APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION
UBI PRIMUM
OF HIS HOLINESS, POPE LEO XIII

On the Laws, Rights and Privileges of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary

When first, by the secret designs of Divine Providence, we were promoted to the Chair of Peter, seeing the evils that were threatening, We deemed it our Apostolic duty, for the salvation of souls, to consider by what means we could best guard the interests of the Church and the integrity of the Catholic Faith. Our mind at once turned to the great Mother of God, who was a partner in the work of man's Redemption, and to whom Catholics have always had recourse in times of danger and adversity. How safe they were in putting their trust in her is seen by the wonderful favors she has bestowed on her clients. Many of these, we know, have been obtained by that beautiful form of prayer, given by her and propagated by the ministry of Saint Dominic under the title of the Rosary. Our Predecessors, the Sovereign Pontiffs, have again and again decreed that the Virgin should be honored by the practice of that devotion, and We also, emulating their zeal, have dwelt very fully on the dignity and power of the Rosary of Mary in several Encyclical Letters published since the 1st of September, 1883, exhorting the faithful to practise either publicly or in their own homes, this most salutary devotion to Our Lady, and to join the Sodalities of the Rosary. (n.b. *sodality:* noun: a confraternity or association, especially a Roman Catholic religious guild or brotherhood.) All these We called to mind, and, as it were, summarized in a recent letter given on the 5th of September this year, in which We expressed our intention of publishing a Constitution on

the rights, privileges, and indulgences which those enjoy who join this holy confraternity.

Now, to carry out our design, and at the desire of the Master General of the Order of Preachers, We publish this Constitution in which, enumerating the laws made for the Confraternity and the benefits granted to its members by the Sovereign Pontiffs, We decree the manner in which this holy society is to be ruled.

1. The end for which the Confraternity of the Rosary has been instituted is, that many being banded together in fraternal charity by that most devotional form of prayer from which the association takes its name, may be drawn to praise and honor the Blessed Virgin, and by unanimous supplication secure her patronage. Wherefore, without any subscription or payment whatever, it admits persons of every condition of life amongst its members, and binds them to one another by no other bond than the recitation of the Rosary of Mary. The result is, that while each one contributes a little towards the common treasure, all receive a great deal from it. For whenever a person fulfills his obligation of reciting the Rosary according to the rules of the Confraternity, he includes in his intention all its members, and they in turn render to him the same service many times over.

2. The Dominican Order which from its very beginning has been most devoted in honoring the Blessed Virgin, and by which the institution and propagation of the Confraternity of the Rosary was accomplished, holds as its inheritance all that belongs to this devotion. Only the Master General of the Dominicans, therefore, is to have the right of erecting sodalities of the Rosary. When he is absent from Rome, his Vicar General has the right; and when he dies, or is removed from his office, it belongs to the Vicar General of the Order.

Wherefore, whatever sodality may be hereafter established cannot enjoy any of the benefits, privileges and indulgences with which the Roman Pontiffs have enriched the lawful and true Confraternity of the Rosary, unless a diploma of institution be obtained from the Master General or the aforesaid Vicars.

3. Whatever sodalities of the most Holy Rosary have been instituted in the past and are in existence to this day without the letters-patent of the Master General, must, within the space of one year from this date, obtain the aforesaid document. In the meantime, however, provided there be no other defect, We by our Apostolic authority graciously declare, that these sodalities, until such time as their diploma is sent, are to be considered as sanctioned and lawful, and participating in all the benefits and indulgences.

4. For the erection of the Confraternity in any particular church, the Master General is to depute by the usual document a priest of his own Order; where there are no convents of Dominican Fathers he is to appoint a priest approved by the Bishop; but he cannot in general, and without limitations, transfer his power to the Provincials, or other priests of his own or any other Order or Institute.

We revoke the faculty granted by Benedict XIII, of happy memory, to the Master of the Order, of delegating Provincials beyond the sea (*transmarinos*) without restriction. We grant, however, considering it expedient, that they may give power to the priors, vicars, and superiors of missions in such provinces to erect a certain number of Sodalities, of which they must render to them an accurate account.

5. The Confraternity of the Rosary may be established in any church or public oratory to which the faithful have free access, except the churches of nuns and

other pious women living in community, as the Holy Roman Congregations have frequently declared.* Seeing that it has been already decided by the Apostolic See that more than one Sodality of the Most Holy Rosary must not exist in one and the same place, We again enforce this law, and command that it be everywhere observed. If, however, at present it happens that there are several Sodalities properly constituted in any one place, the Master General of the Order has authority to decide the matter in whatever way he thinks just. In large cities, as has been already granted, there may be several Sodalities of the Rosary; these for their lawful institution must be proposed by the Ordinary to the Master General.

*The Rosary Confraternity may be established in churches and chapels of religious women with restrictions as to its organization and activities, according to the provisions of Canon 712, section 3; and notwithstanding this contrary declaration of the Constitution Ubi Primum of Pope Leo XIII, communities of religious women, with the consent of their Ordinaries and with the Diploma of the Master General of the Dominicans, may erect in their churches, public chapels, or semi-public chapels the Rosary Confraternity as a pious union of prayer, and may keep their own Register for the enrollment of Sodalists for participation in all indulgences and spiritual benefits. In churches or chapels of religious women the Rosary Confraternity is forbidden to have an organic Sodality with officers under the direction of the chaplain rector, and is forbidden to have solemn Rosary processions or religious functions proper to the organized Sodality functions of a cathedral, conventual or parochial Church.

6. Since there is no chief Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary to which the other lesser Sodalities are aggregated, it follows that each new Association of the Rosary, by its own canonical institution enjoys all the indulgences and privileges which are granted by this Apostolic See to the other Sodalities of the Rosary throughout the world. These indulgences and privileges adhere to the church in which it is established. For although the privileges of the Sodality belong to the members, still many indulgences granted to those visiting its chapel or altar, as also the privileged altar, are inherent to the place, and therefore without a special Apostolic indult cannot be taken from it nor transferred. Whenever, therefore, the Sodality is for any reason to be transferred to another church, a new document for that purpose must be applied for to the Master General. If, however, the church is destroyed, and a new church under the same title is erected on the same site or in the neighborhood, to this, inasmuch as it may be considered the same place, all the privileges and indulgences are transferred, and the institution of a new Sodality is not required. But if in any place after the Sodality has been canonically instituted in a church, a convent with a church of the Order of Preachers be erected, the Sodality as a matter of right is transferred to the church belonging to that convent; but if in any exceptional case it may seem advisable to depart from this rule, we grant authority to the Master General of the Order to arrange the matter according to his own discretion and prudence, maintaining in its integrity the right of his Order.

7. To what is above decreed, which pertains to the nature and constitutions of the Confraternity, other things may be added, if it be deemed advisable for the better working of the Sodality. The members may form for themselves certain rules by which their whole Sodality may be governed, or by which certain members may be encouraged to undertake some special works of Christian piety, with a subscription to be paid if such be approved of, and with the

wearing of religious garb or otherwise. But no variety of this kind is an obstacle to the gaining of the indulgences by the members, provided they fulfill the conditions for gaining them prescribed by the Apostolic See. Additional rules, however, of this kind are to be approved of by the Bishop of the diocese, and remain subject to his authority, as was sanctioned by the Constitution *Quaecumque* of Clement VII.

8. The appointment of the Directors who are to enroll the members in the Confraternity, bless Rosary beads, and discharge all the principal duties connected with the Sodality, belongs to the Master General or his Vicar, as already stated, with the consent, however, of the Ordinary of the place in case of churches under the charge of the secular clergy. In order, however, the better to provide for the permanent establishment of the Sodality, the Master General should appoint as Director some priest holding a certain office, or enjoying a certain benefice in the church where the Sodality is established, and his successor in that benefice or office. If, perchance, these be wanting, Bishops have the power, as already sanctioned by this Apostolic See, of deputing for that office the parish priest for the time being.

9. Since it often appears expedient, or even necessary, that another priest in the place of the Director should inscribe the names, bless beads, and perform other duties in connection with the Sodality which pertain to the office of Director, the Master General can grant to the Director the power of subdelegating, not in general but in individual cases, another approved priest, who will act for him as often as for any reasonable cause he deems it expedient.

10. Moreover, in places where the Sodality of the Rosary and its Director cannot be instituted, we give to the Master General power to appoint other

priests to take the names of the faithful who are desirous of gaining the indulgences for enrollment in the nearest Sodality, and to bless their beads.

11. The formula for blessing Rosary beads or chaplets made sacred by long usage and which has been prescribed from the earliest times in the Dominican Order, and is given in the Appendix to the Roman Ritual, is to be retained.

12. Although names may be lawfully inscribed at any time, it is, however, to be desired that the custom of having a more solemn reception on the first Sunday of each month or on the greater feasts of the Mother of God, should be carefully retained.

13. The only obligation imposed on the members of the Confraternity, which does not, however, bind under sin, is to recite the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, devoutly meditating on them, once in each week. But the true form of the Rosary beads must be used, so that they should always be composed of either five, ten or fifteen decades. Other beads should not be called by the name of “Rosary.” In meditating on the mysteries of our Redemption, other mysteries should not be substituted for those in general use. The Apostolic See has already decreed that those who do not observe the usual order in meditating on the mysteries do not gain the indulgence of the Rosary. The Directors of Confraternities will diligently take care to have the Rosary publicly recited at the Altar of the Confraternity daily, or as frequently as possible, especially on the feasts of the Blessed Virgin. The custom approved of by the Holy See should be retained, so that each week all the mysteries may be recited, the “Joyful” on Mondays and Thursdays, the “Sorrowful” on Tuesdays and Fridays, the “Glorious” on Sundays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

14. Amongst the pious exercises of the Confraternity the first place is with reason given to the solemn procession in honor of the Mother of God which takes place on the first Sunday of each month, and especially on the first Sunday of October. St. Pius V commended this ancient custom; Gregory XIII mentions it amongst the "praiseworthy exercises and customs of the Confraternity," and many Sovereign Pontiffs have attached to it special indulgences. In order that this ceremony may never be omitted, at least within the Church when it is impossible to have it in the open air, we extend to all the Directors of the Confraternity the privilege granted by Benedict XIII to the Order of Preachers, of transferring the procession to another Sunday, when, for any reason, it cannot take place on the first Sunday of the month. But when on account of want of space and of the number of the faithful, the solemn procession cannot conveniently take place in the church, we permit that whilst the priest with his attendants make the circuit of the church, the members of the Confraternity who are present may gain all the indulgences attached to the procession.

15. We wish the privilege of the Votive Mass of the most Holy Rosary, so often confirmed for the Order of Preachers, to be retained, and in such manner that not only Dominican priests but also priests who are tertiaries, and who have received from the Master General the faculty of legitimately using the missal of the Order, may celebrate the Votive Mass, *Salve Radix Sancta*, twice in the week, according to the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. But other priests, members of the Confraternity, have permission to celebrate only the Votive Mass in the Roman missal, *pro diversitate ternporum*, at the altar of the Confraternity, on the same days as above, and with the same indulgences. The lay members of the Confraternity can share in these indulgences if they assist at the Mass, and either having confessed their sins or having contrition

of heart and the intention of approaching the Sacrament of Penance, they pour forth their prayers to God.

16. The Master General will as soon as possible draw up a complete and accurate list of all the indulgences which the Sovereign Pontiffs have granted to the Confraternity of the Rosary, and to all the faithful who recite it. This list will be submitted to the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Sacred Relics for examination and to the Holy See for confirmation. We wish and command that those things which are decreed, declared, and ordained in this Apostolic Constitution shall be observed by all whom they concern, and that they shall not be questioned, infringed, or called into dispute for any, even exceptional, cause, reason or pretense, but that they shall have their full and entire effect, notwithstanding whatever has been hitherto decreed. And as far as may be necessary for securing the effect of the above, we specially and expressly derogate and declare to be derogated, not-withstanding anything that may appear to the contrary, our own rules and those of the Apostolic Chancery, the Constitutions of Urban VIII, the other Apostolic Constitutions, though published even in Provincial and General Councils, and all statutes, customs, and prescriptions, even possessing Apostolic confirmation, or any other authority.

Leo, Bishop, Servant of the Servants of God
Given at St. Peter's, Rome, October 2nd, A.D. 1898, in the twenty-first year of Our Pontificate

C. Card. Aloysius Masella, *Pro. Dat.*
A. Card. Macchi, *Visa. De Curia I. De Aquilae Vicecomitibus*