



FATIMA REDUX

May 2014

Dear Friend of Clear Creek Abbey,

Reflecting on the stupendous phenomenon of Fatima—the apparitions and the revelations—one is tempted to modify the well-known saying of Saint Bernard to say *De Fatima numquam satis*, “When it comes to Fatima, enough is never said.” As a Carmelite theologian expressed it at the end of the last century, “Fatima is the prophetic message of our time.” As we move closer to the centenary of the apparitions in 2017, does this still hold true?

Most Catholics know the story. On May 13th, 1917, three young shepherds were herding their flock not far from their home in Fatima, Portugal, when they saw, as they reported, a lady “brighter than the sun, shedding rays of light clearer and stronger than a crystal goblet filled with the most sparkling water and pierced by the burning rays of the sun” (De Marchi, 1952. *The Immaculate Heart*. Farrar, Straus and Young). They saw her on several more occasions in the months to follow, and during the final apparition, on October 13, a great miracle of the sun occurred, observed by some 70,000 bystanders.

During the apparitions, the children received instructions from the lady, identified as the Blessed Virgin Mary. She taught them to pray and make acts of reparation. She also confided to them three secrets that would later be revealed to the world. The secrets concerned the eternal punishment reserved for sinners, how to avoid this terrible fate, and what would happen in the world in the not too distant future. Above all, there was revealed God’s desire to establish devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Every person of Faith who ponders the events of Fatima and its revelations sees the ongoing importance of this prophetic message. Our world truly needs Fatima—or more precisely the teaching and triumph of the Immaculate Heart—more than ever! All agree with this proposition, including the Popes of the 20th and now 21st centuries, including the reigning Supreme Pontiff, Pope Francis.

However, there are questions surrounding the famous third secret of Fatima and the consecration asked by Our Lady that continue to upset and polarize many Catholics, especially in the United States. There is a real risk that the controversies keep the faithful from receiving the real message. Can we come to a true and adequate understanding of these controversial points?

Volumes have been written on both the subject of the third secret and on the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart. It would be quite useless to attempt to recapitulate or summarize all these discussions. The only point I make here is that if we want to know the whole truth about these important questions, *we must go to the people who know*.

It is perfectly obvious that the true witnesses of Fatima were the three seers, Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco (the latter two now being Blessed), of whom Lucia—later Sister Lucia—became the main “voice.” By a disposition of Divine Providence, Sr. Lucia had a very long life, one that spanned most of the

great events that marked the 20th century and that confirmed, decade by decade, the prophecies uttered at the Cova da Iria. She was, more than any other living human being (Jacinta and Francisco died very young), *the one who knew*. Sr. Lucia spoke clearly, forcefully, articulately, and courageously the message of Fatima, answering when appropriate the questions that arose over the controversial matters of the third secret and of the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart desired by Heaven. She always maintained her focus, keeping her eye on the “bigger picture,” the essential elements of the message, and never letting the controversies distract her or her listeners from the main issue.

I have had the privilege of knowing two holy priests, one of whom is still living, who knew Sr. Lucia well and worked with her closely. Father Robert J. Fox (1928-2009) was the director of the Fatima Family Apostolate and editor of the *Immaculate Heart Messenger*. He received information and insights directly from Sr. Lucia, especially as regards the status of the consecration. Father Giovanni Salerno, founder of the Missionary Servants of the Poor of the Third World, was personally invited by Sr. Lucia to visit her in 1982 at her Carmelite convent in Coimbra, Portugal. He spoke with her for several hours and received the encouragement he needed to found his missionary work. Father Giovanni continues to have close contact with the Carmelites in Coimbra to this day. Although neither of these priests was a direct witness of the events of Fatima, both were in a privileged position to confirm the testimony of Sr. Lucia and that she spoke *freely* and unwaveringly about all that concerned the mission of her life, the message of Fatima.

Finally, there is that group of men, who are without parallel, *the ones who know* what vitally concerns the Faith and morals. They are the successors of Peter, the Holy Roman Pontiffs. They also have an incomparable insight into matters that are not strictly questions of faith and morals, even though they may disappoint our personal expectations. The Popes have fully understood the importance of Fatima. On July 7, 1952, Pope Pius XII formally consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. On March 25, 1984, in union with all the bishops of the world, Pope Saint John Paul II consecrated the entire world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, *mentioning specifically and renewing* the consecration done by Pope Pius XII in 1952 of Russia, although without repeating the name. Shortly thereafter, Sr. Lucia told the papal nuncio to Portugal that the consecration was fulfilled. She later gave written confirmation of this in August of 1989, not long before the Berlin Wall fell. She also confirmed that the text of third secret, published by the Holy See in 2000, was authentic and entire.

On May 13, 1984, anniversary of the first apparition, less than two months after Pope Saint John Paul II's consecration mentioned above, an explosion at the Soviets' Severomorsk naval base destroyed two-thirds of all the missiles stockpiled for the Soviets' northern fleet. The blast also obliterated the workshops needed to maintain the missiles and killed hundreds of scientists and technicians. A few months later, the Soviet defense minister, the mastermind of plans for invading Western Europe, suddenly and mysteriously died. And all of that was just the beginning of the woes that led to the end of the Soviet “empire” as it had been known. These are things to think about.

Why then is there no peace in the world today? Why are Europe and much of America losing the Faith? There would be much to say, but the essential point is that we must continue to live the prophetic message of Fatima and to propagate devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This is why I am sending you the small but powerful brochure written by Father Giovanni Salerno, our missionary friend.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us. Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us.

+ br. Philip Anderson, abbot

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