THE DAILY BREAD

The Acts of the Apostles



Marian Consecration

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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The Everyday Apostle

THE DAILY BREAD

Our Lady

Marian Consecration

A 33-Day Guide to Giving Yourself to Jesus Through Mary

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A Daily Bread Formation Book

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INTRODUCTION

The Total Gift

There is a particular kind of act that only a certain kind of man is capable of: the total gift of himself. Most men give partially. They give their effort to their work, their affection to their family, some of their time to God, holding back always a reserved core, a self they keep for themselves, a territory over which they remain sole sovereign. And there is a spiritual practice, ancient and powerful, that consists precisely in the surrender of that reserved core, the giving of the whole self, holding nothing back, to God, through the hands of his Mother. It is called Marian consecration, or total consecration to Jesus through Mary, and it is one of the most decisive acts a man can make in the spiritual life.

The phrase can sound strange, even off-putting, to a man who has not encountered it. Consecration to Mary? Does that not put Mary in the place of God, giving to her a total self-surrender that belongs to him alone? This misunderstanding stops many men before they begin, and it must be cleared away at the outset, because the reality is the opposite of what the phrase seems to suggest. Marian consecration is not the giving of oneself to Mary instead of to God. It is the giving of oneself totally to Jesus Christ, through Mary, entrusting the whole gift to her hands precisely because she, more perfectly than anyone, will bring it to her Son. It is consecration to Jesus, made through Mary, and its whole aim, its only aim, is Jesus. Mary keeps nothing for herself; she exists entirely to bring souls to Christ, and to consecrate oneself to Jesus through her is to take the surest, most direct road to him.

Do whatever he tells you. — John 2:5

Those are Mary's words at the wedding at Cana, her last recorded words in the Gospels, and they are the whole of her message: not look at me, but do what he says, go to him. This is what Marian consecration is: a taking of Mary's hand so that she may lead a man, as only she can, to her Son, to whom she is always pointing. The great apostle of this devotion, Saint Louis de Montfort, who wrote the classic work on it centuries ago, taught that to Jesus through Mary is the surest and shortest path to holiness, and a later saint, Pope John Paul II, took as his own motto the words Totus Tuus, totally yours, expressing this very consecration, and credited it with shaping his entire life and pontificate. This is not a fringe devotion; it is a path walked by some of the greatest saints, and it is available to any man ready to make the total gift.

This book is a guide to making that consecration, structured around the traditional thirty-three days of preparation. We will look first at what consecration actually is and why it works, clearing away the misunderstandings. We will consider why a man in particular might make this total gift, and what it does in him. Then we will walk through the thirty-three days, understanding the shape of the preparation and how to make it, so that at the end a man may consecrate himself, entirely, to Jesus through Mary, and begin to live the consecrated life that follows.

The aim is that you make the total gift of yourself to Jesus through Mary, and discover, as the saints discovered, that in giving Mary everything, you lose nothing and gain Christ, who is everything.

A word to the man who feels the resistance rising already at the idea of a total gift. That resistance is worth naming, because it points to exactly what the consecration addresses. Most men resist total surrender because they fear losing themselves, losing control, losing the reserved core over which they remain master. The whole instinct of a man is to keep something back, to retain sovereignty, to remain, in the last analysis, his own. And the consecration asks precisely for that reserved core, the last territory, the thing a man most wants to keep. This is why it is difficult, and why it is powerful. But here is the paradox at the heart of the Gospel, which the consecration enacts: the self a man clings to, he loses, and the self he surrenders to God, he receives back transformed. The reserved core, kept, becomes a prison; surrendered, it becomes the very place where Christ takes up residence. A man does not lose himself in the total gift; he finds his true self, the self he was made to be, which he could never reach as long as he clung to the false sovereignty of keeping something back. The resistance a man feels is the flesh defending a sovereignty that was always an illusion. The consecration invites him to surrender it, and to discover, on the far side, a freedom and a self he never had while he was still his own.

CHAPTER ONE

What Consecration Actually Is

To Jesus, Through Mary

Everything depends on understanding correctly what Marian consecration is, because the misunderstandings are exactly what keep men away, and clearing them reveals a devotion that is profoundly Christ-centered and entirely sound.

Consecration Belongs to God

To consecrate means to set apart for God, to dedicate wholly to him. In its deepest sense, consecration is always to God; a man consecrates himself to God, giving himself entirely to his Creator and Lord. Marian consecration does not change this. The total self-gift of Marian consecration is, in the end, a gift to God, a consecration to Jesus Christ, in whom alone a man finds his end and his salvation. The Marian dimension is not a rival to this but a means of it: a man consecrates himself to Jesus, and he does so through Mary, entrusting the gift to her so that she may perfect it and present it to her Son. The destination is always Christ. Mary is the road, the surest road, but Christ is the end, and Marian consecration never loses sight of this, for Mary herself never does.

For to me to live is Christ. — Philippians 1:21

Why Through Mary

But why through Mary at all? Why not simply consecrate oneself to Christ directly, without the Marian mediation? The answer lies in who Mary is and the role God himself gave her. God chose to give the world his Son through Mary; the Incarnation itself came to us through her yes, her womb, her hands. Christ came to us through Mary the first time, and the tradition of this devotion holds that he delights to come to us through her still, that the way God chose to give us Christ is the way he wishes us to go to Christ in return, through the same Mother. Mary is, moreover, the perfect disciple, the one who received Christ most fully and was most perfectly conformed to him, and so she is the surest guide to him, the one most able to form a soul into the likeness of her Son. To go to Jesus through Mary is not to add an unnecessary step but to take the road God himself established, the road of the Incarnation, entrusting oneself to the Mother who brought Christ into the world and who longs to bring each soul to him. She is the shortest path precisely because she is the most perfect, holding nothing back, wholly transparent to Christ, so that a soul entrusted to her is carried straight and sure to him.

The Total Self-Gift

What distinguishes this consecration from lesser Marian devotions is its totality. It is not merely praying to Mary, or honoring her, or wearing her medal, good as these are. It is the total gift of oneself, everything, one's body and soul, one's interior and exterior goods, one's past merits and future actions, the whole of oneself and all one has, given entirely to Jesus through Mary, holding nothing back. De Montfort described it as giving Mary everything, so completely that a man keeps nothing for himself, trusting her to use it all for the glory of her Son and the good of his soul. This totality is what gives the consecration its power. It is the surrender of the reserved core, the handing over of the

last territory a man keeps for himself, the complete and unconditional gift. And in making it, a man does not lose himself but finds himself, for in giving everything to Mary he gives everything to Christ, and in Christ he receives back his true self, transformed. The total gift is the heart of the consecration, and it is why the practice is so decisive: it asks for everything, and to everything it gives Christ.

The Slavery of Love

De Montfort used a startling phrase for this total gift that can trouble the modern ear and deserves explanation, because rightly understood it captures something the softer language misses. He called the consecration a holy slavery of love, a total belonging to Jesus through Mary so complete that it exceeds even the ordinary bonds of devotion. The word slavery jars, and it is meant to, but its sense is precise: it names a belonging so total that a man holds nothing back, gives Mary not merely his service but his very self, belongs to her, for Jesus, without reserve. This is not the slavery of coercion, which degrades, but the slavery of love, which is freely chosen and which, paradoxically, sets a man free, the way a man freely binds himself to his wife in a covenant that both binds and liberates. The total belonging de Montfort describes is the belonging of love at its most complete, a man giving himself away so entirely that he becomes, in the language of love, wholly another's, and finding in that total self-gift not degradation but the highest freedom, the freedom of one who has given all and been received. The jarring phrase names a beautiful reality: a belonging to Christ, through Mary, so total that nothing is kept back, freely chosen out of love, and liberating precisely because it is total.

CHAPTER TWO

A Devotion for Men

Why Make the Total Gift

Some men hesitate at Marian consecration not only from theological confusion but from a vague sense that it is somehow not for them, too tender, too devotional, a piety better suited to others. This is worth addressing directly, because rightly understood, the total consecration is among the most fitting acts a man can make, and some of the strongest men in the history of the Church have made it.

The Decisiveness of the Total Gift

There is something profoundly fitting to a man in the totality of this consecration. A man is made for the decisive, total act, the complete commitment, the burning of the ships,

the giving of himself entirely to a cause worth everything. Half-measures and hedged commitments are, in the end, unworthy of a man, and something in him knows it. Marian consecration is the total commitment applied to the one thing that most deserves it, the whole self given entirely to Christ. It is not a soft or tender half-devotion; it is the most complete and decisive spiritual act available to a man, the total gift of the whole self, holding nothing in reserve. Far from being unmanly, it is the supremely manly act in the spiritual life: the complete, unconditional, total commitment of a man to his Lord, made through the Mother his Lord gave him. The man who has made this consecration has done, in the spiritual life, exactly what a man is made to do, given everything, held nothing back, committed himself totally.

Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. — Matthew 16:25

A Mother's Formation

There is also, for a man, a particular grace in being formed by Mary. The spiritual life is a matter of being conformed to Christ, made like him, and this transformation is not something a man accomplishes by his own effort but something worked in him, and Mary is uniquely suited to work it. She formed Christ himself in her womb and raised him in her home; she knows, as no one else does, how to form a soul into the likeness of her Son. To consecrate oneself to Jesus through Mary is to entrust oneself to this formation, to place oneself in the hands of the Mother who will shape a man, patiently and surely, into the image of Christ. For a man serious about growing into the likeness of his Lord, there is no surer means than to give himself to the Mother who formed the Lord himself, and who longs to form each of her children into him. The consecrated man is a man being shaped by Mary into Christ, which is exactly the transformation the whole spiritual life aims at, accomplished by the surest possible means.

Strength in the Battle

And there is, for the man engaged in the spiritual battle, a particular strength in Marian consecration, connecting to the theme running through the spiritual warfare books in this library. From the beginning, in the promise in the garden, God set enmity between the woman and the serpent, and promised that her offspring would crush the serpent's head. Mary is, in the Church's understanding, a particular terror to the enemy, her heel poised over his head, her intercession a powerful force in the spiritual combat. The man consecrated to Jesus through Mary fights under her protection, shielded by the Mother whom the enemy cannot overcome, strengthened by her powerful intercession. There is nothing unmanly about a soldier accepting the protection of the most powerful ally available to him, and in the spiritual battle Mary is exactly that. The consecrated man

does not fight alone; he fights as a son under the mantle of the Mother whom God set against the serpent from the beginning, and this is a source of real strength in the combat.

But Isn't This Too Much?

The honest objection remains for some men: even granting that consecration is finally to Christ, does all this attention to Mary not still risk giving her too large a place, crowding out the direct relationship with Christ that should be central? The answer, drawn from the experience of the saints who have made this consecration, is that the opposite happens. Far from crowding out Christ, genuine Marian consecration intensifies a man's relationship with Christ, because Mary's entire work is to bring souls to her Son, and a soul entrusted to her is carried more surely and more deeply to Christ than it could go on its own. The saints who were most consecrated to Mary were not less devoted to Christ but more; their Marian consecration was the very means by which they reached a deeper union with Christ than they could otherwise have attained. This is Mary's nature: she never keeps a soul for herself, never draws attention to herself, always and only leads to her Son. So the fear that consecration to Mary diminishes Christ is exactly backward; the consecration exists to magnify Christ in a soul, and it does, through the Mother whose whole being points to him. A man who consecrates himself to Jesus through Mary will find, not that Mary has taken Christ's place, but that Christ has become greater in his life than ever before, brought nearer by the Mother who lives only to bring souls to him.

CHAPTER THREE

The Thirty-Three Days

The Shape of the Preparation

The traditional way of making the consecration is through thirty-three days of preparation, culminating in the act of consecration itself on the thirty-fourth day. Understanding why it takes this shape, and what happens across the days, prepares a man to make the journey well.

Why Thirty-Three Days

The thirty-three days correspond to the thirty-three years of the earthly life of Christ, so that the preparation is a kind of walking through the whole life of the Lord to whom a man is about to give himself entirely. The consecration is traditionally made on a Marian feast day, so a man counts back thirty-three days from the feast on which he wishes to

consecrate himself and begins his preparation then, arriving at the feast ready to make the total gift. This structure, thirty-three days of preparation ending in consecration on a feast of Our Lady, gives the whole thing a shape and a destination, a journey with a clear beginning and a clear culmination, so that the consecration is not made casually or on impulse but as the fruit of a real preparation of the soul.

Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight. — Matthew 3:3

The Movement of the Preparation

The classic method of preparation, established by de Montfort, moves through a deliberate sequence, and though several good methods of preparation exist today, they share this basic movement: a stripping away of what is opposed to God, followed by a growing knowledge of self, of Mary, and finally of Christ, into whose likeness the whole journey leads. The preparation is not merely the passing of days but a real interior movement, an emptying and a filling, a turning away from the spirit of the world and a growing into the knowledge and love of God. Here is the traditional shape of the journey.

The First Days: Emptying, *A turning away from the spirit of the world, renouncing what is opposed to God, emptying oneself to make room for what is to come.*

Knowledge of Self, *Coming to know oneself truly, one's sinfulness and need, one's nothingness before God, in humility.*

Knowledge of Mary, *Coming to know the Mother to whom one is entrusting oneself, her role, her virtues, her love.*

Knowledge of Jesus Christ, *Coming to know more deeply the Lord to whom the whole gift is finally made, into whose likeness Mary forms us.*

This movement, from emptying, through knowledge of self, to knowledge of Mary, to knowledge of Christ, carries a man from where he begins, entangled in the world and unaware of himself, to where the consecration requires him to be, humbled, knowing his need, entrusting himself to Mary, and giving himself wholly to Christ. The days are not filler; they are the road by which a man is prepared, interiorly, to make the total gift with understanding and depth rather than as an empty gesture.

Why the Order Matters

The order of the phases is not arbitrary; each prepares for the next. The emptying comes first because a man cannot receive what is new until he has let go of what fills him, and the spirit of the world, the values and attachments and self-reliance a man absorbs

without noticing, must be renounced to make room for God. The knowledge of self comes next because humility is the foundation of the whole gift; a man who does not know his own sinfulness and need cannot make a genuine surrender, for he still imagines he can manage on his own, and only the man who has faced his own nothingness before God is ready to give himself away entirely. The knowledge of Mary follows because a man cannot entrust himself to one he does not know, and so he comes to know the Mother to whom he is about to give everything, her role in God's plan, her virtues, her love, growing in the trust that makes the entrusting possible. And the knowledge of Christ comes last because he is the destination, the one to whom the whole gift is finally made, into whose likeness Mary forms us, so that the preparation culminates in a deepened love for the Lord to whom the man is about to consecrate himself entirely. Emptying, humility, trust, love: the four movements build on one another, carrying a man from worldly entanglement to the readiness for total self-gift, which is why the preparation takes the shape it does and why each phase deserves to be entered fully.

CHAPTER FOUR

Making the Preparation

How to Pray the Thirty-Three Days

Knowing the shape of the preparation, a man needs to know how to actually make it, what to do each day across the thirty-three days so that the interior movement really happens and he arrives at the consecration truly prepared.

A Daily Rhythm

The preparation is made through a modest daily rhythm, kept faithfully across the thirty-three days. Each day involves a period of prayer, some reading suited to the phase of the journey, and certain prayers appropriate to the day, together taking perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes. The exact prayers and readings depend on the method a man follows; the traditional de Montfort method prescribes particular prayers and readings for each phase, and several fuller guides available today provide a structured daily program, with a reading, a meditation, and prayers laid out for each of the thirty-three days. A man beginning the consecration does well to obtain one of these structured guides, which walk him through each day, so that he need only follow the daily program faithfully. What matters is the faithful daily keeping of the rhythm, the showing up each day to the prayer and reading and reflection, so that the interior movement of the preparation actually

unfolds across the thirty-three days rather than the consecration being made without real preparation.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. — James 4:8

Entering Each Phase

As a man moves through the phases, he enters into each interiorly, not merely reading about it but letting it work in him. In the days of emptying, he genuinely turns from the spirit of the world, examining where he is entangled in its values and renouncing them. In the knowledge of self, he honestly faces his own sinfulness and need, growing in the humility that is the foundation of the whole gift. In the knowledge of Mary, he comes to know and love the Mother to whom he is entrusting himself, contemplating her role and her virtues. In the knowledge of Christ, he deepens his love for the Lord to whom the total gift is made. This entering-in is the real work of the preparation, and a man makes it well by giving himself genuinely to each phase, letting it accomplish its interior work, rather than merely reading the words and passing the days. The thirty-three days are meant to change a man, to bring him, by their end, to a real readiness for the total gift, and this happens only if he enters each phase and lets it work.

Persevering Through the Days

As with any sustained spiritual practice, a man will meet resistance across the thirty-three days: days when the prayer feels dry, when he is tempted to skip, when the whole thing seems to be accomplishing nothing. Persevere. The preparation works through the faithful keeping of the daily rhythm, whether or not any given day feels fruitful, and the man who keeps the days faithfully, through the dry stretches and the temptations to quit, arrives at the consecration truly prepared, while the man who abandons the rhythm does not. Keep the days, all thirty-three, faithfully, and let the preparation do its slow interior work, trusting that even the dry days are part of the road, until you arrive at the feast and the consecration ready to make the total gift.

Choosing a Method

Several sound methods of preparation exist, and a man beginning the consecration should choose one and follow it. The original is de Montfort's own method, laid out in his classic work on the subject, which prescribes particular prayers and readings across the phases. Over the centuries, other saints and teachers have offered their own approaches, and in more recent times structured day-by-day guides have been produced that walk a man through each of the thirty-three days with a short reading, a meditation, and prayers, some of them drawing on the wisdom of several great Marian saints rather than

de Montfort alone. Any of these sound methods will serve; what matters is choosing one and following it faithfully through the thirty-three days. A man doing this for the first time often finds a structured daily guide easiest, since it removes the burden of assembling the readings and prayers himself and lets him simply follow the program each day. Choose a method with care, ideally on the recommendation of a trustworthy priest or a mature Catholic who has made the consecration, ensuring it is faithful to the Church and to the authentic tradition, and then follow it faithfully to the end. The library can point toward sound guides; the essential thing is to begin with a good method and keep to it across all thirty-three days.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Day of Consecration

Making the Total Gift

At the end of the thirty-three days of preparation comes the day of consecration itself, traditionally a Marian feast, on which a man makes the total gift of himself to Jesus through Mary. This is the culmination toward which the whole preparation has led, and it deserves to be made worthily.

The Act Itself

On the day of consecration, a man makes a formal act of consecration, giving himself totally to Jesus through Mary, usually by praying a prayer of consecration, often one composed by de Montfort or another saint, in which he explicitly hands over his whole self, everything he is and has, to Mary, for Jesus. Ideally the consecration is made in connection with the Mass and the Eucharist, on the Marian feast, so that the total gift is joined to the sacrifice of Christ himself and the reception of Holy Communion, giving it the fullest possible setting. The act itself is simple, the praying of the consecration prayer with sincerity and intention, but it is momentous, for in it a man does what the whole preparation aimed at: he gives himself entirely, holding nothing back, to Jesus through Mary, making the total gift. Many men find it meaningful to make the consecration with real solemnity, before the Blessed Sacrament, on the feast day, marking the decisiveness of what they are doing.

I appeal to you, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. — Romans 12:1

A Real Handing Over

It is important that the act of consecration be a real handing over and not merely the recitation of words. In making the consecration, a man genuinely gives Mary everything, entrusting to her his whole self, his prayers and actions and merits, his body and soul, his past and future, holding nothing back, so that she may use it all for the glory of her Son. This is the total gift the whole preparation has readied him to make, and he makes it as a real act of the will, genuinely surrendering the reserved core, genuinely handing over the last territory, genuinely giving Mary all. When a man makes the consecration this way, as a real and total handing over of himself, it becomes one of the decisive acts of his spiritual life, a genuine turning point, after which he belongs, in a new and total way, to Jesus through Mary.

Renewing It

The consecration, once made, is meant to be renewed, kept alive and deepened over time rather than made once and forgotten. Many who have consecrated themselves renew the consecration regularly, daily in a brief prayer and more fully on Marian feasts or annually, so that the total gift made once is continually reaffirmed and lived. This renewal keeps the consecration from becoming a past event and makes it a present reality, a daily belonging to Jesus through Mary that is renewed each day and deepened over a lifetime. A simple daily prayer of renewal, even a few words entrusting the day to Jesus through Mary, keeps the consecration living, so that a man does not merely have consecrated himself once but lives, daily, as a consecrated man.

CHAPTER SIX

Living the Consecrated Life

After the Gift Is Made

The consecration is not the end but the beginning. Having made the total gift, a man is called to live the consecrated life, to let the consecration shape his days and form him, over time, into the likeness of Christ. What does it mean to live as a consecrated man?

Doing Everything Through Mary

At its heart, living the consecration means doing everything through Mary, with her, in her, and for her, as de Montfort taught, so that all a man does is done in union with the Mother and offered through her to Christ. Practically, this means a man forms the habit of turning to Mary throughout his day, entrusting his actions to her, doing his work and bearing his trials and offering his prayers in union with her and through her hands, so

that she may perfect them and present them to her Son. This does not require constant explicit thought of Mary, but a habitual turning to her, a living awareness of belonging to her, a doing of all things in union with the Mother to whom one has given oneself. Over time, this habitual union with Mary shapes a man deeply, forming him, through her, into the image of Christ, which is the whole aim of the consecration.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. — Galatians 2:20

Confidence and Peace

Living the consecration brings, for many, a great confidence and peace, the peace of a man who has given everything to God through Mary and now trusts himself entirely to her care. Having handed over the reserved core, a man no longer carries the burden of sovereign self-management; he belongs to Jesus through Mary, entrusted to her care, and this belonging brings a deep security and peace. The consecrated man walks through his life as one who is not his own, who has given himself away and been received, who is held and guided and protected by the Mother to whom he belongs. This is a source of great freedom and peace, the peace of the total gift made and lived, the security of a son who has entrusted himself entirely to a Mother who will never fail him.

Formation Over Time

Finally, living the consecration means allowing Mary to form a man over time, patiently, into the likeness of Christ. The consecration is not a magic act that transforms a man in an instant; it is the beginning of a formation that unfolds across a lifetime, as Mary, given a man's total self, works slowly and surely to shape him into her Son. The consecrated man cooperates with this formation, remaining faithful to his prayer and the sacraments and the ordinary means of grace, renewing his consecration, doing all through Mary, and trusting her to accomplish over time the transformation he cannot accomplish himself. Over the years, this formation bears fruit, as the consecrated man is gradually conformed to Christ by the Mother who formed Christ himself, becoming, slowly, what the consecration aimed at from the start: a man made into the likeness of the Lord to whom he gave himself entirely.

The Fruits the Saints Promised

Those who have written on this consecration, de Montfort chief among them, promise real fruits to the man who lives it faithfully, and the testimony of the saints bears them out. They promise a growth in humility, as a man comes to rely not on himself but on God through Mary. They promise a deepening of faith and of love for Christ, brought nearer by his Mother. They promise a greater ease and freedom in the spiritual life, as

Mary smooths the path and carries what a man could not carry alone. They promise protection in temptation and strength in the spiritual battle, under the mantle of the Mother the enemy cannot overcome. And they promise, above all, a surer and swifter progress toward holiness, toward union with Christ, than a man could make on his own, because he has entrusted himself to the surest guide, the Mother who forms souls into her Son. These are not guaranteed feelings or dramatic experiences; they are the deep and often quiet fruits of a life lived in consecration to Jesus through Mary, unfolding over years, as the Mother patiently does her work. The man who makes the consecration and lives it faithfully can trust that these fruits will grow in him over time, as they have grown in the saints who walked this road before him, whether or not he feels them arriving, because the consecration works, as the whole tradition testifies, in the man who lives it.

CONCLUSION

Totally Yours

Return to where we began, to the total gift, the surrender of the reserved core that only a certain kind of man is capable of. This book has been an invitation to make that gift, to give oneself entirely to Jesus through Mary, and a guide to the thirty-three days of preparation by which the gift is made ready. We have seen that the consecration is not a giving of oneself to Mary instead of God but a giving of oneself totally to Jesus through her, taking the surest road to Christ, the road of the Incarnation, entrusting oneself to the Mother who brought Christ to the world and longs to bring each soul to him. We have seen that it is a supremely fitting act for a man, the total and decisive commitment applied to the one thing that most deserves it, made under the protection of the Mother whom God set against the serpent from the beginning.

The words Pope John Paul II took as his motto, Totus Tuus, totally yours, capture the whole of it: the total gift of a man to Jesus through Mary, holding nothing back, belonging entirely, giving all. That great and strong man credited this consecration with shaping his entire life, and countless saints before and after him have found in it the surest and shortest road to holiness, the road to Jesus through Mary. It is available to you, the ordinary man, through the thirty-three days of preparation and the total gift made at their end, and it may become, as it has for so many, one of the decisive acts of your spiritual life.

So consider making the gift. Choose a Marian feast, count back thirty-three days, obtain a good guide for the daily preparation, and begin the journey: the emptying, the knowledge of self, of Mary, of Christ, unfolding across the days until you arrive, prepared, at the feast. And there, before the Blessed Sacrament, in connection with the Mass, make the total gift of yourself to Jesus through Mary, holding nothing back, and begin to live the consecrated life, doing all through Mary, being formed by her, over time, into the likeness of her Son.

Give her everything, and you will lose nothing, and gain Christ, who is everything. That is the promise of the consecration, tested by the saints across the centuries, and offered now to you. Make the total gift. Say, with John Paul and the whole company of the consecrated, Totally yours, and let the Mother lead you, surely and completely, to her Son.

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Marian Consecration: A 33-Day Guide is part of The Daily Bread Library.

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