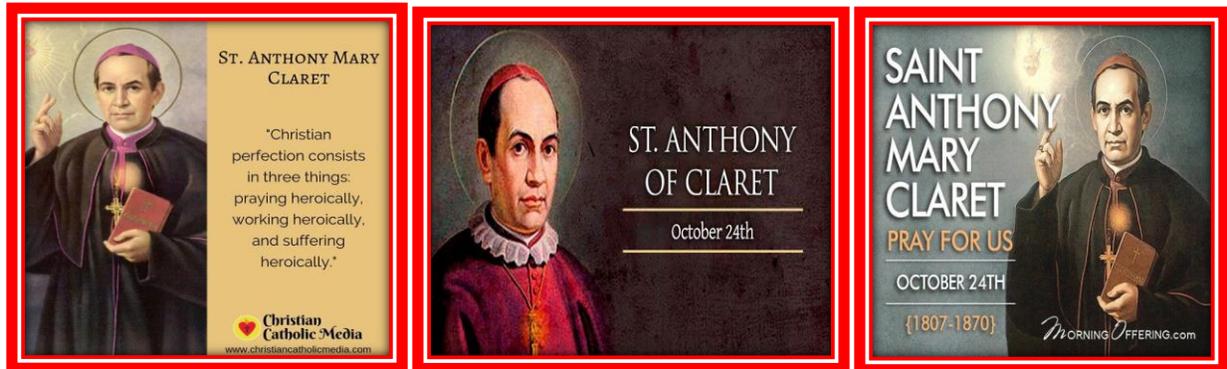


## Daily Saints - 24 October

### Feast of Saint Anthony Mary Claret



**Born:** December 23, 1807, Sallent, Barcelona, Spain, **Died:** October 24, 1870 (aged 62), Fontfroide, Narbonne, France **Venerated in** Roman Catholic Church, **Beatified:** February 25, 1934, Rome by Pope Pius XI, **Canonized:** May 7, 1950, Rome by Pope Pius XII **Major shrine:** Vic, Barcelona, Spain **Feast:** October 24, October 23 (local calendars and among Traditional Roman Catholics), **Attributes:** Bishop's robe, crozier, an open book, catechism, 2 students beside him at his side and having his bent arm pointing to the sky.

**He is the patron saint of Textile merchants, weavers, savings (taught the poor the importance of savings), Catholic press.**

Anthony Mary Claret was born in Catalonia, the north-eastern corner of Spain, in a town called Sallent on 23 December 1807. He was the fifth son of Juan Claret and Josefa Clará's eleven children. His father owned a small textile factory but was not rich. Anthony grew up in a Christian environment and at a very early age had a strong sense of the eternal life that Christ wanted all men and women to enjoy. He wanted to spare sinners' eternal unhappiness and felt moved to work for their salvation. When he was about eleven years old, a bishop visited his school and asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. Without hesitation, he responded: "A priest."

As soon as Anthony was old enough, he began working as an apprentice weaver. When he turned 17, his father sent him to Barcelona to study the latest techniques in textile manufacturing and to work in the large textile mills. He did so well in the textile design school that he began receiving offers from large textile companies. Even though he had the talent to succeed, he turned down the offers and returned home after experiencing the emptiness of worldly achievements.

The words of the Gospel kept resounding in his heart: "what good is it for man to win the world if he loses his soul?" He began to study Latin to prepare to enter the Seminary. He wanted to be a Carthusian Monk. His father was ready to accept the will of God but preferred to see him become a diocesan priest.

Anthony decided to enter the local diocesan seminary in the city of Vic. He was 21 years old. After a year of studies, he decided to pursue his monastic vocation and left for a nearby monastery. On the way there, he was caught in a big storm. He realized that his health was not the best and withdrew from his decision to go to the monastery. He was ordained a priest at 27 years of age and was assigned to his hometown parish. The town soon became too small for his missionary zeal and the political situation — hostile to the Church— limited his apostolic activity. He decided to go to Rome to offer himself to serve in foreign missions. Things did not work out as expected and he decided to join the Jesuits to pursue his missionary dream.

While in the Jesuit Novitiate, he developed a strange illness, which led his superiors to think that God might have other plans for him. Once again, he had to return home to keep searching for God's will in his life.

Back in a parish of Catalonia, Claret began preaching popular missions all over. He traveled on foot, attracting large crowds with his sermons. Some days he preached up to seven sermons in a day and spent 10 hours listening to confessions. He dedicated to Mary all his apostolic efforts. He felt forged as an apostle and sent to preach by Mary. Anthony spent 10 years giving popular missions and retreats, always placing great emphasis on the Eucharist and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It was said that his rosary was never out of his hand.

His popularity spread- people sought him for spiritual and physical help. By the end of 1842, the Pope gave him the title of "apostolic missionary." Aware of the power of the press, in 1847, he organized with other priests a Religious Press. Claret began writing books and pamphlets, making the message of God accessible to all social groups. The increasing political restlessness in Spain continued to endanger his life and curtail his apostolic activities. So, he accepted an offer to preach in the Canary Islands, where he spent 14 months. In spite of his great success there too, he decided to return to Spain to carry out one of his dreams: the organization of an order of missionaries to share in his work.

On July 16, 1849, he gathered a group of priests who shared his dream. This is the beginning of the 'Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary', today also known as 'Claretian Fathers and Brothers'. Days later, he received a new assignment: he was named Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba. He was forced to leave the newly founded community to respond to the call of God in the New World.

After two months of travel, he reached the Island of Cuba and began his episcopal ministry by dedicating it to Mary. He visited the church where the image of Our Lady of Charity, patroness of Cuba was venerated. Soon he realized the urgent need for human and Christian formation, especially among the poor.

He called Antonia Paris to begin there the religious community they had agreed to found back in Spain. He was concerned for all aspects of human development and applied his great creativity to improve the conditions of the people under his pastoral care. Among his great initiatives were: trade or vocational schools for disadvantaged children and credit unions for the use of the poor. He wrote books about rural spirituality and agricultural methods, which he himself tested first. He visited jails and hospitals, defended the oppressed, and denounced racism. The expected reaction came soon. He began to experience persecution and finally when preaching in the city of Holguín, a man stabbed him on the cheek in an attempt to kill him. For Claret, this was a great cause of joy. Anthony succeeded in getting the would-be assassin's death sentence commuted to a prison term.

During his 6 years in Cuba, he visited the extensive Archdiocese three times...town by town. In the first years, records show, he confirmed 100,000 people and performed 9,000 sacramental marriages.

Claret was called back to Spain in 1857 to serve as confessor to the Queen of Spain, Isabella II. He had a natural dislike for aristocratic life. He loved poverty and the simplest lifestyle. He accepted in obedience but requested to be allowed to continue some missionary work. Whenever he had to travel with the Queen, he used the opportunity to preach in different towns throughout Spain. In a time where the Queens and Kings chose the bishops for vacant dioceses, Claret played an important role in the selection of holy and dedicated bishops for Spain and its colonies.

The eleven years he spent as confessor to the Queen of Spain was particularly painful, because the enemies of the Church directed toward him all kinds of slanders and personal ridicule. In 1868 a new revolution dethroned the Queen and sent her with her family into exile. Claret's life was also in danger, so he accompanied her to France. This gave him the opportunity to preach the Gospel in Paris. He stayed with them for a while, then went to Rome where he was received by Pope Pius IX in a private audience. On December 8, 1869, seven hundred bishops from all over the world gathered in Rome for the First Vatican Council. Claret was one of the Council Fathers. His presence became noticeable when the subject of papal infallibility was discussed, which Claret defended vehemently. This teaching became a dogma of faith for all Catholics at this Council.

The Italian revolution interrupted the process of the Council, which was never concluded. Claret's health deteriorated, so he returned to France accompanied by the Superior General of the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, his congregation. In France, Claret joined his missionaries who were also in exile. Soon he found out, that there was a warrant for his arrest. He decided to go into hiding in a Cistercian Monastery in the French southern town of Fontfroide. There he died on 24 October 1870 at the age of 62. As his last request, he dictated to his missionaries the words that are to appear on his tombstone: "I have loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore, I die in exile."

## Quotes of Saint Anthony Mary Claret

- "Love is the most necessary of all virtues. Love in the person who preaches the word of God is like fire in a musket. If a person were to throw a bullet with his hands, he would hardly make a dent in anything; but if the person takes the same bullet and ignites some gunpowder behind it, it can kill. It is much the same as the word of God. If it is spoken by someone who is filled with the fire of charity- the fire of the love of God and neighbor- it will work wonders."
- "Christian perfection consists in three things: praying heroically, working heroically, and suffering heroically."
- "An apostolic missionary must have both heart and tongue ablaze with charity."
- "The rosary should be said daily...We should meditate on the mysteries, applying them to the circumstances of our own lives."
- "Woe to me if I do not preach and warn them, for I would be held responsible for their condemnation."
- "The Christian who desires to follow Jesus carrying his cross must bear in mind that the name "Christian" means "learner or imitator of Christ" and that if he wishes to bear that noble title worthily he must above all do as Christ charges us in the Gospel: We must oppose or deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow him."
- "Although the sinner does not believe in Hell, he shall nevertheless go there if he has the misfortune to die in mortal sin."
- "I keep in mind the teaching laid down by St. John of the Cross which states: "If any one affirms that one can reach perfection without practicing exterior mortification, do not believe him; and even though he confirm this assertion by working miracles, know that his contentions are nothing but illusions."
- "As for me, I look to St. Paul for my example, for he mortified himself, and said publicly: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others I myself may become a castaway." All the saints until now have done in like manner. Venerable Rodriguez says that the Blessed Virgin said to St. Elizabeth of Hungary, that no spiritual grace comes to the soul, commonly speaking, except by way of prayer and bodily afflictions. There is an old principle which goes: "Woe to those who are enemies of mortification and of the cross of Christ!"
- "The faith I have when I am in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament is so strong that I find it impossible to express what I feel... When the time comes to leave I must force myself to overcome the inclination to prolong my stay with Jesus."
- "Books are the food of the soul. Good and wholesome food given to a hungry body will nourish it, but if the food is poisonous, it will be injurious to the system. The same happens with reading. If people read good and instructive books at regular and proper times, it will strengthen and nourish them greatly."
- "I live, but my life is that of Christ's. And in possessing me, my poor Lord possesses nothing. And I, in possessing Him, possess everything."