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## THE EXCELLENCE OF THE ROSARY

CONFERENCES FOR DEVOTIONS IN HONOR OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

BY  
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## THE ROSARY

CONFERENCES FOR SODALITIES B. V. M.

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## I. THE NAME OF THIS DEVOTION

"I was exalted as a rose plant in Jericho."—Eccles. xxiv, 18.

My dear brethren, when Pope Pius IX, on May 23, 1877, gave audience to a number of pious pilgrims he said to them: "Have courage, my dear children! I exhort you to fight against the persecution of the Church and against anarchy, not with the sword, but with the rosary, with prayer and good example." This Pope, who with great wisdom and strong hand has guided for thirty-two years the bark of Peter, which in many violent storms had been rocked to and fro, he who well knew the great dangers of our times, regarded the rosary as a conquering weapon.

What great confidence his successor, Pope Leo XIII, placed in the veneration and invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by means of the rosary! He exhorted all Christianity to pray the rosary daily during the month of October, in order to obtain assistance in these distressing times. In his brief on this occasion Leo XIII says: "It has been a favorite and prevalent custom of Catholics, in times of need and danger, to take refuge in Mary, and to seek consolation from her motherly concern."

Thus the firm reliance and confidence rightly placed by the Catholic Church in the mother of God is staunchly avowed.

As a matter of fact, Mary, the immaculate Virgin, free from original sin, the chosen mother of God, is endowed with such power by her Son, as no other creature, man or angel, has ever received or can receive.

The efficacy of this great devotion to the great Queen of Heaven had been demonstrated especially when false teachings, depravity, or other great enemies threatened disaster to Christians.

History, early and recent, relates how public and private devotion to the mother of God was held in times of calamity and distress, and how these prayers were heard, and help was granted. Thus originated the exalted titles which Catholics give to the Blessed Virgin, such as Help of Christians, Refuge of Sinners, etc.

To these titles was added another, when under date of December 10, 1883, Leo XIII directed that the title "Queen of the Rosary" be added to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. In his brief the Holy Father expresses the desire that all the faithful practise daily the devotion of the rosary. If, therefore, the rosary is considered of such great power and efficacy by the head of the Church, the representative of Christ, it is befitting that we heed his words and pray often and devoutly by means of the rosary.

If this prayer were better understood it would be prayed with more devotion, and greater benefit would come from it. In order, then, to spread a better knowledge, and to urge the devout recital of the rosary, let us contemplate this devotion in a course of instructive addresses. The name rosary may be the subject of to-day's discourse.

The devotion of the rosary consists in the recital of a fixed number of Our Fathers and Hail Marys, combined with the meditation on certain mysteries from the lives of Jesus and Mary. The name rosary is significant. It is a symbol of Mary, also of the devotion to her. We will endeavor to make this clear.

The realm of nature is the symbol of the realm of grace, as the realm of grace is a symbol of the realm of glory. It was God's intention to let His earthly creation be a reflection of the divine perfections, of the supernatural, of divinity, so that man might perceive the supernatural through created things, and thus more readily understand it. "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. i, 20).

Our first parents obtained a clear conception of the supernatural through the natural things of this life. Nature was to them an open book, in which they could read the divine perfections. Through sin the understanding of man was dimmed and he failed in the interpretation of nature. Instead of being led to God through it, he allowed himself to become estranged, and from a master became the slave of nature.

Then Christ came and redeemed the world from the slavery of sin and again granted to man the clear conception of the true God, as also the right understanding of nature. This is verified in the saints and we have a beautiful example in St. Francis of Assisi. About his interpretation and meditation of nature St. Bonaventure says: "He considered all things created as original from God, and saw in each creature the Creator and Preserver."

Everything in nature was to him a symbol of spiritual life. He took delight especially in flowers, because they reminded him of the flower from the root of Jesse, which refreshes and gladdens the whole world.

See, my dear brethren, this is the correct, the Christian way of contemplating nature. The spiritual world is reflected in the visible.

And Jesus being the King and Mary the Queen in the realm of grace and glory, nature contains symbols that refer to Jesus and Mary. All things of this creation: from the flowers of the valley to the brilliant stars that illumine the night, all things in nature are symbols of the glorious mother of God. Among many such symbols used in Holy Scripture we find Mary called the mystical rose. The Church therefore regards the rose as a symbol of Mary. Let us see in what the likeness consists.

If on a summer's day we enter a garden, where various flowers through their form, color and sweet odor delight and refresh us, our eye is chiefly attracted by the rose. We are especially well pleased with it. The rose is the queen of flowers in form, color and fragrant odor, because of its beauty.

Let us turn now our gaze to the spiritual garden, the Church of Christ. The various flowers there are the faithful, adorned with piety and virtue, and spreading the fragrance of saintliness with which God is pleased. In the Canticle of Canticles the Lamb of God is pictured as feeding among the lilies. A beautiful thought! It tells us how the Lamb of God,

our divine Saviour, is fond of the flowers of God, the God-loving souls, as is the lamb of the lilies.

And in this garden of God, the Holy Church, Mary is the rose, the pride of the garden, the queen of the flowers. The rose is therefore the most beautiful symbol of Mary, of all saints the queen, exalted above all saints in sublimity, beauty, gentleness and sweetness. Therefore, because Mary is among the saints what the rose is among flowers, she is called "the mystical rose." And the name rosary is to remind us of this.

The rose, furthermore, signifies the virtuous life of Mary the virgin. The rosebud is a beautiful symbol of virginity. It is hidden as under a veil. Lovely is the Christian virgin, hidden in the garb of innocence like a rosebud. Mary is the Virgin of Virgins, and can above all be compared to the fair and undefiled rosebud.

The open, blooming rose is an emblem of pure motherhood. Like the opened radiant rose the Christian mother is in the full vigor of life; her heart open with true love for her husband and children; and she unfolds her soul to heaven, so that through prayer she may receive the needed assistance for herself and hers. Through her good example in Christian virtues she spreads around her the fragrance of a God-pleasing life, and encourages those who associate with her to imitate her virtues.

Mary is the immaculate virgin and mother, mother of God, and of all mankind. She is the most noble and perfect of all mothers. Like a magnificent rose she shines in the splendor of her virtues, and is the perfect example for all mothers. Because her heart is fired with love for God and man, she is, as St. Jordanus says, likened to the flaming red rose.

There is no rose but has its thorns. The thorns are a figure of suffering, of sorrow, of the temptations in life, under which only a truly virtuous life can thrive.

St. Brigid relates in her revelations how she at one time was downcast because the enemies of Christ were so powerful, and how she was consoled by the mother of God herself, who told her to remember the rose among the thorns. "The rose," so said Mary, "gives a fragrant odor; it is beautiful to the sight, and tender to the touch, and yet it grows among thorns, inimical to beauty and tenderness. So may also those who are mild, patient, beautiful in virtue, be put to a test among adversaries. And as the thorn, on the other hand, guards, so do wicked surroundings protect the just against sin by demonstrating to them the destructiveness of sin."

The life of Mary was interwoven with many sorrows and she is justly called "a rose among thorns." St. Brigid says: "The Virgin may suitably be called a blooming rose. Just as the gentle rose is placed among thorns, so this gentle Virgin was surrounded by sorrow."

The rose obtains its life through the stem, to which it is closely united. A rose broken from the stem will soon wither. So Mary received all her graces from Jesus, with whom she was united through the liveliest faith and ardent love.

Mary is in truth a spiritual, a mystic rose. The rose therefore is a fitting symbol of the virtuous life of the mother of God. As mystical rose she deserves our admiration and veneration, and she must be our example and model in all Christian virtues, the model of a true spiritual life.

The name rosary, therefore, is well suited to this devotion. For it is a wreath of spiritual roses, as it were, which we place at the feet of Mary, in order to show our love and veneration.

The rose has, moreover, been at all times regarded as a symbol of love. It was already the custom of the early Christians to adorn on feast days the pictures and statues of the saints with wreaths of roses, especially on feast days of the Blessed Virgin.

St. Dominic, inspired and instructed by Mary, formed from the beautiful and efficacious prayers, the Our Father and the Hail Mary, together with the principal mysteries from the lives of Jesus and Mary, a beautiful wreath, and called it the "Rosary."

The threefold mysteries represented in the devotion again give it a resemblance to the rose. The green of the rose is the color of hope and confidence. It is represented in the glorious rosary. The thorns are represented in the sorrowful rosary. The beautiful red petals of the rose, finally, are represented in the joyful rosary, in the glories of Jesus and Mary.

Thus is shown therefore the deep and significant meaning of the name rosary. And as the rosary reminds us of all the virtues, the spiritual beauty and sublimity of Mary, and as it is a worthy manifestation of our love and veneration for the mother of God it is meet that we hold the rosary in high esteem. And Mary finds delight in this devotion, for it reminds her of all the good God did for her, and for which all nations pronounce her blessed.

Oh, let us then resolve to wind this wreath frequently, to lay it often at the feet of the noble, the gracious queen of the Rosary!

## II. THE ORIGIN OF THE ROSARY

"The Highest himself hath founded her."—Ps. lxxxvi.

My dear brethren, in our consideration on the rosary let us to-day reflect upon its origin.

Its origin and age bestow on this devotion a great dignity. From the earliest times of Christianity it has been the custom

of the Christians to observe in their prayers method and perseverance. Thus it was the custom of the hermits of the Orient, as far back as the fourth century, to devise a sequence of certain prayers, which they counted on pebbles. We also know that long ago in England a so-called Paternoster-cord was used for this purpose. St. Gregory, at the end of the fourth century, spoke of such a method of devotion in veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This pious bishop thought a wreath of spiritual roses would be more pleasing to the blessed Virgin than the natural roses with which the faithful adorned her altar. He selected, therefore, a number of prayers, in praise of the blessed Virgin, and united them into a wreath. And this was the origin of the rosary, woven by pious hands for the veneration of Mary, the mystical rose.

In the fifth century, St. Brigid urgently commended the devotion of the rosary, and she chose as its prayers the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Creed, and united them into a wreath of prayers. In order to count their recital she strung little beads of stone or wood and made a wreath of them.

This custom subsequently spread through all Christian lands, and through the centuries, to our own days. That this devotion was always in great favor and esteem among pious Christians may be concluded from the fact that in the grave of St. Norbert, who died in 1134, a rosary similar to ours was found.

We have proof, then, that the devotion of the rosary, such as we have it, was practised already in the early days of Christianity. And it was practised not only by monks and nuns, but found adherents among all the faithful.

The particular manner in which we now pray the rosary was brought into vogue by St. Dominic. This is attested by the tradition of six centuries. Twelve Popes bear witness to this fact. We will now speak of the introduction by St. Dominic, and will also refer to the great efficacy of this devotion since its inception. May our reflections contribute to the greater honor of God, and of the glorious Queen of the rosary.

I. The devotion of the rosary in its present form dates its origin from the thirteenth century, and St. Dominic was selected by God as the instrument of its introduction. Spain was the home of this great saint. In one of the valleys of Castile there is situated an humble little village named Calarunga, where his parents possessed a small estate. He was born there in the year 1170. While being baptized his sponsor saw, as if in a vision, a brilliant star over the forehead of the future saint, shedding its brilliant light through the church. As Dominic advanced in years he increased in wisdom, virtue and piety. In due time he devoted himself to theology, believing that in this pursuit alone he could find the wisdom of God. Not in the pleasures of this world, but in the knowledge of God, he sought his pastime. His favorite place was the church and the solitude of the sanctuary. Two incidents from his schooldays throw a light upon his character. At the time of a famine Dominic gave all that he possessed to the poor, even all but the necessary clothes, and when he had nothing more to give, he sold even his beloved books and gave the proceeds to the poor. When berated by people for his excessive generosity, he said: "How could I dare indulge in these lifeless books, when human lives are in danger of starvation?" At another time St. Dominic met a woman who was weeping bitterly because she had no money with which she could release her brother, who had been imprisoned by the Saracens. Dominic offered to sell himself into bondage to release this brother; but since God had destined him to release sinful mankind from the bondage of sin, of error and unbelief, He did not permit Dominic to do as he offered.

At the age of twenty-five he was appointed upon the chapter of the cathedral at Osma. Here he was conspicuous among his brethren on account of his humility, holiness, and zeal for prayer. He spent nine years in Osma, during which time divine Providence prepared him for his important and great vocation. This vocation became plain to him when, in the year 1204, he went to France and saw the terrible devastation which the prevailing heresies had wrought against the Church of Christ. The sight of this disaster nearly broke his heart. The poison of heresy had spread among the faithful with great rapidity, and principally in southern France. From the city of Albi the heretics had assumed the name Albigenses. These Albigenses discarded the doctrines of Christianity and constructed new doctrines that played havoc with morality and social order. They were violent enemies of Church and State, and preached disobedience and rebellion against spiritual and temporal authority. An enemy of the Church is invariably also an enemy of the State; history and experience prove this.

In southern France the Albigenses secured the support of Prince Raimond, of Toulouse, a wealthy and mighty, but, at the same time, a most godless and immoral prince of that time. He had several wives; associated with heretics, and even gave his children to be educated by them. This prince undertook the leadership of the heretical Albigenses, and with them, and other rabble by which France at that time was overrun, scoured the country, robbing and plundering wherever they went. This lawless band, under the direction of this godless prince, robbed churches of their treasures, murdered priests, even tore open the tabernacles and desecrated the most holy Sacrament. A messenger of Pope Innocent III was murdered by one of these knaves, who then found the protection of this depraved prince. Under these conditions the Pope finally saw the necessity of preaching a crusade against these heretics, who surpassed even the Saracens in the outrages committed. A terrible war then ensued, in which these enemies of Church and State were subdued, but not converted. For this there was necessary an extraordinary spiritual effort, and divine Providence had already prepared the instrument. St. Dominic was the tool in the hand of God to introduce and apply an efficacious remedy, and this remedy was the rosary.

Dominic had for many years taught the doctrines of the Catholic Church to the heretics, and had converted a number of them, but not enough to satisfy his holy zeal. He often turned with humility to God and besought Him with tears, and deeds of penance, that He might let him know how to accomplish better results. Since childhood he had been a faithful servant of Mary, and had often said that the devotion to her was a powerful means of converting heretics and sinners.

Finally his prayers were heard in a miraculous way. One day, while on his way from Toulouse, Dominic threw himself down on his knees and resolved not to cease praying until his prayers were heard. Then, so the legend tells us, the glorious Queen of heaven appeared to him, spoke words of encouragement, and taught him how to pray the rosary, assuring him that this would be the right weapon to conquer error and sin. With joy Dominic arose and returned to Toulouse, and began to spread the use of the rosary, as Mary had taught him and in the way we now recite it. He preached this devotion, explained it, and taught the people how to pray it. It proved indeed a most efficacious means for the conversion of apostates, heretics, and sinners. Since the lack of knowledge in matters of faith had been the real

cause why heresy so quickly spread, the principal truths of faith and morals were now communicated to the people through the rosary, and the principles of a Christian life were taught them in this most sublime prayer of the Church. This was bound to bring results, and we will give now some thought to these results.

II. According to the historians of those ages the effects of the rosary sermons of St. Dominic were truly wonderful. In all cities where he preached, the people gathered in great numbers to hear his heaven-inspired words and to pray the rosary with St. Dominic. Sinners were converted, the faithful were strengthened and fortified, and many thousands of those who had been led into heresy opened their hearts again to the true faith and returned to the holy Church. The inspired words of St. Dominic met with such splendid results that, even if the tradition did not tell us so, the miraculous effects of this devotion would prove its heavenly inspiration, and Pius IX, Leo XIII, as many Popes before them, have publicly avowed their belief that St. Dominic received the rosary from our blessed Mother.

The promise which Dominic received was fulfilled. Where all other means had failed, the humble prayer of the rosary accomplished the victory over heresy. Thus divine wisdom and infinite power make use of humble things to effect great achievements. Of this the great work of the redemption gives us an example. God made the Cross the instrument of the redemption. The despised Cross, once a shame and disgrace, was raised on the height of Calvary and became the instrument of the redemption for all the world, the fountain of grace, a blessing for time and eternity, the symbol of victory and glory.

St. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, writes: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of Christ. For I judge not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And my speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and power. That your faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness: But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God; for the foolishness of God is wiser than men; but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong. That no flesh should glory in his sight" (I Cor. i and ii). And so did God choose the rosary, this humble prayer, to work such great things, that human effort had not been able to accomplish. What an incentive to put all our trust in God, rather than in our own strength!

The devotion of the rosary soon spread from southern France to all other Catholic lands, and all peoples welcomed it with joy and prayed it with great zeal. Rosary societies were formed and approved of by the Popes, and were richly endowed with many indulgences. Ever since there has been no other prayer practised so diligently as the rosary. And often there have been recorded miraculous effects of this devotion, no less miraculous than the conversion of the heretics in the south of France.

The devotion as now practised is therefore in use over seven hundred years. The wonderful origin, its great age and the remarkable miracles that were wrought by its use at all times, bestow a great dignity on this devotion.

When we consider the conditions that prevailed at the time of the origin of the rosary, and for the betterment of which divine Providence provided this devotion, we can not fail to realize a similarity of conditions in our own times. Materialism and unbelief, connected with widespread immorality, are now prevalent as they were then. They are causing great injury to Church, State, and homes, and will become more destructive if not checked by the right weapon. Pope Pius IX, as also Pope Leo XIII, have declared the rosary to be that weapon, and have exhorted Christianity to resort to the zealous use of it. If all Christians would follow the advice of these supreme Pontiffs, we should soon see the Catholic faith and good morals come into their own again, and ample blessing would, through this devotion, be bestowed upon private and public life. All the insistent endeavors of world-wise scholars and reformers will be of no avail if God's blessing does not rest upon their work. Only then, when the true faith and a life of faith are made the standard of public and private merit and ethics, will the temporal, no less than the eternal, welfare of nations and of individuals be assured.

Let us, through the rosary, call to Mary for her powerful intercession in the battle of the Church against the enemies of faith and morals, and with her intercession we shall be sure of victory. Amen.

### III. THE POWER OF THE ROSARY

"Lo, here is the sword of Goliath. . . . There is none like that, give it to me."—I Kings xxi, 9.

*SYNOPSIS.—David, with God's assistance, his only weapon a pebble, slew the giant. God gives us, as our weapon, the rosary. This has proven efficacious in the battles of the Church against heretics and heathen armies. Examples: Albigenses; Turks at Lepanto and Belgrade; many epidemics abated or averted by the power of the rosary. This devotion is just as powerful for the individual and for the family.*

*God has shown us that He wishes many to co-operate with the Church and with the Christian in their fight for faith and salvation. Let all use this weapon.*

My dear brethren, in the first book of Kings we read how the Philistines went forth to battle against the Israelites. The Philistines arrayed their forces on a mountain, and the Israelites occupied a mountain on the opposite side, so that the valley was between them. Then there went out from the hordes of the Philistines a man named Goliath, a giant of enormous strength, who challenged the Israelites to let one of their men fight him hand to hand, the result of this contest to decide the victory or defeat of either army. A youth named David, inspired and urged by the spirit of God,

went forth with a few smooth stones and a sling to meet this Philistine, and as Goliath rushed toward him David cast the stones with the sling and struck the Philistine in the forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth. David then ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and slew him. Israel thus gained the victory over the Philistines. But when for this victory exceeding praise was given to David, King Saul became angry and sought the life of the youthful hero. In his flight David came to Nobe. Not having any weapon, he said to the high priest Achimelech: "Hast thou here at hand a spear or a sword?" The high priest answered: "Lo, here is the sword of Goliath, whom thou slewest in the valley of Terebinth, if thou wilt take this, for there is no other but this." And David said, "There is none like that, give it me."

These last words, which I have made the text for my address to-day, we may fitly apply to the holy rosary. For the rosary has ever since its origin proven itself a conquering weapon for the Church, as also well as for the individual Christian, against the most powerful enemies of God and of His Church. Let us consider the fact for the greater glory of God and of the Queen of the rosary.

Since the introduction of the rosary by St. Dominic, for more than six hundred years therefore, the great victories of Christianity against the many and ferocious enemies of the Church are ascribed to the devotion of the rosary. The Church has at all times had enemies, who with all their power and in all their evil ways have opposed and persecuted her. Nor is this surprising. Ever since Satan succeeded in beguiling our first parents into sin, he has continued to sow dissension among mankind. Beginning with Cain and Abel, there have been children of God who obeyed God's commandments, and, on the other hand, children of Satan, as holy Scripture calls them, who seek their salvation in the pleasures of this life. Since the time of Cain and Abel, mankind has been split into two divisions, one seeking the kingdom of God, the other the kingdom of the world, the kingdom of Satan.

When our Saviour conquered Satan He left him power over those who make themselves slaves to the sensual pleasures, and thus there exists an evil force against the Church, and it will exist to the end of time. This is a fact that we must keep in view in order to fully understand and judge the conditions. The realm of darkness, Satan's realm, stands opposed to the realm of Christ. Satan and his adherents carry on the warfare against the Church of Christ, as they assaulted Christ Himself. "As they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you," so did Christ prophecy.

The Church of Christ demands the subjection of the flesh; she preaches against luxury, pride and selfishness. She preaches chastity and submission to the commandments of God; she preaches penance alike to those of high and low station in life. This angers all those who would indulge in the evil things of this world. They cry: "Let us break her bonds asunder; and let us cast away her yoke from us." But as Christ foretold the persecution of His Church, so He also foretold that the gates of hell would not prevail against her. The Church of God will in due time conquer all her enemies, some will be converted, while others who are obstinate will perish in the battle. In all these battles and victories of the Church, Mary, blessed mother of her divine Founder, co-operates with the Church through her intercession. Mary was already spoken of in paradise as the one who would come to tread upon the head of the serpent, the spirit of darkness. This she has done by becoming the mother of God, by bringing forth the Redeemer. And as Jesus through Mary's co-operation came into this world, so He desires her co-operation in ruling the world. The history of the contests and Victories of the Church verify this throughout the centuries.

The evil spirit has a twofold weapon with which he assails and combats God's Church; namely, the godless rulers of the world and heresy. Through the godless authorities of the world Satan has endeavored since the beginning to crush the Church; through heresy he attempts to destroy the Church by internal dissension. Both weapons are used together, for heresy and calumny can not prevail without substantial support, and heretics seek worldly power and assistance. On every page of Church history we find recorded the clashes planned by these evil forces, from which the Church always came out not conquered, but a conqueror.

The history of the veneration of Mary tells us that the Blessed Virgin Mary helped to win these victories. During the early times, when fierce battles against the Church were raging, bishops and priests knew of no more efficacious means to avert these dangers than to exhort the faithful to pray to the Blessed Virgin. Thus we read in history that the holy bishops and martyrs Ignatius and Irenaeus did this in the second century, and in the third century it was Pope Calixtus who advised the faithful to take refuge with the Blessed Virgin in time of persecution of the Church. And so on through all Christian times.

Since the introduction of the rosary by St. Dominic all great victories have been credited to the devotion of the rosary. The first great conquest of the Church effected by the rosary was the victory over the Albigenses, who had spread heresy in southern France and had caused great havoc in Church and State.

St. Bernard complained in those times: "The churches are empty, the people without priests, the Sacraments without reverence. People on their deathbed refuse the assistance of the Church, ridicule penance."

How the weapon with which this heresy was conquered was the rosary we have related in a previous sermon. This was the first glorious victory through the devotion of the rosary. It was the sword with which the Church slew the proud Goliath of heresy.

Another wonderful victory through this miraculous weapon of Christianity was the defeat of the Turkish navy at Lepanto, on October 7, 1571. The so-called reformation, of which Martin Luther was the originator, had spread over the whole of Europe, bringing in its trail destruction, dissension and war. The Turks, who had long thirsted for vengeance upon the Christians, found situations favorable for their plans. They gathered all their forces to assail the Christian lands. The princes of Europe were either indifferent, or were besieged with difficulties in their own lands, and Luther even said he preferred the Turks to the papacy. Pope Pius V alone realized the great danger that threatened Christianity and he called upon the Christian people to defend country and Church against the common enemy.

The Christian forces which could be assembled were very small compared with those of the Turks. Nevertheless Pius V knew of another power which he realized would be a mighty ally. With all his energy he exhorted his people to implore the Blessed Virgin and glorious Queen of heaven, through the rosary, to come to the assistance of the Christian army. It

was, as Leo XIII said in his Commendation of the rosary, an ennobling sight, which drew the eyes of the whole world; on one side, not far from the Corinthian Sea, the Christians prepared to sacrifice life for religion and country; while gathered on the other side, imploring through the rosary Mary's assistance for the fighting Christians, were many Christians unable to take up arms.

The small army of Christians attacking the great force of the Turkish fleet was an undertaking similar to the assault of David upon the giant Goliath. On October 7, 1571, the deciding battle was fought, in the Bay of Lepanto. The battle raged from six o'clock in the morning until six o'clock at night. It was one of the most terrific battles ever fought. And, lo! in the evening, toward six o'clock, the battle ended in the victory of the Christians over their powerful enemy. This wonderful victory of the Christians was undoubtedly due to the assistance of the Blessed Virgin. Pope Pius V so declared, and in memory of this wonderful achievement he added to the litany of the Blessed Virgin the supplication: "Help of Christians, pray for us!" He also ordained that the anniversary of this victory be celebrated as the feast of "Our Lady of Victory," which Gregory XIII subsequently styled the "Feast of the Rosary."

In the annals of the Church there is another great victory over the Turks recorded which once more demonstrated the power of the rosary. It was the great victory in the campaign against the Turks at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

After the Turks had been defeated at sea, they endeavored to conquer on land. They forced their way to Hungary, and had taken possession of eight provinces, when Emperor Charles VII sent an army against them under the command of Prince Eugene. This army was composed of only seventy thousand men. With this meager force Prince Eugene defeated two hundred thousand Turks and laid siege to Belgrade, their stronghold.

Prince Eugene, before engaging the enemy, implored the help of the Blessed Virgin, through the rosary, and then with confidence in God's assistance went to battle and to glorious victory. Thirty thousand Turks were slain on the battlefield; the others fled. The rosary again had won the victory, and on the feast day of the Blessed Virgin.

In the same manner as the rosary was a successful weapon against heretics and other enemies of the Church, it has demonstrated its wonderful efficiency in individual cases of stress, and of such I will mention a few instances. In the year 1578 a fearful epidemic devastated the city of Pavia. The terrified people made a public vow to build a chapel to our Blessed Lady of the Rosary if the epidemic would cease. And the very day the vow was made the epidemic did abate. A similar case happened in Cologne, where people were saved from an epidemic after such a vow had been made. That cases like these are innumerable is manifested by the many chapels built as a result of such vows, and by the votive tablets in pilgrimage churches dedicated to Mary. Sight is restored to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, the use of their limbs to the crippled, diseases of all kind are cured, by invoking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin by means of the devotion of the rosary.

The conversion of a hardened sinner is, after all, a greater miracle than all cures of disease. And such conversions to this day are as numerous as they were at the time the rosary was introduced. Entire nations, provinces and cities have been converted to God through his devotion. Blessed John, a companion of St. Dominic, wrote a book about the miraculous power of the rosary. The blessed Alanus de la Roche tells of a bishop, in whose diocese morality was decadent, who finally took up the devotion to the rosary, explained it to his people, prayed it with them, and had it introduced in all parishes. Soon the people abandoned their evil ways.

St. Clement Hofbauer assures us: "When I am called to a sick man of whom I know that he is averse to making his peace with God, on the way I pray my rosary, and when I reach him I am sure to find him desirous to receive the Sacraments."

The holy doctor Alphonsus of Liguori relates from his experience: "The walls of Jericho did not collapse more quickly at the trumpet call of Josue than false teachings disappear after the earnest praying of the rosary. The swimming pool of Jerusalem was not as healing for the bodily sick as the rosary is as remedy for the spiritually diseased."

These few examples, to which I could add hundreds of other similar instances, prove the miraculous efficacy of the rosary. Oh, that all Christians would grasp this weapon to attack and conquer all enemies of Church and soul!

Great dangers threaten the spiritual weal of the individual, family and community. Let us, then, arise and grasp the mighty sword which is like to none, the holy rosary, and let us attack with it the Goliath of our times, corruption and godlessness. As David courageously met the enemy of Israel with the humble sling in his hand and conquered because God was with him, so let us face the enemies of Christendom and of our salvation, with the humble wreath of the rosary in our hands, and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin will secure for us God's grace and assistance, and with God to fight our battles, who will do us harm? Amen!

#### IV. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE ROSARY

##### (a) *The Sign of the Cross*

"The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains."—Ps. lxxxvi, I.

Dear brethren, we have seen in our previous discourses upon the rosary how for more than six centuries the rosary has proved itself a great, indeed a marvelous, power and help in times of stress. This, of course, was apparent from its very origin. It was a special instrument of divine Providence in troublous times of Church and Society. The various parts of the rosary are admirably adapted to exercise such great power and efficacy. The Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed,

the Glory be to the Father, and the Sign of the Cross, which are said in reciting the rosary, are the most beautiful, I the holiest and most excellent of prayers, and for this reason also the most potent and efficacious. The mysteries of our holy faith, which are at the same time meditated upon, embrace the entire work of our redemption, in its work (joyful mysteries), its accomplishment (sorrowful mysteries), and in its fruits (glorious mysteries). Meditation combined with prayer as it is contained in the rosary renders it a perfect prayer. The rosary furthermore is the best means of honoring Mary, and therefore it is the best means for obtaining Mary's powerful intercession.

That we may understand and perceive the whole beauty and excellence of the rosary let us closely view its component parts, and we will begin to-day by considering the opening of the rosary, namely the sign of the Cross. This has a most sublime meaning, and has of itself great power and efficacy. It is a sign of honor, of blessing and of power. In this threefold aspect let us consider it to-day.

I. The sign of the Cross is, first of all, a mark of honor. It reminds us of the holy Trinity and of our relation to the triune God. The Father has created us, the Son redeemed us, and the Holy Ghost has sanctified us. God the Father created us after His own image, and therefore we bear a resemblance to God in our souls. Our soul is a spirit, as God is a spirit. It has understanding and free will; it can be holy; it can become perfect, since our heavenly Father is perfect. Our soul is immortal, as God is immortal, and it is destined to partake in heaven of divine glory and happiness. Is there not in this resemblance and likeness to God an unspeakably high dignity and glory for man? We are reminded of this by the sign of the Cross. The Son of God redeemed us through the Cross. After sin had reduced the human race to a state of ignominious bondage the Son of God, moved by infinite love, became incarnate for us, in order to make satisfaction for our sins and to remove from us their awful consequences. From slaves of sin and of the devil, He has made us just and children of God. Having been redeemed, we now call God our Father; and Jesus, the Son of the eternal Father, calls us His brethren. Of all this we are reminded by the Cross, for we were redeemed through the Cross, and became children of God and heirs of heaven. Thus the Cross is the glorious sign of our redemption. The Holy Ghost sanctifies us by dwelling in us and making of us His temples. What an honor for us! The sign of the Cross reminds us of this honor.

In truth is therefore this sign a mark of the highest honor, and the Christian's greatest glory. In this sense the Apostle wrote to the Galatians: "But God forbid that I should glory, but in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi, 14). This means, according to Saint Chrysostom: "I glory only in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely, in the faith, in grateful remembrance and contemplation of the benefactions of the Cross, through which we were redeemed and have received the grace to lead a devout: life and to strive for eternal happiness. In the Cross we recognize thoroughly the enormity of our guilt and the boundless love of God."

With what love and devotion should we, then, make the sign of the Cross! As often as we sign ourselves with the Cross we profess our belief in the holy Trinity, and in the merciful and blessed work of the redemption, and express our gratitude to the holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is hard to believe that there are Christians who are ashamed to make the sign of the Cross; and yet: there are many such nowadays. Some act so from motives of cowardly human respect; others because their faith is dead. But to be ashamed of the Cross means a denial of our faith. At all times the sign of the Cross has served as a public and solemn profession of the Christian faith. Thus did in the days of persecution the faithful profess their belief in Christ, and seal their profession with their blood, as the acts of the martyrs record. When the holy Bishop Polycarp was brought before the heathen judge, who said to him, "Deny Christ and you will be free!" Polycarp's reply was worthy of a true Christian. "It is now over sixty years that I have served Him, and He never did me any harm. How, then, can I deny my beloved Master, King and Saviour?" So speaks the true Christian when an attempt is made to make him deny his God and Redeemer. The sign of the Cross also serves as a mark of distinction from those sects, which centuries ago separated themselves from the mother Church and abandoned the beautiful custom of making the sign of the Cross. It is a great crime, then, to be ashamed of a sign which serves for our honor and distinction. And Jesus Christ says, "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his majesty, and of his father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke ix, 26). "But whosoever shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father, who is in heaven" (Matt, x, 33). Thus does Jesus Christ express Himself concerning those who are ashamed of the glorious sign of the true Christian, and those who reject this sign with contempt.

II. The Cross is, furthermore, a sign of blessing. It reminds us, in the first place, as we have considered, of the source of all blessing, of all gifts and graces for body and soul. This source is the blessed Trinity. As often as we make the sign of the Cross we invoke the blessings of God upon us, for we owe all blessings to the infinite merits of our divine Saviour, who died upon the Cross for us. The ignominious instrument of torture and death, the Cross, has now become the instrument of life and the source of salvation. Hence the Church never dispenses blessing except in the sign of the Cross. St. Chrysostom says therefore: Every blessing in which we participate is accomplished through the sign of the Cross. When regeneration (Baptism) takes place, the sign of the Cross is employed. Whether we partake of that holy mysterious food or receive any other of the Sacraments, it is always under the sign of our victory, the sign of the Cross. We should, therefore, earnestly endeavor to have this sign in our homes, and often sign our foreheads with it; for it is the commemoration of our salvation and of our redemption. In making the sign of the Cross devoutly we say to God: Heavenly Father, behold not our sins which render us unworthy of thy grace, but the Cross of thy beloved Son, with which we sign our foreheads, which we profess with our lips and carry devoutly in our hearts. For the sake of Jesus' bitter death upon the Cross be merciful to us and grant us the assistance of thy grace in all our words and actions! This is the prayer which is contained in the sign of the Cross. That such prayer will not remain unheard is attested by numerous manifestations of grace which have been obtained through this sign, and the countless miracles which at all times have been performed through the same.

III. Finally, the Cross is a sign of power. Because Jesus upon the Cross conquered the arch enemy, redeemed mankind and merited for us all blessings and graces, there lies in the sign of the Cross a miraculous strength and efficacy. Jesus himself has said: "Everything that you ask the Father in my name, he will give you." The sign of the Cross calls for help and grace through the Blood of Christ shed upon the Cross. Would God deny such prayer? The sign of the Cross is a particularly powerful weapon against the malicious and cunning assaults of the devil. Of this St. Chrysostom says: "When in the fulness of faith you make the sign of the Cross upon your forehead no impure spirit will be able to tarry near you; for he beholds the sword that has given him the death blow." "Write the sign of the Cross upon thy brow,"



says St. Cyril, "so that the devils when they see the sign of the king may tremble and take flight." St Augustine tells us that our mere remembrance of the Cross puts the devil to flight, strengthens us against his assaults, and preserves us from his snares. The sign of the Cross provides us with a powerful weapon, wherewith we may conquer the unseen foe in every attack.

We know, too, from the testimony of Holy Writ, that the evil spirit can injure mankind not only in body and soul but also in earthly possessions. Thus the devil, by God's permission, slew Job's children, deprived him of his possessions and afflicted him with painful and loathsome maladies. Now, though Christ by His death has broken Satan's power, yet He has not completely removed it. For this reason the Church makes the sign of the Cross over people, blesses food and drink, dwellings, water, soil, in brief everything that Christians come in contact with. This she does in order to withdraw all these things from the injurious influence of the evil spirit, to unite them with the divine blessing and thus make them salutary. The grace before meals of Christians has the same purpose. It is indeed a sad token of ignorance, of indifference, or lack of faith, when in Christian homes grace before meals is disregarded, as not infrequently happens in our days. We know from the testimony of history that the sign of the Cross was also employed successfully against bodily evils. When St. Benedict was handed a glass of poisoned wine, the saint made the sign of the Cross over it, and behold the glass broke in his hand, and he was saved from death. St. Gregory of Nissa testifies that his sister during an illness desired her mother to make the sign of the Cross over her; and when it was done the illness left her. Through the sign of the Cross Bishop Fortunatus restored the sight to a blind man; St. Lawrence cured several others similarly affected. St. Roch cured the plague stricken, and the legend says that St. Corbinian brought the dead back to life by this same sign. The lives of the saints are replete with examples that testify to the miraculous power of the sign of the Cross.

Because the Cross is then a sign of honor, of blessing and power, because it is an effective remedy against evils of body and soul, the Church has always exhorted the faithful by word and example to make zealous use of the same at all times. Since the time of the Apostles the sign of the Cross has been made by the faithful in all their undertakings. Through this sign they dedicated their work to God and invoke the divine blessing upon it.

The Fathers teach that this custom originated with the Apostles; it is related even by a pious legend that Christ Himself at His ascension into heaven blessed the Apostles with this sign. How universal this custom was among Christians of the early centuries may be learned from the words of St. Chrysostom: "We find everywhere the sign of the Cross, it is used by princes and subjects, by women and men, by the slaves and the free. They all sign themselves with it by making it over their foreheads."

Let us then imitate the pious Christians of those days when faith was more lively and robust, and let us never be ashamed of this sign of honor! What would you think of a soldier ashamed of his colors? Let us not be ashamed of this sign, lest Jesus be ashamed of us, when He comes in power and majesty, with the Cross shining before Him like the sun. Let us not deprive ourselves of the manifold blessings of this sign, either through fear of our fellowmen or indifference. Let us make abundant use of this sign of power, so that we may participate in the blessing and protection that comes from the Cross, most especially when assailed by the enemies of our salvation. This sign of the Cross should be placed upon the forehead, lips and breast, before our prayers, for by this our thoughts, our words, and the emotions of our heart are consecrated and become more pleasing to God. This is the purpose of beginning the prayer of the rosary with the sign of the Cross. But, remember, it is not enough to make the sign merely with the fingers, our spirit must take part in making it, and it should be made with reverence, devotion, with a lively faith and firm confidence in the merits of Jesus Christ. Christians who make this sign thoughtlessly and without devotion deprive themselves of the great blessings of this holy sign. We, however, who have just contemplated this glorious token of salvation will use it with the greatest zeal and piety, and profess with it our faith in the blessed Trinity and in our holy mother Church. Amen.

## V. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE ROSARY

### (b) *The Apostles' Creed.*

"For with the heart, we believe unto justice: but, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x, 10).

Dear Brethren: At the beginning of the Rosary, the Apostles' Creed is recited. Everything that we must believe, in order to attain to eternal life, is contained in this Creed. It puts in explicit words all that of which the sign of the Cross is the symbol. Tradition tells us that this profession of faith originated with the Apostles, and for this reason it is called the Apostles' Creed. To be sure not all the dogmas of the Catholic Church are declared in the twelve articles of the Creed, but any dogmas not expressly mentioned are included in the ninth article, which says: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." In these words the Catholic declares that he believes everything which the holy infallible Catholic Church teaches and requires of us to believe.

The Creed is, therefore, by its origin, as well as its contents, a truly holy and excellent prayer. If we duly appreciate this beautiful prayer we shall say it with more devotion, to the greater glory of God, and our own good.

I. "I believe in God." With these words I express my firm conviction that there is a God, and that everything that God has revealed is infallible truth, because God is truth itself and can neither deceive nor be deceived. With these words I submit my mind, my reason and my will to the infallible authority of God.

"I believe in God the Father." This means that I believe that in God there are three Persons, of whom the first Person is called the Father because He is the origin of all existence; because from all eternity He begot the Son, who is equal to Him in essence but different in Person. Further, He is our Father because He created us His children.

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty." It is befitting that at the beginning of the Creed the omnipotence of God should be emphasized. Our faith contains many mysteries, which no created understanding can comprehend. Because I firmly believe in the omnipotence of God I profess that to God nothing is impossible.

In His omnipotence, God, the Father, created the world, calling it into existence from nothing. Hence we say: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth." But God not only created the world, He also preserves and rules it through His omnipotence. As by virtue of His will He created the world, so does God cause it to continue in existence. A building erected by a master hand remains standing even though the master absent himself; yet the world, according to St. Augustine, could not continue to exist for one moment did not God preserve it. This world which God called forth from nothing would, the very moment that God should withdraw His almighty hand, fall back into nothing. "And how could anything endure if thou wouldst not?" Thus we read of God in the Book of Wisdom (ii, 26). Since we are then so utterly dependent upon God that at any moment He could cut the thread of our lives, how greatly should we fear to offend Him?

God not only preserves, but also rules the world; He is solicitous for all things; He orders and governs all things with wisdom and mercy to the end for which He created them. "The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord: and thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature" (Ps. cxliv, 15-16). Of what little value is a flower which so soon withers? And yet the divine solicitude extends to this humble flower. Indeed, is not the flower of the field clothed more beautifully by the hand of God, than was Solomon in all his glory? What is there about a man of less account than a single hair of his head? And yet each of these hairs is counted, and not one falls from the head without the knowledge and will of God. We see how the care and providence of God extends to all things, even the most insignificant.

God, furthermore, orders and governs all things according to their appointed end. He created the world and all that is in it for His glorification and for the welfare of mankind, and provides in all things that this end may be attained. Nothing can withdraw itself from the rule of God. There is no blind chance, no blind fortune. The prophet Jeremias asks: "Who is he that hath commanded a thing to be done, when the Lord commandeth it not?" (Lam. iii, 37). "Thy providence, O Father, ruleth all things," so we read in the Book of Wisdom. And so God orders and disposes everything in our lives, that we may attain the eternal goal. We have but to commit ourselves to divine Providence and place our trust in God. For this reason we should exclaim with David: "The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing. For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me" (Ps. xxii).

In the first article we profess our faith, therefore, in the omnipotence of God, divine Providence, and all the divine attributes. God has created us and preserves us. But He has done still greater things for us. Is this possible? Yes, for God so loved the world that He sacrificed His only begotten Son for it. And this brings us to the second article, which comprises the truths we must believe of God the Son.

II. When the sin of our first parents had deprived us of the friendship of God as well as of our heirship to Heaven, there came to our rescue the second Person of the Godhead, the only begotten of the Father. The succeeding articles tell us of the love and sacrifice of the Son of God for our race.

The second article is: "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord." What does this mean? It means I believe that He is the Son of God, God of God, true God of true God. It means I believe that He became incarnate for the sake of our salvation. It means I believe in the doctrines that He proclaimed, in the miracles that He performed. It means I believe in His presence in the holy Eucharist; in the effects of the holy Sacraments which He instituted. It means I believe in His holy Church, to which He transmitted His authority. To believe in Jesus Christ means, furthermore, to believe in His Passion and death, by which He redeemed the world; in His glorious resurrection and ascension. He is the Divine Master, and as such the supreme Lawgiver whom all creatures must obey. He is also the Judge of the universe, and as such will come again one day to preside at the general judgment, when He will judge all men according to their belief, according to the manner in which each one has observed or transgressed His commandments, used or neglected the means of salvation. Then will be the end of time; and mankind will go to its reward or to its punishment once and for all. All this is proclaimed in the articles of faith that treat of Jesus Christ. To believe in Jesus Christ means to believe everything that the Gospel teaches and everything which the holy, infallible Church requires us to believe.

The third chief part of the Creed declares what we must believe of the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Godhead.

III. The Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Godhead, proceeds equally from the Father and the Son, from all eternity, and is of equal essence with the Father and the Son from eternity.

The Holy Ghost, sent by the Father and the Son, came down upon earth and took charge of the Church founded by Christ, in order to apply through it the fruits of redemption to mankind.

Only in the true Church of Christ can be found the fruits of the redemption; only in her is the true priesthood of the Lord. The fruits of the redemption here on earth are truth and grace, and in the hereafter eternal salvation. The divine truth, as proclaimed by Christ, is alone contained in the holy Catholic Church; and through the co-operation of the Holy Ghost it is preserved uncorrupted in this Church. The Church is the pillar and the beacon of the truth. She can not deviate unto the end of the world one tittle from the doctrine received from Christ, because the Holy Ghost guides the teaching Church in all truth, and sees to it that every truth is understood rightly by her and properly interpreted and explained. Hence, to submit ourselves to the Church's definition of the faith means to submit ourselves to the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost operates in the Church, through the priesthood, and thus applies to the faithful the fruits of the redemption, so as to sanctify them and prepare them for eternal happiness. Thus it is the Holy Ghost who sanctifies us, who makes us holy, as our Father in heaven is holy; who leads us to perfection, as our Father in heaven is perfect.

"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," is the next article of our Creed. The Holy Ghost lives and operates in the Church. This Church is a "Communion of Saints," a communion of faithful, part of whom have already entered eternal life of bliss, and is called the Church Triumphant; another part is being cleansed from the remnants of sin in the place

of purification, and is called the Suffering Church; a third part is still struggling on the battlefield of the world for the crown of eternal life, and is called the Church Militant. All are true members of this great community of saints and children of God, allied through the bond of love. This doctrine is very consoling to us. It opens to us, as it were, even during our earthly life, the portals of eternity. We may enter these in spirit, and seek and find help and consolation amongst our glorified brethren, and also carry help and consolation to our suffering brethren. One thing alone bars us from this glorious communion and shuts heaven against us, and that is sin. But in the Church there is provided for repentant sinners the Absolution from Sins, the remission of sin and its penalty. When we finally die in the grace of God our soul shall enjoy eternal life, and our glorified body shall be joined to it on the great day of resurrection.

This, then, is what we are taught to believe in the Apostles' Creed. When we say this Creed with devotion and perfect faith, we honor and glorify first of all the Blessed Trinity. But we refresh also the teaching of the Gospel in our minds, and thus strengthen our faith. It is an excellent means of awakening exalted sentiments of faith within us, and of inspiring us to a courageous profession of our holy religion.

The Creed is possessed of great power against the temptations of the evil one. The Apostle exhorts us "to resist the devil strong in faith" (I Pet. v, 8), and Holy Scripture calls the faith a shield against which the darts of Satan are broken. Thus is the Creed, according to its origin, and its contents, and efficacy, a holy and excellent prayer. In conclusion, let me quote an exhortation from St. Augustine: "Forget not," he says, "to recite the profession of your faith when you rise in the morning, nor when retiring at night; repeat it frequently, for its repetition is salutary for you, that no forgetfulness may arise. Your creed should be your mirror. Examine yourself therein as to whether you firmly believe everything you profess to believe, and rejoice daily in the possession of faith." Well, then, let us bear in mind this beautiful advice. Let us say the Creed daily, in order to strengthen ourselves in the faith but especially let us say it with great devotion as part of the holy Rosary. If here below we are true to the faith we shall one day behold in reality what we now see only with the eyes of faith, and in this vision enjoy eternal glory and bliss without end. Amen.

## VI. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE ROSARY

### (c) *The Glory be to the Father*

"Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honor, and power: because thou hast created all things."—Apoc. iv, II.

Dear Brethren, we know that the "Glory be to the Father" occurs very frequently in the prayers of the Church and in our private devotions. In the Rosary it is repeated with every decade. This prayer of praise is of great significance for the Christian life. In order to understand its meaning better we must join in spirit the choirs of the blessed before the throne of God. Isaias, the great prophet of the Old Testament, to whom was vouchsafed a profound insight into the mysteries of God, had a vision of heaven, and he says, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated, and his train filled the temple; upon it stood the seraphims: . . . and they cried one to another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts; all the earth is full of his glory" (Is. vi, I). So also did John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, have the grace to see heaven, and he saw the angels of heaven, and with them the whole army of the saints and all the nations, tribes and peoples, standing before the throne in sight of the Lamb, and with a loud voice they praised God, who sat upon the throne, and the Lamb, who is the Lamb of God (Apoc. vii, 11).

Thus God has made known to us, through both these prophets, in what the unceasing occupation of the blessed in heaven consists. They behold the magnificent beauty of God and praise Him on account of His majesty, power and love, and this occupation of the dwellers in heaven should also be the task of the dwellers upon earth. It is indeed the duty of mankind, and an indispensable obligation. King David acknowledged this when he said: "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall be always in my mouth" (Ps. xxxiii).

Therefore, our whole life and endeavor should be one uninterrupted "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

We will make this obligation the subject of our consideration.

I. The happy inhabitants of heaven as they behold God in His indescribable splendor extol Him with hymns of praise. To know God and to serve Him, to glorify Him, this is the supreme end of man, not only when he is admitted to heaven, but even here on earth. God himself tells us this through the Prophet Isaias. "In order," thus He speaks, "that man should glorify me, therefore have I created him and brought him forth from nothing."

We mortals as yet can not behold God as the blessed do in heaven; but we do behold Him in His works, and know Him from His revelation given us through the prophets, and through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The works through which God has revealed Himself to us are creation, redemption and sanctification. Creation is a vast book which speaks to us unceasingly of God, and it is intelligible to all. If we contemplate the magnificence of the starlit sky we must exclaim with David: "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands" (Ps. xvlii). Yet not only the heavens, but also the earth shows us, at every step, the omnipotence of God, His wisdom and love. Mountain and valley, forest and field, river and ocean, they all remind us of God, their creator. Every flower of field and meadow is a great masterpiece, which no mortal man could create.

The animal world presents still greater marvels for our consideration. The waters teeming with millions of animals of all kinds, from the smallest jellyfish to the ship-destroying monsters, the beasts of the forest, the birds of the air, they all

are called into existence by God, and God has not merely called all these creatures into existence, but His providence preserves them, and not even a sparrow falls from the roof without His knowledge.

But we have not yet considered the masterpiece of creation: man, the creature with an immortal soul, created according to God's own image and likeness. In man body and soul are joined together in a wonderful unity, so that man presents in himself a combination of the spiritual and material.

Man is the masterpiece of creation, and all creation is for his service. "Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor; thou hast set him over the work of thy hands" (Ps. viii, 6).

In very truth we may say, therefore, the universe speaks to our mind and heart in powerful and impressive language. This language is its beauty, its appropriateness, its greatness.

But yet more plainly than creation does the redemption proclaim the glory of God. It is "not the immensity of the heavenly bodies," says St. Gregory, "not the brilliancy of the stars, not the adornment of the universe, not the preservation of the world, that point so much to the glory of the divine power and omnipotence, as does that divine condescension to the feebleness of nature."

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, descended from heaven and brought into the world a truer and fuller knowledge of God. The ancient people knew there was a God, but they knew Him not. The knowledge of the true God was drowned in paganism. Even among the Jews small had become the number of those who still possessed an undefiled knowledge of God. In the Old Testament there was only an intimation of the blessed Trinity, not a clear knowledge. Then Jesus Christ brought to us the knowledge of the Triune God. In Him the divine attributes of love, sanctity, justice, wisdom, omnipotence and mercy were presented to our minds so that we can comprehend them. He made known to us the merciful decrees which God had ordained for our temporal and eternal welfare. Through His bitter passion and death He reconciled us to the Father, and acquired for us the heirship of heaven. He founded the Church, the kingdom of God upon earth, and He rules it through the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from Him and the Father.

Through this Church are applied the glorious fruits of the redemption. Through this Church God would sanctify all mankind and lead them to eternal salvation. The Church and the communion of the saints reveal to us God's glory and love far more than all the wonders of the world. A single saint is a greater miracle of the divine grace than the whole universe. The redemption made of earth a preparatory school for heaven, and it behooves us, as St. Augustine says, in this life to give praise to God, because in heaven our work will be an eternal proclamation of the divine praises. Our whole earthly life, as a befitting preparation for heaven, should be an imitation of the life of the blessed in heaven. It ought to be a perpetual praise of God, until after a happy death we are admitted to the ranks of the celestial choirs.

II. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, who has brought to us the true knowledge of God, taught us also the true worship of God. After He had accomplished the work of the redemption and had founded the Church, He returned to heaven. Before this, however, He provided that He should also remain here upon earth. He instituted the most Holy Eucharist, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and thus remains in His Church until the end of time. Jesus, the Head of the Church, offers Himself to the Father unceasingly in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Thus the glorification of God takes place here upon earth as unceasingly as it does in heaven. The praise of God takes place here on earth, furthermore, through the ecclesiastical hourly prayer, in which all the priests and religious of the Church unite throughout the world. The Church dedicates the Sunday exclusively to the praise and service of God. This day is to remind us of the creation accomplished by the Father, of the redemption accomplished by the Son, and of the sanctification accomplished by the Holy Ghost. On this day especially are the members of the Church invited to contemplate these great works of God, and praise and thank Him for the same.

The entire year has been divided by the Church into three great festival cycles, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, and thus is consecrated to the Triune God.

We are exhorted to receive the holy Sacraments, and thus participate in the fruits of the redemption, sanctifying ourselves by a Christian life. A truly Christian life is the best and highest worship of God here below, as it makes us worthy to be associated with the heavenly choirs, there to continue eternally our praises in the blissful vision of God.

We see then how the Church admonishes us to make our whole lives and all our works an unending "Glory be to God." In order that this may be accomplished we must above all things be faithful children and living members of the Church, brethren of Jesus Christ.

We must diligently and devoutly obey the Commandments, and receive the Sacraments. The light of faith should lead us and hope should draw us heavenward, the love of God and of our neighbors must fill our hearts. He who possesses these virtues is indeed in possession of all other virtues. Love is the bond of perfection, for who so loves God and his neighbor has fulfilled the law. We should make a good intention the first thing in the morning, and renew it frequently throughout the day. This certainly is not difficult. St. Paul exhorts us urgently to make this good intention in the words: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do; do all things for the glory of God" (I Cor. x, 31)

To make this good intention, the "Glory be to the Father" is especially appropriate. If we utter the same frequently and devoutly we shall make our lives a continual praising and glorifying of God, a perpetual prayer. Glory be to the Father, who has created us; to the Son, who has redeemed us; and to the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies us. Glory be to the Holy Trinity through all our thoughts, words and works, as glory was to God in the beginning, when He created heaven and earth, as now, and so too through all eternity in heaven. Yes, we will glorify God here below with the militant Church, so that we may be worthy to behold Him one day with the triumphant Church, and to praise Him in blissful rapture for all eternity! Amen.

## VII. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE ROSARY

### (d) *The "Our Father"*

"Lord, teach us to pray."—Luke xi, I.

Dear Brethren: The holiest, the most beautiful and most perfect, and for this reason the most efficient prayer is the "Our Father."

This prayer comes from Our Lord himself, who gave it to His disciples when they urged that He should teach them how to pray. The "Our Father," therefore, had its origin with God himself, and, therefore, is the holiest of prayers. It is a petition to His heavenly Father, composed by the God-man and bequeathed to us, His brethren. In this petition is contained everything we may ask for. Tertullian says in his writings that the "Our Father" contains not merely the things for which man ought to ask God, but also everything the Lord has taught and ordained, so that the whole Christian doctrine is briefly contained therein. The separate petitions are arranged according to their importance, and follow one another in a most appropriate way. Therefore, the "Our Father" is according to its origin, as also according to its contents and its form, the perfect prayer.

The divine Saviour promised that everything we ask of our Father in heaven He will give us. When we recite the "Our Father" we not merely pray in the name of Jesus, but in His own words. Hence the Lord's Prayer is to God the most pleasing prayer, and for that reason the most efficient and powerful of prayers. It is evident from the history of the Church that the Lord's Prayer has, at all times been held by the faithful in the highest esteem. It was used, as the fathers tell us, not only in public, but also in private devotions.

This holy, excellent and most efficacious prayer forms a part of the Rosary, and we will give it our consideration, in order the better to understand it, to appreciate it more fully, and to say it more devoutly.

I. The "Our Father" consists of a preface and seven petitions. The preface is intended to lift up our thoughts to God. Holy Scripture admonishes us to such preparation, "Before prayer, prepare thy soul: and be not as a man that tempteth God" (Eccles. xviii, 23). When beginning to pray we should present to our mind God as He is enthroned in heaven. We should approach God in humility and reverence with childlike confidence and love. Thus prepared for prayer we will be pleasing to God. To give our mind this disposition is the purpose of the preface: "Our Father, who art in heaven." Hence this preface should be said with devotion and piety.

The seven petitions of the "Our Father" contain everything a Christian ought and may ask for. But what may and should a Christian ask for? For all things necessary and serviceable for the proper fulfilment of his life work. This prayer contains petitions for everything necessary for the attainment of the last end for which we were created, and that is, in the first place, the glorification of God, and, in the second place, our eternal salvation. In the first four petitions Christ teaches us and commands us to beseech for the things that pertain to this last end, and in the last three petitions for protection against the things which hinder the attainment of this end.

1. The glory of God is the first and chief purpose of all creation, as also of redemption and sanctification. It should be the occupation of all mankind, as it is the occupation of the blessed in heaven. We glorify God when we recognize Him as the highest good; when we love Him above all things, with a childlike love, serve Him faithfully, worship Him in all our thoughts, words and actions. As we are unable to do this by our own strength we must seek the assistance of grace, which we do in the words of the first petition: "Hallowed be Thy name." By the words "Thy name" must be understood here, God himself, as He has revealed Himself to us and this petition is equivalent to saying: "Thou, O God, shalt be glorified by us and by all mankind." We ask in the first petition that God may not be blasphemed, but rightly known, truly loved and duly revered. We implore God in this petition to enlighten the heathen that yet stand in the shadow of death, and all unbelievers and heretics, that they may learn to know and adore Him; and to grant sincere conversion to all sinners. We also ask, for ourselves and our fellow Christians, the grace to grow in the knowledge of God, in His love and service and in Christian perfection, so that thereby God may ever be glorified more and more. A truly Christian life is our highest glorification of God, hence to obtain this grace we must diligently pray.

This petition is placed first, because it is the most necessary to the glorification of God and to our salvation. It is also the foundation of the other petitions.

2. In the second petition "Thy kingdom come," a threefold kingdom of God is meant, for the coming of which we pray. It is the kingdom of God about us, in us and above us. The kingdom of God about us is the Church of Christ. Christ founded it as His divine kingdom on earth, to glorify God and lead mankind to Salvation. We ask that God may grant to all men grace to recognize our holy Church as *the* divine institution, to submit themselves to her authority, and to become members of this Church find order to properly worship the true God, to glorify Him, and thus work their salvation.

The kingdom of God is within us, when we allow ourselves to be ruled and guided not by the spirit of the world, but by the spirit of God. "Those who are moved by the spirit of God are God's children." In his soul is the kingdom of God established whose faith agrees with the teaching of the Church, who hopes, loves and lives in the true faith.

The kingdom of God above us is the kingdom of heaven. The Church on earth is the kingdom of truth, of grace, of virtue; it will become in heaven the kingdom of glory.

Through this triple kingdom God is glorified on earth and in heaven, and this is the first and chief aim of every created thing. Through this threefold kingdom we gain salvation, happiness and eternal life. That this threefold dominion of God may come to us and to all mankind we ask the Father in heaven in the second petition.

In order that what we ask for in the second petition may be attained we must comply with the third petition: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Almighty God is the supreme ruler of heaven and earth. All creatures in heaven and earth must submit themselves unconditionally to His holy will. God makes His will known to us through His commandments, and through His holy Church. We must be ready and willing at all times to do the will of God, and to submit to it in all things. We must obey His commandments, we must gladly and humbly submit ourselves to His dispensations, no matter what they may be. That God's will may at all times be done by us, and in us, and in all things, this should be our ardent desire, not with a servile fear but with filial love, as Jesus has taught us by His word and example. But this far surpasses our own strength and for this reason Jesus teaches and enjoins us to beg the Father that He may grant to us and to all mankind the grace to do at all times His holy will. By this faithful submission of our wills to the will of God we glorify God in the most perfect way.

3. In our earthly pilgrimage to heaven we require divine assistance in order to live our corporal and spiritual life according to the divine Will. For this reason Christ instructs us to pray in the fourth petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." That means: Give us, O God, what we stand in need of for body and soul that we may live according to Thy holy will.

We depend upon God in all things. He is our Creator and also our Preserver. We could not live a single moment without his aid. As we are composed of body and soul our wants are twofold, we have requirements for the body and others for the soul. We stand in need of food, shelter and clothing for body. All, rich and poor alike, must petition God for these, for each one stands in God's hand. God can cast the rich man down like Job, and free the poor man from all want. The word bread includes all necessities of life. "Give me neither beggary nor riches: give me only the necessaries of life" (Prov. xxx, 8).

That we are told to pray for our daily bread should remind us that we must not be too solicitous for the morrow. He who gives unto us to-day will also provide for us to-morrow if we humbly ask Him. We say: *Our* bread, because it is our duty to earn it in an honorable manner by industry and labor. "He who toils not, shall not eat." We say also *our* bread, and not *my* bread, because we wish the poor who can not help themselves to have it as well as we ourselves, and we must share it with them as much as our means allow.

As our body requires nourishment, so does our soul. The food of the soul is the word of God, and the Bread of Life that came down from heaven. We must partake of this Bread of the soul by hearing the word of God, by reading and meditation, and by receiving the Sacraments.

Thus has Jesus in the four first petitions taught and commanded us to ask for everything that is necessary for the attainment of our last end. In the three remaining petitions He instructs us to pray for protection against all things which are obstacles to the attainment of that end.

II. In these three petitions we ask that everything may be averted that would hinder us from attaining our true goal, our salvation and the glorification of God.

1. This obstacle, however, is sin and its evil consequences and these three petitions have reference to sin and its evil consequences. We, like all men, are sinners, and in our sins we can not worship God properly, nor can we attain our salvation if God does not show mercy to us. For this reason we humbly implore God in the fifth petition: "Forgive us our trespasses." In these words we implore God to grant unto us and to our fellow men a sincerely contrite heart and to graciously forgive us our sins and the punishment due for them. As a condition of forgiveness, however, God exacts from us that we forgive those who have offended us, as fully as we desire that God forgive us. Therefore, we add: "As we forgive those who trespass against us."

2. In the sixth petition we implore God that He would graciously preserve us from falling into sin. "Lead us not into temptation." With these words we urge God that He should keep from us temptation to sin, or, if through temptation He desires to try us, that He grant us abundant graces to conquer it. Temptations do not come from God, but from our own nature, from Satan and from the world. God permits them in His wisdom to try our love for Him, to preserve us in humility, and to strengthen us, to animate our zeal for virtue and to increase our merits. God will assist us in temptation if we are exposed to it without any fault of ours.

Those, however, who court the danger will perish in it. They can not expect divine assistance who wilfully seek temptation and sin.

3. The seventh and last petition is "But deliver us from evil." After asking God not to lead us into temptation we urge Him to preserve us from evil of soul and body. We confidently trust God to guide us according to His wisdom and mercy, and to deliver us from everything which is an obstacle to our salvation, even if in our own shortsightedness we may think it good and desirable.

We conclude the "Lord's Prayer" with the little word "Amen," which is equivalent to "So be it." With this single word we confirm all our petitions. It means: "O God grant us these things for which we have just prayed."

Truly this prayer, taught us by Our Lord, is of high dignity and importance. It is not alone a prayer, but a sermon as well. It is a prayer which comprises in itself all other prayers. It is a prayer of praise, of thanksgiving and supplication. It is, therefore, appropriate for all occasions. Are you discouraged and faint-hearted, go and say the "Our Father." The thought that you have an all-merciful Father in heaven will lift you up, inspire you with confidence and comfort you. Do self-love and pride strive for the mastery within you, go and say, "Hallowed be Thy name." Is anger and malice in your heart, say, "Forgive us our trespasses at we forgive those who trespass against us." If impatience is your fault say, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." When beset by temptation invoke God: "Lead us not into temptation," and in trial and adversity beseech God: "Deliver us from evil."

O that this holy and sublime prayer would be properly understood and appreciated. What blessings it would produce everywhere. May then our contemplation contribute with the blessing of God toward our own love of this wonderful

prayer and greater devotion in its recital.

## VIII. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE ROSARY

### (e) *The Hail Mary.*

"And the angel said to her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women."—Luke i, 28.

Dear Brethren: To-day there is offered for our consideration one of the sweetest of prayers of our holy Religion. It is the "Hail Mary," or Angelical Salutation, which we say so often, particularly in the Rosary. Considered in its origin, its contents, and in its efficacy it is beautiful and sublime, and, with the exception of the Lord's Prayer, the most excellent. Its origin is to be had in the words which the Archangel Gabriel addressed to blessed Mary, ever virgin. To these have been added the words of St. Elizabeth on the occasion of Mary's visit, and the holy Church has completed the prayer with a consoling supplication. Its very origin, therefore, makes this prayer a holy and venerable one.

The words of salutation are brief, but they contain everything that one could ever say in praise of the Virgin Mother of God.

The petition includes briefly everything for which we may ask Mary.

Let us then give our attention to this beautiful prayer in the name of Jesus and Mary, His blessed mother.

I. I said, that in the first part of the "Hail Mary" all the privileges and glories which made the blessed Virgin so worthy of praise are contained. A closer examination will show us how true this is. Let us transport ourselves in spirit to Nazareth, to the quiet little room where Mary is praying in deepest devotion. Suddenly there enters this room one of the most exalted spirits that stand at the throne of the Creator. What does this messenger from heaven desire of this humble virgin, unknown to the world? He desires no less than her participation in our redemption. The only begotten Son of God, in His infinite love for mankind, has offered to take upon Himself human nature, to atone for our sins and to redeem us. The time appointed by God's providence, when this great work was to be consummated, had now come. Mary, in the divine counsels, is destined to be the mother of the Saviour. The celestial messenger appears to bring this message to her, and to obtain her consent. God desired that Mary should voluntarily cooperate in the redemption.

Mary cooperated in our redemption by proving herself worthy to be called to the divine motherhood, as far as this is possible for a human being. This she did by cooperating faithfully with the abundance of grace granted her by God, and thus proving herself worthy to become the mother of the Saviour. Through her virginity she rendered herself worthy according to the body, and through her most profound piety and humility according to the spirit. Both virtues stand forth most brilliantly in the annunciation of the angel. But she wished rather to forego the exalted dignity of divine motherhood, than relinquish the virginity which she had dedicated to God. And when the highest dignity which can be bestowed upon a creature was announced to her, she called herself the handmaid of the Lord. Mary, when convinced of the will of God, humbly consented, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word."

Through this consent Mary conferred upon the world an unspeakable great blessing, for which we should be eternally grateful to her. By this consent she became the second Eve, the spiritual first parent of the redeemed race.

The angel, recognizing in Mary his future queen, now reverently set forth in brief words all the prerogatives which God had granted her, and was about to bestow upon her. These prerogatives are: (1) the fulness of grace which God had already granted unto her; (2) the dignity of mother of God which He now granted her, and, finally (3), the veneration and glorification which on account of this fulness of grace and this dignity she would partake of in heaven and earth.

The first privilege, fulness of grace, which she had received from God, the angel expressed with the words "full of grace." These words mean: thou art filled with all the divine graces in a measure possible to no other creature; thou hast received to the full all graces. As God will exalt thee to a dignity beyond that of the most exalted spirits of heaven, so He has granted you more and greater graces than even to the Seraphim and Cherubim. Now since thou hast cooperated in a perfect manner with all these graces, thou hast become the most virtuous, the holiest, the most perfect of all creatures. Therefore, art thou worthy to become the mother of the Most High.

Mary's second privilege which the angel mentioned was her elevation to the dignity of mother of God. "The Lord is with thee," that is, God has bestowed upon thee every grace, and, finding thee worthy, thou art to be the mother of His Son, to cooperate in the redemption and the salvation of the world.

In the words "The Lord is with thee" is expressed the intimate relationship of Mary to God, accomplished by the Incarnation. Not merely through the fulness of His grace and love is God with her, but even according to the flesh God is intimately united to her.

Mary's third privilege announced by the angel is the exalted veneration which she merits for her dignity and sanctity. The angel expresses this in the words "Blessed art thou among women." The angel had reference to the promise given by God in Paradise, that there would come a woman who should crush the serpent's head. He had in mind also the renowned women of the old law who had rescued the people of God from peril and oppression, and who were for this reason blessed by the people, such as Judith and Esther. These heroic women were glorious prototypes, pointing to Mary who was to crush the serpent's head, to destroy the designs of Lucifer, and to save the human race from

destruction. Yes, truly, Mary is blessed by God among all women, and is herself an infinite blessing for the entire world. The Lord hath done great things in her. She realized this herself, in those prophetic words, "Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, for he that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name." And so it has been, and ever will be, as long as the sun illumines the earth. For more than nineteen centuries the people and nations have joyfully repeated the angel's words, "Blessed art thou among women." By precept of the Church we add the words "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus," in order to join to our praise of Mary that of Jesus, from whom and on whose account she received all her privileges, and for whose sake she receives all this praise.

II. After the prayer of praise in the "Hail Mary" there follows the prayer of supplication which the Church has added. This supplication is "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen." A short petition, but a significant one by which we invoke Mary's intercession in all our needs. The words holy Mary, mother of God, form the opening of this petition. They repeat the truth contained in the prayer of praise, and are at the same time calculated to arouse our confidence in Mary. The name "Mary" alone should awaken our confidence in the blessed Virgin, because the name Mary means sovereign. Mary, is indeed a sovereign, a ruler. As mother of the King of heaven and earth, she is the Queen of heaven and earth, and our lady, our queen as well. Mary means also star of the sea. As star of the sea Mary is to mankind what a kindly star is to the sailor who finds himself on the stormy waters. This world resembles an ocean, where storms and perils abound to the menace of body and soul. The winds and storms of temptations rise, the dangerous rocks of oppression threaten, the stormy waves of passion, of pride, of ambition, of avarice, of anger, envy, revenge, avidity beat upon us. All these dangers trouble the heart and fill it with sorrow and fear. And as the star leads the sailor to a safe haven, so Mary is to us the kindly star that inspires us with consolation and confidence and brings us rescue.

Holy Mary, mother of God! As mother of God Mary possesses the power of mediation with her divine Son. The angels and saints all together can not have the influence that Mary exercises. The holy fathers and teachers refer to this power, when they say Mary is omnipotent through her intercession, as God is omnipotent in Himself. Thus the opening of the supplication inspires veneration and confidence in Mary. With this veneration and confidence then we ask, "Pray for us sinners." Thou, the holy one, the powerful and good, pray for us miserable sinners, not worthy to approach God and be heard. Pray for us in all our temporal and spiritual necessities, in every danger of body and soul. Pray above all, to obtain for us the grace of a perfect conversion and repentance, and the grace of perseverance until the end of life. Pray for us, holy Mary, mother of God, now, while it is yet time for us to merit salvation, but pray for us especially when that solemn and sad hour of death has arrived. In that dark hour will be decided our eternal destiny; at that dread hour forsake us not, Pray for us now, and at the hour of our death.

We have seen what an excellent prayer the Hail Mary is. It follows that it is also an efficacious prayer. When the Hail Mary was uttered for the first time by the Archangel it ushered in the most stupendous of all miracles. And whenever we devoutly repeat this salutation with faith and confidence, it will be for us also a means of grace and blessing. Whenever you salute Mary, says St. Bernard, she returns the greeting, she gives you in return consolation and blessing.

Let us then recite this beautiful and excellent prayer most diligently and piously, and let us give special preference to the devotion of the Rosary which is a garland woven to blessed Mary from this prayer of praise. The quarter of an hour spent in reciting the beads will bring us blessings in life and a happy death. How we shall rejoice when we behold Mary face to face and greet her with the words: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus, to whom be praise for all eternity. Amen.

## IX. THE PRAYER TO INCREASE THE THREE DIVINE VIRTUES

"And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity."—I. Cor. xiii, 13.

Dear brethren, in beginning the Rosary one Our Father and three Hail Marys are said in supplication for the three divine virtues. These virtues are called divine because they have God for their Author or their object. In Baptism these virtues are infused into the soul together with sanctifying grace. Through sanctifying grace, received in Baptism, we are made children of God. From that moment there is imposed upon us the duty, as soon as we shall be able to use our reason, of thinking, speaking and acting as behooves the true children of God. This duty we perform if we imitate the example of Jesus Christ, and if we endeavor to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. But as this cannot be done by human power, the Holy Ghost has willed to enable us to do so, by imparting to us, in Baptism, the three divine virtues. By the infused grace of faith God gives us a supernatural light, in addition to the natural light of our reason, with the aid of which we may comprehend His revelations. God bestows upon us thus, through the virtue of faith, a share in His own wisdom. The supernatural grace of hope turns our thought heavenward, gives us an incentive to cooperate with grace.

The supernatural virtue of charity renders us capable of loving God in a worthy and meritorious manner and of loving that which God loves.

As the child arrives at the age of discretion, and obtains the right use of reason, he is obliged to practise these virtues, and thus I strengthen his soul and grow in grace.

We are obliged to awaken frequently faith, hope, and charity towards God and our neighbor, in a practical manner. By the possession, practise and application of these three divine virtues we attain to Christian perfection. The more we learn to know these virtues, the more zealous we shall be in practising them, the more earnestly we shall strive for their increase, the more incessantly shall we pray for them.



Let us, therefore, take these three divine virtues for the subject of our consideration.

I. Faith is the first of the three divine virtues; it is the foundation of the other virtues. Without faith in God, in His revelations and promises, there can be no Christian hope, no Christian charity. For this reason faith is the foundation of virtuous living: Christian faith is a virtue infused by God into our souls by which we are enabled to believe firmly all that which God has revealed and which the infallible Catholic Church proposes for our belief.

An act of faith requires the use of the understanding and the use of the will. The mysteries surpass our natural understanding; they are, furthermore, to be believed in a supernatural manner, and we require, therefore, the supernatural light of faith, added to the natural light of our understanding, and we require also that our natural willpower be strengthened by the supernatural power of grace. This light and this power we receive in Baptism. The supernatural light of faith qualifies us to understand that the truths revealed by God are divine.

In order to believe it does not suffice to know the divine truths as the Church teaches them, we must also, of our own free will, assent to them, and acknowledge as divine truths even those mysteries which surpass our human understanding. To that extent faith is a matter of the will. God, through the light and the power of the grace of faith, comes to the assistance of our reason and will, in order that we may confidently submit both to divine revelation, that is, to God. In order that the infused virtue of faith may be meritorious for us, we must co-operate with grace by readily submitting our understanding and our will to divine revelation. Then this virtue of faith will not only be an infused one but, also, will be an acquired one and thus become a meritorious virtue. This actual and acquired virtue is for every adult the first condition of salvation. Still the acceptance of the divine doctrine is alone not sufficient for salvation. We must live in accordance with our faith; we must do good and shun evil. Such is the teaching of faith. "He truly believes who practises what believes," says St. Gregory, and St. James tells us that "Faith without works is a dead faith and avails nothing to salvation." A living faith is the first condition and the beginning of salvation. Eternal happiness consists, as we are aware, in the vision of God. The living faith is a beginning of this vision. We know God through the Christian faith, but only as in a mirror. "Now I know in part: but then I shall know even as I am known" (I. Cor. xiii, 12).

II. The second of the divine virtues is hope. Christian hope is a virtue infused into our souls by which we confidently expect of God everything which He has promised us through the merits of Christ. God has promised us eternal happiness, also all things which we stand in need of, and that are profitable for us in our endeavor to attain eternal happiness. Jesus has merited these for us, and God has promised them to us for the sake of the merits of Jesus Christ. And because God has promised them to us we must confidently expect and hope for them, because God is omnipotent, merciful and faithful to His promises.

This Christian confidence in God is bestowed by the virtue of hope, infused into our souls at Baptism. We must frequently exercise it in order to make it conducive to salvation.

The virtue of hope is based upon the virtue of faith. Faith informs us of the promises of God, and that He is all-powerful and faithful in fulfilling His promises. Without faith Christian hope would not be possible. This the Apostle Paul teaches in his Epistle to the Corinthians, in plain words: "Faith," he writes, "is the substance of things hoped for" (Heb. xi, i). Hope is really, therefore, an active faith in the mercy and generosity of God. Christian hope is just as necessary for salvation as faith. "For we are saved by hope." Thus the Apostle writes in the Epistle to the Romans (Rom. viii, 24). Hence, when we lose hope we forfeit our salvation.

Christian hope is in part desire, in part confidence. It is a lively desire for eternal happiness, for the possession of God and for the means which aid us in gaining salvation. It contains in itself a heartfelt desire for forgiveness of sins, and for liberation from the punishment due to sins. It includes an ardent longing for a virtuous Christian life. It is that hunger and thirst for justice of which Christ speaks in the eight Beatitudes. As God is the supreme good, combining every other good, so our desire for the blessed possession of God must be the sincerest, indeed, the sole, desire of our hearts. All other things we may desire only on God's account, and only in so far as they are the means to help us to the possession of God. Whoever experiences this desire will zealously pray for all things; he will be a man of prayer.

Christian hope is not only desire, but also confidence. God has promised us forgiveness of our sins and the grace to do the good that is required of us. He has promised us after a Christian life the eternal happiness of heaven. He is ready to fulfil His promises. The fulfillment of the divine promise depends, however, upon our own co-operation, upon our sincere good-will, upon our co-operation with grace. Our confidence must, therefore, never become presumption. The Apostle admonishes us to work out our salvation in fear and trembling. St. Francis de Sales calls confidence in God and distrust in ourselves the two balancing poles by the help of which we are enabled to keep our equilibrium. To distrust ourselves, and to have the fullest trust in God, this is the essence of Christian hope.

Christian hope is an essential condition for eternal happiness. By hope we anticipate life eternal. It is to us a pledge and a foretaste, and when we shall pass into eternity with this living hope, our hope will be transformed into possession of that which we have hoped for the possession of God, the supreme good.

III. Charity, the third of the divine virtues, is the virtue infused by God into our souls which enables us to love God above all things, and for His sake to love our neighbor as ourselves. That such divine charity surpasses human power is quite evident. It is inseparably united to sanctifying grace. He who possesses sanctifying grace possesses also the virtue of divine charity. He who loses sanctifying grace through mortal sin, loses also divine charity. The virtue of charity is a participation in the divine charity with which God loves us. It is a divine commandment that we must love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with our whole strength, and that we must love our neighbor as ourselves, for God's sake. To give oneself wholly to God, to prefer Him to all things, rather lose all things than offend Him, to seek to accomplish His holy will in all things, to observe His commandments, to offer up to God every thought, word, and deed, to work and suffer for God, to live and die for God, this is the true love of God.

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them; he it is that loveth me." Thus speaks the Son of God (John xiv, 21). To love God in this manner is made possible for us by the divine virtue of charity, received in Baptism. We may,

however, co-operate with it and so fulfil God's commandments. Only in this manner does the infused virtue become an acquired and meritorious virtue. The Christian virtue of charity is the greatest of all virtues. It presupposes faith and hope because we must believe and hope in God before we can love Him: charity gives life to faith and hope. Without charity, faith and hope are dead and avail not for salvation. Who so loves not remains in death. Charity is not merely the greatest of all virtues, but it contains all Christian virtues; it is the essence of the Christian life. Through Christian faith we participate in the divine knowledge, through hope in the divine power, and through charity we participate in the divine justice and sanctity. Christian charity renders us holy, as the heavenly Father is holy, and perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. It is charity which here on earth unites us with God. "He who abides in charity abides in God and God in him." It is a virtue which continues for all eternity, when faith has become the vision, and hope the possession, of God.

The love of God is inseparably united to the love of our neighbor; for, as St. Augustine says, there are two commandments but only one charity, because there is no other charity with which we love our neighbor than that with which we love God. Who so says that he loves God, but does not love his neighbor, in him there is no divine charity.

We have seen, therefore, how the three divine virtues are the foundation of the Christian life, and that their practise constitutes Christian life. The true worship of God consists in practising these virtues which, at the same time, are the sole way to eternal bliss. Progress in the Christian life keeps pace with the activity of these

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virtues. This increase of virtue is, likewise, a gracious gift of God. We are ever obliged to co-operate with grace. We must strive for the increase of our faith, hope, and charity, by frequently practising

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these virtues, by the worthy reception of the holy Sacraments, by attentively contemplating the divine truths and, especially, by humble and heartfelt prayer.

How feeble, indeed, is our faith, how wavering our hope, how insufficient our love of God and our neighbor. They need the strengthening grace of God.

To pray rightly, and to be worthy of being heard, we must awaken these fundamental virtues. Therefore, at the beginning of the Rosary we say devoutly one Our Father and three Hail Marys to ask God for an increase of these virtues. Because faith, hope, and charity should be both the basis and the fruit of the Rosary. Amen.

## X. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE ROSARY IN REGARD TO ITS FORM

"She reacheth therefore from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly."—Wisdom viii, 1.

The disposition of the heart is in prayer of more consequence than the manner of expression. Yet an appropriate form of prayer is helpful in avoiding distraction and in inducing devotion. Our Divine Saviour taught His disciples to make use of a special form of prayer, the "Our Father."

The form of the Rosary helps appreciably in rendering the Rosary the great prayer it is. The Rosary has been aptly called the "lay breviary." For many centuries the faithful joined in the reciting of the breviary. As late as in the eleventh century St. Peter Damian urgently exhorted the faithful to participate in the ecclesiastical "hours" of prayer. And when gradually participation in the ecclesiastical prayer ceased, Divine Providence supplied the Rosary to take for the laity the place of the breviary. It may thus properly be called the "lay breviary." In fact it reminds of the breviary of priests, for it contains verbal prayer and meditation, and the hundred and fifty "Hail Marys" of the Rosary correspond to the hundred and fifty psalms of the breviary.

Let us now consider how appropriate the form of the Rosary is, and how it renders the Rosary a perfect prayer.

The form makes the Rosary both an excellent devotion and a perfect prayer. Prayer is the first duty of all men. It is an article of faith that no man can work out his salvation without prayer. The real essence of prayer consists in the union of vocal prayer with meditation, or interior prayer. The true prayer is a conversation, or intercourse, of man with God. The combination of meditating with vocal prayer is an excellent means of participating in Divine grace. Meditation makes us realize our needs, the faults which we should lay aside, and the virtues which we must acquire. Sin makes man blind, meditation opens his eyes. Vocal prayer alone is not of itself a protection from sin, daily experience teaches this. There are many who say vocal prayers and yet fall into grievous sin and remain in that state. The reason is because they omit the contemplative prayer. Those who combine vocal prayer with meditation do not easily incur God's disfavor, or if they do they at once resolve to amend and they lose no time in returning to God. A combination of meditation and vocal prayer is therefore calculated to preserve us from sin, and to rescue us from that state, if unfortunately we find ourselves in it. It is also the most effective means for us to reach Christian perfection and eternal salvation.

We should therefore combine with vocal prayers proper meditation if we desire our prayers to be more perfect. When we say the "Our Father," or the "Hail Mary," we should not merely utter the words with our lips, but should contemplate the purport of the words, lifting the mind to God, to whom we are praying, otherwise our prayer will be merely a prayer of the lips. Remember the words of our Divine Saviour: "These people glorify Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me."

In saying the Rosary we combine vocal prayer with meditation upon the Sacred Mysteries. Where there is time for it a longer meditation is very beneficial and of great spiritual advantage. But if time is lacking, or when the Rosary is said in common with others, one should at least at every decade briefly put the mystery before the mind. Pondering upon the mysteries whilst saying the prayers is ordinarily requisite to gain the indulgences attached to the Rosary.

The Rosary in its union of vocal prayer and meditation is a perfect prayer. The parts of the Rosary so appropriately succeed one another as to form a beautiful chain of prayers. We begin the prayers of the Rosary with the sign of the Cross, with which the Church commences all her prayers. This sign reminds us of the Most Holy Trinity in whose Name we were baptized, and to whom we belong absolutely, through creation, redemption, and sanctification. By making the sign of the Cross we place ourselves vividly in the presence of God, to whom we are praying, and awaken within us acts of faith, reverence, love, and confidence. Through the sign of the Cross there are dedicated to God in prayer the thoughts of the mind, the words of our lips, and the sentiments and feelings of the heart. Most assuredly the devout signing ourselves with the Cross is an excellent introduction and preparation for prayer.

Then follows most appropriately the Apostle's Creed. It declares more fully that which the sign of the Cross indicates. The twelve articles of the Creed contain that which we must firmly believe if we would be saved.

The Creed most properly opens the Rosary because it is the basis of our faith. The Joyful Rosary expounds the article of faith: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." The Sorrowful Rosary is a commemoration of the article: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried." The glorious is founded upon the article: "Rose again from the dead, ascended into Heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God." Thus the entire Rosary is in truth a prayer of faith, and draws from the faith its force and efficacy.

After the Creed follows "Glory be to the Father," which is repeated at every decade of the Rosary as it is also said in the ecclesiastical "hours" after every Psalm. To give glory to God is our chief duty, it must be our intention in all our words and works. To give glory to God must also be our principal intention in saying the Rosary. As we repeat this doxology at the end of each decade, we should again raise up our mind and heart to God with fresh sentiments of faith, love, and confidence. This preserves us from distraction and gives new zeal to our prayers.

After the first "Glory be to God" we say one Our Father and three Hail Marys for the increase of the three divine virtues. The three divine virtues are the foundation of the right disposition which we must have, in order truly and worthily to honor God. St. Augustine says: "God is to be glorified through faith, hope, and charity. They are the corner-stone of the Christian life." And the Apostle says: "The just man liveth by faith" (Heb. x, 38), meaning that man lays the foundation for his justification through faith, receives the life of justification from faith, perseveres in this just life through faith, perfects this life through the light and the power of faith whence hope and charity proceed.

To promote this kind of life is the aim of the devotion of the Rosary. The more pious and virtuous we become, the more we glorify God and assure our temporal and eternal happiness.

These prayers are the introduction and preparation to the prayer of the Rosary, which combines meditation of the Mysteries with the recital of the Our Fathers and Hail Marys. The Rosary is a prayer indeed for the glory of God and for honoring and invoking Mary the Mother of God. The Mysteries of the Rosary contain that which God has done in order to glorify Himself and to redeem, sanctify, and save mankind. At the same time these mysteries from the lives of Jesus and Mary are fraught with touching examples for our own lives. In the devout contemplation of these mysteries, and in the application of the same to our own religious moral life, lie the gist of the prayers of the Rosary and the chief fruits which we should draw from this saving devotion.

Certain critics of the Rosary cannot understand why the Hail Mary is so frequently repeated. But in the repetition lies the strength of the prayer, for holy perseverance is expressed by this repetition. The psalmist in the one hundredth and thirty-fifth Psalm repeats twenty-six times the words: "For his mercy endureth forever." And the heavenly hosts proclaim their "Thrice Holy" for ever and ever.

We are perfectly right, therefore, in declaring that the Rosary is a thoroughly practical prayer, corresponding exactly to the necessities and peculiarities of our minds and hearts.

We might challenge the world to name a more beautiful, a more excellent prayer. The Church therefore numbers the Rosary amongst her most efficacious prayers, and she has endowed it richly with indulgences to induce the faithful to say it frequently.

## XI. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE ROSARY ON ACCOUNT OF THE MYSTERIES COMMEMORATED

"Unless thy law had been my meditation, I had then perhaps perished in my abjection."—Ps. cxviii, 92.

Dear Brethren: In our former considerations of the Rosary we have discussed the prayers of which the Rosary is composed. The second chief part of the Rosary is the fifteen Mysteries. They are called Mysteries because the truths which they contain are hidden and cannot be comprehended except by Divine revelation. These Mysteries and their significance will be the subject of our discourse to-day. It is the spirit and intention of the Church that these Mysteries be properly meditated upon while saying the Rosary. This we do by reflecting upon them, by applying to ourselves the lesson drawn! from them, and by resolving to amend our life or to perfect it according to this lesson.

I. The consideration of the Divine truths of salvation is absolutely necessary for all mankind, for no one can be saved

who is not mindful of his salvation. We cannot attain happiness without serving and loving God. Yet he knows not God who does not give any thought to things divine. In order to learn to know God and to make progress in this knowledge we must contemplate the Divine attributes and perfections, and the works which proclaim them. The whole universe is preaching to us God's omnipotence, wisdom, and love. The heavens tell of God's glory, and the firmament proclaims the works of His hands. The tiny flowers in field and meadow, the birds in the tree, the stars in the sky, they all remind us of God and of His Omnipotence and Goodness. We ought not regard these things thoughtlessly, they give us food for salutary thought and meditation. They exhort us to show love and gratitude towards God, the merciful Father who has created all these things for us.

God so loved the world as to sacrifice for it His only begotten Son. The Son so loved Mankind that He became Man, suffered for us and died upon the Cross, in order to ransom us from sin and ruin. We learn to know not only the malice, horror, and guilt of sin, but also the infinite mercy and love of God by pondering on the works of God.

In the work of sanctification, specially ascribed to the Holy Ghost, we perceive fresh wonders of God's love. The Holy Ghost cleanses us from our sins and transforms us into children of God. He consoles us with heavenly consolation, and leads us with His hand, conducting us to Christian perfection and to life eternal. By considering these divine works, often and earnestly, we learn to know God, and become desirous of loving Him and serving Him faithfully. To make progress in the knowledge of these divine things is the sacred duty of a Christian. But in order to be saved it is not sufficient to know God; we must also know ourselves. For this reason St. Augustine besought God: "Let me know myself, and let me know Thee." We must learn to know our faults in order to correct them, and our evil inclinations so as to fight against them. We must ascertain what virtues we are lacking in so that we may strive to acquire them. We must understand the gravity of our sins to repent of them sincerely. Finally, we must understand our inability to acquire merit, so that we may seek from God grace, strength, and help.

It is necessary also that we understand clearly the duties which we have to perform.

If we were profoundly impressed by the excellence of the Divine Laws, of the magnificent rewards that will be the share of those who observe the Commandments, and of the terrible chastisement awaiting the transgressor, who would ever presume to transgress these Divine Commandments? And what is calculated to impress us with these truths if not serious reflection upon them?

The royal Prophet exclaims: "Blessed are they that search his testimonies; that seek him with their whole heart" (Ps. cxviii, 2).

Meditation has drawn numberless sinners from the depths of sin and protected untold numbers against sin. It is also, as St. Ignatius remarks, the shortest way to Christian perfection. Hence St. Teresa implores those who have not yet begun this meditative prayer, to do so in the name of God, and through the love of Christ, and no longer deprive themselves of this most precious and necessary good.

Objection may be made by some that they cannot meditate, that they have not the ability to do so. The reply is that for meditation no skill or science is required. When you reflect upon an article of faith, upon a commandment of God, upon sin or virtue, upon God, your duties, and then awaken acts of faith, hope and charity, contrition, and thanksgiving, followed by resolutions of amendment, petitions to God for His grace and assistance to keep these resolutions, you have made a very good meditation. This much any one can do.

Another objection may be advanced, that one has no time for it. A man living in the world has many business cares, but then the salvation of the soul is the chief business of man. Our Divine Saviour has said that one thing only is necessary, and this one thing is solicitude for the soul's welfare. David had the cares of governing a great kingdom, and yet he said: "O how have I loved thy law, O Lord, it is my meditation all the day." (Ps. cxviii, 97.) No, my brethren, time and ability are not lacking. If anything is lacking, it is the good will. Therefore let us all make the firm resolution to give in the future due consideration to Christian meditation so as to place our soul's welfare in safety.

II. The Mysteries of the Rosary offer us an easy method and material for our meditation. They give us a brief sketch of the life, passion, and death of Jesus Christ and the sorrows and joys of our Mother Mary. The fifteen Mysteries are divided into three parts: the Joyful, the Sorrowful, and the Glorious Mysteries.

The joyful Mysteries of the Rosary contain events from the youthful life of Jesus. These are the Annunciation, the Visitation of Mary, the Nativity of Christ, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, and the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple. These five Mysteries comprise the foundation of the work of the redemption. With all of them is intimately connected Mary, the Blessed Mother of the Redeemer.

These five Mysteries set before us the example of Jesus and Mary. To make of us children of God, the Son of God became incarnate, and He is for us the model of a child of God. Mary, His holy Mother, is in all things His faithful likeness and thus the model for us in the imitation of Christ.

The sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary remind us of the work of redemption, through the passion and death of Jesus Christ. He begins His passion in the garden of Olives in an agony of sorrow. By the scourging He did penance for our sins of the flesh, and by the crowning with thorns, for our sins of the mind. Then He bore His Cross to the place of execution, and with it the sins of the world, in order to efface our debt upon this Cross. These Mysteries teach us how to partake of the merits of the redemption. The consideration of our sins, of their malice and guilt, and a sincere contrition for them is the first step. The second is the discipline of our flesh and its evil desires by temperance, chastity, and mortification. The third step is the discipline of the spirit by humble obedience towards God and His holy law. The fourth is the patient bearing of our cross, and the last is that we die completely to sin, and live only for Christ.

The glorious Mysteries of the Rosary tell us of the glorious fruits of the redemption. These are a new life of grace, resurrection from the dead, and admittance into heaven. They speak to us also of the mission of the Holy Ghost, whose work is to sanctify us. In Mary's assumption into Heaven we behold the most sublime work of the Holy Spirit, *viz.*, her

holy life here upon earth and her coronation in Heaven, the reward of this holy life for all eternity. All these things are calculated to induce in us a devout Christian life. We behold what God has prepared for those who love Him, who live for Him, who work and suffer and die in His grace and love.

Thus the fifteen Mysteries give us a short summary of the lives of Jesus and Mary. The events selected are best calculated to awaken our faith, to strengthen our hope, to inflame our hearts with love for Jesus and Mary, and to animate us to imitate the lives of Jesus and Mary.

These Mysteries thus offer most excellent material for our meditations. They are so simple that every believing Christian may understand them, yet so profound and full of meaning that those most learned and advanced in the spiritual life may find therein ample food for edification. The public life of Jesus and Mary pass, as it were, before our eyes.

How fortunate did the Apostles esteem themselves to have known Jesus by sight, to have listened to the teachings from His own lips, to have gazed and meditated upon His holy life! We may draw the same profit from the diligent and devout meditation of the Mysteries of the Rosary.

If we daily say the Rosary, and picture the mysteries to ourselves, what advantage may we not draw from them for our life! It will be for us a daily intercourse and association with Jesus and Mary that will enlighten our minds, elevate and ennoble our hearts, and powerfully invite our will to a true life of virtue. The Rosary is, therefore, an admirable means to lead a truly Christian life, and an admirable means, consequently to attain eternal salvation. Let us all be zealous to avail ourselves of it and the Rosary will become a bond uniting us intimately with Jesus and Mary, and conducting us to the participation of their glory and happiness for all eternity. Amen.

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