



# Dolorosa

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

OCTOBER 2017

## *Fatima: A Message of Hope*



## *Fifth Apparition September 13, 1917*

Father Paul Krug, C.S.P.V

By the time September—the fifth month of the apparitions—arrived, thousands still refused to believe in Our Lady’s message. Thousands more, however, did believe. Thus, the roads leading to the Cova da Iria on September 13, 1917, were mobbed. So thronged were they that Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta had a difficult time reaching the Cova. Lucia mentions this in her memoirs. As related by Father John de Marchi in *The Message of Our Lady of Fatima*, Lucia wrote: “When it came time to leave for the Cova da Iria, I left with Jacinta and Francisco, but there were so many people that we could hardly move a step. The roads overflowed with people” (113).

As the children inched their way along the road, they were continually stopped by people. Some fell on their knees at the feet of the children and besought them to bring their requests to the Blessed Virgin; others, who were unable to get near the children, shouted their requests above the din of the crowd. Some, according to Father de Marchi, even climbed trees to make their petitions known (114).

When the children finally arrived at the Cova da Iria, they approached the holm oak tree and began the Rosary. Lucia led while the massive crowd of people responded with Francisco and Jacinta. Towards the end of the Rosary, the children saw the flash of light that preceded Our Lady’s coming in each of the previous months. Soon, a

globe of light appeared before the crowd, and the Blessed Virgin was standing above the holm oak. She was, of course, only visible to the children.

Our Lady’s message of September 1917, as recounted by Father de Marchi, began with essentially the same request she had made in the previous apparitions: say the Rosary. “Let the people continue to say the Rosary every day to obtain the end of the war,” Our Lady said. So important is the Rosary to Our Lady that she left her throne in heaven to come to earth to tell us the same thing over and over. Certainly, she knows that children often need to be told something more than once to make an impression, and we are truly her children. Furthermore, Our Lady emphasized how powerful the Rosary is by telling Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta that it was the instrument which would bring about the end of World War I.

After making her plea for the recitation of the Rosary, Our Lady’s message took on a prophetic tone, as it had in the month previous. She reaffirmed her promise to work a miracle in October and again foretold some of the details that would accompany the miracle. She reminded the children that they would see Saint Joseph and the Christ Child and that Our Divine Savior, Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and the Mother of Sorrows would also appear.

Then, Our Lady encouraged Lucia, Francisco,



—Charles Bosseron Chambers. *Our Lady of Fatima*.

and Jacinta, as she had done in the past, to continue in their prayers and sacrifices for sinners. However, the Blessed Virgin, like a good Mother, wanted to make sure the children would not go overboard with their penitential practices to the detriment of their health, and thus she cautioned them against bodily penances that are too rigorous.

At this point, Lucia began presenting various petitions for cures which she had received from a number of people. To these requests, Our Lady simply responded: “Some I will cure, but the others, no.”

Lucia then spoke to Our Lady about three more concerns. First, she mentioned that some people desired to build a chapel at the Cova—a request to which Our Lady gave her approval. Then, she besought the Blessed Virgin to work the miracle in October so that all would believe that she was not a liar. Finally, Lucia presented Our Lady with some letters and a bottle of cologne or perfume. “Some people gave me these [for you],” Lucia said.

Surely, Our Lady smiled at the innocent gift of perfume, but her only response was this: “None of that is necessary for heaven.” With these words, Our Lady took leave of the children ascending into the air and heading towards the east. (115-116)

The words with which Our Lady ended her message, at first glance, may not seem very important. The Mother of God, however, does not say anything without a purpose. Consider how few times her words are recorded in Sacred Scripture. The four Gospels combined contain a total of eighty-nine chapters. Of these eighty-nine chapters, only three contain words spoken by the Blessed Virgin Mary—the first and second chapters of Saint Luke’s Gospel, and the second chapter of Saint John’s. In these three chapters, Our Lady is recorded as speaking on only four occasions: at the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Finding in the Temple, and the Marriage Feast at Cana. So, when Our Lady speaks, she has a motive. There was, therefore, a good reason why she responded to Lucia’s offering of letters and perfume with the words “None of that is necessary for heaven.”

These were the last words Our Lady spoke on this occasion. Undoubtedly, she desired to impress upon the children the emptiness of worldly things and that they are not necessary for eternal life.

The Blessed Mother understands how easy it is for her children to be drawn to the things and cares of the world. She knows, too, that the devil often uses worldly things and concerns to lead one away from God. And so, as she warned Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta, so does she warn us: the things of this world are not necessary for heaven; rather they are often obstacles to the attainment of heaven.

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We live in a world that is immersed not only in sin, but also in material goods, pleasures, news, and noise. One of the greatest examples of this is today’s obsession with technology. So many people, young and old, are frequently bent over their phones and tablets. Occasionally, they may look up to avoid stumbling or bumping into someone, but their devices tend to occupy their whole attention. It would seem, too, that the days when families spoke while at the dinner table are disappearing. Today, we see restaurants full of people who are more interested in their electronic devices than in the people around them. Children are playing video games or watching television shows on their phones, parents are scrolling through e-mails and text messages, and even the waiters are checking their social media accounts between orders. I see this almost on a weekly



basis in the airports. On average, seven of the ten people I see are occupied by their smartphones, their tablets, the television, and countless other gadgets of this sort.

Now, we cannot criticize technology itself for society's "technological mass hypnosis." Nothing is wrong with the responsible use of smartphones, tablets, or technology in general. Nor is there anything wrong with sending text messages, checking the latest news, keeping in touch with family and friends through social media, etc. But what is wrong with smartphones, tablets, and technology is the misuse of and obsession with these. The problem therefore is not with the technology; it is with the user. It is, as they say, a "user error."

Technology constitutes just one aspect, albeit a prominent one, of the excessive concern with material possessions with which this world is captivated. Money, pleasure, news, and work are among the others. What results from this preoccupation with the things and cares of the world? The result is the shirking of the duties of one's state in life; the neglecting of one's family; and, for Catholics, the lukewarm, neglectful practice of the Faith, especially regarding fidelity to prayer. If this last result—the lukewarm practice of the faith—is not checked, it will grow gradually worse and in the end, God forbid, draw one away from the faith altogether.

Because of original sin and fallen human nature, it is so easy to get caught up in the world. The goods of this earth, the pleasures, the entertainment, the business—all of these are appealing to human nature. We live in the

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world, we are exposed to the spirit of the world on a daily basis, and thus over time we develop, in a certain sense, a craving for worldly things, news, and pleasures. We must, therefore, be on our guard and not allow the worldly spirit to take hold of us or our loved ones. We must constantly remind ourselves of Our Lady's words at Fatima: "None of [this] is necessary for heaven." This we must do every day. For the world is, as it were, a swamp, and we have to venture through this swamp in the course of our lives. When one trudges through an actual swamp, his shoes will inevitably be covered with slime. Likewise, when we trudge through the swamp of the world, we are often covered, to a greater or lesser degree, with the slime of the world; that is, we are touched by its spirit. Very often, then, we need to cleanse ourselves of this slime. One of the simplest means of doing this is through spiritual reading.

For some, the term *spiritual reading* may be a strange expression. Very simply, spiritual reading is the reading of those books which help one to know, love, and serve God better, and which aid one in the pursuit of holiness and the practice of virtue. It is perhaps the most underrated exercise in the spiritual life. Many people are unaware of just how important it is for living a good Catholic life. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, one of the great Doctors of the Church, considered it to be one of the most powerful weapons in the spiritual combat for our souls. He truly believed, as Saint Alphonsus de Liguori relates in *The True Spouse of Christ*, that "spiritual reading and prayer are the arms by which hell is conquered and paradise won" (513). Indeed, it is an antidote given us by God against the plague of worldliness.

Spiritual reading furnishes us with so many advantages against the lure of the world. These advantages include (1) help with prayer, (2) an escape from worldly cares, (3) examples to imitate.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, twelfth-century Doctor of the Church





Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Society of Jesus

### *Help with Prayer*

Very often during prayer our minds will wander to worldly topics, such as what is happening in our daily lives, what is going on in the world, what concerns us about certain material possessions, and so on. These distractions, and others like them, constantly rear their ugly heads while we pray, and we often have to exert serious effort to repel them and turn our minds back to our prayer. However, by means of spiritual reading, we fill our minds with thoughts of God, Our Lady, and the saints, and we can call upon these thoughts in time of distraction to bring our mind back to our prayer.

### *An Escape from Worldly Cares*

Spiritual reading raises our minds from the people, the things, the cares, and the worries of this world to the people, the things, and the cares of heaven. Each day, so many material concerns occupy our minds and our time. It is most beneficial to the soul, then, to retreat from these distractions and set our minds at rest by reading about Our Divine Savior, His Blessed Mother, and the saints.

### *Examples to Imitate*

The practice of spiritual reading often brings to life the lives of Our Lord, Our Lady, and the saints. We see through their eyes, as it were, the difficulties they faced, the virtues they practiced, and so on. We can thus learn from their holy examples how to practice virtue; how to bear our sufferings, hardships, and sorrows; and ultimately how

to save our souls. If we wish to become holy, we must read about holy people. Their faith will strengthen ours. Their confidence in God and trust in divine providence will encourage ours. Their perseverance in bearing with the struggles of this life will inflame us with perseverance. Above all, their victory over themselves, the world, and the devil will spur us on to victory. How desperately we need this encouragement today!

A number of saints, who at one time had led worldly lives, were put on the path to heaven by means of spiritual reading. Consider Saint Augustine who, at one time enslaved by impurity and heresy, began to lead a life of holiness by reading one of the epistles of Saint Paul. Today, he is a Doctor of the Church and one of the greatest saints in heaven. Look at Saint Ignatius of Loyola. He was a soldier, imbued with the desire for the honors, the comforts, and the pleasures of the world. By reading the lives of the saints while recovering from injury, he too began leading a life of holiness, and he eventually founded the Jesuit Order, which is responsible for the salvation of countless souls.

Let us, then, like these great saints, make it a point to devote some time to the reading of Sacred Scripture; of the events in the lives of Our Lord, Our Lady, and the saints; or of the writings of the saints and other Catholic spiritual authors. Let us do this several times a week. Ideally, reading of this sort should be done daily for about fifteen minutes, but if we strive to spend about twenty minutes a couple times each week, we will be doing enough to arm ourselves against the world and its spirit.

Be assured, the devil will tempt you to put off this holy practice. He will try to convince you that you do not have enough time to spare for spiritual reading. He will tell you that spiritual books are not readily available—that you cannot just walk into Barnes & Noble and find a good Catholic book on the life of a saint that is not modernized. The devil will certainly do his best, but at such moments, we must remember three things. First, that it is possible to find good spiritual books. The Daughters of Mary have a number of them available on their website ([www.daughtersofmarypress.com](http://www.daughtersofmarypress.com)), and many more can be found online at places such as TAN Books. Second, we must remind ourselves that we have time for so many other activities. We often even have time to read worldly articles, news reports, books, and social media posts. Surely, we can spare some time each week to read about topics that pertain to our eternal salvation. Finally, we must remember the words of Our Lady of Fatima, especially when struggling with worldly desires, that none of these things are necessary for heaven. Only one thing is necessary—that each of us dies in the state of grace and saves our immortal souls.