



BLESSED

FRANCISCO AND JACINTA MARTO

BULLETIN OF THE LITTLE SHEPHERDS – JULY-SEPTEMBER 2004 (42nd YEAR)

FATIMA AND MODERNITY — PROPHECY AND ESCHATOLOGY

(continued)

3. *In a perspective of Christological and Trinitarian faith*

To conclude, the entire Fatima message is presented to us in the perspective of Christological and Trinitarian faith. And it is here that we find the proximate context into which the Eucharistic dimension is inserted.

The Fatima message as a whole comprises three cycles: the angelic cycle (apparitions of the Angel - 1916), the Marian cycle (apparitions of Our Lady from 13th May to 13th October 1917), and the Heart of Mary cycle (apparitions in Pontevedra in 1925-26 and in Tuy in 1929).

In my opinion, the apparitions of the Angel and the last apparition in Tuy constitute respectively the gateway and the keystone in the light of which the entire message is to be set and viewed. It is in them that the Eucharistic mystery appears, clearly and closely linked with the mystery of the Trinity.

In the first apparition, the Angel teaches to the children, and arouses in them, the spirit of adoring reparation in faith, hope and love, by means of 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!"

In the second apparition, the Angel arouses in them the spirit of sacrifice by the making of daily sacrifices.

In the third and last apparition, the Angel makes concrete and explicit the spirit of sacrificial adoration in a Trinitarian and Eucharistic dimension, by means of prayer and communion, attributing to both a reparatory purpose. The angel's prayer 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."

Already during the first apparition of Our Lady on 13th May

1917, when the grace of God was revealed to the children and communicated to them in the form of a "light so intense ... that its rays penetrated our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see ourselves in God who was that Light", the children prayed in their hearts: "O most Holy Trinity, I adore You. My God, I love You in the most Blessed Sacrament".

Finally, we have the last apparition in Tuy. Being in a sense a dome, it completes and synthesises the entire message in a dazzling vision which takes in at a glance the mystery of the Trinity, the redeeming sacrifice of the Cross, the sacrifice of the Mass and the presence and unique sharing of Mary with her Immaculate Heart, beneath



The vision on June 13, 1929 in Tuy, Spain

the Cross, in the whole of this mystery of the salvation of the world: "I had asked for, and been granted, permission by my Superiors and confessor to make a Holy Hour from 11 p.m. until midnight on Thursday nights. One night, being alone, I knelt down inside the altar rail in the middle of the chapel to pray, prostrate, the prayers of the Angel. When I began to feel tired, I stood up and continued praying them with my arms outstretched in the form of a cross. The only light was that of the sanctuary lamp. Suddenly, the entire chapel was filled with a supernatural light, and over the altar there appeared a Cross of light which extended right up to the ceiling. In an even brighter light, one could see on the upper part of the cross the face of a man with his body down to the waist, with a dove, also of light, over his breast and the body of another man nailed to the cross. A little below the waist, suspended in the air, one could see a huge Chalice and a Host down which were trickling some drops of blood which was running down the cheeks of the Crucified and from a wound in his chest. These drops were trickling across the Host and thence into the Chalice. Beneath the right arm of the cross stood Our Lady with her Immaculate Heart in her hand ("it was Our Lady of Fatima with her Immaculate Heart ... in her left hand, ...without either a sword or roses, but with a crown of thorns and flames..."). Beneath the left arm of the cross, some large letters,

as if made of the clearest water pouring over the altar, formed the words: "Grace and Mercy!"

I understood that I had been shown the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and I received lights concerning this Mystery which I am not allowed to reveal".

It is interesting to note that this representation of the Trinity in the Cross is called, in Christian iconography, the "Throne of Grace", recalling, as it does, the passage from Hebrews 4, 14-15 "Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession of faith. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need". And how can we not also recall, by association, St John's Prologue, in which he presents to us the Incarnate Word as "the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth", that is, of merciful and abiding love "from whose fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1, 14-16).

Moreover, iconographic art has at times expressed this truth with greater depth and delicacy than some academic theologies. This happens in the iconographic tradition of the West, when it presents, and represents as in a theological aesthetic, the Trinitarian mystery in the wood of the Cross. It is like an artistic synthesis of this theology: the Father handing over his Son to share the lot of men, and suffering in the pain of his love; the Son delivering himself up utterly for the multitude of his brothers and sisters; the dove, the Spirit of Love, supporting the Son in the act of handing himself over and who, in turn, is handed over by the Son to humanity as the gift of his suffering love.

It is this mystery of love which we celebrate in the Eucharist.

Conclusion

Grace and Mercy, the Grace of merciful Love - this, then, is the synthesis of the message of Fatima and of the revelation of the compassionate God who, in his Trinitarian Love, reaches out to human suffering, to humanity as a whole, to enable it to feel his great tenderness, to reveal Himself as the loving Father of every creature.

And this brings us to understand how the Pope, in recalling the 80th anniversary of the apparitions in Fatima, wrote in a message to the local bishop:

"At the beginning of the third millennium, and observing the signs of the times in this 20th century, Fatima can certainly be regarded as one of the greatest, also because, in its Message, it proclaims many of the other signs that have occurred, and calls on us to live its appeals; signs such as the two World Wars, but also great assemblies of Nations and Peoples under the sign of dialogue and of peace; the oppression and upheavals endured by many countries and peoples, but also the voice and the opportunity given to peoples and nations which have meanwhile come to the fore in the international arena; the crises, the desertions and so much suffering among members of the Church, but also a renewed and intense mood of solidarity and of mutual dependence in the Mystical Body of Christ, which continues to grow to maturity in all the baptised...; the withdrawal from and abandonment of God on the part of individuals and societies, but also an irruption of the Spirit of Truth in hearts and communities which have reached the heights of immolation and martyrdom in order

to preserve the "image and likeness of God in man" (Gen. 1, 22), to save man from man himself.

Among these and other signs of the times, as I was saying, Fatima stands out in revealing to us the hand of God, provident guide and patient and compassionate Father also of this 20th century."

In the light of these keys to the meaning of things, Fatima can be seen as a sign of God for our generation, a prophetic word for our time, a divine intervention in human history by means of the maternal face of Mary.

When Mary moves to accomplish a mission received from God, she never does so for things of little consequence or of marginal importance; rather she does so when the serious problem of the fate or destiny of the world and the salvation of mankind is at stake.

If one reflects deeply on it, then, the co-ordinates of the Fatima message are wide and, theologically, they contain a prophecy in the light of eschatology. "Prophecy, in the biblical meaning of the term, does not mean predicting the future, but rather applying the will of God to the present time, and in this way, pointing out the correct path to be followed in the future".

On the other hand, the vicissitudes of mankind as a whole and of the Church in particular must be viewed from the eschatological perspective, or that of its last end. Only by opening the horizons of eternity and proclaiming theological hope is it possible to shed light on the meaning of a history which is open to the future of God and to withstand the evil threatening humanity. In this sense, the message of Fatima forewarns of the "judgement" hanging over the world with the possibility of a hellish self-destruction, that would reduce the world and those in it to ashes, while at the same time proclaiming the hope of overcoming evil by our conversion to God. The Fatima message thus constitutes a warning and, at the same time, promises the consolation of theological hope: evil is overcome by the Trinitarian love revealed in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus, and by the love of Mary for us.

THE APPARITIONS OF OUR LADY

The third Apparition

A few moments after arriving at the Cova da Iria, near the holmoak, where a large number of people were praying the Rosary, we saw the flash of light once more, and a moment later Our Lady appeared on the holmoak.

"What do you want of me?" I asked.

"I want you to come here on the 13th of next month, to continue to pray the Rosary every day in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary, in order to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war, because only she can help you."

"I would like to ask you to tell us who you are, and to work a miracle so that everybody will believe that you are appearing to us."

"Continue to come here every month. In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe."

I then made some requests, but I cannot recall now just what they were. What I do remember is that Our Lady said it was necessary for such people to pray the Rosary in order to obtain these graces during the year. And she continued:

"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.”

In this account of what happened, the text that follows formed part of the secret which, in 1917, Our Lady asked the children not to reveal to anyone, and which they did not reveal even when the Administrator put them in prison and threatened to fry them in boiling oil. It was only on 31st August, 1941, in the letter that she wrote from Tuy to Bishop José Alves Correia da Silva, that Lucia declared that «the time had come» to speak of the secret, and then went on to say:

«...The secret is made up of three distinct parts, two of which I am now going to reveal.

The first part is the vision of hell.

As Our Lady spoke these last words, she opened her hands once more, as she had done during the two previous months. The rays of light seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw as it were a sea of fire. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. (It must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me.)»

[The report in the daily newspaper *O Século* for 23rd July 1917 included the following paragraph: «There was a sound as of thunder, whereupon the children burst into tears, and began making wild gestures, after which they fell into an ecstasy.»]

«The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals. Terrified and as if to plead for succour, we looked up at Our Lady, who said to us, so kindly and so sadly:

“You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end; but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the pontificate of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.

“To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world. In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved; etc.. »

As for the third part of the secret, Lucy wrote it down when she was ill in Tuy, on 3rd January 1944, having once again been ordered to do so by the Bishop of Leiria, to whom

she entrusted it in a sealed envelope. The contents of this letter remained hidden until the day of the solemn beatification of Francisco and Jacinta in Fatima on 13th May, 2000. On this day it was read publicly by Cardinal Sodano. A theological commentary on the text prepared by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was later published in Rome, on 26th June 2000.

The third part of the secret revealed at the Cova da Iria-Fatima, on 13 July 1917.

I write in obedience to you, my God, who command me to do so through his Excellency the Bishop of Leiria and through your Most Holy Mother and mine.

After the two parts which I have already explained, at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendour that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: ‘Penance, Penance, Penance!’. And we saw in an immense light that is God: ‘something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it’ a Bishop dressed in White ‘we had the impression that it was the Holy Father’. Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God.

Continuation of Lucia's letter of August 31st, 1941:

«Do not tell this to anybody. Francisco, yes, you may tell him.»

“When you pray the Rosary, say after each mystery: O my Jesus, forgive us, save us from the fire of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need.”

After this, there was a moment of silence, and then I asked:

“Is there anything more that you want of me?”

“No, I do not want anything more of you today.”

Then, as before Our Lady began to ascend towards the east, until she finally disappeared in the immense distance of the firmament. »

12th/13th MAY 2004

The solemn commemoration of the 87th anniversary of the apparition of Our Lady to the three little shepherds on 13th May 1917 was presided over by Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino. The Cardinal, who had come specially from Rome for the occasion, is the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. It was he who presided at the Solemn Concelebration with 25 Bishops, 340 priests, and many thousands of pilgrims.

The Cardinal began his homily by recalling that Pope John Paul II had come to Fatima in order to beatify the two little

shepherds, Francisco and Jacinta, but also in order to proclaim once more Our Lady's message of hope and of peace. A few days later, the Pope had spoken as follows: A message of conversion and hope is being transmitted from Fatima to the entire world. It is a message which, in accordance with Christian revelation, is profoundly embedded in history. Precisely because it is based on lived experience, this message calls on believers to pray earnestly for peace in the world and to do penance in order to open the hearts of sinners to repentance. This is the true Gospel of Christ, which is being proclaimed once again to the men and women of our generation, tormented as they are by the memory of all they have suffered in the past. The appeal made to us by God through the Virgin Mary is today as pressing and immediate as when it was first made» (General Audience, 17th May 2000).

In his homily, Cardinal Martino presented Fatima as a message of hope, linking it with the Gospel of St John which had been read during the Mass and which, as the Cardinal explained, «contains one of the most consoling and, at the same time, most demanding revelations left to us by Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the form, as it were, of a last will and testament at the supreme moment of his Passion. What stands out in this Gospel passage is, as St John's Gospel underlines, the communitarian and ecclesial dimension of love. This dimension has its fulcrum in the words that Jesus addresses to his mother and to the beloved disciple. We cannot, of course, rule out the idea that this was an act of filial piety whereby Jesus entrusted his mother to the care of the beloved disciple. But there was more to it than that. There are many factors pointing in this direction. To begin with, there is the rich and solemn context of Calvary in which this brief episode is narrated. Then, the word that Jesus uses 'Woman', a word filled with echoes of the Old Testament. Finally, the clear parallelism with the episode of the miracle at Cana (John 2, 1-11). Of course, the mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple are real people, and not mere symbols. Nevertheless, the context invites us to see a broader meaning in them: these real people are called upon to fulfil a typological and representative role. Mary is not addressed by her name, but by her role as mother (the mother of Jesus, your mother, our mother) — not by her name but by her function, as a symbol or perhaps, better still, as a representation. The disciple, too, is not identified by his name but as the disciple whom Jesus loved. He too fulfils the role of a representative figure. Thus, we understand how it is that the mother of Jesus takes on the role of the mother of the disciple and of all disciples. For his part, the beloved disciple represents all those who believe in Jesus. Hence, Jesus' last act,

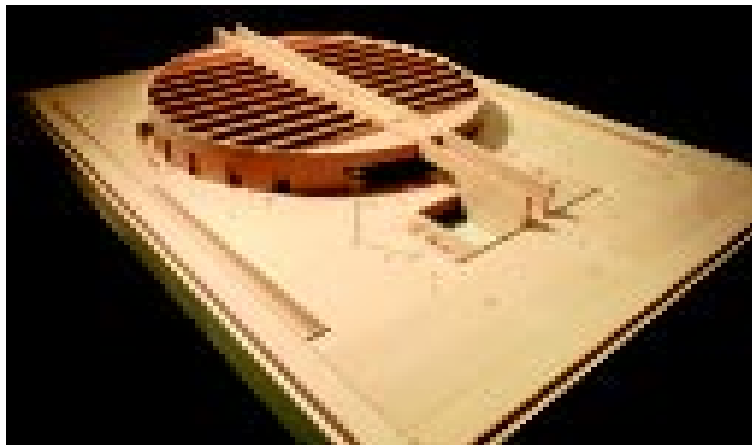
before he died, was to found a community of love in the persons of his mother and of the beloved disciple. We can therefore conclude that, in this scene on Calvary, a new, though as yet hidden, entity is making its appearance, namely, the community. The community is born from the Cross. From the Cross is born the Church. And Mary, our mother, is present at this birth of the Church. Her presence at the moment when it comes into existence is both a theological and a spiritual indication that, yesterday as today, she is perpetually our hope, the hope of the Church, the hope of the world.»

Grateful for the maternal solicitude of Mary our Mother, we too must become witnesses of hope for our brothers and sisters, witnesses of a hope that expresses itself in charity.

We shall learn from Our Lady of Fatima to live the present in the way in which it should be lived, namely, as a time which is given to us in order to love God and our brothers and sisters. In this way, Our Lady will be our daily viaticum of hope.»

NEW CHURCH FOR THE SHRINE

The first stone of the Church of the Most Holy Trinity was laid on the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity. This stone, which had been blessed and sent as a gift by Pope John Paul II on 9th March 2004, had been taken from the tomb of St Peter above which the Basilica of St Peter was built in Rome.



The model of the church of the Most Holy Trinity

The Bishop of Leiria Fatima presided at the ceremony and implored God's help on the work which is to «house the true servants of God».

Those responsible for the Shrine of Fatima feel that the Holy Father's gift will achieve its purpose more easily if it can be seen by all those who enter the building. For this reason, once the building has been completed, this stone will be placed in a position which will show forth more clearly the link between Fatima and the Chair of St Peter. Accordingly, a second stone, taken from the mass of rocks excavated from the site of the future church, was placed at the base of building.

On the afternoon of the same day, an exhibition was opened displaying the plans, together with a model of the proposed church as it will appear within the surrounding area of the Shrine. The hope is that this church will be officially opened on 13th May 2007.

The Church will consist of two main areas: the area of reconciliation and that of the church proper, which will cover an area 125 metres in diameter and can be sub-divided into two separate areas separated from each other by a solid curtain, with a seating capacity of 3000 and 9000 people respectively.

BLESSED FRANCISCO AND JACINTA MARTO - Quarterly Publication. Price:0.05 €

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2496-908 FATIMA – PORTUGAL - Ph. 249 539780; 531282. Fax 249 539789. E-Mail: Sec.pastorinhos@mail.telepac.pt
www.pastorinhos.com – Printed in Gráfica Almondina, Torres Novas – Dep. Legal 163921/01