St. Anthony Mary Claret

THE DEVOTION OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY

La devoción del santísimo rosario

From the Spanish of the first edition (Madrid, 1858)

English translation

Contributed to Mind of the Church by a friend of the library who wishes to remain anonymous

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About this translation

Translated from *La devoción del santísimo rosario* (Madrid: Aguado, 1858). **Incomplete**: pages 8–14 of the booklet are missing and are not translated. It is not the longer *El santísimo rosario explicado* of 1864.

The notes give the references to Claret's sources and the notes he printed himself; the modern editors' commentary and the translator's own remarks are not reproduced.

The Devotion of the Most Holy Rosary (1858)

What the Rosary Is

The form of prayers of which we shall speak briefly in this little book is called the Rosary, because it is a crown of roses of Hail Marys that Christians offer to the Queen of heaven and earth. The ancient peoples of the East had the custom of offering crowns of roses to distinguished persons. And true Christians have the praiseworthy custom of offering every day, and with great devotion, the crown of Marian roses to their beloved Mother, the most holy Virgin. So did St. Louis, King of France, the great Bossuet, Fénelon, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales, St. Francis Xavier and others. Indeed, since the year 1208, when the glorious St. Dominic taught it as it is prayed today,[1] there has been no Saint nor person distinguished in learning and virtue who has not had devotion to the Rosary. And it is known by experience that whoever does not pray the Rosary prays nothing at all; he neither prays nor lives as a Christian, but as a pagan, as an impious man. The Rosary is a prayer that is both mental and vocal. The complete Rosary has three parts: the first comprises the joyful mysteries, the second the sorrowful, and the third the glorious.

Each part is divided into five mysteries, and each mystery is accompanied by the prayer of the Our Father, ten Hail Marys and the Glory Be.

The Rosary can be called a compendium of our most holy Religion, because it consists of its chief mysteries; and whoever prays it whole recalls and meditates in one day what the Church celebrates in her feasts in the course of the year.

Besides meditating on these holy mysteries, the Christian prays in each of them the prayer of the Our Father, a prayer taken from the holy Gospel, which is a way of praying that Jesus Christ himself deigned to teach.[2] This prayer is like a petition \[*memorial*, a formal written petition to a superior\] that our advocate Jesus dictated to us, so that we may present it to his eternal Father and so obtain all we need for both body and soul.

The Our Father is followed by the Hail Mary, so that through the means and intercession of most holy Mary we may obtain from God what we have asked in the Our Father. And since we trust more in Mary's prayers than in our own, we repeat the Hail Mary ten times, begging her to pray to God for us now and at the hour of death.

The Hail Mary has two parts. The first is taken from the holy Gospel: the words spoken by the archangel St. Gabriel and those spoken by St. Elizabeth.[3] The second part consists of the words spoken by the Church at the Council of Ephesus in the year 431, gathered by Pope St. Celestine to condemn the heresies of Nestorius, who spoke against most holy Mary.

The words "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit" are those which the Angels and Saints say in heaven in praise of the most holy Trinity.

Since, then, the most holy Rosary is made up of such holy elements, no one will be surprised that it is a devotion so pleasing to God and to most holy Mary, and so powerful for obtaining every grace. We know it and are sure of it by experience: through the devotion of the most holy Rosary a remedy has been found in

public needs of war, plague, famine and other calamities; and likewise individuals in their troubles of soul and body have been consoled whenever they have had recourse to the Rosary.

The most holy Rosary is, moreover, a most abundant mine in which Christians who pray and meditate it with attention and devotion grow rich in great merits. It is a garden in flower where one gathers every kind of flower of the most beautiful and fragrant virtues.

The most holy Rosary is the most powerful, easy and gentle means of dispelling ignorance and removing errors and heresies. It is the most powerful spring \[*resorte*, the mainspring of a mechanism\] of the human heart; and so those who grow fond of the most holy Rosary soon improve their conduct.

No one, then, will wonder that the devotion of the most holy Rosary is so highly recommended, and so enriched with indulgences and spiritual graces by the Supreme Pontiffs and other Prelates of the Church.

Advice for Praying the Rosary Well

1. Some souls pray the whole Rosary every day, that is, all three parts. Others, and these are the majority, pray only one part. In that case on Mondays and Thursdays they should meditate on the joyful mysteries; on Tuesdays and Fridays the sorrowful; and on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays the glorious.

2. On the day on which the feast of some mystery is celebrated, one will meditate on the mysteries of the part to which the mystery of the feast belongs. For example, \[if\] Christmas falls on a Friday, one will meditate not on the sorrowful mysteries but on the joyful, even though it is Friday; and so with the rest.

3. While praying, one will apply the senses in imagination to the persons of each mystery being meditated, as if one saw the persons, as if one heard what they say, observing all their actions, and applying to oneself all that can help to correct one's faults and acquire the virtues.

4. One must not pray hurriedly, but slowly and with devotion, pronouncing all the words well, not beginning one choir until the other has finished. One must not doze or mix in other words. One must think that one is speaking with God and with the most holy Virgin Mary. Anyone who had to speak with a king and queen of the earth would behave with care and stand in their presence with modesty and circumspection; and when one prays the Rosary one is speaking with the King of kings and with the Queen of heaven and earth.

Notice

So that those devoted to the most holy Rosary may know how to meditate on the mysteries while praying, these brief notes have been set down here, which they may read when they have time.

Virtues to Be Imitated in the Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary

In the First Joyful Mystery Humility Will Be Imitated

The first mystery is the Incarnation of the Son of God.

See, Christian soul, how great a humility the Lord teaches you. Being God, he becomes man; he takes on all human miseries; he submits to all hardships. He dressed humbly, never with luxury; he ate humbly; he fled honors; he never praised himself; all praise he directed to his heavenly Father.

Learn from Jesus to be meek and humble of heart.[1] Never praise yourself, nor accept praise or flattery. Dress modestly, and not with luxury or vanity. Be a friend of the poor; do not disdain to deal with them.[2] Do not prefer yourself to anyone; on the contrary, regard yourself as the servant of all. Do as the most holy Virgin did: though raised to the almost infinite dignity of Mother of God, she calls herself and considers herself a handmaid;[3] and she is the one who has best imitated the humility and meekness of Jesus.

From the Second Joyful Mystery Charity toward One's Neighbor Is to Be Drawn

The second mystery is the Visitation of Our Lady to her cousin St. Elizabeth, in whose house she stayed three months, to sanctify the son, John, and to serve the mother.[4] Oh, what great graces must have entered that house through Mary!

Christian soul, imitate Mary in the visits you make. Do not gossip or waste time in them. Edify by good example, and practice charity toward the parents and children of the house. If those you visit are poor, help them with what you can; and where your means do not reach, make it up with good words, counsel and prayers, since man does not live by bread alone.[5] So do the gentlemen and ladies of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, to the great edification of everyone, and to no small bodily and spiritual profit of the families they visit. And you must know that all the good you do to your neighbors the Lord will praise on the day of judgment and reward as if you had done it to him.[6]

From the Third Joyful Mystery Love of Poverty of Spirit Is to Be Drawn

The third mystery is the Birth of the Son of God in the stable of Bethlehem. Contemplate, Christian soul, the poverty of Jesus. Though most rich, and master of heaven and earth, he deprives himself of everything;[7] and so that he may lack even the small comforts he could have had in the house at Nazareth, he wills to be born in Bethlehem, where he finds no lodging, not even in the inn.[8] He must be born in a cave, open to the weather and lacking every relief, on a winter's night, without fire or any shelter.[9]

Learn from this holy Family not to complain when you see yourself despised. Do not lose heart when you find yourself without resources of any kind in the midst of the rigors of the season; think that Jesus found himself so. Thank him for making you share in his sufferings, hoping that one day you will be a companion of his glory.[10] If you possess riches, do not let your heart cling to them; help the poor \[*los pobrecitos*, "the poor little ones"\] with them, since that is why the Lord has entrusted them to you.

From the Fourth Joyful Mystery Obedience to the Laws of the Church Is to Be Drawn

The fourth mystery is the Presentation of the Son of God in the temple, and the Purification of the most holy Virgin. The law had two precepts regarding mothers who had just given birth: one concerned the child, the other the mother.[11] Strictly, neither applied to either of them, because the Son was not conceived by the work of man, nor did the Mother cease to be a virgin. Nevertheless, to teach us obedience to the holy laws of Religion, they submitted to them, even at the cost of their honor.[12]

Christian soul, learn from Jesus and Mary to obey the holy ordinances and laws of the Church. Keep her commandments: hear Mass, go to confession, receive Communion, fast on the days she prescribes. Jesus and Mary, who could have excused themselves from those laws, do not excuse themselves; they fulfill them exactly. And you look for excuses where there are none, letting yourself be deceived by laziness, by pride, by human respect and by irreligion. Be, then, from now on, more obedient than you have been until now.

From the Fifth Joyful Mystery You Are to Draw the Seeking of Jesus

The fifth mystery is the Child lost and found in the temple. Without fault, the Virgin and St. Joseph lost Jesus; at once they looked for him, and they did not rest until they found him.[13]

Christian soul, learn from Mary and Joseph the diligence you must have in seeking Jesus when you have lost him by sin. If you lose an ox or a horse, you have no rest until you find it; and if you lose the grace of Jesus by sin, it does not trouble you: you eat, you sleep, you amuse yourself as if you had lost nothing. Oh, if you knew that to lose the grace of Jesus is a greater loss than if you lost all the riches of the world! Ah, if you reflected that besides this you have lost the riches of heaven and made yourself deserving of hell! Ah, how you would weep, how you would seek with the care of Joseph and Mary![14] Seek it, then, as they did, and you will find it. They found him in the temple; you too will find it in the temple. Yes, in the temple you will find

it, by receiving well the holy sacraments of Penance and Communion.

From the First Sorrowful Mystery Contrition Is to Be Drawn

The first mystery is the Prayer in the garden. See, Christian soul, Jesus plunged in the greatest sadness, anguish and agony.[15] Have compassion on him; ask him the cause of such great sorrow, and he will answer that it is your sins and the punishments you have deserved for them. Wishing to pay for you, he is overwhelmed by how much he sees he must suffer; and his sorrow is increased by knowing your small gratitude and poor response. Stop, Christian soul; have compassion on Jesus; repent of your sins, seeing that by them you have offended so good a God. Work for your salvation, and see that the sufferings of your divine Redeemer are not wasted in you. Be firm, constant and persevering in prayer. Imitate Jesus, who did not give up prayer for sadness or anguish; on the contrary, he prolonged it and prayed more fervently.[16]

From the Second Sorrowful Mystery Love of Penance Is to Be Drawn

The second mystery is the scourging the Son of God suffered, tied to a pillar.[17] See, Christian soul, Jesus stripped and bound to the pillar. He is innocent, and yet they are scourging him. He is innocent; he has no crimes of his own; but he has taken on yours, and for them he is so cruelly scourged. Run, Christian soul, to put right that mistake, to correct that injustice. Say to the executioners scourging Jesus: Stop! You are mistaken; he is not the guilty one; he is innocent. I am the criminal; I am the one who deserves those lashes. And if you will not punish me, I will punish myself. Yes, I will scourge myself, I will mortify myself, I will do penance all the days of my life for the remission of my sins.

From the Third Sorrowful Mystery Patience in Suffering Pains and Contempt Is to Be Drawn

The third mystery is the crowning of the Son of God with thorns.[18] Wonder, Christian soul, at the patience of Jesus in suffering a crown so painful and so shameful, not only from the Jews but even from Christians. For when they sin they break his law, and so treat him as a mock king, and so mock his commands. Have compassion on Jesus; adore him as your true king; keep his holy laws; imitate his virtues of patience and endurance. And so, when you see yourself persecuted, mocked, despised and slandered, bear it patiently, like Jesus, and in this way you will gain the crown of glory.

From the Fourth Sorrowful Mystery Compassion and Relief of Our Neighbors' Sufferings Is to Be Drawn

The fourth mystery is the carrying of the cross.[19] Christian soul, in the person of the sick, or of one afflicted with the cross of trials and sorrows, you must see the person of Jesus;[20] and with this thought imitate the daughters of Jerusalem:[21] have compassion on him. Imitate Veronica: wipe the poor sufferer's face, wipe his tears and sweat with the veils of charity. Imitate also Simon of Cyrene: help him carry his cross.[22] Accompany him like most holy Mary, and never abandon him until death. Oh, what great merit you will gain for the glory of heaven!

From the Fifth Sorrowful Mystery Love of Jesus Is to Be Drawn

The fifth mystery is how the Son of God was crucified.[23] Know, O Christian soul, that no one has greater love than he who gives his life for the beloved.[24] Well, Jesus has given it for you: see if he loves you. Love must be repaid with love[25] \[*amor con amor se paga*, a Spanish proverb: "love is paid with love"\]; love him truly. You will love him if you keep his commandments, and if you receive the holy Sacraments well and often, without being held back by human respect. Imitate Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who took Jesus down from the cross;[26] this you will do when you receive the sacrament of Penance. St. Paul says that whoever sins crucifies Jesus again;[27] so whoever confesses takes him down. And Joseph of Arimathea gave him his tomb to bury him;[28] you will give him your heart, in which you will place him and keep him through

Communion, with the spices of the virtues of faith, hope, charity and humility.

From the First Glorious Mystery a Change of Life Is to Be Drawn

The first mystery is the glorious Resurrection of the Son of God. See, Christian soul, how disfigured Jesus was in the tomb, dead and shrouded. But as soon as he rises, he leaves shroud and face-cloth in the tomb and comes forth triumphant and glorious, never to die again.[29] What happiness! What beauty!

Lazarus also rose and came out of the tomb, but with face-cloth, shroud and bandages;[30] and after some time he died again.

Christians who receive the holy sacraments of Penance and Communion with good dispositions rise to spiritual life, exchanging the ugliness of sin for the beauty of grace. But there is this difference. Those who leave the near and even the remote occasions, as Jesus left shroud and face-cloth in the tomb, do not sin again. But those who are converted and take some occasions with them, even if not wholly near ones, sin again, just like Lazarus, who took shroud and face-cloth with him and died again.

So, Christian soul, rise truly like Jesus and leave all occasions of sin; in this way you will not sin again, and you will be saved.

From the Second Glorious Mystery Desires to Go to Heaven Are to Be Drawn

The second mystery is the wonderful Ascension of the Son of God.[31] Christian soul, think that you were created not for earth but for heaven. Heaven is your homeland;[32] there you have your Father, who is God; your Mother, who is most holy Mary; your brothers, friends and companions, who are the Angels and Saints.[33] On earth you are a pilgrim, a traveler who must always long to finish your journey soon and happily and reach your homeland. Nothing you see on earth fills you; it occupies you a little, and then it wearies you; for one small, short-lived flower there are a thousand thorns. This world is a true exile and a sad valley of tears.

Love God truly; desire with lively longing to go to heaven; prepare yourself with a store of good works, and be always ready to depart; and before long the Lord will take you to glory, where you will be happy for all eternity.

From the Third Glorious Mystery Fidelity to Grace Is to Be Drawn

The third mystery is the Coming of the Holy Spirit. At the coming of the Holy Spirit the Apostles were filled with the grace he gave them.[34] They responded to grace, so that grace was not in vain for them, as St. Paul says of himself. Here is what you must do, Christian soul. Grace is given to everyone, to some in one way, to others in another. What matters is to be a good and faithful servant, not to keep the talent hidden, but to trade with it until the Lord comes to ask us for an account and give us the reward.[35] And the greater the pay we shall receive, the deeper our humility will have been, the more constant our work, and the more heroic our patience. So we must respond to grace and cooperate with it by humility, work and patience; and the more, the better. Be an apostle among your own people by good example, by prayer, and by words and deeds, if you have the opportunity.

From the Fourth Glorious Mystery Perseverance until Death Is to Be Drawn

The fourth mystery is the Assumption of Our Lady. Christian soul, imitate most holy Mary. Be faithful to grace; walk always toward perfection; never say "enough," nor turn back through sin. You must always persevere and go forward on the road of virtue. Do not be frightened by stumbles, do not be daunted by enemies, do not be held back by human respect. Every day hear Mass, if you can; pray the Rosary; read in some good book; walk always in the presence of God and offer him all your works and sufferings; receive the holy Sacraments often; practice works of mercy. And if you persevere in this good conduct to the end,

you will have a good and happy death and afterwards the crown of glory, which you should so much desire. And if not, what will all the world profit you if you have the misfortune to lose your soul?[36]

From the Fifth Glorious Mystery Devotion and Confidence in Most Holy Mary Are to Be Drawn

The fifth mystery is the Coronation of Our Lady. Christian soul, raise the eyes of your consideration; fix them on that throne of majesty and grandeur set at the right hand of the King. There Mary is seated, crowned queen and empress of heaven and earth and advocate of sinners. She is Daughter of the eternal Father, Mother of the eternal Son, and Spouse of the eternal Holy Spirit. No grace is given that does not pass through her hands; to her has been given all power in heaven and on earth.[37] This Lady, so powerful, is your mother, the most tender and loving. Trust in her; go to her in all your needs; love her fervently; serve her faithfully; honor her devoutly. I give you my word that if you are a true devotee of Mary and persevere in her devotion, you will obtain in this world all the graces you need, and in the next the eternal glory that I so much desire for you. Amen.

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[38] Cf. POSSADAS, F. DE, *Vida del glorioso P. y Patriarcha Santo Domingo* \[Madrid 1721\], pp. 111–119.

[39] Cf. Mt 6:9–13; Lk 11:1–4.

[40] Cf. Lk 1:28, 42.

[1] Cf. Mt 11:29.

[2] Cf. Is 61:1; Lk 4:18.

[3] *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word*: Lk 1:38.

[4] Cf. Lk 1:39–56.

[5] Mt 4:4; Lk 4:4.

[6] Cf. Mt 25:40, 45.

[7] *Though he was rich, he became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich*: 2 Cor 8:9.

[8] Cf. Lk 2:7.

[9] Cf. ibid.

[10] Cf. 2 Cor 1:7.

[11] Cf. Ex 13:1–2; Lv 12:1–8.

[12] Cf. Lk 2:22–24.

[13] Cf. Lk 2:41–50.

[14] Cf. Lk 2:48.

[15] Cf. Mt 26:36–46; Mk 14:32–42; Lk 22:39–46.

[16] Cf. Lk 22:44.

[17] Cf. Mt 27:26; Mk 15:15; Jn 19:1.

[18] Cf. Mt 27:29; Mk 15:17; Jn 19:2, 5.

[19] Cf. Jn 19:16–17.

[20] Cf. Mt 25:31–46.

[21] Cf. Lk 23:27.

[22] Cf. Mt 27:32; Mk 15:21; Lk 23:26.

[23] Cf. Mt 27:31; Mk 15:20, 24.

[24] Jn 15:13.

[25] "Love is repaid with love" (BERGUA, J., *Refranero español* \[Madrid 1984\], p. 132: "It says that a gift should be answered in the same measure").

[26] Cf. Jn 19:38–40.

[27] Acts 9:4.

[28] Cf. Mt 27:59–60; Mk 15:45–46; Lk 23:50–53; Jn 19:38–41.

[29] Cf. Jn 20:7; Rom 6:9.

[30] Cf. Jn 11:44.

[31] Cf. Mk 16:19; Lk 24:50–53; Acts 1:3–14.

[32] Cf. Phil 3:20: *We already live as citizens of heaven.*

[33] Cf. LG no. 50.

[34] Cf. Acts 2:1–4.

[35] Cf. Mt 25:14–30.

[36] Mt 16:26.

[37] *Ab omnipotente Filio omnipotens Mater est effecta*: *De laud. B.M.V.*, bk. 4.