

One hundred years of Grace and Mercy bestowed upon the World

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# INTRODUCTION

The motto of the Message of Fatima is given in the apparition of the Most Holy Trinity and the Immaculate Heart of Mary to Sister Lucia in Tuy, Spain: "GRACE AND MERCY".

God's grace transforms all things, granting their existence and value. It is through the sanctifying grace that God transmits His life to mankind. It is the actual grace that keeps the universe going on, making possible the richness, continuity and diversity of creation.

But all creatures need God's mercy. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel came to the Temple of Jerusalem singing the psalms, chanting God's eternal mercy; a mercy that freed the people of God from the slavery of Egypt, granting them the Promised Land: "The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity, continuing his kindness for a thousand generation..." (Exodus 34, 6-7).

In the New Testament, God is made flesh and His mercy is closer to us and more powerful in the person of Jesus Christ. The history of salvation is an epiphany of God's mercy to humanity as the Archangel Gabriel announced to Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; hence, the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God" (Luke 1, 35).

The Blessed Virgin Mary experienced God's mercy more than any other creature. She obeyed God's word with absolute trust in His mercy: "For he has looked upon his servant in her lowliness; all ages to come shall call me blessed" (Luke 1, 48). Mary's Canticle, the Magnificat, expresses her "fiat", her "yes" of joyous acceptance of God's will, having a prophetic content of the marvels performed by God's mercy on her and through her attitude of gratitude on the disciples of her beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

The Magnificat of the Blessed Virgin Mary reveals to us, the New People of God, the real face of God, His mercy to humanity. Our lady knows better than anyone else the significance of Divine Mercy, the price paid for our salvation at the Cross where her Divine Son suffered and died. She, who was at the foot of the Cross, deserves to be considered an Icon of Mercy, Mother of Divine Mercy or Our Lady of Mercy, as these titles give us a better idea of the association of Mary with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, her only Son. The mystery of God's mercy is better understood through the maternal vocation of Mary as God has a maternal face of mercy toward humanity. And there is no human love as pure, as total, as that of a mother toward her children.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, as Mother of God and Mother of mankind, is a unique instrument of grace and mercy in the hands of God, expressing in a closer and simple way its richness and profound meaning to humanity. No wonder she is the pride of humanity as she has experienced God's infinite grace and mercy as no other creature.

## THE OPENING OF OUR HEARTS

The opening of our hearts to the fullness of God's love is precisely the key element of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, as it is of the Message of Fatima as well, and the request of Our Lady to let our hearts be submerged into the ocean of love that is God. As the three children shepherds of Fatima were submerged into the Most Holy Trinity and experienced the Trinitarian Love that caused their "metanoia", their complete transformation into "new creatures" with a profound inner life and knowledge of God within themselves and with an accurate knowledge of their own consciences, "contemplating themselves as in the best of mirrors", as God contemplates them... This is the spiritual effect of the religious experience of Fatima in its fullness.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, this Jubilee Year of Mercy for the Universal Church is proclaimed by Pope Francis precisely before the Centennial Year of the Fatima Apparitions, the year 2017, thus serving also as a great spiritual and pastoral preparation for the ephemerides of the greatest Mariophany in the history of the Church. The Jubilee Year of Mercy should become a prolonged spiritual retreat for the faithful to make real the beautiful prophesy of Pope Benedict XVI at the end of his homily of May, 13, 2010 in the Shrine of Fatima, about the definitive triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary: "May the seven years which separate us from the centenary of the apparitions hasten the fulfillment of the prophecy of the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity."

### *THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF FATIMA*

To comprehend the authentic Spirituality of Fatima it is necessary to introduce the phrase: The religious experience of Fatima. Our Blessed Mother came to Fatima as a teacher to introduce the three little shepherds to the intimate knowledge of the Trinitarian Love, making them flavor God as the most beautiful experience, assisted by His grace and mercy: "A grace experience that made them enamored of God in Jesus" as Pope Benedict XVI said in his pilgrimage to the Shrine of Fatima. The religious experience of Fatima opens the human heart to the mystery of God as through the interior senses of the soul, where we can perceive the sweet and peaceful presence of the Almighty. In our days, there are so many individuals who do not perceive God's presence in their lives as they are too much aware of the external realities and the images offered by "the world". Unfortunately, they have lost their capacity to relate to the spiritual experiences offered by the Good Lord to elevate our lives to Him. We must watch our hearts continually, preventing them to become old and rusty due to the many worries of our times, as St. Augustine taught.

As the disciples of Emmaus felt their hearts burning in ardent love in the presence of Jesus Christ, we can also see with the eyes of faith that Light which is God Himself, coming out of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as she did with Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco, turning our poor cold and unhappy hearts into hearts aflame. Blessed Jacinta had her heart burning with the fire of God's love as she shared with Jesus Christ the desire to convert poor sinners. Let us follow the teachings of St. Augustine, the great spiritual master of conversion and Patron Saint of the Diocese of Leiria-Fatima, as he called his disciples in his book "Confessions", to cultivate an interior watchfulness as to see God with "the eyes of the heart", a heart that was created to live forever with his Creator. This is the religious experience we all need: To come closer to God and become His intimate friends. This is the true religious experience we must seek in our pilgrimage to Fatima. This is what

characterized the special relationship between Jesus and His beloved disciple, John, who was worthy of resting his head on his Master's shoulder; who never abandoned Jesus and accompanied Mary at the foot of the Cross; who received Mary as his spiritual Mother in his home and in his heart; who received Mary as spiritual Mother of the human race.

#### *CHARITY: THE SIGN OF OUR INTERIOR LIFE*

The sign of our interior life in God's presence is our charity. The three little shepherds of Fatima excelled themselves in opening their hearts, transformed by God's grace and mercy, to universal love, to perfect love. We must build the civilization of love and peace, proper of the New Evangelization of the world, one of the great objectives of Our Lady of Fatima, by following the example of the three little seers: Sharing all we have with the poor and needy; offering to God our sufferings and the sanctification of our daily duties in an act of perfect love for the conversion of poor sinners; sharing our experience of God's love with others who do not know Him as well as we do, as there is no greater act of charity than to witness Jesus Christ to our neighbors in a world lacking of faith; giving ourselves in donation, offering our time, energy and work for the welfare of others to achieve the civilization of love and peace that is the definitive triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. By the words of Pope Benedict XVI in Fatima, we are confirmed that the definitive triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a process that we may hasten or delay, expand or *diminish*, according to our response to God's calls. This triumph has already begun as a process with qualitative changes occurred in Eastern Europe and Russia and by the prevention of a terrible nuclear war in the year 1985, according to a letter of Sister Lucia to Saint John Paul II. But now the triumph must move to the hearts of human beings, to a renewal of our spiritual life, to the realm of human inner life. Let us make possible the collapse of the evil structures that enslave the hearts of so many with vice, corruption and immorality as the evil structures and historical ties that enslaved many atheistic countries collapsed after the collegial consecration of Russia and the world performed by Saint John Paul II on March 25, 1984. Now, we are living the stage of confrontation between the forces of the Woman dressed in sun and the red dragon for the domination of the human heart, as revealed in the Book of Revelation, Chapter 12. The struggle has moved from the political arena to the spiritual arena for the dominion of the human heart.

#### *"POPE FRANCIS EFFECT" OVER THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH*

The Holy Spirit is free to move as He wants and is full of surprises. Many of us are wrong when we want to remain attached to our own certainties, indifferent to the surprises of the Spirit. What is the Spirit telling us in our days? Certainly, the Spirit is moving the Church toward missionary conversion, New Evangelization, formation of families, renewal of the faithful from within, sometimes through a process of painful purification. These are the same main forces operating in the Message of Fatima through reparatory practices as Our Lady foresaw our realities and needs: Meditative prayer; penance, offering of our lives to God; consecration and entrustment to God through the Immaculate Heart of Mary; Eucharistic adoration and communion of reparation; frequent receipt of the Sacraments, especially the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.

It is great that the World Apostolate of Fatima has foreseen these calls from the Spirit and has adjusted its paths to the blowing of the Holy Ghost and responded accordingly:

- (1) The WAF is engaged in missionary conversion to spread the New Evangelization through the elements of the Message of Fatima, that are precisely the same elements of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the great advantage that these elements have been adapted to the needs of the Church in our days not by a group of competent theologians but by the action of the Mother of God, who was sent from heaven to address her children and provide them with the latest state-of-the-art instruments to bring the Kingdom of God on earth, overcoming tremendous confusion and darkness of the spiritual and moral crisis of our time. No one can prepare such a perfect echo of the Gospel of Jesus than His own Mother,
- (2) The WAF is working toward the New Evangelization through the study of the Message of Fatima, living and spreading it throughout the world, speaking in the name of the Church when proclaiming its authenticity;
- (3) The formation of families is our priority as it is precisely the priority of the Message of Fatima since the beginning and the priority of the Universal Church in our days. The Bishops of the Church are meeting in Rome at the Synod of the Family, convoked by Pope Francis. By following the example of the three little children shepherds of Fatima, the WAF evangelizes our families through the action of the children and youngsters who bring their parents and relatives closer to God, as per the adoration of children and youngsters of the Blessed Sacrament in reparation for the sins of the world, for the triumph of good over evil in our days; as the Venerable Lucia did with Blessed Jacinta and Francisco, in the company of "Hidden Jesus". Thus, following the revolutionary methods of Our Lady of Fatima, we bring families back to the Church through the adoration and reparation of their children hungry for God in the Most Blessed Sacrament and through the Five First Saturdays Devotion and the Communion of Reparation and monthly Confession, known as the Great Promise of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Pontevedra, Spain, a practice blessed by five tremendous graces from heaven: (1) Grace of final perseverance; (2) conversion of many sinners; (3) salvation of many souls; (4) peace of the world; (5) unity and strength of the Universal Church against inner dissensions opposing the Magisterium of Peter. This "forgotten part of the Message of Fatima" is the essential condition missing to obtain from heaven the definitive triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary promised in Fatima when devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is spread throughout the world and the Immaculate Heart of Mary is venerated alongside with the Sacred Heart of Jesus by the Universal Church (prophecy of Saint Padre Pio of Pietralcina).
- (4) The renewal of the inner self, of the interior life, is the consequence of living the spirituality of Fatima, especially the perfect love or charity communicated by the Most Holy Trinity dwelling in our poor hearts. This is the measure of the discipleship needed to witness Jesus Christ to others, the essence of the New Evangelization, always open to the needs of the Universal Church: (a) attentive to the Middle East where Christian minorities are in risk to disappear due to terrorism; (b) attentive to Africa for the abandonment of so many and the great differences between the rich and the poor; (c) attentive to Latin America, that have an urgent need to revitalize their Catholic traditions; (d) attentive to America, living the terrible consequences of its secularization and materialistic consumerism; (e) attentive to Europe, losing its faith and even talking about a "post-Christian world"; (f) attentive to Russia, needing pastoral care of many in huge territories and still confronting imperialistic

modes endangering peace on earth; (g) attentive to Asia, where there is a complete "world" to be evangelized... Pope Francis has called the Church to go out to the streets, to make noise, to shake the corrupted structures of our sick societies, to never become too institutionalized as to close the doors to the "movements of the Holy Spirit"; always searching to imitate more and more Jesus Christ and His methods of evangelization who went after the "lost sheep of Israel".

- (5) To purify our hearts and the Body of Christ, the Church, it is necessary PENANCE!, PENANCE!,PENANCE!,as prescribed in the third part of the secret of Fatima. But, when there is no habit of practicing penance and the worldly spirit brings people to search for unlawful pleasures and desires, the only possibility is to be purified by suffering. The Church has suffered much in the XXth century, "the century of martyrs". More recently, the agony of moral scandals have shaken the very foundations of the Church. As Pope Benedict XVI explained in his pilgrimage to Fatima for the conclusion of the Year of the Priesthood, in 2010, and after consecrating all priests of the Church to Our Lady of Fatima, entrusting them to her Maternal Heart, for their sanctification and successful ministry, this terrible purification was needed to prepare the Church for a "new Marian Pentecost", for "a new springtime", the definitive triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary!