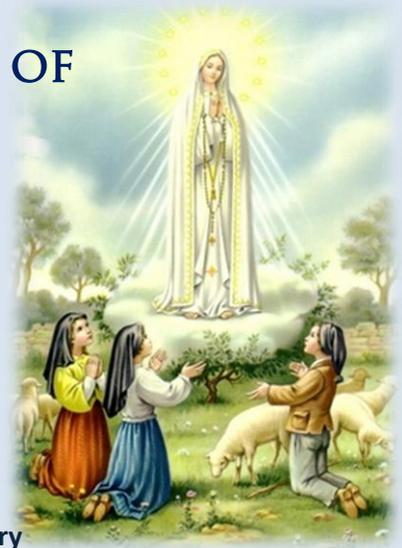


CELEBRATING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF *Our Lady of Fatima*

June 19, 2017

**The Second Secret
and Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary**



Why does the message of Fatima include secrets? To address this through the use of analogy, I might ask how many of us ever kept a secret diary or a journal. This is very common especially with young girls. Some even decide to put a lock on it. The lock is there just in case one's siblings might, as they claim, find it by "accident." We've all heard convincing excuses like that before. The lock simply ensures that the contents remain protected and respected. The desire for secrecy is not because the contents are illicit, but because they are personal and intimate. In her diary, a woman may divulge the deepest sorrows of her heart or she may convey her most sublime joys. Not just anyone, especially not an unwarranted second party, would be able to appreciate these precious heart-spun treasures. Only to the right person at the right time, might one entrust the contents contained in one's secret diary because of how dear they are to the heart of the beholder. This natural analogy may serve as an answer to why part of the message of Fatima is associated with secrets. When Our Lady appeared to the three children, she revealed some of the deepest sorrows and some of the most sublime joys of her Immaculate Heart. She referred to these contents of her heart as secrets when she conveyed them to the children. They were not to be entrusted to just anyone, but only to the right person at the right time. It is an honor now, to be considered one of Mary's confidants and to know these secrets and to be able to reflect upon them.

Last night, we spoke about the first secret, which encompassed the vision of Hell and Mary's message relating to it. Can you imagine any greater sorrow that afflicts the hearts of Jesus and Mary than a soul's eternal separation from God? After conveying this reality to the children, Mary next related what is referred to as the second secret, which is the focus of my talk tonight. The second secret entails three aspects: war, Communism, and consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Due to time constraints, we will not be able to cover in full, the details of this secret. I also did not want to approach this talk as one that would be merely informational. I would really like to use this opportunity to convey how the second secret is personally applicable and how Our Lady is extending this message to each of us today. The first two parts of the secret involve grave sorrows. Yet, the third part foretells of triumphant joy. So, I will save the best part for last!

In the second secret, Mary transitioned from the eternal reality of Hell to a temporal manifestation of Hell when she made reference to war. Mary announced that World War I was going to end, yet she also foretold that if people did not stop offending God a worse war would soon commence. As history tragically records, World War I claimed an estimated 20 million lives and World War II more than doubled that toll with the loss of 50 million lives. The sufferings, sins, atrocities, and devastating destruction of human life associated with these two wars was excessive and they were like daggers piercing through the tender heart of Our Mother.

After conveying this sorrow to the children, Mary next spoke of the possible spread of Communism in Russia and throughout the world. On the first night of the novena, Sr. Mary Ann eloquently addressed the historical context relating to this aspect of the secret. From the details Sister provided, we considered how from 1917 onwards, through corrupt leadership and blind human submission, Russia forcibly disseminated its atheistic, dehumanizing, and demoralizing errors throughout the world. This Godless movement also unleashed a systematic persecution of the Church and of

Christians, as was foretold in the second secret. Fr. Andrew Apostoli in his book *Fatima For Today* noted that “During the 50 years of Communist ascendancy, there were more Christians martyred than there were in all the previous years of Christian history combined” (Apostoli, 77).

Despite the gravity of these sorrows, we would be in error to think that the second secret merely comprised the projection of the rise of evil. While describing these ills, Our Lady also took the opportunity to affirm that good always triumphs over evil. May we never forget the power of Christ’s cross and resurrection and that our Head has conquered sin and death. What Our Lady’s message related to the children and what it helps us to understand today is that there is still a battle going on and that as members of the Body of Christ we have a role to play in this battle. In addition, she wanted to make clear that she is the one our Lord has chosen to direct us in this battle. If we want to consider this in military terms, we could say that she is our general. And according to the book of Revelation she is the best suited for this role because she is a “12 star” general – referring to the crown she wears. This is great news for us! This means that she is well seasoned and highly decorated for her work and has been chosen by her Son in lieu of her success in fighting against the enemy. Therefore, we must take time to consider what strategy our loving general has provided for us so that we may engage in this battle. Thus, I would like to devote the remainder of the talk this evening to illustrating how the second secret entails Our Lady’s battle plan and offers the means by which evil can be confronted and conquered.

First in response to World War I and the prospect of World War II, Our Lady asked the children to pray, especially the rosary, and to pray for peace in the world. She enjoined the children to embody this call for peace in their daily lives. As their tender lives vividly attest, they passionately heeded Mary’s request to the full. Do we not still have global conflicts and threats against peace today? Then Our Lady’s message continues to hold great relevance for us too. Considering our current need, let us apply this request to ourselves and examine how we can fulfill Our Lady’s appeal. I invite you to ask yourself:

Do I take time for prayer each day? Do I have recourse to Our Lady and meditate on the life of her son through the rosary? In regards to praying the rosary, a good thing to remember is that Mary is not God's accountant (even though she'd be an honest one). She is not up in heaven with a tally board adding up **how many** rosaries we pray. The sheer numbers do not matter to God. What matters most is our mind and our heart. Ultimately, Our Lady is inviting us to foster daily interior conversion and personal growth in holiness. Prayer, especially praying the rosary, is one powerful means encouraged by Our Lady to help nurture this growth.

Next, in regards to Mary's request, we should ask ourselves: Am I convinced of the import of praying for world peace? Furthermore, do I recognize that world peace begins with my own interior peace and that of my neighbor? Peace is a gift from Jesus. His peace keeps us focused on reality and ultimate reality, which is God. We know that God guides everything by His wisdom and loving providence. When Christ reigns in our hearts, we are not disturbed by distorted thoughts or values or blinded by ambition. As Dante said in his *Divine Comedy*, "In His will is our peace." Our Lady came to remind us of this pivotal reality. When we pray, especially the rosary, and strive to live God's will and imbibe Christ's peace in our hearts, then peace will radiate outwards. It will pour forth upon our families, our parishes, our communities, the nation, the Church, and the world. In summary, we see that the first part of Mary's plan entails praying, especially the rosary, for peace in the world and the call to live this message of peace in our daily lives.

Secondly, in response to the spread of Communism in Russia and throughout the world, Mary asked for the consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart and for the Communion of Reparation on First Saturdays. These two requests were reiterated later in 1925 and 1929 through two visions that Lucia received after she had entered the convent. Sr. John Marie will cover these in her talk on the last night of the novena (so we will hold you in suspense until then). But tonight, I would like to focus on

how these requests of Our Lady are personally applicable and how they directly relate to the last part of the second secret, which offers one of the greatest consolations associated with Our Lady's message.

The Communion of Reparation and the First Saturday devotions are acts that flow from a desire to live consecrated to God through the Heart of Our Mother. What does it mean to be consecrated to Mary? When referring to Marian consecration, Sr. Lucia stated that consecration entails conversion and self-gift. Through conversion, we allow Mary to show us the way to her Son. We turn to her as our refuge in the midst of temptation and the battles of daily life, and strive to follow her example. The second aspect self-gift entails entrustment. We offer ourselves to Mary wholly, mind, body, soul, and will, and then she offers us wholly to Jesus. As a sign of one's consecration to Mary, one can wear the Brown Scapular. This beautiful sacramental serves as a reminder of our promise to Mary and of Mary's promise to us to guide and protect us on the pathway to eternity. Tonight Father Lanzrath will be offering an enrollment in the Brown Scapular for all of those who have not already done so. This will take place right before we begin Holy Hour.

Now that we have considered these points of Mary's peace plan, prayer and consecration, we are ready to explore the last part of the second secret. After divulging the great sorrows that weighed upon her heart in relation to war and Communism, Mary humbly and serenely stated to the children, "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph." Shining hope pours forth from these affirming words of Our Lady because she assured the promise of triumph. This statement is very consoling, yet it is also somewhat mysterious. What does Mary mean when she says "in the end"? And what will her "triumph" entail. Some might mistake this statement to mean that her triumph is far off so we will have to just wait around for the end times to come and for her triumph to be fully realized. Others may unknowingly think that this triumph solely applies to Mary. Well in response to these misconceptions I must say that I don't know of any army that ever triumphed in battle with the soldiers just waiting

around on the battlefield while the general did all the fighting. The triumph of the Immaculate Heart “in the end” is not something that is far off. It actually entails what we are doing right NOW in union with Our Lady. There is no “waiting around” about it. We all have a part to play now. We are called to actively participate in her triumph throughout time, which will capitalize in the ultimate triumph at the end of time, and it will be the ultimate victory because it will be united to Jesus’ triumph.

Since Mary’s triumph does involve us now, we are compelled to consider how we can participate in her triumph. John Haffert was a co-founder of the World Apostolate of Fatima, or the Blue Army, which is an approved International Public Association of the Faithful. He had a special opportunity to visit Sr. Lucia and to converse with her. In the course of their conversation, Mr. Haffert asked Sr. Lucia what was required for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Sr. Lucia emphasized that “It is the fulfillment of one’s daily duty according to one’s state in life” and the offering of this duty in reparation for one’s sins and for the conversion of sinners (Sockey, 40). Sr. Lucia was very clear that this was the primary condition for turning back the tide of evil, the conversion of Russia, and the ushering forth of an era of peace (Sockey, 40).

What does living our state in life well entail? As Christians, we are called to embrace the cross, and the cross involves sacrifice. There are two types of sacrifices we can engage in: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary sacrifices are actively chosen. They may entail giving something up that pleases us like a food, comfort, or a form of entertainment. Many of us do this during Lent and we refer to these acts as penances. We may even extend these penitential practices beyond the season of Lent, which can be very beneficial. Yet, what many of us often overlook (and I am the first to be guilty of this) are the involuntary sacrifices that come to us every day. Sometimes we barely even give them a thought except for our awareness of the frustration, inconvenience, discomfort or disappointment that they may cause us. Thus, what Sr. Lucia was calling to our attention is that the “stuff” of everyday life can serve as

beneficial sacrifices when offered up to God. In fact, they are so pleasing and so powerful that they can change the fate of souls and the future of the world.

This habit of offering up daily sacrifices especially those that come to us through involuntary means takes practice. Thus, I would like to offer an examination for you this evening in order to help forge a good habit that will benefit you and will additionally profit many souls. There are three parts to this practice: awareness, understanding and action.

Step 1 involves awareness. How aware are you throughout the day of sacrifices that you could offer up? Let's examine this for a brief moment: a sacrifice you could offer would include any time you: wake up late, tired or sore; when you stub your toe, bump your funny bone, have a headache, or a runny nose; when you have a disagreement with your child, spouse, sibling, co-worker, or boss; when you are irritated by a barrage of anonymous solicitations over the phone, the mishandling of your groceries at the store, or someone taking up your personal space in the elevator; when you have to wait in line to buy your food, clothing, car parts, household appliances or in the doctor's office, dentists office, or beauticians shop; when you experience an inconvenience like the coffee maker unexpectedly breaks right before you have to leave for work, you come home and find that your child dropped your cell phone in the pool, you burn the chicken while you're cooking dinner, and you go to Baskin Robin's and find out that they don't make your favorite ice cream flavor anymore. I could go on and on, but I will spare you that. I think I have made the point... no matter how great or how small the situation is, every day provides a well-spring of experiences to offer in sacrifice for our growth in holiness and for the salvation of souls. So to review **step one**, the first key to this practice is being aware. As you think through your day, reflect upon the events that transpired, whether they be good or ill, and consciously bring them to your minds attention.

Step 2 involves understanding. I will not replay the list I just recited to you, but once you become aware of an experience or multiple experiences, particularly those that that bring disappointment, frustration, discomfort or inconvenience, in step two, you access the power of your intellect and you seek to direct your thoughts about this experience towards an understanding of it as a gift. When your understanding is raised on high, then you are prepared for step three.

Step 3 involves action. You take this experience, which you now see as gift, and you offer it as an act of reparation. The angel of Portugal taught the three children a beautiful prayer to help them make these offerings, and Mary repeated this prayer in the second secret. Thus, it would be a fitting prayer to use in step three. Please repeat after me, “Oh my Jesus this is for love of you, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for sins committed, against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” This short prayer is included on your handout, which is entitled Our Lady’s Peace Plan. It is under the first bolded part: Offering daily the sufferings God permits. Many of you are familiar with the old axiom “offer it up.” Well this is exactly what Our Lady is calling us to do every day and even multiple times a day. You could say this prayer and make this offering at the beginning of the day with your morning offering or at the end of the day with your examine. You could also take fuller advantage of this short prayer and employ it dozens of times throughout the day as events and circumstances transpire. From personal experience, I can attest to the amazing effects this can have in transforming your whole interior disposition and how it brings such peace!

This three-step method is not something I invented, but it is closely associated with the practices of many saints. In fact, Ignatius of Loyola systematized this valuable practice and usefully employed it in the structure of his Spiritual Exercises. I would like to use an example from the life of the three children of Fatima as an illustration of how this could be lived out on a daily basis. One afternoon while the children were out tending the sheep, Jacinta noted to her companions that her head hurt and that the

chirping of the crickets greatly increased the aching. That is step one. Jacinta was aware of a struggle in her daily life. Francisco responded to her statement and said, “Wouldn’t you like to offer this to Our Lady for the conversion of sinners?” He gently guided his sister to raise her awareness to a higher understanding of the situation at hand. That is step two. Jacinta understood she had an opportunity to offer up her experience as a gift. Jacinta then valiantly responded, “Yes, I would, let them sing!” That is step three. Her intentional offering was actualized. Doing this time and time again helped her to form a beautiful habit and fostered her growth in virtue. Isn’t it reassuring to know that if we live our state in life well and offer it all in reparation and for the conversion of sinners, we are on the path to great sanctity and we are participating in the triumph of Our Immaculate Mother?

I would like to conclude the talk tonight with a final story that illustrates the points we have considered. This recounting of events places the response to Our Lady’s call from the second secret in striking context in history. On August 6, 1945, the B-29 aircraft Enola Gay dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima at 8:15 a.m. Nine days later on August 15, U.S. forces were ordered to cease fire. When the American troops entered the decimated area and assessed the casualties, they found that more than 100,000 people had died. Many thousands more were suffering terribly from blisters and sores caused by the effects of the radiation. Over the next few months their bodies began to deteriorate and in a short time they died. Considering the mass devastation and tremendous loss of life, the American army doctors were utterly stunned when they encountered Father Hubert Schiffer. He and his fellow Jesuit priests lived only a half mile from the epicenter where the bomb exploded, and they all survived unscathed. The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption and the rectory in which the eight Jesuit priests lived, were the only remnants that could be found for miles and miles. Fr. Schiffer recounted the story of that historic morning. He had just finished celebrating Mass, and he decided to go to the rectory for breakfast. He had just sat down, when suddenly, there was a bright flash of light and a tremendous

explosion. In an instant, he was lifted from his chair, and then thrown through the air as though he were being whirled around like a leaf in the wind. The next thing he remembered, was that he opened his eyes and he was lying on the ground. He got up to look around and he could see nothing (literally nothing) in any direction. The railroad station, all the buildings and the people that were once there had been leveled to the ground. Considering his dismay at the unimaginable situation, he checked himself over and came to find that the only harm that had come to him was that he could feel a few pieces of glass in the back of his neck. Over 30 years later, in 1976, Fr. Schiffer told their story at a Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia. At that time, all eight Jesuit priests were still living and none of them had suffered the effects of radiation. When asked why he thought they were spared, the answer Fr. Schiffer gave was, "We believe that we survived because we were living the message of Fatima. We lived and prayed the rosary daily in that home" (Ruge, 31). This is a truly remarkable story and how powerfully it demonstrates the message we have considered tonight! Our Lady can work miracles through prayer and consecration to her!

After considering Our Lady's message in the second secret we are gravely reminded of the evils of war and of Communism, and that there is still a battle going on and that we have a role to play in it. We are also heartened by the peace plan of our 12 star general which includes praying the rosary, Marian consecration, and offering our daily sacrifices for the conversion of sinners and in reparation. I hope these reflections have ignited within your own heart a greater conviction to live the message of Fatima in your daily life. As a young religious brother, Fr. Andrew Apostoli was instructed by his novice master, "Form your convictions now and form them well, because you will live the rest of your life based on them" (Apostoli, 227). This is a time-tested truth that our convictions produce actions. Do we personally hear the request of Our Lady and do we believe that she is asking this of us? Are we convinced of its importance? Are we convicted enough to act upon it and to strive to live the message

of Fatima, which is ultimately a reiteration of the Gospel, in our daily lives? Our Lady's message is vital for our times, and now is the time to begin living it out in preparation for her triumph. Our Lady has laid the plan before us and she is inviting us to answer this call. She is counting on us – if we don't answer, who will?

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