

Fatima – Part III: The Relevancy¹

By Jim Seghers

“For those with faith, no explanation is necessary. For those without faith, no explanation is possible.”

“Fatima is more important now than in 1917!” These words were spoken by Pope John Paul II while he was recovering from his brush with death due to the assassination attempt on his life. This pope was convinced that our world is engaged in an enormous spiritual conflict between the forces of good and evil. The battle lines are clearly delineated between those who have a living faith in God, the Supreme Being, and those who reject God or live as if God is irrelevant. Anyone who thinks he can assume a neutral position is a fool. Jesus made this very clear when he said, “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters” (Mt 12:30). This conflict between good and evil is paraded before us by the media, which daily presents the violence and corruption that threatens to engulf us into the darkness of barbarism. Tragically, while voices are heard that decry the decadence and violence, many appear to live in a state of spiritual stupor that prevents them from arousing themselves to the actions that will change their lives and our world.

Two biblical passages are particularly applicable. The first from the Psalms relates to building a successful society; the second from Proverbs refers to spiritual sloth:

- “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Ps 127:1).
- “The sluggard says, ‘There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!’ As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed. The sluggard bruises his hand in the dish; it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth” (Prov 26:13-15).

Fatima is a wake up call to the world, not just to three young children or the people of Portugal. The messages begin with the reality that God exists. This truth needs reaffirmation today because “a fiercely militant, hegemonic, openly aggressive kind of godlessness is on the rise in the very country renowned the world over for its official motto, ‘In God We Trust’.”² Either we will build society as “a civilization of love and truth based on the sanctity of human life and those rights and responsibilities given by the Creator to each human person, or a tyranny of hate and oppression based on contempt of God, hatred for his Church and relativistic values.”³

¹ This essay draws heavily on and to some extent is a summary of Fr. Andrew Apostoli’s fine work *Fatima For Today: The Urgent Marian Message of Hope*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, c. 2010. All the quotations, unless indicated otherwise, are drawn from this book. I hope what I have written here will motivate you to get and read the book.

² Patrick Madrid & Kenneth Hensley, *The Godless Delusion*, p. 11.

³ *Fatima For Today*, p. 217.

Hell exists too. Our behavior has eternal consequences. God's law, as summarized in the Ten Commandments, are just that, *commandments* - not suggestions. Breaking them leads to broken people, families and society. Ultimately, it leads to damnation in an eternity of suffering, regrets and despair. The Blessed Mother instructed the children that most people go to hell for unrepented sexual sins. This truth is very unwelcomed information to a society run amuck in sexual excesses of every type.

However, in spite of the gloomy moral state of contemporary society, the messages of Fatima are one of hope. God reigns and his victory is assured: "In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph!" We are called to rise from our lethargy and join the winning side. This starts with a personal conversion. Jesus began his preaching in Galilee with words that challenge us today: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:17). At Fatima Mary pleaded: "Do not offend the Lord our God anymore, because he is already so much offended!" The history of the last two thousand years is bursting with examples of men and women who made a positive difference once they repented. Why not us?

The call to daily prayer figured prominently in the Fatima aspirations. Prayer, by its very nature, acknowledges our helplessness and our reliance on God. He never fails us. The Rosary was particularly recommended because these twenty meditations form a summary of the whole Gospel. This humble prayer is very powerful as anyone can attest who prays it devoutly each day. Another devotion was also recommended – the Five First Saturdays, which Fr. Apostoli describes as a "formation program" in the spiritual life.

The Five First Saturday's Devotion consists of the following four elements:

1. Go to *Confession* within a period of eight days of the first Saturday. The Sacrament of Confession deepens our awareness of how often we let God down, and it reminds us of God's loving mercy. The particular graces from this sacrament buttress our determination to avoid sin and the occasion of sin.
2. Receive *Holy Communion*. In the worthy reception of the Eucharist we are transformed into Christ, the Heavenly Bridegroom, who makes us one with him.
3. Recite *five decades of the Rosary*. The Rosary, as was indicated earlier, is a reflection on the entire work of Christ. The key to the effectiveness of this beautiful prayer is the meditation on the mysteries while we are saying the prayers. Without turning our minds and hearts to God the prayers of the Rosary are reduced to the mere mumbling of many words that Jesus condemned (Mt 6:7). For those who like to meditate on the scriptural passages that underpin the Rosary, the following citations might prove helpful:

JOYFUL MYSTERIES

1. The *Annunciation* (Lk 1:26-38)
2. The *Visitation* (Lk 1:39-56)
3. *The Birth of Jesus* (Lk 2:1-21)

4. *The Presentation* (Lk 2:22-40)
5. *Finding Jesus in the Temple* (Lk 2:41-52)

LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

1. *Jesus' Baptism by John* (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22; Jn 1:29-34)
2. *The Wedding Feast at Cana* (Jn 2:1-11)
3. *The Proclamation of the Gospel* (Mt 4:12-17; Mk 1:14-15; Lk 4:14-15)
4. *The Transfiguration* (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8)
5. *The Eucharist* (Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:2-25; Lk 22:14-20; Jn 6:22-71; 1 Cor 10:14-17; 11:23-30)

SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

1. *The Agony in Gethsemane* (Mt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:39-53)
2. *The Scouring* (Mt 27:26; Mk 15:15; Lk 23:16; Jn 19:1)
3. *The Crowning with Thorns* (Mt 27:27-31; Mk 15:16-20; Jn 19:2-16)
4. *The Crucifixion* (Mt 27:31-44; Mk 15:22-32; Lk 23:26-43; Jn 19:16-50)
5. *Jesus' Death on the Cross* (Mt 27:45-56; Mk 15:33-41; Lk 23:44-56; Jn 19:31-42)

GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

1. *The Resurrection* (Mt 28:15, 7; Mk 16:1-18; Lk 24:1-43; Jn 20:1-21:19)
2. *The Ascension* (Mk 16:19-20; Lk 24:50-53; Acts 2:1-13)
3. *The Descent of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:1-13)
4. *Mary's Assumption* (Rev 12:1)
5. *Mary's Coronation* (Rev 12:1)

4. *Keep our Blessed Mother company in prayer for fifteen minutes while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary. We are asked to make reparation for the blasphemy and indifference that she suffers.*

One of the most striking features of the Fatima apparitions is the emphasis on intercessory prayers. The Father wants all his children with him in heaven, so he sent our Heavenly Mother to urge us to repent and to pray for those who reject God. Mary asked the children and through them all of us:

“Sacrifice yourselves for sinners, and say many times, especially whenever you make any sacrifices: O Jesus, it is for love of You, and for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

She also gave the world the following message:

“Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to hell, because there are none to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them.”

The Bible amply demonstrates that it is the Father's plan to incorporate his earthly children into the family business of the Blessed Trinity, which is the salvation of souls.

Our prayers and sacrifices have a unique power because we have been united to Christ. Thus St. Paul wrote, “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church” (Col 1:24).

However, our prayers and sacrifices are imperfect and impotent of themselves. In this regard the *Catechism* gives us an important instruction:

“Jesus also prays for us - in our place and on our behalf. All our petitions were gathered up, once for all, in his cry on the Cross and, in his Resurrection, heard by the Father. This is why he never ceases to intercede for us with the Father.⁴ If our prayer is resolutely united with that of Jesus, in trust and boldness as children, we obtain all that we ask in his name, even more than any particular thing: the Holy Spirit himself, who contains all gifts.”⁵

Finally, when we are inclined to focus on our ineptitude in prayer, we should recall the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, the interior Master of Christian prayer. Thus, St. Paul assured the Romans:

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sight too deep for words” (Rom 5:26).

⁴ Heb 5:7; 7:25; 9:24

⁵ [CCC # 2741](#).