St. Anthony Mary Claret

EXPLANATION OF THE PICTURE

Explicación que hace de la estampa

From the Spanish of the leaflet (Barcelona, 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 the leaflet *Explicación que hace de la estampa el Excmo. é Ilmo. Sr. D. Antonio Claret, Arzobispo de Cuba* (Barcelona: Librería Religiosa, 1858). The translation is complete, and the woodcut it explains is reproduced from the same leaflet, where it stands at the head of the first page.

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.

Explanation of the Picture

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."[1]



The woodcut printed at the head of the leaflet.

Explanation of the Picture by His Excellency and Most Illustrious Lordship Don Antonio Claret, Archbishop of Cuba

All this I will give you, said Satan to Jesus Christ, showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, *if you will fall down and adore me* (Matt. 4:9). Since, then, Jesus willed to be tempted in order to overcome our temptations and to teach how we must behave in them so as to come out victorious, let us hear what, for our instruction, He at once answered the devil with indignation: *Begone*, He said, *begone, Satan; for it is written: The Lord your God shall you adore, and Him only shall you serve*. And see: the devil, put to shame by this answer, *left Him, and Angels came* (in visible form, since the tempter had come in that form) *and*

ministered to Him.[2] We have seen the temptation and what Jesus did to overcome it; let us now see what the enemy does with the Christian soul, and what the soul must do to overcome, in imitation of Jesus and of His Saints.

Fix your eyes on the picture, devout soul who read this, for even the smallest detail in it is very meaningful. Do you see, there at the very top, a resplendent *Lady* with a *Child* on her left, who with her right hand holds up a *crown*, as though offering it to that innocent *young woman* who is climbing that steep path strewn with thorns, and who, with her eyes fixed on the crown, stretches out her arms as if longing for it, and takes no heed of where she treads? Well, that Lady is *Mary*, the Mother of Jesus, who, as the *channel* of her Son's graces and the *ladder* of sinners, calls to souls from high heaven, saying to them: *My daughters, hear me: happy is he who comes to me, imitates my virtues and listens to me; for whoever finds me will find the life of grace* (signified by the *Child Jesus*) *and will be saved* (which is what the *crown* she offers signifies).

That *young woman* adorned with the white garment is a symbol of the Christian soul, which, on hearing Mary's voice, conceives a desire to win the *crown*. But on seeing how high the mountain is on which the crown stands, how steep the path, and how thickly sown with briars that hurt her feet, she stretches her arms towards the crown and at the same time, because she knows her own weakness, asks with tenderness, humility and confidence for help from Mary. She knows that Mary's Son so honours her that He wills all graces to pass through her hands, and she hears inwardly a voice saying to her: *Ite ad Mariam: go to Mary*. That is what is meant by the *Child* looking at the *young woman* and pointing with His right hand to the *Lady*.

But the *devil*, who had the audacious pride to tempt Jesus, in the excess of his rage at the efforts he sees this soul making to win the *crown*, thinks how to prevent her and… what does he do? Here it is: do you see him figured in that *monster* which, though it looks like a man, is sufficiently given away by its marks? Well, he goes out to meet the soul and paints for her a vivid but exaggerated picture of how hard the path is. He paints the devout life in the blackest colours, calling it an exaggerated *mysticism*, and urges her not to ruin her health with so much weariness and so many thorns. Then he presses her to get herself some relief, after the example of those *dancers*, and to try to cut a brilliant figure in society, winning honours, figured in the *crown* he shows her down there. So that she can keep up the brilliance of those honours, he incites her to get temporal goods, figured in those *coins* you see in the mouth of that *money bag*: *with money*, he tells her, *everything can be had*. And flattering her with the pleasures of the table, figured in the *dishes*, *bottles* and *glasses* he offers her, he suggests that afterwards she will be able to give herself, with less expense and more intensity, to the other, coarser and more brutal pleasures that follow from dances, figured also in that *couple* who are *dancing* so shamelessly. And he hurls these suggestions at her like poisoned darts at all times and places, and with such tenacity that he does not let her rest.

But he does not always tempt by himself; he sometimes also uses his allies, worldly men, as in paradise he used the serpent to tempt Eve. These men come down to three classes, figured in those three serpents you see coiled in that tree, whose tongues are continually hissing in the soul's ear.

- Some (the first class) persecute with threats and violent means. Such are the enemies of the faith and of Religion, and these have crowned constant souls with martyrdom. Such too are those who, finding themselves rebuffed, like Potiphar's wife or the lustful elders, use slander and other means to have the Josephs and the chaste Susannas buried in a dungeon, or murdered, or put to the sword.[3]

- Others (the second class) insult the soul, now mocking her retirement, which they call misanthropy, now her devout practices, which they call useless *beatería*. And when they cannot bite into her works, they try to blacken her intentions, saying that she does it to deceive the world and to swindle.

- And finally there are others (the third class) who openly oppose virtue, and oppose the soul's embracing a more perfect state in accordance with the evangelical counsels. These are her relatives, because in this they see their hopes of worldly goods, which they promised themselves from her or through her, come to nothing;

and they are figured in that leafy tree, well furnished with leaves, flowers and fruit.

And the soul, in the midst of such powerful, bold and tireless enemies who wound her right and left, what does she do? There you see her, her eyes fixed on the immortal crown Mary offers her, not daunted by the difficulty of the path, nor by the devil's flatteries, nor by the poisoned hissing of the serpents. She flees the vicious extremes to the right and to the left and goes on fearlessly along the middle way, where virtue lies and which leads to the life of heaven. In her weariness, caused by the roughness of the path, and amid the thorns that hurt her feet, she takes heart on seeing that Jesus compassionately holds out a hand to her while pointing her to His Mother, whose charge it is to give her help. And so, burning more and more with that love of Jesus and Mary which grows with the blows of temptation, as fire does with the blows of steel struck on flint, she longs more and more for the crown. She strives to pray more earnestly. She despises with more courage the devil with all his works, the world with its pomps, amusements, riches, glitter and honours, and the flesh with all its allurements and delights. Turning a deaf ear to everything that is not a means of reaching Jesus more quickly, her whole concern is to follow constantly the plan of life that has been traced for her; and the better to achieve it, she makes use of these resolutions:

1. In temptations I will say: God sees you and hears you; will you have the courage to sin while God is looking at you? Life is like a dream; death is coming after me; it will overtake me when I least think of it; after death I must be judged on everything I have thought, said and done. If death finds me in the state of grace, an eternity of joy awaits me in heaven; if in mortal sin, I shall go to suffer eternally with the devils. This is inevitable, whether I believe it or not.

2. The moment I feel tempted I will call Jesus and Mary to my help with some ejaculatory prayer: *Jesus, save me; Virgin Mary, protect me.*

3. Every day I will make the Christian's exercise morning and night (as it is found in the *Camino recto*); I will say one part of the Rosary;[4] the *Hail Mary* when the clock strikes the hours; before dinner and supper I will ask God's blessing and afterwards give Him thanks, as it is in the *Camino recto*.

4. I will spend at least a quarter of an hour in mental prayer in the morning and another in the afternoon. I will read a little in some spiritual book. And as a craftsman tries to have the tools of his trade, I will try to have tools that help me in my good works, such as the *Catechism explained with pictures*, the *Villacastín*, besides the *Camino recto* mentioned in no. 3, the *Devout Life* of St. Francis de Sales, the *Spiritual Combat*, etc.

5. I will spend feast days in attending the functions of the Church, in examining these resolutions of mine to see whether I keep them, in reading somewhat more, in giving more time to prayer and in doing works of mercy.

6. Each month I will go to confession and Communion at least once.

7. I will never fail to do my duties out of human respect.

8. I will flee the occasions of sin: bad company, courtships or flirtations, dances, gambling, cafés, taverns and evening gatherings; and I will never read impious or obscene books, nor look at provocative pictures.

9. I will keep my senses recollected, neither looking at nor listening to obscene things or gossip, taking the greatest care not to fail in charity. I will not utter unseemly words, still less blasphemies; if I hear them, I will say *Ave María purísima*. And if I fail in anything, I will kiss the ground when I am alone, as a sign of sorrow, and say a *Hail Mary* in penance.

10. To obtain the grace of not offending my neighbours in anything, I will say a *Hail Mary* daily, and another so as never to take revenge on whoever offends me.

11. To obtain the grace of not staining myself with any impurity, I will say three *Hail Marys* to the purity of the Virgin of Virgins.

12. If, which God forbid, I should fall into mortal sin, I will at once try to make acts of sorrow and of love of God, and I will go to confession as soon as I can.

13. I will try to have a good director and obey him blindly. *If I do this I shall be saved. Hoc fac, et vives* \[Do this and you shall live\] (Luke 10:28).

Several Prelates of Spain have granted 2400 days of indulgence to all the publications of the Librería Religiosa.

BARCELONA: Librería Religiosa. Printing house of Pablo Riera. 1858.

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[1] Rev 2:10.

[2] Matt 4:8–11.

[3] Gen 39:7–20 (Joseph and Potiphar's wife); Dan 13 (Susanna and the elders).

[4] *tercios.*