

MONTSE GRASES

novena



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With ecclesiastical approval

The “Reflections” include examples from Montse’s life, taken from the book by J. M. Cejas [JMC], *Montse Grases. La alegría de la entrega*, 2nd edition, Rialp, Madrid 1993. An abbreviated version of this book has been published in English as *Like Any Other: A Girl Named Montse*, Scepter, 2017.

At the end of each day of the novena there are some considerations from *The Way* by St Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei. Montse often used this book for meditation and prayer. *The Way* had a great influence on her life.



Those who obtain favours through Montse Grases’ intercession are requested to inform the Office for the Causes of Saints of the Opus Dei Prelature, by writing to ocs@opusdei.org or through the website www.montsegrases.org

Further information about Montse or Opus Dei is available at:
www.montsegrases.org & www.opusdei.org

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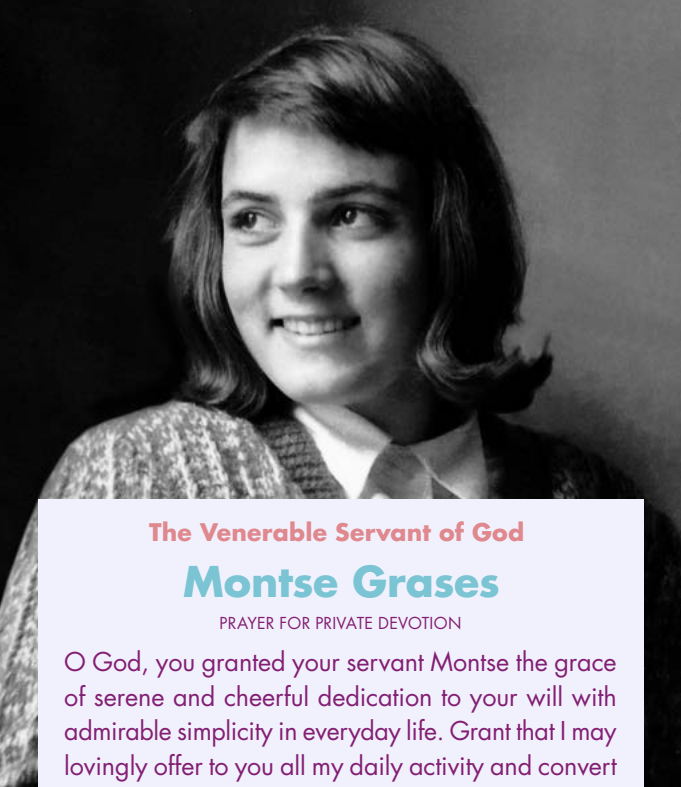
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The Venerable Servant of God

Montse Grases

PRAYER FOR PRIVATE DEVOTION

O God, you granted your servant Montse the grace of serene and cheerful dedication to your will with admirable simplicity in everyday life. Grant that I may lovingly offer to you all my daily activity and convert it into Christian service for others. Deign to glorify your servant Montse, and through her intercession grant me the favour I ask of you... (*here make your request*). Amen.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.

contents

In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that there is no intention of anticipating in any way the judgment of the Church, and that this prayer is not intended for public use.

The life of Montse Grases

Montserrat Grases was born in Barcelona, Spain, on 10 July 1941 into a deeply Catholic family. Montse, as she was known by everyone, had 8 siblings. Her parents sought to create a family climate in which sincere faith was fostered, with great respect for the children's freedom.

After graduating from high school, she continued her studies at the Barcelona Women's Professional School.

In 1957 Montse sensed that God was calling her to follow the path of sanctification in ordinary life in Opus Dei; so after seeking appropriate counsel, she asked for admission to Opus Dei.

In her struggle to reach holiness, Montse always stood out for her love for the Sacred Humanity of Christ, her Eucharistic piety, her devotion to our Lady, her deep humility and her effort to serve others. She found God in the loving fulfillment of her work and study, in the small things of each day.



In June 1958, she was diagnosed with bone cancer in her leg. The cancer caused intense pain, which she bore with serenity and heroic fortitude. Throughout her illness, Montse never lost her infectious cheerfulness or capacity for friendship, which sprang from her deep interior life and zeal for souls. As a result, she continued bringing many friends and classmates closer to God during her illness.

She died on Holy Thursday, 26 March 1959. Her body rests in the crypt of the Oratory of Our Lady, Colegio Mayor Bonaigua, Barcelona, Spain.

The Cause for her canonization was opened in Barcelona in 1962.

On 26 April 2016, the Holy Father Pope Francis declared that she had practised the virtues heroically. From then on she has been known by the title "Venerable".

The Postulator of her Cause explains: "By declaring Montse to be 'Venerable', the Church is saying that she can be offered as an example for the devotion and imitation of the Catholic faithful, and is also encouraging us to have recourse to her intercession to obtain favours from Heaven".





Love for God

Montse's example

"Like so many young people, Montse really loved life, sports, music, and acting... And also like many young people, she found it an effort to lead a Christian life... Her holiness lay in her love. She fought to love God day after day, unfailingly, smilingly, in happiness and in suffering. That was her message: she reminded all of us, by her simple life, that it really is possible to be holy, to be saints, right here and now, in the humble setting of our ordinary lives" (JMC, p. 486).

At the end of her life, when she could no longer get out of bed, "She kissed the crucifix frequently and said very quietly, although she could hardly speak: 'Lord, I love you very, very much, and our Lady too'" (JMC, p. 464).

On one of those days her father told some of her friends who came to look after her overnight: "Don't you believe for a minute that this daughter of mine did not know about love. My daughter was in love. She fell in love with God. That was the meaning of her life" (JMC, p. 478).



PRAYER

Lord, through Montse's intercession I ask you for the grace to love you more every day, and to love others very much. Help me fight to overcome my selfishness, to think less about myself, my wishes, my tastes, my ambitions; and, with your grace, to obtain a big heart so that I can love you above all things and my neighbour as myself (cf. *Luke 10:27*).

Help me also to combat the temptation of thinking that I can't do more than I am doing already, of shutting myself up in my own plans for my life. I want Montse's generous self-giving to be a living example that helps me to walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, as St Paul said (cf. *Eph 5:2*).

"My God, I love you, but... teach me how to love!" (*The Way*, 423).

"Everything that is done for Love acquires beauty and becomes great" (*The Way*, 429).

Say the prayer for Montse's intercession



Interior life

Montse's example

"In a very short time," one of her friends, Rosa, says, "she matured both from a human and a spiritual point of view. She had a very rich interior life. I noticed it all the time. To such an extent during the last month of her life, that I wrote down everything she said, and when I got home I would take it to prayer because these things helped me a lot in my own relationship with our Lord..." (JMC, p. 418).

"She was so normal and so supernatural at the same time, combining both aspects so gracefully.... Her unity of life was remarkable.... Actually human life and spiritual life were not two facets for her, but just one" (JMC, p. 418).

"You just had to see her practise her norms of piety [Holy Communion, mental prayer, spiritual reading, rosary, etc.] to know where her strength came from." "She struggled heroically to fulfil her norms of piety, in spite of it being so difficult in her circumstances" (JMC, pp. 435 and 438).



PRAYER

Lord, I want my spiritual life to become deeper and more mature. I sometimes feel a sort of emptiness, like an inner paralysis, that leaves me lukewarm and half-asleep. Maybe because I don't pray, go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and receive Holy Communion as lovingly as you want me to. Teach me to pray, to talk to you more personally and more affectionately every day.

I want to be generous, constant and self-sacrificing in my interior life. So I ask you through Montse's intercession for the grace to follow a definite plan of daily, weekly and monthly practices of piety, according to a clear timetable, so that my good desires are not just theoretical but put into practice.

"Action is worth nothing without prayer: prayer grows in value with sacrifice" (*The Way*, 81).

"'This tying oneself to a plan of life, to a timetable,' you told me, 'is so monotonous!' And I answered you: 'There is monotony because there is little Love.'" (*The Way*, 77).

[Say the prayer for Montse's intercession](#)



The meaning of life

Montse's example

Montse's father, speaking to a group of her friends about her vocation to Opus Dei, said: "My daughter was in love. She fell in love with God. That was the meaning of her life. That was why she prayed, and did apostolate, and obeyed, and struggled. I could see how she struggled constantly, day after day, to become progressively more united to God... And she did all of that because she was in love with God." (JMC, p. 478).

Maria Luisa, a friend who went to see Montse the day before she died, wrote afterwards: "At that moment life had a perfect meaning. You, Lord, were there: it was essential to live for You, much more for You, completely for You. With you, life had a precise meaning; without you it had none" (JMC, p. 472).

The day after Montse's death, Rosa related the thoughts that had occurred to her when she went to pray by Montse's body. She said, "At that time I thought of how happy Montse had been on earth and how happy she would be in heaven. I remembered how the founder of Opus Dei used to say that the happiness of heaven was for those who knew how to be happy on earth. She was happy, right up to the last moment" (JMC, p. 477).



PRAYER

Lord, don't let my life end up in frustration, entangled in material things, sensuality, vanity, pleasure-seeking, etc., as unfortunately happens to so many people who don't have an ideal to give meaning to their lives.

Through Montse's intercession I ask you that I may learn to open my heart completely to your invitation: *I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (John 8:12).*

And don't let me be scared if I then hear you saying: *If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Matt 16:24).*

"Don't let your life be barren. –Be useful. –Leave a mark. –Shine forth, with the torch of your faith and your love. [...] – And set aflame all the ways of the earth with the fire of Christ that you bear in your heart" (*The Way*, 1).

[Say the prayer for Montse's intercession](#)



Loving God's will

Montse's example

Shortly after the news broke that Montse had an incurable cancer (Ewing's Sarcoma) in her leg, a priest explained to her that it was a special sign of love from God. Montse afterwards told the Director of the Opus Dei Centre she attended, "Just imagine, I didn't think so at first, but now I do... and I feel very calm and very happy. I'm full of peace. And I want whatever is God's Will. Remind me in case I forget: I want God's Will... And this is the second self-surrender I've made to our Lord. I already made one" – meaning that she had said 'Yes' to God's call to Opus Dei (JMC, p. 304).

Montse told a childhood friend who had become a pharmacist, "Look, Rosa, if a new medicine comes out I will take it; if they have to cut my leg off, let them. If our Lord wants me to die, I will die. I try to survive because I am a member of Opus Dei, because I want to serve our Lord, because I would like to avoid my parents suffering. I love life... but if God wants me to die, I will die.... because I can also help from heaven" (JMC, p. 410).

Her mother said that the day she was told at home about the diagnosis, Montse knelt down in the evening in front of a little statue of Our Lady of Montserrat, her special patron, and said, "Whatever you want." And then she went peacefully to sleep (cf. JMC, p. 301).



PRAYER

Lord, every time we say the Our Father we say Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. I don't want just to say the words. I want to embrace what you want and to do it. I don't want to lie to myself any more, by saying the Our Father aloud while saying inside, "My will be done."

Help me to say, like Montse, "I want God's Will... Lord, whatever You want." I ask you this in the words of the Psalm: *Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul (Psalm 143:8)*. Let me know what you want of me each day, each moment, in good times and in hard times; and help me to do it, with your grace. May Montse support me by interceding for me.

"Jesus, whatever you may want... I love" (*The Way*, 773).

"On whether you and I behave as God wants, don't forget it, many great things depend" (*The Way*, 755).

[Say the prayer for Montse's intercession](#)



Holiness in daily life

Montse's example

"I realize now, with hindsight," recalls Montse's friend Roser, "that the extraordinary part of Montse's behaviour lay precisely in her normality. She had the ability to endure her illness without attracting attention to herself; she did not try to be the centre of attention and gave no importance at all to her illness.... When we asked her about her illness she would respond without either exaggeration or frivolity in the same tone as one might say... 'I had an exam this morning and I did quite badly.'... She never wanted to be a 'special case'" (JMC, pp. 313-314).

What was so special about Montse? How was she different from other girls of her age and background? A well-known Spanish writer, José María Pemán, gave the answer: "What was extraordinary in Montse's life was her love for God. In her ordinary everyday life she learned to find Jesus, and fall madly in love with Him. That was what made her different" (JMC, p. 484).

"She learned to love God with all her soul in everyday affairs, in the smallest and most insignificant things. And so, almost without anyone noticing, she made her life into a wonderful artwork composed of 'little things', humbly embroidered, day after day, with the thread of Love" (JMC, pp. 484-485).



PRAYER

Dear Jesus, sometimes my life seems very ordinary, monotonous, or even tedious. Help me understand that the thirty years of your “hidden life”, which you spent, with Mary and Joseph, in apparent monotony, were really a wonderful daily divine and human love-poem.

The greatness of “hidden life” was the shining light that you lit in St Josemaría’s soul, which he then spread throughout the world, including to Montse. She understood that in the ordinary things – our families, our jobs, our daily duties – you are there waiting for us; and that all honest jobs, even the lowest and humblest, can be a path to holiness, “an opportunity to love you and serve with joy and simplicity”.

“Do everything for Love. –That way there are no little things: everything is big. – Perseverance in little things, for Love, is heroism” (*The Way*, 813).

[Say the prayer for Montse’s intercession](#)



A Christian family

Montse's example

"What an affectionate household! It really was one of those 'bright and cheerful homes' the founder of Opus Dei used to talk about... Whenever I went to visit Montse, instead of talking to me about her sufferings, she would ask me how I was, how my parents were, if my mother was well, if I liked the lectures I attended at the University, and which subject I was finding most difficult... Clearly they were all so close to our Lord that you could feel the presence of God through their behaviour" (JMC, p. 388).

"I have always been thankful to God," Manolita, Montse's mother comments, "for the great trust we had in each other, and I have often thought how important it is for parents to be real friends to their children, to anticipate their big problems and their little ones" (JMC, p. 130).

"One of her big concerns was that no one should suffer for her. One day she called her father and asked him: 'Dad, are you happy?' She did the same with each member of the family. She added, 'We are the happiest family in Barcelona. When I die I don't want anyone to be sad. You must be cheerful'" (JMC, p. 394).



PRAYER

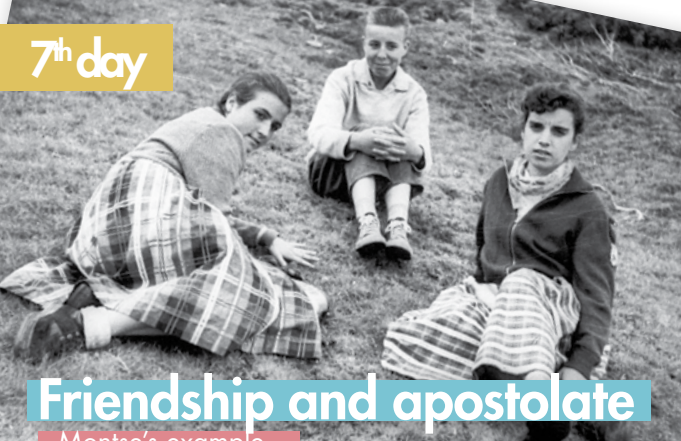
Lord, when we have you within our hearts, the way we treat family members, classmates, colleagues, and friends is filled with affection, sensitivity, a spirit of service, serenity and optimism. That is what Montse's home life was like and that is how she behaved towards her family, the people at school, all her friends, and her mountaineering and skiing group.

Grant me through Montse's intercession the grace to spread especially among all those I live with, the same peace and joy that was part of her family atmosphere and that faithfully reflected what was said of the first Christians: *The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul (Acts 4:32).*

"An aspiration: May I myself be good, and everyone else better than me" (*The Way*, 284).

"To shine like a star... aspiring to be on high, a light sparkling in the heavens? Better: to burn, like a torch, hidden, setting your fire to all that you touch. –This is your apostolate: it's for this that you are on earth" (*The Way*, 835).

[Say the prayer for Montse's intercession](#)



Friendship and apostolate

Montse's example

Montse loved skiing. She and a group of companions used to pray to St Bernard for a good fall of snow. Why did she like it so much? "It wasn't just for the sake of the sport," said a friend. "She wanted to have many more friends and she never missed a chance of deepening in her friendship and doing apostolate with them." "She had fulfilled her spiritual plan of life fairly well although in a slightly disorderly way. She said: 'It really wasn't easy'" (JMC, pp. 255 and 257).

She was talking with a friend, when she was already seriously ill in bed. "'Montse, how are you?' 'Fine!' 'Can I do anything for you?' 'Not really... well... would you like to do something that would make me really, really happy?' 'Yes, of course! What?' 'Well, look here... there is a retreat... if you were to go... you would make me so very happy...'. And then, with her big smile, so cheerful, she would tell jokes and she would laugh and sing the song that I was teaching her to play on the guitar" (JMC, pp. 404-405).

Just hours before finding herself in God's presence for ever, she made the effort to say to the friends who were at her bedside, "I love you all very much. But I love our Lord much more" (JMC, p. 469).



PRAYER

Lord, when will I finally forget about myself and make up my mind to dedicate my life to others, especially to bring them to you? Like all good children of God, Montse lived for others. Her greatest joy was to be able to do something to help them find happiness here on earth and afterwards in Heaven. And what am I doing?

I ask you through Montse's intercession to grant me the apostolic drive that is obtained by prayer, sacrifices offered for others, the practice of virtues and sincere friendship that will lead people to open their hearts and talk about God.

"A secret. –An open secret: these world crises are crises of saints. –God wants a handful of men 'of his own' in each human activity" (*The Way*, 301).

"You have got to be a 'man of God', a man of interior life, a man of prayer and sacrifice. –Your apostolate must be an overflow of your life 'within'" (*The Way*, 961).

Say the prayer for Montse's intercession



Love amidst suffering

Montse's example

"She had a victory morale," recalls her brother Enrique, "because she knew that 'God does not lose battles', as St Josemaría used to say; because she knew that God's love is always stronger than death [...] That was the source of her joy, which seemed so incomprehensible. She turned suffering around and made it into love" (JMC, pp. 482-483).

He continues: "And when she faced her greatest challenge, she was able to give the best of herself, as she had in those tennis matches at Barcino Club, when she had a tough opponent... She learned to give all the love she had inside, playing as partner to the sufferings of Jesus on the Cross, echoing his every move [...] And God, as usual, won the match." (JMC, p. 482).

A friend of Montse's who had had polio as a child and used crutches said, "I learned from the example of her life what our founder [St Josemaría] taught us: that what really makes people unhappy is when they try and get rid of the Cross from their lives. And that finding the Cross means finding Christ, who is Love... It was from her that I learned how to love... I know this is the wrong word but I can't think of a better one: I learned to love her illness, and my own" (JMC, p. 407).



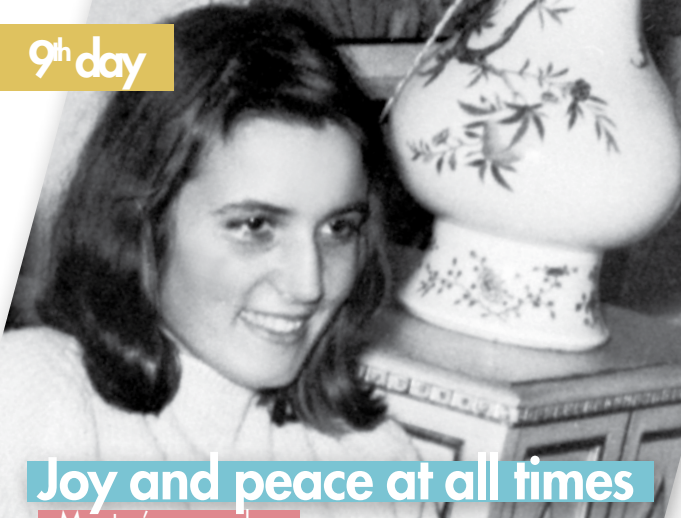
PRAYER

Lord, one of the things I most admire in the saints is the loving way they learned to suffer, with your help, not giving any importance to their sufferings, or falling into self-pity. Just the opposite: they were more than ever concerned with the good of their neighbour. I know that the secret behind this approach is love – your Love! That is the grace that I ask of you now, through Montse’s intercession.

Dear Jesus, when you were dying on the Cross you thought of us with love. You asked your Father to forgive your enemies, helped the Good Thief to get to Heaven, and gave us your Blessed Mother to be our Mother. Help me to stay fearlessly by your Cross, and to unite my sufferings to yours, and my love to yours, as you gave yourself up for us and our salvation.

“Don’t forget that Sorrow is the touchstone of Love” (*The Way*, 439). “Marvel at Mary’s steadfastness: at the foot of the Cross, with the greatest of human sorrows – there is no sorrow like her sorrow – filled with fortitude. –And ask her for some of that steadfastness, so that you too may know how to stand beside the Cross” (*The Way*, 508).

Say the prayer for Montse’s intercession



Joy and peace at all times

Montse's example

Montse found Jesus on the Cross – Jesus who abandoned himself into the arms of his Father, saying: “Into your hands I commend my spirit.” And as she trusted in her Father God, and felt that she was in his hands, she was serene, tranquil, and happy (JMC, p. 481).

After being told how serious her illness was, “she was never sad. She was as nice as always and never lost her sense of humour. She saw the bright side of everything and she always had a funny story at hand to tell. She always made me laugh” (JMC, p. 343).

The diary of the Opus Dei Centre she attended relates: “Montse came and lay down on the bed for a while.... From her bed she sang with all the rest.... They are very impressed by her cheerfulness. Quite a few of them come to us to ask: ‘Is it true that Montse is so ill? She seems so happy!’ Of course she is. Her disposition is marvellous. She wants to give whatever our Lord asks” (JMC, p. 379).



PRAYER

Lord, as I meditate on the serenity and joy Montse showed right up to the very last moment of her life, I feel ashamed of my worries, fears, complaints and anxieties about unimportant things. Forgive me for my lack of faith, and grant me the grace never to forget that you are near me, protecting me as my loving Father at every moment, in all the circumstances of my life.

I know that peace of heart is the source of Christian joy, and that that peace is obtained by doing what Jesus asks of us: *Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light* (Matt 11:28-30). Jesus, with the help of Montse's intercession, I want to get closer to you, I want to trust you, to rest in you... and to carry your Cross generously. Accept my self-dedication. "A wholehearted acceptance of the Will of God necessarily brings joy and peace: happiness in the Cross. –It's then one sees that Christ's yoke is sweet and that his burden is not heavy" (*The Way*, 758).

[Say the prayer for Montse's intercession](#)