



Dolorosa

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SEPTEMBER 2017



Fatima: A Message of Hope

Fourth Apparition *August 19, 1917*

Father Paul Krug, C.S.P.V

Memorable as the apparition of July 13th was, Our Lady's apparition in August 1917 was memorable in its own right. This is because, through no fault of the children, it did not occur on thirteenth of the month as Our Lady had so desired. This is what happened, as explained by Father John de Marchi in *The Message of Our Lady of Fatima* (83-105).

News of the apparitions had spread far and wide throughout Fatima and all of Portugal. This spread was aided by the anti-clerical and godless press, which sought to sow seeds of doubt and skepticism about the apparitions. Among those who ridiculed the idea of the apparitions was Artur Oliveira Santos, the chief magistrate, or mayor, of the county of Ourém. He was baptized Catholic, but abandoned his Faith at the age of twenty to join the Freemasonic Lodge of Leira. When he heard about the apparitions of Fatima, he realized that they might not only have positive effects among people, but also that the Church, which he had endeavored to undermine, could rise to new life in his county. So, he set out to end all talk of the apparitions once and for all.



Artur Oliveira Santos

On the morning of Monday, August 13th, Señor Santos arrived at the home of Francisco and Jacinta Marto and insisted that he drive all three children to the Cova da Iria in his carriage. Ti Marto, Francisco and Jacinta's father, protested but to no avail. To make a long story short, the mayor coaxed the children into the carriage with him. They began making their way to the Cova da

Iria, but when they came to a certain crossroads, everything changed. The carriage turned away from the Cova and headed toward Ourém. There, Señor Santos rudely interrogated the children in an attempt to discover the secret Our Lady had revealed to them. He promised them money, he assured them safety, and when all else failed, he threatened them. Yet, despite his threats and promises, the children refused to divulge the secret.

In the afternoon, the children were moved to the local prison and further threatened. This time it was with death. Still, they were firmly determined to die rather than reveal Our Lady's secret. "If they kill us, it won't matter," Jacinta told her brother and her cousin, "because we'll go straight to heaven."



That day a crowd of about six thousand gathered at the Cova da Iria to witness the apparition. Around noon, they saw a cloud descend and rest above the holm oak tree for a few minutes, after which it rose towards heaven and disappeared. The people believed that Our Lady had come and, not finding the children, had returned to heaven. The crowd felt that the Blessed Virgin was disappointed, and thus they were upset. So, they formed a mob and planned to march to Ourém to protest against the mayor. This was prevented, however, by the intervention of Mr. Marto who urged the crowd to be calm and not to hurt anyone.

Meanwhile, the children were kept overnight by the mayor. On the morning of the fourteenth, after rigorously interrogating Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta, Señor Santos told them that he was going to put them in jail and then have them thrown into a tank of boiling oil. When they reached the jail, Jacinta began to cry.

“Why do you cry, Jacinta?” Lucia asked.

“Because we are going to die without ever again seeing our parents.”

“Don’t cry, Jacinta,” Francisco then said. “We are offering this sacrifice for sinners.”

The three children then knelt down and prayed thus: “My Jesus, all this is for love of You and for sinners.”

With the failure of all his attempts to persuade the children to reveal Our Lady’s secret, the mayor then resorted to base trickery. One by one he took the children away to “boil” them in oil. This trick, too, failed. In the end, Señor Santos realized that if he did not release the children, the enraged mob would come for him. So, rather than endanger his life, he himself took the children in his carriage to the rectory of the church in Fatima

On the following Sunday, August 19th, the children went to a place called Valinhos where they intended to spend the afternoon. It was there, in the late afternoon, that Our Lady appeared.

“What do you want of me?” Lucia asked.

“I want you to continue to come to the Cova da Iria on the thirteenth and to continue to say the Rosary every day.”

Lucia then expressed her anguish at the lack of belief of so many in the reality of her presence. She asked the Blessed Virgin if she would work a miracle that all might see and believe.

“Yes,” Our Lady said, “in the last month, in October, I shall perform a miracle so that all may believe in my apparitions. If they had not taken you to the village, the miracle would have been greater. Saint Joseph will come with the baby Jesus to give peace to the world. Our Lord will also come to bless the people. Besides, Our Lady of the Rosary and Our Lady of Sorrows will come.”

The children listened intently as the Blessed Virgin spoke. Suddenly, the Blessed Mother’s countenance grew sad. “Pray,” she said. “Pray a great deal and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to hell because there is no one to pray and make sacrifices for them.” With these words, Our Lady rose into the air and moved towards the east before disappearing.

“Pray a great deal and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to hell because there is no one to pray and make sacrifices for them.”

In modern times, there have been two great Marian apparitions—at Lourdes in 1858 and at Fatima in 1917. In the course of both of these apparitions, the Mother of God repeatedly made the same plea: to pray and make sacrifices for sinners. In her apparitions to Saint Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes, the Blessed Virgin asked her to pray to God for sinners and to do penance for sin. She even told Bernadette to relay this message to the crowd at the grotto. Fifty-nine years later at Fatima, Our Lady gave Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta the same message: “Pray a great deal and make sacrifices for sinners.” Why was it that Our Lady was so adamant that prayers be offered for sinners? Why was she so unwavering in her request that sacrifices be made for them and that penance be done for their sins?

It is because the Blessed Virgin Mary truly understands the incomprehensible value of a soul. She knows that one soul is worth more than the entire created universe and all creation in it. This is because the soul is made in the image and likeness of God. “Let us make man,” God said, “in our own image and likeness” (Gen. 1:26). In the *Summa Theologica*, Saint Thomas Aquinas explains that it is this image and likeness of God in the soul that makes man above all other earthly creatures (Ia. Q.93). When that soul, furthermore, is in the state of grace, no price can be put on it.

This is why Our Lady so often repeated her plea to pray and sacrifice for sinners. While it is true that we are all sinners, Our Lady was particularly referring to those who are hardened in vice and who are not sorry for their sins. As a good Mother, she fears for these, her children, and she knows that a number of them will lose their souls in the end because there was no one to pray and sacrifice for them. For it is by means of prayer and sacrifice that grace is obtained for sinners to amend their lives. Our Lady, therefore, besought Saint Bernadette at Lourdes, she implored the children at Fatima, and through them, she pleads with us. “Pray,” she says to us, “pray a great deal and make sacrifices for sinners.” Will we, true children of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let her pleas on behalf of sinners go unanswered? Will we stand by as countless sinners—perhaps some of our own relatives and friends—drown in the deluge of sin which is flooding the world? I do not



believe there is a good person, however indifferent, who would just stand by and watch someone else drown without making any effort to help save that person. So, it must be us in regard to sinners.

Will we, true children of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let her pleas on behalf of sinners go unanswered? Will we stand by as countless sinners—perhaps some of our own relatives and friends—drown in the deluge of sin which is flooding the world?

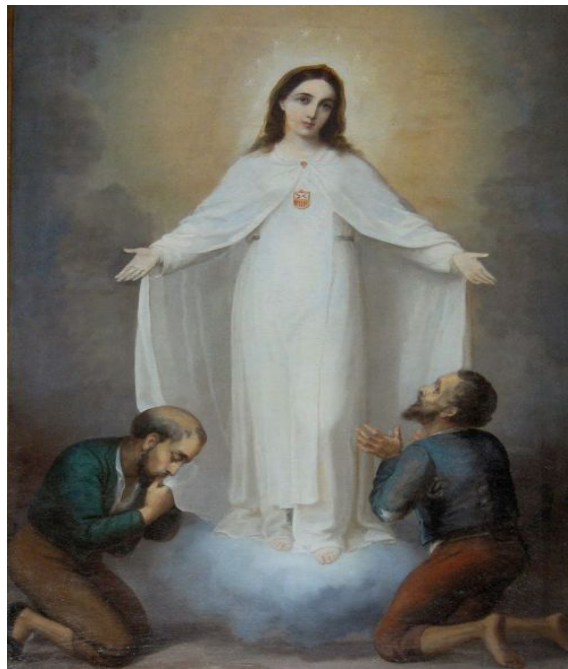


Let us, then, answer Our Lady’s call to free sinners from the clutches of hell. Let us do this by praying for those souls who are hardened in sin and by making sacrifices for their salvation just as we should hope that others would pray and sacrifice in reparation for our sins. We should endeavor every day to say a little prayer for some particular sinner whom we know or for a certain type of sinner, such as those who are most in need of prayers or those who have fallen into some particular vice, or we should pray for sinners in general. As we strive each day to pray for them, let us also make a little sacrifice, that is, do some small penance, for them each day. Sacrifices, even the smallest ones, are so beneficial for souls. We thus should not neglect this most salutary practice.

There are essentially two types of penance: voluntary, or self-imposed penance, and involuntary, or what we can call “God-imposed,” penance. Voluntary penance is an act of the virtue of mortification. Mortification is either external or internal. External penance is of the body, that is, of the five senses. An example of external mortification is fasting. Saint Francis de Sales teaches, as related in *The Spirit of Saint Francis de Sales* by Bishop Jean Pierre Camus, that a very meritorious external mortification consists in eating a little less of what we like and a little more of what we do not like (161). Another example of exterior penance is practicing custody of our eyes—not looking at something out of curiosity. In short, any mortification of the five senses is external mortification.

Interior mortification, on the other hand, is penance of the heart. It consists in suppressing the eleven passions and the soul’s spiritual faculties of the understanding, or intellect, and the will. An example of interior penance is subduing our self-will, that is, the inclination to do what we want, when, where, and how we want to do it. We can also mortify ourselves internally by not complaining or criticizing when we do not get our way, or by controlling our imagination—in other words, by not daydreaming. Penance of this nature constitute internal mortification and are thus valuable sacrifices that can be offered for sinners. Saint Francis de Sales and many other masters of the spiritual life tell us that interior penance is superior to the exterior form. “That [penance] which is inward and hidden,” he says, “is far more excellent than that which is exterior” (155). The reason Saint Francis says this is because exterior penances can easily lead one to pride, vanity, hypocrisy, and indiscretion. In other words, since bodily penances can be seen by others, one can easily become puffed up by them.

However, Saint Francis goes on to explain that not even internal penances are the greatest mortifications. He says that “those mortifications which come upon us from without, either directly from God or through men by His permission are always superior to those which depend



Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners

upon our own choice” (155). In other words, the mortifications we do not seek or choose for ourselves—the penances and opportunities for sacrifice that God sends us either directly or through others—are the highest form of penance. This is so because they do not originate in our own will. What are these mortifications and penances? The sorrows, the trials, the contradictions, the toil and sufferings of our daily lives—in a word, the cross. “What can be a better penance,” St. Francis de Sales says in so many words, “than to bear a cross?” (154). Indeed, what better sacrifices can we make for sinners than to

carry our daily crosses for them? After all, is that not why Our Divine Savior carried His? We thus never imitate our suffering Savior more closely than when we bear our crosses for the sake of sinners.

In our time, perhaps more than ever before, we need heroic, self-sacrificing Catholics to heed Our Lady’s message of hope at Fatima—her request to give hope to poor sinners by praying and by making sacrifices for them. Today, perhaps more than ever before, we need Catholic people to make reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the countless sins and innumerable blasphemies hurled against them

and the Church. If we, Catholics, are not willing to do so, who will?

Let us, then, ever strive to pray each day for the conversion of sinners. Let us make it our daily endeavor to do penance for them, to perform exterior and interior mortifications for them, and to bear our crosses in the spirit of penance for our sins and the sins of others. In times of sorrow and hardship, let us keep ever on our lips the prayer of Our Lady of Fatima—the very prayer the three children prayed while suffering in prison: “O Jesus, it is for the love of Thee, in reparation

for the offences committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and for the conversion of poor sinners that I bear this.” In this way, may we be the Catholics today’s world and sinners need by striving to be heroic and saintly followers of Christ.

. . . what better sacrifices can we make for sinners than to carry our daily crosses for them? After all, is that not why Our Divine Savior carried His? We thus never imitate our suffering Savior more closely than when we bear our crosses for the sake of sinners.
