



A simple devotion with extraordinary spiritual power

Introduction: The small can be immense

In a time when the extraordinary is sought in the spectacular, the Catholic faith reminds us that the greatest things are often hidden in the smallest ones. Such is the case of a devotional practice as simple as it is powerful: the **“Three Hail Marys” prayed at night**. St. Anthony Mary Claret, a great 19th-century missionary and founder of the Claretian Missionaries, fervently recommended this custom, asserting that it had a **powerful effect against the devil**, as well as offering spiritual protection and growth in grace.

This article is an invitation to rediscover this forgotten jewel of popular spirituality, with deep theological roots and immeasurable usefulness for the Christian life.

I. Who was St. Anthony Mary Claret?

Before diving into the devotion, it’s worth briefly knowing the saint who promoted it. **St. Anthony Mary Claret (1807-1870)** was Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, confessor to Queen Isabella II of Spain, and one of the greatest missionaries of the 19th century. Founder of the **Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**, his life was marked by a burning zeal for souls, love for the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary, and a constant battle against the forces of evil.

Claret didn’t speak from theory when he recommended spiritual practices; he spoke from the experience of a soul profoundly united to God, who lived through real and tangible spiritual combats. He was a mystic, an ascetic, and a man deeply Eucharistic and Marian.

II. Origin of the Devotion of the “Three Hail Marys”

The practice of praying three Hail Marys before going to sleep **did not originate with St. Anthony Mary Claret**, but he **fervently popularized it**, convinced of its effectiveness against demonic attacks. The devotion has much older roots, connected to **St. Mechtilde of Hackeborn**, a 13th-century Benedictine nun. According to her mystical visions, **the Virgin**



Mary promised special protection to those who would pray three Hail Marys every night in honor of the three prerogatives with which God had adorned her:

- 1. The power granted by the Father**
- 2. The wisdom given by the Son**
- 3. The love and intercession received from the Holy Spirit**

St. Alphonsus Liguori also strongly recommended this devotion. But it was Claret who, in the 19th-century context with its spiritual and social dangers, insisted again that this **simple weapon was especially effective against the devil**.

III. The Theological Foundation of the “Three Hail Marys”

The Hail Mary is not a magic formula, but a prayer rich in theological meaning. Each Hail Mary is an act of faith, a recognition of Mary’s unique role in the plan of salvation, and a trusting plea.

1. Praying to the Father through Mary (Power of the Father):

Mary is the beloved Daughter of the Father. Her divine motherhood is the result of the eternal plan of the Father, who prepared her through her Immaculate Conception. Calling upon her is seeking refuge under the authority of the Father.

2. Praying to the Son through Mary (Wisdom of the Son):

She is the Mother of the Incarnate Word. Her “yes” made the Incarnation possible. She fully participated in Christ’s redemptive wisdom. Calling upon her is accessing the wisdom that flows from the Heart of Christ.

3. Praying to the Holy Spirit through Mary (Love of the Spirit):

She is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit overshadowed her, and since then, He dwells in her. Praying to her is opening ourselves to His sanctifying action.

Thus, praying three Hail Marys is **appealing to the Virgin Mary in her three great Trinitarian relationships**, which carries deep spiritual and theological significance.



IV. Why Do They Drive Away Demons?

St. Anthony Mary Claret asserted that this daily practice drove demons away. Why? Not because of superstition, but because of spiritual realism. In his writings, Claret recounts experiences where invoking the name of Mary and praying the Hail Marys caused demons torment and drove them away.

This has a foundation in **Christian anthropology** and the age-old teaching of the Church:

- **The devil hates the Virgin Mary**, because her humility defeated his pride.
- **Each Hail Mary is a proclamation of Christ’s and Mary’s victory.**
- Mary’s humility, celebrated in the Hail Mary, is a sword against Lucifer’s pride.
- **The Hail Mary, as part of the Rosary and Marian prayers, has always been a weapon in spiritual warfare.**

Genesis tells us: *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; she will crush your head”* (Genesis 3:15). This passage, known as the *Protoevangelium*, has been interpreted by Christian tradition as a prophecy of Mary, the new Eve, victorious over evil.

V. Practical Application: How to Pray Them Each Night?

St. Anthony Mary Claret recommended doing this before going to bed, with devotion, humility, and trust. Here’s a simple yet profound spiritual guide:

□ **Nightly Spiritual Guide for the “Three Hail Marys”**

1. **Prepare your soul in silence.** Turn off your phone, take a deep breath. Recognize that the day is ending and entrust your soul to God.
2. **Make the Sign of the Cross** slowly and reverently.
3. **Pray three Hail Marys**, one for each Divine Person:
 - First Hail Mary, in honor of the **Power of the Father** in Mary.
 - Second Hail Mary, in honor of the **Wisdom of the Son** in Mary.
 - Third Hail Mary, in honor of the **Love of the Holy Spirit** in Mary.
4. **Add this short ejaculation after each Hail Mary** (*optional but traditional*): “By your pure and immaculate conception, O Mary, purify my body and sanctify my soul.”
5. **Say a Marian consecration prayer (optional):** “O my Lady, O my Mother, I offer



myself entirely to you...”

6. **End with a short act of trust in God and rest in His providence.**

This brief prayer moment may take less than five minutes, but its spiritual fruits can be eternal.

VI. Relevance in Today’s World

In a world marked by anxiety, spiritual insecurity, and moral confusion, many Christians feel as if they are spiritually disarmed. The devotion of the three Hail Marys is one of those “small” but powerful weapons that can restore **prayer life, confidence in Mary’s intercession**, and the **spiritual protection** that so many souls desperately need.

This practice can be integrated into **family catechesis, children’s formation, youth ministry, religious communities**, and **lay movements**. It is simple, but full of depth and mystical strength.

VII. Testimony of the Saints and the Magisterium

St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote:

“If a person faithfully perseveres in this practice throughout life, they will certainly obtain great graces and final perseverance.”

Pope Leo XIII, so devoted to Mary and a strong promoter of the Rosary, also blessed this practice on several occasions, encouraging the faithful to adopt it.

Conclusion: Mary, Strength of the Humble

Ultimately, what the “Three Hail Marys” teach us is not just a specific devotion, but a way of life: **to entrust each day, each night, to Mary**, the Mother who never sleeps, the Queen



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of Angels, the victor over the devil.

If you are looking for a spiritual practice that is simple yet solid, **start tonight**. Kneel down, pray three Hail Marys with an open heart, and let grace begin to work in your soul.

□ Final Recommendation

Do it for yourself. Do it for your children. Do it for the Church.

Heaven is closer when you call upon the Mother.

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6)

And there is no prayer more humble and powerful than the Hail Mary prayed with love.