



PREFACE

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Fatima's "Angel of Peace" appeared to the three little shepherds in 1917, and convened the first "Children's Holy Hour." Quickly they would become students in the "School of the Immaculate Heart of Mary," and apostles of prayer and sacrifice. God used these small children to renew the Gospel message of repentance and call the world back, through Mary, to His Son.

On the 90th anniversary of the apparitions I had the privilege to preside at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, in Washington D.C., at the *2007 Worldwide Children's Eucharistic Holy Hour*.

Crowning the image of Our Lady of Fatima and entrusting ourselves to her classroom of faith and love, we readied our hearts in prayer and song and adored our Lord Jesus Christ.

In response to the children's questions I wanted to teach about Eucharistic adoration – the first and highest prayer of the human heart, a prayer which directs itself to the supreme and sublime mystery of the Godhead. At the same time, I learned from our children what the world learned from Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta: a way of trust and joy and prayer by which we approach the Blessed Sacrament, hand in hand with Mary, and learn to live with a more pure love.

We prayed before the monstrance, and contemplated the mysteries of the rosary, focused as they are on the unfolding revelation of the Incarnate Lord, His victory over sin and death, and the exemplary participation of Mary in the pathways of the Christian journey.

As priests facing the challenging circumstances of our Pastoral Ministry, we daily come before the "Ineffable Mystery:" the living Presence of Jesus Christ. In Holy Mass, and in its extension in adoration, we draw strength and light from the Eucharistic Sacrifice, "the center and root of the whole priestly life," and the source "from which principally flows the priest's pastoral love." (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 14)

Children also are drawn to the Eucharistic Jesus. It is not that they become suddenly capable of articulating deep mysteries – any more than we do - but that they begin to acquire peace and a listening heart necessary to following our Lord.

God chose the children at Fatima to be apostles for peace in the world through prayer and sacrifice. The "Lady dressed in white" prepared them to suffer much; to persevere in virtue; and to be images of holiness in ordinary life.

This simple outline offers a framework for and resources for such a Holy Hour in your diocese and parishes. I ask my brother bishops and pastors throughout the world to consider the value of children's Eucharistic adoration for the sanctification of families, and as a locus of intercession for peace and authentic conversion.

I join the founders of the "Worldwide Catholic School Children's Eucharistic Holy Hour" in inviting you to gather for the annual observance on the First Friday in October as participants in a global response to the New Evangelization following Mary's invitation to renewal.

In Christ and Mary,
+Bishop Finn