



BLESSED FRANCISCO AND JACINTA MARTO

BULLETIN OF THE LITTLE SHEPHERDS – APRIL-JUNE 2006 (44th YEAR)

THE ECCLESIASTICAL HIERARCHY OF THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA The new Bishop of Fátima, D. António dos Santos Marto

God, in his admirable Providence, wished to give extraordinary successors and saints to his Church, which had been built on the rock of Peter. This He did also in the century during which He sent to Fatima his Angel and his Mother with a Message of holiness and peace.

Benedict XV (1914-1922); Pius XI (1922-1939); Pius XII (1939-1958); John XXIII (1958-1963); Paul VI (1963-1978), who was the first Pope to visit Fatima, in 1967; John Paul I (1978); John Paul II (1978-2005) and Benedict XVI, all opened themselves to this great Message.

Pius XII, whose consecration as Bishop coincided with the first apparition of Our Lady in Fatima, always spoke with deep emotion of 'that great day', of the secret design of Providence, when he was consecrated Bishop by Benedict XV in the Sistine Chapel on 13th May, 1917. «as if the blessed Mother wished to indicate that, in the stormy times that marked our Pontificate, in the midst of one of the greatest crises in world history, we would always have her to protect us ...» (Message sent to the Shrine in Fatima on the 25th anniversary of his Consecration). He was the first Pope to consecrate the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Nevertheless, the mission of fully implementing the Mother of God's request in Fatima fell to John Paul II. After the attempt on his life, while still in hospital, he opened the envelope containing the third part of the secret. As is now known, he at once thought of the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and he himself wrote the prayer for what he called an 'Act of Dedication' which was used for the first time in the Basilica of St Mary Major on 7th June 1981. Faithful to Our Lady's request, and in spiritual union with all the Bishops of the world who had been 'summoned' beforehand, he consecrated all humankind and all peoples to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on 25th March, 1984, in Rome.

In the diocese of Leiria, too, which had been restored in 1918, its first bishop, José Alves Correia da Silva (1919-1957) and his successors, João Pereira Venâncio (1958-1972), Albert Cosme do Amaral (1972-1993) and Serafim de Sousa Ferreira da Silva (1996.2006), were appointed as shepherds of the diocese in which the Blessed Virgin had appeared, to watch over the flock entrusted to them

and, as masters of the Message which had also been entrusted to them, to spread it by word and example not only amongst their flock but also to the entire Church of God.

On 7th October, 2005, D. Alberto Cosme do Amaral, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Leiria-Fatima died, and his body was laid to rest in the sanctuary of the Shrine Basilica.

D. Serafim Ferreira e Silva, his successor, has presided over Our Lady's Diocese for 13 years and asked to be allowed to retire about a year ago.



The new Bishop of Fatima with Pope Benedict XVI

On 22nd April last, Pope Benedict

XVI appointed D. António dos Santos Marto as the new Bishop of Leiria-Fatima. After two years in charge of the diocese of Viseu, where he repeatedly expressed his great devotion to Our Lady and to her Message, D. António dos Santos Marto has already entrusted his new diocese and his new pastoral task to the protection of the Virgin Mary. As from 25th June, he will assume full responsibility as Shepherd of the Diocese of Our Lady of Fatima.

Let us pray for the new Bishop of Fatima, for the holiness of his life totally dedicated to the service of God so that he may be a good Shepherd of the Diocese and that from now onwards he may also cause to shine throughout the world the Message which the Blessed Virgin entrusted to his diocese in 1917. «Since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God» (2 Cor. 7,1).

If Mary's requests for prayer and reparation, especially to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, also for the salvation of others, are fulfilled, the Mother of the Church will be able to present her in splendour as a Church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (cf. Eph. 5, 27).

CELEBRATION OF 12TH/13TH MAY

25th anniversary of the attempt on the life of John Paul II

About 400,000 pilgrims, including 136 organised groups from nearly every corner of the world, came to Fatima to attend the celebrations marking the 89th anniversary of the first apparition.

The celebrations were presided over by Cardinal Stanislaus Dziwisz, Archbishop of Cracow, who was previously personal secretary to Pope John Paul II and who, on the occasion of the attempt on the Pope's life on 13th May, 1981, accompanied him to the Gemelli Hospital, being in this way one of the first people to collaborate in saving the Pope's life.

On this occasion, the capacity of the Shrine to accommodate pilgrims having been exceeded, thousands of pilgrims had to occupy the lateral spaces in order to attend the ceremonies.

«This is a very unusual 13th May» declared the Rector of the Sanctuary, adding that the presence in Fatima of the Cardinal Archbishop of Cracow was probably the chief reason for the great number of pilgrims.

Cardinal Dziwisz had accompanied Pope John Paul II on all three of his visits to Fatima so that, this time, he had come «to thank the Lord and his Blessed Mother for the Pope's life, spent in the course of 24 years of faithful service to the Church and to the whole of humanity... It is for this reason that I have come here in order to express my very personal thank-you and also that of the Church in Cracow, which has now been entrusted to my own pastoral care by Pope Benedict XVI».

It was Pope John Paul II who, after having read the so-called «secret of Fatima» in his bed in the Gemelli Hospital, had identified himself as the «Bishop dressed in white who ... having reached the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross, was killed by a group of soldiers ...» and thus, according to the opinion expressed by Sister Lucia herself, which she repeated in the presence of Cardinal Bertone, that «what happened in St Peter's Square on 13th May, 1981, was a fulfilment of what the three little shepherds had seen in the secret on 13th July 1917».

It was John Paul II himself who revealed this third part of the secret, when he beatified the two little shepherds, Francisco and Jacinta Marto in Fatima, on 13th May, 2000.

The Cardinal also recalled «how Pope John Paul II, seriously injured by the assassin's deadly bullet» had been saved by the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima and he confessed that the Pope himself firmly believed that «one hand had shot the bullet, but another had guided it».

«His pontificate began, as we all remember, with that courageous call to all people on earth: "Fear not! Open wide the doors to Christ!" A pontificate lived by repeating every day 'Totus tuus Maria!' not only in words but, truly, in a spirit of total dedication right through to those last days of agony and at the hour of death! It was undoubtedly due to that total dedication that John Paul II became, in our own day, a protagonist in the fulfilment of the Message which Mary gave to the little Shepherds». (Extracts from the homily of Cardinal Dziwisz.

Moreover, on the same day, in St Peter's Square in Rome, a commemorative tablet in white marble was laid at the spot where the attempt on the Pope's life took place.

In a message addressed to the assembled pilgrims, Pope Benedict XVI recalled Mary's miraculous intervention and expressed the hope that the Message of Fatima would be increasingly heard, understood and lived in every community.

THE LITTLE SHEPHERDS' JOURNEY (2)

The living out of the eternal truths of salvation has fallen to such a low level in the heart and eyes of humanity that there is a danger that it will lose its own roots and salvation.

For this reason, in order to awaken the sleeping hearts and consciences of so many, the love of God wished to present them with the eternal content of the Message of Fatima, at the heart of which we find the need for reparation. Both the Angel, and, subsequently, Our Lady even more insistently, called for reparation.

Although the Fatima Apparitions are known about throughout the world, it is to be regretted that many people only regard them superficially, looking merely at the exterior aspect of the Message.

During his very first appearance, the Angel began his adoration of reparation with the little shepherds with a simple and beautiful prayer: «My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love You. I ask pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love You.»

Having repeated this prayer three times, he stood up and said:

«Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications.»

When writing her Second Memoir in November, 1937, Sister Lucia recalled that «the Angel's words engraved themselves so deeply on our minds that we could never forget them. From then on, we used to spend long periods of time, prostrate like the Angel, repeating his words, until sometimes we fell, exhausted.»

The second appearance of the Angel must have been in the height of summer, when the children used to spend the siesta time under the shelter of the trees surrounding the Arneiro well.

Suddenly they saw the Angel who, wishing to arouse in them the spirit of reparation by means of daily sacrifices, said to them: «What are you doing? Pray! Pray very much! The Hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High!»

«How are we to make sacrifices?» Lucia asked.

«Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners. You will thus draw down peace upon your country. I am its Angel Guardian, the Angel of Portugal. Above all, accept and bear with submission the suffering which the Lord will send you.»

When the Angel appeared for the third time, he had a chalice in his hand and over it a Host from which some drops of blood were falling into the chalice. Leaving the chalice with the host suspended in the air, the Angel then knelt down and repeated with the children three times the prayer which, in a Trinitarian and Eucharistic dimension, makes concrete the spirit of sacrificial adoration.

This prayer of the Angel's is extremely illuminating:

«Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly, and I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference with which He Himself is offended. And, through the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of You the conversion of poor sinners.»

Then, rising, he took the chalice and the Host in his hands and gave the Host to Lucia and the contents of the chalice to Jacinta and Francisco to drink. Next, in order to confer on the receiving of Communion a reparatory purpose he said to them:

“Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men! Make reparation for their crimes and console your God.”

Once again, the Angel prostrated on the ground and repeated with the children three times more the same prayer “Most Holy Trinity ...”.

In her recently published little book entitled *How I see the Message of Fatima in the course of time and in the light of events*, which she wrote when she was already 75 years of age, Sister Lucia says: «This prayer was for me a great link in my union with God, a link which grasps me, takes hold of me, indissolubly engraved in my heart: ‘Holy Trinity, one true God, in whom I believe, in Thee I hope; I adore Thee and I love Thee; accept my love and my humble adoration. I have so little to give You that I beg you to accept, in place of my unworthiness, the infinite merits of the Heart of Jesus and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and in exchange I beg of You the conversion of poor sinners’.»

What a lesson for us all from Sister Lucia, whose explanation we find in the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ: «The whole body with the Head is Son of man, is Son of God, is God». So, according to this famous text in Scripture, there is no body without the head, and no head without the body; nor without God is there any head or body to make the whole Christ. Everything then which is with God makes one God. The Son of God is with God by nature; the Son of man is with him by person, and Christ’s body is with Christ by the sacrament.» (Sermon of Blessed Isaac, 12th century). And it is in this mystical union that we accomplish the offer taught to us by the Angel.

In all the Apparitions in 1917, Our Lady stressed ever more forcibly the need for reparation:

On 13th May, during the first apparition, She asked the three little shepherds: “Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and to bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?”

On 13th June, She gave them to understand that God wanted to establish devotion to her Immaculate Heart in the world as a means of salvation for souls.

During the third Apparition, on 13th July, She emphasised her request for reparation by teaching them how they were to make the offering of their prayers and sacrifices: “Sacrifice yourselves for sinners and say many times, especially whenever you make some sacrifice: ‘O Jesus, it is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.’”

And later She asks for veneration of and consecration to her Immaculate Heart in order to save sinners, promising solemnly that her Heart would triumph over sin and the calamities caused by atheism and the blasphemies of men.

During the fourth Apparition, on 19th August, Mary asks even more insistently for prayers and sacrifices for the same intention, saying: “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.”

Finally, during the last apparition on 13th October, looking very sad, like someone who is in distress, She urged: “People must amend their lives and ask forgiveness for their sins. Do not offend the Lord God any more, because He is already so much offended.”

As if foreseeing that men would take little notice of these requests made by the Angel and by Our Lady, the Apparition on 13th July promised that not only would She return to reinforce her request, but She also entrusted to Lucia the mission of making known the need for reparation and spreading it, because God was entrusting the salvation of souls in a special way to the hands of his Most Blessed Mother.

Little Jacinta, before she died, reminded Lucia of this special collaboration of the Heart of Mary in the salvation of souls: “When the time comes when you are allowed to reveal the secret, tell everybody that God grants us graces through the Immaculate Heart of Mary; that people are to ask Her for them; and that the Heart of Jesus wants the Immaculate Heart of Mary to be venerated at his side. Tell them also to pray to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for peace, since God has entrusted it to Her.”

The further visit promised by Our Lady [during the 13th July 1917 apparition], took place on 10th December, 1925, therefore after the deaths of the other two little shepherds, Francisco and Jacinta, and when Lucia herself was a postulant in the Congregation of the Sisters of St Dorothy, in Spain. With this apparition of Mary to Lucia alone, the Fatima revelations were more complete.

Lucia subsequently destroyed the first description of this apparition which she had written down a few days after it, as she was not sure whether she should reveal it, since devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary formed part of the secret. The extant text of the document is a second account, in the third person, written down by order of her confessor on 17th December 1927. On that day, Lucia had asked Jesus in the Tabernacle how she could comply with what had been asked of her, as the origin of the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary was embedded in the Secret that the Blessed Virgin had entrusted to her.

Jesus made her hear very distinctly these words: “My daughter, write what they ask of you. Write also all that the Blessed Virgin revealed to you in the Apparition in which She spoke of this devotion. As for the remainder of the Secret, continue to keep silence.”

This account, which is exactly the same as the first, but was written two years later, reads as follows:

«On December 10th, 1925, the most holy Virgin appeared to her, and by her side, elevated on a luminous cloud, was a Child. The most holy Virgin rested her hand on her shoulder, and as She did so, She showed her a heart encircled by thorns, which She was holding in her other hand.

At the same time the Child said: “Have compassion on the Heart of your most holy Mother, covered with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to make an act of reparation to remove them.”

Then the most holy Virgin said: “Look, my daughter, at my Heart surrounded by thorns with which ungrateful men pierce me every moment by their blasphemies and

ingratitude. You, at least, try to console me and say that I promise to assist at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, shall go to confession, receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for fifteen minutes while meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me”.

The Child complained of the state of his Mother's Heart (covered with thorns) and of the lack of pity and reparation on the part of many people (no-one removing the thorns). Mary repeated the Child's words and explained that all this was due to «blasphemies and ingratitude». Ungrateful men continually blaspheme against her Heart. As an emergency solution, Our Lady proposed that at least Lucia should console her and entrusted to her the great mission of proclaiming the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the practice of the first Saturdays as a form of reparation, promising to help those who practised this devotion with all the graces necessary for salvation.

«It was during the celebration of the anniversary of the apparition that, on 13th September 1939, after the Gospel, the revered Bishop of Leiria ascended the pulpit in the Basilica in Fatima in order to proclaim officially the devotion of the five Saturdays revealed by the Blessed Virgin Mary to Sister Maria Lucia of Jesus, at the time when she was making her novitiate in the Institute of St Dorothy.» (Voz de Fátima, 13th October, 1939).

Thus Mary collaborates in a mission received from God, which is not one of minor importance or concerning marginal things, but one which is connected with the serious problem of the world and the salvation of all.

Her promise now makes our heart thrill with tenderness and hope, because it is truly great! «I promise», Our Lady said, so that we would understand that She was committing her name, her honour and her all-powerful prayer. She «promises» the salvation of those souls who make the five Saturdays; it becomes a kind of personal contract, in connection with which She wishes to spend to the utmost, so to speak, the treasures of her merciful omnipotence. She «promises» to assist us with the necessary and superabundant graces so that we can die well. After having declared what her Immaculate Heart would be in the lives of the little Shepherds, and also in our own, a refuge and a way to God, She assures us now that she will be our invaluable aid also at the moment of death. The love of the Hearts of Jesus and of Mary for souls is here in this infinitely great promise: the grace of final perseverance. This is the most precious of graces, because on it depends the eternal salvation of all those who practise the devotion of the five consecutive first Saturdays in a spirit of reparation.

Thus the Blessed Virgin made her request for reparation to her Immaculate Heart in each one of her apparitions. Later, in Pontevedra, Lucia received the mission to propagate the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as a devotion to be spread throughout the

world and also to propagate the devotion of the first Saturdays of the month, with the intention of making reparation to this Heart which is wounded by the blasphemies and ingratitude of men. This explains why Mary makes her appeal so insistently.

«Why does Our Lady ask for devotion to her Immaculate Heart in order to save poor sinners? Her reply is: It is because God wishes it. *“To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.”* Yes, God wishes to use Her, as the Mother of the people of God, gate of salvation, gateway to Heaven, refuge of sinners who appeal to her with faith, hope and love, Help of Christians, Mother of the Saviour, who by her intercession with God obtains for us the grace of pardon, for those who ask for it with sincere repentance, and the grace of conversion. Mother of divine Grace, Mother of divine Love, of which her Immaculate Heart is the symbol, She is the receptacle of the love of God and the Protectress of the souls redeemed by the saving work of Jesus Christ her Son, who entrusted them to her motherly care as He was dying on the hill of Calvary, nailed to the Cross: “Woman, behold your son.” She is the Protectress, too, of all those who, with faith, hope and love, want to follow in Christ's footsteps, giving for each one his own life, the life of grace. Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women; (because) blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus. Pray for us sinners, and make us worthy of receiving the promises of Jesus Christ.» (These are the words of Sister Lucia in her last little book ‘How I see the Message in the course of time and in the light of events’)

Is Our Lady authorised to make such a demand? Has She the authority to ask for, indeed to demand, reparation for the offences committed against her Immaculate Heart? What, generally speaking, does «reparation» mean?

We will attempt to reply to these questions in forthcoming issues of the Bulletin. To show, in the first place, the position of Mary in the plan of salvation; then we shall explain the essence of sin as an offence against the Holy Name of God; and, finally, what is meant by the «reparation called for» in the Apparitions, which is what Sacred Scripture, too, calls for continually.

In this way it will become clear that the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is not to be understood as something of this world, as a political triumph. Rather it will be the victory of the Cross of Christ, the victory of saving love of the Heart of Jesus, in which the Immaculate Heart of Mary will play a substantial part.

(to be continued in the next Bulletin)

Published on the occasion of the translation of the mortal remains of Sister Lucia to the Basilica in Fatima, the last little book she wrote, entitled «How I see the Message in the course of time and in the light of events» is now available from the Secretariado dos Pastorinhos in the following languages: Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian, German, Hungarian and Polish. Copies will be sent by post to anyone who asks, the price being €1.50 per copy, plus the cost of postage and packing.

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