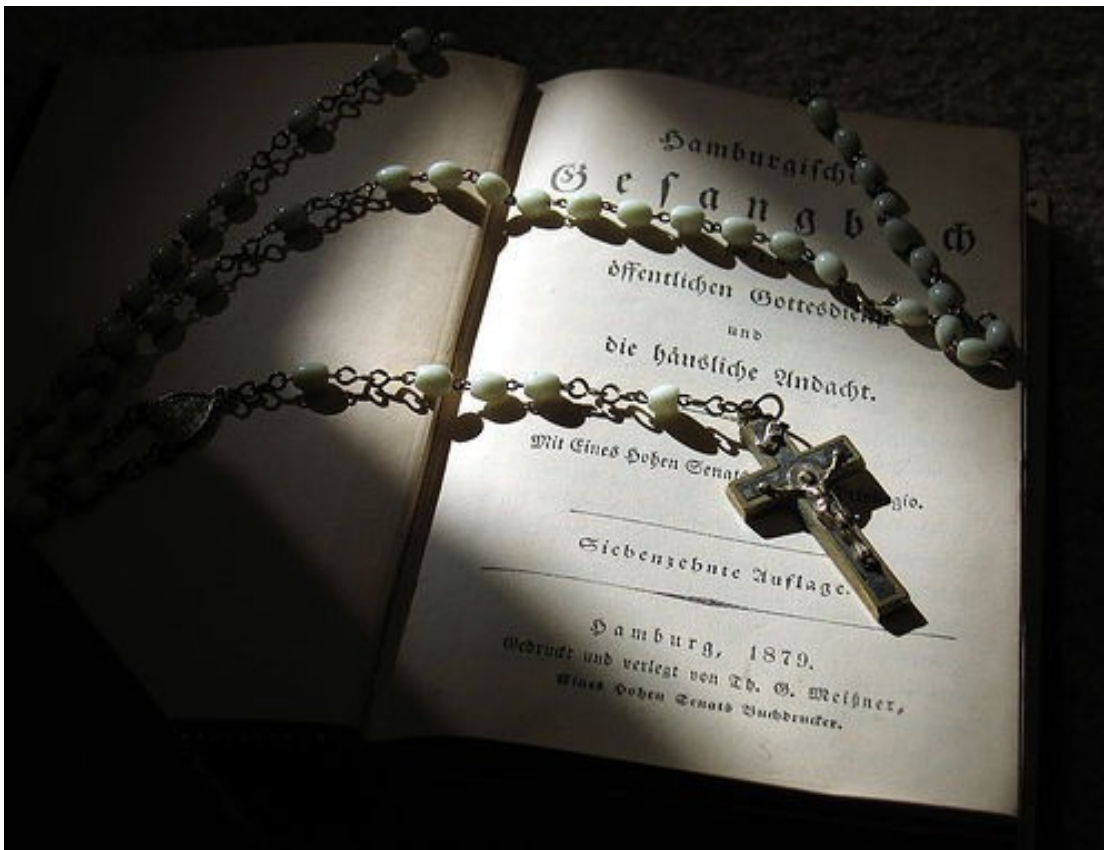


With This Weapon! The Hidden Secrets of the Rosary

By St. Robert Bellarmine



“when we appeal to the throne of grace we do so through Mary, honoring God by honoring His Mother, imitating Him by exalting her, touching the most responsive chord in the Sacred Heart of Christ with the sweet name of Mary.”

-St. Bellarmine on the role of Mary
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"and a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of stars. And being in labor she was in pain to be delivered. And there was another sign in heaven the red dragon Satan ready to devour the fruit of her womb. And when she brought forth there was a great battle in heaven, wherein the angels of God cast out Satan and his angels. And I heard a voice saying: Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of God and the power of His Christ."

Discover The Hidden Secrets Of This Most Powerful Devotion

Such, my brethren, is the account, in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, of Mary's first glorious victory over the enemy of mankind. History has repeated itself since then, for in the thirteenth century we again behold the dragon now the dragon of heresy preparing to destroy the dogmas of our faith the fair offspring of Mary, the Mother of Wisdom. But once again she appears in the heavens, and taking from her head its starry crown, she makes of it a Rosary, and placing it in the hands of St. Dominic, she bids him to arm himself and his followers with this weapon, and lead them against the powers of darkness. Then the demons of error and of sin fly before them, so that once again the heavenly voice proclaims the kingdom of God re-established and the power of His Christ restored. Brethren, this being a time of division and hardship, we will do well to discover the hidden secrets of this most powerful devotion.

Rosary Objections **Know Thy Enemies!**

Let us see first, what its enemies say against it; second, what its advocates say for it, and third and lastly, whether the voice of our conscience numbers us among its friends or among its enemies.

What do its enemies say against it? **A fanatical opposition to God's holy Mother and to the homage paid her by Catholics has ever been the distinguishing mark of Protestantism.** While professing unbounded admiration for womankind and for motherhood they still have no respect for the ideal woman, the Virgin of Virgin Mothers.

Hence it is not strange that they should find fault with a method of prayer wherein the name of Mary is repeated with that of the Godhead in proportion of ten times to one. They remind us of St. Paul's words, that "there is one name and one only at the sound of which every knee in heaven and on earth and in hell shall bend that which there is no other name under heaven given to man whereby we must be saved" the sacred name of Jesus. Yet, they say, you Catholics deify Mary and relegate the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to the position of lesser divinities.

What's more; they accuse us of taking to ourselves a graven thing a few beads strung on a wire a monkish invention and making them the talisman of hope, the idol of men's love. As for the prayers, they ask, why this monotonous mummery? Why this eternal repetition of the selfsame prayer? Why indeed, if not that the devotion of the Rosary is essentially Catholic, and therefore essentially wrong.

Know The Secrets Of **The Holy Rosary**

Brethren, when we Catholics desire direction in the practice of our religion we are not likely to appeal to our Protestant brethren for instruction. Of them are true the words of St. Paul, that "they understand not either the things they say or whereof they affirm." In fact, making due allowance for prejudice, what they deny is generally true, and what they affirm is to be denied. We do not deify Mary, neither do we adore her, but we honor her, first as the Mother of our God and again for her own transcendent virtues. So transcendent indeed that the Son of God Himself, like another Solomon, stepped down from His royal throne to raise her to a place by His side. Do we not hear Him address her in Solomon's words: **"Speak, Mother, for I cannot refuse thy petition."** Therefore when we appeal to the throne of grace we do so through Mary, honoring God by honoring His Mother, imitating Him by exalting her, touching the most responsive chord in the Sacred Heart of Christ with the sweet name of Mary.

For who of you does not remember his childhood days and the boyish ruse by which you secured favors from your earthly father? Did you go to him boldly and demand the desired pocket money? No; for there was about him a stern dignity that overawed. But freely and confidently you went to your good mother to present your petition, and you saw your father smile with pleasure, and your mother returning to you radiant, with double the amount.

Perfection Comes Through Having The Heart of a Child

Brethren, it was not without reason that Our Lord pointing to a little boy said to His Apostles: "To be My disciples you must become as one of these," **for the nearer our devotions come to the simple and loving methods of a child, the more perfect they are.** Such, I say, is the devotion of the Rosary. Nor do we pay to the mere beads and chains any superstitious worship or attribute to them any magic power. But we cherish the beads as a gift from the Mother of Jesus herself, as an article consecrated to devotion by the blessing of God's minister, as a blessed chain that constantly leads back our wandering thoughts to God and holy things.

Repetitious Prayer Equals Vain Words?

We repeat the same prayer over and over again just as a child will repeat and repeat and repeat again his question or request till it be granted. **True, prayer does not consist in much speaking,** says Christ; that is, not long and eloquent discourses, but a short simple request perseveringly repeated. The omniscient intellect of God requires no circumlocutions to understand our needs, but His will demands perseverance on our part before it is moved to relieve them.

Scripture & Repetitious Prayer

- Thus we see Abraham holding back the arm of God's wrath from Sodom and Gomorrah by a simple but oft repeated request. What variety is there in Moses holding up his hands or Joshua blowing a trumpet? Yet that simple act, persevered in all day, procured for Moses a victory over his enemies and for Joshua the ruin of the walls of Jericho.
- The stern judge yielding at last to the widow's petition was

overcome not by her eloquence but by her importunity.

- The baker rising in the night to serve his customer yielded not to his arguments but to his monotonous knocking.
- Of Christ in His agony we read that He went and fell prostrate three times, and three times He prayed the selfsame prayer.

Thus you see that **the recitation of the Rosary, far from being a vain and tedious repetition, is of all prayers the one best suited to the childlike nature of a true Christian,** and most closely resembling the model Christ gave us by His teaching and example.

Of Mental & Vocal Prayer

If we analyze this devotion we will find in itself still further proof of its excellence. Vocal prayer is good, but it may be rendered void by distractions; mental prayer is better, but it may be defective through lack of vocal expression; **but a prayer that is at the same time vocal and mental is, all things being equal, essentially perfect.** Now such is the Rosary, the idea of which is to keep the mind engaged in holy meditations, while the lips are singing the praises of God.

Again, if we care to further analyze this twofold element the vocal part and the mental part we will find in the former a series of prayers the most perfect the Church possesses, and in the latter a series of the most salutary reflections of which the mind of man is capable. **A lively faith is the groundwork of all prayer, for how can men praise a God whom they know not, or ask benefits of Him in whom they do not believe?**

The Prayers of The Rosary

The Rosary begins with that grand profession of faith, the sign of the cross, wherein is expressed a belief in the threefold mystery of the unity of God's nature, of the Trinity of the divine persons, and of the Incarnation. Then, as though ill content with so brief an exposition of his belief, the pious follower of the Rosary is next led on to give a fuller declaration of his faith in the inspired words of the Apostles' Creed. Thus he declares himself not only a believer but a staunch defender of all the truths from the Alpha to the Omega of Christian doctrine.

The Our Father

Then begins the Rosary proper. First comes the "Our Father." Of the excellence of this prayer, it is enough to say that it is the most perfect of all prayers, having Christ Himself for its Author. [What blesses it contains as it petitions for every blessing pertaining to man's temporal and spiritual welfare.]

The Hail Mary

The "Hail Mary" follows with loving persistency we repeat the words God addressed to Mary through the Arch-Angel Gabriel, while with St. Elizabeth we congratulate her on the great things the Omnipotent has done to her. And as often as we recall Mary's transcendent dignity as the Mother of God, so often do we in the "Holy Mary," invoke her powerful intercession for us poor sinners now, and especially at the hour of our death.

Glory Be

Finally, we at the end of each decade turn from Mary, her honor and perfections, to Mary's Creator, the sole Author of her greatness, the one Source of all good things, and we say, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

The Beauty of the Meditating On The Mysteries of the Rosary

But beautiful as are the vocal prayers of the Rosary, the accompanying meditations are not less praiseworthy. They are a fitting accompaniment for so sweet a melody. "If," says St. Bernard, "you would avoid going down to hell after your death, you must frequently go down there by meditation during your life." With equal good reason may we say if we would go to heaven in eternity, we must accustom our thoughts to go there often in time. But how can we do this better than by following in spirit the footsteps of our divine Guide Jesus Christ? Hence we divide His history into fifteen parts or mysteries, and we allot one mystery to each decade, and thus we proceed as He did, and as every true disciple of His must do, from joy through sorrow to glory.

Joyful Mysteries

We see the gentle Virgin once again in her humble home, and we see the resplendent Gabriel coming with his tidings of great joy to her and all mankind. We hear Mary and Elizabeth blend their voices in magnifying the Lord for choosing them to be the mothers of men greater than whom have never been born of women And we kneel again by the crib in the stable of Bethlehem. Then we hear the "Nunc Dimittis," the canticle of Simeon, during the presentation of our Lord at the temple. Finally, in we gaze in mingled joy and wonder on the fair boy in the midst of the holy doctors in the Temple where Joseph and Mary find their son.

Sorrowful Mysteries

But, as for Christ, **so for His true disciples, there is no joy without its latent woe**, hence, we meditate next on the sorrowful mysteries. We go in spirit to the garden of Gethsemane, and kneel by the side of the agonized Christ. We listen to the horrible echo of the leaded thong, as each brawny savage rains blow after blow on the quivering shoulders of our poor Savior. Then we stand by while the huge thorns are being pressed down and in till they grate on His sacred skull. Alas, we take up our cross and follow Him on and up the heights of Calvary and **there immolate ourselves in spirit by the side of our crucified Lord**.

Glorious Mysteries

Finally, as if to carry out the idea that **after the cross of tribulation, and only after the cross, comes the crown of glory**. We rise with Him from the sepulcher in which our sins have entombed us. Then soaring above and beyond the reach of human joy and human sorrow we enter with Him, glorified, into the kingdom of His Father. When we have thus ascended to God in thought, the Holy Spirit of God descends on us in reality, calling up for our meditations the picture of His first descent on the twelve Apostles. In the midst of that group we see the Virgin Mary. Now that her earthly mission is accomplished, she presently closes her eyes in the sweet sleep of death where is taken up body and soul into heaven, here we accompany her, to assist with the angels and the saints at her glorious coronation.

Brethren, such are the beautiful thoughts that occupy the mind while our lips are praising God in language commended by Himself, and our hands keeping time to our thoughts and words on a little instrument invented for her wayward children by our own loving Mother.

The Rosary is the Queen of Indulgence Devotions

Every faculty of our mind and body is by this method of prayer brought into play and directed heavenward, so that with right good reason one of the Fathers has said of the Rosary that it is the queen of indulgenced devotions. Not least among the many excellences of this prayer is its suitability to all classes of men and to every condition of life.

The Sweetness of the Family Rosary

It is the devotion of the family circle. Many of us will remember the old homestead of long ago, where, at the quiet evening hour, our good parents and their little ones knelt around the hearth and joined with simple fervor in reciting the Rosary. Who does not remember that happy moment when for the first time it was his proud privilege to recite his own decade? For so simple is this devotion that **the merest child can practice it; so easy that the most uncultivated mind can follow it.** It inspires thoughts worthy of the loftiest intellect, emotions that satisfy the cravings of the most fervent heart, and aspirations that lead innumerable souls to God. It unites all, high and low, in the bonds of equality and brotherhood.

Answered Prayers: The Fruit of the Rosary

I can recall a little chapel where you may often see a royal queen and a lowly peasant addressing the same prayers to the same Mary, Queen of the Rosary. We find instances in history where the Christian soldier, defeated in his struggle for faith and fatherland, has turned the tide of battle by an appeal to Mary of the Rosary. We see the great O'Connell wincing under the fiery eloquence of his opponent, but preparing himself by reciting the Rosary for that grand effort of his which procured hope for the country he loved full well, and freedom for the Church he loved better still. Besides these victories, who will recount its spiritual conquests, the hardened hearts moved to repentance, the despairing souls it has snatched from the edge of hell and returned to God! Ultimately, it

is the badge of the noblest of God's creatures, of the gentle Sisters of Charity on the battlefield and in the hospital, and of the intrepid missionaries in the wilderness.

Editing Notes

All editing was done for the purpose of readability. You are guaranteed that none of the meaning was changed. A good example of the editing was the original translator included very few paragraphs and many run-on sentences. All headlines were created by John Quinn. Important Note: The amount of editing done places this work out of public domain and is copyrighted material. All copyright laws apply.

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The Rosary; Friend or Foe

Brethren, do we appreciate the full value of this devotion? Are we its friends or are we its enemies? We are, you say, its friends, But alas! as many a man will say: "I am a Catholic, but I cannot say I practice my religion." So many of us will have to say: "I approve of the Rosary, but I cannot say I practice it." To each I say equally: "Stuff and nonsense; there is no Catholic but a practical Catholic, and there is no friend of the Rosary but he who practices it often and well." "He that is not with me is against me," is not less true of Christ than it is of the Church and the Rosary.

Woe To Foe; Protestant or Catholic

Your Protestant friend refuses the honor due to the Queen of the Rosary and you resent it, but if you practice not this devotion your action is inconsistent. The Protestant only openly declares the disrespect for Mary which you by your neglect tacitly affirm the same disrespect. Hence since God both hears men's words and reads men's thoughts, you are no better before God than the Protestant. **Nay, you are worse.** For he knowing not the truth lives consistently with his error, but you knowing the truth neglect to conform your life thereto.

Neglect and Saying the Rosary

Again, there are many who do practice this devotion, who really do recite the Rosary every day; but how do they recite it? Ah, with them it is not a unison of mental and oral prayer with them it is all oral all words and words pronounced, alas, not in a human manner, but after the method of a parrot or a speaking machine. Truly, such a practice is but little better than absolute neglect. Nay, I would even venture to say that rather than recite the Rosary thus, it would be better not to attempt to say it at all, for the indifference of her children hurts the tender heart of our Mother less than their positive disrespect.

With Great Devotion Comes Great Grace

But there are others who recite the beads every day and recite them well, and of these I say, may God and His holy Mother bless them, and enable them to persevere and lead others to imitate them. Let this be your devotion in Church and in the home circle always, but especially during

this month of the Rosary. You will find that in your individual souls and in the community at large will be accomplished another triumph of the angels of virtue over the angels of sin and again the heavenly voice will proclaim the kingdom of God reestablished upon earth and the power of His Christ restored.
