

OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY AT FATIMA:

**“Pray! Pray a great deal and make sacrifices for sinners,
for many souls go to Hell for not having someone to pray
and make sacrifices for them.”**

**“They must amend their lives, ask forgiveness for their sins.
Offend not Our Lord any more, for He is already much offended.”**

This is the same sad but sweetly persistent voice heard at Lourdes many years ago - “Penance! Penance! Penance!” This is the same Mother who wept upon the mountain of La Salette in 1846: “If my people will not submit I shall be forced to let go the hand of my Son. It is so strong, so heavy, that I can no longer withhold it.” Surely the Mother of God would only complain about one thing, and that is sin.

What were the sins that made her weep? Working on Sundays, taking God’s Name in vain, disregard of the fast and abstinence laws of the Church. “My people...”she said, not Freemasons, heretics, or atheists - “my people,” the peasants of Catholic France. What were those sins? Violations of the Commandments of God and His Church that had become a way of life to those poor people. “Those who drive the carts cannot swear without introducing the Name of my Son...” What is more commonplace then to take God’s Name in vain? To work on Sundays? To violate the abstinence of the Church? Surely these sins don’t “hurt” anybody! No, nobody ... nobody but God and His Mother.

Hear the words addressed to the Bishop of Leiria by Sister Lucy in 1943. The complaint is still the same, and nothing could be clearer:

“The Good Lord complains bitterly and sorrowfully about the small number of souls in His grace who are willing to renounce whatever the observance of His Law requires of them. This is penance, which the Lord now asks: the sacrifice that every person has to impose upon himself to lead a life of justice in the observance of His Law. For many, thinking that the word penance means great austerities and not feeling in themselves the strength or the generosity for these, lose heart and rest in a life of lukewarmness and sin... Our Lord said to me:

‘The sacrifice required of every person is the fulfillment of his duties in life and the observance of My Law. This is the penance that I now seek and require.’ ”

These words are the meaning of Fatima. All else - the Rosary, consecration, devotion to the Immaculate Heart, the First Saturdays - are but means to an end. The Rosary is not an automatic ticket to eternal salvation. If we willfully continue to lead lives of worldliness and sin, if the Rosary’s mysteries have no meaning in our lives, what good is it doing us or anybody else? Are we not to be numbered among those false devotees of which St. Louis Marie de Montfort speaks, “They will say quantities of Rosaries with the greatest precipitation... without amending their lives, without doing any violence to their passions.” No, amendment of life is the essence and importance of Fatima, the “penance” involved in keeping God’s Commandments and fulfilling one’s duties of state in life. All very unglamorous and unexciting, isn’t it? And maybe that’s why we miss the boat.

The sacrifices entailed in raising a family, in doing an honest day’s work, in keeping inviolate the marriage vows, and practicing chastity according to one’s state; overcoming human respect when it means living our Faith in a pagan society, uncompromising adherence to the Church’s standards of Mary-like modesty, avoidance of persons, places and things that are occasions of sin to us, including what is called “recreation” these days - a hundred and one “sacrifices” God demands of us in the simple day to day living of our Catholic Faith. These are the “little things” that are actually heroic deeds, things that sanctify and purify us far better than hair-shirt and flagella. This is the “stuff” of which martyrs are made.

In the simplicity of Fatima’s message, it is greatly to be feared that many do not, or will not, understand it. Russia is not converted, and we are far, far from world peace. Our Lady’s requests have not been granted, in spite of millions who have promised to pray the Rosary and wear the Scapular. Had those millions amended their lives, perhaps we could be more optimistic. “Do you wish to offer yourselves to God to endure all the sufferings that He may please to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended and to ask for the conversion of poor sinners?” If you answer YES, remember what it is Our Lady requires of all of her children...**p e n a n c e.**

OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY AT FATIMA:

“Jesus wants to use you to make me known and loved.

He wants to establish the Devotion to my Immaculate Heart in the world.

**I promise salvation to those who embrace it
and their souls will be loved by God as flowers placed by myself
to adorn His throne.”**

We have to look honestly at Fatima. It is not what we want it to be, but what God planned it to be. **“My thoughts are not your thoughts; nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord.”** (Isaiah LV:8)

God has proved the truth of Fatima with great miracles. We must accept that truth or run the risk of neglecting grace. If we find that our habits of thinking are at odds with what God has made known at Fatima we had better promptly revise our thinking. Nobody likes to think about hell; divine justice is a frightening attribute which we easily ignore; penance is disturbing; devotion to the Immaculate Heart may seem like an unnecessary novelty; discussion of Russia may appear imprudent; the Rosary strikes some as monotonous, and the Five First Saturdays as unduly mathematical. But all these are in the message of Fatima, and we must put them in order and understand them if we want to accept what God has said to us through Fatima in the resounding voice of miracles and prophecies.

Fatima is, first of all, a dreadful warning to the world to stop sinning. The enormity of mankind's rebellion against God and God's infinite aversion for sin form the foundation of the Fatima message. Then He gives the sinner hope in the revelation that He will accept repentance made through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Fatima manifests the most misunderstood of the divine attributes — justice and mercy.

The three children of Fatima saw hell. The vision was not for their instruction or warning, but for ours; the Blessed Virgin had assured them that they were going to be saved. The accent on hell is tremendous. It is the first part of the secret of Fatima; it is the reason for all the rest of the revelations. Our Lady went on to tell of temporal punishments that would be visited on the world if men did not amend their lives. We have seen them come — war, famine, persecution of the Church, the destruction of many nations. From the words of Our Lady we must fear even greater affliction unless there is a change in human conduct. But we definitely miss “the spiritual meaning of things” if we think that Our Lady came at Fatima to tell us how to keep out of a third world war, or how to convert Russia, or how to achieve tranquility in our earthly existence. She came to tell us how to keep out of hell!

The temporal punishments are secondary; they are punishments which strangely impress us more than hell. Yet all the bleeding, dying, and despair of a thousand wars cannot equal the disaster of a single soul being damned. And damnation is not merely a possible evil which may arrive if we do not do what Our Lady of Fatima said; it is an actuality already claiming countless souls that did not and now never can fulfill the purpose of their existence. Fatima is intended to stop this devastation. War can come or not; it is evil, in the final analysis, only in the measure that it brings about the only final evil, the loss of souls.

“You have seen hell where the souls of sinners go,” the Blessed Virgin said to Lucy. This is the first point of the Fatima message. We are free, we have abused our freedom, we are in danger of failing eternally, we must repent. **“Do not offend Our Lord any more; He is already much offended,”** Our Lady said to Lucy while 70,000 people watched the spinning and falling of the sun.

At the August apparition Our Lady said; **“Pray, pray very much; and make sacrifices for sinners. Many souls are lost, because there are none to make sacrifices for them.”** In every apparition she urged the children on to sacrifice; and for their sacrifice she presented two motives: the reparation of offenses against the divine majesty and the conversion of sinners. In the July apparition she taught a prayer which she asked to be said whenever sacrifices were offered: **“O Jesus, it is for love of Thee, for the conversion of sinners and in reparation for the offenses committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”** The children responded with exceptional works of penance. We are urged to do penance also, to make at least the sacrifices necessary for fulfilling our duties.

If the emphasis in the Fatima message on the danger of hell and the necessity of penance is upsetting, there are a few considerations which may rectify our judgement. No one fully understands the gravity of sin because it must be measured by the holiness of God whom sin offends. The plea of Our Lady on the mountain at Fatima is not different from the dictation of Our Lord on another mount: **“Enter ye in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat.”** (Matt. VII:13) The fire of hell cannot be extinguished by our indifference to it; nor will divine justice be altered by our failure to understand it. **“Hear ye, therefore, O house of Israel: is it My way that is not right, and are not rather your ways perverse?”** (Ezechiel XVIII:25) We must admit the mystery and accept the facts of divine justice and everlasting punishment. The crime of not seeking heaven is very great. It is much better to be terrified now of hell and avoid it than to ignore it now and after death discover it. **“Why will you die, O house of Israel?”** (Ezechiel XVIII:31)

“To save them the Lord wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.” This sums up the second part of the Secret of Fatima. The warning of hell and earthly chastisements manifests divine justice but it is also an expression of God’s mercy. Divine mercy is further manifest in the revelation of the Immaculate Heart. Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is not new. It was practiced by Our Blessed Lord. The Heart of Mary was honored with His first miracle. It was the affectionate consideration of Our Lady’s heart for the bridal couple at Cana which inspired her to have Our Lord change water into wine. The heart of Mary is the symbol of her love. Her love is without stain of any kind, without a single blemish of selfishness — Immaculate.

The angel Gabriel honored the Immaculate Heart of Mary when he saluted her as “Full of grace,” for grace is the sharing of God’s life and the divine life in the Christian soul is active through charity, which is love. The Immaculate Heart is the full flowering of the grace that God bestowed on His Mother in her Immaculate Conception.

We have always known that the Blessed Virgin had an intimate share in the work of redemption and that through her God wills that the fruits of redemption be distributed to the souls of men. We know now from Fatima that God wishes us to honor the Heart of His Mother, or, let us say, to honor His Mother, or Co-Redemptrix, through the title of her love — her Immaculate Heart.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary suffered because of sin. At Fatima she showed Lucy her heart pierced all about by thorns. God has told us now, through Fatima, that we can make reparation to Him if we repair the suffering we have caused her. The Heart that received the fullness of participation in the divine life, that knew the affections of a mother for Jesus Christ during the years at Nazareth, that went through the agony of seeing Him die, that honors Him in heaven more than all the rest of creation, is now gloriously proclaimed by Him through Fatima. *The Lord wishes to establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.* We must not discuss the timeliness or convenience of devotion to the Immaculate Heart; we must strive in humble prayer to acquire it.

This is substantially the meaning of Fatima. There are other details, indeed, but the details must not obscure the essence of Fatima's message, namely, that for our own salvation, for the conversion of sinners, for the expiation of our sins, God wants us to honor the Heart of His Mother.

The other details have to do with the means of honoring the Immaculate Heart and with the divine sanctions of this devotion — the punishments which will follow if God's merciful offer is spurned and devotion to the Immaculate Heart is neglected. The first means declared at Fatima of paying homage to the Immaculate Heart is the Rosary. It is certainly Our Lady's favorite prayer. The reason is not hard to find; the soul of the Rosary is meditation on the mysteries of Our Lord's Incarnation, redemptive suffering, and glorious triumph. It is her favorite prayer because it draws us to Our Lord.

The devotion of the Communions of Reparation of the Five First Saturdays was made known and insisted upon in three distinct apparitions to Lucy. It has simplified the manner in which we can fulfill the demands of Fatima. A great promise has been made. We are assured of the help necessary for salvation if we fulfill a series of devotional acts with the intention of making reparation to God for sin through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The request is not vague; it is definite. From this definition can be derived the comfort of reaching an assurance that we have fulfilled the call of Fatima. We are asked to receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion (Penance within a week, before or after) on the first Saturday of each of five consecutive months; and, on the first Saturdays, to say the Rosary (five decades) and, apart from the Rosary, to spend fifteen minutes in meditation on one or more of the mysteries of the Rosary.

Our Lady foretold at Fatima that Russia would spread her errors throughout the world and that the results would be wars and persecution of the Church. This does not mean that Russia is the enemy of peace; it means rather that Russia — unwittingly, indeed — is the instrument of divine justice. The enemy of peace is not Russia, but sin, which abounds within all borders.

Our Lady of Fatima has prophesied absolutely that Russia will one day be converted and that a period of peace will follow. There is no indication in her message that this will be achieved before another war. Fatima must not be mistaken for merely an assurance of peace. Peace will one day come; its arrival will be hastened if men repent and honor the Heart of Mary. If they do not, the world will continue to suffer the chastisements of divine justice.

But the triumph of the Immaculate Heart in your souls and mine and in the soul of the man in the delicatessen, or of the woman across the way on the streetcar, or of the child in the classroom, or of the executive at his desk, does not have to wait for the consecration of Russia; it awaits the consecration of the individual to God in penance and in reparation through the Heart of Mary. (VISION OF FATIMA by Thomas McGlynn, O.P., copyright 1949)

St. Denis said that there is nothing more noble and more pleasing to God than to cooperate in the work of saving souls and to frustrate the devil's plans for ruining them.

Father Dominic, the Carthusian, who was deeply devoted to the Holy Rosary, had this vision: Heaven was opened for him to see and the whole heavenly court was assembled in magnificent array. He heard them sing the Rosary in an enchanting melody and each decade was in honor of a mystery of the life, passion or glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of His Blessed Mother. Father Dominic noticed that whenever they said the sacred name of Mary they bowed their heads and at the name of Jesus they genuflected and gave thanks to God for the great good that He had wrought in heaven and on earth through the Holy Rosary, which the Confraternity members say here on earth. He noticed too that they were praying for those who practice this devotion.

(taken from THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY - Twenty-Ninth Rose by St. Louis Marie de Montfort)