

## **Prayer of the Month • May 2011**

Father, give me humility, meekness, chastity, patience, and charity.

Father, teach me goodness, knowledge, and discipline.

Father, give me your love together with your grace and I will be rich enough.

My God, my Jesus, and my all!

St Anthony Mary Claret, 1807–70

If I had the opportunity to ask for three wishes, like Aladdin, I don't know if I would have the courage to ask for these. However, what a marvellous and profound collection of qualities they are. The author has evidently given quite some thought to what qualities he needs. Although it might be viewed as rather self-concerned – 'give me', 'teach me' – actually, his wish lists come to be what they are because of the intense regard and relation to Jesus that he has. When Jesus is our all, then we look at things differently. There's a wonderful phrase in one of the modern eucharistic prayers, which says of the 'living breath', 'in whom all our hungers are satisfied'. This has a similar sentiment – with God's grace and love we shall indeed be rich.

Anthony Mary Claret was born near Barcelona on 23 December 1807, son of a woollen manufacturer. When he was twelve, he became a weaver, and moved to Barcelona to develop his trade. While there he devoted himself to studying French, Spanish and engraving. Feeling called to the religious life, he became a Carthusian, and later entered a seminary and was ordained in 1835. Attracted by the idea of missionary work he travelled to Rome. There he entered the Jesuit novitiate but had to leave because of ill health. Returning to Spain he carried out missionary work in Catalonia. In 1848 he was sent to the Canary Islands where he gave retreats for fifteen months. Returning to Spain he established a religious order, the Claretians, and founded a great religious library in Barcelona. He was appointed archbishop of Santiago, Cuba, in 1849. At Santiago, he re-organised the seminary, founded a hospital and established several schools. In 1857 he was recalled to Spain and became confessor to Queen Isabella II. Resigning his see, he continued with missionary and educational work. He went to Rome in 1869 to prepare for the First Vatican Council, but had to withdraw due to failing health, and retired to the French Pyrenees. He died on 24 October 1870, aged 63, the date now designated as his feast day. His legacy includes over a hundred printed works as well as a missionary order that currently has over 450 houses, with missions on five continents.

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