

THE SECRET
OF THE ROSARY



*"One Day through the Rosary and Scapular
I will save the world."
-Blessed Virgin Mary to Saint Dominic*



THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY

by

Saint Louis Mary De Montfort

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Preface

BIOGRAPHERS have already told us much about St. Louis De Montfort and the Rosary; now, with this first English edition of *THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY*, we can listen to Montfort speaking for himself. Drawing upon his own experience as well as upon the experience of others,¹ he endeavors to bring home to the reader, “in a simple and straightforward manner,” as he himself tells us, the authentic message of the Rosary; namely, that it is a veritable school of Christian life. He sees it as including essentially the meditation of the mysteries of the life, death and glory of Jesus and Mary, with a view not only to honoring but especially imitating their virtues as held up to our consideration in each mystery.

For our Saint, the Rosary was not simply a method of prayer: it was his most effective tool and weapon in his apostolic work. Fittingly has the Church called him an “Extraordinary preacher of the Rosary.” He preached it in season and out of season; established it in every parish where he gave a mission² and judged the fruits of the mission by the subsequent perseverance in its recitation. There was no limit to the power of the Rosary and to it he attributed much of his success with sinners. “Let me but place my rosary around a sinner’s neck,” he was wont to say, “and he will not escape me.”

A Dominican Tertiary himself, De Montfort represents the best in the Dominican Rosary tradition. Speaking of our Saint’s contribution to the Rosary, Father R. Poupon, well known Dominican writer says, “Montfort’s genius prolongs

1. See “Tenth Rose” for some of his sources.

2. It is estimated that he enrolled over 100,000 persons in the Rosary Confraternity. (Le Crom, S.M.M. “St. L-M. de Montfort” Ch. XV, p. 311.)

in one straight line that of Blessed Alan de la Roche and of St. Dominic. He completes them by bringing forth a personal grace and interpretation.” Commenting on De Montfort’s book, Father Willam says, “It goes far beyond mere research. We might say that it contains everything that can be said about the rosary, about its content and form, its real worth, about the instruction necessary for its appreciation and use.”³

THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY was written almost two and a half centuries ago, it is true, but it has lost none of its freshness and timeliness. Indeed, today, in the light of the specific requests of Our Lady of Fatima, it will be doubly welcomed by all true clients of, Our Lady. We feel confident that it will bring many souls to a better understanding of the Rosary not only as a prayer but especially as a way of spiritual life.

THE EDITORS

3. F. M. Willam, *The Rosary: Its History and Meaning*, Benziger Bros., 1952, p. 115.

THE FRONT COVER of the SORROWFUL AND IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY. This picture, somewhat mysterious in its origin, was discovered at the time of the 1918 armistice in the cellar of the boarding school where Berthe Petit, a humble Franciscan Tertiary, had been educated. After the troops had departed, one of the Bernardine nuns in putting things in order found a piece of cardboard on which was pasted a pornographic picture and she tore it off to consign it to flames. To her astonishment she found that it covered this beautiful representation of the Blessed Virgin! It seems to combine the art of both the Eastern and the Western Rites. The facial features resemble those of the well known Pieta. Prayer before this picture has brought signal favors.

Confided by Our Lord to Berthe Petit: "Teach souls to love the Heart of My Mother pierced by the very sorrow which pierced Mine." (Dec. 25, 1909).

"The Heart of My Mother has the right to be called Sorrowful and I wish this title placed before that of Immaculate because she has won it herself. The Church has defined in the case of My Mother what I Myself had ordained—her Immaculate Conception. This right which My Mother has to a title of justice is now, according to My express wish, to be known and universally accepted. She has earned it by her identification with My sorrows; by her sufferings; by her sacrifices and her immolation in Calvary endured in perfect correspondence with My grace for the salvation of mankind . . ." (Sept. 8, 1911).

"It is hearts that must be changed. This will be accomplished only by the Devotion proclaimed, explained, preached and recommended everywhere. Recourse to My Mother under this title I wish for her universally, is the last help I shall give before the end of time." (July 2, 1940).

A White Rose

For Priests

DEAR MINISTERS of the Most High, 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 Holy Rosary and taste its fruit; and 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 every 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 brethren and fellow priests, it will not be enough for us to preach this devotion to others; we must practice it ourselves. Even 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, for no one can give what he does not have: "Jesus began to do and to teach." (*Acts* 1:1). We ought to pattern ourselves on Our Blessed Lord, Who began by practicing what He preached. We ought to emulate Saint Paul who knew and preached nothing but Jesus Crucified. This is really and truly what you will be doing if you preach the Holy Rosary. It is not just a conglomeration of Our Fathers and Hail Marys, but on the contrary it is a divine summary of the mysteries of the life, Passion, death and glory of Jesus and Mary.

I could tell you at great length of the grace God gave 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 in French.

A Red Rose

For Sinners

POOOR MEN AND WOMEN who are sinners, I, a greater sinner than you, wish to give to you this rose—a crimson one, because the Precious Blood of Our Lord has fallen upon it. Please God that it will bring true fragrance into your lives—but above all may it save you

from the danger that you are in. Every day unbelievers and unrepentant sinners cry: "Let us crown ourselves with roses." (*Wis.* 2:8) But our cry should be: "Let us crown ourselves with roses of the Most Holy Rosary."

How different are theirs from ours! Their roses are pleasures of the flesh, worldly honors 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.

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: and there are two reasons for doing this: First of all to honor 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 Most 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 is 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." (*1 Ptr.* 5:4). 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 Holy 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 Holy Rosary. Please read and meditate upon them.

A Mystical Rose Tree

For Devout Souls

GOOD AND DEVOUT SOULS, who walk in the light of the Holy Spirit: I do not think that 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 beautiful. 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 marvelous 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; its green leaves are the Joyous 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 Joyous Mysteries. Its thorns are sharp, and 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, 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 very small now, will grow into a tree so great that the birds of heaven, i.e., 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 great 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 honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. So be it.

GOD ALONE

A Rosebud

For Little Children

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.

Two girls (two little sisters) were saying the Rosary very nicely and devoutly in front of their home. A beautiful Lady suddenly appeared, walked towards the younger—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 and heartbrokenly told her parents that her sister had been kidnapped. For three whole days the poor father and mother sought the child but could not find her.

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 her 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 over and over 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 Most Holy 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. So be it.

Therefore let all men, the learned and the ignorant, the just and the sinners, the great and the small praise and honor

Jesus and Mary, night and day, by saying the Most Holy Rosary. “Salute Mary who hath labored much among you.” (*Rom.* 16:6).