

Ignatian Rosary

A Jesuit Way to Pray
a Dominican Devotion

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo, OP



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About the Author

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo, OP, a published author, is at the Center for Theology, Religious Studies and Ethics at the Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomás in Manila, where he is a faculty member at the Institute of Religion, the academic collaborations officer of the ecclesiastical faculties, and a research associate at the Center for Theology, Religious Studies and Ethics at the Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomás in Manila. He is finishing his doctoral studies in theology at the university. His master's degree is in theological studies and his bachelor's degree is in philosophy.

*To Dominic and Ignatius as we
celebrate 2021–22, a Jubilee both
Dominican and Ignatian: the 500th
anniversary of Ignatius' conversion, the
400th anniversary of his canonization,
and the 800th year of the birth of
Dominic into life eternal.*

Introduction

The title of this pamphlet may raise questions, like, “What is an Ignatian-style rosary?” And how can “a Jesuit way to pray” be applied to “a Dominican devotion”? Traditionally, a rivalry exists between the Jesuits and the Dominicans, not only in jokes and other friendly ways but in history. Having the Church’s top theologians among the ranks of both orders has led to frequently unavoidable debates and disagreements. Also, as religious orders known for providing quality education, their universities and schools have always vied for supremacy in prestige and performance. Despite this reality, these two great traditions need not always be in conflict.

After all, did not Ignatius' conversion begin with a desire to emulate Francis and Dominic? The content found within these pages is an effort to fuse the richness of two great spiritual traditions. It seeks to apply Ignatian principles and techniques—especially imaginative contemplation—to the rosary, a Dominican prayer that is both familiar and dear to many Catholics.

And how providential to publish this pamphlet in 2021, a time when both orders are celebrating important Jubilees, plus the miraculous Christian victory that took place 450 years ago, all of which I noted on the page of acknowledgments.

To Ignatius, prayer is a form of exercise, no different from physical exercise. The more regularly we do it, the better we become at doing it, and the more benefit we gain. He titled his masterpiece *The Spiritual Exercises* so it would be seen as a guide for those who want to become closer to God. Unfortunately, not all people have the time, money, or opportunity to do the full Spiritual Exercises that ideally last for about thirty days, as Ignatius designed it. Seldom, too, are people able to go on retreats of five or eight days. However, most of us—per-

haps with some extra effort—would be able to set aside thirty minutes to an hour of quality time each day to pray. Combining the Ignatian method of contemplation with the daily praying of the rosary can thus be a way of doing the retreat in daily life, making it more accessible to the lay faithful.

The rosary once earned the moniker “the ordinary person’s breviary.” Perhaps with the help of this booklet, the holy rosary also could become known as “the ordinary person’s retreat.”

Ignatian Contemplation

Contemplation is a word used infrequently in daily conversation. The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers a wide range of definitions, from “look at thoughtfully for a long time” to “think about deeply and at length.” Yet the dictionary fails to capture what contemplation means in the spiritual sense. Moreover, the word is often confined to the realm of mysticism, an obscure field most often associated with the saints and spiritual elite and into which most of us mere mortals would not dare dabble. Even among religious people, it can carry different nuances. For instance, a Carmelite or Jesuit will not mean exactly the same thing when using the word. For clarity, we can apply the definition Ignatius gives to the word *contemplation* in *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (1522–24):

[To take] the true groundwork of the narrative, and [through] discussing and considering for himself, find something which makes the events a little clearer or brings

them a little more home to him—whether this comes through his own reasoning or because his intellect is enlightened by the Divine power—he will get more spiritual relish and fruit than if the one who is giving the Exercises had much explained and amplified the meaning of the events. For it is not knowing much, but realizing and relishing things interiorly, that contents and satisfies the soul.

In other words, Ignatian contemplation involves entering the biblical narrative and exploring its depths using one's mind with the help of God's grace. For example, while dealing with episodes in the life of Christ, one does not just read and ponder an explanation of an episode of Christ from a third party, but one experiences it personally by employing the creativity of imagination, thus making it clearer to the mind and closer to the heart.

As with any exercise, this activity takes some skill, which is learned and developed by frequent repetition. At first, one may have difficulty imagining the story. That is where aids and sugges-

tions, such as those provided in this booklet, can be helpful. Over time and with enough patience, the “black-and-white photos” of stories and prayers will start to come alive with color, sounds, smell, or even sensation. One slowly finds oneself not just watching but engaging in scenes and taking part in them—not as a spectator but as a participant.

Brief points for consideration are provided to help the reader enter more fully into each mystery and follow as closely as possible the points that Ignatius himself provides in *The Spiritual Exercises*. These should be treated as pointers rather than prescriptions. While it is good for you to stay close to the points, it is unnecessary to be limited or confined by them. Also, you need not cover all the points for each mystery. Choosing one or two points you feel drawn to is sufficient. In matters of prayer, follow the lead of the good spirit who may wish you to contemplate some other aspect of the mystery. Be open.

The objective to know and understand can be ensured efficiently through study and reflection. The ultimate goal is to feel and savor, which

is what Ignatius means by “not knowing much, but realizing and relishing things interiorly.” He does not mean to forsake knowledge and understanding, both of which are important in our relationship with God—for “it is by knowing that comes loving,” as St. Thomas Aquinas says.

Rather, St. Ignatius invites us to develop familiarity with God on an equally important and complementary level—that of the heart. The phrase just quoted has been condensed into an idiom much loved in Ignatian circles: *non multa sed multum* (“many but not much”). Simply, it means that the quantity of knowledge or insight we have about God is not as important as the depth of closeness we attain with him.