

BLESSED

FRANCISCO AND JACINTA MARTO

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THE LITTLE SHEPHERDS' JOURNEY (4)

II. IN THE BIBLE «SIN» MEANS «TO BLASPHEME AGAINST THE HOLY NAME OF GOD»

In Sacred Scripture there is a great contrast between a curse and a blessing. Both descend upon man, «image and likeness» of God, and he pronounces his own judgement. Curse and blessing — the diffusion of the dominion of these two realities and their transmission — can only be understood in the light of the fact that man in Christ is «image and likeness» of God», which means that the Name of God dwells in the human soul. Sacred Scripture requires above all that man should make holy and glorify the Name of God.

God is the Lord who wishes to dwell with men and that his Name should make them holy. They must be holy, because God is holy; they must be as holy as God is holy, and the Name of God can never be profaned.

**The Immaculate Heart
of Mary
calls the attention
of all to
what sin really is;**

It was in sacrifice of the Cross that Christ won back this vocation for men, so that they could glorify the Name of the Father in union with Him.

The biblical meaning of «sin» includes this intimate relationship of men with God, and expresses its perversion. Each man sins directly against God and not against any creature or moral law.

The «Law» of Moses shows this clearly: man either fulfils the whole of the Law or he does not fulfil it at all (James 2, 8-13). It is not possible to fulfil only part of the Law. The principal requirement is not the commandment or any particular law laid down, but always the Sovereign God who gave these orders directly, and who is in the hearts of men. The important thing is the immediate and direct relationship between God and man, which is not the case in the relationship between men and the thing that has been commanded. Hence, anyone who disobeys

one particular requirement of the law, disobeys the entire law, and the curse on all sins is the same as that incurred for disobeying one particular commandment (Deut. 27-28). In the same way, the sin-offering atones for all violations of the Law (Lev. 4). This is because the Law is not a list of rules imposed and the totality of the things that have been laid down, but the «Law» is the personal «Voice» of God, who is concerned for his people. Each human being experiences within him- or her-self this love

of God as an unconditional demand on God's part who, by means of the Covenant «Law» or «commandment» draws men to Himself. He draws men to himself and calls them to listen to his voice and obey his orders. It is for this reason that, before giving any order,



**it shows too
the only effective way
of salvation:
the adoration of
reparation.**

He declares: «I am the Lord your God who makes you holy». And God's Voice is eternally valid.

Neither the Old nor the New Testament contains any connected «Law», but they do contain a summons

to listen interiorly to the living voice of God; to accept, follow and observe the voice of his commandment. This jealous Love of his is the only «Law» in the whole of Sacred Scripture. The direct relationship between God and men is the «Law of the Spirit» or the «Law of freedom» which He expresses in his commandments.

However, when man turns the rules upside down and relegates God to the end, he enters into the «law of bondage», because the law of bondage puts created things before God and thus perverts the truth into a lie and freedom into bondage.

The direct relationship between man and God is also the reason why each sin is primarily an offence against

God, and not against the moral law or any creature. Sin is primarily a profanation, an insult against the Divine Name, which man carries with him «before» violating the law or any created order, because God is much closer to man than any created thing, closer than all statutes and creatures. When the Name of God is blasphemed and insulted, this sin touches God first and foremost, and immediately brings with it the dynamic reign of blasphemy, the spiritual horizon of its action, its consequences.

Anyone whom God calls by name, who is chosen and clothed, can use this name both for blessing and for curse because the Name of God is his Being, it is his Holiness, and also because, by his Spirit, God dwells in that person. This call by God and this vocation in Christ brings with it «a blessing or a curse»: for his glorification, God gives to the person his Holy Name as a blessing in faithfulness and as a curse in unfaithfulness. And that person imparts to others either the blessing or the curse, because on receiving the Holy Name from God and his Holiness, the person receives also his power, his power of radiation and attraction. God makes the person powerful, as we read in the call of Abraham; all those that he will bless will be blessed by God, and those who curse him will be cursed by God; because in those who are chosen, the curse injures God directly: «Now the Lord said to Abraham, “ I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.”» (Gen 12, 1-3).

Whoever bears within him the Name of God, this Name will be either sanctifying and glorifying for him and for all around him, or it will bring about profanation and a curse. By the Holy Spirit, the Name of God must dwell in each person, mark his life and the activity of his being. Thus, each person, by his or her own holiness will sanctify, and by his or her own wickedness will corrupt, other people, because both the holiness of the name of God and its defamation possess power. Misfortune reigns dynamically throughout the world, and where the Spirit of Christ is not, there reigns the spirit of Satan.

To receive and to use the name of God is to be chosen. God takes possession of the person and the person is consecrated to Him; the sign of election is indissolubly impressed on him or her. Those who do not bear in themselves the name of God, also provoke the blasphemy of others, because to use this Holy Name for anything that is not holy, is a cause of blasphemy for others. The real effect of this blasphemy is so much more terrible the more the person belongs to God, the more he or she is intimate with God. This is true of any person because he or she is in the image of God, but it is even more true of those specially chosen of God, of Israel, the holy people of God, of the Church, of the priesthood, of a religious Order, etc. A person consecrated to God, and the people as belonging to God, are sealed with the Name of God. They can either draw other men and women and other peoples closer to God and purify them, or soil them and separate them from God.

Israel was called for the glorification of the Name of God. Due to the idolatry in its heart, it could profane the Holy Name of God in many places. Not being holy, it profaned the Name of the Lord and brought misfortune and perdition down on other people.

The profanation of the name of God always caused great misfortune, and this could never be made good by the external practice of sacrifices, but only by the purification and total renewal wrought by the Spirit of God, coming from within, from whence had issued the misfortune, and by the radical conversion of the heart. This is called penitence and reparation. The interior root of infidelity, which gives rise to the interior idolatry of covetousness that is manifested openly, must be rooted out. Only the pure water of the divine Spirit which springs up interiorly is capable of renewing the heart and the entire human personality. Only this pure water from Heaven can renew the heart; only God can bring this about by his own Holy Name; man must accept and not resist the purifying and sanctifying action of God.

Through his Spirit, God brings about a change of heart, but man must cooperate in this conversion and must turn towards the centre from which this water flows. «I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses... A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you: I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.» Whoever belongs to God is God's property, whoever is consecrated to God and whoever bears the Name of God must be holy, must allow him- or her-self to be sanctified, otherwise he or she could not belong to God, who is essentially holy; otherwise he or she would be a veritable blasphemy. When a person or a community, through lack of holiness, falsifies, profanes this Name and uses the Holy Name deceitfully to give a false appearance of holiness, that person or that community sins primarily against God's second commandment; this contempt is a blasphemy and is offered directly to God, also in his true holy ones who use, make holy and glorify his Holy Name.

Sin is primarily the perversion of the image and likeness of God, it is a blasphemy. This sad reality affected Adam to the greatest degree. Being in the «image and likeness of God», he was also the type of Christ; with his universal radius of action, he affected the whole human race, robbed it of its likeness to God and brought into the world the dynamic reign of blasphemy. Adam is in himself a true profanation of the image and likeness of God in Christ, and the Name of God was engraved in his existence even in its «perversion».

However, God again called Adam by name, gave him back his true Holy Name, the name of Christ: image and likeness of God. But God gave Christ's name also to other men in various and specific aspects. In order that God's Holy Name in human beings can be for his glorification, in order to manifest the variety and diversity of his wisdom and glory, God divided up his Name into the calls and destinies of individual names. Nevertheless, they are all «one» in Christ (Gal. 3, 38); because Christ is the inexhaustible fullness of the riches of all aspects of this image and likeness of God, uniquely concentrated in Christ and divided up in his individual members. Nonetheless, the fundamental content of the Name, «image and likeness of God», must be present in each individual. Man was created exclusively for this specific mission in the mystical union with Christ. God gave to each person a special name so that the Name of God

may be glorified in his or her particular aspect in Christ. The perversion of this vocation is blasphemy, which touches God directly. Holy people, who use and sanctify the Name of God, are insulted by the people of this world and the insult touches God directly because in them is accomplished the mystery of Christ: thus they have a share in the reparatory passion of Christ and in this way must rejoice and give glory to God. Christ often warned his followers that in this world they would be insulted for the sake of his Name; in this way God brings about the sanctification of the members of Christ and the purification of a fallen world, the building up of the Mystical Body, the perfecting of the Mystery of Christ.

Mary in Fatima called attention to the blasphemies against God and against her own Immaculate Heart and urged insistently the need for reparation for these blasphemies in relation to her Immaculate Heart. She shows the special aspects in which, today, the Holy Name of God is profaned; she shows, too, the most painful wounds, the aberrations and perversions of the people of today. Mary concentrates in herself the mystery of the Holy «Church», humanity in the Holy Spirit mystically united to Christ and holy. The name «Church», both in Sacred Scripture and in the patristic tradition, means true interior holiness. This holiness is the central content of the name and mystery of the Church; it does not mean a purely interior and invisible holiness, but rather a true interior holiness thanks to having been called by name and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is at work in the entire visible community. However, if this name «Church» is assumed by a community which is not holy, because its earthly basis has been established exteriorly and juridically, and worship-wise is independent, this would be a true blasphemy which directly touches God in Christ, the Head of the Church, and in a special way the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Worship which is maintained by exterior means, with a stained heart, is a blasphemy against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. When men do not perform before God their divine external service with a pure heart, in an interior attitude of believing adoration, as «unprofitable servant» of the Lord, this, too, touches the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Our Lady in Fatima points to yet another very painful «wound» in men and women of today: this concerns «virginity», because virginity is the true interior and exterior holiness; it is the complete distance from the legitimacies of this fallen world. The Immaculate Heart of Mary is however the focus, the inner root of Mary's perfect bodily virginity. God formed the heart and the virginity of Mary in order to glorify the Name of God under this aspect; and Mary bears this name in the most perfect manner; She is, in the completeness of her personality, the glorification of this Name.

With her words, in Fatima, Mary «reminds» men also of the sin of Adam, which is theirs, although they pay no attention to it and have totally forgotten the sin of Adam.

In this way Mary recalls the essential content of the first three commandments, which in today's world have been emptied of content and sent up in smoke. She shows in her Immaculate Heart where men are to find the basis, in order to complete and perfect the essential content of these three commandments which contain the mystery of Christ and human destiny. They express a

single reality and can be fulfilled as one. Mary shows to men principally the content of the second commandment which today is so ignored and disfigured. «You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.»

God thus reveals his Holy Name which He also gave to man, so that God could dwell in him. The true «I am», the Saviour and Liberator from slavery ardently attracts man to Himself, in order to care for him as his own property. He made of Israel his own holy people, and also his holy priesthood. Adoration of the true God in faith is the basis on which all else rests, the interior root from which everything else develops, penetrating all things and perfecting all things: adoration in faith is the beginning, the centre and the end. To belong to God as his own possession requires of man his total commitment to God, in the spontaneity of adoration, in unconditional exclusivity and in totality: this is the first commandment of God.

As direct, exclusive and total as the first commandment of adoration in faith is the second commandment. It, too, allows of no limitations, exceptions or compromises of a divided heart, because it does no more than express the reverse side of the first commandment: the human nothingness. Man must keep before his eyes his own nothingness in a living interior adoration the true «I am» and cannot fall into the sin of Adam, declaring himself divine, because this meant the Name of God. Hence whoever does not fulfil the first commandment, cannot fulfil the second either, and vice versa.

Israel is the people and property of the Lord. It is a holy people, a royal priesthood, the name of the Lord is its name – the name of God is the name of man – of the whole people and of each one; that is why it is said: «Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.»

The name of God is his holy essence, it is the living reality of his holiness and He allows man to take part in it. «To call on» means to attract, to capture and to secure the prey; «in vain»: this is the motive, the aim, in conjunction with the «void»: without foundation and hence unjust, false. Because the Lord cannot purify and make good anyone who calls on his name «in vain». When man uses the Name of God for that purpose, which is nothing, this is nothing other than the sin of Adam: it is to steal the name of God, it is to steal the likeness of God.

This stealing of the likeness of God which is the sin of Adam is to be found in the expression of the second commandment of God which carries man to his own centre: seeking to awaken him interiorly so that he will distance himself from this interior sin, and suppress it by the adoration, by one's total commitment to God.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary thus wishes to remind men and peoples of the first three commandments:

1. Adoration of the one true God with one's whole heart in the total commitment of one's personality to the consuming fire of the jealous love of God.

2. Complete renunciation of the pride of Adam, from the interior root of a truly sincere humility.

3. The sanctification of the Sunday, with the Holy Sacrifice: adoration of God in union with Jesus.

These central elements of the three first commandments are thus the essential elements of the priestly prayer of Christ, of the Magnificat and of the Our Father.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary calls the attention of all to what sin really is, shows the interior roots of sin, the causes of the misfortunes of our time; it shows too the only effective way of salvation. Hence it is necessary to bear in mind, in the adoration of reparation, these aspects pointed out by the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

«Do not offend the Lord our God any more...»

Sister Lucy in her book "Calls" from the Message of Fatima calls insistently on people to fulfil the Commandments of God. This how she puts it: «God created us to love and serve Him here on earth, and then to see and enjoy Him forever in Heaven. The Message of Fatima reminds us that we must follow the road to Heaven. And it is observance of the Commandments that will lead us to eternal life. This is what Jesus Christ told the young man who asked Him: «... *If you would enter life, keep the commandments*» Therefore, the way to Heaven is this: keep the Commandments. Since, unfortunately, the great majority of people neither know nor understand the Commandments, it will be useful to many people to recall them here, so that we may all understand what we must do in order to obtain eternal life.

It may possibly occur to someone to ask me: What have the ten Commandments got to do with the Message of Fatima? I answer that they have a great deal to do with it: they are among the chief aims of the Message. In fact, Our Lady ended the series of her apparitions in Fatima with these words: *"Do not offend the Lord our God any more, because He is already so much offended"*. And, previously, on the 13th July, she had already said: *"In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want."* Thus, what Our Lady wanted and, therefore, the main object of the Message, was to beg us not to continue to offend Our Lord because He was already so deeply offended.

There can be no doubt that what offends God most is the breaking of his law: all Sacred Scripture confirms this. All the Prophets protested against the breaking of God's law; and, in the same way, Jesus Christ condemns it also, as does the Church, which continues to speak in his name in our own day.

The Book of Deuteronomy tells us how Moses, on the threshold of the Promised Land, called around him the twelve tribes of Israel in order to remind them of how God had led them from the time they left Egypt until they had arrived where they now were, at the River Jordan. This is how Moses recalls God's great gift to his people, the Decalogue: *«The Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, while I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up into the mountain. He said: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage»* (Dt 5,4-6).

God showed Himself to his people on Mount Sinai, so that they would acknowledge Him as the one true God. We were there, represented by the Israelites; to us also God makes Himself known and addresses his word.

All the Israelites saw the fire on the mountains and all understood that it was supernatural fire, since it neither burned nor consumed. In this fire, in some way, they saw God and they were terrified, as they themselves confessed, finally asking Moses to be their mediator: *«... Go near, and hear all that the Lord our God will say; and speak to us all that the Lord our God will speak to you; and we will hear and do it.»* (Dt 5, 24-27).

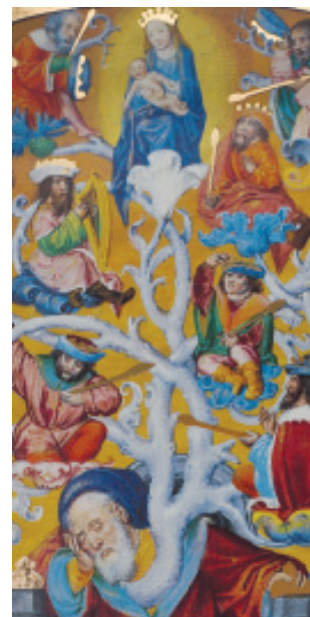
God showed Himself to the Israelites in order to assure them of the reality of his existence and thus to make it possible for them to pass on the certainty of that truth. We, too, belong, spiritually, to that same people. Made one with Christ in Baptism, we became part of the People of God. We were chosen by God to become members of the mystical Body of Christ, which is his Church. ..

Terrified not only by the fire which God caused on the mountain, which itself trembled, but also by the voice of thunder with which God spoke to them, the Israelites begged Moses to be their intermediary with God. When Moses returned from God's presence, he told them the laws which God had given him, and, then, said to them: *«These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them upon two tables of stone, and gave them to me. And when you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; and you said, "(...) Go near, and hear all that the Lord our God will say; and speak to us all that the Lord our God will speak to you; and we will listen and obey..."* (Deut 5, 22-24; 27-29;32).

This should be our response too: to listen to the Church, and believe what it says – certain that what it tells us is the word of God – and obey. *"We will listen and obey"*

Holy Christmas

A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse, a scion thrusts from his roots: on him the spirit of Yahweh rests.
(Is 11,1)



The maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son.
(Is 7,14)
The Word was made flesh, he lived among us.
(Jo 1,14)

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Director: Fr. Luis Kondor, svd / Editor and Proprietor: Secretariado dos Pastorinhos – Rua de S. Pedro, 9 – 2496-908 Fatima - Portugal
Ph. 249 539780 Fax 249 539789. E-Mail: Sec.pastorinhos@mail.telepac.pt **Visit our website: www.pastorinhos.com**

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