



NEW EVANGELIZATION AND THE LITTLE SHEPHERDS OF FATIMA

“Father, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children” (Mt 11:25).

Cardinal José Saraiva Martins,
Prefect of the Congregation of the Saints spoke of
the gift of the “Little Shepherds” to the Church and to the world, in the context of the
New Evangelization.

International Fatima Congress for the 21st Century

“My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way which will lead you to God”
– June 13, 1917 – Our Lady to the Little Shepherds

Our Lady appeared to the little Shepherds gleaming with light, but in her words and also in Her face, which at times was veiled in sorrow, because of the constant reality of sin.

She showed the children her Immaculate Heart crowned with thorns, and explained that prayer and sacrifice are needed in order to make reparation for the many evils that offend God, to bring an end to war and to obtain peace for the world. Mary’s language is simple, suited to children, without being toned down or fanciful.

The Virgin chooses innocent children as her privileged collaborators in order to combat the terrible leprosy of sin which is corrupting mankind with the weapons of prayer and penance.

Pius XII, whose cause for beatification is now under way, made his prophecy. I quote his words: “You must not think that a tender age is an obstacle in the way of consummate perfection, for holiness.

Our predecessor Pius X declared that there will be saints among young children when he opened to them the Eucharistic Tabernacle. He knew, as we ourselves know, that physical age does not stand in the way of the soul, so that the human being, even a young human being, can attain the perfection of spiritual age (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 12, sed contra and ad 2). If Jesus calls for spiritual childhood as a condition for entering into heaven, and then goes on to say: ‘Let the little children come unto me,’ how can one deny that children are able to attain evangelical perfection?”

No. In no way. To prove it, we have the example of the two Little Shepherds who, in accordance with the Church’s most recent practice, inaugurated precisely with them, were

solemnly raised to the honor of the altar. These two who, in a sense, originated this new practice, were also, one might say, the first to benefit from it.

Turning to Francisco,

The words of the Angel, “Console your God,” impressed Francisco very deeply and guided his whole life. He wanted to be the ‘Consoler of Jesus’ primarily by praying the Rosary and adoring the Hidden Jesus in the Tabernacle of the Parish Church.

He wanted to go often and stay in church as long as he could in order to be near the tabernacle close to the “hidden Jesus,” as he called the Eucharist in his childlike, profound way of speaking.

God told only Francisco “how sad” he was, as he said. One night his father heard him sobbing and asked him why he was crying; his son answered: “I was thinking of Jesus who is so sad because of the sins that are committed against him.” He was motivated by one desire—so expressive of how children think – “to console Jesus and make him happy.”

– Pope John Paul II

The Rosary

In addition to all this, if we examine the many episodes in the lives of the little Shepherds, we cannot but see the line which links them all together, namely the recitation of the Rosary. When we pay attention to this undoubted fact, *we perceive that for them the Rosary is a reply of love to the Lady who came to visit them.*

Let us work together to help the children of the world to come to know the “Power of the Most Holy Rosary.”