




Dolorosa

WEEK WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE SACRED HEART

JUNE 2017



Fatima: A Message of Hope *First Apparition - May 13, 1917*

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Less than one month after the outbreak of World War I, on August 20, 1914, the saintly pontiff Pope Pius X died. Shortly after, the College of Cardinals assembled in a conclave to elect a new pope. The conclave elected Cardinal Giacomo della Chiesa, the Archbishop of Bologna. It is said that with World War I raging, the cardinals sought someone with diplomatic experience to lead the Church. Cardinal della Chiesa was the man. He took the name Benedict XV in honor of Pope Benedict XIV, who was also the Archbishop of Bologna.

Pope Benedict XV's main focus during the early years of his pontificate was bringing about peace in a world at war. To this end, he issued his first encyclical *Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum* on November 1, 1914. In this document, Benedict XV expressed an earnest appeal for world peace. He summed up the grave situation in these words:

On every side the dread phantom of war holds sway: there is scarce room for another thought in the minds of men. The combatants are the greatest and wealthiest nations of the earth; what wonder, then, if, well provided with the most awful weapons modern military science has devised, they strive to destroy one another with refinements of horror. There is no limit to the measure of ruin and of slaughter; day by day the earth is drenched with newly-shed blood, and is covered with the

bodies of the wounded and of the slain. (Vatican Website. 30 June 2017. W2.Vatican.va)

Benedict's heartfelt petitions for peace, however, went unheard as the horrors of war continued.

On December 7, 1914, Benedict pleaded with the world powers to hold a Christmas truce, asking "that the guns may fall silent at least upon the night the angels sang," to allow for negotiations for peace. The plea was

—Pope Benedict XV





From left to right: Lucia dos Santos, Francisco Marto, Jacinta Marto

ignored by the world leaders, although there were informal Christmas truces in certain places.

With all of his efforts to bring about peace failing, Pope Benedict XV turned to the Mother of God. He urgently requested all Christians to beg the Blessed Virgin Mary to obtain peace in the world. On May 5, 1917, he issued a letter to all Catholics. William Thomas Walsh relates a portion of this letter in his book *Our Lady of Fatima*. He cites these words of Pope Benedict:

To Mary, then, who is the Mother of Mercy and omnipotent by grace, let loving and devout appeal go up from every corner of the earth—from noble temples and tiniest chapels, from royal palaces and mansions of the rich as from the poorest hut—from every place wherein a faithful soul finds shelter—from blood-drenched plains and seas. Let it bear to her the anguished cry of mothers and wives, the wailing of innocent little ones, the sighs of every generous heart: that her most tender and benign solicitude may be moved and the peace we ask for be obtained for our agitated world. (60)

As an act of filial confidence in Our Lady's ability to bring peace to the world, the Pope ordered that the invocation "Queen of Peace, pray for us" be permanently added to the Litany of Loreto.

The Blessed Mother responded quickly to this heartfelt plea of the Pope and all Christendom. Only eight days later, at Fatima, Portugal, the Queen of Peace came in response to the cries raised to her from a warring world.

She appeared to three children in a small little corner of the earth. The place was named by the natives "Cova da Iria," which means the "Cove of Peace."

On Sunday, May 13, 1917, the three shepherd children—Lucia dos Santos and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto—had taken their flocks out to pasture. After they finished lunch, they prayed the rosary and then began building castles out of rocks while watching their sheep.

As they occupied themselves collecting rocks and constructing their castles, they saw a sudden bright flash of light in the clear, blue sky. This was followed immediately by another flash. Frightened, the children dropped their stones and looked at one another. There was not a dark cloud in the sky, the sun was shining brightly, and there was no wind. Yet, they knew that lightning meant a storm was coming and decided to return home. They quickly gathered their sheep and started down the hill when another shaft of light flashed in the sky. As they continued on their way, they noticed a beautiful lady hovering above a holm oak tree.

In *The Message of Fatima*, John De Marchi relates the account of the apparition as given by Lucia. "It was a lady dressed all in white," Lucia records, "more brilliant than the sun, shedding rays of light, clear and stronger than crystal glass filled with the most sparkling water, pierced by the burning rays of the sun" (31).

The children could do nothing but stand there frightened as the bright light that surrounded the Lady engulfed them.

The Lady smiled and warmly said: "Do not be afraid. I will not harm you."

Lucia asked here where she came from.

The Lady pointed to the sky and said, "I come from heaven."

Still unsure of the Lady, Lucia asked what she wanted.

The Lady said, "I came to ask you to come here for six consecutive months, on the thirteenth day, at this same hour. I will tell you later who I am and what I want. And I shall return here again a seventh time."

Lucia asked the Lady if they would go to heaven, and she answered yes.

"Are you willing to offer yourselves to God," the Blessed Virgin then asked, "and endure all the sufferings that He may choose to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended and as a supplication for the conversion of sinners?"

Lucia responded for all three of them that they would like to do so.

"Then you are going to have much to suffer," the Lady said, "but the grace of God will be your comfort." As she said these words, she opened her hands and a stream of light permeated the children.

Before departing, Our Lady made one last request. "Say the rosary every day," she said, "to bring peace to the world and the end of the war."

Have said that she began to rise into the air, moving towards the east until she disappeared.

"To Mary, then, who is the Mother of Mercy and omnipotent by grace, let loving and devout appeal go up from every corner of the earth . . . that Her most tender and benign solicitude may be moved and the peace we ask for be obtained for our agitated world."

One hundred years ago, the Mother of God came from heaven to earth with a message of hope for mankind and a plan for world peace. An essential part of that message and plan is the daily recitation of her rosary. "Say the rosary every day," she repeated over at Fatima. In fact, Our Lady made this request in all six of her apparitions. That is how important the rosary is to her and how essential it is to her plan; that is how indispensable it is for our eternal salvation.

The devil knows this. He understands how powerful the rosary is against him and his agents in this world. This is why he has put so much effort into his attempts to destroy devotion to the rosary. To achieve his end, he has even employed the hierarchy of the New Church. Although the Modernists were successful in



taking away the Mass and the sacraments from millions of Catholics throughout the world, they failed to take away the rosary. They certainly tried. They attempted to rid the world of the rosary by calling Saint Dominic's reception of the rosary from Our Lady a myth and a legend. They tried by scoffing those who believed it and who prayed it. Yet, they failed to get rid of the rosary. The only thing the Modernists could do was distort it by boldly adding their own so-called Luminous Mysteries to the true mysteries given us by Our Lady. Only we can take the rosary away from ourselves. This we do by neglecting or, heaven forbid, by refusing to say it.

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In 1914, Pope Benedict XV wrote about the condition of the world. "On every side the dread phantom of war holds sway," he wrote, "there is scarce room for another thought in the minds of men." These words of the Holy Father may very well be applied to our own day, for while there may not be a world war, strictly speaking, there is nonetheless much bloodshed and violence. This violence is found not only in the world as a whole, but also in our own country. The world is utterly bereft of peace.

It would even seem that the stage is being set for another world war—so great is the political strife today.

To help avert worldwide catastrophe and bring about peace for our world, our country, and our homes, we must respond to the request of Our Lady of Fatima. That is, we must do our part by resolving to pray the rosary every day. “To bring peace to the world and the end of the war,” Our Lady said—and we may add for our own day, to bring peace, end the senseless bloodshed, and prevent war—”say the rosary every day.” We must, then, refuse to listen to the false excuses prompted by the devil and our imagination, which attempt to convince us that we do not have the time or that we are too tired to pray the rosary. We must be convinced that if we have time to eat, then we have time for the rosary.

If, however, you already pray the daily rosary, strive to pray it more fervently and inspire others to do so. One way to aid you in praying the rosary better is to form an intention before beginning. We all have someone or something for which to pray. Whenever you say the rosary, then, ask for some special grace either for yourself—such as to cultivate a certain virtue, to overcome a specific sin, etc.,— or, for someone else—such as the conversion or spiritual welfare of a certain relative or friend. Forming an intention helps in devoutly reciting the rosary because if

you pray with a specific intention—one that really matters to you—you will have an incentive to pray it better since you have something at stake. It will therefore be easier to bring your mind back to the mystery upon which you are meditating.

Let us, then, follow the holy example of Pope Benedict XV and place our trust for peace in the world, in our country, and in our homes in the immaculate hands of the Queen of Peace. Let us, as well, place ourselves under her mantle of protection as we strive in this valley of tears to attain eternal happiness, bearing ever in mind these consoling words of Saint Louis de Montfort: “If you say the rosary faithfully until death, I do assure you that, in spite of the gravity of your sins ‘you shall receive a never fading crown of glory’ (*The Secret of the Rosary* 12).

—The Reception of the Rosary by Saint Dominic

