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THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY

FOR RENEWAL AND SALVATION

by **St. Louis de Montfort**

A White Rose

1. Dear ministers of the most high God, you my fellow priests who preach the truth of God and who teach the gospel to all nations, let me give you this little book as a white rose that I would like you to keep. The truths contained in it are set forth in a very simple and straightforward manner, as you will see.

Please keep them in your heart so that you yourselves may make a practice of the Rosary and taste its fruits.

Please have them always on your lips too, so that you will always preach the Rosary and thus convert others by teaching them the excellence of this holy devotion.

I beg of you to beware of thinking of the Rosary as something of little importance - as do ignorant people, and even several great but proud scholars. Far from being insignificant, the Rosary is a priceless treasure which is inspired by God.

Almighty God has given it to you because he wants you to use it as a means to convert the most hardened sinners and the most obstinate heretics. He has attached to it grace in this life and glory in the next. The saints have said it faithfully and the Popes have endorsed it.

When the Holy Spirit has revealed this secret to a priest and director of souls, how blessed is that priest! For the vast majority of people fail to know this secret or else only know it superficially. If such a priest really understands this secret, he will say the Rosary each day and will encourage others to say it. God and his blessed Mother will pour abundant grace into his soul, so that he may become God's instrument for his glory; and his word, though simple, will do more good in one month than that of other preachers in several years.

2. Therefore, my dear brothers and fellow priests, it will not be enough for us to preach this devotion to others; we must practice it ourselves, for if we firmly believed in the importance of the holy Rosary but never said it ourselves, people could hardly be expected to act upon our advice, since no one can give what he does not have: "Jesus began to do and to teach." We ought to pattern ourselves on our Lord, who began practising what he preached. We ought to emulate St. Paul, who knew and preached nothing but Jesus crucified.

I could tell you at great length of the grace God has given me to know by experience the effectiveness of the preaching of the holy Rosary, and of how I have seen, with my own eyes, the most wonderful conversions it has brought about. I would gladly tell you all these things if I thought that it would move you to preach this beautiful devotion, in spite of the fact that priests are not in the habit of doing so these days. But instead of all this, I think it will be quite enough for this little summary that I am writing if I tell you a few ancient but authentic stories about the holy Rosary. These excerpts really go to prove what I have outlined for the faithful.

A Red Rose

3. Poor men and women who are sinners, I, a greater sinner than you, wish to give you this rose, a crimson one, because the precious blood of our Lord has fallen upon it. Please God that it may bring true fragrance into your lives - but above all, may it save you from the danger that you are in. Every day unbelievers and un-repentant sinners cry, "Let us crown ourselves with roses." But our cry should be, "Let us crown ourselves with the roses of the holy Rosary."

How different are theirs from ours! Their roses are pleasures of the flesh, worldly honours and passing riches which wilt and decay in no time, but ours, which are the Our Father and Hail Mary which we have said devoutly over and over again, and to which we have added good penitential acts, will never wilt or die, and they will be just as exquisite thousands of years from now as they are today.

On the contrary, sinners' roses only look like roses, while in point of fact they are cruel thorns which prick them during life by giving them pangs of conscience, at their death they pierce them with bitter regret and, still worse, in eternity they turn to burning shafts of anger and despair. But if our roses have thorns, they are the thorns of Jesus Christ, who changes them into roses. If our roses prick us, it is only for a short time, and only in order to cure the illness of sin and to save our souls.

4. So by all means we should eagerly crown ourselves with these roses from heaven, and recite the entire Rosary every day, that is to say, three rosaries each of five decades, which are like three little wreaths or crowns of flowers. There are two reasons for doing this: first of all, to honour the three crowns of Jesus and Mary - Jesus' crown of grace at the time of his Incarnation, his crown of thorns during his passion, and his crown of glory in heaven, and of course the three-fold crown which the Blessed Trinity gave Mary in heaven. Secondly, we should do this so that we ourselves may receive three crowns from Jesus and Mary, the first a crown of merit during our lifetime; the second, a crown of peace at our death; and the third, a crown of glory in heaven.

If you say the Rosary faithfully until death, I do assure you that, in spite of the gravity of your sins "you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory." Even if you are on the brink of damnation, even if you have one foot in hell, even if you have sold your soul to the devil as sorcerers do who practice black magic, and even if you are a heretic as obstinate as a devil, sooner or later you will be converted and will amend your life and save

your soul, if - and mark well what I say - if you say the Rosary devoutly every day until death for the purpose of knowing the truth and obtaining contrition and pardon for your sins.

In this book there are several stories of great sinners who were converted through the power of the Rosary. Please read and meditate upon them.

A Mystical Rose Tree

5. Good and devout souls, who walk in the light of the Holy Spirit, I do not think you will mind my giving you this little mystical rose tree which comes straight from heaven and which is to be planted in the garden of your soul. It cannot possibly harm the sweet-smelling flowers of your contemplations; for it is a heavenly tree and its scent is very pleasant. It will not in the least interfere with your carefully planned flower-beds; for, being itself all pure and well-ordered, it inclines all to order and purity. If it is carefully watered and properly attended to every day, it will grow to such a marvellous height, and its branches will have such a wide span that, far from hindering your other devotions, it will maintain and perfect them. Of course, you understand what I mean, since you are spiritually minded; this mystical rose tree is Jesus and Mary in life, death and eternity.

6. Its green leaves are the Joyful Mysteries, the thorns the Sorrowful ones, and the flowers the Glorious Mysteries of Jesus and Mary. The buds are the childhood of Jesus and Mary, and the open blooms show us both of them in their sufferings, and the full-blown roses symbolize Jesus and Mary in their triumph and glory.

A rose delights us because of its beauty: so here we have Jesus and Mary in the Joyful Mysteries. Its thorns are sharp, and they prick, which makes us think of them in the Sorrowful Mysteries, and last of all, its perfume is so sweet that everyone loves it, and this fragrance symbolizes their Glorious Mysteries.

So please do not scorn this beautiful and heavenly tree, but plant it with your own hands in the garden of your soul, by making the resolution to say your Rosary every day. By saying it daily and by doing good works you will be tending your tree, watering it, hoeing the earth around it.

Eventually you will see that this little seed which I have given you, and which seems so small now, will grow into a tree so great that the birds of heaven, that is, predestinate and contemplative souls, will dwell in it and make their nests there. Its shade will shelter them from the scorching heat of the sun and its height will keep them safe from the wild beasts on the ground. And best of all, they will feed upon the tree's fruit, which is none other than our adorable Jesus, to whom be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen. God Alone

A Rosebud

7. Dear little friends, this beautiful rosebud is for you; it is one of the beads of your Rosary, and it may seem to you to be such a tiny thing. But if you only knew how precious this bead is! This wonderful bud will open out into a gorgeous rose if you say your Hail Mary really well.

Of course it would be too much to expect you to say the whole fifteen mysteries every day, but do say at least five mysteries, and say them properly with love and devotion. This Rosary will be your little wreath of roses, your crown for Jesus and Mary. Please pay attention to every word I have said, and listen carefully to a true story that I want to tell you, and that I would like you to remember.

8. Two little girls, who were sisters, were saying the Rosary very devoutly in front of their house. A beautiful lady suddenly appeared, walked towards the younger girl, who was only about six or seven, took her by the hand, and led her away. Her elder sister was very startled and looked for the little girl everywhere. At last, still not having found her, she went home weeping and told her parents that her sister had been kidnapped. For three whole days the poor father and mother sought the child without success.

At the end of the third day they found her at the front door looking extremely happy and pleased. Naturally they asked her where on earth she had been, and she told them that the lady to whom she had been saying the Rosary had taken her to a lovely place where she had given her delicious things to eat. She said that the lady had also given her a baby boy to hold, that he was very beautiful, and that she had kissed him again and again.

The father and mother, who had been converted to the Catholic faith only a short time before, sent at once for the Jesuit Father who had instructed them for their reception into the Church and who had also taught them

devotion to the Rosary. They told him everything that had happened, and it was this priest himself who told me this story. It all took place in Paraguay.

So, dear children, imitate these little girls and say your Rosary every day as they always did. If you do this, you will earn the right to go to heaven to see Jesus and Mary. If it is not their wish that you should see them in this life, at any rate after you die you will see them for all eternity. Amen.

Therefore let all men, the learned and the ignorant, the just and the sinners, the great and the small, praise and honour Jesus and Mary night and day, by saying the holy Rosary. "Greet Mary who has laboured much among you."

FIRST DECADE

The surpassing merit of the Rosary as seen in its origin and name.

First Rose

9. The Rosary is made up of two things: mental prayer and vocal prayer. In the Rosary mental prayer is none other than meditation of the chief mysteries of the life, death and glory of Jesus Christ and of his blessed Mother. Vocal prayer consists in saying fifteen decades of the Hail Mary, each decade headed by an Our Father, while at the same time meditating on and contemplating the fifteen principal virtues which Jesus and Mary practised in the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary.

In the first five decades we must honour the five Joyful Mysteries and meditate on them; in the second five decades, the Sorrowful Mysteries; and

in the third group of five, the Glorious Mysteries. So the Rosary is a blessed blending of mental and vocal prayer by which we honour and learn to imitate the mysteries and the virtues of the life, death, passion and glory of Jesus and Mary.

Second Rose

10. Since the Rosary is composed, principally and in substance, of the prayer of Christ and the Angelic Salutation, that is, the Our Father and the Hail Mary, it was without doubt the first prayer and the principal devotion of the faithful and has been in use all through the centuries, from the time of the apostles and disciples down to the present.

11. It was only in the year 1214, however, that the Church received the Rosary in its present form and according to the method we use today. It was given to the Church by St. Dominic, who had received it from the Blessed Virgin as a means of converting the Albigensians and other sinners.

I will tell you the story of how he received it, which is found in the very well-known book *De Dignitate Psalterii*, by Blessed Alan de la Roche. Saint Dominic, seeing that the gravity of people's sins was hindering the conversion of the Albigensians, withdrew into a forest near Toulouse, where he prayed continuously for three days and three nights. During this time he did nothing but weep and do harsh penances in order to appease the anger of God. He used his discipline so much that his body was lacerated, and finally he fell into a coma.

At this point our Lady appeared to him, accompanied by three angels, and she said, "Dear Dominic, do you know which weapon the Blessed Trinity wants to use to reform the world?"

"Oh, my Lady," answered Saint Dominic, "you know far better than I do, because next to your Son Jesus Christ you have always been the chief instrument of our salvation."

Then our Lady replied, "I want you to know that, in this kind of warfare, the principal weapon has always been the Angelic Psalter, which is the foundation-stone of the New Testament. Therefore, if you want to reach these hardened souls and win them over to God, preach my Psalter."

So he arose, comforted, and burning with zeal for the conversion of the people in that district, he made straight for the cathedral. At once unseen angels rang the bells to gather the people together, and Saint Dominic began to preach.

At the very beginning of his sermon, an appalling storm broke out, the earth shook, the sun was darkened, and there was so much thunder and lightning that all were very much afraid. Even greater was their fear when, looking at a picture of our Lady exposed in a prominent place, they saw her raise her arms to heaven three times to call down God's vengeance upon them if they failed to be converted, to amend their lives, and seek the protection of the holy Mother of God.

God wished, by means of these supernatural phenomena, to spread the new devotion of the holy Rosary and to make it more widely known.

At last, at the prayer of Saint Dominic, the storm came to an end, and he went on preaching. So fervently and compellingly did he explain the importance and value of the Rosary that almost all the people of Toulouse embraced it and renounced their false beliefs. In a very short time a great improvement was seen in the town; people began leading Christian lives and gave up their former bad habits.

Third Rose

12. The miraculous way in which the devotion to the holy Rosary was established is something of a parallel to the way in which God gave his law to the world on Mount Sinai, and it obviously proves its value and importance.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, instructed by the Blessed Virgin as well as by his own experience, Saint Dominic preached the Rosary for the rest of his life. He preached it by his example as well as by his sermons, in cities and in country places, to people of high station and low, before scholars and the uneducated, to Catholics and to heretics.

The Rosary, which he said every day, was his preparation for every sermon and his little tryst with our Lady immediately after preaching.

13. One day he had to preach at Notre Dame in Paris, and it happened to be the feast of St. John the Evangelist. He was in a little chapel behind the high altar prayerfully preparing his sermon by saying the Rosary, as he always did, when our Lady appeared to him and said: "Dominic, even

though what you have planned to say may be very good, I am bringing you a much better sermon."

Saint Dominic took in his hands the book our Lady proffered, read the sermon carefully and, when he had understood it and meditated on it, he gave thanks to her.

When the time came, he went up into the pulpit and, in spite of the feast day, made no mention of Saint John other than to say that he had been found worthy to be the guardian of the Queen of Heaven. The congregation was made up of theologians and other eminent people, who were used to hearing unusual and polished discourses; but Saint Dominic told them that it was not his desire to give them a learned discourse, wise in the eyes of the world, but that he would speak in the simplicity of the Holy Spirit and with his forcefulness.

So he began preaching the Rosary and explained the Hail Mary word by word as he would to a group of children, and used the very simple illustrations which were in the book given him by our Lady.

14. Carthage, the great scholar, quoting Blessed Alan de la Roche in *De Dignitate Psalterii*, describes how this took place.

"Blessed Alan writes that one day Father Dominic said to him in a vision, 'My son, it is good to preach; but there is always a danger of looking for praise rather than the salvation of souls. Listen carefully to what happened to me in Paris, so that you may be on your guard against this kind of mistake. I was to preach in the great church dedicated to the

Blessed Virgin and I was particularly anxious to give a fine sermon, not out of pride, but because of the high intellectual stature of the congregation.

"An hour before the time I had to preach, I was dutifully saying my Rosary - as I always did before giving a sermon - when I fell into ecstasy. I saw my beloved friend, the Mother of God, coming towards me with a book in her hand. "Dominic," she said, "your sermon for today may be very good indeed, but no matter how good it is, I have brought you one that is very much better."

"Of course I was overjoyed, and I took the book and read every word of it. Just as our Lady had said, I found exactly the right things to say in my sermon, so I thanked her with all my heart.

"When it was time to begin, I saw that the University of Paris had turned out in full force, as well as a large number of noblemen. They had all seen and heard of the great things that the good Lord had been doing through me.

"I went up into the pulpit. It was the feast of Saint John the Evangelist but all I said about him was that he had been found worthy to be the guardian of the Queen of Heaven. Then I addressed the congregation:

"My Lords and illustrious doctors of the University, you are accustomed to hearing learned sermons suited to your refined tastes. Now I do not want to speak to you in the scholarly language of human wisdom but, on the contrary, to show you the Spirit of God and his greatness."

Here ends the quotation from Blessed Alan, after which Carthagena goes on to say in his own words, "Then Saint Dominic explained the Angelic Salutation to them, using simple comparisons and examples from everyday life."

15. Blessed Alan, according to Carthagena, mentioned several other occasions when our Lord and our Lady appeared to Saint Dominic to urge him and inspire him to preach the Rosary more and more in order to wipe out sin and convert sinners and heretics.

In another passage Carthagena says, "Blessed Alan said our Lady revealed to him that, after she had appeared to Saint Dominic, her blessed Son appeared to him and said, 'Dominic, I rejoice to see that you are not relying on your own wisdom and that, rather than seek the empty praise of men, you are working with great humility for the salvation of souls.

"But many priests want to preach thunderously against the worst kinds of sin at the very outset, failing to realize that before a sick person is given bitter medicine, he needs to be prepared by being put into the right frame of mind to really benefit by it.

"That is why, before doing anything else, priests should try to kindle a love of prayer in people's hearts and especially a love of my Angelic Psalter. If only they would all start saying it and would really persevere, God in his mercy could hardly refuse to give them his grace. So I want you to preach my Rosary."

16. In another place Blessed Alan says, "All priests say a Hail Mary with the faithful before preaching, to ask for God's grace.' They do this because of a revelation that Saint Dominic had from our Lady. 'My son,' she said one day, 'do not be surprised that your sermons fail to bear the results you had hoped for. You are trying to cultivate a piece of ground which has not had any rain. Now when God planned to renew the face of the earth, he started by sending down rain from heaven - and this was the Angelic Salutation. In this way God reformed the world.

"So when you give a sermon, urge people to say my Rosary, and in this way your words will bear much fruit for souls.'

"Saint Dominic lost no time in obeying, and from then on he exerted great influence by his sermons." (This last quotation is from "The Book of Miracles of the Holy Rosary," written in Italian, also found in Justin's works, Sermon 143.)

17. I have been very pleased to quote these well-known authors word for word for the benefit of those who might otherwise have doubts as to the marvellous power of the Rosary.

As long as priests followed Saint Dominic's example and preached devotion to the holy Rosary, piety and fervour thrived throughout the Christian world and in those religious orders which were devoted to the Rosary. But since people have neglected this gift from heaven, all kinds of sin and disorder have spread far and wide.

Fourth Rose

18. All things, even the holiest, are subject to change, especially when they are dependent on man's free will. It is hardly to be wondered at, then, that the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary only retained its first fervour for a century after it was instituted by Saint Dominic. After this it was like a thing buried and forgotten.

Doubtless, too, the wicked scheming and jealousy of the devil were largely responsible for getting people to neglect the Rosary, and thus block the flow of God's grace which it had drawn upon the world.

Thus, in 1349 God punished the whole of Europe with the most terrible plague that had ever been known. Starting in the east, it spread throughout Italy, Germany, France, Poland and Hungary, bringing desolation wherever it went, for out of a hundred men hardly one lived to tell the tale. Big cities, towns, villages and monasteries were almost completely deserted during the three years that the epidemic lasted.

This scourge of God was quickly followed by two others, the heresy of the Flagellants and a tragic schism in 1376.

19. Later on, when these trials were over, thanks to the mercy of God, our Lady told Blessed Alan to revive the former Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. Blessed Alan was one of the Dominican Fathers at the monastery at Dinan, in Brittany. He was an eminent theologian and a famous preacher. Our Lady chose him because, since the Confraternity had

originally been started in that province, it was fitting that a Dominican from the same province should have the honour of re-establishing it.

Blessed Alan began this great work in 1460, after a special warning from our Lord. This is how he received that urgent message, as he himself tells it:

One day when he was offering Mass, our Lord, who wished to spur him on to preach the holy Rosary, spoke to him in the Sacred Host. "How can you crucify me again so soon?" Jesus said. "What did you say, Lord?" asked Blessed Alan, horrified. "You crucified me once before by your sins," answered Jesus, "and I would willingly be crucified again rather than have my Father offended by the sins you used to commit. You are crucifying me again now because you have all the learning and understanding that you need to preach my Mother's Rosary, and you are not doing it. If you only did that, you could teach many souls the right path and lead them away from sin. But you are not doing it, and so you yourself are guilty of the sins that they commit."

This terrible reproach made Blessed Alan solemnly resolve to preach the Rosary unceasingly.

20. Our Lady also said to him one day to inspire him to preach the Rosary more and more, "You were a great sinner in your youth, but I obtained the grace of your conversion from my Son. Had such a thing been possible, I would have liked to have gone through all kinds of suffering to save you,

because converted sinners are a glory to me. And I would have done that also to make you worthy of preaching my Rosary far and wide."

Saint Dominic appeared to Blessed Alan as well and told him of the great results of his ministry: he had preached the Rosary unceasingly, his sermons had borne great fruit and many people had been converted during his missions.

He said to Blessed Alan, "See what wonderful results I have had through preaching the Rosary. You and all who love our Lady ought to do the same so that, by means of this holy practice of the Rosary, you may draw all people to the real science of the virtues."

Briefly, then, this is the history of how Saint Dominic established the holy Rosary and of how Blessed Alan de la Roche restored it.

Fifth Rose

21. Strictly speaking, there can be only one kind of Confraternity of the Rosary, that is, one whose members agree to say the entire Rosary of 150 Hail Marys every day. However, considering the fervour of those who say it, we may distinguish three kinds: Ordinary Membership, which entails saying the complete Rosary once a week; Perpetual Membership, which requires it to be said only once a year; Daily Membership, which obliges one to say it all every day, that is, the fifteen decades made up of 150 Hail Marys.

None of these oblige under pain of sin. It is not even a venial sin to fail in this duty because such an undertaking is entirely voluntary and

supererogatory. Needless to say, people should not join the Confraternity if they do not intend to fulfil their obligation by saying the Rosary as often as is required, without, however, neglecting the duties of their state in life.

So whenever the Rosary clashes with a duty of one's state in life, holy as the Rosary is, one must give preference to the duty to be performed.

Similarly, sick people are not obliged to say the whole Rosary or even part of it if this effort might tire them and make them worse.

If you have been unable to say it because of some duty required by obedience or because you genuinely forgot, or because of some urgent necessity, you have not committed even a venial sin. You will then receive the benefits of the Confraternity just the same, sharing in the graces and merits of your brothers and sisters in the Rosary, who are saying it throughout the world.

And, my dear Catholic people, even if you fail to say your Rosary out of sheer carelessness or laziness, as long as you do not have any formal contempt for it, you do not sin, absolutely speaking, but you forfeit your participation in the prayers, good works and merits of the Confraternity. Moreover, because you have not been faithful in things that are little and of supererogation, almost without knowing it you may fall into the habit of neglecting big things, such as those duties which bind under pain of sin; for "He that scorns small things shall fall little by little."

Sixth Rose

22. From the time Saint Dominic established the devotion to the holy Rosary up to the time when Blessed Alan de la Roche re-established it in 1460, it has always been called the Psalter of Jesus and Mary. This is because it has the same number of Hail Marys as there are psalms in the Book of the Psalms of David. Since simple and uneducated people are not able to say the Psalms of David, the Rosary is held to be just as fruitful for them as David's Psalter is for others.

But the Rosary can be considered to be even more valuable than the latter for three reasons:

1. Firstly, because the Angelic Psalter bears a nobler fruit, that of the Word incarnate, whereas David's Psalter only prophesies his coming;
2. Just as the real thing is more important than its prefiguration and the body surpasses the shadow, so the Psalter of our Lady is greater than David's Psalter, which did no more than prefigure it;
3. Because our Lady's Psalter or the Rosary made up of the Our Father and Hail Mary is the direct work of the Blessed Trinity.

Here is what the learned Carthage says about it:

The scholarly writer of Aix-la-Chapelle says in his book, *The Rose Crown*, dedicated to the Emperor Maximilian: "It cannot be maintained that Salutation of Mary is a recent innovation. It spread almost with the Church itself. For at the very beginnings of the Church the more educated members of the faithful celebrated the praises of God in the 150 psalms of

David. The ordinary people, who encountered more difficulty in divine service, thus conceived a holy emulation of them.... They considered, which is indeed true, that the heavenly praises of the Rosary contained all the divine secrets of the psalms, for, if the psalms sing of the one who is to come, the Rosary proclaims him as having come.

"That is how they began to call their prayer of 150 Salutations 'The Psalter of Mary,' and to precede each decade with an Our Father, as was done by those who recited the psalms."

23. The Psalter or Rosary of our Lady is divided into three chaplets of five decades each, for the following reasons:

1. to honour the three persons of the Blessed Trinity;
- 2 to honour the life, death and glory of Jesus Christ;
3. to imitate the Church triumphant, to help the members of the Church militant, and to bring relief to the Church suffering;
4. to imitate the three groups into which the psalms are divided, the first being for the purgative life, the second for the illuminative life, and the third for the unitive life;
5. to give us graces in abundance during life, peace at death, and glory in eternity.

Seventh Rose

24. Ever since Blessed Alan de la Roche re-established this devotion, the voice of the people, which is the voice of God, gave it the name of the

Rosary, which means "crown of roses." That is to say that every time people say the Rosary devoutly they place on the heads of Jesus and Mary 153 white roses and sixteen red roses. Being heavenly flowers, these roses will never fade or lose their beauty.

Our Lady has approved and confirmed this name of the Rosary; she has revealed to several people that each time they say a Hail Mary they are giving her a beautiful rose, and that each complete Rosary makes her a crown of roses.

25. The Jesuit brother, Alphonsus Rodriguez, used to say his Rosary with such fervour that he often saw a red rose come out of his mouth at each Our Father, and a white rose at each Hail Mary, both equal in beauty and differing only in colour.

The chronicles of St. Francis tell of a young friar who had the praiseworthy habit of saying this crown of our Lady every day before dinner. One day, for some reason or other, he did not manage to say it. The refectory bell had already been rung when he asked the Superior to allow him to say it before coming to the table, and, having obtained permission, he withdrew to his cell to pray.

After he had been gone a long time, the Superior sent another friar to fetch him, and he found him in his room bathed in a heavenly light in the presence of our Lady and two angels. Beautiful roses kept issuing from his mouth at each Hail Mary, and the two angels were taking them one by one and placing them on our Lady's head, while she smilingly accepted them.

Finally, two other friars who had been sent to find out what had happened to the first two saw the same scene, and our Lady did not leave until the whole Rosary had been said.

So the complete Rosary is a large crown of roses and each chaplet of five decades is a little wreath of flowers or a little crown of heavenly roses which we place on the heads of Jesus and Mary. The rose is the queen of flowers, and so the Rosary is the rose of devotions and the most important one.

Eighth Rose

26. It is scarcely possible for me to put into words how our Lady esteems the Rosary and how she prefers it to all other devotions. Nor can I sufficiently express how wonderfully she rewards those who work to make known the devotion, to establish it and spread it nor, on the other hand, how strictly she punishes those who work against it.

St. Dominic had nothing more at heart during his life than to praise our Lady, to preach her greatness, and to inspire everybody to honour her by saying her Rosary. As a reward he received countless graces from her. This powerful Queen of heaven crowned his labours with many miracles and prodigies. God always granted him what he asked through our Lady. The greatest favour of all was that she helped him to crush the Albigensian heresy and made him the founder and patriarch of a great religious order.

27. As for Blessed Alan de la Roche, who restored the devotion of the Rosary, he received many privileges from our Lady; she graciously

appeared to him several times to teach him how to work out his salvation, to become a good priest and perfect religious, and how to pattern himself on our Lord.

He used to be horribly tempted and persecuted by devils, and then a deep sadness would fall upon him and sometimes he would be near to despair. But our Lady always comforted him by her presence, which banished the clouds of darkness from his soul.

She taught him how to say the Rosary, explaining its value and the fruits to be gained by it; and she gave him a great and glorious privilege, which was the honour of being called her new spouse. As a token of her chaste love for him, she placed a ring upon his finger and a necklace made of her own hair about his neck and gave him a Rosary.

Fr. Tritème, the learned Carthage and Martin of Navarre, as well as others, have spoken of him in terms of highest praise. Blessed Alan died at Zwolle, in Flanders, on September 8th, 1475, after having brought more than a hundred thousand people into the Confraternity.

28. Blessed Thomas of St. John was well known for his sermons on the holy Rosary, and the devil, jealous of his success, tortured him so much that he fell ill and was sick for such a long time that the doctors gave him up. One night, when he really thought he was dying, the devil appeared to him in the most terrible form imaginable. There was a picture of our Lady near his bed; he looked at it and cried with all his heart and soul and strength, "Help me, save me, my dearest Mother." No sooner had he said

this than the picture seemed to come alive and our Lady put out her hand, took him by the arm and said, "Do not be afraid, Thomas my son, here I am and I am going to save you; get up now and go on preaching my Rosary as you used to do. I promise to shield you from your enemies."

When our Lady said this, the devil fled and Blessed Thomas got up, finding himself in perfect health. He then thanked our Lady with tears of joy. He resumed his Rosary apostolate, and his sermons were wonderfully successful.

29. Our Lady not only blesses those who preach her Rosary but she highly rewards all those who, by their example, get others to say it.

Alphonsus, King of Leon and Galicia, very much wanted all his servants to honour the Blessed Virgin by saying the Rosary, so he used to hang a large rosary on his belt, though he never said it himself. Nevertheless, his wearing it encouraged his courtiers to say the Rosary devoutly.

One day the King fell seriously ill and when he was given up for dead he found himself, in spirit, before the judgment-seat of our Lord. Many devils were there accusing him of all the sins he had committed, and our Lord was about to condemn him when our Lady came forward to speak in his favour. She called for a pair of scales and had his sins placed in one of the balances, while she put the large rosary which he had always worn on the other scale, together with all the rosaries that had been said through his example. It was found that the Rosaries weighed more than his sins.

Looking at him with great kindness, our Lady said, "As a reward for the little service you did for me in wearing my rosary, I have obtained a great grace for you from my Son. Your life will be spared for a few more years. See that you spend those years wisely, and do penance."

When the King regained consciousness he cried out, "Blessed be the Rosary of the most holy Virgin Mary, by which I have been delivered from eternal damnation."

After he had recovered his health, he spent the rest of his life in spreading devotion to the Rosary, and said it faithfully every day.

People who love the Blessed Virgin ought to follow the example of King Alphonsus and that of the saints whom I have mentioned, so that they too may win other souls for the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. They will receive great graces here on earth and finally eternal life. "Those who explain me will have life everlasting."

Ninth Rose

30. It is very wicked indeed and unjust to hinder the progress of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. God has severely punished many of those who have been so benighted as to scorn the Confraternity and have sought to destroy it.

Even though God has set his seal of approval on the Rosary by many miracles, and though it has been approved by the Church in many papal bulls, there are only too many people who are against the holy Rosary

today. Such are free-thinkers and those who scorn religion, who either condemn the Rosary or try to turn others away from it.

It is easy to see that they have absorbed the poison of hell and that they are inspired by the devil; for no one can condemn devotion to the holy Rosary without condemning all that is most holy in the Catholic faith, such as the Lord's prayer, the Hail Mary and the mysteries of the life, death and glory of Jesus Christ and his holy Mother.

These freethinkers, who cannot bear to have people saying the Rosary, often fall into an heretical state of mind without realizing it and come to hate the Rosary and its mysteries.

To have a loathing for confraternities is to fall away from God and true piety, for our Lord himself has told us that he is always in the midst of those who are gathered together in his name. No good Catholic would neglect the many great indulgences which the Church has granted to confraternities. Finally, to dissuade others from joining the Rosary Confraternity is to be an enemy of souls, because the Rosary is a means of avoiding sin and leading a good life.

St. Bonaventure says in his "Psalter" that whoever neglects our Lady will die in his sins. What, then, must be the punishment in store for those who turn people away from devotion to her?

Tenth Rose

31. While St. Dominic was preaching the Rosary in Carcassone, a heretic made fun of his miracles and the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, and this

prevented other heretics from being converted. As a punishment God allowed fifteen thousand devils to enter the man's body.

His parents took him to Father Dominic to be delivered from the evil spirits. He started to pray and he begged everyone who was there to say the Rosary out loud with him, and at each Hail Mary our Lady drove a hundred devils out of the man, and they came out in the form of red-hot coals.

After he had been delivered, he abjured his former errors, was converted and joined the Rosary Confraternity. Several of his associates did the same, having been greatly moved by his punishment and by the power of the Rosary.

32. The learned Franciscan, Carthagenia, as well as several other authors, says that an extraordinary event took place in 1482. The venerable Fr. James Sprenger and the religious of his order were zealously working to re-establish devotion to the Rosary and its Confraternity in the city of Cologne. Unfortunately, two priests who were famous for their preaching ability were jealous of the great influence they were exerting through preaching the Rosary. These two Fathers spoke against this devotion whenever they had a chance, and as they were very eloquent and had a great reputation, they persuaded many people not to join the Confraternity. One of them, the better to achieve his wicked end, wrote a special sermon against the Rosary and planned to give it the following Sunday. But when the time came for the sermon he did not appear and,

after a certain amount of waiting, someone went to fetch him. He was found to be dead, and he had evidently died without anyone to help him.

After persuading himself that this death was due to natural causes, the other priest decided to carry out his friend's plan and give a similar sermon on another day, hoping to put an end to the Confraternity of the Rosary. However, when the day came for him to preach and it was time to give the sermon, God punished him by striking him down with paralysis which deprived him of the use of his limbs and of his power of speech.

At last he admitted his fault and that of his friend and in his heart he silently besought our Lady to help him. He promised that if only she would cure him, he would preach the Rosary with as much zeal as that with which he had formerly fought against it. For this end he implored her to restore his health and his speech, which she did, and finding himself instantaneously cured he rose up like another Saul, a persecutor turned defender of the holy Rosary. He publicly acknowledged his former error and ever afterwards preached the wonders of the Rosary with great zeal and eloquence.

33. I am quite sure that freethinkers and ultra-critical people of today will question the truth of the stories in this little book, as they question most things, but all I have done has been to copy them from very good contemporary authors and, in part, from a book written a short time ago, *The Mystical Rose-tree*, by Fr. Antonin Thomas, O.P.

Everyone knows that there are three different kinds of faith by which we believe different kinds of stories. To stories from Holy Scripture we owe divine faith; to stories on non-religious subjects which are not against common sense and are written by trustworthy authors, we pay the tribute of human faith; and to stories about holy subjects which are told by good authors and are not in any way contrary to reason, to faith or to morals (even though they may sometimes deal with happenings which are above the ordinary), we pay the tribute of a pious faith.

I agree that we must be neither too credulous nor too critical, and that we should keep a happy medium in all things in order to find just where truth and virtue lie. But on the other hand, I know equally well that charity easily leads us to believe all that is not contrary to faith or morals: "Charity believes all things," in the same way as pride induces us to doubt even well authenticated stories on the plea that they are not to be found in Holy Scripture.

This is one of the devil's traps; heretics of the past who denied tradition have fallen into it, and over-critical people of today are falling into it too, without even realizing it. People of this kind refuse to believe what they do not understand or what is not to their liking, simply because of their own spirit of pride and independence.

SECOND DECADE

The surpassing merit of the Rosary as seen in the prayers which compose it.

Eleventh Rose [The Creed]

34. The Creed or the Symbol of the Apostles, which is said on the crucifix of the rosary, is a holy summary of all the Christian truths. It is a prayer that has great merit, because faith is the root, foundation and beginning of all Christian virtues, of all eternal virtues, and of all prayers that are pleasing to God. "Anyone who comes to God must believe," and the greater his faith the more merit his prayer will have, the more powerful it will be, and the more it will glorify God.

I shall not take time here to explain the Creed word for word, but I cannot resist saying that the first words, "I believe in God," are wonderfully effective as a means of sanctifying our souls and putting the devils to rout, because these words contain the acts of the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.

It was by saying these words that many saints overcame temptations, especially those against faith, hope or charity, either during their lifetime or at the hour of their death. They were also the last words of St. Peter, Martyr. A heretic had cleft his head in two by a blow of his sword, and although St. Peter was at his last gasp, he managed to trace these words in the sand with his finger.

35. The holy Rosary contains many mysteries of Jesus and Mary, and since faith is the only key which opens up these mysteries for us, we must begin

the Rosary by saying the Creed very devoutly, and the stronger our faith the more merit our Rosary will have.

This faith must be lively and informed by charity; in other words, to recite the Rosary properly it is necessary to be in God's grace, or at least seeking it. This faith must be strong and constant, that is, one must not be looking for sensible devotion and spiritual consolation in the recitation of the Rosary; nor should one give it up because the mind is flooded with countless involuntary distractions, or because one experiences a strange distaste in the soul or an almost continual and oppressive fatigue of the body. Neither feelings, nor consolation, nor sighs, nor transports, nor the continual attention of the imagination are needed; faith and good intentions are quite enough. *Sola fides sufficit.*

Twelfth Rose [The Our Father]

36. The Our Father or the Lord's Prayer derives its great value above all from its author, who is neither a man nor an angel, but the King of angels and of men, our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Cyprian says it was necessary that he who came to give us the life of grace as our Saviour should teach us the way to pray as our heavenly Master.

The beautiful order, the tender forcefulness and the clarity of this divine prayer pay tribute to our divine Master's wisdom. It is a short prayer but can teach us so very much, and it is well within the grasp of uneducated people, while scholars find it a continual source of investigation into the mysteries of God.

The Our Father contains all the duties we owe to God, the acts of all the virtues and the petitions for all our spiritual and corporal needs. Tertullian says that the Our Father is a summary of the New Testament. Thomas a Kempis says that it surpasses all the desires of all the saints; that it is a condensation of all the beautiful sayings of all the psalms and canticles; that in it we ask God for everything that we need, that by it we praise him in the very best way; that by it we lift up our souls from earth to heaven and unite them closely to God.

37. St. John Chrysostom says that we cannot be our Master's disciples unless we pray as he did and in the way that he showed us. Moreover, God the Father listens more willingly to the prayer that we have learned from his Son rather than those of our own making, which have all our human limitations.

We should say the Our Father with the certitude that the eternal Father will hear us because it is the prayer of his Son, whom he always hears, and because we are his members. God will surely grant our petitions made through the Lord's Prayer because it is impossible to imagine that such a good Father could refuse a request couched in the language of so worthy a Son, reinforced by his merits, and made at his behest.

St. Augustine assures us that whenever we say the Our Father devoutly our venial sins are forgiven. The just man falls seven times, and in the Lord's Prayer he will find seven petitions which will both help him to avoid lapses and protect him from his spiritual enemies. Our Lord, knowing how weak and helpless we are, and how many difficulties we

endure, made his prayer short and easy to say, so that if we say it devoutly and often, we can be sure that God will quickly come to our aid.

38. I have a word for you, devout souls who pay little attention to the prayer that the Son of God gave us himself and asked us all to say: It is high time for you to change your way of thinking. You only esteem prayers that men have written, as though anybody, even the most inspired man in the whole world, could possibly know more about how we ought to pray than Jesus Christ himself! You look for prayers in books written by other men almost as though you were ashamed of saying the prayer that our Lord told us to say.

You have managed to convince yourself that the prayers in those books are for scholars and for the rich, and that the Rosary is only for women and children and the poor people. As if the prayers and praises you have been reading were more beautiful and more pleasing to God than those which are to be found in the Lord's Prayer! It is a very dangerous temptation to lose interest in the prayer that our Lord gave us and to take up prayers that men have written instead.

Not that I disapprove of prayers that saints have written to encourage the faithful to praise God, but it is not to be endured that they should prefer these to the prayer which was uttered by Wisdom incarnate. If they ignore this prayer, it is as though they passed by the spring to go to the brook, and refusing the clear water, they drink instead that which is dirty. For the Rosary, made up of the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary, is this clear and ever-flowing water which comes from the fountain of grace, whereas other

prayers which they look for in books are nothing but tiny streams which spring from this fountain.

39. People who say the Lord's Prayer carefully, weighing every word and meditating on them, may indeed call themselves blessed, for they find therein everything that they need or can wish for.

When we say this wonderful prayer, we touch God's heart at the very outset by calling him by that sweet name of Father.

"Our Father," he is the dearest of fathers: all-powerful in his creation, wonderful in the way he maintains the world, completely lovable in his divine Providence, all good and infinitely so in the Redemption. We have God for our Father, so we are all brothers, and heaven is our homeland and our heritage. This should be more than enough to teach us to love God and our neighbour, and to be detached from the things of this world.

So we ought to love our heavenly Father and say to him over and over again: "Our Father who art in heaven" -

Thou who dost fill heaven and earth
with the immensity of thy being,
Thou who art present everywhere:
Thou who art in the saints by thy glory,
in the damned by thy justice,
in the good by thy grace,
in sinners by the patience
with which thou dost tolerate them,

grant that we may always remember
that we come from thee;
grant that we may live as thy true children;
that we may direct our course towards thee alone
with all the ardour of our soul.

"Hallowed by thy name." The name of the Lord is holy and to be feared, said the prophet-king David, and heaven, according to Isaiah, echoes with the praises of the seraphim who unceasingly praise the holiness of the Lord, God of hosts.

We ask here that all the world may learn to know and adore the attributes of our God, who is so great and so holy. We ask that he may be known, loved and adored by pagans, Turks, Jews, barbarians and all infidels; that all men may serve and glorify him by a living faith, a staunch hope, a burning charity, and by the renouncing of all erroneous beliefs. In short, we pray that all men may be holy because our God himself is holy.

"Thy kingdom come." That is to say: May you reign in our souls by your grace, during life, so that after death we may be found worthy to reign with thee in thy kingdom, in perfect and unending bliss; that we firmly believe in this happiness to come; we hope for it and we expect it, because God the Father has promised it in his great goodness, and because it was purchased for us by the merits of God the Son; and it has been made known to us by the light of the Holy Spirit.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." As Tertullian says, this sentence does not mean in the least that we are afraid of people thwarting God's designs, because nothing whatsoever can happen without divine Providence having foreseen it and having made it fit into his plans beforehand. No obstruction in the whole world can possibly prevent the will of God from being carried out.

Rather, when we say these words, we ask God to make us humbly resigned to all that he has seen fit to send us in this life. We also ask him to help us to do, in all things and at all times, his holy will, made known to us by the commandments, promptly, lovingly and faithfully, as the angels and the blessed do in heaven.

40. "Give us this day our daily bread." Our Lord teaches us to ask God for everything that we need, whether in the spiritual or the temporal order. By asking for our daily bread, we humbly admit our own poverty and insufficiency, and pay tribute to our God, knowing that all temporal goods come from his Providence. When we say bread we ask for that which is necessary to live; and, of course that does not include luxuries.

We ask for this bread today, which means that we are concerned only for the present, leaving the morrow in the hands of Providence.

And when we ask for our daily bread, we recognize that we need God's help every day and that we are entirely dependent upon him for his help and protection.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Every sin, says St. Augustine and Tertullian, is a debt which we contract with God, and he in his justice requires payment down to the last farthing. Unfortunately we all have these sad debts.

No matter how many they may be, we should go to God with all confidence and with true sorrow for our sins, saying, "Our Father who art in heaven, forgive us our sins of thought and those of speech, forgive us our sins of commission and of omission which make us infinitely guilty in the eyes of thy justice.

"We dare to ask this because thou art our loving and merciful Father, and because we have forgiven those who have offended us, out of obedience to you and out of charity.

"Do not permit us, in spite of our infidelity to thy graces, to give in to the temptations of the world, the devil, and the flesh.

"But deliver us from evil." The evil of sin, from the evil of temporal punishment and of everlasting punishment, which we have rightly deserved.

"Amen." This word at the end of the Our Father is very consoling, and St. Jerome says that it is a sort of seal of approbation that God puts at the end of our petitions to assure us that he will grant our requests, as though he himself were answering:

"Amen! May it be as you have asked, for truly you have obtained what you asked for." That is what is meant by this word: Amen.

Thirteenth Rose

41. Each word of the Lord's Prayer is a tribute we pay to the perfections of God. We honour his fecundity by the name of Father.

Father,
thou who throughout eternity
dost beget a Son
who is God like thee,
eternal, consubstantial with thee,
who is of the very same essence as thee;
and is of like power
and goodness
and wisdom
as thou art....
Father and Son,
who, from your mutual love,
produce the Holy Spirit,
who is God like unto you;
three persons
but one God.

Our Father. This means that he is the Father of mankind, because he has created us and continues to sustain us, and because he has redeemed us. He is also the merciful Father of sinners, the Father who is the friend of the just, and the glorious Father of the blessed in heaven.

When we say Who art, we honour by these words the infinity and immensity and fullness of God's essence. God is rightly called "He who is;" that is to say, he exists of necessity, essentially, and eternally, because he is the Being of beings and the cause of all beings. He possesses within himself, in a super-eminent degree, the perfections of all beings, and he is in all of them by his essence, by his presence and by his power, but without being bounded by their limitations. We honour his sublimity and his glory and his majesty by the words Who art in heaven, that is to say, seated as on thy throne, holding sway over all men by thy justice.

When we say Hallowed be thy Name, we worship God's holiness; and we make obeisance to his kingship and bow to the justice of his laws by the words Thy kingdom come, praying that men will obey him on earth as the angels do in heaven.

We show our trust in his Providence by asking for our daily bread, and we appeal to his mercy when we ask for the forgiveness of our sins.

We look to his great power when we beg him not to lead us into temptation, and we show our faith in his goodness by our hope that he will deliver us from evil.

The Son of God has always glorified his Father by his works, and he came into the world to teach men to give glory to him. He showed men how to praise him by this prayer, which he taught us with his own lips. It is our duty, therefore, to say it often, with attention, and in the same spirit as he composed it.

Fourteenth Rose

42. We make as many acts of the noblest Christian virtues as we pronounce words when we recite this divine prayer attentively.

In saying "Our Father, who art in heaven," we make acts of faith, adoration and humility. When we ask that his name be hallowed, we show a burning zeal for his glory. When we ask for the spread of his kingdom, we make an act of hope; by the wish that his will be done on earth as it is in heaven, we show a spirit of perfect obedience. In asking for our daily bread, we practice poverty of spirit and detachment from worldly goods. When we beg him to forgive us our sins, we make an act of sorrow for them. By forgiving those who have trespassed against us, we give proof of the virtue of mercy in its highest degree. Through asking God's help in all our temptations, we make acts of humility, prudence and fortitude. As we wait for him to deliver us from evil, we exercise the virtue of patience.

Finally, while asking for all these things, not only for ourselves but also for our neighbour and for all members of the Church, we are carrying out our duty as true children of God, we are imitating him in his love which embraces all men and we are keeping the commandment of love of our neighbour.

43. If we mean in our hearts what we say with our lips, and if our intentions are not at variance with those expressed in the Lord's Prayer, then, by reciting this prayer, we hate all sin and we observe all of God's laws. For whenever we think that God is in heaven, that is to say, infinitely removed from us by the greatness of his majesty, we place ourselves in his

presence filled with overwhelming reverence. Then the fear of the Lord will chase away all pride and we will bow down before God in utter nothingness.

When we pronounce the name "Father" and remember that we owe our existence to God, by means of our parents, and even the instruction we have received by means of our teachers, who take the place of God and are his living images, we cannot help paying them honour and respect, or, to be more exact, to honour God in them. And nothing would be farther from our thoughts than to be disrespectful to them or hurt them.

When we pray that God's holy name be glorified, we cannot be farther from profaning it. If we really look upon the kingdom of God as our heritage, we cannot possibly be attached to the things of this world.

If we sincerely ask God that our neighbour may have the same blessings that we ourselves stand in need of, it goes without saying that we will give up all hatred, quarrelling and jealousy. And if we ask God for our daily bread, we shall learn to hate gluttony and sensual pleasures which thrive in rich surroundings.

While sincerely asking God to forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us, we no longer give way to anger and revenge, we return good for evil and we love our enemies.

To ask God to save us from falling into sin when we are tempted is to give proof that we are fighting laziness and that we are genuinely seeking means to root out vicious habits and to work out our salvation.

To pray God to deliver us from evil is to fear his justice, and this will give us true happiness, for the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. It is through the virtue of the fear of God that men avoid sin.

Fifteenth Rose

44. The Angelic Salutation, or Hail Mary, is so heavenly and so beyond us in its depth of meaning, that Blessed Alan de la Roche held that no mere creature could ever understand it, and that only our Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, can really explain it.

Its enormous value is due, first of all, to our Lady to whom it was addressed, to the purpose of the Incarnation of the Word, for which reason this prayer was brought from heaven, and also to the archangel Gabriel who was the first ever to say it.

The Angelic Salutation is a most concise summary of all that Catholic theology teaches about the Blessed Virgin. It is divided into two parts, that of praise and that of petition. The first shows all that goes to make up Mary's greatness; and the second, all that we need to ask her for, and all that we may expect to receive through her goodness.

The most Blessed Trinity revealed the first part of it to us; St. Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, added the second; and the Church gave us the conclusion in the year 430 when she condemned the Nestorian heresy at the Council of Ephesus and defined that the Blessed Virgin is truly the Mother of God. At this time she ordered us to pray to our Lady under this

glorious title by saying, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death."

45. The greatest event in the whole history of the world was the Incarnation of the eternal Word by whom the world was redeemed and peace was restored between God and men. Our Lady was chosen as his instrument for this tremendous event, and it was put into effect when she was greeted with the Angelic Salutation. The archangel Gabriel, one of the leading princes of the heavenly court, was chosen as ambassador to bear these glad tidings.

In the Angelic Salutation can be seen the faith and hope of the patriarchs, the prophets and the apostles. Furthermore, it gives to martyrs their unswerving constancy and strength, it is the wisdom of the doctors of the Church, the perseverance of the holy confessors and the life of all religious (Blessed Alan). It is the new hymn of the law of grace, the joy of angels and men, and the hymn which terrifies devils and puts them to shame.

By the Angelic Salutation God became man, a virgin became the Mother of God, the souls of the just were delivered from Limbo, the empty thrones in heaven have been filled, sin has been pardoned, grace been given to us, the sick been made well, the dead brought back to life, exiles brought home, the Blessed Trinity has been appeased, and men obtained eternal life.

Finally, the Angelic Salutation is the rainbow in the sky, a sign of the mercy and grace which God has given to the world (Blessed Alan).

Sixteenth Rose

46. Even though there is nothing so great as the majesty of God and nothing so low as man in so far as he is a sinner, Almighty God does not despise our poor prayers. On the contrary, he is pleased when we sing his praises.

And the Angel's greeting to our Lady is one of the most beautiful hymns which we could possibly sing to the glory of the Most High. "To you will I sing a new song." This new hymn, which David foretold would be sung at the coming of the Messiah, is none other than the Angelic Salutation.

There is an old hymn and a new hymn: the first is that which the Jews sang out of gratitude to God for creating them and maintaining them in existence, for delivering them from captivity and leading them safely through the Red Sea, for giving them manna to eat, and for all his other blessings.

The new hymn is that which Christians sing in thanksgiving for the graces of the Incarnation and the Redemption. As these marvels were brought about by the Angelic Salutation, so also do we repeat the same salutation to thank the most Blessed Trinity for the immeasurable goodness shown to us.

We praise God the Father because he so loved the world that he gave us his only Son as our Saviour. We bless the Son because he deigned to leave heaven and come down upon earth, because he was made man and redeemed us. We glorify the Holy Spirit because he formed our Lord's

pure body in the womb of our Lady, that body which was the victim for our sins. In this spirit of deep thankfulness should we, then, always say the Hail Mary, making acts of faith, hope, love and thanksgiving for the priceless gift of salvation.

47. Although this new hymn is in praise of the Mother of God and is sung directly to her, it is nevertheless most glorious to the Blessed Trinity, for any honour we pay to our Lady returns inevitably to God, the source of all her perfections and virtues. God the Father is glorified when we honour the most perfect of his creatures; God the Son is glorified when we praise his most pure Mother; the Holy Spirit is glorified when we are lost in admiration at the graces with which he has filled his spouse.

When we praise and bless our Lady by saying the Angelic Salutation, she always refers these praises to God in the same way as she did when she was praised by St. Elizabeth. The latter blessed her in her high dignity as Mother of God and our Lady immediately returned these praises to God in her beautiful Magnificat.

48. Just as the Angelic Salutation gave glory to the Blessed Trinity, it is also the very highest praise that we can give to Mary.

One day, when St. Mechtilde was praying and was trying to think of some way in which she could express her love of the Blessed Virgin better than before, she fell into ecstasy. Our Lady appeared to her with the Angelic Salutation written in letters of gold upon her breast and said to her, "My daughter, I want you to know that no one can please me more than by

saying the greeting which the most adorable Trinity presented to me and by which I was raised to the dignity of the Mother of God.

"By the word Ave, which is the name of Eve, Eva, I learned that God in his infinite power had preserved me from all sin and its attendant misery which the first woman had been subject to.

"The name Mary, which means 'lady of light,' shows that God has filled me with wisdom and light, like a shining star, to light up heaven and earth.

"The words, full of grace, remind me that the Holy Spirit has showered so many graces upon me that I am able to give these graces in abundance to those who ask for them through my mediation.

"When people say, The Lord is with thee, they renew the indescribable joy that was mine when the eternal Word became incarnate in my womb.

"When you say to me, Blessed art thou among women, I praise the mercy of God who has raised me to this exalted degree of happiness.

"And at the words, Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus, the whole of heaven rejoices with me to see my Son Jesus adored and glorified for having saved mankind."

Seventeenth Rose

49. Blessed Alan de la Roche, who was so deeply devoted to the Blessed Virgin, had many revelations from her, and we know that he confirmed the truth of these revelations by a solemn oath. Three of them stand out

with special emphasis: the first, that if people fail to say the Hail Mary, which has saved the world, out of carelessness, or because they are lukewarm, or because they hate it, this is an indication that they will probably be condemned to eternal punishment.

The second truth is that those who love this divine salutation bear the very special stamp of predestination.

The third is that those to whom God has given this favour of loving our Lady and of serving her out of love must take very great care to continue to love and serve her until the time when she shall have had them placed in heaven by her Son in the degree of glory which they have earned
(Blessed Alan)

50. Heretics, all of whom are children of the devil and who clearly bear the sign of God's reprobation, have a horror of the Hail Mary. They still say the Our Father, but never the Hail Mary; they would rather carry a poisonous snake about them than a rosary.

Among Catholics, those who bear the mark of God's reprobation think but little of the Rosary. They either neglect to say it or only say it quickly and in a lukewarm manner.

Even if I did not believe what was revealed to Blessed Alan de la Roche, even then my own experience would be enough to convince me of this terrible but consoling truth. I do not know, nor do I see clearly, how it can be that a devotion which seems to be so small can be the infallible sign of

eternal salvation, and how its absence can be the sign of God's eternal displeasure; nevertheless, nothing could be more true.

In our own day we see that people who hold new doctrines that have been condemned by the Church, with all their would-be piety, ignore the devotion to the Rosary and often dissuade their acquaintances from saying it with all sorts of fine pretexts. They are very careful not to condemn the Rosary and the Scapular, as the Calvinists do, but the way they set about attacking them is all the more deadly because it is the more cunning. I shall refer to it again later on.

51. The Hail Mary, the Rosary, is the prayer and the infallible touchstone by which I can tell those who are led by the Spirit of God from those who are deceived by the devil. I have known souls who seemed to soar like eagles to the heights by their sublime contemplation and yet were pitifully led astray by the devil. I only found out how wrong they were when I learned that they scorned the Hail Mary and the Rosary, which they considered as being far beneath them.

The Hail Mary is a blessed dew that falls from heaven upon the souls of the predestinate. It gives them a marvellous spiritual fertility so that they can grow in all virtues. The more the garden of the soul is watered by this prayer, the more enlightened in mind we become, the more zealous in heart, the stronger against all our enemies.

The Hail Mary is a sharp and flaming shaft which, joined to the Word of God, gives the preacher the strength to pierce, move, and convert the most hardened hearts, even if he has little or no natural gift for preaching.

As I have already said, this was the great secret that our Lady taught St. Dominic and Blessed Alan for the conversion of heretics and sinners. Saint Antoninus tells us that that is why many priests acquired the habit of saying a Hail Mary at the beginning of their sermons.

Eighteenth Rose

52. This heavenly salutation draws down upon us the blessings of Jesus and Mary in abundance, for it is an infallible truth that Jesus and Mary reward in a marvellous way those who glorify them. "I love those who love me. I enrich them and fill their treasures." That is what Jesus and Mary say to us. "Those who sow blessings will also reap blessings."

Now if we say the Hail Mary properly, is not that a way to love, bless and glorify Jesus and Mary? In each Hail Mary we bless both Jesus and Mary: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

By each Hail Mary we give our Lady the same honour that God gave her when he sent the archangel Gabriel to greet her for him. How could anyone possibly think that Jesus and Mary, who often do good to those who curse them, could ever curse those who bless and honour them by the Hail Mary?

Both Saint Bernard and Saint Bonaventure say that the Queen of Heaven is certainly no less grateful and good than gracious and well-mannered people of this world. Just as she excels in all other perfections, she surpasses us all in the virtue of gratitude; so she will never let us honour her with respect without repaying us a hundredfold. Saint Bonaventure says that Mary will greet us with grace if we greet her with the Hail Mary.

Who could possibly understand the graces and blessings which the greeting and tender regard of the Virgin Mary effect in us? From the very first instant that Saint Elizabeth heard the greeting given her by the Mother of God, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and the child in her womb leaped for joy. If we make ourselves worthy of the greeting and blessing of our Lady, we shall certainly be filled with graces and a flood of spiritual consolations will flow into our souls.

Nineteenth Rose

53. It is written, "Give, and it shall be given to you." To take Blessed Alan's illustration of this: "Supposing I were to give you a hundred and fifty diamonds every day, even if you were an enemy of mine, would you not forgive me? Would you not treat me as a friend and give me all the graces that you were able to give? If you want to gain the riches of grace and of glory, salute the Blessed Virgin, honour your good Mother."

"He who honours his Mother (the Blessed Virgin) is as one who lays up a treasure." Present her every day with at least fifty Hail Marys, for each one is worth fifteen precious stones, which are more pleasing to her than all the riches of this world put together.

And you can then expect great things from her generosity. She is our Mother and our friend. She is the empress of the universe and loves us more than all the mothers and queens of the world have ever loved any one human being, for, as St. Augustine says, the charity of the Blessed Virgin far surpasses the natural love of all mankind and even of all the angels.

54. One day Saint Gertrude had a vision of our Lord counting gold coins. She summoned the courage to ask him what he was doing, and he answered, "I am counting the Hail Marys that you have said; this is the money with which you purchase heaven."

The holy and learned Jesuit, Father Suarez, was so deeply aware of the value of the Angelic Salutation that he said he would gladly give all his learning for the price of one Hail Mary well said.

55. Blessed Alan de la Roche said, "Let everyone who loves you, O most holy Mary, listen to this and drink it in:

"Whenever I say Hail, Mary, the court of heaven rejoices and earth is lost in wonderment; I despise the world and my heart is filled with the love of God, when I say 'Hail, Mary.' All my fears wilt and die and my passions are quelled, if I say 'Hail, Mary'; devotion grows within me and sorrow for sin awakens, when I say 'Hail, Mary.'

"Hope is made strong in my breast and the dew of consolation falls on my soul more and more, because I say, 'Hail, Mary.' And my spirit rejoices and sorrow fades away, when I say 'Hail, Mary.'

"For the sweetness of this blessed salutation is so great that there are no words to explain it adequately, and even when its wonders have been sung, we still find it so full of mystery and so profound that its depths can never be plumbed. It has but few words but is exceeding rich in mystery; it is sweeter than honey and more precious than gold. We should often meditate on it in our hearts, and have it ever on our lips so as to say it devoutly again and again."

Blessed Alan also relates that a nun who had always had a great devotion to the Rosary appeared after her death to one of her sisters in religion and said to her, "If I were able to return in my body to have the chance of saying just a single Hail Mary, even without great fervour, I would gladly go through the sufferings that I had during my last illness all over again, in order to gain the merit of this prayer" It is to be noted that she had been bedridden and suffered agonizing pains for several years before she died.

56. Michel de Lisle, Bishop of Salubre, who was a disciple and co-worker of Blessed Alan de la Roche in the re-establishment of the holy Rosary, said that the Angelic Salutation is the remedy for all ills that we suffer as long as we say it devoutly in honour of our Lady.

Twentieth Rose: Brief explanation of the Hail Mary

57. Are you in the miserable state of sin? Then call on Mary and say to her, "Ave," which means "I greet thee with the most profound respect, thou who art without sin," and she will deliver you from the evil of your sins.

Are you groping in the darkness of ignorance and error? Go to Mary and say to her, "Hail Mary," which means "Hail, thou who art bathed in the light of the Sun of Justice," and she will give you a share in her light.

Have you strayed from the path leading to heaven? Then call on Mary, for her name means "Star of the Sea, the Polar Star which guides the ships of our souls during the voyage of this life," and she will guide you to the harbour of eternal salvation.

Are you in sorrow? Turn to Mary, for her name means also "Sea of Bitterness which has been filled with bitterness in this world but which is now turned into a sea of purest joy in heaven," and she will turn your sorrow into joy and your affliction into consolation.

Have you lost the state of grace? Praise and honour the numberless graces with which God has filled the Blessed Virgin and say to her, Thou art full of grace and filled with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and she will give you some of these graces.

Are you alone, having lost God's protection? Pray to Mary and say, The Lord is with thee, in a nobler and more intimate way than he is with the saints and the just, because thou art one with him. He is thy Son and his flesh is thy flesh; thou art united to the Lord because of thy perfect likeness to him and by your mutual love, for thou art his Mother. And then say to her, "The three persons of the Godhead are with thee because thou art the Temple of the Blessed Trinity," and she will place you once more under the protection and care of God.

Have you become an outcast and been accursed by God? Then say to our Lady, "Blessed art thou above all women and above all nations by thy purity and fertility; thou hast turned God's maledictions into blessings for us." She will bless you.

Do you hunger for the bread of grace and the bread of life? Draw near to her who bore the living Bread which came down from heaven, and say to her, "Blessed be the fruit of thy womb, whom thou hast conceived without the slightest loss to thy virginity, whom thou didst carry without discomfort and brought forth without pain. Blessed be Jesus who redeemed our suffering world when we were in the bondage of sin, who has healed the world of its sickness, who has raised the dead to life, brought home the banished, restored sinners to grace, and saved men from damnation. Without doubt, your soul will be filled with the bread of grace in this life and of eternal glory in the next. Amen."

58. Conclude your prayer with the Church and say, "Holy Mary," holy because of thy incomparable and eternal devotion to the service of God, holy in thy great rank as Mother of God, who has endowed thee with eminent holiness, in keeping with this great dignity.

"Mother of God, and our Mother, our Advocate and Mediatrix, Treasurer and dispenser of God's graces, obtain for us the prompt forgiveness of our sins and grant that we may be reconciled with the divine majesty.

"Pray for us sinners, thou who art always filled with compassion for those in need, who never despise sinners or turn them away, for without them you would never have been Mother of the Redeemer.

"Pray for us now, during this short life, so fraught with sorrow and uncertainty; now, because we can be sure of nothing except the present moment; now that we are surrounded and attacked night and day by powerful and ruthless enemies.

"And at the hour of our death, so terrible and full of danger, when our strength is waning and our spirits are sinking, and our souls and bodies are worn out with fear and pain; at the hour of our death when the devil is working with might and main to ensnare us and cast us into perdition; at that hour when our lot will be decided forever and ever, heaven or hell.

"Come to the help of your poor children, gentle Mother of pity, Advocate and Refuge of sinners, at the hour of our death drive far from us our bitter enemies, the devils, our accusers, whose frightful presence fills us with dread. Light our path through the valley of the shadow of death. Lead us to thy Son's judgment-seat and remain at our side. Intercede for us and ask thy Son to pardon us and receive us into the ranks of thy elect in the realms of everlasting glory. Amen."

59. No one could help admiring the excellence of the holy Rosary, made up as it is of these two divine parts: the Lord's Prayer and the Angelic Salutation. How could there be any prayers more pleasing to God and to the Blessed Virgin, or any that are easier, more precious, or more helpful

than these two prayers? We should always have them in our hearts and on our lips to honour the most Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ our Saviour and his most holy Mother.

In addition, at the end of each decade it is good to add the Gloria Patri, that is: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

THIRD DECADE

The surpassing merit of the holy Rosary as a meditation on the life and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ

Twenty-first Rose: The Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary

60. A mystery is a sacred thing which is difficult to understand. The works of our Lord Jesus Christ are all sacred and divine because he is God and man at one and the same time. The works of the Blessed Virgin are very holy because she is the most perfect and the most pure of God's creatures. The works of our Lord and of his blessed Mother can rightly be called mysteries because they are so full of wonders, of all kinds of perfections, and of deep and sublime truths, which the Holy Spirit reveals to the humble and simple souls who honour these mysteries.

The works of Jesus and Mary can also be called wonderful flowers, but their fragrance and beauty can only be appreciated by those who approach them, who breathe in their fragrance, and who discover their beauty by diligent and serious meditation.

61. St. Dominic divided the lives of our Lord and our Lady into fifteen mysteries, which stand for their virtues and their most important actions. These are fifteen pictures whose every detail must rule and inspire our lives. They are fifteen flaming torches to guide our steps throughout this earthly life; fifteen shining mirrors to help us to know Jesus and Mary, to know ourselves and to light the fire of their love in our hearts; fifteen fiery furnaces to consume us completely in their heavenly flames.

Our Lady taught Saint Dominic this excellent method of praying and ordered him to preach it far and wide so as to reawaken the fervour of Christians and to revive in their hearts a love for our Blessed Lord. She also taught it to Blessed Alan de la Roche and said to him in a vision, "When people say 150 Hail Marys, that prayer is very helpful to them and a most pleasing tribute to me. But they will do better still and will please me more if they say these salutations while meditating on the life, death, and passion of Jesus Christ, for this meditation is the soul of this prayer." For the Rosary said without the meditation on the sacred mysteries of our salvation would almost be a body without a soul, excellent matter, but without the form, which is the meditation, and which distinguishes it from other devotions.

62. The first part of the Rosary contains five mysteries: the first, the Annunciation of the archangel Gabriel to our Lady; the second the Visitation of our Lady to Saint Elizabeth; the third, the Nativity of Jesus Christ; the fourth, the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple and

the purification of the Blessed Virgin; the fifth, the Finding of Jesus in the Temple among the doctors.

These are called the Joyful Mysteries because of the joy which they gave to the whole universe. Our Lady and the angels were overwhelmed with joy the moment the Son of God became incarnate. Saint Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist were filled with joy by the visit of Jesus and Mary. Heaven and earth rejoiced at the birth of the Saviour. Holy Simeon felt great consolation and was filled with joy when he took the holy child into his arms. The doctors were lost in admiration and wonderment at the replies which Jesus gave; and who could express the joy of Mary and Joseph when they found Jesus after three days' absence?

63. The second part of the Rosary is also composed of five mysteries, which are called the Sorrowful Mysteries because they show us our Lord weighed down with sadness, covered with wounds, laden with insults, sufferings and torments.

The first of these mysteries is our Lord's prayer and his Agony in the Garden of Olives; the second, his Scourging; the third, his being Crowned with thorns; the fourth, his Carrying of the Cross; the fifth, his Crucifixion and death on Calvary.

64. The third part of the Rosary contains five more mysteries, which are called the Glorious Mysteries, because when we say them we meditate on Jesus and Mary in their triumph and glory. The first is the Resurrection of Jesus; the second, his Ascension into heaven; the third, the Descent of the

Holy Spirit upon the apostles; the fourth, our Lady's Assumption in glory; the fifth, her Coronation.

Such are the fifteen fragrant flowers of the mystical Rose- tree, on which devout souls linger, like discerning bees, to gather their nectar and make the honey of a solid devotion.

Twenty-second Rose: The Meditation of the Mysteries makes us resemble Jesus

65. The chief concern of the Christian should be to tend to perfection. "Be faithful imitators of God, as his well-beloved children," the great Apostle tells us. This obligation is included in the eternal decree of our predestination, as the one and only means prescribed by God to attain everlasting glory.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa makes a delightful comparison when he says that we are all artists and that our souls are blank canvasses which we have to fill in. The colours which we use are the Christian virtues, and the original which we have to copy is Jesus Christ, the perfect living image of God the Father. Just as a painter who wants to do a life-like portrait places the model before his eyes and looks at it before making each stroke, so the Christian must always have before his eyes the life and virtues of Jesus Christ, so as never to say, think or do anything which is not in conformity with his model.

66. It was because our Lady wanted to help us in the great task of working out our salvation that she ordered Saint Dominic to teach the faithful to

meditate upon the sacred mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. She did this, not only that they might adore and glorify him, but chiefly that they might pattern their lives and actions on his virtues.

Children copy their parents through watching them and talking to them, and they learn their own language through hearing them speak. An apprentice learns his trade through watching his master at work; in the same way the faithful members of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary can become like their divine Master if they reverently study and imitate the virtues of Jesus which are shown in the fifteen mysteries of his life. They can do this with the help of his grace and through the intercession of his blessed Mother.

67. Long ago, Moses was inspired by God to command the Jewish people never to forget the graces which had been showered upon them. The Son of God has all the more reason to command us to engrave the mysteries of his life, passion and glory upon our hearts and to have them always before our eyes, since each mystery reminds us of his goodness to us in some special way and it is by these mysteries that he has shown us his overwhelming love and desire for our salvation. "Oh, all you who pass by, pause a while," he says, "and see if there has ever been any sorrow like to the sorrow I have endured for love of you. Be mindful of my poverty and humiliations; think of the gall and wormwood I took for you in my bitter passion."

These words and many others which could be given here should be more than enough to convince us that we must not only say the Rosary with our

lips in honour of Jesus and Mary, but also meditate upon the sacred mysteries while we are saying it.

Twenty-third Rose: The Rosary is a Memorial of the Life and Death of Jesus

68. Jesus Christ, the divine spouse of our souls and our very dear friend, wishes us to remember his goodness to us and to prize his gifts above all else. Whenever we meditate devoutly and lovingly upon the sacred mysteries of the Rosary, he receives an added joy, as also do our Lady and all the saints in heaven. His gifts are the most outstanding results of his love for us and the richest presents he could possibly give us, and it is by virtue of such presents that the Blessed Virgin herself and all the saints are glorified in heaven.

One day Blessed Angela of Foligno begged our Lord to let her know by which religious exercise she could honour him best. He appeared to her nailed to his cross and said, "My daughter, look at my wounds." She then realized that nothing pleases our dear Lord more than meditating upon his sufferings. Then he showed her the wounds on his head and revealed still other sufferings and said to her, "I have suffered all this for your salvation. What can you ever do to return my love for you?"

69. The holy sacrifice of the Mass gives infinite honour to the most Blessed Trinity because it represents the passion of Jesus Christ and because through the Mass we offer to God the merits of our Lord's obedience, of his sufferings, and of his precious blood. All the heavenly court also receive an added joy from the Mass. Several doctors of the Church,

including St. Thomas, tell us that, for the same reason, all the blessed in heaven rejoice in the communion of the faithful because the Blessed Sacrament is a memorial of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, and that by means of it men share in its fruits and work out their salvation.

Now the holy Rosary, recited with the meditation on the sacred mysteries, is a sacrifice of praise to God for the great gift of our redemption and a holy reminder of the sufferings, death and glory of Jesus Christ. It is therefore true that the Rosary gives glory and added joy to our Lord, our Lady and all the blessed, because they cannot desire anything greater, for the sake of our eternal happiness, than to see us engaged in a practice which is so glorious for our Lord and so salutary for ourselves.

70. The Gospel teaches us that a sinner who is converted and who does penance gives joy to all the angels. If the repentance and conversion of one sinner is enough to make the angels rejoice, how great must be the happiness and jubilation of the whole heavenly court and what glory for our Blessed Lord himself to see us here on earth meditating devoutly and lovingly on his humiliations and torments and on his cruel and shameful death! Is there anything that could touch our hearts more surely and bring us to sincere repentance?

A Christian who does not meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary is very ungrateful to our Lord and shows how little he cares for all that our divine Saviour has suffered to save the world. This attitude seems to show that he knows little or nothing of the life of Jesus Christ, and that he has never taken the trouble to find out what he has done and what he went through

in order to save us. A Christian of that kind ought to fear that, not having known Jesus Christ or having put him out of his mind, Jesus will reject him on the day of judgment with the reproach, "I tell you solemnly, I do not know you."

Let us meditate, then, on the life and sufferings of our Saviour by means of the holy Rosary; let us learn to know him well and to be grateful for all his blessings, so that, on the day of Judgment, he may number us among his children and his friends.

Twenty-fourth Rose: Meditation on the Mysteries of the Rosary is a great means of perfection

71. The saints made our Lord's life the principal object of their study; they meditated on his virtues and his sufferings, and in this way arrived at Christian perfection.

Saint Bernard began with this meditation and he always kept it up. "At the very beginning of my conversion," he said, "I made a bouquet of myrrh fashioned from the sorrows of my Saviour. I placed this bouquet upon my heart, thinking of the lashes, the thorns and the nails of his passion. I applied my whole mind to the meditation on these mysteries every day."

This was also the practice of the holy martyrs; we admire how they triumphed over the most cruel sufferings. Where could this admirable constancy of the martyrs come from, says Saint Bernard, if not from the wounds of Jesus Christ, on which they meditated so frequently? Where was the soul of these generous athletes when their blood gushed forth and

their bodies were wracked with cruel torments? Their soul was in the wounds of Christ and those wounds made them invincible."

72. During her whole life, our Saviour's holy Mother was occupied in meditating on the virtues and the sufferings of her Son. When she heard the angels sing their hymn of joy at his birth and saw the shepherds adore him in the stable, her heart was filled with wonder and she meditated on all these marvels. She compared the greatness of the Word incarnate to the way he humbled himself in this lowly fashion; the straw of the crib, to his throne in the heart of his Father; the might of God, to the weakness of a child; his wisdom, to his simplicity.

Our Lady said to Saint Bridget one day, "Whenever I used to contemplate the beauty, modesty, and wisdom of my Son, my heart was filled with joy; and whenever I considered his hands and feet which would be pierced with cruel nails, I wept bitterly and my heart was rent with sorrow and pain."

73. After our Lord's Ascension, our Blessed Lady spent the rest of her life visiting the places that had been hallowed by his presence and by his sufferings. There, she meditated on his boundless love and on his terrible passion.

Saint Mary Magdalene continually performed the same religious exercises during the last thirty years of her life, when she lived at Sainte-Baume.

Saint Jerome tells us that this was the devotion of the faithful in the early centuries of the Church. From all the countries of the world they came to

the Holy Land to engrave more deeply on their hearts a great love and remembrance of the Saviour of mankind by seeing the places and things he had made holy by his birth, his work, his sufferings, and his death.

74. All Christians have but one faith and adore one and the same God, and hope for the same happiness in heaven; they know only one mediator, who is Jesus Christ; all must imitate their divine model, and in order to do this they must meditate on the mysteries of his life, of his virtues and of his glory.

It is a great mistake to think that only priests and religious and those who have withdrawn from the turmoil of the world are supposed to meditate upon the truths of our faith and the mysteries of the life of Christ. If priests and religious have an obligation to meditate on the great truths of our holy religion in order to live up to their vocation worthily, the same obligation is just as much incumbent on the laity, because of the fact that every day they meet with spiritual dangers which might cause them to lose their souls. Therefore they should arm themselves with the frequent meditation on the life, virtues, and sufferings of our Blessed Lord, which are presented to us in the fifteen mysteries of the holy Rosary.

Twenty-fifth Rose: The Riches of Holiness contained in the Prayers and Meditations of the Rosary

75. Never will anyone be able to understand the marvellous riches of sanctification which are contained in the prayers and mysteries of the holy Rosary. This meditation on the mysteries of the life and death of our Lord

Jesus Christ is the source of the most wonderful fruits for those who make use of it.

Today people want things that strike and move them, that leave deep impressions on the soul. Now has there ever been anything in the history of the world more moving than the wonderful story of the life, death, and glory of our Saviour which is contained in the holy Rosary? In the fifteen tableaux, the principal scenes or mysteries of his life unfold before our eyes. How could there be any prayers more wonderful and sublime than the Lord's Prayer and the Ave of the angel? All our desires and all our needs are found expressed in these two prayers.

76. The meditation on the mysteries and prayers of the Rosary is the easiest of all prayers, because the diversity of the virtues of our Lord and the different situations of his life which we study, refresh and fortify our mind in a wonderful way and help us to avoid distractions. For the learned, these mysteries are the source of the most profound doctrine, while simple people find in them a means of instruction well within their reach.

We need to learn this easy form of meditation before progressing to the highest state of contemplation. That is the view of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and the advice that he gives when he says that, first of all, one must practice on a battlefield, as it were, by acquiring all the virtues of which we have the perfect model in the mysteries of the Rosary; for, says the learned Cajetan, that is the way we arrive at a really intimate union with God,

since without that union contemplation is nothing but an illusion which can lead souls astray.

77. If only the Illuminists or the Quietists of these days had followed this piece of advice, they would never have fallen so low or caused such scandals among spiritual people. To think that it is possible to say prayers that are finer and more beautiful than the Our Father and the Hail Mary is to fall a prey to a strange illusion of the devil, for these heavenly prayers are the support, the strength and the safeguard of our souls.

I admit it is not always necessary to say them as vocal prayers and that interior prayer is, in a sense, more perfect than vocal. But believe me, it is really dangerous, not to say fatal, to give up saying the Rosary of your own accord under the pretext of seeking a more perfect union with God. Sometimes a soul that is proud in a subtle way and who may have done everything that he can do interiorly to rise to the sublime heights of contemplation that the saints have reached may be deluded by the noonday devil into giving up his former devotions which are good enough for ordinary souls. He turns a deaf ear to the prayers and the greeting of an angel and even to the prayer which God has composed, put into practice, and commanded: Thus shall you pray: Our Father. Having reached this point, such a soul drifts from illusion to illusion, and falls from precipice to precipice.

78. Believe me, dear brother of the Rosary Confraternity, if you genuinely wish to attain a high degree of prayer in all honesty and without falling

into the illusions of the devil so common with those who practice mental prayer, say the whole Rosary every day, or at least five decades of it.

If you have already attained, by the grace of God, a high degree of prayer, keep up the practice of saying the holy Rosary if you wish to remain in that state and by it to grow in humility. For never will anyone who says his Rosary every day become a formal heretic or be led astray by the devil. This is a statement which I would sign with my blood.

On the other hand, if God in his infinite mercy draws you to himself as forcibly as he did some of the saints while saying the Rosary, make yourself passive in his hands and let yourself be drawn towards him. Let God work and pray in you and let him say your Rosary in his way, and that will be sufficient for the day.

But if you are still in the state of active contemplation or the ordinary prayer of quietude, of the presence of God, affective prayer, you have even less reason for giving up the Rosary. Far from making you lose ground in mental prayer or stunting your spiritual growth, it will be a wonderful help to you. You will find it a real Jacob's ladder with fifteen rungs by which you will go from virtue to virtue and from light to light. Thus, without danger of being misled, you will easily arrive at the fullness of the age of Jesus Christ.

Twenty-sixth Rose

79. Whatever you do, do not be like a certain pious but self-willed lady in Rome, so often referred to by speakers on the Rosary. She was so devout

and fervent that she put to shame by her holy life even the strictest religious in the Church.

Having decided to ask St. Dominic's advice about her spiritual life, she made her confession to him. For penance he gave her one Rosary to say and advised her to say it every day. She excused herself, saying that she had her regular exercises, that she made the Stations of Rome every day, that she wore sack-cloth as well as a hair-shirt, that she gave herself the discipline several times a week, that she often fasted and did other penances. Saint Dominic urged her over and over again to take his advice and say the Rosary, but she would not hear of it. She left the confessional, horrified at the methods of this new spiritual director who had tried so hard to persuade her to take up a devotion for which she had no taste.

Later on, when she was at prayer she fell into ecstasy and had a vision of her soul appearing before the Supreme Judge. Saint Michael put all her penances and other prayers on one side of the scales and all her sins and imperfections on the other. The tray of her good works were greatly outweighed by that of her sins and imperfections.

Filled with alarm, she cried for mercy, imploring the help of the Blessed Virgin, her gracious advocate, who took the one and only Rosary she had said for her penance and dropped it on the tray of her good works. This one Rosary was so heavy that it weighed more than all her sins as well as all her good works. Our Lady then reproved her for having refused to follow the counsel of her servant Dominic and for not saying the Rosary every day.

As soon as she came to herself she rushed and threw herself at the feet of Saint Dominic and told him all that had happened, begged his forgiveness for her unbelief, and promised to say the Rosary faithfully every day. By this means she rose to Christian perfection and finally to the glory of everlasting life.

You who are people of prayer, learn from this the power, the value and the importance of this devotion of the holy Rosary when it is said with meditation on the mysteries.

80. Few saints have reached the same heights of prayer as Saint Mary Magdalene, who was lifted up to heaven by angels each day, and who had the privilege of learning at the feet of Jesus and his holy Mother. Yet one day, when she asked God to show her a sure way of advancing in his love and arriving at the heights of perfection, he sent the archangel St. Michael to tell her, on his behalf, that there was no other way for her to reach perfection than to meditate on our Lord's passion. So he placed a cross in the front of her cave and told her to pray before it, contemplating the sorrowful mysteries which she had seen take place with her own eyes.

The example of Saint Francis de Sales, the great spiritual director of his time, should spur you on to join the holy confraternity of the Rosary, since, great saint though he was, he bound himself by vow to say the whole Rosary every day for as long as he lived.

Saint Charles Borromeo also said it every day and strongly recommended this devotion to his priests and clerics in seminaries and to all his people.

Blessed Pius V, one of the greatest popes who have ever ruled the Church, used to say the Rosary every day. Saint Thomas of Villanova, Archbishop of Valencia, Saint Ignatius, Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Francis Borgia, Saint Teresa and Saint Philip Neri, as well as many other great men whom I do not mention, were greatly devoted to the Rosary.

Follow their example; your spiritual directors will be very pleased, and if they are aware of the benefits which you can derive from this devotion, they will be the first to urge you to adopt it.

Twenty-seventh Rose

81. To encourage you still more in this devotion practised by so many holy people, I should like to add that the Rosary recited with the meditation of the mysteries brings about the following marvellous results:

1. it gradually brings us a perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ;
2. it purifies our souls from sin;
- 3 it gives us victory over all our enemies;
4. it makes the practice of virtue easy;
- 5 it sets us on fire with the love of our Lord;
6. it enriches us with graces and merits;
- 7 it supplies us with what is needed to pay all our debts to God and to our fellow-men, and finally, it obtains all kinds of graces from God.

82. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is the science of Christians and the science of salvation; it surpasses, says Saint Paul, all human sciences in value and perfection:

1. because of the dignity of its object, which is a God-man, compared to whom the whole universe is but a drop of dew or a grain of sand;
2. because of its utility to us; human sciences only fill us with the wind and emptiness of pride;
3. because of its necessity; for no one can be saved without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, while a person who knows absolutely nothing of any other science will be saved as long as he is enlightened by the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Blessed is the Rosary which gives us this science and knowledge of our Blessed Lord through our meditations on his life, death, passion and glory.

The Queen of Sheba, lost in admiration at Solomon's wisdom, cried out, "Blessed are your attendants and your servants who are always in your presence and hear your wisdom." But happier still are the faithful who carefully meditate on the life, virtues, sufferings and glory of our Saviour, because by this means they can gain perfect knowledge of him, in which eternal life consists.

83. Our Lady revealed to Blessed Alan that no sooner had Saint Dominic begun preaching the Rosary than hardened sinners were touched and wept bitterly over their grievous sins. Young children performed unbelievable penances, and everywhere he preached the Rosary such

fervour was aroused that sinners changed their lives and edified everyone by their penances and the amendment of their lives.

If by chance your conscience is burdened with sin, take your Rosary and say at least a part of it in honour of some of the mysteries of the life, passion, and glory of Jesus Christ, and you can be sure that, while you are meditating on these mysteries and honouring them, he will show his sacred wounds to his Father in heaven. He will plead for you and obtain for you contrition and the forgiveness of your sins. One day our Lord said to Blessed Alan, "If only these poor wretched sinners would say my Rosary often, they would share in the merits of my passion, and I would be their Advocate and would appease the justice of God."

84. This life is a continual war and a series of temptations; we do not have to contend with enemies of flesh and blood, but with the very powers of hell. What better weapon could we possibly use to combat them than the prayer which our great Leader has taught us, than the Angelic Salutation which has put the devils to flight, destroyed sin and renewed the world? What better weapon could we use than meditation on the life and passion of Jesus Christ? For, as Saint Peter tells us, it is with this thought that we must arm ourselves, in order to defend ourselves against the very same enemies whom he has conquered and who molest us every day.

"Ever since the devil was crushed by the humility and the passion of Jesus Christ," says Cardinal Hugues, "he has been practically unable to attack a soul that is armed with meditation on the mysteries of our Lord's life, and,

if he does trouble such a soul, he is sure to be shamefully defeated." "Put on the armour of God so as to be able to resist the attacks of the devil."

85. So arm yourself with the arms of God, with the holy Rosary, and you will crush the devil's head and stand firm in the face of all his temptations. That is why even a pair of rosary beads is so terrible to the devil, and why the saints have used them to fetter him and drive him from the bodies of those who were possessed. Such happenings have been recorded more than once.

86. Blessed Alan relates that a man he knew had tried desperately all kinds of devotions to rid himself of the evil spirit which possessed him, but without success. Finally, he thought of wearing his rosary round his neck, which eased him considerably. He discovered that whenever he took it off the devil tormented him cruelly, so he resolved to wear it night and day. This drove the evil spirit away forever because he could not bear such a terrible chain. Blessed Alan also testifies that he delivered a great number of those who were possessed by putting a rosary round their necks.

87. Father Jean Amât, of the Order of St. Dominic, was giving a series of Lenten sermons in the Kingdom of Aragon one year, when a young girl was brought to him who was possessed by the devil. After he had exorcised her several times without success, he put his rosary round her neck. Hardly had he done so when the girl began to scream and cry out in a fearful way, shrieking, "Take it off, take it off; these beads are tormenting me." At last, the priest, filled with pity for the girl, took his rosary off her.

The very next night, when Fr. Amât was in bed, the same devils who had possession of the girl came to him, foaming with rage and tried to seize him. But he had his rosary clasped in his hand and no efforts of theirs could wrench it from him. He beat them with it very well indeed and put them to flight, crying out, "Holy Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary, come to my help."

The next day on his way to the church, he met the poor girl, still possessed; one of the devils within her started to jeer at him, saying, "Well, brother, if you had been without your rosary, we should have made short shrift of you." Then the good Father threw his rosary round the girl's neck without more ado, saying, "By the sacred names of Jesus and Mary his holy Mother, and by the power of the holy Rosary, I command you, evil spirits, to leave the body of this girl at once." They were immediately forced to obey him, and she was delivered from them.

These stories show the power of the holy Rosary in overcoming all sorts of temptations from the evil spirits and all sorts of sins, because these blessed beads of the Rosary put devils to rout.

Twenty-eighth Rose

88. St. Augustine assures us that there is no spiritual exercise more fruitful or more useful than the frequent reflection on the sufferings of our Lord. Blessed Albert the Great, who had St. Thomas Aquinas as his student, learned in a revelation that by simply thinking of or meditating on the passion of Jesus Christ, a Christian gains more merit than if he had fasted on bread and water every Friday for a year, or had beaten himself with the

discipline once a week till blood flowed, or had recited the whole Book of Psalms every day. If this is so, then how great must be the merit we can gain from the Rosary, which commemorates the whole life and passion of our Lord?

Our Lady one day revealed to Blessed Alan de la Roche that, after the holy sacrifice of the Mass, which is the first and most living memorial of our Lord's passion, there was indeed no more excellent devotion or one of greater merit than that of the Rosary, which is like a second memorial and representation of the life and passion of Jesus Christ.

89. Fr. Dorland relates that in 1481 our Lady appeared to the Venerable Dominic, a Carthusian devoted to the holy Rosary, who lived at Treves, and said to him:

"Whenever one of the faithful, in a state of grace, says the Rosary while meditating on the mysteries of the life and passion of Christ, he obtains full and entire remission of all his sins."

She also said to Blessed Alan, "I want you to know that, although there are numerous indulgences already attached to the recitation of my Rosary, I shall add many more to every five decades for those who, free from serious sin, say them with devotion, on their knees. And whosoever shall persevere in the devotion of the holy Rosary, with its prayers and meditations, shall be rewarded for it; I shall obtain for him full remission of the penalty and the guilt of all his sins at the end of his life.

"And let this not seem incredible to you; it is easy for me because I am the Mother of the King of heaven, and he calls me full of grace. And being filled with grace, I am able to dispense it freely to my dear children."

90. St. Dominic was so convinced of the efficacy of the Rosary and its great value that, when he heard confessions, he hardly ever gave any other penance, as we have seen in the story I told you of the lady in Rome to whom he gave only a single Rosary. St. Dominic was a great saint and other confessors also ought to walk in his footsteps by asking their penitents to say the Rosary with meditation on the sacred mysteries, rather than giving them other penances which are less meritorious and less pleasing to God, less likely to help them to advance in virtue, and not as efficacious in helping them to avoid sin. Moreover, while saying the Rosary, people gain numerous indulgences which are not attached to many other devotions.

91. As Abbot Blosius says, "The Rosary, with meditation on the life and passion of Christ, is certainly most pleasing to our Lord and his blessed Mother and is a very successful means of obtaining all graces; we can say it for ourselves as well as for those who have been recommended to our prayers and for the whole Church. Let us turn, then, to the holy Rosary in all our needs, and we shall infallibly obtain the graces we ask for from God to attain our salvation.

Twenty-ninth Rose

92. There is nothing more divine, according to the mind of St. Denis, nothing more noble or agreeable to God than to cooperate in the work of

saving souls and to frustrate the devil's plans for ruining them. The Son of God came down to earth for no other reason than to save us. He upset Satan's empire by founding the Church, but the devil rallied his strength and wreaked cruel violence on souls by the Albigensian heresy, by the hatred, dissensions and abominable vices which he spread throughout the world in the eleventh century.

Only severe remedies could possibly cure such terrible disorders and repel Satan's forces. The Blessed Virgin, protectress of the Church, has given us a most powerful means for appeasing her Son's anger, uprooting heresy and reforming Christian morals, in the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, as events have shown. It has brought back charity and the frequent reception of the sacraments as in the first golden centuries of the Church, and it has reformed Christian morals.

93. Pope Leo X said in his bull that this Confraternity had been founded in honour of God and of the Blessed Virgin as a wall to hold back the evils that were going to break upon the Church. Gregory XIII said that the Rosary was given us from heaven as a means of appeasing God's anger and of imploring the intercession of our Lady.

Julius III said that the Rosary was inspired by God that heaven might be more easily opened to us through the favours of our Lady.

Paul III and Blessed Pius V declared that the Rosary was given to the faithful in order that they might have spiritual peace and consolation more

easily. Surely everyone will want to join a confraternity which was founded for such noble purposes.

94. Father Dominic, a Carthusian, who was deeply devoted to the holy Rosary, had a vision in which he saw heaven opened and the whole heavenly court assembled in magnificent array. He heard them sing the Rosary in an enchanting melody, and each decade was in honour of a mystery of the life, passion, or glory of Jesus Christ and his holy Mother. Fr. Dominic noticed that whenever they pronounced the holy name of Mary they bowed their heads, and at the name of Jesus they genuflected and gave thanks to God for the great good he had wrought in heaven and on earth through the holy Rosary. He also saw our Lady and the Saints present to God the Rosaries which the Confraternity members say here on earth. He noticed too that they were praying for those who practice this devotion. He also saw beautiful crowns without number, which were made of sweet-smelling flowers, for those who say the Rosary devoutly. He learned that by every Rosary that they say they make a crown for themselves which they will be able to wear in heaven.

This holy Carthusian's vision is very much like that which the Beloved Disciple had, in which he saw a great multitude of angels and saints, who continually praised and blessed Jesus Christ for all that he had done and suffered on earth for our salvation. And is not this what the devout members of the Rosary Confraternity do?

95. It must not be imagined that the Rosary is only for women, and for simple and unlearned people; it is also for men and for the greatest of men.

As soon as St. Dominic acquainted Pope Innocent III with the fact that he had received a command from heaven to establish the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, the Holy Father gave it his full approval, urged St. Dominic to preach it, and said that he wished to become a member himself. Even Cardinals embraced the devotion with great fervour, which prompted Lopez to say, "Neither sex nor age nor any other condition has kept anyone from devotion to the Rosary."

Members of this Confraternity have come from all walks of life: dukes, princes, kings, as well as prelates, cardinals and Sovereign Pontiffs. It would take too long to list them in this little book. If you join this Confraternity, dear reader, you will share in their devotion and their graces on earth and their glory in heaven. "Since you are united to them in their devotion, you will share in their dignity."

Thirtieth Rose

96. If privileges, graces and indulgences of a confraternity make God alone it valuable to us, then that of the Rosary is the one to be most recommended, since it is the most favoured and enriched with indulgences, and ever since its inception there has hardly been a pope who has not opened the treasures of the Church to enrich it with further privileges. And since example is more persuasive than words and favours, the Holy Fathers have found that there was no better way to show their high regard for this holy Confraternity than to join it themselves.

Here is a short summary of the indulgences which they wholeheartedly granted to the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, and which were

confirmed again by our Holy Father Pope Innocent XI on 31st July 1679, and received and made public by the Archbishop of Paris on 25th September of the same year:

1. Members may gain a plenary indulgence on the day of joining the Confraternity;
2. A plenary indulgence at the hour of death;
- 3 For each rosary of five decades recited: ten years and ten quarantines;
4. Each time that members say the holy names of Jesus and Mary devoutly: seven days' indulgence;
5. For those who assist with devotion at the procession of the holy Rosary: seven years and seven quarantines of indulgence;
6. Members who have made a good confession and are genuinely sorry for their sins may gain a plenary indulgence on certain days by visiting the Rosary Chapel in the church where the Confraternity is established. This may be gained on the first Sunday of every month, and on the feasts of our Lord and our Lady;
7. To those who assist at the Salve Regina: a hundred days' indulgence;
8. To those who openly wear the rosary out of devotion and to set a good example: a hundred days' indulgence;
9. Sick members who are unable to go to church may gain a plenary indulgence by going to confession and Communion and by saying that day the whole Rosary, or at least five decades;

10. The Sovereign Pontiffs have shown their generosity towards members of the Rosary Confraternity by allowing them to gain the indulgences attached to the Stations of the Cross by visiting five altars in the church where the Rosary Confraternity is established, and by saying the Our Father and Hail Mary five times before each altar, for the well-being of the Church. If there are only one or two altars in the Confraternity church, they should say the Our Father and Hail Mary twenty-five times before one of them.

97. This is a wonderful favour granted to Confraternity members, for in the Station Churches in Rome plenary indulgences can be obtained, souls can be delivered from purgatory, and many other important remissions can be gained. and these are available to members without trouble, without expense, and without leaving their own country. And even if the Confraternity is not established in the place where the members live, they can gain the very same indulgences by visiting five altars in any church. This concession was granted by Leo X.

The Sacred Congregation of Indulgences drew up a list of certain definite days on which those outside the city of Rome could gain the indulgences of the Stations of Rome. The Holy Father approved this list on March 7th, 1678, and commanded that it be strictly observed. These indulgences can be gained on the following days:

All the Sundays of Advent; each of the three Ember Days; Christmas Eve, and the Masses of midnight, of the Dawn and of the Day; the feasts of St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, the Holy Innocents, the Circumcision and

the Epiphany; the Sundays of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, Quinquagesima, and every day from Ash Wednesday to Low Sunday inclusively; each of the three Rogation days; Ascension; the vigil of Pentecost, and every day of its octave; and the three days of the September Ember Days.

Dear brothers and sisters of the Confraternity, there are numerous other indulgences which you can gain. If you want to know about them, read the complete list of indulgences which have been granted to the members of the Confraternity. You will see there the names of the popes, the year in which they granted the indulgence, and many other particulars which I have not been able to include in this little summary.

FOURTH DECADE

The surpassing merit of the holy Rosary as seen in the wonders God has worked through it.

Thirty-first Rose

98. The saintly Blanche of Castille, Queen of France, was deeply grieved because twelve years after her marriage she was still childless. When St. Dominic went to see her he advised her to say the Rosary every day to ask God for the grace of motherhood, and she faithfully carried out his advice. In the year 1213 she gave birth to her eldest child, who was called Philip. But when the child died in infancy, the Queen sought our Lady's help more than ever, and had a large number of rosaries given out to all members of the court and to people in several towns in the Kingdom, asking them to pray to God for a blessing which this time would be complete. This was granted to her, for in 1215 St. Louis was born, the

prince who was to become the glory of France and the model of Christian kings.

99. Alphonsus VIII, King of Aragon and Castille, had been leading a disorderly life and had been punished by God in several ways, and he was forced to take refuge in a town belonging to one of his allies.

St. Dominic happened to be in this town on Christmas Day and he preached on the Rosary as he usually did, and spoke of the graces that we obtain through this devotion. He mentioned, among other things, that those who said the Rosary devoutly would overcome their enemies and regain all they had lost.

The King listened attentively and sent for St. Dominic to ask whether what he had said about the Rosary was really true. The Saint assured him that nothing was more true, and that if only he would practice this devotion and join the Confraternity, he would see for himself. The King resolved to say the Rosary every day and persevered for a year in doing so. The very next Christmas, our Lady appeared to him at the end of his Rosary and said, "Alphonsus, you have served me for a year by saying my Rosary devoutly every day, so I have come to reward you. I have obtained the forgiveness of your sins from my Son. Here is a rosary, which I present to you; wear it, and I promise you that none of your enemies will be able to harm you."

Our Lady vanished, leaving the King overjoyed and greatly encouraged; he immediately went in search of the Queen and told her all about our

Lady's gift and the promise that went with it. He touched her eyes with this rosary, for she had lost her sight, and she was cured.

Shortly afterwards the King rallied some troops and with the help of his allies boldly attacked his enemies. He forced them to give back the territory they had taken from him and make reparation for his losses. They were completely routed, and he became so successful in war that soldiers came from all sides to fight under his standard, because it seemed that, whenever he went into battle, the victory was sure to be his.

This is not surprising because he never went into battle without first saying his Rosary on his knees. He made certain that the whole of his court joined the Confraternity of the Rosary and he saw to it that all his officials and servants were devoted to it.

The Queen also joined the Confraternity, and they both persevered in the service of Blessed Virgin and lived very holy lives.

Thirty-second Rose

100. St. Dominic had a cousin named Don Perez or Pedro, who was leading a highly immoral life. When he heard that his cousin was preaching on the wonders of the Rosary and learned that several people had been converted and had amended their lives by means of it, he said, "I had given up all hope of being saved but now I am beginning to take heart again. I really must hear this man of God."

So one day he went to hear one of St. Dominic's sermons. When the latter caught sight of him, he struck out against sin more zealously than ever

before, and from the depths of his heart he besought God to enlighten his cousin and let him see what a deplorable state his soul was in.

At first, Don Perez was somewhat alarmed, but he still did not resolve to change his ways. He came once more to hear the Saint preach and his cousin, realizing that a heart as hardened as his could only be moved by something extraordinary, cried out with a loud voice, "Lord Jesus, grant that this whole congregation may see the state of the man who has just come into your house."

Then everyone suddenly saw that Don Perez was completely surrounded by a band of devils in the form of hideous beasts, who were holding him in great iron chains. People fled in all directions in abject terror, and Don Perez himself was even more appalled when he saw how everyone shunned him. St. Dominic told them all to stand still and said to his cousin, "Unhappy man that you are, acknowledge the deplorable state you are in and throw yourself at our Lady's feet. Take this rosary, say it with devotion and with true sorrow for all your sins, and make a resolution to amend your life."

Don Perez knelt down and said the Rosary; he then felt the desire to make his confession, which he did with heartfelt contrition. St. Dominic ordered him to say the Rosary every day; he promised to do this and he entered his own name in the register of the Confraternity. When he left the church his face was no longer horrible to behold but shining like that of an angel. Thereafter he persevered in devotion to the Rosary, led a well-ordered life and died a happy death.

Thirty-third Rose

101. When St. Dominic was preaching the Rosary near Carcassone, an Albigensian was brought to him who was possessed by the devil. The Saint exorcised him in the presence of a great crowd of people; it appears that over twelve thousand had come to hear him speak. The devils who were in possession of this wretched man were forced to answer St. Dominic's questions in spite of themselves. They said:

1. that there were fifteen thousand of them in the body of that poor man, because he had attacked the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary;
2. that by the Rosary which he preached, he put fear and horror into the depths of hell, and that he was the man they hated most throughout the world because of the souls he snatched from them by the devotion of the Rosary.
3. They revealed several other things.

St. Dominic put his rosary round the neck of the possessed man and asked them who, of all the saints in heaven, was the one they feared most, who should therefore be the most loved and revered by men.

At this they let out such unearthly screams that most of the people fell to the ground, seized with fear. Then, using all their cunning so as not to answer, the devils wept and wailed in such a pitiful way that many of the people wept also, out of pure natural pity. The devils, speaking through the mouth of the Albigensian, pleaded in a heart-rending voice, "Dominic, Dominic, have pity on us, we promise you we will never harm you.

"You have always had compassion for sinners and those in distress; have pity on us, for we are in grievous straits. We are suffering so much already, why do you delight in increasing our pains? Can't you be satisfied with the pains we now endure? Have mercy on us, have mercy on us!"

102. St. Dominic was not in the least moved by the pathetic words of those wretched spirits, and told them he would not let them alone until they had answered his question. Then they said they would whisper the answer in such a way that only St. Dominic would be able to hear. The latter firmly insisted upon their answering clearly and audibly. Then the devils kept quiet and would not say another word, completely disregarding St. Dominic's orders.

So he knelt down and said this prayer to our Lady: "Oh, most glorious Virgin Mary, I implore you by the power of the holy Rosary command these enemies of the human race to answer my question."

No sooner had he said this prayer than a glowing flame leaped out of the ears, nostrils and mouth of the possessed man. Everyone shook with fear, but the fire did not hurt anyone. Then the devils cried, "Dominic, we beseech you, by the passion of Jesus Christ and the merits of his holy Mother and of all the saints, let us leave the body of this man without speaking further; for the angels will answer your question whenever you wish. After all, are we not liars - so why should you want to believe us? Do not torment us any more, have pity on us."

"Woe to you, wretched spirits, who do not deserve to be heard," St. Dominic said, and kneeling down he prayed to the Blessed Virgin: "O most worthy Mother of Wisdom, I am praying for the people assembled here, who have already learned how to say the Angelic Salutation properly. I beg you for the salvation of those here present, compel these adversaries of yours to proclaim the whole truth here and now before the people."

St. Dominic had scarcely finished this prayer when he saw the Blessed Virgin near at hand surrounded by a multitude of angels. She struck the possessed man with a golden rod that she held and said, "Answer my servant Dominic at once." (It must be noted that the people neither saw nor heard our Lady, only St. Dominic.)

103. Then the devils started screaming:

104. "Oh, you who are our enemy, our downfall and our destruction, why have you come from heaven to torture us so grievously? O advocate of sinners, you who snatch them from the very jaws of hell, you who are a most sure path to heaven, must we, in spite of ourselves, tell the whole truth and confess before everyone who it is who is the cause of our shame and our ruin? Oh, woe to us, princes of darkness.

"Then listen, you Christians. This Mother of Jesus is most powerful in saving her servants from falling into hell. She is like the sun which destroys the darkness of our wiles and subtlety. It is she who uncovers our hidden plots, breaks our snares, and makes our temptations useless and ineffective.

"We have to say, however, reluctantly, that no soul who has really persevered in her service has ever been damned with us; one single sigh that she offers to the Blessed Trinity is worth far more than all the prayers, desires, and aspirations of all the saints. We fear her more than all the other saints in heaven together, and we have no success with her faithful servants.

"Many Christians who call on her at the hour of death and who really ought to be damned according to our ordinary standards are saved by her intercession. And if that Marietta (it is thus in their fury they called her) did not counter our plans and our efforts, we should have overcome the Church and destroyed it long before this, and caused all the Orders in the Church to fall into error and infidelity.

"Now that we are forced to speak, we must also tell you that nobody who perseveres in saying the Rosary will be damned, because she obtains for her servants the grace of true contrition for their sins by which they obtain pardon and mercy."

Then St. Dominic had all the people say the Rosary very slowly and with great devotion, and a wonderful thing happened: at each Hail Mary which he and the people said, a large number of devils issued forth from the wretched man's body under the guise of red-hot coals. When the devils had all been expelled and the heretic completely delivered from them, our Lady, although invisible, gave her blessing to the assembled company, and they were filled with joy.

A large number of heretics were converted because of this miracle and joined the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary.

Thirty-fourth Rose

105. It is almost impossible to do credit sufficiently to the victories that Count Simon de Montfort won against the Albigensians under the patronage of Our Lady of the Rosary. They are so famous that the world has never seen anything to match them. One day he defeated ten thousand heretics with a force of five hundred men; on another occasion he overcame three thousand with only thirty men; finally, with eight hundred horsemen and one thousand infantrymen he completely routed the army of the King of Aragon, which was a hundred thousand strong, and this with the loss on his side of only one horseman and eight soldiers.

106. Our Lady also protected Alan de l'Anvallay, a Breton knight, from great perils. He too was fighting for the faith against the Albigensians. One day, when he found himself surrounded by enemies on all sides, our Lady let fall a hundred and fifty rocks upon his enemies and he was delivered from their hands.

Another day, when his ship had foundered and was about to sink, this good Mother caused a hundred and fifty small hills to appear miraculously above the water and by means of them they reached Brittany in safety. In thanksgiving to our Lady for the miracles she had worked on his behalf in answer to his daily Rosary, he built a monastery at Dinan for the religious of the new Order of St. Dominic and, having become a religious himself, he died a holy death at Orleans.

107. Othère, also a Breton soldier, from Vaucouleurs, often put whole companies of heretics or robbers to flight, wearing his rosary on his arm and on the hilt of his sword. Once when he had beaten his enemies, they admitted that they had seen his sword shining brightly, and another time had noticed a shield on his arm on which our Lord, our Lady and the saints were depicted. This shield made him invisible and gave him the strength to attack well.

Another time he defeated twenty thousand heretics with only ten companies without losing a single man. This so impressed the general of the heretics' army that he sought out Othère, abjured his heresy and declared that he had seen him surrounded by flaming swords during the battle.

Thirty-fifth Rose

108. Blessed Alan relates that a certain Cardinal Pierre, whose titular church was that of St. Mary-beyond-the-Tiber, was a great friend of St. Dominic's and had learned from him to have a great devotion to the holy Rosary. He grew to love it so much that he never ceased singing its praises and encouraging everyone he met to embrace it. Eventually he was sent as legate to the Holy Land to the Christians who were fighting against the Saracens. So successfully did he convince the Christian army of the power of the Rosary that they all started saying it and stormed heaven for help in a battle in which they knew they would be pitifully outnumbered. And in fact, their three thousand triumphed over an enemy of one hundred thousand.

As we have seen, the devils have an overwhelming fear of the Rosary. St. Bernard says that the Angelic Salutation puts them to flight and makes all hell tremble. Blessed Alan assures us that he has seen several people delivered from Satan's bondage after taking up the holy Rosary, even though they had previously sold themselves to him, body and soul, by renouncing their baptismal vows and their allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Thirty-sixth Rose

109. In 1578, a woman of Antwerp had given herself to the devil and signed a contract with her own blood. Shortly afterwards she was stricken with remorse and had an intense desire to make amends for this terrible deed. So she sought out a kind and wise confessor to find out how she could be set free from the power of the devil.

She found a wise and holy priest, who advised her to go to Fr. Henry, director of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, at the Dominican Friary, to be enrolled there and to make her confession. Accordingly, she asked to see him but met, not Fr. Henry, but the devil disguised as a friar. He reproved her severely and said she could never hope to receive God's grace, and there was no way of revoking what she had signed. This grieved her greatly but she did not lose hope in God's mercy and sought out Fr. Henry once more, only to find the devil a second time, and to meet with a second rebuff. She came back a third time and then at last, by divine providence, she found Fr. Henry in person, the priest whom she had been looking for, and he treated her with great kindness, urging her to throw herself on the mercy of God and to make a good confession. He then

received her into the Confraternity and told her to say the Rosary frequently.

One day, while Fr. Henry was celebrating Mass for her, our Lady forced the devil to give her back the contract she had signed. In this way she was delivered from the devil by the authority of Mary and by devotion to the holy Rosary.

Thirty-seventh Rose

110. A nobleman who had several daughters placed one of them in a lax monastery where the nuns were concerned only with vanity and pleasures. Their confessor, on the other hand, was a zealous priest with a great devotion to the holy Rosary. Wishing to guide this nun into a better way of life, he ordered her to say the Rosary every day in honour of the Blessed Virgin, while meditating on the life, passion and glory of Jesus Christ.

She joyously undertook this devotion, and little by little she grew to have a repugnance for the wayward habits of her sisters in religion. She developed a love of silence and prayer, in spite of the fact that the others despised and ridiculed her and called her a fanatic.

It was at this time that a holy priest, who was making the visitation of the convent, had a strange vision during his meditation: he saw a nun in her room, rapt in prayer, kneeling in front of a Lady of great beauty who was surrounded by angels. The latter had flaming spears with which they

repelled a crowd of devils who wanted to come in. These evil spirits then fled to the other nuns' rooms under the guise of vile animals.

By this vision the priest became aware of the lamentable state of that monastery and was so upset that he thought he might die of grief. He sent for the young religious and exhorted her to persevere. As he pondered on the value of the Rosary, he decided to try and reform the Sisters by means of it. He bought a supply of beautiful rosaries and gave one to each nun, imploring them to say it every day and promising them that, if they would only say it faithfully, he would not try to force them to alter their lives. Wonderful and strange though it may seem, the nuns willingly accepted the rosaries and promised to say the prayer on that condition. Little by little they began to give up their empty and worldly pursuits, letting silence and recollection come into their lives. In less than a year they all asked that the monastery be reformed.

The Rosary worked more changes in their hearts than the priest could have done by exhorting and commanding them.

Thirty-eighth Rose

111. A Spanish countess who had been taught the holy Rosary by St. Dominic used to say it faithfully every day, with the result that she was making marvellous progress in her spiritual life. Since her only desire was to attain to perfection, she asked a bishop who was a renowned preacher for some practices that would help her to become perfect. The bishop told her that, before he could give her any advice, she would have to let him know the state of her soul and what her religious exercises were. She

answered that her most important exercise was the Rosary, which she said every day, meditating on the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries, and that she had profited greatly by so doing.

The Bishop was overjoyed to hear her explain what priceless lessons the mysteries contain. "I have been a doctor of theology for twenty years," he exclaimed, "and I have read many excellent books on various devotional practices. But never before have I come across one better than this or more conformed to the Christian life. From now on I shall follow your example, and I shall preach the Rosary."

He did so with such success that in a short while he saw his diocese changed for the better. There was a notable decline in immorality and worldliness of all kinds as well as in gambling. There were several instances of people being brought back to the faith, of sinners making restitution for their crimes, and of others sincerely resolving to give up their lives of vice. Religious fervour and Christian charity began to flourish. These changes were all the more remarkable because this bishop had been striving to reform his diocese for some time but with hardly any results.

To inculcate the devotion of the Rosary all the more, the bishop also wore a beautiful rosary at his side and always showed it to his congregation when he preached. He used to say, "My dear brethren, I am a doctor of theology, and of canon and civil law, but I say to you, as your bishop, that I take more pride in wearing the rosary of the Blessed Virgin than in any of my episcopal regalia or academic robes."

Thirty-ninth Rose

112. A Danish priest used to love to tell how the very same improvement that the Spanish bishop noticed in his diocese had occurred in his own parish. He always told his story with great joy of heart because it gave such glory to God.

"I had," he said, "preached as compellingly as I could, touching on many aspects of our holy Faith, and using every argument I could possibly think of to get people to amend their way of life, but in vain. Finally, I decided to preach the holy Rosary. I told my congregations how precious it was and taught them how to say it, and I affirm that having taught them to appreciate this devotion, I saw a manifest change within six months.

"How true it is that this God-given prayer has a divine power to touch our hearts and inspire them with a horror of sin and a love of virtue!"

One day our Lady said to Blessed Alan, "Just as God chose the Angelic Salutation to bring about the incarnation of his Word and the redemption of mankind, so those who want to bring about moral reforms and regenerate them in Jesus Christ must honour me and greet me with the same salutation. I am the channel by which God came to men, and so, next to Jesus Christ, it is through me that men must obtain grace and virtue."

113. I, who write this, have learnt from my own experience that the Rosary has the power to convert even the most hardened hearts. I have known people who have gone to missions and heard sermons on the most terrifying subjects without being in the least moved; and yet, after they

had, on my advice, started to say the Rosary every day. they eventually became converted and gave themselves completely to God.

When I have gone back to parishes where I had given missions, I have seen tremendous differences between them; in those parishes where the people had given up the Rosary, they had generally fallen back into their sinful ways, whereas in places where the Rosary was said faithfully I found the people were persevering in the grace of God and advancing in virtue day by day.

Fortieth Rose

114. Blessed Alan de la Roche, Fr. Jean Dumont, Fr. Thomas, the chronicles of St. Dominic and other writers who have seen these things with their own eyes speak of the marvellous conversions that are brought about by this wonderful devotion. Great sinners, both men and women, have been converted after twenty, thirty or forty years of sin and unspeakable vice. I will not even relate those which I have seen myself because I do not want to make this book too long; there are several reasons why I would rather not talk about them.

Dear reader, if you practice and preach this devotion, you will learn more, by your own experience, than from spiritual books, and you will have the happiness of being rewarded by our Lady in accordance with the promises she made to St. Dominic, to Blessed Alan de la Roche, and to those who encourage this devotion which is so dear to her. For the Rosary teaches people about the virtues of Jesus and Mary, and leads them to mental prayer, to the imitation of Jesus Christ, to the frequentation of the

sacraments, the practice of genuine virtue and of all kinds of good works. It also helps us to gain many wonderful indulgences, which people are unaware of because those who preach this devotion hardly ever mention them and content themselves with giving a popular sermon on the Rosary which very often produces admiration but not instruction.

115. Finally, I shall content myself with saying, in company with Blessed Alan de la Roche, that the Rosary is a source and a store-house of countless blessings.

1. Sinners obtain pardon;
- 2 Those who thirst are refreshed;
3. Those who are fettered are set free;
- 4 Those who weep find joy;
5. Those who are tempted find peace;
- 6 Those in need find help;
7. Religious are reformed;
- 8 The ignorant are instructed;
9. The living learn to resist spiritual decline;
- 10 The dead have their pains eased by suffrages.

Our Lady once said to Blessed Alan, "I want those who are devoted to my Rosary to have my Son's grace and blessing during their lifetime, at death and after their death. I want them to be freed from all slavery so that they

will be like kings, with crowns on their heads, sceptres in their hands and to reign in eternal glory. Amen.

FIFTH DECADE

How to say the Rosary worthily

Forty-first Rose

116. It is not so much the length of a prayer as the fervour with which it is said which pleases God and touches his heart. A single Hail Mary said properly is worth more than a hundred and fifty said badly. Most Catholics say the Rosary, either the whole fifteen mysteries or five of them, or at least a few decades. Why is it then that so few of them give up their sins and make progress in virtue, if not because they are not saying them as they should.

117. It is a good thing to think over how we should pray if we want to please God and become more holy.

1. Firstly, to say the holy Rosary with advantage one must be in a state of grace or at least be fully determined to give up sin, for all our theology teaches us that good works and prayers are dead works if they are done in a state of mortal sin. Therefore, they can neither be pleasing to God nor help us to gain eternal life. As Scripture says, "Praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner" (Ecclus. 15).

The praise and greeting of the angel and the very prayer of Jesus Christ are not pleasing to God when they are said by unrepentant sinners.

"These people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me"
(Mark 7:6).

Those who join my confraternities (says Jesus Christ), who say the Rosary every day, without any contrition for their sins, offer me lip service only and their hearts are far from me.

2. I have just said that a person must "at least be fully determined to give up sin," 1) because if it were true that God only heard the prayers of those in a state of grace, it would follow that those who are in a state of serious sin should not pray at all. This is an erroneous teaching which has been condemned by the Church, because sinners, of course, need to pray far more than good people. Were this horrible doctrine true, it would be useless and futile to tell a sinner to say the Rosary, because it would never help him; 2) because they join one of our Lady's confraternities, or say the Rosary or some other prayer, without having the slightest intention of giving up sin, they join the ranks of her false devotees. These presumptuous and impenitent devotees, hiding under her mantle, with the scapular round their necks and the rosary in their hands, cry out, "Blessed Virgin, good Mother, Hail Mary," and yet at the same time they are crucifying Jesus Christ and tearing his flesh anew by their sins. It is a great tragedy, but from the ranks of our Lady's most holy confraternities souls are falling into the fires of hell.

118. We earnestly advise everyone to say the Rosary: the virtuous, that they may persevere and grow in the grace of God; sinners, that they may rise from their sins. But God forbid we should ever encourage a sinner to

think that our Lady will protect him with her mantle if he continues to love sin, for it will turn into a mantle of damnation which will hide his sins from the public eye. The Rosary, which is a remedy for all ills, would then be turned into a deadly poison. *Corruptio optimi pessima*.

The learned Cardinal Hugues tells us that one should be as pure as an angel to approach the Blessed Virgin and say the Angelic Salutation. One day, our Lady showed herself to an immoral man who used to say the Rosary regularly every day. She showed him a bowl of beautiful fruit, but the bowl itself was covered with filth. The man was horrified to see this, and our Lady said to him, "This is the way you are honouring me. You are giving me beautiful roses in a dirty bowl. Do you think I can find them pleasing to me?"

Forty-second Rose

119. In order to pray well, it is not enough to give expression to our petitions by means of that most excellent of all prayers, the Rosary, but we must also pray with great attention, for God listens more to the voice of the heart than that of the mouth. To be guilty of wilful distractions during prayer would show a great lack of respect and reverence; it would make our Rosaries unfruitful and make us guilty of sin.

How can we expect God to listen to us if we ourselves do not pay attention to what we are saying? How can we expect him to be pleased if, while in the presence of his tremendous majesty, we give in to distractions, like a child running after a butterfly? People who do that forfeit God's blessing, which is changed into a curse for having treated the things of God

disrespectfully: "Cursed be the one who does God's work negligently." Jer. 48:10.

120. Of course, you cannot say your Rosary without having a few involuntary distractions; it is even difficult to say a Hail Mary without your imagination troubling you a little, for it is never still; but you can say it without voluntary distractions, and you must take all sorts of precautions to lessen involuntary distractions and to control your imagination.

To do this, put yourself in the presence of God and imagine that God and his Blessed Mother are watching you, and that your guardian angel is at your right hand, taking your Hail Marys, if they are well said, and using them like roses to make crowns for Jesus and Mary. But remember that at your left hand is the devil, ready to pounce on every Hail Mary that comes his way and to write it down in his book of death, if they are not said with attention, devotion, and reverence. Above all, do not fail to offer up each decade in honour of one of the mysteries, and try to form a picture in your mind of Jesus and Mary in connection with that mystery.

121. We read in the life of Blessed Hermann of the Order of the Premonstratensians, that at one time when he used to say the Rosary attentively and devoutly while meditating on the mysteries, our Lady used to appear to him resplendent in breathtaking majesty and beauty. But, as time went on, his fervour cooled and he fell into the way of saying his Rosary hurriedly and without giving it his full attention. Then one day our Lady appeared to him again, but this time she was far from beautiful, and

her face was furrowed and drawn with sadness. Blessed Hermann was appalled at the change in her, and our Lady explained, "This is how I look to you, Hermann, because this is how you are treating me; as a woman to be despised and of no importance. Why do you no longer greet me with respect and attention while meditating on my mysteries and praising my privileges?"

Forty-third Rose

122. When the Rosary is well said, it gives Jesus and Mary more glory and is more meritorious for the soul than any other prayer. But it is also the hardest prayer to say well and to persevere in, owing especially to the distractions which almost inevitably attend the constant repetition of the same words.

When we say the Little Office of Our Lady, or the Seven Penitential Psalms, or any prayers other than the Rosary, the variety of words and expressions keeps us alert, prevents our imagination from wandering, and so makes it easier for us to say them well. On the contrary, because of the constant repetition of the Our Father and Hail Mary in the same unvarying form, it is difficult, while saying the Rosary, not to become wearied and inclined to sleep, or to turn to other prayers that are more refreshing and less tedious. This shows that one needs much greater devotion to persevere in saying the Rosary than in saying any other prayer, even the psalter of David.

123. Our imagination, which is hardly still a minute, makes our task harder, and then of course there is the devil who never tires of trying to

distract us and keep us from praying. To what ends does not the evil one go against us while we are engaged in saying our Rosary against him.

Being human, we easily become tired and slipshod, but the devil makes these difficulties worse when we are saying the Rosary. Before we even begin, he makes us feel bored, distracted, or exhausted; and when we have started praying, he oppresses us from all sides, and when after much difficulty and many distractions, we have finished, he whispers to us, "What you have just said is worthless. It is useless for you to say the Rosary. You had better get on with other things. It is only a waste of time to pray without paying attention to what you are saying; half-an-hour's meditation or some spiritual reading would be much better. Tomorrow, when you are not feeling so sluggish, you'll pray better; leave the rest of your Rosary till then." By tricks of this kind the devil gets us to give up the Rosary altogether or to say it less often, and we keep putting it off or change to some other devotion.

124. Dear friend of the Rosary Confraternity, do not listen to the devil, but be of good heart, even if your imagination has been bothering you throughout your Rosary, filling your mind with all kinds of distracting thoughts, so long as you tried your best to get rid of them as soon as you noticed them. Always remember that the best Rosary is the one with the most merit, and there is more merit in praying when it is hard than when it is easy. Prayer is all the harder when it is, naturally speaking, distasteful to the soul and is filled with those annoying little ants and flies running about in your imagination, against your will, and scarcely allowing you

the time to enjoy a little peace and appreciate the beauty of what you are saying.

125. Even if you have to fight distractions all through your whole Rosary, be sure to fight well, arms in hand: that is to say, do not stop saying your Rosary even if it is difficult to say and you have no sensible devotion. It is a terrible battle, but one that is profitable to the faithful soul. If you put down your arms, that is, if you give up the Rosary, you will be admitting defeat and then the devil, having got what he wanted, will leave you in peace, and on the day of judgment will taunt you because of your faithlessness and lack of courage. "He who is faithful in little things will also be faithful in those that are greater." Luke 16:10.

He who is faithful in rejecting the smallest distractions when he says even the smallest prayer, will also be faithful in great things. Nothing is more certain, since the Holy Spirit has told us so.

So all of you, servants and handmaids of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin, who have made up your minds to say the Rosary every day, be of good heart. Do not let the multitude of flies (as I call the distractions that make war on you during prayer) make you abandon the company of Jesus and Mary, in whose holy presence you are when saying the Rosary. In what follows I shall give you suggestions for diminishing distractions in prayer.

Forty-fourth Rose

126. After you have invoked the Holy Spirit, in order to say your Rosary well, place yourself for a moment in the presence of God and make the offering of the decades in the way I will show you later.

Before beginning a decade, pause for a moment or two, depending on how much time you have, and contemplate the mystery that you are about to honour in that decade. Always be sure to ask, by this mystery and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, for one of the virtues that shines forth most in this mystery or one of which you are in particular need.

Take great care to avoid the two pitfalls that most people fall into during the Rosary. The first is the danger of not asking for any graces at all, so that if some good people were asked their Rosary intention they would not know what to say. So, whenever you say your Rosary, be sure to ask for some special grace or virtue, or strength to overcome some sin.

The second fault commonly committed in saying the Rosary is to have no intention other than that of getting it over with as quickly as possible. This is because so many look upon the Rosary as a burden, which weighs heavily upon them when it has not been said, especially when we have promised to say it regularly or have been told to say it as a penance more or less against our will.

127. It is sad to see how most people say the Rosary. They say it astonishingly fast, slipping over part of the words. We could not possibly expect anyone, even the most important person, to think that a slipshod

address of this kind was a compliment, and yet we imagine that Jesus and Mary will be honoured by it!

Small wonder, then, that the most sacred prayers of our holy religion seem to bear no fruit, and that, after saying thousands of Rosaries, we are still no better than we were before.

Dear friend of the Confraternity, I beg you to restrain your natural precipitation when saying your Rosary, and make some pauses in the middle of the Our Father and Hail Mary, and a smaller one after the words of the Our Father and Hail Mary which I have marked with a cross, as follows:

Our Father who art in heaven, + hallowed by thy name, + thy kingdom come, + thy will be done + on earth as it is in heaven. + Give us this day + our daily bread, + and forgive us our trespasses + as we forgive those who trespass against us, + and lead us not into temptation, + but deliver us from evil. Amen. +

Hail, Mary, full of grace, + the Lord is with thee, + blessed art thou among women, + and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. +

Holy Mary, Mother of God, + pray for us sinners, now + and at the hour of our death. Amen. +

At first, you may find it difficult to make these pauses because of your bad habit of saying prayers in a hurry; but a decade said recollectedly in this way will be worth more than thousands of Rosaries said in a hurry, without pausing or reflecting.

128. Blessed Alan de la Roche and other writers, including Robert Bellarmine, tell the story of how a good priest advised three of his penitents, who happened to be sisters, to say the Rosary every day without fail for a whole year. This was so that they might make a beautiful robe of glory for the Blessed Virgin out of their Rosaries. This was a secret that the priest had received from heaven.

So the three sisters said the Rosary faithfully for a year, and on the feast of the Purification our Lady appeared to them at night when they had retired. St. Catherine and St. Agnes were with her, and she was wearing a dress brilliant with light, on which was written in letters of gold the words "Hail, Mary, full of grace." Our Lady approached the eldest sister and said, "I greet you, my daughter, who have greeted me so often and so well. I want to thank you for the beautiful robes you have made me." The two virgin saints who accompanied our Lady also thanked her and all three disappeared.

An hour later, our Lady, with the same two companions, entered the room again, but this time she was wearing a green dress which had no gold lettering and did not shine. She went to the second sister and thanked her for the robe she had made by saying her Rosary. But since this sister had seen our Lady appear to the eldest sister much more magnificently dressed, she asked the reason why. Our Lady answered, "Your sister made me more beautiful clothes because she has been saying the Rosary better than you."

About an hour after this, she appeared to the youngest of the sisters wearing tattered and dirty rags. "My daughter," she said, "I want to thank you for these clothes you have made me." The young girl, feeling ashamed, cried out, "O my lady, how could I have dressed you so badly! I beg you to forgive me. Please grant me a little more time to make you a beautiful robe by saying my Rosary better." Our Lady and the two saints vanished, leaving the girl heartbroken. She told her confessor everything that had happened and he urged them to say the Rosary for another year and to say it with more devotion than ever.

At the end of this second year, on the same day of the Purification, our Lady, clothed in a magnificent robe, and again attended by St. Catherine and St. Agnes, wearing crowns, appeared to them in the evening. She said to them, "I have come to tell you that you have earned heaven at last, and you will all have the great joy of going there tomorrow." The three of them cried, "Our hearts are ready, dearest Queen, our hearts are ready." Then the vision faded. That same night they became ill and sent for their confessor, and received the last sacraments, after having thanked him for the holy practice he had taught them. After Compline, our Lady appeared with a large company of virgins and had the three sisters clothed in white robes. While angels were singing, "Come, spouses of Jesus Christ, receive the crowns which have been prepared for you for all eternity," they departed from this life.

Some important truths can be learned from this story: 1) How important it is to have a good director who will counsel holy practices, especially that

of the holy Rosary; 2) How important it is to say the Rosary with attention and devotion; 3) How kind and merciful is the Blessed Virgin to those who are sorry for the past and are firmly resolved to do better; 4) How generous she is in rewarding us in life, at death, and in eternity for the little services that we render her with fidelity.

Forty-fifth Rose

129. I would like to add that the Rosary ought to be said reverently, that is to say, it ought to be said as much as possible, kneeling, with hands joined, clasping the rosary. However, if you are ill, you can, of course, say it in bed; or if one is travelling it can be said while walking; if, on account of some infirmity, you cannot kneel you can say it standing or sitting. You can even say it while working if your duties do not allow you to leave your job, for work with one's hands is not always incompatible with vocal prayer.

I agree that, since the soul has its limitations and can only do so much, when we are concentrating on manual work we are less attentive to the activities of the spirit, such as prayer. But when we cannot do otherwise, this kind of prayer is not without its value in our Lady's eyes, and she rewards our good-will more than our exterior actions.

130. I advise you to divide up your Rosary into three parts and to say each group of five decades at different times of the day. This is much better than saying the whole fifteen decades at once.

If you cannot find the time to say five decades all together, say a decade here and a decade there; you will thus be able, in spite of your work and the calls upon your time, to complete the whole Rosary before going to bed.

St. Francis de Sales set us a very good example of fidelity in this respect: once when he was extremely tired from the visits he had made during the day and remembered, towards midnight, that he had left a few decades of his Rosary unsaid, he knelt down and said them before going to bed, notwithstanding all the efforts of his secretary, who saw he was tired and begged him to leave the rest of his prayers till the next day.

Imitate also the faithfulness, reverence and devotion of the holy friar, mentioned in the chronicles of St. Francis, who always said five decades of the Rosary with great reverence and attention before dinner. I have mentioned this earlier.

Forty-sixth Rose

131. Of all the ways of saying the holy Rosary, the most glorious to God, most salutary to our souls, and the most terrible to the devil is that of saying or chanting the Rosary publicly in two choirs.

God is very pleased to have people gathered together in prayer. All the angels and the blessed unite to praise him unceasingly. The just on earth, gathered together in various communities, pray in common, night and day. Our Lord expressly recommended this practice to his apostles and

disciples, and promised that whenever there would be at least two or three gathered in his name he would be there in the midst of them.

What a wonderful thing to have Jesus Christ in our midst! And all we have to do to have him with us is to come together to say the Rosary. That is why the first Christians met so often to pray together, in spite of the persecutions of the Emperors, who had forbidden them to assemble. They preferred to risk death rather than to miss their gatherings where our Lord was present.

132. This way of praying is of the greatest benefit to us:

1. because our minds are usually more alert during public prayer than when we pray alone;

2. when we pray in common, the prayer of each one belongs to the whole group and make all together but one prayer, so that if one person is not praying well, someone else in the same gathering who is praying better makes up for his deficiency. In the same way, those who are strong uphold the weak, those who are fervent inspire the lukewarm, the rich enrich the poor, the bad are merged with the good. How can a measure of cockle be sold? This can be done very easily by mixing it with four or five bushels of good wheat.

3. One who says his Rosary alone only gains the merit of one Rosary; but if he says it with thirty other people he gains the merit of thirty Rosaries. This is the law of public prayer. How profitable, how advantageous this is!

4. Urban VIII, who was very pleased to see how the devotion of the holy Rosary had spread to Rome and how it was being said in two groups or choirs, particularly at the convent of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, attached a hundred days' extra indulgence *toties quoties*, whenever the Rosary was said in two choirs. This is set out in his brief *Ad perpetuam rei memoriam*, of the year 1626. So every time you say the Rosary in common, you gain a hundred days' indulgence.

5. Public prayer is more powerful than private prayer to appease the anger of God and call down his mercy, and the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, has always advocated it in times of disasters and general distress.

In his Bull on the Rosary, Pope Gregory XIII declares that we must believe, on pious faith, that the public prayers and processions of the members of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary were largely responsible for the great victory over the Turkish navy at Lepanto, which God granted to the Christians on the first Sunday of October 1571.

133. When King Louis the Just, of blessed memory, was besieging La Rochelle, where the rebellious heretics had their strongholds, he wrote to his mother to beg her to have public prayers offered for a victorious outcome. The Queen-Mother decided to have the Rosary recited publicly in Paris in the Dominican church of Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and this was carried out by the Archbishop of Paris. It was begun on May 20th, 1628.

Both the Queen and the Queen-Mother were present, with the Duke of Orleans, Cardinal de la Rochefoucault, Cardinal de Bérulle, and several

prelates. The court turned out in full force as well as a great number of the general populace. The Archbishop read the meditations on the mysteries aloud and then began the Our Father and Hail Mary of each decade, while the congregation of religious and lay-folk answered. At the end of the Rosary a statue of the Blessed Virgin was carried solemnly in procession while the Litany of our Lady was sung.

This devotion was continued every Saturday with admirable fervour and resulted in a manifest blessing from heaven, for the King triumphed over the English at the Island of Ré and made his triumphant entry into La Rochelle on All Saints Day of the same year. This shows us the power of public prayer.

134. Finally, when the Rosary is said in common, it is far more formidable to the devil, because in this public prayer it is an army that is attacking him. He can often overcome the prayer of an individual, but if it is joined to that of others, the devil has much more trouble in getting the best of it. It is easy to break a single stick; but if you join it to others to make a bundle, it cannot be broken. *Vis unita fit fortior*. Soldiers join together in an army to overcome their enemies; immoral people often come together for parties of debauchery and dancing; evil spirits join forces in order to make us lose our souls. Why, then, should not Christians join forces to have Jesus Christ present with them, to appease the anger of God, to draw down his grace and mercy on us, and to frustrate and overcome the devil more forcefully?

Dear friend of the Confraternity, whether you live in the town or the country, near the parish church or a chapel, go there at least every evening,

with the approval of the parish priest, together with all those who want to recite the Rosary in two choirs. If a church or chapel is not available, say the Rosary together in your own or a neighbour's house.

135. This is a holy practice, which God, in his mercy, has set up in places where I have preached missions, in order to safeguard and increase the good brought about by the mission and to prevent further sin. Before the Rosary was established in these little towns and villages, dances and parties of debauchery went on; dissoluteness, wantonness, blasphemy, quarrels and feuds flourished; one heard nothing but evil songs and double-meaning talk. But now nothing is heard but hymns and the chant of the Our Father and Hail Mary. The only gatherings to be seen are those of twenty, thirty or a hundred or more people who, at a fixed time, sing the praises of God as religious do.

There are even places where the Rosary is said in common every day, at three different times of the day. What a blessing from heaven that is! As there are wicked people everywhere, do not expect to find that the place you live in is free of them; there will be people who avoid going to church for the Rosary, who may even make fun of it and do all they can, by what they do and say, to stop you from going. But do not give up. As those wretched people will have to be separated from God and heaven forever, already here on earth they have to be separated from the company of Jesus and his servants.

Forty-seventh Rose

136. People of God, cut yourselves adrift from those who are damning themselves by their impious lives, laziness and lack of devotion without delay, and say the Rosary often with faith, humility, confidence and perseverance.

1. Our Lord told us to pray always, after the example he has given us, because of our endless need of prayer, on account of the darkness of our minds, our ignorance, and weakness, and the number of our enemies. Anyone who really gives heed to this commandment of our Master will surely not be satisfied with saying the Rosary once a year, as the Perpetual Members do, or once a week, like the Ordinary Members, but will say it every day without fail, as a member of the Daily Rosary, even though the only obligation he has is that of his own salvation. "We ought always to pray and not lose heart."

137. These are the eternal words of our Blessed Lord himself. And we must believe his words and abide by them if we do not want to be damned. You can explain them as you wish so long as you do not interpret them as the world does and observe them in a worldly way. Our Lord gave us the true explanation of his words in the examples he left us: "I have given you an example that as I have done to you, so you do also." (Jn. 13:5.) And "he spent the whole night in prayer to God," (Luke 6:12) as if the day was not sufficient for it.

Often he repeated to his Apostles these two words, "Watch and pray." The flesh is weak, temptation is everywhere and always around you. If you do

not keep up your prayers, you will fall. And because some of them evidently thought that these words of our Lord constituted only a counsel, they completely missed the point. That is why they fell into temptation and sin, even though they were in the company of Jesus Christ.

138. Dear friend of the Confraternity, if you want to lead a fashionable life and belong to the world - by this I mean if you do not mind falling into mortal sin from time to time and then going to confession, and avoiding conspicuous sins which the world considers vile, while keeping up the "respectable" ones - then, of course, there is no need for you to say so many prayers and Rosaries. To be "respectable" you only need to say a little prayer morning and evening, an occasional Rosary given to you for your penance, a few decades said in a casual way, when the fancy takes you - that is quite enough for any good-living person. If you did less, you might be branded as a freethinker or profligate; if you do more, you are becoming an eccentric or a fanatic.

139. But if you want to lead a true Christian life and genuinely want to save your soul and walk in the footsteps of the saints and not fall into serious sin, if you wish to break all the snares of the devil and extinguish all his flaming darts, you must pray always as our Lord taught and commanded you to do.

If you really have this wish at heart, then you should at least say your Rosary every day, or its equivalent.

I repeat "at least," because probably all that you will accomplish through your Rosary will be to avoid mortal sin and temptation. This is because you are exposed to the strong current of the world's wickedness by which many a strong soul is swept away; you are in the midst of the thick, clinging darkness which often blinds even the most enlightened souls; you are surrounded by evil spirits who, being more experienced than ever and knowing that their time is short, are more subtle and more effective in tempting you.

It will indeed be a marvel of grace wrought by the holy Rosary if you manage to keep out of the clutches of the world, the devil and the flesh and sin, and gain eternal life.

140. If you do not want to believe what I say, at least learn from your own experience. I should like to ask you if, when you were in the habit of saying no more prayers than people usually say in the world, and saying them in the way they usually say them, you were able to avoid serious faults and sins that were grievous but seemed of little account to you in your blindness. Now at last you must wake up, and if you want to live and die without sin, at least serious sin, pray always; say your Rosary every day, as all members used to do in the early days of the Confraternity. (See the end of this book for proof of what I say.)

When our Blessed Lady gave the Rosary to St. Dominic, she ordered him to say it every day and to get others to say it daily. St. Dominic never let anyone join the Confraternity unless he were fully determined to say it every day. If nowadays people are allowed to be Ordinary members

through saying the Rosary once a week, it is because fervour has dwindled and charity grown cold. You get what you can from one who is poor in prayer. "It was not so in the beginning."

Three things must be noted here.

141. The first is that if you want to be enrolled in the Confraternity of the Daily Rosary and share in the prayers and merits of its members, it is not enough to be enrolled in the Ordinary Rosary or simply to make a resolution to say it every day. In addition, you must give your name to those who have the power of enrolling. It is also a very good thing to go to confession and communion for this intention. The reason for this is that the Ordinary Rosary membership does not include that of the Daily Rosary, but this latter does include the former.

The second point I want to make is that, absolutely speaking, it is not even a venial sin to fail to say the Rosary every day, or every week, or every year.

The third point is that whenever illness, or obedience to a lawful superior, or necessity, or involuntary forgetfulness has prevented you from saying the Rosary, you do not forfeit your share in the merits and you do not lose your participation in the Rosaries of the other Confraternity members. So it is not absolutely necessary for you to say two Rosaries on the following day to make up for the one you missed, as I suppose, through no fault of your own. If, however, when you are ill, your sickness is such that you are still able to say part of your Rosary, you have to say that part.

"Blessed are those who stand before you always." "Happy those who dwell in your house, O Lord, they praise you continually." Lord Jesus, blessed are the brothers and sisters of the Daily Rosary Confraternity who, day after day, are present in and around your throne in heaven, so that they may meditate and contemplate your joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries. How happy they are on earth because of the wonderful graces you bestow on them, and how blessed shall they be in heaven where they will praise you in a special way forever and ever.

142. 2. The Rosary should be said with faith, for our Blessed Lord said, "Believe that you will receive and it will be granted." If you believe that you will receive what you ask from God, he will grant your petitions. He will say to you, "As you have believed, so be it done to you." "If anyone needs wisdom, let him ask God with faith, and without hesitating, and - through his Rosary - it will be given him."

143. 3. Thirdly, we must pray with humility, like the publican; he was kneeling on the ground, on two knees, not on one knee as proud and worldly people do, or one knee on the bench. He was at the back of the church and not in the sanctuary as the Pharisee was; his eyes were cast down, for he dared not look up to heaven; he did not hold his head up and look about him like the Pharisee; he beat his breast, confessing himself a sinner and asking for forgiveness: "Be merciful to me, a sinner," and not like the Pharisee who boasted of his good works, who despised others in their prayers. Do not imitate the prayer of the proud Pharisee which only

hardened his heart and increased his guilt; imitate rather the humility of the tax-collector, whose prayer obtained him the remission of his sins.

You must be on your guard against giving yourself to what is extraordinary and asking or even desiring knowledge of extraordinary things, visions, revelations, or other miraculous graces which God has occasionally given to some of the saints while they were saying the Rosary. Sola fides sufficit: Faith alone suffices now that the Gospel and all the devotions and pious practices are sufficiently established.

Even if you suffer from dryness of soul, distaste for prayer and interior discouragement, never give up the least part of your Rosary; this would be a sign of pride and infidelity; but like a brave champion of Jesus and Mary, say your Our Fathers and Hail Marys in your dryness, without seeing, feeling, or appreciating, and concentrating as best you can on the mysteries.

You ought not to look for sweets or jam to eat with your daily bread, as children do; but to imitate Jesus more perfectly in his agony you could say your Rosary more slowly sometimes when you find it particularly hard to say: "Being in agony, he prayed the longer," so that what was said of our Lord when he was in his agony of prayer may be said of you: he prayed all the longer.

144. 4. Pray with great confidence, with confidence based on the goodness and infinite generosity of God and on the promises of Jesus Christ. God is the spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those

who pray. The eternal Father yearns for nothing so much as to share the life-giving waters of his grace and mercy with us. He entreats us, "All you who thirst, come to the waters," that is, come and drink of my spring through prayer, and when we do not pray to him he sorrowfully says that we are forsaking him, "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water."

We please our Lord when we ask him for graces, and if we do not ask he makes a loving complaint, "Until now you have not asked anything.... Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you."

Furthermore, to give us more confidence in praying to him, he has bound himself by a promise: that his eternal Father would grant everything we ask in his name.

Forty-eighth Rose

145. As a fifth point, I must add perseverance and prayer. Only he who perseveres in asking, seeking, and knocking, will receive, will find and will enter. It is not enough to ask God for certain graces for a month, a year, ten or twenty years; we must never tire of asking. We must keep on asking until the very moment of death, and even in this prayer, which shows our confidence in God, we must join the thought of death to that of perseverance and say, "Although he should kill me, I will trust in him," will trust him to give me what I ask.

146. Prominent and rich people of the world show their generosity by foreseeing people's wants and ministering to them, even before they are asked for anything. God's munificence, on the other hand, is shown by his making us seek and ask, over a long period of time, for the graces which he wishes to bestow, and the more precious the grace, the longer he takes to grant it:

1. in order to increase the grace still more;
2. in order that the recipient may more deeply appreciate it;
3. in order that the one who receives it may guard against losing it; for people do not appreciate very much what they obtain quickly and at little cost.

So, dear members of the Confraternity, persevere in asking God for all your needs, both spiritual and material, through the holy Rosary; especially should you pray for divine Wisdom, which is "an infinite treasure," and there can be no possible doubt that you will receive it sooner or later, provided you do not give up and do not lose courage in the middle of your journey. "You still have a great way to go."

You have a long way to travel, there will be bad times to weather, many difficulties to overcome, and many enemies to defeat before you will have stored up enough treasures for eternity, enough Our Fathers and Hail Marys with which to buy your way to heaven and win the glorious crown which awaits each faithful brother and sister of the Confraternity.

"Let no one take your crown": take care that your crown is not appropriated by another who has been more faithful than you in saying his Rosary every day. "Your crown": it was yours, God had prepared it for you; it was yours, you had already half obtained it by your Rosaries well said. But because you stopped on the way when you were running so well, another has left you behind and got there first; another who is more diligent and more faithful has paid, by his Rosaries and good works, what was required to obtain that crown.

"You began your race well; who has hindered you?" Who has prevented you from having the crown of the holy Rosary? Alas, none other than the enemies of the Rosary, who are so numerous.

147. Believe me, it is only the violent who take it by force. These crowns are not for the timid who are afraid of this world's taunts and threats, neither are they for the lazy and indolent who only say their Rosary carelessly, or hastily, just for the sake of getting it over with. The same applies to people who say it intermittently, as the spirit moves them. These crowns are not for cowards who lose heart and lay down their arms as soon as they see hell is let loose against their Rosary.

Dear fellow-members, if you want to serve Jesus and Mary by saying the Rosary every day, you must be prepared for temptation: "If you aspire to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation." Heretics, licentious people, the so-called respectable people of the world, persons of superficial piety, and false prophets, hand in glove with your fallen nature and all hell

itself - all will wage terrible battles against you in an endeavour to make you give up this holy practice.

148. To help you to be better armed against their onslaught - not so much of acknowledged heretics and profligates as those who are considered "respectable" in the eyes of the world, and even those who are devout but have no use for the Rosary - I am going to tell you simply some of the things these people are always saying and thinking.

"What does this babbler want to say?" "Come, let us attack him, for he is against us." What is he doing, saying so many Rosaries? What is it he is always mumbling? Such laziness! He does nothing but keep on sliding those beads along, he would do much better to work without amusing himself with such foolishness. Oh yes, it's quite true, all you have to do is to say the Rosary and a fortune will fall from heaven into your lap. The Rosary brings you all you need without lifting a finger. But hasn't it been said, "God helps those who help themselves"? Why load yourself with so many prayers? *Brevis oratio penetrat coelos*; an Our Father and a Hail Mary well said are quite sufficient. God has never commanded us to say the Rosary; of course it's all right, it's not a bad devotion when you've got the time, but don't think for one minute that people who say the Rosary are any more sure of heaven than we are. Just look at the saints who never said it!

Far too many people want everyone to see through their own eyes, people who lack prudence and carry everything to extremes, scrupulous people

who see sin almost everywhere, who say that those who do not say the Rosary will be damned.

Oh yes, the Rosary is all right for old women who can't read. But surely the Little Office of our Lady is much more worthwhile, or the seven penitential psalms? Is there anything more beautiful than those psalms which have been inspired by the Holy Spirit?

You say you have undertaken to say the Rosary every day; that's just a flash in the pan, you know it won't last. Wouldn't it be better to undertake less and be more faithful about it? Come, my friend, take my word for it, say your morning and night prayers, work hard during the day and offer it up. God does not ask any more than that. If you didn't have your living to earn, as you have, you could commit yourself to saying your Rosary. But as it is, say your Rosary on Sundays and Holidays when you have plenty of time, but not on days when you have to work.

But really and truly, what are you doing with that enormous pair of beads? I've seen a rosary of only one decade, it's just as good as one of fifteen decades. Why on earth are you wearing it on your belt, fanatic that you are? Why don't you go the whole way and wear it round your neck like the Spaniards? They are great lovers of rosaries; they carry a big rosary in one hand, while in the other they have a dagger to give a treacherous stab. For goodness' sake drop these exterior devotions; true devotion is in the heart. And so on.

149. Similarly, not a few clever people and learned scholars may occasionally try to dissuade you from saying the Rosary, proud and critical people, I mean. They would rather you said the seven penitential psalms or some other prayers. If a good confessor has given you a Rosary for your penance, to be said for a fortnight or a month, all you have to do to get your penance changed to a few other prayers, fasts, alms or Masses, is to go to confession to one of those gentlemen.

If you consult even some people who live lives of prayer in the world, but who have never tried the Rosary, they will not only not encourage it but will turn people away from it to get them to learn contemplation, as if the Rosary and contemplation were incompatible, as if all the saints who have been devoted to the Rosary had not reached the heights of contemplation.

Your closest enemies will attack you all the more cruelly because they are within you. I mean the powers of your soul and your bodily senses, the distractions of the mind, distress and uncertainty of the will, dryness of the heart, exhaustion and illness of the body - all that will combine with the evil spirits to say to you, "Give up your Rosary, that is what is giving you such a headache; give up your Rosary, there is no obligation under pain of sin; at least say only a part of it; the difficulties you are having are a sign that God does not want you to say it; you can say it tomorrow when you are more in the mood." And so on.

150. Finally, my dear brothers and sisters, the daily Rosary has so many enemies that I look upon the grace of persevering in it until death as one of the greatest favours God can give us.

Persevere in it and your fidelity will be rewarded with the wonderful crown which is prepared for you in heaven: "Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life."

Forty-ninth Rose

151. This is the time to say a little about the indulgences which have been granted to Rosary Confraternity members, so that you may gain as many as possible.

An indulgence, in general, is a remission or relaxation of temporal punishment due to actual sins, by the application of the super-abundant satisfactions of Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Virgin and all the saints, which are contained in the treasury of the Church.

A plenary indulgence is a remission of the whole punishment due to sin; a partial indulgence of, for instance, a hundred or a thousand years can be explained as the remission of as much punishment as could have been expiated during a hundred or a thousand years, if one had been given a corresponding number of the penances prescribed by the Church's ancient Canons.

Now these Canons exacted seven and sometimes ten or fifteen years' penance for a single mortal sin, so that a person who was guilty of twenty mortal sins would probably have had to perform a seven year penance at least twenty times, and so on.

152. Members of the Rosary Confraternity who want to gain the indulgences must:

1. Be truly repentant and go to confession and communion, as the Papal Bull of indulgences states.
2. Be entirely free from affection for venial sin, because if affection for sin remains, the guilt also remains, and if the guilt remains the punishment cannot be lifted.
3. Say the prayers and perform the good works designated by the Bull. If, in accordance with what the Popes have said, one can gain a partial indulgence (for instance, of a hundred years) without gaining a plenary indulgence, it is not always necessary to go to confession and communion in order to gain it. Many such partial indulgences are attached to the Rosary (either of five or fifteen decades), to processions, blessed rosaries, etc. Do not neglect these indulgences.

153. Flammin and a great number of other writers tell the story of a young girl of noble station named Alexandra, who had been miraculously converted and enrolled by St. Dominic in the Confraternity of the Rosary. After her death, she appeared to him and said she had been condemned to seven hundred years in purgatory because of her own sins and those she had caused others to commit by her worldly ways. So she implored him to ease her pains by his prayers and to ask the Confraternity members to pray for the same end. St. Dominic did as she had asked.

Two weeks later she appeared to him, more radiant than the sun, having been quickly delivered from purgatory by the prayers of the Confraternity members. She also told St. Dominic that she had come on behalf of the

souls in purgatory to beg him to go on preaching the Rosary and to ask their relations to offer their Rosaries for them, and that they would reward them abundantly when they entered into glory.

154. To make the recitation of the Rosary easier for you, here are several methods which will help you to say it in a good and holy way, with the meditation on the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries of Jesus and Mary. Choose whichever method pleases you and helps you the most: or you can make up one for yourself, as several holy people have done.

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