

St. Anthony Mary Claret and his Missionary Zeal

Anthony Mary Claret



Pope Francis constantly is challenging a world enveloped in the globalization of indifference that missionary zeal must be enkindled. Jesus reminds us with a heavy heart: “The harvest is rich, but the laborers are few.”

One of the powerful motivational forces that can move us to do great things for the Lord, to work strenuously in the vineyard of the Lord for the purpose of saving souls is to read, meditate and to imitate the zeal of the saints.

Missionary Saints: Get To Know Them

The Church presents a plethora of noble and holy personalities that we call “Saints” who have given their lives to gather in the harvest of souls as missionaries. Let us mention just a few: St. Paul, St. Francis Xavier, St. Peter Claver, St. Peter Chanel, St. Damien of Molokai, St. Frances Cabrini, St. John Neuman, Blessed Francis Seelos, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Francis de Sales, St. Anthony Mary Claret, and St. Therese of Lisieux.

These brilliant stars that shine so brightly in the firmament of heaven (using an image of Hans Von Balthasar) had two things in common: a burning love for God and an insatiable love for what God loves most—the salvation of immortal souls. Indeed the saints understood the teachings of the angelic Doctor, Saint Thomas Aquinas: “One soul is worth more than the whole created universe.” One immortal soul, and that is your soul and mine, was saved by the most Precious Blood that Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ poured out to the last drop as He hung on the cross that first Good Friday.

Indeed if we truly love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, as the Gospel challenges us to do (Lk. 10:27), then we should love what God loves most: the salvation of immortal souls!

We would like to pay tribute to one missionary saint who should be taken as a splendid model for our modern world, whose feast day we celebrate every year on October 24: St. Anthony Mary Claret (1807-1870).

This man accomplished extraordinary miracles of grace because of his great union with Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. His accomplishments should inspire all followers of Christ to move from a slow, mediocre, tepid and lukewarm state to fire for the love of God. Remember the last words Saint Ignatius said to St. Francis Xavier before he embarked on his fervent missionary adventure: GO SET ALL ON FIRE!!!

One of the great hallmarks of the sanctity of this man of God, who was both priest and Bishop, was his tireless zeal for the ministry of the Word of God. May Saint Anthony encourage all deacons, priests, Bishops, as well as the laity to do all they can in their power to teach, preach and spread the Word of God. This great missionary saint was keenly aware of one of the principle reasons for the falling and sinking into sin and the loss of souls was the widespread ignorance especially among so many Catholics.

Today in Europe, USA, and many other so called “Catholic countries” paganism is reining; agnosticism leading to atheism is spreading like wild-fire; even the growth and diffusion of satanic cults and the worship of the devil is becoming more and more prominent. May Saint Anthony Mary Claret and his prayers launch us into a renewed desire to preach, to teach, to catechize, to evangelize—in a word, to be true missionaries. Time is of the essence!

Missionary Preaching

Saint Anthony Claret never wearied as a fervent missionary to preach in season and out of season. He did it all! He taught children catechism. He preached popular missions to the adults, aware of the fact that the first catechists in the family as well as teachers should be the parents! Claret would preach retreats to Religious nuns; how important is the renewal of Religious life in this year dedicated to the Religious Life. He taught priests and eventually became the founder of the Claretians, servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The purpose of his preaching was always the same—to glorify God, the conversion of sinners, the perseverance of the just and the ultimate salvation of their immortal souls.

A Typical Popular Mission: The Means St. Anthony Mary Claret Utilized

Below is a list of means that Saint Anthony Mary Claret would use in his missions to praise God and save souls. Let us pray for a renewed missionary zeal in the Church right now!

PRAYER. Claret, following in the footsteps of the prior missionary saints, relied heavily on the tool of prayer. He would pray for his missions. Furthermore he would try to get as many people to pray for his mission as possible: children, nuns, lay-people, the sick and suffering, all possible categories. The fervent and abundant prayer that preceded his missions would water the apostolic soil for an abundant harvest.

INSTRUCTING CHILDREN. Jesus said: “Let the children come to me for the Kingdom of God is as such as these.” He would teach the little ones about the love of God then he would give them a holy card and the following day the parents would show up at the mission. Like Claret, today more than ever we must teach and catechize the children while they are young; if not the world, the media and modern education will poison their little minds.

ADULT INSTRUCTION. Claret insisted on teaching the adults. They are the primary teachers of their children. However, nobody can give what he does not have. Could it be that since the second Vatican Council that one of the greatest failures of the Church has been in a failure to educate the adults and parents in their catholic faith? Professionals must undergo constant ongoing formation; call it **PERMANENT FORMATION.** Should not adult Catholics pursue a constant ongoing formation??? If you like should we not be intent upon forming “Professional Catholics” in the faith? As Doctors and Lawyers and Teachers must know their trade, Catholics should know and love Jesus and be able to bring Him to others, starting in their own families

SERMONS. St. Anthony was a superb preacher of the word of God. Let us pray for priests that they make a constant effort to grow in their desire and capacity to preach the word of God to the hungry people. Jesus said: “Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.”(Mt. 4:4) Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen offers one of the keys to success for priests to accomplish powerful and efficacious preaching—the **HOUR OF POWER.** May priests and Bishops accept the challenge of Sheen and undertake to make a daily Holy Hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Fire will issue forth from the heart and lips of such a priest!!!

THE IGNATIAN EXERCISES. Having spent some time in formation with the Jesuits, Saint Anthony Mary Claret was totally convinced of the power and efficacy of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola to help many to order the disordered in their lives, to learn the art of meditation and contemplation and to purify their conscience by means of a well-prepared and profound Sacramental Confession.

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS. Part and parcel of the preaching and missions of Claret was the distribution of books as well as pamphlets. Before arriving at the place of mission Saint Anthony would study the terrain to see what was most needed spiritually and morally, then he would distribute especially short pamphlets to educate and meet the need! How many souls have been converted through the reading of good literature? Saint Ignatius of Loyola is just one of many! He read the lives of the saints and felt motivated to imitate their holy lives.

EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS. Another means to teach, catechize and evangelize for Saint Anthony Mary Claret was the simple device of talking individually to anybody that God put in his path about God and the spiritual life. Every soul he saw as precious in God’s eyes and he was ready and willing to do all to bring every individual soul back to God by talking about God and the spiritual life. Look at your life now and the many contacts that you have. Most likely there are people that you meet on a daily basis that are confused, muddled, depressed and ignorant of all that refers to God and the salvation of their souls. Maybe, in imitation of Saint Anthony Mary Claret, you are the one to lead this person to the Light, and that light is Jesus Christ the Light of the world!!!

Let us conclude with an excerpt, taken from the Liturgy of the Hours (October 24th) from a preaching

of the great Saint Anthony Mary Claret. Hopefully these words will enkindle in your heart an ardent desire to make God known and loved and an ardent desire to save immoral souls:

“For myself, I say this to you: The man who burns with the fire of divine love is a son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and wherever he goes, he enkindles that flame; he desires and works with all his strength to inflame all men with the fire of God’s love. Nothing deters him: he rejoices in poverty, he labors strenuously; he welcomes hardships; he laughs off false accusations; he rejoices in anguish. He thinks only of how he might follow Jesus Christ and imitate him by his prayers, his labors, his sufferings, and by caring always and only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.”

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