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NEWSLETTER

MONTSE GRASES

WITH THE DECREE ON THE HEROIC VIRTUES

MONTSE: HEROISM IN LOVE EACH DAY

On 27 April 2016, feast of Our Lady of Montserrat, it was announced that on the day before, Pope Francis had authorised the promulgation of a decree declaring the heroic virtues of Montse Grases. The timing of this announcement can be seen as a gesture of affection from Our Lady for her daughter, who had been baptised with the name "Mary of Montserrat".

The decree is an important step towards Montse's beatification. All that is now needed is for one of the many extraordinary favours attributed to her intercession to be declared miraculous.

Montse died before she was eighteen, but in her short life, through her response to God's call, she achieved what we read of in Sacred Scripture: "being perfected in a short time, they fulfilled long years, for their souls were pleasing to the Lord" (*Wis 4:13*).

Did Montse do extraordinary things in that short space of time? No. Her life mirrored the ideal taught by Saint Josemaría, the founder of Opus Dei: "It is in the greatness of ordinary things that He awaits us!" (*Furrow*, 486). That is to say in daily things, the same things as most people encounter

in their ordinary life, but with a difference: the "ordinary" things are transformed into holiness when they are done with extraordinary love for God and others. That is how Montse lived. "She was very cheerful and spread joy in all the circumstances of her life, including illness and death" (Monsignor José Luis Gutiérrez, postulator of Montse's cause).

Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei at that time, on receiving news of the promulgation of the decree, described Montse as "a girl whose life was short, but who was a genuine gift of God for those who knew her and also for those who came to know her afterwards."

He went on to say that Montse "from an early age responded to God's love, and strove to live a life of piety, to work well, using the talents God gave her with a generous desire to serve others generously, forgetting about herself. She followed our Lord faithfully when he called her to Opus Dei, and tried to stay closely united to God, in a life similar to that of the other women around her. She strove to carry out her daily work out of love for God and others, and to bring her many friends closer to Jesus. And she continued doing

so when she was diagnosed with cancer, which caused severe pain and led to her death."

Jorge, a young friend of Montse's family, was one of the few people the family allowed to visit her during the days prior to her death. "Her

and numerous friends, many of whom she brought closer to God."

Up to the day before she died, while she was still conscious, Montse passed on to the



parents brought me to her room. Montse was in bed, looking very pale, but with the same joyful expression I had always seen in her. That smiling image struck me and impressed me deeply from the very first moment. That's when I realised the sort of person Montse was. She was dying and was at peace, cheerful and smiling with the quiet calm that was so typical of her." Without thinking she was special, Montse practised the simple heroism that Saint Josemaría spoke about: "All the things that are now worrying you can be put into a smile which shows your love of God" (*Furrow*, 89).

Margot, a student from El Salvador, was a good friend of Montse's and lived with her during the months she spent in Barcelona (in 1957 and 1958). Years later, in her testimony for the cause of beatification and canonisation, she described Montse as follows: "She had clear eyes, a very lively way of looking at you, with her perfectly proportioned features. Her physical beauty reflected the greatness of her soul. Two virtues I noticed especially in her were cheerfulness and simplicity. She had a very attractive personality,

friends who took turns spending the night with her, and her relatives, the peace coming from her friendship with God. It was the peace of a mature, saintly person who asked herself each day in her examination of conscience, up to the day of her death: "What did I do today that pleased God? What did I do today that didn't please God?"

Montse's example is like a bright lamp, lit by God, highlighting the irreplaceable role of the family in people's upbringing. What an intense Christian life and atmosphere there was in Montse's family! Her life also shines a bright light on the incomparable adventure of a complete self-giving to God in ordinary life, and the joy of striving to make others happy, with God's help. It shows us, in short, the riches of a Christian life that has God as its foundation and light.

As Monsignor José Luis Gutiérrez remarked: "The example of an attractive and cheerful young woman who becomes a saint in her ordinary daily work, will act as a magnet to attract many people, especially young people, and lead them to take their faith seriously and, in so doing, to find happiness."



decree on the virtues

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints has published a Decree in Latin on the heroic nature of the virtues Montse practised and her fame for holiness. We offer a translation of the Decree here.

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS BARCELONA

BEATIFICATION AND CANONISATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

MARÍA MONTSERRAT GRASES GARCÍA

LAYWOMAN OF THE PERSONAL PRELATURE OF THE HOLY CROSS AND OPUS DEI

(1941-1959)

DECREE ON THE VIRTUES

“I am a daughter of God.” “When You wish, as You wish and in whatever You wish.” “*Omnia in bonum.*”

These three aspirations, which María Montserrat Grases often repeated, are a good way of describing her spiritual journey. Her very keen awareness of her divine filiation led her to fulfil the will of God the Father lovingly, with the assurance that everything He sends us is always for our good.

María Montserrat Grases García, known to family and friends as Montse, was born in Barcelona, Spain, on 10 July 1941 and was baptised nine days later. She was the second of nine children born to Manuel and Manolita Grases.

The childhood and adolescence of the Servant of God were spent in the serene atmosphere of a Christian family. Montse’s parents were members of Opus Dei and, in keeping with St Josemaría

Escrivá's teachings, they sought to make their house a bright and cheerful home.

After completing her secondary education, which she combined with learning to play the piano, Montse went to a professional training college. She liked sports, hiking, music, country dancing and performing plays. She had many friends, boys and girls.

Her parents taught her to deal with Jesus with a lot of confidence, and helped her develop the characteristic features of her personality: cheerfulness, simplicity, forgetfulness of self, and concern for the spiritual and material well-being of others. During her teens, together with some of her classmates, she would visit poor families in Barcelona, and give catechism classes to children and sometimes take them toys or sweets. She had a lively, spontaneous temperament, and at times her reactions could be a little brusque, though her relatives and teachers recall that she fought to overcome this and be friendly and jovial with everyone.

In 1954, her mother suggested that she might like to go to a Centre of Opus Dei which offered Christian and human formation to young girls. Little by little Montse came to see that God was calling her to this path of holiness and on 24 December 1957, after meditating and praying and asking her parents' advice, she asked to join Opus Dei, with total dedication to God in apostolic celibacy.

From then on she strengthened her determination and constancy to seek holiness in her everyday life. She set herself a demanding daily plan of spiritual life, which included Holy Mass, the Holy Rosary, reading from the New Testament and spiritual books, and

other practices of piety. In addition, she lived a real spirit of penance, including generous corporal mortifications, offering Our Lord many little sacrifices during the course of the day, and struggled to improve her character.

Likewise, she was constant in her efforts to bring her friends and companions closer to God as she went about her ordinary life. For example, when playing sports, she saw there an opportunity to give herself to others and to transmit to them the peace she experienced from living close to God.

In December 1957, on a mountain excursion, she fell and hurt her knee badly. It didn't seem serious at the time, but after some days the pain only got worse. After consulting several doctors, in June 1958 they diagnosed an Ewing Sarcoma in her left femur. When her parents told her that her illness was incurable and terminal, Montse took it with immense peace and supernatural outlook, and carried on in her efforts to please God in her daily life.

The illness caused her intense and ever-increasing pain. The Servant of God offered her sufferings for the Church, for the Pope, for Opus Dei and for the many specific intentions her relatives and friends asked her to pray for. She thought of her neighbour more than herself, and never complained about her situation. On the contrary, her cheerfulness was always infectious. She brought many of those who came to visit her nearer to God. Those who lived with Montse bore witness to how she grew closer to God and how she transformed her suffering into prayer and apostolate: into true sanctity. One of her friends said that when she saw



her praying, her closeness to Christ was palpably evident.

From when she asked for admission to Opus Dei, the Servant of God had undertaken a serious quest for holiness in the middle of the world, so that her illness found her well prepared to live the virtues with complete heroism.

She died peacefully on Holy Thursday, 26 March 1959. She was buried two days later. In 1994, her mortal remains were transferred to the crypt of the oratory of Santa María de Bonaigua, in Barcelona, where they are today.

From the very first moment, there have been many testimonies of her reputation for holiness – now spread to many countries – as well as news of graces and favours obtained through her intercession.

Montse died in the fullness of youth, not long before her eighteenth birthday. Though short, her life was a real gift of God for those who knew her then and for those who have come to know her afterwards, because she went about her ordinary occupations filled with love for God and other people. She

brought many souls to Jesus with her piety, her smile and her simple, heroic generosity. Her youthful response to God's love is an example that will help many people, especially the young, to understand the beauty of following Christ in their daily lives.

The process to gather information regarding the reputation for holiness, the virtues in general and the miracles was held in Barcelona from 1962 to 1968. When new legislation on causes of canonisation was promulgated, the Archbishop of Barcelona, after appointing a commission of historical experts to gather relevant documents, ordered an additional diocesan process to take place, and this was done in 1993.

The special Congress of theological consultors, which took place on 30 June 2015, responded in the affirmative to the question whether the Servant of God had practised the virtues to a heroic degree. The most Eminent and Excellent members of the Congregation gave the same answer at the Ordinary Session convened on 19 April 2016, at which I, Cardinal Angelo Amato, presided.

The undersigned Cardinal Prefect presented to the Supreme Pontiff Pope Francis a detailed account of all the phases listed above. The Holy Father, receiving and ratifying the evaluation of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, with today's date, has solemnly declared that: *Proofs exist of the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, towards both God and neighbour, and also of the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude, with their annexed virtues, in heroic degree, and of the reputation for holiness of the Servant of God María Montserrat (Montse) Grases García, laywoman of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, in the case and to which effect this relates.*

The Holy Father has ordered that this Decree be published and transcribed in the Acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

**Given in Rome, the 26th day
of the month of April in the
year of Our Lord 2016.**

ANGELO Card. AMATO, S.D.B.

Prefect

L. + S.

MARCELLO BARTOLUCCI

Titular Archbishop of Bevagna
Secretary



The Popes speak to young people



Pope Francis

Dear friends, God expects something from you. Have you understood this? God expects something from you, God wants something from you. God hopes in you. God comes to break down all our fences. He comes to open the doors of our lives, our dreams, our ways of seeing things. God comes to break open everything that keeps you closed in. He is encouraging you to dream. He wants to make you see that, with you, the world can be different. For the fact is, unless you offer the best of yourselves, the world will never be different. This is the challenge.

"Father, but I have my limits, I am a sinner, what can I do?" When the Lord calls us, he doesn't worry about what we are, what we have been, or what we have done or not done. Quite the opposite. When he

calls us, he is thinking about everything we have to give, all the love we are capable of spreading. His bets are on the future, on tomorrow. Jesus is pointing you to the future, and never to the museum.

So today, my friends, Jesus is inviting you, calling you, to leave your mark on life, to leave a mark on history, your own and that of many others as well.

Today Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life, is calling you, you, and you to leave your mark on history. He, who is life, is asking each of you to leave a mark that brings life to your own history and that of many others. He, who is truth, is asking you to abandon the paths of rejection, division and emptiness. Are you up to this? Are you up to this? May the Lord bless your dreams. Thank you!

**Prayer Vigil with Young People
Krakow, 30 July 2016**

Pope Benedict XVI

Dear young people, do not be afraid to make definitive decisions. You do not lack generosity – that I know! But the idea of risking a lifelong commitment, whether in marriage or in a life of special consecration, can be daunting. You might think: “The world is in constant flux and life is full of possibilities. Can I make a lifelong commitment now, without knowing what unforeseen events lie in store for me? By making a definitive decision, would I not be risking my freedom and tying my own hands?” These are the doubts you feel, and today’s individualistic and hedonist culture aggravates them. Yet when young people avoid decisions, there is a risk of never attaining to full maturity! I say to you: Take courage! Dare to make definitive decisions, because in reality these are the only decisions which do not destroy your freedom, but guide it in the right direction, enabling you to move forward and attain something worthwhile in life. There is no doubt about it: life is worthwhile only if you take courage and are ready for adventure, if you trust in the Lord who will never abandon you.

**Meeting with young people
Luanda, 21 March 2009**



St John Paul II

It is Jesus, in fact, that you seek when you dream of happiness. He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you. He is the beauty to which you are so attracted. It is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise. It is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.

Dear young people of the century now beginning, in saying “yes” to Christ, you say “yes” to all your noblest ideals. I pray that he will reign in your hearts and in all of humanity in the new century and the new millennium. Have no fear of entrusting yourselves to him! He will guide you, he will grant you the strength to follow him every day and in every situation.

**Vigil of prayer, World Youth Day
Rome, 19 August 2000**



Montse's favours



An international prize

In 2015 the school in which I work opened a new unit and became a single-sex school. I became class teacher for Year 5. At that time my class was the smallest in the school, with only 5 pupils, all 10 years old.

We heard one day that an international competition was being held in Spain to make the life of the Servant of God, Montserrat Grases, better known. When we learned the details of the competition, we decided to take part in the film category, although that section was open to students of up to 20 years of age.

For over a month we worked on a film using the stop-motion technique. Every day, during the break, the pupils sketched the drawings to make the picture and I photographed the drawings. About 1,200 photos were taken and with them we were able to put together a film that lasted over a minute.

The announcement that we had won 1st prize was a great, and very welcome, surprise. The children were thrilled to win first prize in an

international competition. It was great to see our film on Montse's website.

When we received the prize we decided unanimously to give the money as a gift to the school, to help it through a difficult patch. The pupils sent a delegation to donate the money personally to the headmaster.

The children were so happy about it that to thank Montse, we began to say her prayer card at the end of each class. When we came to the petition we decided to pray that our school, and especially our class, would have more pupils. In a short time the children knew the prayer by heart and spread the idea to all their teachers. After a few months the class grew from 5 to 12 pupils, to everyone's delight.

Now we don't know which is the best gift Montse obtained for us: the international prize, the new pupils, or our trust and constancy in praying through her intercession.

J.T. (Brazil), April 2016

A boyfriend

I am writing to express my gratitude for a favour I obtained through the intercession of Montse Grases. Two years ago my niece began to go out with a boy who, from his behaviour and what my niece told me, was not having a positive influence on her. I was concerned that he might lead her away from the faith, in the very delicate period of adolescence. I began to pray to Montse asking her to help my niece; and that is what happened, and even more than I expected! A short while afterwards they broke off the relationship, and a few months later she got to know a young man who is now her boyfriend, a fine boy with very sound ideas about courtship. He has helped her to improve in her Christian life.

P. M. (Spain), May 2014

Novena to Montse

"Montse was a girl just like any other, a very human person, who learnt to make the most humdrum situations into something supernatural – her family relationships, her teenage friendships, her study and work, her leisure time, etc. Everyone who knew her agreed that she had real sweetness – not sentimentality – which made her very attractive. As a result, lots of girls of her own age wanted to be friends with her, and she made friends with them generously. She was a deeply happy girl, and spread happiness around her in all situations, including her illness and death" (Interview with Monsignor José Luis Gutierrez Gomez, Postulator for Montse Grases' Cause of Canonisation). Montse, who always shared this attractive friendship in her lifetime, continues to do so from Heaven for everyone who wishes to be her friend.

"By declaring Montse 'Venerable', the Church is saying that Montse is an example who can be proposed to Catholic faithful for our devotion and imitation, and is encouraging us to have recourse to her intercession to obtain favours from Heaven" (*ibid.*).

Fr Francisco Faus has written a Novena to enable readers – especially young people – to get to know Montse Grases better and to ask her intercession for favours. The novena is available at www.montsegrases.org.

Montse rehearsing for a play

Those who obtain favours through Montse Grases' intercession are requested to inform the Office for the Causes of Saints, Opus Dei Prelature, 4 Orme Court, London W2 4RL, writing in to ocs.uk@opusdei.org or through the website www.montsegrases.org



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

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.

Those who wish to give alms to help its publication may send donations by cheque to the address below or by direct transfer, indicating that these are for Montse's Cause.

Prelature of Opus Dei, Office for the Causes of Saints, 4 Orme Court, London W2 4RL

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WITH ECCLESIASTICAL APPROVAL