

# + OUR LADY OF FATIMA

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Philip Anderson, Abbot of Clear Creek Abbey,  
Delivered during a Special Mass on the occasion of the  
Centennial celebration of the apparitions at Fatima  
October 13, 2017

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
My Very Dear Sons,

At a moment when the world is torn apart by acts of terror and rumors of wars<sup>1</sup>, while looking, heavenward, perhaps as never before, for a sign to ease the tension, the prophetic messages uttered one hundred years ago at Fatima concerning the Immaculate Heart of Mary and our need for conversion seem more to the point than ever, more eloquent than anything mere human words could convey: they bear upon the very destiny of our lives and of the world. Even as secular society, living under the enchantment of a technical power seemingly limitless, continues to ask for entertainment and amusement rather than for spiritual enlightenment and salvation, that same society is nonetheless haunted by the memory of better things, of beautiful things that once were and that thrived in a more Christian time—things that could be. All is not forgotten; all is not lost. Many are the good souls and faithful families that surround us. Still, few clear-sighted men or women would deny that we seem to be on the brink of dire events.

The purpose of the apparitions of Fatima, if we can fathom somewhat the high purposes of God who sent Our Lady down to earth, was not merely to cast us into fear, but rather to give us a new and splendid hope founded upon the sober truth. To a world having lost the sense of sin and of the seriousness of salvation, some austere lessons had to be given, but it was all in order to lift up our wounded humanity with supernatural grace and to place before our eyes the light and the beauty of God. What face could better express this beauty and what amounts to a *motherly* concern than that of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, who is also the Mother of Consolation, *Mater consolationis*?

On this day that marks one hundred years since the great miracle of the sun at Cova da Iria, a miracle witnessed by some seventy thousand onlookers, we can hardly keep from thinking back over the century that has gone by. Never before has the world seen wars of such immense proportions engendering death camps and ruins, never has it witnessed so many martyrs for the Faith. One gets the feeling that there is a kind of ultimate struggle going on, a supreme contest for the soul of mankind. It would be foolish to predict today the end of the world, for God alone knows the day and the hour, but many have thought we are coming to the end of *a* world, the end of an age.

Perhaps what is needed is a new miracle of the sun. Would not the masses of humanity turn back to God were they to see a great sign like that in the heavens? Then again, the miracle of the sun that took place one hundred years ago, though it converted many, did not stop very

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Matt. 24:6.

long the march toward our modern evils. It did not stem the tide of atheism and moral corruption weighing upon the human race in general. Besides, God, in His infinite wisdom, does not repeat Himself as does so often merely human prudence. He did the miracle of the sun once and will probably not do it again—at least not in the same way.

At the center of the message of Fatima, however, is proposed a different sort of miracle, a different sort of fire. This is the revelation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a Heart pierced with the sword of sorrow and crowned with the fire of burning charity. Here is the very Immaculate Heart of the woman clothed with the sun mentioned in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse. This Heart has the greatest fire burning inside, that of the love of God, more powerful than any atomic bomb. In answer, at least partially, to Our Lady's request, Popes have made consecrations of the world and even of Russia (but without all the bishops) to this Immaculate Heart. According to Sr. Lucia, the one made in 1984 was accepted by Our Lady.

And yet a sense of incompleteness persists in the minds of many. In a keynote address given to the Fatima Centennial Summit in Irving, Texas, just a few days ago, His Eminence Raymond Cardinal Burke uttered these impressive words: "I do not doubt for a moment the intention of Pope St. John Paul II to carry out the consecration on March 25, 1984." He also acknowledged that, according to Sister Lucia, Our Lady had accepted that consecration. Nevertheless the Cardinal went on to add:

Recognizing the necessity of a total conversion from atheistic materialism and communism to Christ, the call of Our Lady of Fatima to consecrate Russia to Her Immaculate Heart in accord with Her explicit instruction remains urgent.

Cardinal Burke is a wise and holy man. We must take his words seriously.

On the other hand, we need not sit idly by, while waiting anxiously for the current Holy Father or one of his successors to make that more explicit consecration. The requests from Heaven did not involve only the popes. There was also the call to the faithful to practice the First Five Saturdays and all which that implies. How many of us have done this? We should also consecrate our families to the Immaculate Heart in addition to consecrating them to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Yes, we can, on our own side, do something very real to fulfill the prophecy of Fatima. Let us just take a moment more to consider how important is our personal acceptance of the message of Fatima.

We are faced now with a great need now for heroic action in the world. The peace-keeping soldiers everywhere need to drive into the dust—or convert them if possible—the militant islamists and other terrorists—cowards, all of them—who crucify children and make themselves guilty of atrocious crimes. The black flag of ISIS must be destroyed and forever forgotten. The honest policemen and judges of our country must drive from our borders and into the sea the drug lords and other human predators, who daily violate our youth and destroy the very fabric of society. When will our public officials wake up and stop the extremely harmful nonsense that is being promoted in the name of "gender"? We all must find the strength necessary to pull away from the lures of shameful materialism, seeking instead a simple and poor life in conformity with the Gospel. All of this is most urgent.

But the soldiers will not have courage to fight; the policemen will not have moral integrity in their action; no one will be able to escape the snares of the artificial paradise of consumerism, if we do not acquire purity of heart. It is in that flame appearing above the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady, in that theological and spiritual fire that is produced by the grace of God, that resides the power of the good for the Church and the world. As even the pagan Philosophers knew, a man's foremost enemy is not the exterior one, but the one in himself, in the sin of his heart. The spiritual combat comes first. That is what Our Lady is telling us: Prayer and Penance.

But how do we acquire this purity of heart? There are many converging paths. One great source is in the Holy Liturgy. In his Preface to *The Liturgical Year*, Dom Gueranger deploras the way the Christian people have left aside this great prayer:

Now for many ages past, the Christians have grown too solicitous about earthly things to frequent the holy vigils, and the mystical Hours of the day. Long before the rationalism of the sixteenth century had become the auxiliary of heresies of that period by curtailing the solemnity of the divine service, the people had ceased to unite themselves exteriorly with the prayer of the Church, except on Sundays and festivals.... Each new generation increased in indifference for that which their forefathers in the faith had loved as their best and strongest food.... This was the first sad revolution in the Christian world.

So let us renew our liturgical fervor, seeking in these official prayers of the Church a solid means of acquiring purity of heart through prayer and penance. Nor can we forget the Most Holy Rosary. Perhaps a different sort of miracle of the sun might occur as well. Were the splendor of thousands upon thousands of monstrances to light up the world with the Eucharistic real Presence, would that not be a new miracle of the sun? We must do what we can to promote such a miracle.

May the beautiful Lady who appeared one hundred years ago to the three shepherd children at the Cova da Iria, including Saints Francisco and Jacinta, whose relics we have recently acquired and which are on display for our veneration today, may the Lady from Heaven show us the path forward through the century that lies ahead. The horizon is rather dark, one must admit, but Her Immaculate and flaming Heart will be the torch to guide us forward. Amen. Alleluia.