



Dolorosa

CHRISTMAS WEEK

DECEMBER 2017



In her apparition at Fatima on June 13, 1917, Our Lady made a promise to Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta. As Father John de Marchi in *The Message of Our Lady of Fatima* relates, Our Lady said to Lucia:

I will take Francisco and Jacinta soon [to heaven]. You, however, are to stay here a longer time. Jesus wants to use you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish the Devotion to the Immaculate Heart in the world. (56)

The first part of this promise—that Our Lady would come to take Francisco and Jacinta to heaven—was fulfilled not long after the final apparition of 1917. She came for Francisco first. After a bout of influenza, Francisco, having made his first and last Holy Communion, died on April 4, 1919. Less than a year later, Our Lady returned for Jacinta. Like Francisco, Jacinta too had suffered from influenza for a considerable amount of time. Her illness caused an abscess in her chest which slowly sapped her fragile body of its strength. From these ailments, Jacinta developed pneumonia, followed by tuberculosis, and finally pleurisy. She died on February 20, 1920.

Lucia was thus left alone in this world to carry out the second part of Our Lady's promise. For many more years, she was to remain on earth to accomplish a mission very dear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. On December 10, 1925, this mission was revealed to her.

Some months previous Lucia had entered the convent of the Sisters of Saint Dorothy. It was there that Our Lady again appeared, as she had said she would in July 1917, to request the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. Don Sharkey relates the account of this apparition in *The Woman Shall Conquer*. He writes:

Lucia was praying in the cell of her convent when Our Lady appeared, together with the Child Jesus elevated on a cloud of light. Our Lady rested one hand on Lucia's shoulder. In the other, she held a heart surrounded with sharp thorns. The Child Jesus spoke first: "Have pity on the Heart of your Most Holy Mother. It is covered with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to remove them with an act of reparation." (121)

After Our Lord had spoken, Our Lady then made her heartfelt plea. This is what she said:

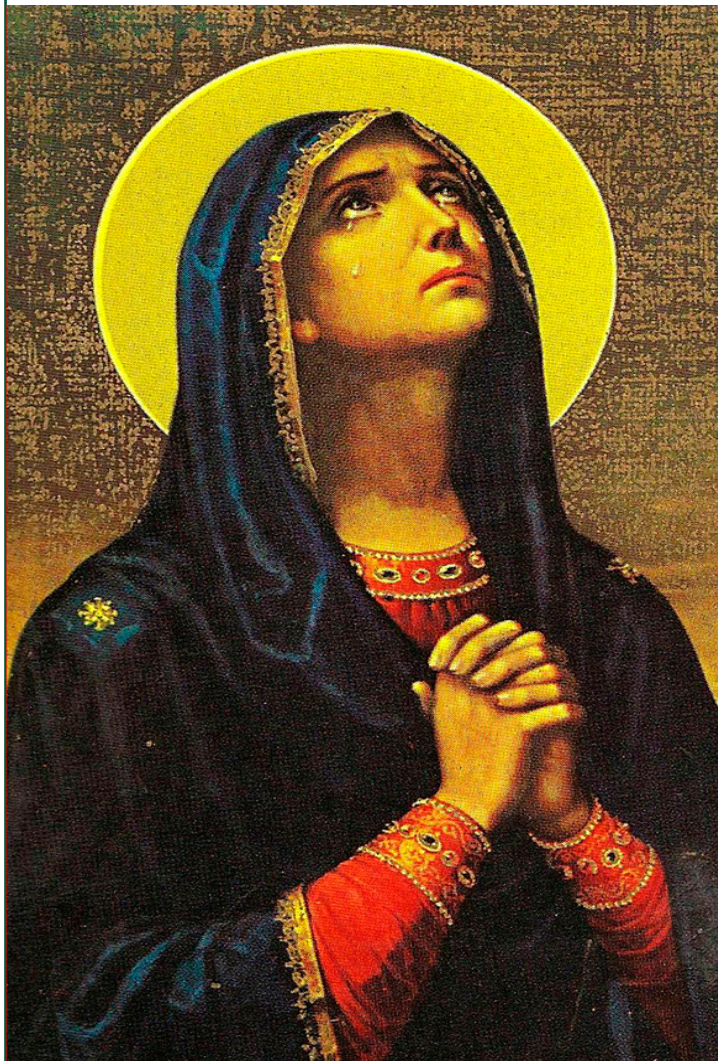
My daughter, look at my Heart encircled with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. Do you at least try to console me and announce in my name that I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who, on the first Saturday

of five consecutive months, go to confession and receive Holy Communion, recite the Rosary and keep me company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary with the intention of making reparation. (121)

So impressed was Lucia by Our Lady's sorrowful countenance and pierced heart, that she never forgot what she saw and heard. She, therefore, strove with every fiber of her being to ensure that the devotion of the five First Saturdays was promoted so that her heavenly Mother would be consoled.

"My daughter, look at my Heart encircled with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. Do you at least try to console me . . ."

Such was Lucia's love for the Blessed Virgin Mary—such was the love of this child for her mother. In fact, this should be the love of any child for his mother, for filial love moves a child to go out of his way to comfort and console his mother in times of sorrow.



Several years ago, a certain mother shared a rather touching story about her young son's love and compassion. The mother explained that she had been grieving for many weeks over the sudden loss of her husband. Whenever she would think of him or see his picture, tears would fill her eyes and she would begin to cry.

One day, her little boy saw her crying, and he wanted to cheer her up and make her feel better, so he went to his bedroom and pulled his small bank off the shelf. Opening the bank, he emptied out all the coins. He then went to his mother and held out the coins in the palm of his hand. "Here, Mom," he said, "I want you to have these." The young mother took the coins from the boy's hand and graciously thanked him for his little gift.

The little boy, however, could see that she was still very sad, so he ran outside and picked a rose from the garden. He then returned to his mother's side, and holding the flower out to her, he said, "I picked this flower for you, Mom. I hope it makes you feel better." The mother took the flower, gently patted her son on the head, and with a little smile said, "Thank you so much. It's a beautiful flower."

But the boy could still see the signs of sorrow and grief written on his mother's face. He wanted to do something to comfort her, but he did not know what he could do. He thought and thought about what else he could give his mother, but nothing came to mind, except one thing. And so he stretched out his small arms, he embraced his mother, and he said, "Mom, I love you." The sad mother looked lovingly into her little boy's eyes and hugging him, said: "I love you, too." Still embracing her son, she then said, "Thank you. Thank you for making me feel so much better. Thank you for cheering me up."



... the boy could still see the signs of sorrow and grief written on his mother's face. He wanted to do something to comfort his mother, but he did not know what he could do. He thought and thought about what else he could give his mother, but nothing came to mind, except one thing.

How many stories there are like this one. How often we hear about the consolation a child gives his parents when they are faced with sorrow and trials. These incidents have heart-warming endings. There is, however, a story similar to these, but one which has a very sad ending. It is the "story" of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her Divine Son—the story of a Mother who had to watch her only Son be tortured and then be unjustly put to death.

Our Lady watched as the brutal soldiers scourged her Son until His sacred flesh hung in shreds. She walked in His bloody footsteps as she followed Him up Mount Calvary. She witnessed the barbaric executioners drive the long nails into His hands and feet before raising Him up on the cross to die. Then, after watching Him hang upon the cross in a death agony for three hours, she held the bruised and bloodied Body of her dead Son in her arms.

How her Immaculate Heart ached at that moment!
How her Heart aches today when she sees her Divine Son

tortured and crucified again, as it were, by mortal sin. Words cannot describe the sorrow she felt then and the sorrow she feels now.

Yet—and this is perhaps the saddest part of the story—how few of Our Sorrowful Mother's children there are, relatively speaking, who strive to console her. How few there are who try to do something to comfort her, let alone try to be like the little boy who did everything he could to make his grieving mother feel better.

So, it was in 1917, Our Lady left her heavenly throne in search of someone who would console her Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart. She came to Fatima, Portugal, and there she did what a mother should never have to do with her children—she pleaded with them. She pleaded with the Fatima children, and through them, she pleaded with us. She besought all of her children to console her Sorrowful Heart. Our Lady did not, however, stop with making a simple request in 1917. She returned eight years later in 1925 to ask us again and to give us the means by which we could best comfort her.

"Look at my Heart," she said. "Look at my Heart encircled with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude." Then, she asked, "Do you at least try to console me . . ."

"Do you at least." It is as though she were saying to Lucia and to us, "There are so few who compassionate me in my sorrow, will you be among the few who do so? Will you at least care what I have suffered for you—what I have done for you? Will you at least be there for me, your Mother?"

Will we stand by and let our Mother's plea fall on deaf ears? Or will we rise up as loving children of Mary and be there for her and support her as she so often and so willingly is there for us and supports us in our sorrows? This is a question that only we can answer, and we can answer it best by fulfilling the request Our Lady made to Lucia in 1925, that is, by the devotion of the Five First Saturdays.

Our Lady herself told us the manner of making the First Saturdays, and she even made us a most wonderful promise if we would but comfort her in this way. She said:

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, go to confession and receive Holy Communion, recite the Rosary and keep me company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary with the intention of making reparation.

The devotion of the Five First Saturdays is thus quite simple. On the first Saturday of five consecutive months, all one need do is (1) go to confession; (2) receive Holy Communion; (3) pray five decades of the Rosary; (4) meditate for fifteen minutes on one or several mysteries of the Rosary; and, (5) do all these things with the intention of making reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Now, I do understand that not all of you have access to Holy Mass or to Holy Communion and confession on the First Saturdays and that some of you live a great distance from a chapel. However, you can still make reparation to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart.

For those who live at a distance but who are in range of one of our chapels, I encourage you to make it a priority to do the five First Saturdays at least once. Make it a top concern in your life. Yes, it may be quite a trip, but the more inconvenient it is, the more consoling will it be to the Blessed Virgin Mary. For your edification and inspiration, I want to hold out to you a most admirable example of such dedication. Ironically, within the past few weeks, I met a man at one of our chapels who made the Five First Saturdays several years ago. He is in his 80's. He told me that he drove fifteen hours one way for five consecutive months to make the First Saturdays. Fifteen hours one way! That is thirty hours round-trip! How pleasing this must have been to the Mother of God. Why did he go to such lengths? Very simply, it was because he made Our Lady's request a priority in his life; his heavenly Mother was and is important to him. May his good example move us to make the fulfillment of Our Lady's request a high priority in our lives, even if it means driving a distance for five consecutive months.

For those who do not have access to the Mass, Holy Communion, or confession on the First Saturdays, I encourage you to make them as far as you are able. A little explanation of the requirements may be helpful in understanding and fulfilling them.

Confession

All one need do is to make a good, humble confession either within the week before the First Saturday, on the First Saturday itself, or within the following eight days.

Holy Communion

Very simply, all one needs to do is receive Holy Communion on the First Saturday. However, for those who do not have access to Holy Communion on the First Saturdays, I encourage you to make a Spiritual Communion in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. "A Spiritual Communion," as Saint Alphonsus explains in *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*, "consists in an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament and in lovingly embracing Him as if we had actually received Him" (xviii). There are various methods and prayers for making a Spiritual Communion. Saint Alphonsus' Short Act of Spiritual Communion is as follows: "O Jesus, I believe that Thou art in the Most Blessed Sacrament! Come into my heart. I embrace Thee; oh, never leave me!" (xx). Furthermore, one who is unable to receive Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist on the First Saturday may offer up his Communion on Sunday in reparation to Our Lady's Heart. Despite the fact that in doing these things, one is not making the Communion of Reparation as Our Lady requested, still, by making a Spiritual Communion or receiving Holy Communion on Sunday, one will certainly bring Our Lady much comfort and consolation. I, therefore, do not think it rash to believe that she will reward you with the promises she made to those who make the sacramental Communion of Reparation since you are unable to receive sacramentally.

Five Decades of the Rosary

The third requirement consists in reciting five decades of the Rosary. We should strive to pray the Rosary devoutly by not rushing through it and with attention by thinking about the words we are saying or about the mysteries. Since it is Saturday, it would be appropriate to say the Glorious Mysteries, but the Joyful or Sorrowful suffice as well.

Fifteen Minutes' Meditation

The final requirement consists of meditating for fifteen minutes on the mysteries of the Rosary. Note that this is a separate requirement from the Rosary. Our Lady said that we may meditate on one of the fifteen mysteries or on several. The choice is ours. A simple method of meditation is the "See-Tell-Do" method. To see, you can either picture in your mind whichever mystery or mysteries on which you are meditating, or you can place yourself in that

particular scene and imagine what happened as if you were right there. To tell, you ask yourself what virtue you see being practiced in the scene—especially the virtue in which you need improvement. In other words, try to see how Our Lord or Our Lady practiced that virtue. Then, you ask yourself, “What should I do?” “How can I imitate Our Lord or Our Lady?” This is a very simple method of meditation, but it is an effective one.

Reparation

Lastly, remember that all these requirements—confession, Communion, the Rosary, and meditation—must be done with the intention of making reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Let us ever strive, then, as true children of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to console her Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart which is so offended by men today. Let us do this by being generous with Our Lady and with our time by complying with her petition for reparation on the First Saturdays. If you live near a chapel and have already made the Five First Saturdays, I ask you on behalf of Our Lady to please continue making the Communion of Reparation as her Immaculate Heart is offended anew each day. May we do this ever mindful of her most generous and loving promise to assist us at the hour of death—the moment we will need her most—with all the graces necessary to save our souls.

“Have pity on the Heart of your Most Holy Mother. It is covered with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to remove them with an act of reparation.”

~The Child Jesus to Lucia on December 10, 1925~

