



Devotion to the

Immaculate Heart

by Fr. Pierre Duverger, SSPX

¹ The primary source for the writing of this article and the following one is the recent work by Joseph de Belfont: *Mysteries and Hidden Truths of the Third Secret of Fatima* [French] (Lanore, 2011).

Three times in 1916, three little children saw an Angel. The following year, Fatima became famous. Our Lady appeared from May to October on the 13th of the month. She came and spoke to Lucy, the oldest. Jacinta heard the words, but Francisco was only able to see the visions.¹

Prayers and sacrifices for sinners, the recitation of the rosary, hell and war, offenses against God and His Mother, secrets to be revealed later, announcement of wars, conversion of Russia and a miracle to come—all these things attracted more than 70,000 people on October 13, 1917. In front of this immense crowd, after a heavy rain which left everyone muddy and tired, the sun danced before everyone, witnesses of this unique miracle, never seen since Joshua.

Between 1925 and 1930, Sister Lucy continued to receive instructions to complete and transmit the message and the secrets. The first and second World Wars would start and finish as prophesied by the Queen of Peace. Almost a century later, the Third Secret of Fatima, supposedly revealed by the Vatican in 2000, is still the object of inquiry, and the specific request made to the Pope is still incomplete despite various attempts.

² July 13, 1917. *Memorias e cartas da Irma Lucia* [abbreviated hereafter MCIL], (Porto, 1973), p. 401. Alonso, pp. 19-20. Br. Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *Toute la vérité sur Fatima* [abbreviated hereafter TVF2], Vol. 2 (Edition CRC, 1984), pp. 324-25.

³ During four communications: on May 13, June 13, and on July 13 before and after the vision of hell.

⁴ Through the apparitions of Dec. 10, 1925; Feb. 15, 1926; Dec. 17, 1927; 1929 and 1930.

In the following pages, we will recall the most important revelation of Fatima: devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the famous request of her love, the consecration of Russia.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary

*“Jesus wants to use you in order to make me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world the devotion to my Immaculate Heart. To the one who embraces it, I promise salvation. These souls will be loved by God as flowers picked by me to adorn His throne... My heart will be your refuge and the way which will lead you to God.”*²

Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary appears to be the very core of the revelations at Fatima. In a very specific way Our Lady mentions the divine will about this devotion in the apparitions of 1917.³ Already in the three apparitions of 1916, the Angel had introduced the children to the devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. When in Pontevedra and then in Tuy, Lucy received information⁴ on how to practice this devotion and what special requests were expected to be passed on to the Church’s authorities.

All the other themes of Fatima—the conversion of sinners by sacrifice and prayer, the rosary, the communion of reparation, and the consecration of Russia—are tied to this central concern: to establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The conversion of sinners by prayer and sacrifice is the first and most known of all the messages. It would be, for Jacinta in particular, the very spring of her perfection until her abandonment in death, heroically accepted for a ten-year-old little saint. This theme has been recalled in almost all the apparitions, including those of the Angel and the subsequent ones in Pontevedra and Tuy. >

“I desire very ardently the propagation of the cult and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, because this Heart is the magnet which draws souls to Me, the fire which makes the rays of My light and My love beam out over the earth, and the inexhaustible well causing the living water of My mercy to gush over the earth.”

Communication to Sister Lucy, in Letter to Bp. Gurza May 27, 1943



⁵ The Holy Family, Our Lady of Sorrows, and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

The first prayer taught by the Angel is for repairing the offenses of sinners; the second is to ask for their conversion. But the Blessed Virgin came to reveal an infallible means to save them from hell: her Immaculate Heart.

The daily prayer of the rosary was asked for in each apparition in 1917. During the last one, she called herself Our Lady of the Rosary, offering to the children three visions according to the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries.⁵ It is easy to understand the recitation of the rosary as a special way to honor the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The communion of reparation is a request mentioned by Our Lady on July 13, 1917. The Angel taught the children devotion to the Eucharist by prayer, and he himself gave them Communion in his third apparition. The details of the practice would be later explained to Lucy in the apparitions of Pontevedra in 1925 and of Tuy in 1926. This devotion is dedicated to reparation for the offenses made against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

⁶ See the following article in this issue: "The Consecration of Russia."

⁷ Fr. Coudrin, founder of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, promoted the devotion to the Immaculate Heart on April 1st. The Curé of Ars consecrated his parish to the Immaculate Conception.

The consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart was asked by Our Lady on June 13, 1929, at Tuy. During the apparitions of Fatima, on July 13, 1917, she had announced that she would come again and ask for it: "*I will come to ask the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart...*" In 1930 Our Lord reminded Lucy about the request of His Mother. The very consecration of Russia and its resulting conversion were submitted to conditions. One of them, the most important, is the recognition, promulgation, and practice of the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.⁶

Revelation and Apparitions

The Church's teaching is very clear about the apparitions. They are called private to distinguish them from the Revelation made by Our Lord Jesus Christ during His life and as taught by the Apostles who received the mission and special charism to faithfully and integrally transmit it. Apparitions cannot add anything to the deposit of the Faith. They cannot bring anything new. But the study of theologians and the movement of the Holy Ghost in the devotion of the faithful can help the hierarchy to make explicit Revelation in an aspect which appears new to us although it was always contained in the Creed.

The revelations at Fatima and subsequent apparitions do not escape this rule. The cult to the Immaculate existed before 1917. Fatima makes it explicit and encourages it, and manifests clearly that God is pleased to be honored this way, especially in our times. This devotion is mainly expressed through the practice of the first Saturdays, daily recitation of the Rosary, and consecration to her Immaculate Heart.

Devotion to the Heart of Mary

Numerous authors have shown how the Heart of Mary, symbol of her love, was announced in many figures of the Old Testament. It is the whole understanding of the place of Our Lady in the divine plan of the Redemption as the new Eve in the New Testament.

The first saints known for explicitly expressing the devotion to the Immaculate Heart are Sts. Mechtilde and Gertrude in the 13th century. In the 17th, two other saints developed and diffused the devotion, united to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: Sts. John Eudes and Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort. Closer to us, the most ardent apostle of the Immaculate Heart is St. Maximilian Kolbe.

In the 19th century, Pius VII and Pius IX established the feast of the "Most Pure Heart of Mary." In 1830, Our Lady appeared to St. Catherine and requested a medal with the two Hearts of Jesus and Mary, known as the Miraculous Medal. In 1836,⁷ on December 11, Fr. Desgenettes consecrated his parish, Our Lady of Victories, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. From that day, like Ars, this parish soon became a model of fervor and faith. Finally, Pius IX defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1858. >





⁸ On June 13, 1912, i.e. exactly five years before the apparition of Our Lady at Fatima wherein she showed her Heart with thorns, asking reparation of the children.

⁹ Letter to Fr. Goncalves, June 12, 1930. MCIL, pp. 409 & 411; TVF2, pp. 166-169 and 33-35.

Devotion of the First Saturdays

Since the 15th century, the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary used to offer special prayers and to receive the sacraments on Saturday for 15 weeks in a row in honor of the 15 mysteries of the Rosary. Fr. Desgenettes put this practice in the Statutes of his confraternity. In 1889, Leo XIII granted a plenary indulgence to be gained on one of the 15 Saturdays, and in 1892 he allowed this practice to be done on the following Sunday if need be. In 1905, St. Pius X granted a plenary indulgence for those who practiced the twelve first Saturdays. In 1912⁸ he approved the first Saturdays in honor of Mary Immaculate, offered in a spirit of reparation for the blasphemies against her name and her privileges. In 1920, Benedict XV granted a plenary indulgence for those who practice it for eight weeks.

Devotion of Reparation: Eucharistic and Marian

In December 1925, Our Lady told Sister Lucy the details of the devotion she was asking for: on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, the offering of a Communion, the Rosary, a 15-minute meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary, and confession made eight days before or after in a spirit of reparation for the offenses against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. To those who embrace this devotion, “I promise to assist them at the hour of death with all the graces necessary for the salvation of their soul.” The Child Jesus showed her the heart of His Mother surrounded by thorns and told her: “Have mercy on the Heart of your holy Mother surrounded by thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, without anyone to make an act of reparation in order to take them out.” “You at least,” said Our Lady, “try to console me...”

Two months later, on February 15, the Child Jesus appeared to Sister Lucy and gave her some specific requests for the devotion of the first Saturdays, namely the possibility of receiving Communion on the following Sunday: “The souls who practice the five first Saturdays with fervor and in order to make reparation to the Heart of your heavenly Mother please me more than those who, lukewarm and indifferent, practice them fifteen times.”

In a communication in 1930, Our Lord revealed to Sister Lucy the following: “My daughter, the motive is simple. There are five kinds of offenses and blasphemies uttered against the Immaculate Heart of Mary: Blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception; blasphemies against her perpetual virginity; blasphemies against her Divine Maternity, in refusing at the same time to recognize her as the Mother of men; blasphemies of those who openly seek to foster in the hearts of children indifference or scorn, or even hatred for this Immaculate Mother; the offenses of those who directly outrage her in her holy images. Here, then, My daughter, is the reason why the Immaculate Heart of Mary causes Me to ask for this little act of reparation and by means of it, moves My mercy to forgive those souls who have had the misfortune of offending her. As for you, try without ceasing, with all your prayers and sacrifices, to move Me to mercy toward those poor souls.”⁹

¹⁰ See the following article: “The Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

¹¹ It was at Our Lady of Victories that the Ven. Francis Libermann received his vocation and said his first Mass. Co-founder of the congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers, he inspired Archbishop Lefebvre in the writing of the Statutes of the Society of St. Pius X, also called the Fraternity of the Apostles of Jesus and Mary.

Toward the Consecration of Russia

To be thorough regarding the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we should mention the consecration to her and in particular the consecration of Russia. It will be found in the following article.¹⁰

The salvation of the world, promised to the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, is a common effort of the whole Church. It depends neither on the sole consecration of Russia made by the Church’s authorities nor on our own sacrifices and prayers. This is why the story of the consecration of a parish to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and its wonderful effects will encourage us to respond to the requests of Fatima as far as it depends on us as well as to give us a glimpse of what will be the conversion of Russia “in the end”!

Effects of a Consecration

Father Desgenettes consecrated his parish in the heart of Paris, Our Lady of Victories,¹¹ to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1836. When he was first assigned to this parish of 40,000 souls in 1832, around 40 people used to go to Mass. The French Revolution had not only destroyed lives and countries, but also, and more deeply, souls! Despite all his efforts, prayers, and sacrifices, Father Desgenettes saw no fruit for years and was greatly discouraged.

On December 3, 1836, a first Saturday, he heard an interior voice telling him during Mass: *Consecrate your parish to the Immaculate Heart of Mary*. Immediately he wrote the Statutes of the Confraternity of the “Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners.” The members would commit to assist at Mass on the first Saturday and to pray in particular for the conversion of sinners. On Saturday, December 10, Bishop Quelen approved the new confraternity and authorized the beginning of the devotion the next day, the Third Sunday of Advent. To the ten faithful who were assisting at Mass that day, Father Desgenettes announced that, later that very afternoon, he wished the parish to make an act of devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. From that moment, the miracles at Our Lady of Victories never ceased. After Mass, two fathers of families asked for confession. In the evening, 400 to 500 people assisted at the act of consecration. On the following day, M. Joly, the last minister of Louis XVI, who had refused so far to receive the sacraments, agreed to make his confession to his parish priest. In ten days, 214 souls became members of the confraternity, and in April 1838 Gregory XVI made it an archconfraternity for the whole Church. In 1842, there were more than two million members and nine hundred affiliated parishes.

In July 1853, Pius IX crowned the statue of Our Lady of Victories parish.¹² On that occasion he said: “*The Archconfraternity of the Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary is God’s work. It is a thought of Heaven realized on earth. It will be the Church’s resource in bad days.*”



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