

THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA FOCUSES ON THE SANCTIFICATION OF OUR FAMILIES

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God is love! God is also a family! We usually think about the Holy Family of Nazareth, having Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as a member. But the Most Holy Trinity is a family in a mysterious way. There is only one God, one nature, one essence but three persons for that God. Every person is different in the way it expresses its personality. The Almighty Father is the first person, the Creator. The Divine Son is the second person, the Wisdom, the divine intelligence, the “Logos”. The second person has a second nature, the human nature, as He is our Savior and Redeemer. He and only He is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit is the person with the function of sanctifying our souls. The Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son. This Love between the Father and the Son is so unique, so perfect and marvelous that He is the third person of the Most Holy Trinity. The Most Holy Trinity was described by St. Augustine, the greatest of the Fathers of the Church. He described the Most Holy Trinity in a symbol that will live forever: The triangle. One area is shaped by the three sides of a triangle. The same is with the mystery of God. There is only one nature shared by the three persons but every person is special and unique; every member of the family has its own personality.

In her personality, Mary relates to each of the persons in the Most Holy Trinity in a different way. Mary is the daughter of God, the Father. Mary is the Mother of God, the Christ. Mary is the wife of God, the Holy Spirit. These are family relations. Mary is the child of the Father; mother of the Son and spouse of the Holy Spirit. There you can find the perfect relationship of the family, seen through the beatific vision of Our Lady. She contemplates God in the Holy Mystery, in a threefold relationship, setting up the model relation of a natural human family.

Then we must state that Fatima is a message from heaven for our families, not only because of the miracle of the Sun, or because the vision of the Holy Family of Nazareth, but much more important, because of the relationship of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the Most Holy Trinity, revealed at Fatima to the three little shepherds-children.

In the vision of the 13th October, 1917, the Holy Family of Nazareth appeared in Fatima during the miracle of the Sun. Then, several apparitions occurred, one after the other. Many scholars investigating the Message of Fatima questioned why. There is an explanation: On the 13th October, 1917, the Good Lord gave us a summary of the major Catholic devotions that have contributed to the salvation of the greater number of souls in the Church: (1) Our Lady of Sorrows, (2) St Joseph with the Child Jesus; (3) the Holy Family of Nazareth. Then, a very curious one;

which still has no name, is that of the image of Jesus Christ risen with luminous rays coming from his hands apart, as Sr. Lucia described in her Memoirs. This happened before the apparition of Jesus of Divine Mercy to Sister Faustina Kowalska in Poland. The devotion of Divine Mercy was not known in the world at this time. In my opinion, this apparition to the three little shepherds of Fatima is that of (4) Jesus of Divine Mercy, a devotion that would be crucial in our days to bring many souls closer to God.

(5) Finally, Our Lady of Mount Carmel with the Child Jesus carrying the Brown Scapular in His hand. The Carmelite Spirituality has produced the greatest number of canonized saints in the history of the Universal Church and comprises the same spirituality of the Message of Fatima at the time that also served to show Lucia her way to serve God as a Carmelite nun.

These five devotions are a summary, a compendium of the best schools of spirituality in the Catholic Church that have contributed so much to bring souls closer to God.

In the Church, sometimes we see so many competitions between apostolic movements. But God who is wise cannot divide His own creation. The people of God all share one Holy Spirit and call Him to come to their hearts, bringing unity and strength to the Church, as He complements the gifts spread between them. All charismas of the Church work to achieve a single goal: The salvation of souls for the greater glory of God. The Message of Fatima is the same. It brings in the last apparition at the Cova da Iria the summary of the major Catholic devotions responsible for saving so many souls. Because the Message of Fatima is not only for one apostolic movement, but a universal call to humanity, even to those who are not Catholic, to pray, do penance and seek God; offering peace, hope and joy to all those that put the Message into practice.

But a special call, the most important, is given to families. The great miracle of the sun occurred so that all people might believe; this is God's sign, His personal signature on the Fatima events for all to see and believe that authenticated the Message of Fatima. The miracle was cosmological. There is only one precedent in the Old Covenant. The people of Israel were losing their fight against the Philistines. God sent a cosmological event to change the course of this battle. The people of God defeated their enemies because of the intervention of God. Now, in the twentieth century, God intervenes to change the course of another battle, when good people were losing the fight against the forces of evil, when the terrible world wars were annihilating whole nations, when the persecution against the Church was worse than ever, producing the greater number of martyrs in that century; the Woman dressed in sun came to the battle to confront the red dragon (Book of Revelation, chapter 12) in the supernatural events occurred in Fatima,

Portugal, on the 13th of October, 1917. In the twentieth century, the century of martyrs, in the century of two world wars, hundreds of millions were assassinated, the Mother of God came to Fatima to defeat the enemy of Christ, as she did before as prophesied in the of Book of Genesis, chapter 3:15, responding to God's mandate.

In the Apparition of the 13th of October, the topic of the family is presented in the Message of Fatima, because the Blessed Virgin Mary is the spiritual Mother of humanity. As a mother, she brings to Fatima her concerns and worries on how a human family will survive this moral, social and spiritual crisis. The Mother is worried because her children are losing faith and separating themselves from God. If you look at the statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Fatima, this spiritual motherhood of Mary over mankind is shown. Our Blessed Mother is barefoot as she is the Handmaid of the Lord. The statue is not crowned because it portrays **this spiritual motherhood to her children; because** she comes mainly as a mother not as a queen. Her hands are in this position because it represents the moment she embraces Sister Lucia consoling her of her solitude and suffering. There is physical contact between the Mother and the child seer.

This is the same kind of physical contact that we see in the Apparition of the Miraculous Medal. The Mother took her child in her lap, like a mother talks to her daughter. This gesture of Mother Mary is a catechesis more profound than any possible speech in Marian theology: A mother taking care of her child. We are all there with our Mother. She is calling all the families of the world to live the authentic Christian life. She is calling families to pray together, especially the prayer of meditation, i.e. the Holy Rosary; to love each other and be patient, to bear sufferings and sacrifices out of love, to care for each other and be merciful, to communicate and share time and efforts; which are the effective means more than ever before to reject the worldly spirit, to abandon materialism and hedonism, the search for worldly pleasures, pride and selfishness.

Families are call to live simple lives, humble lives as simple and humble people are the preferred people of God. Our families should learn to be hungry for salvation and eternal happiness. We all are thirsty of God. We need to recognize that God is first in our lives. This is the principal teaching of the Message of Fatima: God's primacy. God is first! The word "Fatima" is an Arabic word that means "a high place from where light illuminates the darkness of the surroundings." Fatima is a unique gift given to the world to re-discover Faith in God. If families live having God at the center of their lives, families will be renewed, happy, at peace, because God dwells in their hearts.

The children of Fatima were renewed and transformed and with them their families were renewed too. It is important that the instruments of God used in

Fatima to renew these families were three little children. It is if like the Good Lord wishes to renew our families today through the role of the little ones in bringing people closer to God.

The family members were evangelized after the example of the three little shepherds who lived the Christian virtues in an extraordinary and heroic way, re-writing the manuals of theology as such little children were capable of living a holy life, sanctifying themselves and their families in such a way that they can say with St. Paul “It is no longer I who live... it is Christ that lives in me.” The three little shepherds became other Christ, their families were transformed and we must look how!

Let us examine the people in the village of Fatima in the days of the Apparitions. Our Lady called first the children to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The adults were more or less living a Christian life. But they were far away from perfection. Through the children, their parents were called to come closer to God. First, their parents tried to evangelize their children with good examples and catechesis. But they were far away from perfection. Then, the conversion and transformation of the children took place. The conversion of parents came later. **This is a great lesson of Fatima to our Pastoral work. Let us focus on children and young people first; then parents and adults will come. The triumph of the Heart of Mary will be a reality when this is achieved. The soul of the family is the mother.** The Mother portrays the love needed to keep the family together. The father is essential to the family. But the mother is the soul of the family. The same is Fatima: The soul of the Message of Fatima is the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary represents the spiritual motherhood of Mary over humanity. When she appeared to Sr. Lucia, Our Lady had the Heart in her hand and she offered her heart to Lucia. Lucia was representing all human beings when Our Lady said: “My heart will stay with you till the end.” Our Lady was risen and assumed to heaven in body and soul, by her Son, Jesus Christ, but she left the Heart with us on earth: the heart is the spiritual presence of Mary. The spiritual action of the Mother is so much needed by her children. She wants to save her children. She has given us her heart. So her Immaculate Heart is with us on earth. We have two wonderful gifts from heaven. The most important one is the divine and real presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament: His body, blood, soul and Divinity, till the end of times. The second greatest gift is the spiritual motherhood of Mary given over humanity given to us by Jesus Christ on the First Good Friday, when Jesus said to his beloved disciple: “Behold your mother.” From that moment on, John the beloved disciple of Christ, received Mother Mary in her Heart and in his own house.

From the beginning, the Church has seen in St. John, the evangelist, the Children of God, all human beings, receiving Blessed Mother Mary as their spiritual Mother. This calls us to a new family life, rich in God's grace and mercy!

1. God is first. God is a family. The Most Holy Trinity is a family. Our Blessed Mother relates to each of the three persons in a threefold role as child (to the Father), mother (to the Son) and wife (to the Holy Spirit).
2. The family of Nazareth which appeared on 13 October 1917 is the mother of all human families. We better follow the Holy Family, not the bad examples set by other false idols and celebrities of our sick societies that have abandoned Christian values and virtues.

Those who do not believe in marriage or the sanctity of life are in favor of a culture of death. There are parents who spoil their children through TV, internet, profane music, magazines, publications and movies. The false idols destroy the authentic human family. We should not follow these fashions as they oppose the Gospel. Our Lady said in the Message of Fatima: "Many fashions will come that will greatly offend God." So, Our Lady of Fatima is the Mother of families, the mother for children; mother for the parents, mother for the husbands and wives.

We must look at the home of Nazareth to make our own home a domestic church, in the model of the Sacred Family: Jesus, Joseph and Mary. Our own family must be transformed from within by accepting the call from heaven. We have to love each other, to communicate, to accept God's, grace and mercy. We must consecrate our family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so that they will dwell in our own home.

Children must look to Jesus Christ as their model in His obedience to God, the Father. Wives must follow the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her offering of herself and the acceptance of God's will. Husbands must look to St. Joseph to follow his marvelous example of the sanctification of his daily duties. The spirituality of Fatima can transform the family. We pray that the God Lord will bless our needy families granting the Church a new Marian Pentecost. The authentic triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary will come through our families. Grace and Mercy to all!