

Salvation and the Three Hail Mary's

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The Message of Our Lady of Fatima has been ignored by many over the last few decades. Many have despised Our Lady's words, many have mocked Her and ignored Her Message, many have fought energetically against Her and many have dismissed these apparitions as nothing more than the pious imagination of three superstitious children.

You Have a Choice

You too, dear faithful, have this choice today:

You can either take up the Message of Fatima and make known Our Lady's requests or you are free to go home, ignoring Her requests as so many before you have done.

But whatever you do, remember it will have grave consequences. Keep in mind the reason why Our Lady came to Fatima. Our Lady does not appear for light reasons. She didn't appear in

Fatima because She was feeling bored and felt the need to chat with a few children. No, She came for a reason which was much more serious than that; She came for a reason that affects each and every one of you sitting here today. She came because many sinners go to hell. She came to warn you that hell exists, and that you could go there too.

It was Our Lady Herself who gave the three children the Fatima prayer which we recite after every decade of the Rosary.

"O My Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell; lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need."

Hell is a Reality

"Save us from the fires of hell."

We say these words every day after every decade of the Rosary. Think about it often, why do we say these words?

Hell, my dear friends, is

a reality. It is as real as the chair you are sitting on. It is as real as the air you breathe. You can't see the air that you breathe, you can't touch it ... but it exists. It is a truth of the Catholic Faith, a dogma that *must* be believed: One day — we know not when, we know not how — we will all die and then we will be judged. And then Heaven or hell forever.

We've all heard the excuses at one time or another:

- Some will say that they "believe" that hell is just some medieval superstition; we know better now, we are more intelligent now.
- Others say that they "believe" hell exists, but it's empty; and if it's not empty, only the devil is there.
- God is mercy and love itself — I don't "believe" He could condemn anyone to hell.
- I believe that everyone is going to Heaven.
- I won't go to hell because *I don't believe in hell.*

Wake Up!

Who cares what you believe? What you believe does not make one tiny difference to the fact that hell exists and that it is eternal. What you

believe does not change reality. What you believe won't change anything. It won't make hell disappear like a bad dream. If what you believe does not conform with reality, then what you believe is false; it is erroneous. It does not matter whether you don't believe in hell. Hell *believes in you!*

You are free to *believe* that your neighbor is a coconut tree, but that does not change the fact that he is human. You are free to *believe* that this pulpit is a coke machine but the reality is that it's made of wood. You may choose to believe that hell is a fairytale and that no one goes there, but the truth is that hell is real; the existence of hell is a truth *de fide*. It is of our holy Faith itself. Many sinners go there and both you and I can go there. The dogma that hell exists is not some opinion that we are free to take up or not. No, it is a dogma of the Catholic Faith. It is a dogma that must be believed. If we don't believe it we become heretics. We are not Catholics anymore.

Hell exists, whether we believe in it or not. Nothing is more important, then, than

saving our souls.

How Do We Save Our Souls Today?

How, then, do we go about working out our salvation? How do we accomplish this most important business of saving our souls? Our Lady at Fatima urges Her faithful children to take up the powerful weapons She has given us — the Rosary and the Scapular. The importance of praying the Rosary and wearing the Scapular cannot be stressed enough and one would indeed be neglecting the salvation of his soul if he neglected these devotions.

St. Alphonsus Shows Us the Way

Our holy father, Saint Alphonsus, was one of the greatest Marian Saints of all time. As a Doctor of the Church, he is called by several titles: He is called the most zealous Doctor because his zeal for the salvation of souls was unmatched; he is called the most useful Doctor because everything he wrote was most useful for the fostering of the Christian life and the salvation of souls. But there is another title that the

Church gives St. Alphonsus: He is called the Doctor of Prayer. He is called the Doctor of Prayer because he knew how to pray; he knew how to pray to save his soul, and he knew how to teach others to pray and save their souls.

If we look at St. Alphonsus' titles we can see that this is the man who the Church recognizes as the authority on prayer and the salvation of souls. If you want to know how to pray to save your soul then listen to what Saint Alphonsus had to say:

“He who prays is certain to be saved.

“He who doesn't pray is certain to be damned.”

Everyone who is in Heaven is there because they prayed and everyone who is in hell is there because they did not pray.

All his works, all his writings, all his teaching can be summed up in four points:

- 1: He who prays will be saved, he who doesn't pray will be damned.
- 2: Every grace comes to us from the hand of God, but none of them reach us except through the hands of Mary.
3. True devotion to Mary is an

absolutely necessary condition and efficacious means to obtain the graces we need; and

4: A true child of Mary can never be lost.

How did St. Alphonsus pray to save his soul? What devotion did he have to Our Lady? Here's what he did:

- He made a vow to pray 15 decades of the Rosary every day.
- He fasted on bread and water every Saturday in Her honor.
- He prayed the chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady every day in honor of Her sorrows.
- He preached on Her glories every Saturday.
- He wrote a book on Her 'Glories' to defend Her titles against Her attackers.
- He wrote all his 132 works with Her picture at his side guiding him.
- He would never preach without Her picture visible to the audience.
- He said a Hail Mary before every new action he undertook.
- He said a Hail Mary every time the clock struck the

quarter hour.

- He went to Confession every Saturday in Her honor.

We could go on and on about Saint Alphonsus' prayer and fasting and mortification, but is this what St. Alphonsus recommended for us in order to be saved? No!

St. Alphonsus Recommends the Three Hail Mary's

What did he recommend as the best means to save our souls and be devoted to Our Lady? Did he recommend that we fast on bread and water? Sleep on a bed of nails? Scourge ourselves to blood? No.

He recommended a devotion to Mary that was small but powerful, the devotion of the Three Hail Mary's.

What does this devotion consist of? It consists of saying Three Hail Mary's as soon as we get up. The first thing that we do on rising from our bed, the first action of the day, and Three Hail Mary's just before we go to bed. The last thing we do before we sleep. And in between each Hail Mary we add the invocation:

**"By Thy Immaculate
Conception, O Mary, make**

my body pure and my soul holy. My Mother, preserve me this day/night from mortal sin."

By the recitation of the Three Hail Mary's, we are promised three signal graces that are fundamental to the practice of the spiritual life. They are:

- The happiness of possessing sanctifying grace or of recovering it,
- The victory over the vice of impurity, and
- Final perseverance.

What exactly do we mean by these graces? I'd like to explain them in brief:

I. The happiness of possessing sanctifying grace or soon recovering it

You don't need to be a serial killer or a rapist to go to hell. All it takes is one single unconfessed mortal sin. We, therefore, ought to take care that we are always in the state of grace.

St. Alphonsus recommends the devotion of the Three Hail Mary's as the best means of remaining in the state of Sanctifying Grace. One may ask, what authority does St. Alphonsus have to say all this? Who, exactly, was St. Alphonsus? St. Alphonsus

is the patron saint of Moral Theologians and Confessors. The Sacred Penitentiary has already declared that in the field of Moral Theology no one has greater authority than St. Alphonsus.

St. Alphonsus has the same authority in Moral Theology that St. Thomas Aquinas has in Dogmatic Theology. In his book *Homo Apostolicus* for confessors, he says:

"One must never fail to suggest to all penitents, be they devout, or sinners, the devotion to the Blessed Virgin, by engaging them particularly to recommend themselves morning and night by the recitation of the Three Hail Mary's, so as to be preserved from mortal sin. It is difficult for a soul to persevere in the grace of God and save himself, without having a special devotion to the Mother of God."

Not only does the devotion of the Three Hail Mary's preserve us from mortal sin, it also helps us to recover the state of Sanctifying Grace if we are living in mortal sin. Do you know anyone who is leading a sinful life? Some friend or relative? Do you

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know of some penitent who is struggling with sin? Then recommend to him the Three Hail Mary's morning and night. Only two things can happen. Either he will give up the Three Hail Mary's or he will give up sin.

Nothing is more important then than to say it every day without fail, with perseverance, no matter what. If we are already half asleep in bed and remember that we haven't said the Three Hail Mary's, make the sacrifice, get out of bed, get on your knees and say the Three Hail Mary's. If one is physically capable of doing so, one must pray this kneeling down. It's not much of a prayer if you say it laying in your bed, warm and cosy under your bed covers. Make the effort to get out of bed and kneel down.

It's a very small penance in comparison to the great graces promised. In our monastery all the religious make it a point to say the Three Hail Mary's lying prostrate on the floor.

Now you may ask, does this really work? Do sinners really give up sin just by say-

ing Three Hail Mary's morning and night? Well, I haven't been a religious for very long but I've already come across many people, not only in the monastery but also in the world, who have told me that if it wasn't for the Three Hail Mary's, they would never be able to give up sin. They had tried everything else before but nothing worked.

I can honestly say that it has played a huge role in my conversion too. But it doesn't matter what I say; listen to what St. Alphonsus, the Patron Saint of Moral Theologians and Confessors, says:

"The help of Mary is necessary for the conservation of grace and necessary for conversion."

This help is assured, even to sinners, provided that there is good will and recourse to Mary, the Mother of God! The great Jesuit Saint, St. John Berchmans, on his deathbed, when asked what devotion to Mary was necessary for salvation said:

"To be pleasing to Mary, the smallest thing suffices, as long as one is faithful to it."

The small devotion of the Three Hail Mary's is very pleasing to Mary and She will

obtain for us the graces promised, provided we are faithful in reciting it, morning and night, day after day, week after week, year after year, until we die.

II. Victory over the vice of impurity

The second grace promised us by the recitation of the Three Hail Mary's is victory over the vice of impurity, i.e. victory over the sins that are against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. We are told that 99% of those that are condemned to hell are condemned because of sins of impurity. Our Lady, Herself, confirmed this at Fatima when She said that more souls go to hell because of sins of the flesh than for any other reason. The world today is a sewer of immorality and impurity.

Everywhere we go, everywhere we look, we are confronted with impurity probably not seen since the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. What chance have young people today with so much pornography, so many bad examples of bad marriages, concubinage etc. seen all over the television, the internet and the very streets we live on.

If it wasn't for this sin of

impurity, 99% of the souls in hell wouldn't be there. St. Alphonsus promises you that you can overcome all temptations to this vice by the practice of the Three Hail Mary's. Make this devotion known among your parishioners, among the youth, for without this powerful devotion to Our Lady they will be fighting a losing battle against the vice of impurity.

Listen to what St. Alphonsus says in one of his books addressed to priests:

"The means par excellence of keeping chastity is devotion to Mary; the best way of captivating the favor of Mary is to honor Her purity; the most efficacious means of honoring Her purity is to practice the devotion of the Three Hail Mary's."

This devotion is not only useful to preserve chastity and avoid temptations against purity but it is also the best means to bring about a lasting and sincere conversion, even when we are talking about sinners who are addicted to this vice and those who are completely powerless to overcome its attractions.

Listen to what he says again:

“If there be one among you who finds himself plunged into the mire of impurity, I do not want to discourage him; but I say to him: Make haste to get yourself out of this infernal rotting flesh. Remove the occasion and then recommend yourself to Mary, Mother of purity. Each day pray to Her that She deliver you from this vice; and in the morning upon your rising from sleep and in the evening before going to bed, never ever miss saying the Three Hail Mary’s in honor of Her purity.”

To Confessors he says:

“Upon him who has contracted the habit of the impure vice, you must impose the practice of never omitting to recite morning and evening three times the Angelic Salutation in honor of the purity of the Blessed Virgin, reaffirming his intention, before Her image, of never sinning again and asking this good Mother for the grace of perseverance.”

As I said earlier, I haven’t been wearing this habit for very long but I have still seen enough examples to know that the Three Hail Mary’s is the greatest weapon we have when it comes to fighting temptations to impurity. Just

a little over a month ago, a young man I knew in Sydney came up to me and told me that he was able to live a chaste life for the last two years because of the practice of the Three Hail Mary’s.

Let me say with Saint Alphonsus yet again: “Devotion to Mary is a necessary means to overcoming impurity.”

The most efficacious form of this devotion to the Mother of God is the recitation morning and night of the Three Hail Mary’s.

III. The Grace of Final Perseverance

This is the third and most important of the graces that we receive by the recitation of the Three Hail Mary’s. The whole question of our salvation, whether we go to Heaven or hell, depends on the moment of death. If we die in a state of grace we are saved but if we die in a state of mortal sin, we are lost forever. Everything then, depends on the grace of final perseverance.

Our Lord, Himself, says in the Gospel of Matthew, “He that shall persevere to the end shall be saved.” St. Bonaventure says that the crown in Heaven is only giv-

en to those who persevere. St. Jerome says that many begin well but few persevere. Many are called but few are chosen. Saul, Judas, Tertullian, etc. ... all started well but they didn't persevere.

The great St. Bernard warns us: To the one who begins, a reward is only promised; it is only actually given to those who persevere. It is not enough to run for the prize says St. Alphonsus, you need to run until you win it.

If any one of you thinks he is safe and secure and that his place in Heaven is assured, call to mind the sad example of Judas. He was an Apostle, one of the 12 handpicked and chosen by Our Lord; he witnessed all Jesus' miracles — and yet he fell. Read the lives of the early desert Fathers in Egypt and Syria. Some of them barely slept two hours a day. They prayed constantly, they ate scarcely a handful of boiled vegetables every day, and they did more penance in one month than all of us here will do in a lifetime. They even worked miracles! And yet even some of them fell. They lost their place in Heaven forever. How then do we persevere? How do we get

the grace of final perseverance?

Saint Alphonsus gives this warning to everyone, no matter whether he is the Pope, himself, or a simple layman. He says:

"In order to obtain the grace of final perseverance, a particular devotion to Mary is important, to Her who is called the Mother of Perseverance. He who does not have this special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, will persevere with difficulty; because as St. Bernard assures us, all God's graces, especially the grace of perseverance, which is the greatest of all graces, comes to us through Mary.

"Enfant de Marie, enfant de Paradis, Child of Mary, child of Heaven. He who has a true devotion to Mary will be helped by Mary at the hour of death; he who is helped by Mary at this decisive hour will make a holy death and will be saved for all eternity."

Our Lady does not ask for much, but She does ask for good will and constancy. We must be constant in our devotion to the Three Hail Mary's. We must have a good will, i.e., the intention to give up sin.

This devotion is so small

and so easy that it can be practiced by everybody. Even a small child can be taught to say it. And nobody can say they don't have the time to pray the Three Hail Mary's. No, time is not an excuse. No matter how busy we are. It takes less than two minutes to pray the Three Hail Mary's.

Where Did the Three Hail Mary's Come From?

One may ask, did St. Alphonsus invent this devotion? Where did he get these promises from? Did he make them up? The answer is, No! St. Alphonsus did not invent the devotion of the Three Hail Mary's. The Three Hail Mary's, along with its promises, were first given to St. Mechtilde and also later on to St. Gertrude the Great.

It was also preached and practiced by innumerable saints. Notable amongst these are St. Leonard of Port Maurice and the great Saint Anthony of Padua, who preached this devotion with great zeal and was instrumental in making it known in his time. God has shown how pleased He was with this. Many centuries later, the body of St. Anthony of Padua has turned to dust, but

his tongue and vocal cords which preached the Three Hail Mary's are incorrupt. To this day, his tongue remains incorrupt, untouched by the passage of time. This, again, is God's seal of approval on the Three Hail Mary's. St. John Bosco was another one who recommended the practice of the Three Hail Mary's to his children, the Salesians.

The Church Approved Devotion to the Three Hail Mary's

Many Popes — for example, Leo XIII and Benedict XV — have been champions of this devotion, and especially the greatest Pope of the 20th Century, the last Pope Saint in 500 years, St. Pius X, who made himself the faithful apostle of the devotion of the Three Hail Mary's. Not only did he proclaim his personal love for this devotion but he also enriched it with precious indulgences and recommended it to bishops and priests, asking for its diffusion among the faithful.

Three Hail Mary's: the Mustard Seed of Devotion

Now there are two errors that we can have about this devotion: either we can say it

is too little, or too much.

In our pride, we may look at it as something so small and insignificant that it is not worthy of our time and effort. After all, we do say so many other prayers. Keep in mind that there have been many others who have said a lot more prayers than you, have done more penance than you, and have still not persevered to the end. Keep in mind that this devotion has been recommended, not only by the Patron Saint of Moral Theologians and Confessors, but also the Doctor of Prayer himself, St. Alphonsus, and also by numerous Popes. Yes, this devotion may seem small, but it is small like the mustard seed mentioned by Our Lord in the Gospels. If we say the Three Hail Mary's faithfully, not only will it strengthen and increase our devotion to the Mother of God, but it will also bring forth the greatest fruit of all: The grace of final perseverance and eternal life. Truly, then, can the Three Hail Mary's be called the mustard seed of devotion to Our Lady and of salvation.

It is also possible for some of us to fall into the opposite error and think that it is

too much of an effort to say the Three Hail Mary's. I, myself, have heard this from a few friends of mine who live caught up in a life of sin. The answer to that is simple. If you can't do something so small as saying the Three Hail Mary's, then, frankly, you don't deserve Heaven.

Hell Exists

Let me sum up in short. Hell exists, it is a truth of our Catholic Faith. It exists whether we choose to believe in it or not.

Nothing, then, is more important than our eternal salvation. "He who prays," says St. Alphonsus, "will be saved; he who does not pray will be damned."

All Graces from God Come Through Mary

All graces come to us from God, but through the hands of Mary. It is, therefore, necessary to have a devotion to Mary. The devotion of the Three Hail Mary's, if done with good will and with constancy, obtains for us the following graces:

- 1: The conservation or recovery of sanctifying grace,
- 2: Victory over the vice of im-

purity,

3: The grace of final perseverance.

Inasmuch as it is in your power, make this devotion known — from the pulpit, in your newsletters, in the confessional — and you will see the fruits of it yourself. You won't need me to convince you; you will see the fruits of it yourself, in your own experiences.

Listen to this true story. It was given to one of our priests:

"I am seventy-five years old, Father, I have had many pains during my life; I have been exposed to many dangers where others have been shipwrecked. But in my old age I have the sweet confidence of never having committed a single mortal sin since my First Communion. On that unforgettable day never forgotten, my mother held me tight to her bosom for a long while then asked me to promise her, my earthly mother, and to Mary, my heavenly Mother, to faithfully say every day, Three Hail Mary's, morning

and night. I made the promise, and by God's grace I was faithful to my promise. The memory of my mother, the thought of my First Communion, the protection of Mary; to these I attribute the great happiness that I have just told you."

Go to Our Lady

Now, I know it is very easy for what I have said to go into one ear and come out the other. It is very easy to start saying the Three Hail Mary's today but to give it up two days later. That won't do. Therefore, now, I am not telling you, I am not asking you, but I am begging you, each and every one of you here, not for my sake, but for the sake of your eternal salvation; go to Our Lady here. She is offering you a great grace.

Don't reject Her.

Go to Her, and promise Her that you will recite the Three Hail Mary's every day, morning and night, without fail, for the rest of your life. If you promise Her this, She promises you Heaven. **Don't reject Her.** ☩

Expressions of Gratitude

**"Talks have inspired me and have helped me to open my mind and heart to the urgent invitation Messages of Our Lady of Fatima Movement for the Consecration of Russia. The speakers are all genuine apostles of God and Mother Mary."
... Father Gabriel**