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1-1-2011

### 02. Charles Besnard: The Life of Louis Grignon de Montfort

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#### Repository Citation

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## Charles Besnard: The Life of Louis Grignon de Montfort

*(Charles Besnard entered the Seminary of the Holy Spirit shortly after the death of Poullart des Places and he collected much information about him. He wrote of the friendship between Poullart and Louis Grignon de Montfort and later entered the Congregation founded by him, eventually becoming its superior general. Charles was not an eye-witness of the life of Poullart, but he became close to his memory by his own story and that of his institute. Part of volume 5 of his life of Louis de Montfort is devoted to the two men and their relationship.<sup>1</sup>)*

Monsieur Claude François Poullart des Places, to whom the Holy Ghost Seminary is indebted for its foundation, descended from an ancient family of Brittany in the diocese of Saint-Brieuc. He was born at Rennes on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 1679<sup>2</sup>, in the parish of Saint Pierre en Saint-Georges and was baptised the same day. His mother consecrated him at once to the Blessed Virgin and, until he was seven, she dressed him in white in her honour. He did his classical studies and philosophy at the College of Rennes. It was there he entered into close friendship with Louis de Montfort. They joined together to set up, along with some of their fellow students, a little association for the purpose of honouring the Blessed Virgin in a special way. The group gathered on certain days in

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Besnard: "*Life of Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort*", 1770. Book 5. Volume 1. "*Le Séminaire du Saint-Esprit à Paris*", pp. 274-284. *International Montfort Centre, Rome, 1981.*

<sup>2</sup> Besnard has got this date wrong. Claude was baptised on the 27<sup>th</sup> and born on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

a room which a kind person had put at their disposal. (...) These meetings continued for some time after Louis left for Paris, thanks to the efforts of Claude whom he had asked to look after them and who alone remained their animating spirit and support.

However, because his family's plan required him to appear in society, he devoted himself to it, with perhaps a little too much enthusiasm. His great ambition was to distinguish himself in the world and it must be admitted that he had everything needed to excel. His father wanted him to become a Councillor in the Breton Parliament and his mother had already gone to the expense of making a magistrate's gown for him. (...) But God enlightened him and made it clear that he was not called to that state of life. (...) He asked his father's permission to go and study at the Sorbonne and to become a priest. His father was shattered by this news, for he only had one son to perpetuate his name and take over his business. He tried his best to talk him out of it, but when the young man remained steadfast, his family offered no further objection to a vocation that was so evident.