

*Our Lady of Victories and Arch-confraternity;  
Our Lady of Fatima and Millions of Memorares  
June 24, 2014*

Tonight I am going to present to you Our Lady under two different titles and their stories. The titles of Our Lady of Victories and Our Lady of Fatima at first glance, do not appear to have any correlation. Occurring 81 years apart from each other and in two different countries, one is a locution and the other is a series of apparitions, however the common fruit of both events is the connection in praying for the conversion of sinners. Our Blessed Mother on both occasions shows us the importance of bringing souls to her, who have no one else to pray for them. Let's now look at the stories as they happened in the Marian age of history.

In December 1629 Louis XIII financed all the work for a convent church for the Augustinians, called "the little Fathers" and named it Our Lady of Victories, this was in appreciation to the Virgin for the recent victories won by the French. The Blessed Mother chose this place to bring to God her dispersed children separated because of sin and its consequences. One brother, Fiacre, when returning from a pilgrimage to Savona (Italy) began invoking Our Lady of Victories under the title of "Refuge of Sinners" which is a title we now use in the litany of Loreto. It wasn't long before the church experienced difficulties.

During the French Revolution the church was closed and desecrated, first

made into a temple to a false god, then, it was used as the Stock Exchange. The Augustinians at this time were expelled from the Church. When it was finally reclaimed for Catholic worship, between the years 1800-1809, few parishioners remained. The church was re-erected as a parish, but because it was located in a business neighborhood and lack of faith was a fruit of the revolution, the Church had very low attendance. The church was open but the hearts of men were away from God.

After the apparitions to St. Catherine Laboure, the pastor of the parish, which included the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, was Father Charles des Gennettes. He was familiar with the revelations at Rue de Bac even if was not personally acquainted with St. Catherine. In 1832, Fr. des Gennettes was transferred to the Church of Our Lady of Victories which had an illustrious past in regard to devotion to Mary, but had fallen upon bad times since the French Revolution.

For almost four years, Fr. des Gennettes tried everything he could think of to win the people back to the faith, but he saw no fruit of his efforts. He finally decided that he should resign because he saw himself as nothing but a failure, when on Sunday, December 3, 1836 during Mass at the altar of the Blessed Virgin he began praying the Eucharistic prayer, and made great effort to recollect himself during the

Consecration when he heard a voice say, “Consecrate your parish to the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary.” After Mass, he convinced himself that it was all his imagination. But then he knelt to make his thanksgiving, he heard the message clearly and unmistakably repeated. He immediately had great interior peace in his soul with the message.

He went forward and composed the rules for a confraternity of Our Lady and had it approved by the bishop within the week. The next Sunday, December 10, 1836 at Mass, he announced to the ten people attending that there would be Vespers of Our Lady in the evening and that he would explain the rules of the Confraternity afterwards. To Father des Gennettes amazement over four hundred people, a large number of them men, were present! At this gathering the hearts of the people present couldn't help but be transformed as they prayed prayers and litanies to Our Lady and in the end everyone present decided to return to the church and participate in these devotions which animated their faith and brought back peace and joy to their hearts.

Even after an evening as he just experienced, Fr. des Gennettes was not completely convinced this was the work of the Lord. Therefore, he decided to ask the Blessed Virgin for a sign. There was still one minister left of Louis XVI's, Mr. Joly, and he in his youth accepted anti-clerical doctrine and was against the Church. Mr. Joly now in is 80's, blind and very ill had for many years refused to practice any type of religion. On previous occasions Fr. des Gennettes had tried to visit with Mr. Joly,

but he would have no part of speaking with the priest.

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, Fr. des Gennettes returned to Mr. Joly's house. The servants were hesitant to allow the priest in the house, but he insisted that he see Mr. Joly. After only speaking a few words Mr. Joly asked the priest to bless him and at that moment he exclaimed, “Your visit has been so good for me, Father! I cannot see you but I feel your presence. The moment you entered my room I felt peace, interior calm, and a joy which I have never experienced before.” (roman catholic saints) Fr. des Gennettes asked Mr. Joly if he would like to make a confession and he immediately agreed. Fr. was now sure that he was doing the will of God. The Confraternity swiftly spread, becoming an Archconfraternity, in 1838 by decree of Pope Gregory XVI, he erected perpetually in the Church of Our Lady of Victories, the Confraternity of the Blessed and Immaculate Heart of Mary, for the conversion of sinners.

Through Papal approval, Our Lady of Victories with its official Confraternity, became a precursor of the Fatima apparitions; the main promoter of the devotion and consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, including also the Miraculous Medal approval as well spreading devotion.

We are much more familiar with the story of Fatima, but to review, in Fatima, Portugal there were 3 young children: Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta. Our Lady appeared to these 3 shepherd children from May 1917 to October 1917 and prior to the May apparition there were three appearances

from the Angel of Peace in the summer of 1916. In these apparitions these children were taught to pray and sacrifice for the conversion of sinners. In the very first apparition, Our Blessed Mother asked the children *“Are you willing to offer yourselves to God, by bearing the sufferings He wills to send you as an act of reparation for the sins that offend Him, and to humbly beg for the conversion of sinners?”* (Silva, 75) In her initial meeting with the children Our Blessed Mother does not hesitate to ask the children to offer themselves. It is through the series of apparitions the children truly learn what this means. It was in the July apparition that the Fatima seers were taught the prayer which we pray at the end of each decade of the Rosary: *“O my Jesus, forgive us our sins; save us from the fires of hell; and lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of Your mercy.”* As we can begin to see Our Blessed Mother imbued the teaching of praying for the conversion of sinners among the 3 children. Although it would be pertinent, time does not allow, going through each apparition of Fatima, and showing the reference to the conversion of sinners.

Pope St. John Paul states, “Conversion is at the centre of the message of Fatima. It is a continual commitment to seek and bear witness to Jesus Christ our Lord, ‘the way of eternal life (cf. John 13:3) which necessarily passes through penitence (cf. Luke 13:3) and through prayer.” (John Paul II, Francis Johnston, 20) Praying for the conversion of sinners, what is this conversion? The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “Christ’s call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of

Christians. This second conversion is an uninterrupted task for the whole church whom, “clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.” This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a “contrite heart,” drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first.” (CCC 1428) We are drawn and moved by grace to pray for those who are in need of our prayers. Praying for the conversion of sinners is a duty of every baptized Christian springing forth from the command to forth and to baptize all nations given from Jesus in the Gospels. We as disciples begin with prayer but do not allow it to stop there precisely because of Our Lady’s words, “Pray, pray a great deal and make many sacrifices for sinners, many souls go to Hell because they have no one to pray and make sacrifices for them.” (Johnston, 102) The sacrifices being asked of us do not have to be great. No one is being asked to save the world Jesus has already done this for us. Blue Army leader John Haffert asked Sister Lucia in 1946 what Our Lady meant by the word sacrifice, the seer answered: “By sacrifice, Our Lady said that she meant that faithful fulfillment of one’s daily duty...The rosary is important because we must pray it if we are to fulfill our daily duty...The Five First Saturday’s devotion is also important because if people make them, they will purge themselves of sin once a month and renew their purpose to fulfill their daily duty.” (Johnston, 103)

Daily duty...the conversion of sinners....prayer....all of these hold special

places in the life and spirituality of a Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we teach in our active apostolate, and our prayer apostolate is to pray for the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of priests. According to Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical on Devotion of the Rosary in 1883, he states, “It has always been the habit of Catholics in danger and in troubled times to fly for refuge to Mary, and to seek for peace in her maternal goodness.” (Pope Leo XIII, *Supremi Apostolatus Officio*, 2) Asking our Blessed Mother to assist us is what our mission is in the Millions of Memorares. With the prayer of the Memorare we are able to ask the Blessed Mother for her assistance in bringing many souls to her Son.

We are inviting you to join the IHM Sisters in praying Mother Teresa’s “quick novena” for the intentions of the conversion of sinners. Additionally we are asking Our Lady to help us build our Novitiate/House of Formation. The novena consists of nine Memorares in petition and one in thanksgiving and can be said throughout the day or all ten at once. We are hoping to shower Our Lady with millions of Memorares; you can help us by pledging a thousand Memorares for this intention. We will be presenting these Memorares to Our Lady of Fatima at her newly built Shrine on our new property each year on May 13th and October 13th - the anniversary of her first and last apparition at Fatima in 1917.

Tonight we have an exciting opportunity. We are making available to you the opportunity to enroll tonight in the Arch confraternity of prayer for the

conversion of sinners, in Paris. Due to one of our Sister’s translating this form from the French, we have forms for you to complete. You are able to enroll as an individual, a family or a community. There is no fee attached to the enrollment unless you want to send an offering on your own.

The purpose of the Arch confraternity according to the Canonical statutes “Article 2 states:

1. To honor with an act of veneration, of homage and of prayers the Immaculate Heart of the very Holy Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, only Son of God, made flesh by Love for us, and dead on the Cross- for the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of all men.
2. To achieve by the merits of the Heart of Mary, so perfectly adjusted to the Heart of Jesus, the conversion of Sinners.” (notre dame)

In addition what is required for each person enrolled is also outlined in the Canonical statutes and it states:

Article 8

“Every person who is registered commits to say each day at least one “Holy Mary” for the conversion of Sinners and the intention of the Church and the Pope. As far as it is possible for them, the members of the arch-confraternity are invited to participate in the Eucharist celebrated on the first Saturday of each month in honor of the very Holy Virgin Mary.” (notre dame)

These are also listed in your handout that you complete. We also have available tonight, if you need them, Memorare cards

to help keep track of the number you have completed. Once the card is completed you can mail that back into the Motherhouse and we will enter that number into the total for the next procession event, whether it is in May or October.

In conclusion, let us also remember that in praying for the conversion of sinners, that this conversion process must start with our own conversion first. Let us invoke Our Lady for her intercession to help us perform our daily duty well, by praying the Litany to Our Lady of Victories.

Lord, have mercy on us.  
Christ, have mercy on us.  
Lord, have mercy on us.  
Christ, have mercy on us.  
Christ, graciously hear us.  
God, the Father of Heaven, *have mercy on us.*  
God, the Son, Redeemer of the World, *Have ...*  
God, the Holy Ghost,  
Holy Trinity, one God,  
Our Lady of Victories, *Pray for us.*  
Triumphant Mother of The Archdiocese of Our Lady of Victories, *Pray ...*  
Triumphant Mother, scourge of all schismatics,  
Triumphant Daughter of the Father,  
Triumphant Mother of the Son,  
Triumphant Spouse of the Holy Ghost,  
Triumphant Choice of the Most Holy Trinity,  
Triumphant in Thy Immaculate Conception,  
Triumphant in Crushing the Head of the Serpent,  
Triumphant Over All Children of Adam,  
Triumphant Over All Our Enemies,  
Triumphant in the Embassy of the Archangel Gabriel,  
Triumphant in Thy Espousal to St. Joseph,  
Triumphant at the Scene o Bethlehem,  
Triumphant in Thy Flight into Egypt,  
Triumphant in Thy Exile,  
Triumphant in Thy Humble Dwelling at Nazareth,  
Triumphant in Finding Thy Divine Child in the Temple,  
Triumphant in the Earthly Life of Our Lord,  
Triumphant in His Passion and Death,  
Triumphant in the Resurrection,  
Triumphant in the Ascension,  
Triumphant in the Descent of the Holy Ghost,  
Triumphant in Thy Sorrows,  
Triumphant in Thy Joys,  
Triumphant in Thy Entrance in to the heavenly Jerusalem,  
Triumphant in the Angels Who Remained Faithful,  
Triumphant in the Felicity of the Blessed,  
Triumphant in the Grace of the Just,  
Triumphant in the Announcement of the Prophets,

Triumphant in the Desires of the Patriarchs,  
Triumphant in the Zeal of the Apostles,  
Triumphant in the Light of the Evangelists,  
Triumphant in the Wisdom of the Doctors,  
Triumphant in the Crowns of the Confessors,  
Triumphant in the Purity of the Numerous Bands of Virgins,  
Triumphant in the Triumph of the Martyrs,  
Triumphant in Thy All-Powerful Intercession,  
Triumphant under Thy Many Titles,  
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *Spare us, O Lord.*  
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *Graciously hear us, O Lord.*  
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *Have mercy on us, O Lord.*

V. Pray for us, O Blessed Lady of Victories!  
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let Us Pray

O Victorious Lady! Thou who hast ever such powerful influence with thy Divine Son, in conquering the hardest of hearts, intercede from those for whom we pray, that their hearts being softened by the rays of Divine Grace, they may return to the unity of the true Faith, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(Catholic Tradition.org)

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