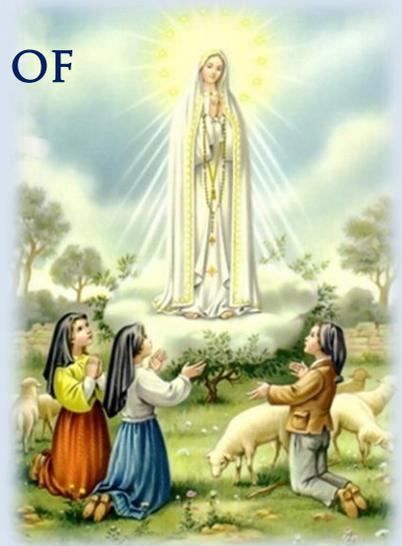


# CELEBRATING THE 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF *Our Lady of Fatima*

**June 21, 2017**

## **The Last Two Visions**



God keeps his promises; Mary also keeps her promises. In 1917, Mary appeared in Fatima, Portugal to three children: Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta. During the June apparition Mary promised to take Francisco and Jacinta to heaven soon; they both died within three years, and now they are canonized saints. In that same visit Mary promised Lucia, “I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.” Indeed, Lucia spent her remaining 88 years on earth living and promoting devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

During the July apparition Mary promised to return and ask for what she called “the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays” and for “the consecration of Russia to [her] Immaculate Heart”. Once again, Mary kept her promise; she returned to visit Lucia in 1925 to explain the First Saturdays, and she came again in 1929 to ask for the consecration of Russia. Many people have heard of Our Lady of Fatima and her message in 1917 to the three children. Not many, however, know about the “follow up” apparitions of Mary to Lucia in the first few years of her religious life. Let us begin with a review of Mary’s initial revelation of her Immaculate Heart in Fatima.

On June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1917, Mary appeared to Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta for the second time. In this month alone Mary’s Heart became visible to the children. Lucia wrote in her memoirs, “In front of the palm of Our Lady’s right hand was a heart encircled by thorns which pierced it. We understood that this was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity, and seeking reparation” (Dos Santos, 177).

One month later, on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1917, Mary *spoke* about her Immaculate Heart as an instrument of God to benefit the world and individual souls. After showing them hell, Mary said to the children, “You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace” (Dos Santos, 178). Our Lady warned the children that if people did not cease offending God, terrible consequences would follow: more war and religious persecution. Mary said, “To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays” (Dos Santos, 179).

This evening we will listen to the accounts of Mary’s later apparitions to Lucia. Then we will consider how Mary’s requests have been fulfilled and what still remains to be done.

Eight years after the apparitions in 1917, Lucia entered the Convent of the Sisters of St. Dorothy. As an 18-year-old postulant in the convent in Pontevedra, Spain, Lucia received a heavenly visit. Mary returned, as she promised, to ask for “the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays”. Here is Lucia’s description, written in the third person at the request of her spiritual director:

On December 10, 1925, the most holy Virgin appeared to her, and by her side, elevated on a luminous cloud, was a child. The most holy Virgin rested her hand on her shoulder, and as she did so, she showed her a heart encircled by thorns, which she was holding in her other hand. At the same time, the Child [Jesus] said: ‘Have compassion on the Heart of your most holy Mother, covered with thorns, with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to make an act of reparation to remove them.’

Then the most holy Virgin said: ‘Look, my daughter, at my Heart, surrounded with thorns with which ungrateful men pierce me at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You at least try to console me and say that I promise to assist at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, shall

confess, receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for fifteen minutes while meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me' (Dos Santos, 194).

With this apparition Lucia received detailed instructions about the Five First Saturdays devotion.

What is Mary's goal here? She is bringing us to Jesus and helping us intensify the quality of our prayer! She invites us to sacramental encounters with Jesus. She offers to accompany us in Christocentric prayer and meditation. She asks us to be intentional in our prayer rather than go through the motions out of routine. She wants us to practice love of neighbor by making reparation on behalf of others, who offend God by offending her. She helps us develop good habits of consistency by asking us to do these things for five months in a row. This apparition in 1925 was the first fulfillment of Mary's promise to return with further explanation of her original message in 1917.

A few years later Mary came again, this time to ask for the consecration of Russia. Exactly twelve years had passed since the day Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta saw the Immaculate Heart of Mary surrounded with thorns.

On the night of June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1929, Sister Lucia kept prayerful vigil in the convent chapel in Tuy, Spain. She beheld a vision that incorporated many familiar themes from visits of the Angel of Peace in 1916 and of Our Lady in 1917; these included the Blessed Trinity, the Eucharist, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and God's desire for the conversion of sinners. Toward the end of the apparition Mary spoke to Sr. Lucia. Here is the account from Lucia's Memoirs:

I had sought and obtained permission from my superiors and confessor to make a Holy Hour from eleven o'clock until midnight, every Thursday to Friday. Being alone one night, I knelt near the altar rails in the middle of the chapel and, prostrate, I prayed the prayers of the Angel. Feeling tired, I then stood up and continued to say the prayers with my arms in the form of a cross. The only light was that of the sanctuary lamp. Suddenly the whole chapel was illuminated by a

supernatural light, and above the altar appeared a cross of light, reaching to the ceiling. In a brighter light on the upper part of the cross, could be seen the face of a man and his body as far as the waist, upon his breast was a dove also of light and nailed to the cross was the body of another man. A little below the waist, I could see a chalice and a large host suspended in the air, on to which drops of blood were falling from the face of Jesus Crucified and from the wound in His side. These drops ran down on to the host and fell into the chalice. Beneath the right arm of the cross was Our Lady and in her hand was her Immaculate Heart. (It was Our Lady of Fatima, with her Immaculate Heart in her left hand, without sword or roses, but with a crown of thorns and flames). Under the left arm of the cross, large letters, as if of crystal clear water which ran down upon the altar, formed these words: 'Grace and Mercy.'

I understood that it was the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity which was shown to me, and I received lights about this mystery which I am not permitted to reveal.

Our Lady then said to me: 'The moment has come in which God asks the Holy Father, in union with all the Bishops of the world, to make the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, promising to save it by this means. There are so many souls whom the Justice of God condemns for sins committed against me, that I have come to ask reparation: sacrifice yourself for this intention and pray' (Dos Santos, 197-8).

This apparition in 1929 was the second fulfillment of Mary's promise to return to Lucia for a further explanation. With her last two visits in the Dorothean convent, Mary completed her message and requests. She explained the details of Sr. Lucia's mission on this earth to spread devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Now that we have heard the accounts of Mary's later apparitions to Sr. Lucia, let us look at their application.

Mary asked for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. Some people question whether or not the Holy Father has consecrated Russia to the

Immaculate Heart of Mary. Father Andrew Apostoli of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal addresses this question at length in his book, "Fatima for Today". Pope Pius XII and Pope Paul VI both consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but Sr. Lucia responded each time that the consecration was incomplete. Pope St. John Paul II consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1984 on May 25<sup>th</sup>, the Solemnity of the Annunciation. He fulfilled Our Lady's request by inviting all the bishops of the world to make the consecration in union with him; he consecrated the world and made special mention of Russia, using a descriptive reference out of prudence.

In subsequent years, some people expressed concern that the Holy Father did not explicitly articulate the name "Russia" during the consecration. Every time someone said to Pope John Paul, "Holy Father, please consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary," he would respond, "I *did* consecrate Russia!" or "Russia is consecrated." Sr. Lucia herself affirmed multiple times that heaven had accepted this consecration (Apostoli, 198).

There are still groups and individuals that stir up confusion about Russia's consecration, complaining that Russia is not converted yet. Fr. Apostoli points out the distinction between "consecration" and "conversion". The Holy Father has consecrated Russia, but realistically its conversion may take some time. Several decades of atheistic communism in Russia have taken quite a toll; systematic indoctrination and aggressive religious persecution have taken place in Russia and in many other countries. The Holy Father has fulfilled his part: he consecrated Russia and the world to Mary's Immaculate Heart. *Our* continued prayer, sacrifice, and fidelity can contribute to their ongoing conversion (Apostoli, 255).

Fr. Apostoli notes that some people get caught up in controversy over Russia and neglect the rest of Mary's message. He says of them, "little attention by comparison is given to responding to our Lady's call for prayer and penance, especially the Five First Saturdays devotion" (Apostoli, 249). To review, here is what Mary requested for the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays: (1) go to Confession, (2) receive Holy Communion, (3) pray the rosary, (4) make an additional 15 minute meditation in Mary's company, (5) form the

intention of making reparation to her; finally, do all of this on the first Saturday of the month for five consecutive months. All of these practices bring us closer to Jesus and develop good habits of prayer, intentionality, and other-centeredness.

Some of our local parishes host First Saturday devotions, and that is a beautiful thing; people go to Mass and receive Holy Communion; before or after Mass they go to Confession and pray the rosary. However, it seems that many people don't realize there are two more aspects to the First Saturday Devotion: an additional meditation and the formation of an intention.

Mary asked that we form the intention of making reparation to her. Why? While Sister Lucia lived in the convent in Tuy, Spain, her confessor asked why there should be five First Saturdays. Why not nine, like the nine First Fridays in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Why not seven, in honor of the seven swords which pierce the Heart of Our Lady of Sorrows? Sister Lucia took these questions to prayer. On the night between May 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, in 1930, she received a response before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament:

'Daughter, the motive is simple. There are five kinds of offenses and blasphemies spoken against the Immaculate Heart of Mary: blasphemies (1) against her Immaculate Conception; (2) against her perpetual virginity; (3) against her divine maternity, refusing at the same time to accept her as the Mother of mankind; (4) by those who try publicly to implant in the hearts of children an indifference, contempt, and even hate for this Immaculate Mother; and (5) for those who insult her directly in her sacred images' (Apostoli, 156-7).

Each of the five months is to make reparation for a specific blasphemy.

It might help to clarify some terms. First, Jesus referred to "blasphemy", which seems like a very strong word. It means "speaking against God in a contemptuous, scornful, or abusive manner. [...] Serious contemptuous ridicule of the saints, sacred objects, or persons consecrated to God is also blasphemous because God is indirectly attacked" (Hardon, 68). Earlier, Mary and Jesus mentioned making "reparation" to remove the thorns piercing

Mary's Heart. "Reparation" means "the act or fact of making amends. [...] With respect to God [and in this case Mary], it means making up with greater love for the failure in love through sin" (Hardon, 463).

Both Mary and the Child Jesus asked Lucia to make reparation for the blasphemies and ingratitude that offend the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Like Jesus, Mary does nothing for selfish reasons. What's more, she experiences perfect happiness and fulfillment in heaven. Why would she ask for reparation for sins committed against *her*? Our Lord explained it to Lucia: God is offended that Mary has been slighted, ignored, and ridiculed; Our Lady requested reparation so her offenders would be forgiven! In the midst of these insults, she does not think of herself; instead, she is concerned for the salvation of those who offend her. This sounds a lot like someone else I know: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34)—Jesus said this while dying for us on the cross (Apostoli, 157).

If we had more time, I would gladly go into detail about each of the five blasphemies and ways we can make reparation. Instead, I will refer you to three resources where you can find more information. Fr. Andrew Apostoli has published a little book called "Treasures of First Saturdays Devotion"; it contains examples of the five blasphemies, doctrinal explanations, ideas for reparation, and rosary meditations. The World Apostolate of Fatima will soon publish a prayer journal called "Give Me Consolation"; it aids in making prayerful reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the Five First Saturdays. Finally, our IHM website offers meditations for the Five First Saturdays; again, this meditation is an oft-forgotten component of Our Lady's request.

Why does our reparation matter? In our country, and in much of the world, many people ignore, despise, offend, or blaspheme God Himself, and this absolutely calls for conversion and reparation! Meanwhile, in the diocese of Wichita, we might wonder about making reparation to Mary. Especially if we surround ourselves with faithful Catholic friends, we probably do not see or hear many grievous offenses against Our Lady. However, our modern world does contain compelling reasons for fervent prayer and sacrifice to make such reparation. Let me tell you about two things in our neighboring continent.

Today, right now, there is a terrible and sacrilegious use of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Gangs of drug traffickers in South America and Mexico take her image and replace her face with a skull. They call this image “*Santa Muerte*”, which means “Holy Death”, and through it they invoke the aid of the devil. This is an outrageous offense against Mary and against God, who sent Our Lady to the people of Mexico. This sacrilege cries out for reparation!

Only three months ago, Life News reported a horrific and blasphemous incident in Argentina. Pro-choice activists gathered in the street outside a Catholic Church, and they graphically play-acted the abortion of Baby Jesus. The woman portraying Mary had an almost gleeful expression on her face. I was horrified, shocked, disgusted, and angry when I saw it. I thought: Don’t these people know what they are doing? I almost hope *not*, because that would make them more culpable for their grave offense against Our Lord and Our Lady. Learning about this modern day incident really fired me up to put my whole heart into making reparation! It *matters*! God is being offended left and right, at any given moment, and so is Mary. Sinners need our prayers and sacrifices on their behalf so they might repent and be converted!

I tell you these two stories hoping that they will strengthen your conviction about the need for reparation. They certainly intensified *my* motivation to pray fervently and sacrifice generously. The reality of blasphemy is sobering, but recall what Our Lady told the three children in July of 1917: “In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and a period of peace will be granted to the world” (Dos Santos, 179).

What is our role? Jesus desires our intentionality and perseverance in prayer. He desires that we make reparation with conviction. Jesus told Lucia, “It is true, my daughter, that many souls begin the First Saturdays, but few finish them, and those who do complete them do so in order to receive the graces that are promised thereby. It would please me more if they did Five with fervor and with the intention of making reparation to the

Heart of your heavenly Mother, than if they did Fifteen, in a tepid and indifferent manner...” (Dos Santos, 196).

Remember what Jesus says in the book of Revelation about lukewarmness! (Rev. 3:16)

It is true that Our Lady asked us for only five First Saturdays of reparation. Having said that, I must ask: Why limit ourselves? We can make another five on behalf of others, and another five, and so on! Better yet, we can invite others and accompany them in making their own Five First Saturdays in reparation, with conviction!

God is so good; He calls us—and the whole world—to conversion and sanctification. God is faithful and always keeps his promises. Mary, too, is faithful; she kept the promises she made to the children in Fatima. The Holy Father has been faithful and responded to his part of Our Lady’s message, consecrating Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. What remains is for *us* to do *our* part. In the words of St. Paul, “As your fellow workers we beg you not to receive the grace of God in vain. [...] Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!” (2 Cor. 6:1-2) So—with generosity and gusto, let us persevere in prayer, penance, and the faithful fulfillment of our daily duty. Let us make reparation with intention and energy by fulfilling the Five First Saturdays and inviting others to join us.

To conclude, let us each think of a voluntary sacrifice or passive penance we can offer in reparation in the next two hours. Please repeat the prayer after me: “O Jesus, it is for love of You,/ for the conversion of sinners,/ and in reparation for the sins/ committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary” (Dos Santos, 87-88). Amen.

Works Cited and Consulted:

Apostoli, Andrew. Fatima for Today: The Urgent Marian Message of Hope. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2010.

Apostoli, Andrew. Treasures of First Saturday Devotion. Washington, New Jersey: World Apostolate of Fatima, 2006.

Dos Santos, Lucia. FATIMA in Lucia's Own Words, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition. Portugal: Secretariado dos Pastorinhos, 2005.

Hardon, John. Modern Catholic Dictionary. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1980.

Wick, Michael. Give Me Consolation. Washington, NJ: World Apostolate of Fatima, 2017.

World Apostolate of Fatima. Fatima: 100 Years of Grace-Soul Commemorative Issue. Washington, NJ: World Apostolate of Fatima, 2017.