

# *Alter Christus*

*“As an **alter Christus** (another Christ) the priest is in Christ, for Christ and with Christ... Because he belongs to Christ, the priest is radically at the service of all people: he is the minister of their salvation” (Pope Benedict XVI)*

Monthly bulletin dedicated to all the Priests of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

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## *The Priest and the Rosary*

**By Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort**

[From the Book *The Secret of the Rosary*]

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.

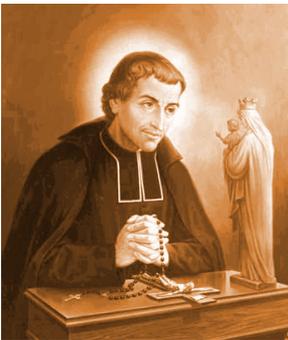
When the Holy Spirit has revealed this secret to a priest and director of souls, how blessed is that priest! For the vast majority of people fail to know this secret or else only know it superficially. If such a priest really understands this secret, he will say the

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.

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."

### Author: Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort

Born poor. Studied in Paris, France, and ordained in 1700. Under Mary's inspiration, he founded the Daughters of Divine Wisdom, a religious institute of women devoted to the care of the destitute, and a brother organization, the Brothers of Saint Gabriel. During this work, he began his apostolate of preaching the Rosary and authentic Marian devotion. He preached Mary everywhere and to everyone. A member of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, Saint Louis was one of the greatest apostles of the Rosary in his day, and by means his miraculously



inspiring book, *The Secret of the Rosary*, he is still so today; the most common manner of reciting the Rosary is the method that originated with Saint Louis's preaching. In 1715, he founded the missionaries known as the Company of Mary or Montfort Missionaries.

His greatest contribution to the Church and world is Total Consecration to the Blessed Virgin. He propagated this in his day by preaching and after his own death by his other famous book *True Devotion to Mary*.

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.

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

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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.

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.

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

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

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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.

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.

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.

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.

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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.

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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.

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.

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.



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