary’s spouse, the Holy Spirit, to help us be generous in giving all to Mary. When in the past have we needed help in being generous or in giving gifts? One way to help someone to be generous is to teach them *how* to be generous. As children, our parents and teachers taught us how to give gifts to others. How has God been teaching you to be generous? How have you taught others to be generous?

Handwriting lines for response to question 1.

2. When the Angel Gabriel comes to announce the Incarnation to Mary, he says “Hail, Full of Grace.” Mary’s graces are a plentitude of God’s love in which we participate by giving all our merits to her! The issue really is one of trust: Do we trust her? The first way we learn to trust another is by getting to know the person. What have you done to get to know Mary?³

Handwriting lines for response to question 2.

3. Frequently, we are asked to “give what we can afford” to charities, even from the pulpit. Yet Christ says to the rich, young man, “If you will be perfect, sell what you have and come follow me” (Mk 10:21). How serious are we about spiritual perfection? What spiritual, physical, interior, or exterior goods do we still fear to let go of? Why?

4. What concerns or apprehensions do you still have as this first week nears its close? Fear of the loss of control of your spiritual life by giving all to Mary? Do you fear purgatory? At what level is your self-concern interfering with your desire to draw close to Mary?

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Help me to give great glory to God by giving all I am and have to Mary.

Day 7

A Quick, Easy, and Secure Way to Holiness

1. An essential part of growing in holiness involves dying to self. This is *not* an easy task. After all, self-preservation is deeply ingrained in all of us. To help us die to self, we are called to bear our daily crosses. Although we often complain about them, St. Louis says that crosses are “the greatest graces and favors of Heaven.” And while Jesus says, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:27), he also says, “Apart from me, you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). We must depend on supernatural help for bearing our crosses in life. Do you have a short list of crosses or a long one? Write out a list of crosses and blessings. (Yes, as the saints remind us, crosses are also blessings.) How have you asked for supernatural help up to now (as you prepare for consecration)?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 1.

2. Have you ever heard the phrase to “offer up” something, either for another person or some special intention? What was your internal response? Did you ask for the grace you need to do this? How will Marian consecration help with this aspect of your spiritual efforts?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 2.

3. Saint Louis describes making a statue from a mold as being much quicker than actually carving it. Imagine being poured into the mold of Mary. Think of being enveloped by her love of God, her happiness in doing God’s will, her prayers before the throne of God, her close relationship to Jesus. Describe your longing to be part of Mary’s virginal and maternal holiness.

4. Security — we all look for it in daily life. We use house alarms and car alarms, change our online passwords, and monitor our credit card statements for fraudulent charges. Some carry licensed weapons. Others hire bodyguards. Some buy expensive security software. All this to protect physical life and possessions. What about Marian consecration gives you the most comfort and security? Talk to Mary about this. Record your conversation here:

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
 Help me to praise you for such a quick, easy, and secure path to holiness!*

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WEEK ONE: Summary

Having just completed seven days of preparation for total consecration to Jesus through Mary, an entire week of the 33 days is now part of your spiritual journey with Mary to God. Give God thanks for this past week in a short prayer of gratitude for the thoughts, events, and personal support of your friends in the small group who accompany you on this pilgrimage. If you are making this retreat alone, mention those among your family and friends whom you know pray for you. You may write the prayer here:

SMALL-GROUP SESSION OUTLINE

~ St. Louis de Montfort ~

A. Prayer

1. + *Angelus*

2. *Come, Holy Spirit, and be with us. We wish to contemplate the mysteries of Jesus and Mary in our lives, as we prepare for consecration to Jesus through Mary. Amen. +*

B. Personal Response

[Selections from the Pondering, Prayerful Response of Week 1. The following questions are only suggestions. Do not feel as though you have to answer every question during the small group discussion time.]

1. Recall a special need in your life that you entrusted to the intercession of Mary or a favorite saint. (This is often known as a “special intention.”) Maybe you prayed a novena for it. Maybe the intention moved you to ask for help, for a blessing, or for an answer. What prayer or novena did you pray? What did you hope for? Was it for an answer? Were you answered in a way that surprised you? Consoled you? Was there a new insight from that prayer?
2. Saint Louis died at age 43, only 16 years after being ordained a priest. In today’s world, that may seem like a long time. What circumstances, employments, or relationships have lasted that long, or longer, in your life? (For example: marriage, parenthood, job, parish membership, a ministry.) What benefits do you count because of those years? Were there any difficulties in continuing for that period of time? What would you say to those who might want to imitate you in being faithful to any of those commitments for that number of years?
3. Part of Marian consecration involves entrusting ourselves totally to Mary so she can bring us to Jesus. And she does so in union with her spouse, the Holy Spirit, in the best way possible. For her to bring us to Jesus, though, we need to let go of always trying to do everything ourselves and from thinking that everything depends on us. Take your best guess at the following questions: What is the first thing that I need to become detached from? Will it be difficult to become detached from it? Will it take time?
4. Mary’s humility humbles Satan even more than the divine power. Are you ready to strive to imitate Mary’s humility? What’s the difference between humility and humiliation? When we don’t seek the former, we sometimes encounter the latter. With which of your family and friends do you find it the easiest to be humble?
5. Though after consecration you cannot insist that the graces given to you (in offering your sufferings and prayers) be given to the person you want them applied to, what might you say to Mary as you give her all the merits of your life and works? What freedom is implied

in letting her have all the value of your good actions? (By the way, when we consecrate ourselves to Mary, we can and *should* still pray for our loved ones, and Mary really does take care of them — even better than we can. She is not outdone in generosity! Consider endnote n. 17 on page 184 of *33 Days to Morning Glory*.)

6. Mary loves to give the gifts of Jesus to others. Read the story of the wedding feast of Cana in John's Gospel, chapter 2. List all the merciful gifts of Mary recorded in that story (there are many, not the least of which is the wine). Pretend you are the bridegroom or the bride. What would you say to Mary after the miracle is made known to you?
7. What concerns or apprehensions do you still have as this first week nears its close? Fear of the loss of control of your spiritual life by giving all to Mary? Do you fear purgatory? At what level is your self-concern interfering with your desire to draw close to Mary?
8. Have you ever heard the phrase to “offer up” something, either for another person or some special intention? What was your internal response? Did you ask for the grace you need to do this? How will Marian consecration help with this aspect of your spiritual efforts?

Generous Additional Response (if there's time):

Which of the seven days or pondering, prayerful responses most interested you, most inspired your prayer, or moved you to meditation?

C. Petition

[Leader] + Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

[Group response] Help me to make this retreat with generosity and zeal.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Prepare me to give myself fully to living out this true and solid devotion.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Give me the grace to reject Satan and follow Christ more closely.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me to give myself entirely to Jesus through Mary.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me be generous in giving all I have to Mary.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me to praise you for such a quick, easy, and secure path to holiness!

Individual petitions...

Response: Come, Holy Spirit, and help me. +

SESSION 2 — DVD NOTES

St. Louis de Montfort

Two Key Points

1. Effects of Marian Consecration

a) Mary's generosity _____

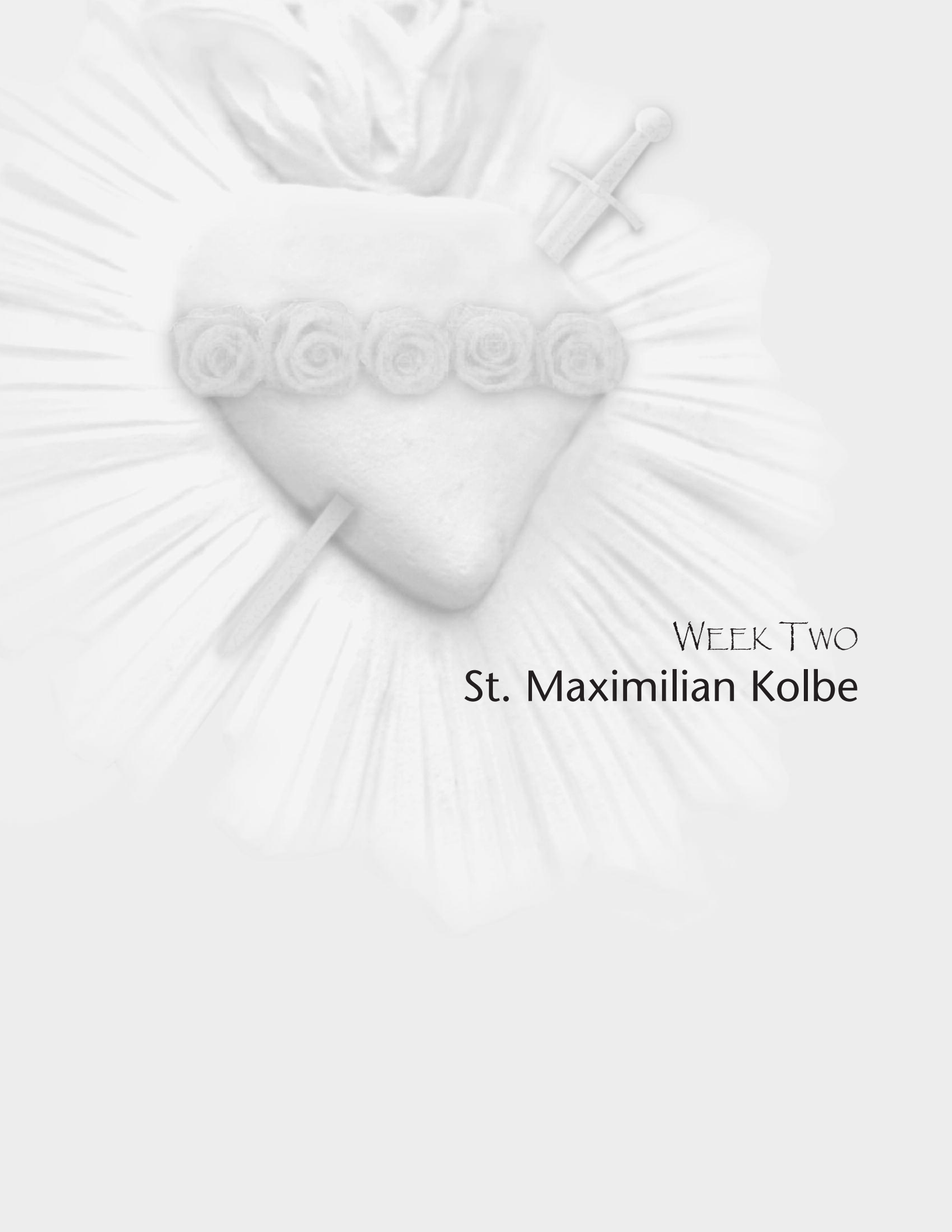
b) Mary augments our giving _____

Mary takes better care _____

d) Mary wants us to continue to pray for our loved ones _____

2. Crosses Made Sweet

Notes



WEEK TWO
St. Maximilian Kolbe

Prayer for Week Two — *Sub Tuum Praesidium*

Asking for Mary’s motherly intercession is a key element to living out Marian consecration. As it says in *33 Days to Morning Glory*, being devoted to Mary means “relying on her intercession, experiencing her care, speaking to her from our hearts, letting ourselves be led by her, having recourse to her in all things, and trusting her completely.”

This week, as you ponder the insights of St. Maximilian’s devotion to our “little mother” and strive to grow in your love of her, start each day with the prayer *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, meaning “Under Your Patronage.” This prayer, which was recorded around 250 A.D., is the oldest complete Marian prayer. It reveals that since the early days of the Church, Christians have called upon Mary as their Mother and Advocate. As you recite this prayer, your heart and mind unite with the saints of old in their devotion to Mary, and you can also recall modern saints, like St. Maximilian, who placed themselves under Mary’s patronage. In a sense, St. Maximilian echoes the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* when he says, “... our little, little mother, the Immaculate Mary, can do anything for us. We are her children. Turn to her. She will overcome everything.”

Sub Tuum Praesidium

We fly to your patronage,
O Holy Mother of God,
Despise not our petitions in our necessities,
But deliver us from all danger,
O ever glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

Day 8

Who Are You, St. Maximilian Kolbe?

[Each day this week, you will (1) read the appropriate day from *33 Days to Morning Glory*, (2) pray the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, and (3) prayerfully answer the four corresponding questions in this *Retreat Companion*.]

1. Purity of Soul and Body: St. Maximilian wanted both the white crown and the red crown: purity and martyrdom. Purity of soul and body prepared him for martyrdom. To grow in holiness — to grow in purity of soul and body — we need Mary’s intercession. What ways can Mary’s powerful intercession help you grow in holiness? Are you ready to ask her for her intercession and guidance in seeking holiness?

2. Purity of Intention: “A person practices purity of intention when he directs his thoughts, words, and actions not to himself or another creature but to a divine purpose or mission, and ultimately to God.” Such an attitude of the heart avoids doing things for selfish reasons and instead tries to do all things out of love for God and for his glory. Can you give an example from your life of a situation in which you believe you acted with purity of intention? What do you need from God (through Mary) to make this a regular virtue in your life?

3. Significant Dates: St. Maximilian was martyred on the eve of the Marian feast of the Assumption. We all have significant dates in our lives. What are some of yours? Think about how you will make the date of your consecration significant throughout your lifetime. Any ideas?

4. Saint Maximilian strove to do everything “through obedience to God’s will, in union with Mary Immaculate.” This is dying to self and living for the glory of God. A second look at what aspects of your personal self must “die” might be good right here. What help from Mary and the Holy Spirit do you need?

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Make me pure in body and spirit and help me to die to myself.*

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Day 9

Who Are You, O Immaculate Conception? (Part One)

- 1. Saint Maximilian’s most important reflection on the mystery of the Immaculate Conception comes in a sudden burst of insight just two hours before his arrest by the Nazis. Have you ever experienced a sudden or surprising understanding about a relationship with a person or a lifelong question? Was it after or during prayer? How did it change you or the situation?

- 2. Saint Maximilian says that Mary is the Immaculate Conception “in the most precise and essential manner... .” Stunning thoughts: “precise,” “essential.” Precisely and essentially, who are you? Who do you wish to become?

3. Was the idea of the Holy Spirit as the uncreated Immaculate Conception a surprise to you? As St. Maximilian understands it, this uncreated Immaculate (holy, sinless) Conception springs from the Father and the Son’s relationship with each other. How does this relationship among the Persons of the Trinity shed light on how they relate to humanity?

4. Ephesians 3:14-15 says, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit ... and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. ...” The goal of our union with Christ is to share in the very life of God, the Holy Trinity. As we consecrate ourselves to Mary and let her guide us, how can her special relationship with the Holy Spirit and Christ help us share more fully in the life of the Trinity?

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Unveil for me the meaning of the Immaculate Conception.

Day 10

Who Are You, O Immaculate Conception? (Part Two)

1. We prayed for the unveiling of the meaning of the Immaculate Conception yesterday. Why do we need the help of the Holy Spirit to understand the meaning of Mary's Immaculate Conception? Besides her being conceived sinless within St. Anne, what might it mean? (Remember to pray to the Holy Spirit as you meditate on this.)

2. Within the Trinity, God is Love, and God loves himself. How can we imitate this, and why would we want to?⁴

3. “Everything that is material occurs in time,” we read. Consider that, though we are material, we are also spiritual, and our ultimate end is union with God. How do we prepare for that eternal union with God in heaven? Mary was the one created human being who lived that intimate union with God while still on earth. How can she help us deepen our relationship to God through our consecration?

4. Mary and the Holy Spirit are united in a very special relationship: She is his spouse.⁵ Today’s meditation suggests that this relationship may even be deeper than human spousal relationships. How might Mary intercede with the Holy Spirit about issues of modern marriage and the family: divorce, domestic violence, abortion, non-marital unions, single parenthood? What might you ask of her regarding these modern spiritual problems? Consider instances of them in your family and among your circle of friends. Bring them all (the people and the situations) to Mary.

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Unveil for me the meaning of the Immaculate Conception.

Day 11

The Immaculata Always Does God’s Will, Perfectly

- 1. We have prayed for the unveiling of the meaning of the Immaculate Conception and gained some insights. John’s Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, is also called the Apocalypse, or the “unveiling.” Read Revelation 12. What might John be revealing in this chapter?

- 2. The union of Mary, the created Immaculate Conception, and the Holy Spirit, the uncreated Immaculate Conception, results in Mary’s doing God’s will always and perfectly! Nice for her, but not for her alone: God wills for us to be perfect (“as your heavenly Father is perfect,” Mt 5:48), and he wants her to lead us to perfection in his will. How will Marian consecration change how you perceive — and do! — the will of God?

3. The Incarnation of the Word and his Paschal mystery are the greatest events of history and unique to the faith of Christians. The Incarnation, Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ reconcile the world with God. Reflect on how we can give glory to God for this great gift of salvation. Ponder Mary’s special role in our salvation. How will Marian consecration help us give glory to God for this great gift?

4. Saint Thomas Aquinas says all creation is in a circular motion from God and back to God. Have you experienced this movement in miniature in your prayer and spiritual life? What is usually the precursor of your feeling distant from God and then returning to him? What do you ask of Mary to help you become closer to God for longer periods or more frequently? (see CCC, nn. 2742-2745).⁶

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Renew the face of the earth, so that all creation may return to God.*

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Day 12

To Be an Instrument – Rather, to Be Instruments

1. We ended yesterday’s meditations with a prayer for renewal, the renewal of the face of the earth. What renewal events do we perform in ordinary life? Rest and relaxation on vacations? Wedding anniversary trips or celebrations? Family reunions? How is Sunday Liturgy a weekly renewal?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 1.

2. All happiness, St. Maximilian says, is contained in the will of God in our lives. Mary Immaculate chose freely and perfectly to let God’s will be done in her. In a list of things you believe are God’s will for you at this point in your life, write a short request for help from Mary in imitating her attitude of “*fiat mihi*” (“let it be done unto me”).

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 2.

3. Though we probably don't see angels, we do receive "divine messengers," St. Maximilian assures us. Can you recall some of the messages to which you said, "God's will be done"? What prompted your reluctance to accept God's will in other instances?

4. Mary is often invoked as "Mediatrice of Grace." In other words, through her fervent prayers, which are inspired by her motherly love for us, God is pleased to give us so many graces. It didn't have to be this way, but it was God's good pleasure to give us a spiritual mother through whose hands we receive grace. Mary's motherly care for us in the order of grace is depicted in the Miraculous Medal shown first to St. Catherine Labouré, where rays of grace flow to the world through her hands. Which graces do you desire to come from her hands to you, to your family and friends, to your country? ⁷

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Unite my will to the will of the Immaculata, which is one with your will.

Day 13

Who Are You, O Holy Saints of God?

1. There are many kinds of instruments: musical instruments, kitchen utensils, implements of war, garden tools. They are only as good as the person who knows how to use them. It takes a great musician to make use of a Stradivarius violin in a concert. Mary will use you as her instrument; you will become an instrument of her love for her children. In writing, try to explain this being an “instrument of love” to someone and how important this privilege is to you.

Horizontal lines for writing response to question 1.

2. Satanic possession, unfortunately, is a reality. But so is possession by God in holiness. What progress are you making toward being “possessed” by Mary (in the manner described by St. Maximilian) so you can grow in holiness? Do not say “not much.” You are very near the 14th day of progress, a whole half-month of progress. List the prayers, changes in attitude, longings for holiness, etc.

Horizontal lines for writing response to question 2.

3. Words like *militia* and *knighthood* appeal to men. They are “fighting words;” however, how can this ideal of winning the world for the Immaculata be made appealing to a wider audience, including teens and women, even children? Perhaps you don’t think it even needs softening — your thoughts?

4. Love and trust are always partners. Learning to love the Immaculata takes a great deal of *trust*, which involves dependence on her intercession, letting ourselves be led by her, accepting her direction, speaking our prayers to her directly from our hearts. What experiences with trust, becoming dependent on someone and taking direction from him or her, have you had in the past? Do you look forward to these experiences of dependence on Mary?⁸

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Prepare me to be a fit instrument in the hands of the Immaculata.

Day 14

Kolbe's Prayer of Consecration

1. Preparing to be a fit instrument in the hands of the Immaculata, there are two key points to remember: acceptance of the will of God and acceptance of the intercession of Mary before God. Do we really believe that our Mother Mary will overcome everything? What might be standing in the way of this trust?

2. Mary's identity, revealed in her apparitions at Lourdes, is the Immaculate Conception. Through her, God's tender mercies are dispensed. We experience these mercies through Mary's humility, gentleness, tenderness, and love. Reflect on how you might imitate these virtues as you live out your Marian consecration.

3. Kolbe expresses Marian consecration not as a gift of self for the sake of achieving “the greater glory of God” (as does de Montfort) but rather as becoming an instrument in the hands of Mary for the purpose of “extending the Kingdom of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.” Thus, his focus is this: Mary’s love of Jesus and her desire to lead all men and women to the Merciful Heart of her Son. How much do you want to be renewed and transformed by the Holy Spirit, through Mary’s powerful intercession, for the sake of the kingdom? How much do you hesitate?

4. “Take me with all that I am and have as your possession and property” is a radical gift, but it is well worth it, because Mary will take you and all that you have and use it to give great glory to God. Also, she’s such a gentle mother, so we don’t need to be afraid. List what you will lay at the feet of Mary. Describe how you will wrap it as a gift (symbolically) with your motivations and intentions for your total consecration to Jesus through Mary.

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Prepare me to give all to the Immaculata for the sake of the kingdom.

WEEK TWO: Summary Questions

Saint Louis's presentation of the meaning of Marian consecration while similar to St. Maximilian's is also somewhat different. Saint Maximilian speaks of being an "instrument" of Mary. Which image (of Mary) speaks most personally to you? Do you have another mental image of Mary that carries the meaning of Marian consecration or "Morning Glory" for you personally?

SMALL-GROUP SESSION OUTLINE

~ St. Maximilian Kolbe ~

A. Prayer

1. + *Sub Tuum Praesidium*

2. *Come, Holy Spirit, and be with us. We wish to contemplate the mysteries of Jesus and Mary in our lives, as we prepare for consecration to Jesus through Mary. Amen. +*

B. Personal Response

[Selections from the Pondering, Prayerful Response of Week 2. The following questions are only suggestions. Do not feel as though you have to answer every question during the small group discussion time.]

1. Purity of Intention: “A person practices purity of intention when he directs his thoughts, words, and actions not to himself or another creature but to a divine purpose or mission, and ultimately to God.” Such an attitude of the heart avoids doing things for selfish reasons and instead tries to do all things out of love for God and for his glory. Can you give an example from your life of a situation in which you believe you acted with purity of intention? What do you need from God (through Mary) to make this a regular virtue in your life?
2. Saint Maximilian’s most important reflection on the mystery of the Immaculate Conception comes in a sudden burst of insight just two hours before his arrest by the Nazis. Have you ever experienced a sudden or surprising understanding about a relationship with a person or a lifelong question? Was it after or during prayer? How did it change you or the situation?
3. Mary and the Holy Spirit are united in a very special relationship: She is his spouse. Today’s meditation suggests that this relationship may even be deeper than human spousal relationships. How might Mary intercede with the Holy Spirit about issues of modern marriage and the family: divorce, domestic violence, abortion, non-marital unions, single parenthood? What might you ask of her regarding these modern spiritual problems? Consider instances of them in your family and among your circle of friends. Bring them all (the people and the situations) to Mary.
4. Saint Thomas Aquinas says all creation is in a circular motion from God and back to God. Have you experienced this movement in miniature in your prayer and spiritual life? What is usually the precursor of your feeling distant from God and then returning to him? What do you ask of Mary to help you become closer to God for longer periods or more frequently?
5. Mary is often invoked as “Mediatrice of Grace.” In other words, through her fervent prayers, which are inspired by her motherly love for us, God is pleased to give us so many graces. It didn’t have to be this way, but it was God’s good pleasure to give us a spiritual

mother through whose hands we receive grace. Mary's motherly care for us in the order of grace is depicted in the Miraculous Medal shown first to St. Catherine Labouré, where rays of grace flow to the world through her hands. Which graces do you desire to come from her hands to you, to your family and friends, to your country?

6. Love and trust are always partners. Learning to love the Immaculata takes a great deal of *trust*, which involves dependence on her intercession, letting ourselves be led by her, accepting her direction, speaking our prayers to her directly from our hearts. What experiences with trust, becoming dependent on someone and taking direction from him or her, have you had in the past? Do you look forward to these experiences of dependence on Mary?
7. "Take me with all that I am and have as your possession and property" is a radical gift, but it is well worth it, because Mary will take you and all that you have and use it to give great glory to God. Also, she's such a gentle mother, so we don't need to be afraid. List what you will lay at the feet of Mary. Describe how you will wrap it as a gift (symbolically) with your motivations and intentions for your total consecration to Jesus through Mary.

Generous Additional Response (if there's time):

Which of the seven days or pondering, prayerful responses most interested you, most inspired your prayer, or moved you to meditation?

C. Petition

[Leader] + Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

[Group response] Make me pure in body and spirit and help me to die to myself.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary,

Unveil for me the meaning of the Immaculate Conception.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary,

Renew the face of the earth, so that all creation may return to God.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary,

Unite my will to the will of the Immaculata, which is one with your will.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary,

Prepare me to be a fit instrument in the hands of the Immaculata

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary,

Prepare me to give all to the Immaculata for the sake of the kingdom.

Individual petitions...

Response: Come, Holy Spirit, and help me. +

SESSION 3 — DVD NOTES
St. Maximilian Kolbe

Three Key Points

1. Kolbe’s Incredible Zeal

2. Mary’s Relationship with the Holy Spirit

3. Kolbe’s Tender Love for Mary

Notes



WEEK THREE
Blessed Mother Teresa

Prayer for Week Three — *Memorare*

While the *Memorare* is often attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), Confessor, Abbot, and Doctor of the Church, it was popularized by another Bernard: Fr. Claude Bernard of France (1588-1641). Father Claude, known as the “Poor Priest,” employed the *Memorare* extensively in his evangelization efforts. Many a condemned criminal was reconciled to God before death through his help and this prayer. He had hundreds of thousands of leaflets of the *Memorare* printed in various languages to distribute (long before modern printing technology!). Saint Francis de Sales, some twenty-one years older than Fr. Claude, also loved and frequently prayed the *Memorare*, as did many saints that came after him.

Blessed Mother Teresa prayed this prayer with great confidence in Mary’s powerful intercession, and she was never let down: “Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known, that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided.” Of course, Mary doesn’t always help us exactly in the way we expect, but she always comes to our aid when we call upon her. This week, as we pray the *Memorare* prayer, let’s bring to Mary all of our needs and trust in her powerful intercession just like so many saints did.

Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known, that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Day 15

Lover of the Heart of Jesus

[Each day this week, you will (1) read the appropriate day from *33 Days to Morning Glory*, (2) pray the *Memorare*, and (3) prayerfully answer the four corresponding questions in this *Retreat Companion*.]

- 1. What details of Mother Teresa’s spiritual growth and development stand out to you and intrigue you? Why? Her First Holy Communion at five years old? Her burning thirst for souls revealed to her at such an early age by Christ? Wanting to be a missionary? Her acceptance of “terrible darkness” out of love for Jesus?

- 2. Mother Teresa’s generosity eventually prompted her to promise Jesus that she would refuse him nothing. In a sense, the Marian consecration that you’re preparing for is similar to Mother Teresa’s promise. Everything of yours will belong to Mary who loves you and brings you closer to the pierced Heart of Christ. Will you refuse her nothing? Recall that Mary is not outdone in generosity. What does the Lord or his Mother say to you in prayer about this?

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3. Mother Teresa experienced “terrible darkness” and loneliness after saying “yes” to Jesus. She eventually discerned it to be a sharing in Jesus’ suffering and thirst on the Cross. Participating in the suffering of Jesus’ Passion and Death is a common theme among many saints’ writings. What about this is attractive to you? What about it is difficult or even frightening for you?⁹

4. Mother Teresa says, “[S]uffering has to come that came in the life of Our Lady, that came in the life of Jesus — it has to come in our life also. ... Suffering is a gift from God. It is between you and Jesus alone inside.” Try to explain your understanding of this as a Catholic Christian.

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
 Help me to find the love of the Heart of Jesus hidden in the darkness.*

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Day 16

'The Gift God Gave September 10th'

- 1. Mother Teresa says that we can't last even one day without hearing Jesus speak to us of his love for us. Otherwise, she says, prayer is dead and meditation "only thinking." What kind of prayer is your prayer? Do you set aside time for prayer or do you pray throughout the day? Do you include some time to listen or to just sit quietly with Jesus? Is quiet helpful for you or do you just get fidgety? (See also *CCC*, Part Four, "Section One: Prayer in The Christian Life," nn. 2558-2758.)

- 2. Be careful of things that block contact with Jesus, Mother Teresa warns. What are the things that block you? Make a list of the interior things (worries, life's past hurts, past mistakes, or even forgiven sins) and the exterior things (grocery lists, errands, appointments, daily responsibilities — phone conversations!) that interfere with daily one-to-one contact with the One who loves and longs for you eternally.

3. What is it about you personally that Jesus thirsts for? Mother Teresa insists that this is crucial to know Jesus’ will for you and what he wants to be for you. After you muse on this for a few moments, record some thoughts:

Horizontal lines for writing.

4. “Whenever we come close to Him — we become partners of Our Lady, St. John, Magdalen. Hear Him. Hear your own name,” Mother Teresa tells us. What does your name sound like when someone you love says it? What did Magdalen’s name sound like when Jesus said it in the garden by the empty tomb? What does your name sound like when Jesus says it?

Horizontal lines for writing.

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Help me to listen to Jesus’ thirst.*

Day 17

The Visions of 1947

- 1. Reread Mother Teresa’s three visions (pages 73-74 in *33 Days to Morning Glory*). Pay attention to Mary’s appearance and actions in the visions. With Mary’s help, what does Teresa see? What does she hear? How does Mary comfort her? How does she support her? Is there significance to Mary holding Teresa’s right arm?

- 2. Why does Mary say, “Fear not” to Mother Teresa? Would this simple two-word sentence be comforting to you, coming from Mary? Why or why not? What could she say to you to allay your fears?

3. Mary says the crowd that Mother Teresa sees belongs to her, “They are mine. Bring them to Jesus.” What does this tell us about Mary’s view of us? What does it tell us about how Mary sees what “belongs” to her? Does this change how you look at what belongs to you or what you do with your belongings?

4. John and Magdalen follow Jesus to Calvary out of personal love for the Savior. However, also motivating them is their love for his Mother, who is suffering as well, though much more than they. It is Mary who is by far the strongest of the three. What are her strengths, interiorly and exteriorly, mentally and spiritually?

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Bring me face to face with the love in the Heart of Jesus crucified.

Day 18

The Immaculate Heart of Mary

- 1. Exchanging hearts with Mary, even for a few moments, would have huge consequences in our lives. Were we to see and feel with Mary’s own depth of love of God, we would not forget it. What gifts from such an exchange would you desire? Compassion for others as she experiences it? Love of the Divine Savior as wholehearted as hers? Depth of prayer and mercy as she lives it? Something else? What are the reasons for your choices, as you understand them?

- 2. When we ask for Mary to lend us her Heart, we’re asking to share in her own inner life. The human heart represents the spiritual reality of inner life and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit’s grace and love. This preparation for consecration includes a focus on your inner life and relationship of love with the Holy Spirit. What is your relationship with the Holy Spirit like now, and how will Mary’s Heart confirm and strengthen this relationship?

3. Jesus chooses to come through Mary into history and to all humanity; he chooses to come to you through Mary. Mary was with the Apostles in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit descended on the first Pentecost. The Holy Spirit also comes to us through Mary.¹⁰ His graces set us afire for his mission in the world. What does it mean to have our hearts “afire”? How do you feel about having your heart aflame with the love of God, with the love of the Blessed Virgin? How will it change your conversations with others and your actions?

4. Praying to Mary with Mother Teresa’s words, “Keep me in your most pure heart,” focuses you on being set apart for love through Mary. Your mission becomes loving with Mary’s Heart, being set apart for her, for pleasing Jesus through her. What obstacles do you perceive in your inner life that would prevent you from earnestly praying for this? How do you think Mary will overcome these obstacles for you?

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Keep me in her most pure and Immaculate Heart.*

Day 19

Heart-Pondering Prayer

1. Are you practicing the daily examen (found in endnote n. 73 on pages 187-189 of *33 Days to Morning Glory*)? Are you dwelling on daily blessings instead of daily annoyances, daily opportunities instead of daily difficulties? What do you perceive as interferences with the regular practice of the daily examen in your life? How can you incorporate it into your bedtime regimen?

Horizontal lines for writing the response to question 1.

2. An examen is basically a list. We make lists all the time: grocery, errands, Christmas and birthday gift lists, books to read, appointments to keep. Make a new list right now: life blessings you live with each day, prayers answered recently, family and friends praying for you, and other instances that have brought God’s grace and direction to you.

Horizontal lines for writing the response to question 2.

3. The retreat asks you to develop both a spiritual sensitivity and an attitude of gratitude. In doing so, you will begin to imitate Mary and her pondering Heart. God is in all things, in all your life’s happenings, all your prayers, all your relationships. List a few events, relationships, and situations where you may not have been sensitive to or grateful for God’s presence. Practice the pondering of Mary and find God there now.

4. What’s the difference between a “laundry list of sins” and the examen? Do you think Mary made lists? You might think of the Rosary as a list: Mary’s memories and sacred moments she wants us to look at as if in a photo album. What pictures of you, your spouse or children, or your friends might you want to put in a spiritual album to remember and pray over? (For example: the First Holy Communion of a first child.)

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Help me to recognize and ponder in my heart all the good you do for me.

Day 20

A Consecration Covenant

- 1. The seriousness of the consecration is compared, indeed almost equated with, the idea of covenant. Giving your word is giving yourself, in Mother Teresa’s explanation. Covenant, in biblical terms, makes you a member of the person’s family relationships. Imagine yourself living with Mary in Nazareth. What would you talk about? How would you relate to Jesus, her Son? What would change in your behavior, your demeanor? How would your thoughts change?

- 2. Looking at the chart on page 114 in *33 Days to Morning Glory*, choose two of Mary’s duties to you that you consider most important, ones that you believe will make you secure in her care and bring you to high holiness. Explain what these two duties mean to you and what they entail in so far as your daily life is concerned. What are you expecting Mary to do, exactly?

3. Choose two of your duties to Mary; ones that are significant to you or that you believe will really challenge you (or help you) to remain focused on the glory of her Son alone. What is the challenge (or help) that is embedded in those duties?

Horizontal lines for writing the response to question 3.

4. The Missionaries of Charity Consecration Covenant prayer (on page 80 of *33 Days to Morning Glory*) speaks of the ardent desire to live in close union with Mary, with the goal of union with Jesus. How does reading this prayer intensify the coming moment of consecration for you? Does it bring to you a deepening sense of the generosity involved in consecration? What does it mean to you?

Horizontal lines for writing the response to question 4.

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Help me to ardently make a Covenant of Consecration with Mary.

Day 21

'Be the One' (with Mary)

- 1. Mother Teresa urges you to “be the one” to console Jesus who thirsts for the love of the souls he so desires to save. Mary is the one who best understands this thirst and the need to comfort Jesus. Ask Mary, Mother Teresa says, to help you understand. What might Mary say to you to help you better understand Jesus’ thirst?

- 2. Mary is the best consoler of Jesus because she is the spouse of the Holy Spirit, who is also called “the Consoler” and “the Comforter” (Jn 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). What do these titles of the Holy Spirit tell us about God’s relationship with us? What do they tell us about Mary’s relationship to Jesus and to each of us — about her relationship to you?

3. Jesus speaks in the Gospel of his longing to gather Jerusalem (Israel) as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings — for comfort, but they wouldn’t accept it (see Luke 13:34). What is so important about consolation that God the Holy Spirit names himself the Consoler or Comforter? Whom do you console in your personal relationships? How do you do it? Do any of those you seek to console refuse you; if so, how does it make you feel?

4. Mother Teresa describes the greatest evil as “lack of love and charity.” She and the Missionaries of Charity put love of Jesus and of others first. Ask yourself: (a) Among your personal acquaintances, who needs your love to avoid loneliness? (b) Who are those nearest to you who need your love expressed to them? (c) How often do you express your love of Jesus directly to him?

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
 Help me to “be the one” to console Jesus with Mary.*

WEEK THREE: Summary

Mother Teresa’s three trademark virtues are “total surrender to God, loving trust, and perfect cheerfulness.” Not just surrender but total surrender, not just trust but loving trust, not just cheerfulness but perfect cheerfulness. We are told this is simple: Just be like a child. What do each of these virtues mean to you personally?

1. total surrender

2. loving trust

3. perfect cheerfulness

SMALL-GROUP SESSION OUTLINE

~ Blessed Mother Teresa ~

A. Prayer

1. + *Memorare*

2. *Come, Holy Spirit, and be with us. We wish to contemplate the mysteries of Jesus and Mary in our lives as we prepare for consecration to Jesus through Mary. Amen. +*

B. Personal Response

[Selections from the Pondering, Prayerful Response of Week 3. The following questions are only suggestions. Do not feel as though you have to answer every question during the small group discussion time.]

1. Mother Teresa experienced “terrible darkness” and loneliness after saying “yes” to Jesus. She eventually discerned it to be a sharing in Jesus’ suffering and thirst on the Cross. Participating in the suffering of Jesus’ Passion and Death is a common theme among many saints’ writings. What about this is attractive to you? What about it is difficult or even frightening for you?
2. Be careful of things that block contact with Jesus, Mother Teresa warns. What are the things that block you? Make a list of the interior things (worries, life’s past hurts, past mistakes, or even forgiven sins) and the exterior things (grocery lists, errands, appointments, daily responsibilities — phone conversations!) that interfere with daily one-to-one contact with the One who loves and longs for you eternally.
3. Reread Mother Teresa’s three visions (pages 73-74 in *33 Days to Morning Glory*). Pay attention to Mary’s appearance and actions in the visions. With Mary’s help, what does Teresa see? What does she hear? How does Mary comfort her? How does she support her? Is there significance to Mary holding Teresa’s right arm?
4. Praying to Mary with Mother Teresa’s words, “Keep me in your most pure heart,” focuses you on being set apart for love through Mary. Your mission becomes loving with Mary’s Heart, being set apart for her, for pleasing Jesus through her. What obstacles do you perceive in your inner life that would prevent you from earnestly praying for this? How do you think Mary will overcome these obstacles for you?
5. Are you practicing the daily examen (found in endnote n. 73 on pages 187-189 of *33 Days to Morning Glory*)? Are you dwelling on daily blessings instead of daily annoyances, daily opportunities instead of daily difficulties? What do you perceive as interferences with the regular practice of the daily examen in your life? How can you incorporate it into your bedtime regimen?
6. The seriousness of the consecration is compared, indeed almost equated with, the idea of covenant. Giving your word is giving yourself, in Mother Teresa’s explanation. Covenant,

in biblical terms, makes you a member of the person's family relationships. Imagine yourself living with Mary in Nazareth. What would you talk about? How would you relate to Jesus, her Son? What would change in your behavior, your demeanor? How would your thoughts change?

7. Mary is the best consoler of Jesus because she is the spouse of the Holy Spirit, who is also called "the Consoler" and "the Comforter" (Jn 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). What do these titles of the Holy Spirit tell us about God's relationship with us? What do they tell us about Mary's relationship to Jesus and to each of us — about her relationship to you?

Generous Additional Response (if there's time):

Which of the seven days or pondering, prayerful responses most interested you, most inspired your prayer, or moved you to meditation?

C. Petition

[Leader] + Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

[Group response] Help me to find the love of the Heart of Jesus hidden in the darkness.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me to listen to Jesus' thirst.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Bring me face to face with the love in the Heart of Jesus crucified.

Blessed Mother Mary, lend me your Heart;

And keep me in your Immaculate Heart.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me to recognize and ponder in my heart all the good you do for me.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me to ardently make a Covenant with Consecration to Mary.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me to "be the one" to console Jesus with Mary.

Individual petitions...

Response: Come, Holy Spirit, and help me. +

SESSION 4 — DVD NOTES

Blessed Mother Teresa

A. “I Thirst” Letter

1. Key to Prayer

2. Face to Face with the Love of Jesus Crucified

3. Divine Mercy

B. Intimacy with Mary

Listen to Jesus’ Thirst and Respond

Notes



WEEK FOUR
St. John Paul II

Prayer for Week Four — The *Magnificat*

During this last full week of retreat before Consecration Day, turn your attention to Mary's "*Magnificat*." This heartfelt prayer, recorded in the Gospel of Luke, captures Mary's joyful response to the "great things" God has done for her and her praise of his mercy. Of all the prayers we've prayed this retreat, the *Magnificat* is by far the most inspired and inspiring, because it is part of the Word of God and flowed from the Immaculate Heart of Mary herself.

As we draw closer to Consecration Day, our hearts begin to fill with praise and thanks to God for the great gift of his mercy that is Marian consecration. For three weeks, we've been pondering the powerful Marian teaching of Marian saints, and God has been doing great things for us. By reciting the *Magnificat* this week, we become even more united with Mary who, with us, is rejoicing at the approach of the beginning of a glorious new morning in our relationship with her.

The *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-55)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

Day 22

Mary's Gift of Mercy

[Each day this week, you will (1) read the appropriate day from *33 Days to Morning Glory*, (2) pray the *Magnificat*, and (3) prayerfully answer the four corresponding questions in this *Retreat Companion*.]

- 1. In her visions at Fatima, Our Lady asked (first) for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart and (second) for "First Saturday" communions of reparation.¹¹ Can you see the connection between these requests and your own consecration to Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary? Explain.

- 2. The first apparition at Fatima and the shooting of Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Square both occurred on May 13th at 5 p.m. John Paul II did not consider this a coincidence. What is a coincidence anyway? Have you experienced any coincidences in your life? Do you believe, as John Paul II did, that "in the designs of Providence, there are no mere coincidences"? If so, what do you believe God is saying through such "God-incidences" in your life? If not, what explanation do you give to others of the two instances being similar in time, circumstances, or outcome?

3. We read that Pope John Paul II solemnly entrusted the whole world to Mary’s Immaculate Heart in 1984 and that the beginning of the collapse of communism in Europe outwardly began five years later. We also read that the Pope solemnly entrusted the world to Divine Mercy in 2002, saying that Divine Mercy would prepare the world for the Lord’s final coming. (Of course, he gave no indication of when this will happen.) Why is consecration/entrustment so important to John Paul II? How is your consecration to Mary related to the consecration of the world to Mary and Divine Mercy? How does your trust in Mary reflect your trust in the love and mercy of Jesus?

4. Mary’s *Magnificat* is her personal response to the great mercy God bestowed on her. Through your consecration to Jesus through Mary, you have the opportunity to participate in her *Magnificat* by your praise of Jesus. Rewrite the *Magnificat* with your first name in it in place of the references to Mary. (Of course, the line “all generations will call me blessed” doesn’t exactly fit for us — except, perhaps, when we consider the great gift of Marian consecration, which makes us especially blessed!) Give thanks for God’s mercy to you personally.

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Have mercy on us and on the whole world!*

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Day 23

Maternal Mediation

- 1. Mediators “stand between” persons or parties to bring unity and agreement. They speak to each side, clarify issues, seek concessions, and urge acceptance from each. With whom and in which relationships do you act as a mediator? Or do you avoid such a role, and if so, why? Are you successful in these attempts to bring unity to two friends, co-workers, or family members? What role does mercy or charity play in your mediation?

- 2. Jesus wants Mary and all Christians to share in his mediation through “obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity” (*Lumen Gentium*, 61). These four will be made easier and secure through Marian consecration. Which of the four is most difficult for you now? Which is easiest now? For whom or for what circumstances in your life are these virtues of mediation most important?

3. By this point in the preparation, we should realize Mary’s important, motherly role in our spiritual lives, and what a gift it is to entrust ourselves to her. Why do you suppose God has brought you, at this point in your life, to make or renew the consecration to Jesus through Mary? What mediation between you and God might need the motherly hand of Mary right now?

Horizontal lines for writing.

4. Mary, through her maternal intercession, brings you grace and mercy and leads you to her Son and the salvation he has won for us. What aspects of your life need her gifts of grace and mercy right now? Ask her for those gifts.

Horizontal lines for writing.

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Fill my heart with praise to God for giving Mary as my spiritual mother.

Day 24

Mary's Retreat (Day One)

1. As Pope John Paul II teaches, God the Father was the first to entrust himself to Mary, giving her his own Son in the mystery of the Incarnation. What humility! The Creator entrusts himself to his creature. And so, we, too, imitate the Son by humbly entrusting ourselves to the care of the Mother of God. What is true humility? How humble are you? What instances in your life can you cite as opportunities for the practice of humility? Were you aware at the time that you needed to exercise humility?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 1.

2. Mary's motherly attentiveness to the details of the couple being married at Cana begins Jesus' public life with the miracle of the water become wine. The lack of wine has been described as a symbol of the lack of joy in human life without God's grace. What human needs might Mary be attentive to and then bring to Jesus for his miraculous intervention if she were invited to your home today?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 2.

3. The attentiveness of Mary to the details of God in every experience allowed her to accept each new dimension of her spiritual motherhood, her personal mediation within the mediation of Christ. When has your attentiveness to detail given you insight into what God wanted of you in a specific situation? How did the details become apparent to you? Did you give thanks to God at the time for his gift of insight?

4. When have you most powerfully experienced heart-pondering prayer during this preparation retreat for consecration to Jesus through Mary? What spiritual fruit or insight has it produced in you? Has your love of Jesus grown? How can you tell?

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Help me to be faithful to heart-pondering prayer, as was Mary.

Day 25

Mary’s Retreat (Day Two)

1. Pope John Paul II in his Cana commentary points out three important aspects of Mary’s “solicitude for human beings”: (1) Mary puts herself between her Son and mankind in their needs; (2) Mary’s mediation for the couple is that of Mother,¹² which is her right as Mother of Jesus; (3) Mary desires to see the manifestation of Jesus’ mediation freeing men and women from misfortune. How much do you desire Jesus’ mediation in present world needs? How much do you want to see Jesus acknowledged as Mediator?

2. Our recourse to Mary as Mother and Mediatrix will be made easier and more secure in our personal consecration to Jesus through her, which is only days away now. What signs have you had in prayer or insights or events that may have confirmed for you that God desires your consecration to Jesus through Mary?

3. Mary is “the spokeswoman of her Son’s will,” John Paul II writes. By your consecration, you will enjoy an even deeper intimacy with Mary. So, after your consecration, what situation or concern of yours will you ask Mary about first regarding Jesus’ will for you?

4. In belonging to Mary, our participation in mediation will be “wholly oriented toward Christ” because Mary is wholly Christ’s. What part of you or your relationships do you hope will become more “wholly Christ’s” by belonging to Mary?

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Remind me to ask for Mary’s powerful intercession in my times of need.*

Day 26

Mary’s Retreat (Day Three)

- 1. At the close of yesterday’s retreat with Mary, we prayed for the Holy Spirit to remind us to ask for Mary’s powerful intercession. How do you remind yourself to run an errand, call someone, or mail a letter? Whom do you ask to help you to remember ordinary, daily things? Why choose those people or things like calendars, alarms, lists to remind us? Why do you need to ask the Holy Spirit to remind you to ask for Mary’s help?

- 2. According to John Paul II, the “new motherhood” of Mary “came to definitive maturity” at the foot of the Cross, at that moment when she burns with love for all those for whom Jesus suffered and died. What will be the grace that you need — what needs to be conquered in you — for you to walk with Mary to Calvary and love more fully all the souls that Jesus wants to save as he suffers? When will you ask for this grace? Now? On Consecration Day?

3. Christ appeared to his disciples after his Resurrection, and he most certainly appeared to his Mother as well. He explained the Scriptures to his disciples on the way to Emmaus, broke bread with them, and promised the Holy Spirit to remind the Apostles of all that he taught them. What personal message might he have had for his Mother in his unrecorded appearances to her, particularly about her role in his Church? Place yourself there with Jesus and Mary. Ponder how the message he gives her might, at least in part, be intended as well for those who are preparing to consecrate themselves to her. What message from the risen Christ does Mary want to share with you personally?

4. Mary’s motherly mediation between her Son and you personally is especially present when you participate in the Sacraments, such as Reconciliation and the Eucharist. How will you invoke Mary’s help and ask for her special motherly mediation in your life when you celebrate these two sacraments?¹³

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Thank you for the gift of my loving Mother, Mary.*

Day 27

Marian Entrustment (Part One)

1. Where does Jesus ask us to take Mary in? You live in a physical house that has certain characteristics. You have an inner “house” of heart and soul and prayer. And you have family relationships that are a sort of “house” in which you live. How will Mary enter more deeply into these houses through your upcoming consecration? By your consecration, you’re inviting her to move into all those places.

Handwriting lines for response to question 1.

2. Mary brings us to intimate communion with Jesus. She brings us into the “hidden life” she lived in Nazareth with Jesus and Joseph. What did they talk about? How did they pray? What would you want to ask Joseph or Mary about how Jesus grew up, what made him laugh, what games he played, what chores he did? What insights might the answers give you into how you should act, work, and pray?

Handwriting lines for response to question 2.

3. How do we take Mary into the physical house where we live? Does she affect the décor of your home, how you entertain guests? Does she affect how you dress, speak, and act toward others in your home? Write some new expectations for your home now that Mary lives there.

Horizontal lines for writing.

4. In entrusting John to Mary, Jesus expected Mary to “mother” John as well as to entrust herself to his care and love. How will Mary mother you? She will be trusting you to care for her — what will you do to care for her?

Horizontal lines for writing.

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Prepare me to entrust myself completely to Mary so she can bring me closer to Christ.

Day 28

Marian Entrustment (Part Two)

- 1. In the same homily that's cited on pages 102-104 in *33 Days to Morning Glory*, Pope John Paul II says:

... “[H]e took her to his own home” can be taken in the literal sense as referring to the place where he lived. Mary’s motherhood in our regard is manifested in a particular way in the places where she meets us: ... places in which a special presence of the Mother is felt. There are many such dwelling places. They are of all kinds: from a special corner in the home or little wayside shrines adorned with an image of the Mother of God

Have you thought about dedicating a small corner of your home or your garden to Mary? Where would it be? Which is your favorite statue or image depicting Mary? How does it express her mercy and God’s mercy?

- 2. “Divine Love placing a limit on evil” is how Pope John Paul II defines the mercy of God. Everyone carries around past and present evils in his life, from physical limits to mental worries to sins of flesh and spirit. What limits on those evils (and the accompanying hope) do you recognize as Divine Mercy in your life?

3. John Paul II identifies the pierced Heart of Christ as the source of merciful love. At the foot of the Cross, Mary was the nearest person to His Heart. Ask her to bring you to that place at the foot of the Cross where she stood and accepted her motherhood of you. Ask for her support as you climb there, and thank her in a short prayer. If you wish, you may write that prayer here:

4. “Jesus,” Pope John Paul II says, “consecrated himself for all mankind: ‘And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.’” You are about to unite yourself to that consecration through your consecration to Jesus through Mary. Ask her to enlighten you about your participation in Jesus’ mediation between God and the world. What specific questions do you have about your prayer life, your suffering, your heart and its readiness to love others?

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Draw me in, with, and through Mary to the Fountain of Mercy.

SMALL-GROUP SESSION OUTLINE

~ St. John Paul II ~

A. Prayer

1. + *Magnificat*

2. *Come, Holy Spirit, and be with us. We wish to contemplate the mysteries of Jesus and Mary in our lives as we prepare for consecration to Jesus through Mary. Amen. +*

B. Personal Response

[Selections from the Pondering, Prayerful Response of Week 4. The following questions are only suggestions. Do not feel as though you have to answer every question during the small group discussion time.]

1. The first apparition at Fatima and the shooting of Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Square both occurred on May 13th at 5 p.m. John Paul II did not consider this a coincidence. What is a coincidence anyway? Have you experienced any coincidences in your life? Do you believe, as John Paul II did, that "in the designs of Providence, there are no mere coincidences"? If so, what do you believe God is saying through such "God-incidences" in your life? If not, what explanation do you give to others of the two instances being similar in time, circumstances, or outcome?
2. We read that Pope John Paul II solemnly entrusted the whole world to Mary's Immaculate Heart in 1984 and that the beginning of the collapse of communism in Europe outwardly began five years later. We also read that the Pope solemnly entrusted the world to Divine Mercy in 2002, saying that Divine Mercy would prepare the world for the Lord's final coming. (Of course, he gave no indication of when this will happen.) Why is consecration/entrustment so important to John Paul II? How is your consecration to Mary related to the consecration of the world to Mary and Divine Mercy? How does your trust in Mary reflect your trust in the love and mercy of Jesus?
3. Mary's motherly attentiveness to the details of the couple being married at Cana begins Jesus' public life with the miracle of the water become wine. The lack of wine has been described as a symbol of the lack of joy in human life without God's grace. What human needs might Mary be attentive to and then bring to Jesus for his miraculous intervention if she were invited to your home today?
4. Our recourse to Mary as Mother and Mediatrix will be made easier and more secure in our personal consecration to Jesus through her, which is only days away now. What signs have you had in prayer or insights or events that may have confirmed for you that God desires your consecration to Jesus through Mary?
5. Christ appeared to his disciples after his Resurrection, and he most certainly appeared to his Mother as well. He explained the Scriptures to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, broke bread with them, and promised the Holy Spirit to remind the Apostles of all that

he taught them. What personal message might he have had for his Mother in his unrecorded appearances to her, particularly about her role in his Church? Place yourself there with Jesus and Mary. Ponder how the message he gives her might, at least in part, be intended as well for those who are consecrated to her. In that light, with Jesus present, what might Mary share with you?

6. Where does Jesus ask us to take Mary in? You live in a physical house that has certain characteristics. You have an inner “house” of heart and soul and prayer. And you have family relationships that are a sort of “house” in which you live. How will Mary enter more deeply into these houses through your upcoming consecration? By your consecration, you’re inviting her to move into all those places.
7. “Divine Love placing a limit on evil” is how Pope John Paul II defines the mercy of God. Everyone carries around past and present evils in his life, from physical limits to mental worries to sins of flesh and spirit. What limits on those evils (and the accompanying hope) do you recognize as Divine Mercy in your life?

Generous Additional Response (if there’s time):

Which of the seven days or pondering, prayerful responses most interested you, most inspired your prayer, or moved you to meditation?

C. Petition

[Leader] + Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

[Group response] Have mercy on us and on the whole world!

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Fill my heart with praise to God for giving Mary as my spiritual mother.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Help me to be faithful to heart-pondering prayer, as was Mary.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Remind me to ask for Mary’s powerful intercession in my times of need.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Thank you for the gift of my loving Mother, Mary.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Prepare me to entrust myself completely to Mary so she can bring me closer to Christ.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

Draw me in, with, and through Mary to the Fountain of Mercy.

Individual petitions...

Response: Come, Holy Spirit, and help me. +

SESSION 5 — DVD NOTES

St. John Paul II**A. The Story Starts in Poland**

1. In 1683: Poland Rescues Vienna

2. In 1920: Miracle on the Vistula

3. In 1989: The Fall of Communism

B. The Message of Divine Mercy

1. *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy)

2. St. John Paul II's Promotion of St. Faustina and the message of Divine Mercy

C. It Gets Even Better with Mary

Our Lady of Fatima

Notes



FIVE FINAL DAYS
Synthesis and Review

After these five final days, your 33 days of preparation will be complete, and you will consecrate yourself totally to Jesus through Mary. The dawn of that day will be joyous and a new beginning for your spiritual life. In a more special way, Mary will become your spiritual mother and the quickest, easiest, and surest way to Jesus Christ, her Son.

Three Reflection Words

During these five final days, there will be no new questions. Instead, you'll have an opportunity to reflect on the three words that summarize the teaching of each of our four Marian giants: St. Louis, St. Maximilian, Blessed Mother Teresa, and St. John Paul II. Then, on the final day, you'll have the chance to reflect on the words of the prayer you will use in making your consecration. (See the corresponding pages in *33 Days to Morning Glory*.) Space is provided to record your thoughts and prayers and the fruits of your pondering, and yes, even your final few questions, if you have any.

Prayer for the First Four Days: The “Three Words” Rosary

To help you ponder the three words for each saint, you might want to try meditating on each of the three words as a decade of the Rosary. Here's how it works:

1. Say the Word — for instance, the first word for St. Louis de Montfort is “Passion.”
2. Then pray:
Our Father
Hail Mary (10x)
Glory Be
O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy
3. Say the next word, etc.

[Note: While saying the Hail Marys, meditate on how the word summarizes the teaching of the given saint or blessed. Also, you don't have to limit the meditation to just one decade for each word. You could do an entire “Rosary” just meditating on one word.]

Day 29

St. Louis de Montfort

Words to Ponder:

1. Passion

2. Baptism

3. Gift

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Closing Prayer:

St. Louis de Montfort.

Pray for us.

Day 30

St. Maximilian Kolbe

Words to Ponder:

1. Mystery

2. Militia

3. Love

Closing Prayer:

St. Maximilian Kolbe.

Pray for us.

Day 31

Blessed Mother Teresa

Words to Ponder:

1. Thirst

2. Heart

3. Covenant

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Closing Prayer:

Blessed Mother Teresa.

Pray for us.

Day 32

St. John Paul II

Words to Ponder:

1. Mother

2. Entrust-ation

3. Mercy

Closing Prayer:

St. John Paul II.

Pray for us.

Day 33

Putting It All Together

Words to Ponder:

Reflect on the words of the Morning Glory Consecration Prayer (page 137 in *33 Days to Morning Glory*), or one from one of the saints or blessed (pages 137-138), or even write your own prayer of consecration. Savor the words. Ponder their meaning in your heart. Ask Mary to prepare you for the consecration. Write down your thoughts on this last full day of preparation.

SMALL-GROUP SESSION OUTLINE

~ Synthesis and Review; A Glorious New Morning ~

A. Prayer

1. + *Litany of Loreto* (see pages 142-144 in *33 Days to Morning Glory*)
2. *Come, Holy Spirit, and be with us. Help us to see in a single gaze of faith all we've learned about Marian consecration to Jesus, and prepare our hearts to live out our consecration to the full. Amen. +*

B. Personal Response

Which of the five final days of reflection left you feeling the most prepared for the day of Consecration and Morning Glory?

You pondered three “summary words” on the first four days and then the words of the consecration prayer on the last day. Which word or words were the most meaningful to you and why?

[For groups that make their consecration after this final meeting:] What decisions and plans have you made for Consecration Day (people invited, food prepared, activities planned)? What are you feeling as Consecration Day nears?

[For groups that have just made their Consecration:] Share your experience of the Consecration Day

C. Petition

[Leader] + Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

[Group response] Help us to give our all to Jesus through Mary on Consecration Day!

St. Louis de Montfort...

Pray for us.

St. Maximilian Kolbe...

Pray for us.

Blessed Mother Teresa...

Pray for us.

St. John Paul II...

Pray for us.

Individual petitions...

Response: Come, Holy Spirit, and help me. +

SESSION 6 — DVD NOTES

Living Your Consecration**A. Renew**

1. Daily: Pray your consecration prayer, or at least a shortened form of it, daily.

2. Yearly: Renew your consecration every year on the same day.

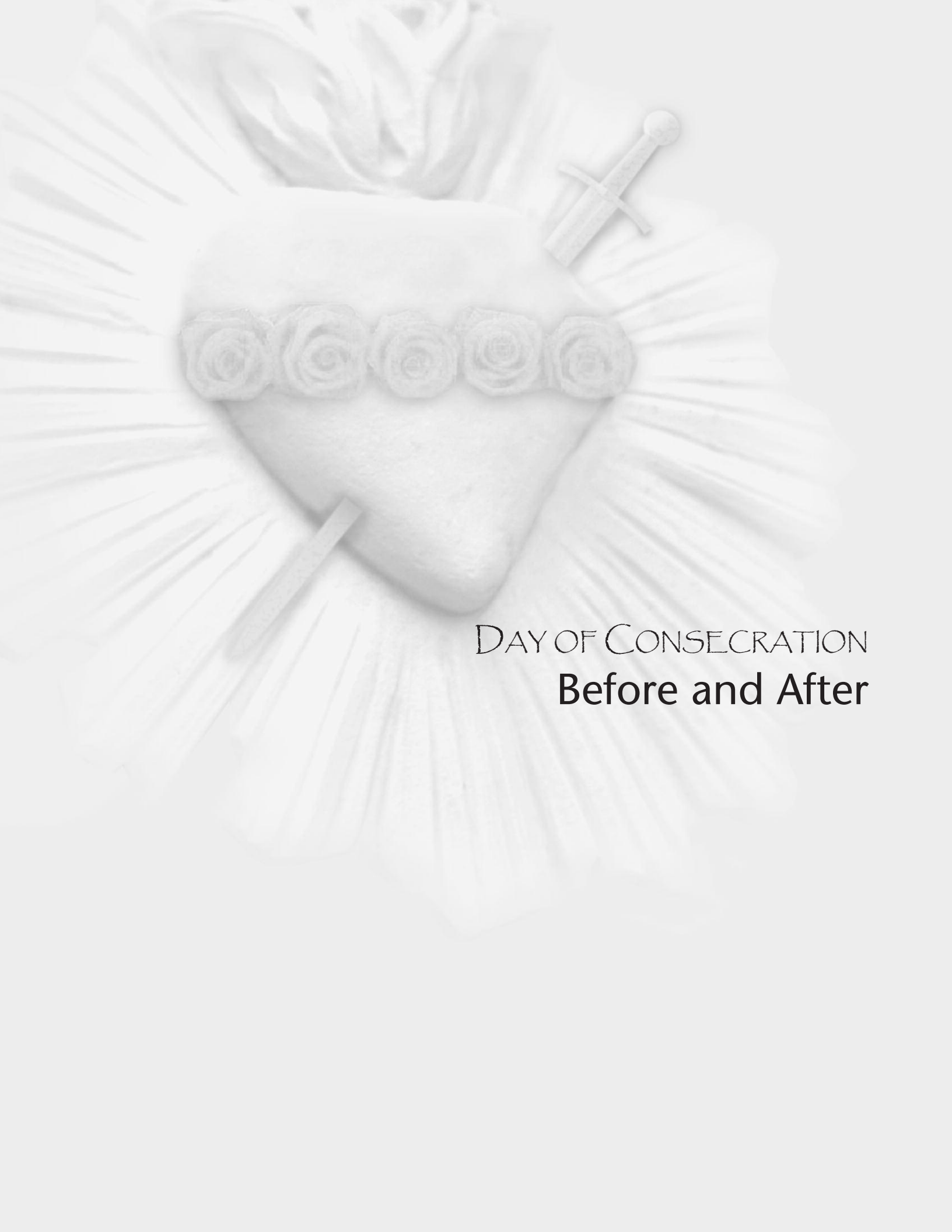
B. Relationship

Marian consecration is about establishing a deeper relationship with Mary, and like all relationships, it takes work, especially the work of communication (prayer).

C. Rosary

Three Reasons to Pray the Rosary

Notes



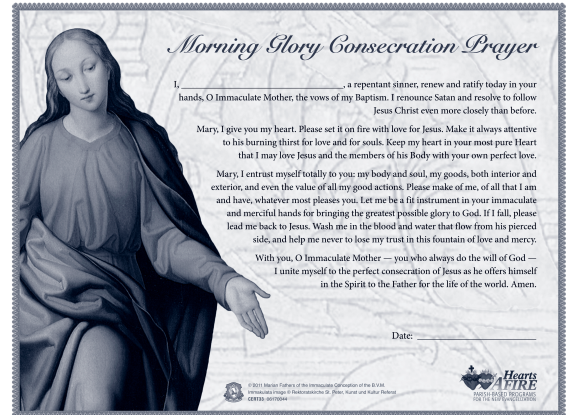
DAY OF CONSECRATION
Before and After

First, make sure you read pages 123-134 in your consecration book, 33 Days to Morning Glory, which includes the topics “before” and “after” the consecration. This present section is not meant to be a substitute for those pages; rather, it’s meant to supplement the treatment in your consecration book with information that will be helpful to those making the consecration in groups.

Before Consecration

CEREMONY AND CELEBRATION. Because your day of consecration is a significant day in your life, and because you’re making it in a group, we recommend that you celebrate it with a certain degree of solemnity. In other words, you might want to ask your pastor if your group can have a special ceremony (preferably after a Mass) during which all the members of the group will recite the consecration prayer individually in the church. Also, after the consecration ceremony, you might want to have a gathering where you’ll share a meal or time together in celebration. This could be an occasion for inviting friends and family. But for it to work, you’ll have to plan ahead, and that’s why we’re mentioning it in the “before” section. Ideas for such a celebration can be found on our website AllHeartsAfire.org.

HANDWRITTEN PRAYER AND CERTIFICATE. Many people like to write out their consecration prayer and then sign it on the day of their consecration. Others like to print up a decorated consecration prayer to sign by hand. Why not do both? You can keep the handwritten version in a safe place and sign it again each year. In addition, perhaps you can frame the certificate version and put it up on the wall to remind you of your consecration day. You can purchase or print our beautiful, full-color certificate from our website, AllHeartsAfire.org. Perhaps someone from your group can order or print several copies of the certificate before the ceremony so everyone can have one.



MIRACULOUS MEDALS AND SCAPULARS. As a special sign of seeking Mary’s maternal protection and help, it might be encouraging for everyone in the group (who hasn’t done so yet), on their consecration day, to be invested in a brown or blue scapular. This would need to be done by the priest, so it would take some planning beforehand. Also, it would be a source of encouragement if everyone (who hasn’t done so yet) could get a miraculous medal on the day of their consecration. For more information on scapulars and miraculous medals, visit the website.

After Consecration

CHJ AND STAGE TWO. After the consecration preparation is over, it's very likely that your group will want to get together again. Well, why not begin the next group retreat program, *Consoling the Heart of Jesus (CHJ)*? This retreat is the second part of Stage One of the Hearts Afire Program. And then you and your group can proceed to Stage Two of the Hearts Afire Program: Wisdom & Works of Mercy. It features The 'One Thing' Is Three Group Study and concludes with a program for works of mercy based on the book *'You Did It to Me.'* To learn more, visit AllHeartsAfire.org.

EXPAND YOUR GROUP EXPERIENCE. You can expand your experience of group consecration beyond your own small group. Do this by frequently visiting the AllHeartsAfire.org website. The website is not just a resource for answering your questions, it's also a place to share about your experience of living the consecration and to read what others are saying.

ENDNOTES

¹ A “novena” is typically a prayer or a series of prayers, offered for nine consecutive days, with a specific intention. It originated in the nine days of prayer by the disciples and Mary between the Ascension of Christ to the Father and Pentecost (the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples and Mary in the Upper Room).

² See the following link for a longer explanation of this painting:
campus.udayton.edu/mary/gallery/artists/angelus.html.

³ See pages 133-134 of *33 Days to Morning Glory* for suggestions on further reading after your consecration.

⁴ CCC, 221, “... God’s very being is love. God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he ... destined us to share in that exchange.”

⁵ Regarding the relationship of Mary with the Holy Spirit, St. John Paul II states in *Redemptoris Mater*, 26:

We know that at the beginning of this journey Mary is present. We see her in the midst of the Apostles in the Upper Room, “prayerfully imploring the gift of the Spirit.” In a sense her journey of faith is longer. The Holy Spirit had already come down upon her, and she became his faithful spouse at the Annunciation, welcoming the Word of the true God, offering “the full submission of intellect and will ... and freely assenting to the truth revealed by him,” indeed abandoning herself totally to God through “the obedience of faith,” whereby she replied to the angel: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

⁶ See CCC, 2742-2745, for an understanding of how love leads to prayer and opens our hearts to God’s grace.

⁷ See page 169 in *33 Days to Morning Glory* for more information on the miraculous medal and St. Catherine.

⁸ CCC, 2677, “... By entrusting ourselves to [Mary’s] ... prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: ‘Thy will be done.’”

⁹ See CCC, 618, which describes our participation in Christ’s sacrifice.

¹⁰ CCC, 725, “... through Mary, the Holy Spirit beings to bring men ... into communion with Christ. And the humble are always the first to accept him: shepherds, magi, Simeon and Anna, the bride and groom at Cana, and the first disciples.”

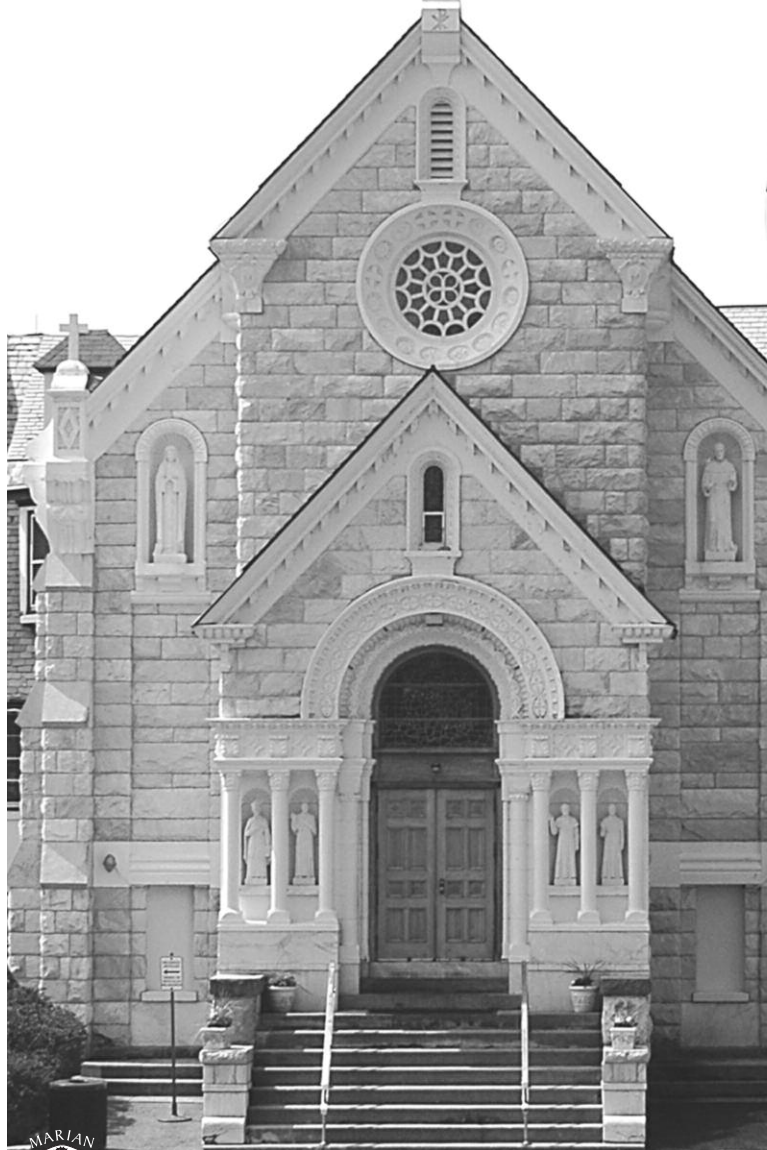
¹¹ Our Lady’s First Saturday requests and promises are explained in endnote 131 on page 194 in *33 Days to Morning Glory*.

¹² See CCC, 2618, which teaches about Mary’s prayer and intercession.

¹³ Saint Louis de Montfort recommends asking Mary to come into our hearts and to help us receive the Lord worthily when we go to receive him in Holy Communion. (See *True Devotion to Mary*, nn. 266-273.)

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STOCKBRIDGE, MA



Marian Press, the publishing apostolate of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M., has published and distributed millions of religious books, magazines, and pamphlets that teach, encourage, and edify Catholics around the world. Our publications promote and support the ministry and spirituality of the Marians worldwide. Loyal to the Holy Father and to the teachings of the Catholic Church, the Marians fulfill their special mission by:

- Fostering devotion to Mary, the Immaculate Conception.
- Promoting The Divine Mercy message and devotion.
- Offering assistance to the dying and the deceased, especially the victims of war and disease.
- Promoting Christian knowledge, administering parishes, shrines, and conducting missions.

Based in Stockbridge, Mass., Marian Press is known as the publisher of the *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska*, and the Marians are the leading authorities on The Divine Mercy message and devotion.

Stockbridge is also the home of the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy, the Association of Marian Helpers, and a destination for thousands of pilgrims each year.

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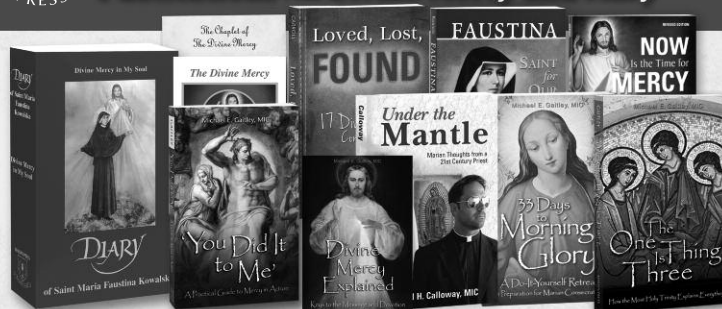
To learn more about the Marians, their spirituality, publications or ministries, visit marian.org or thedivinemercy.org, the Marians' website that is devoted exclusively to Divine Mercy.

To the left is a view of the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Mass. The Shrine, built in the 1950s, was declared a National Shrine by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on March 20, 1996.

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Your Trustworthy Resource for Publications on Divine Mercy and Mary



We welcome you to
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Hearts Afire aims to set hearts on fire with the love of God. The first part of Stage One — 33 Days to Morning Glory — prepares you to consecrate yourself to Jesus through Mary by means of a 33-day group retreat.

To help you with your retreat, we've posted many resources and tips on our website AllHeartsAfire.org:

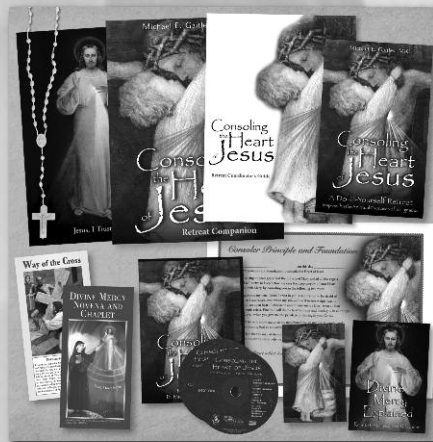
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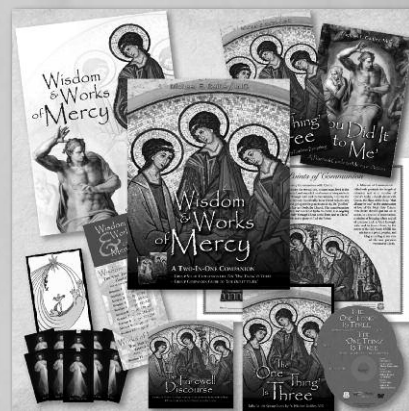
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 CONSOLING THE HEART OF JESUS
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**THEN:
 STAGE TWO: WISDOM AND
 WORKS OF MERCY GROUP STUDY**



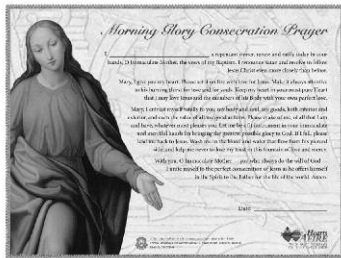
Wisdom and Works of Mercy Coordinator Kit with the study book, *The 'One Thing' Is Three*.



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CELEBRATE YOUR CONSECRATION!

There are many ways to celebrate your consecration day. Be invested in a scapular if you haven't already, give roses to Mary, or purchase a chaplet or rosary. You can even purchase more Morning Glory Consecration Certificates if you want one to sign and renew yearly and another to hang in your home. However you decide to make your consecration day memorable, may it be truly blessed. And let us know what your group did to celebrate — we'd appreciate hearing from you!



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Praise for the 33 Days to Morning Glory Retreat Program

Discover what pastors and parishioners are saying about this new small-group parish program brought to you by Hearts Afire: Parish-based Programs from the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception.

I don't think there's anything greater that anyone could do than to consecrate oneself to Jesus through Our Blessed Mother, Mary. Two weeks after members of our parish consecrated themselves to Our Lady, perpetual Adoration started, daily Mass attendance is up, and people are telling me stories of all the graces they have received.

— **FR. JEREMY LEATHERBY**

Pastor of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Sacramento, California

I'm so grateful I was asked to do this program. It has been a beautiful and powerful moment of grace for me.

— **FR. STEVEN HOFFMAN**

Pastor of St. Luke's Parish, Clearwater, Minnesota

I love the meditations in the *33 Days to Morning Glory* book and *Retreat Companion*, especially the section on Mother Teresa.

— **MARC CARDARONELLA**

Diocesan Director of Evangelization, Peoria Diocese, Illinois

All of those involved in this HAPP Program are truly being moved to a new depth of relationship with their spiritual mother, Mary. She is becoming a real, tangible, and powerful reality in our prayer lives.

— **PATTI JANNUZZI**

Director of the New Evangelization Office, Immaculate Conception Parish, Somerville, New Jersey

This Hearts Afire program brought such joy to everyone at the meeting last night and we hope other parishes experience the same joy.

— **KATHY MCLEAN**

St. Luke's Parish, Clearwater, Minnesota

More than halfway through the 33-day preparation retreat, I already see so many fruits in my life. I am more aware of the spiritual blessings and graces I am receiving every day. I am trying to develop more spiritual sensitivity and the "attitude of gratitude" that was in our reading today. More than anything, I feel I am growing closer to Our Blessed Mother, which is a tremendous gift and blessing.

— **MARIA L. SYLVESTER**

St. Andrew's Parish, Columbus, Ohio



Carol R. Younger, Ed.D., is an adjunct professor in school counseling and psychology, a mother of three grown children, and a grandmother of six. She has taught the Catholic faith, Scripture, and catechesis at the college level, in both parish and diocesan teen and adult groups. Her writing and small-group approach are rooted in the Catholic spiritual tradition. She lives with her husband, Herb, on the West Coast.



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