

“Fatima 100 Years Later: A Marian Call for the Whole Church”
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**Fatima, 100 Years Later:
A Message at the Heart of Faith**

The Virgin Mother of God appeared to the three shepherd children at Cova da Iria near Fatima in 1917, at a time when the world was in a terrible crisis, a crisis which threatened its very future, a crisis which, in many and frightening ways, continues to threaten the future of man and of the world. It is a crisis which has also infected the life of the Church, not, of course, touching the objective reality of Christ’s life in the Church for our salvation but, rather, obscuring and manipulating the Church from within for purposes alien to her nature and thus poisonous for souls.

The immediate manifestation of the crisis was the rise and spread of communism, but its root is an abandonment of faith in God and in His plan for our eternal salvation, as He, from the Creation, has written it into nature, and, above all, inscribed it upon the human heart. It is the abandonment of the Mystery of Faith, an indifference, disregard or even hostility to the supreme reality of the Redemptive Incarnation of God the Son by which God the Father has won for man eternal salvation, the Indwelling of God the Holy Spirit, of divine grace, in the human heart. Thus man can truly live in communion with God, in accord with His plan for His creation. Christ has won for man the gift of His own life, so that man may attain eternal life, while preparing the world for its transformation, in accord with God’s plan, that is, for the inauguration of “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3: 13).

The Church’s technical term for the abandonment of the faith is apostasy. The English word comes from the Greek word for secession, *apo istamai*, a drawing away from. In the Church, it has been used to describe the state of someone who has received the gift of faith but then has, in some way, abandoned the faith, and also the state of someone who has embraced either the vocation to the priesthood and then has abandoned the clerical state, or has embraced the vocation to the consecrated life and then has abandoned it. Thus the Church speaks of apostasy from the faith, apostasy from Holy Orders, and apostasy from religion. While my reflection concerns the first meaning of apostasy, that is, apostasy from the faith, I mention the other two uses of the term as illustrative of the fundamental nature of apostasy: the drawing away from a divine grace which first had been given by God and received by man.

Since apostasy is committed by a man who has received the gift of faith, that is, has known God and His Divine Law, it is a sin against religion, an act of injustice before God. Thus Saint Thomas Aquinas declares:

Apostasy denotes a backsliding from God. This may happen in various ways according to the different kinds of union between man and God. For, in the first place, man is united to God by faith; secondly, by having his will duly submissive in obeying His commandments; thirdly, by certain special things pertaining to supererogation, such as the religious life, the clerical state, or Holy Orders. Now if that which follows be removed, that which precedes, remains. But the converse does not hold. Accordingly a man may apostatize from God, by withdrawing from the religious life to which he was bound by profession, or from the holy Order which he had received: and this is called *apostasy from religious life* or *Orders*. A man may also apostatize from God, by rebelling in his mind against the Divine commandments: and though man may apostatize in both the above ways, he may still remain united to God by faith.

But if he give up the faith, then he seems to turn away from God altogether: and consequently, apostasy simply and absolutely is that whereby a man withdraws from the faith, and is called *apostasy of perfidy*. In this way apostasy, simply so called, pertains to unbelief (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 12).

In addressing certain objections, Saint Thomas Aquinas explains the very concrete nature of apostasy.

In response to an objection regarding the nature of apostasy, that is whether it is more an act of the will than of the intellect, Saint Thomas writes:

It belongs to faith not only that the heart should believe, but also that external words and deeds should bear witness to that inward faith, for confession is an act of faith. In this way, too, certain external words or deeds pertain to unbelief, in so far as they are signs of unbelief, even as a sign of health is said itself to be healthy. Now although the authority quoted may be understood as referring to every kind of apostate, yet it applies most truly to an apostate from the faith. For since faith is the first foundation of things to be hoped for, and since, without faith it is *impossible to please God*; when once faith is removed, man retains nothing that may be useful for the obtaining of eternal salvation, for which reason it is written (Prov. vi. 12): *A man that is an apostate, an unprofitable man*: because faith is the life of the soul, according to Rom. i. 17: *The just man liveth by faith*. Therefore, just as when the life of the body is taken away, man's every member and part loses its due disposition, so when the life of justice, which is by faith, is done away, disorder appears in all his members. First, in his mouth, whereby chiefly his mind stands revealed; secondly, in his eyes; thirdly, in the instrument of movement; fourthly, in his will, which tends to evil. That result is that *he sows discord*, endeavoring to sever others from the

faith even as he severed himself (Summa Theologica, II-II, q. 12, ad 2).

Saint Thomas' explanation of the nature of apostasy recalls to our minds the prayer which the Angel of Portugal taught to the shepherd children of Fatima during the first of his three apparitions to prepare them for the apparitions of the Mother of God. The prayer expresses the inseparable unity of faith and virtue: faith in God necessarily expresses itself in love of God.

During the first vision, while telling the shepherd children not to be afraid and assuring them that he was "the Angel of Peace," he taught them to pray three times with these words:

My God, I believe, I adore, I hope [in] and I love You. I ask pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope [in] and do not love You.

God's messenger to the shepherd children was already indicating the way in which the Mother of God would lead the world to deal with the grave crisis of apostasy: the way of faith and prayer, penance and reparation. He concluded the apparition with the words:

Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications.

Apostasy is distinguished from heresy, the other grave sin against the faith. Father Dominic Prümmer, O.P., in his classic manual of moral theology, defines apostasy as the "total defection from the Christian faith formerly willingly received." Apostasy is the total defection from the Catholic faith, whereas heresy is the denial of one or another article of the faith. Whereas heresy, depending upon the manner in which it is embraced, can lead to apostasy, that is, to the total abandonment of the faith, apostasy, at its root, is a total drawing away from the life of faith.

Historically, some noted theologians, like Francisco Suárez, have taught that heresy willingly embraced by someone who had before professed the Catholic faith is also a form of apostasy. One thinks, for example, of a heretic in what regards the Holy Eucharist which is the heart of the entire Catholic faith. In any case, it is helpful to distinguish heresy from apostasy, in order to underline the apostate's drawing away from the totality of the faith.

As Father Prümmer indicates, for the apostasy to take place it is not necessary that the member of the faithful give adherence to another determinate faith, for example, Judaism or Islam, but simply, "after baptism received in the Catholic Church, defects completely from the faith." He gives as examples those who abandon their Catholic faith as rationalists, atheists, free thinkers or strict Freemasons.

One thinks, for example, of how the Church has suffered from the persistent heretical doctrines of Modernism, as treated by Pope Saint Pius X in his first Encyclical Letter, *E Supremi*, of October 4, 1903. Referring to the trepidation with which he accepted the election to the See of Peter, he declared:

Then again, to omit other motives, We were terrified beyond all else by the disastrous state of human society today. For who can fail to see that society is at the present time, more than in any past age, suffering from a terrible and

deep-rooted malady which, developing every day and eating into its inmost being, is dragging it to destruction? You understand, Venerable Brethren, what this disease is – apostasy from God, that which in truth nothing is more allied with ruin, according to the word of the Prophet: “For behold they that go far from Thee shall perish” (Ps. lxxii., 17). We saw therefore that, in virtue of the ministry of the Pontificate, which was to be entrusted to Us, We must hasten to find a remedy for this great evil, considering as addressed to Us that Divine command: “Lo, I have set thee this day over the nations and over kingdoms, to root up, and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant” (Jerem. i., 10). But, cognizant of Our weakness, We recoiled in terror from a task as urgent as it is arduous.

How much more even today does the Roman Pontiff face the daunting challenge of a widespread apostasy from the faith.

On August 15, 1910, in his Encyclical Letter *Notre Charge Apostolique*, regarding the organization *Le Sillon*, he underlined the foundation of the ruin of the organization in an apostasy from the faith:

And now, overwhelmed with the deepest sadness, We ask Ourselves, Venerable Brethren, what has become of the Catholicism of the Sillon? Alas! this organization which formerly afforded such promising expectations, this limpid and impetuous stream, has been harnessed in its course by the modern enemies of the Church, and is now no more than a miserable affluent of the great movement of apostasy being organized in every country for the establishment of a One-World Church which shall have neither dogmas, nor hierarchy, neither discipline for the mind, nor curb for the passions, and which, under the pretext of freedom and human dignity, would bring back to the world (if such a Church could overcome) the reign of legalized cunning and force, and the oppression of the weak, and of all those who toil and suffer.

How much more even today movements for a single government of the world and certain movements with the Church herself disregard the moral law because they lack any foundation in God and in His plan for our eternal salvation.

In his Encyclical Letter *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* of September 8, 1907, the saintly Pontiff had shown that the heretical doctrines of Modernism flow from a rationalism and sentimentalism which draw souls away from the faith itself. He wrote about the corruption within the Church caused by the embrace of a worldly culture lacking a foundation in sound philosophy and theology. He declared:

That We make no delay in this matter is rendered necessary especially by the fact that the partisans of error are to be sought not only among the Church's

open enemies; they lie hid, a thing to be deeply deplored and feared, in her very bosom and heart, and are the more mischievous, the less conspicuously they appear. We allude, Venerable Brethren, to many who belong to the Catholic laity, nay, and this is far more lamentable, to the ranks of the priesthood itself, who, feigning a love for the Church, lacking the firm protection of philosophy and theology, nay more, thoroughly imbued with the poisonous doctrines taught by the enemies of the Church, and lost to all sense of modesty, vaunt themselves as reformers of the Church; and, forming more boldly into line of attack, assail all that is most sacred in the work of Christ, not sparing even the person of the Divine Redeemer, whom, with sacrilegious daring, they reduce to a simple, mere man.

How easily today the unthinking member of the faithful can be deceived and beguiled by appearances, attractive gestures and flashy slogans, under which the substance is poison for his soul.

Pope Saint Pius X showed how a divorce of faith from reason, inherent to a rationalist and sentimentalist approach, leads man away from God. Regarding a kind of prominent agnosticism, he wrote:

...For let us return for a moment, Venerable Brethren, to that most disastrous doctrine of agnosticism.... The vast majority of mankind holds and always will hold firmly that sentiment and experience alone, when not enlightened and guided by reason, do not lead to the knowledge of God. What remains, then, but the annihilation of all religion, – atheism?The object of science they say is the reality of the knowable; the object of faith, on the contrary, is the reality of the unknowable. Now what makes the unknowable unknowable is its disproportion with the intelligible – a disproportion which nothing whatever, even in the doctrine of the Modernist, can suppress. Hence the unknowable remains and will eternally remain unknowable to the believer as well as to the man of science. Therefore if any religion at all is possible it can only be the religion of an unknowable reality. And why this religion might not be that universal soul of the universe, of which a rationalist speaks, is something We do see. Certainly this suffices to show superabundantly by how many roads Modernism leads to the annihilation of all religion. The first step in this direction was taken by Protestantism; the second is made by Modernism; the next will plunge headlong into atheism.

Pope Saint Pius X courageously identified a poisonous way of thinking which had been plaguing the Church for some centuries and which continues to plague the Church in our time. Pope Benedict XVI identified it strongly in his address at Westminster Hall during his historic pastoral visit to Great Britain in September of 2010. Shortly, I will present Pope Saint John Paul II's teaching regarding the

apostasy of our time as it illustrates the kind of “practical apostasy,” that is without its formal declaration.

Here it is helpful to distinguish two kinds of “exterior manifestation” of apostasy, as they are set forth in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*. Apostasy can be manifested externally in an explicit and formal manner, “if the member of the faithful makes known by a categorical declaration or by acts which are equivalent to a declaration, that he renounces the Catholic faith.” Such would be the case of a baptized Catholic who embraces Judaism or Islam or who, by declarations, writings and other means, announces himself to be a free thinker or atheist, or those who knowingly give their name to groups notoriously hostile to the Catholic faith.

Apostasy can also manifest itself in an implicit and interpretative manner “when a Christian without formally signifying that he renounces his faith, pretending even to treasure the title of Christian, conducts himself in such a way that one can surely conclude that he has become a stranger to the faith.” Examples are those who applaud the attacks of impiety against religion, who mock the leaders and pastors in the Church, who deride the institutions and sacred rites, the religious life, or who propose or support legislation contrary to divine law or against Church law. “There is in these exterior manifestations, when they are conscious and above all repeated, the proof that the faith has disappeared from the hearts of those who make themselves culpable for them. It is implicit apostasy.” A particular example of implicit apostasy are the “*credentes apostatis*,” mentioned in Church discipline:

Credentes apostatis are those who, without themselves having formally apostasized, listen willingly to apostates and, by their words or actions, approve, at least in general, their manner of thinking and of speaking.

There are also “*fautores apostatis*” who favor a cooperation, positive or negative, with apostasy. They are guilty of negative cooperation who “being held by office to denounce, pursue or punish apostates, fail in their obligation.”

In short, “[a]postasy is a sin against the faith, since it rejects revealed doctrine; against religion, because it denies to God true worship; against justice, since it violates the promises of the Christian.” Referring to a modern author, Jean-François Badet, who calls apostasy “spiritual suicide,” the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* declares:

This “spiritual suicide” is, after the hatred of God, the most grave of sins, for it more completely and definitively than the faults simply opposed to the moral virtues separates the powers of the human soul, intelligence and will, from God.

It is clear that apostasy, either explicit or implicit, leads hearts away from the Immaculate Heart of Mary and, thus, from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the only font of our salvation. In that regard, as the Message of Fatima makes, the pastors of the Church, who in some way cooperate with apostasy, also by their silence, bear a most heavy burden of responsibility.

Without entering into a discussion regarding whether the third part of the Secret has been

fully revealed, it seems clear from the most respected studies of the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima, that it has to do with the diabolical forces unleashed upon the world in our time and entering into the very life of the Church which lead souls away from the truth of the faith and, therefore, from the Divine Love flowing from the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus.

On September 10, 1984, the Most Reverend Alberto Cosme do Amaral, then Bishop of Leiria-Fátima, on the basis of his studies whose conclusions had been confirmed by Sister Lucia, in a question-and-answer session at the technical university at Vienna, declared the following about the contents of the third part of the Message or Secret of Fatima:

Its content ... concerns only our faith. To identify the Secret with catastrophic announcements or with a nuclear holocaust is to deform the meaning of the message.

The loss of faith of a continent is worse than the annihilation of a nation; and it is true that faith is continually diminishing in Europe.

As horrible as are the physical chastisements associated with man's disobedient rebellion before God, infinitely more horrible are the spiritual chastisements for they have to do with the fruit of grievous sin: eternal death. As is clear, only the Faith, which places man in the relationship of unity of heart with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, through the mediation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, can save man from the spiritual chastisements which rebellion against God necessarily brings upon its perpetrators and upon the whole of both society and the Church.

The teaching of the Faith in its integrity and with courage is the heart of the office of the Church's pastors: the Roman Pontiff, the Bishops in communion with the See of Peter, and their principal co-workers, the priests. For that reason, the Third Secret is directed, with particular force, to those who exercise the pastoral office in the Church. Their failure to teach the faith, in fidelity to the Church's constant doctrine and practice, whether through explicit declarations and actions or through a superficial, confused or even worldly approach, or through their silence endangers mortally, in the deepest spiritual sense, the very souls for whom they have been consecrated to care spiritually. The poisonous fruits of the failure of the Church's pastors is seen in a manner of worship, of teaching and of moral discipline which is not in accord with Divine Law.

Church discipline, down the Christian centuries, has always addressed the grave evil of apostasy and applied appropriate sanctions both to call the apostate back to the faith and to expiate the grievous harm done by apostasy. The 1917 Code of Canon Law expresses in a complete manner this discipline in can. 1325 which reads:

§ 1. The faithful of Christ are bound to profess their faith whenever their silence, evasiveness, or manner of acting encompasses an implied denial of the faith, contempt for religion, injury to God, or scandal for a neighbor.

§ 2. After the reception of baptism, if anyone, retaining the name Christian, pertinaciously denies or doubts something to be believed from the truth of

divine and Catholic faith, [such a one is] a heretic; if he completely turns away from the Christian faith, [such a one is] an apostate; if finally he refuses to be under the Supreme Pontiff or refuses communion with the members of the Church subject to him, he is a schismatic.

§ 3. Let Catholics beware lest they have debates or conferences, especially public ones, with non-Catholics without having come to the Holy See or, if the cases is urgent to the local Ordinary.

Can. 751 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law contains the same discipline in a more succinct declaration:

Heresy is the obstinate denial or obstinate doubt after the reception of baptism of some truth which is to be believed by divine and Catholic faith; apostasy is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; schism is the refusal of submission to the Supreme Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him.

The more ample articulation of the 1917 Code of Canon Law is especially helpful in making clear that heresy, apostasy and schism can also be implicit by cooperation with these sins against the faith, either by action or omission.

Pope Saint John Paul II addressed the grave evil of apostasy in our time on various occasions. In his Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, of December 30, 1988, he wrote about “a constant spreading of an indifference to religion, of secularism and atheism” in our time, which “inspires and sustains a life lived ‘as if God did not exist’.” Regarding what could be called an implicit atheism, he declared: “This indifference to religion and the practice of religion devoid of true meaning in the face of life’s very serious problems, are not less worrying and upsetting when compared with declared atheism.”

Pope John Paul II addressed his appeal for a new evangelization in response to a constant spread of an abandonment of the faith in practice by pointing out how much philosophical positions inimical to the faith and its practice were influencing the very life of the Church. He wrote:

Without doubt a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world. But for this to come about what is needed is to *first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself* present in these countries and nations.

The necessary new evangelization requires that the Church herself and individual members of the Mystical Body of Christ purify themselves of the ways of thinking and acting which draw them away from Christ, which constitute a kind of implicit apostasy.

Regarding the responsibility of the lay faithful, Pope John Paul II declared:

At this moment the lay faithful, in virtue of their participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, are fully part of this work of the Church. Their responsibility, in particular, is to testify how the Christian faith constitutes the only fully valid

response-consciously perceived and stated by all in varying degrees-to the problems and hopes that life poses to every person and society. This will be possible if the lay faithful will know how to overcome in themselves the separation of the Gospel from life, to again take up in their daily activities in family, work and society, an integrated approach to life that is fully brought about by the inspiration and strength of the Gospel.

Our Lady of Fatima urged the exact same daily conversion of life for the salvation of souls and the salvation of the world.

In his Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* of September 14, 1998, Pope Saint John Paul II addressed the relationship between faith and reason. In a particular way, he addressed the grave harm done by a divorce of faith from reason, leading to the betrayal of both which have God as their one and only author. In fact, erroneous philosophical positions which are a betrayal of philosophy itself, which is the study of the truth, are at the base of a way of life which ends up in a practical apostasy by many in our time. I remember well the sage words of my Bishop, Bishop Frederick W. Freking, during my years of philosophical study in the seminary, 1968-1971, which he repeated often: “Young man, the problems in the Church today are not theological; they are philosophical.”

Pope John Paul II described the situation with these words:

With the rise of the first universities, theology came more directly into contact with other forms of learning and scientific research. Although they insisted upon the organic link between theology and philosophy, Saint Albert the Great and Saint Thomas were the first to recognize the autonomy which philosophy and the sciences needed if they were to perform well in their respective fields of research. From the late Medieval period onwards, however, the legitimate distinction between the two forms of learning became more and more a fateful separation. As a result of the exaggerated rationalism of certain thinkers, positions grew more radical and there emerged eventually a philosophy which was separate from and absolutely independent of the contents of faith. Another of the many consequences of this separation was an ever deeper mistrust with regard to reason itself. In a spirit both skeptical and agnostic, some began to voice a general mistrust, which led some to focus more on faith and others to deny its rationality altogether.

In short, what for Patristic and Medieval thought was in both theory and practice a profound unity, producing knowledge capable of reaching the highest forms of speculation, was destroyed by systems which espoused the cause of rational knowledge sundered from faith and meant to take the place of faith...

It should also be borne in mind that the role of philosophy itself has changed in modern culture. From universal wisdom and learning, it has been gradually

reduced to one of the many fields of human knowing; indeed in some ways it has been consigned to a wholly marginal role. Other forms of rationality have acquired an ever higher profile, making philosophical learning appear all the more peripheral. These forms of rationality are directed not towards the contemplation of truth and the search for the ultimate goal and meaning of life; but instead, as “instrumental reason”, they are directed—actually or potentially—towards the promotion of utilitarian ends, towards enjoyment or power...

In the wake of these cultural shifts, some philosophers have abandoned the search for truth in itself and made their sole aim the attainment of a subjective certainty or a pragmatic sense of utility. This in turn has obscured the true dignity of reason, which is no longer equipped to know the truth and to seek the absolute.

In the address during his General Audience of April 14, 1999, Pope John Paul II, referring to the just-cited text of *Fides et Ratio* and to an ever more pervasive secularism, observed: “The contemporary era has known particularly devastating forms of ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’ atheism.” Time does not permit me to pursue more deeply the philosophical presuppositions of a practical apostasy in our time, but I hope that these words of Pope John Paul II will give direction to your consideration of the matter.

There are many more texts of Pope Saint John Paul II which help to understand both the situation of practical apostasy in the Church and the necessary remedy of it. I note one final text, taken from his Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Europa*, “On Jesus Christ Alive in His Church: The Source of Hope for Europe” of June 23, 2003. Referring to the radical secularization of Christian Europe and to the resulting loss of hope among Christians in Europe, he wrote:

At the root of this loss of hope is an *attempt to promote a vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ*. This sort of thinking has led to man being considered as “the absolute center of reality, a view which makes him occupy – falsely – the place of God and which forgets that it is not man who creates God, but rather God who creates man. Forgetfulness of God led to the abandonment of man”. It is therefore “no wonder that in this context a vast field has opened for the unrestrained development of nihilism in philosophy, of relativism in values and morality, and of pragmatism – and even a cynical hedonism – in daily life”. European culture gives the impression of “silent apostasy” on the part of people who have all that they need and who live as if God does not exist.

This is the context for those attempts, including the most recent ones, to present European culture with no reference to the contribution of the Christian religion

which marked its historical development and its universal diffusion. We are witnessing the emergence of a *new culture*, largely influenced by the mass media, whose content and character are often in conflict with the Gospel and the dignity of the human person. This culture is also marked by a widespread and growing religious agnosticism, connected to a more profound moral and legal relativism rooted in confusion regarding the truth about man as the basis of the inalienable rights of all human beings. At times the signs of a weakening of hope are evident in disturbing forms of what might be called a “culture of death”.

What Pope Saint John Paul II writes about Christianity in Europe sadly could be said about Christianity in America and in other places in which the Christian faith has been taught and the Church has taken root.

The situation of a widespread apostasy to which Pope Saint John Paul II addressed himself with steadfastness throughout his pontificate has been addressed consistently in the Church from her first days of life. One thinks of the acts of the inherent apostasy of Ananias and Sapphira whose deception regarding the sale of property expressed a breach of communion in the Church and redounded to their death. In addressing their act, Saint Peter, shepherd of the universal Church, asked Ananias: “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?” (Acts 5, 3)

One thinks also of the apostasy of Christians who lacked the courage to defend the faith from external persecutions by pagan governments and from the internal persecutions of heretics. As mentioned above, Pope Saint Pius X addressed the situation of a body of teaching and practice, called Modernism, a fruit of the separation of faith from reason by rationalists, in his yet timely Encyclical Letter *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* of September 8, 1907.

We think, in our time, of the practical apostasy of Catholics who support and promote programs and laws which are contrary to the moral law, or who are silent and inactive about them. We think about the ever more diffuse confusion and error in the Church about the foundations of the faith – about the Holy Eucharist and Holy Matrimony, about the truth of the Holy Scriptures – and of the moral life, about acts which are always and everywhere evil and about the just punishment of sin, including eternal damnation for the soul which remains unrepentant of grievous sin. And all of this, in many places, not only goes uncorrected by the clear announcement of the Church’s constant teaching and practice, but is condoned and even promoted by those charged by Our Lord with the care of souls.

We are not talking about theoretical questions but about a confusion and error which endangers the salvation of souls. Let us not forget the words of Our Lady of Fatima regarding the reality of Hell in the first part of the Secret with its two essential contents: the terrifying vision of Hell and the offer of God’s healing peace through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so that souls may be saved from a life of grievous or mortal sin and its fruit: eternal death. At a time

when the world has never needed more the clear and courageous witness of the Church, she appears not to know herself, her identity in Christ Who comes to us through the unbroken Apostolic Tradition. The urgent need of a new evangelization of the world, made possible by a prior new evangelization of the Church herself has never been more urgent. The Message of Our Lady of Fatima has never been more timely.

Referring to the punishments necessarily connected with the grave sins of the time, Our Lady, during her apparition on July 13, 1917, announced the peace which God wants to give to souls and to the world. She teaches us that the peace of God will come to the world through two means: the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the practice of the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturday of the month. Our Lady spoke these words to the shepherd children:

To prevent this [the punishment of the world “for its crimes by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father], 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.

Our Lady indicates the spiritual remedy of the deplorable situation in which the world and the Church find themselves. She also foretold the terrible physical chastisements which would result from the failure to consecrate the agent of the spread of atheistic communism to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through her Immaculate Heart and to undertake the regular practice of reparation for so many offenses communicated against the immeasurable and unceasing love of God manifested so perfectly in the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus.

Regarding the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I do not doubt for a moment the intention of Pope Saint John Paul II to carry out the consecration on March 25, 1984. The Servant of God Sister Maria Lucia of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart indicated that Our Lady had accepted it. But it is evident that the consecration was not carried out in the manner requested by Our Lady. Recognizing the necessity of a total conversion from atheistic materialism and communism to Christ, the call of Our Lady of Fatima to consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart, in accord with her explicit instruction, remains urgent.

The Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays represents the heart of a coherent life lived in Christ, a union of hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We have the assurance of Our Lady that her Immaculate Heart will triumph, that the truth and

love of her Divine Son will triumph. We are called to be agents of her triumph by our obedience to her maternal counsel.

Let us not forget Sister Lucia's description of the third part of the Secret, in which she quotes "the Angel with a flaming sword" whom she saw at Our Lady's left side:

Pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice:

"Penance, Penance, Penance!"

Sister Lucia then describes the martyrdom of those remaining true to Our Lord, of those who are of one heart, in the Immaculate Heart of Mary, with His Most Sacred Heart. Let us not fail to embrace whatever suffering comes from our faithful witness to Him Who is the true treasure of our hearts.

The reality of the apostasy of faith in our time rightly profoundly frightens us. Our love of Christ and of His Mystical Body, the Church, makes clear to us the gravity of the evil which seeks to rob us of our eternal salvation in Christ. But let us not give in to discouragement but rather remember that the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, assumed into glory, never ceases to beat with love for us, the children whom her Divine Son gave to her, as He was dying upon the Cross (Cf. Jn 19, 26-27). With maternal care, she draws our hearts to her glorious Immaculate Heart, in order to take our hearts to His Sacred Heart, and she instructs us, as she instructed the wine stewards at the Wedding Feast of Cana in their distress: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2, 5). Let us, with the help of the Virgin Mother of God, be prepared to accept whatever sacrifice is asked of us, in order to be faithful brothers and sisters of Christ, faithful soldiers of Christ, the only-begotten Son of God.

Let us take up the way of the way of prayer, penance and reparation which Our Lady of Fatima teaches us. Let us make our own the prayer taught to the saintly shepherd children by the Angel of Portugal during his first vision. He taught them to pray three times with these words:

My God, I believe, I adore, I hope [in] and I love You. I ask pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope [in] and do not love You.

What is more, the Angel, God's messenger to the shepherd children to prepare them for the apparitions of the Mother of God, assured them:

Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications.

Let us never doubt that the Hearts of Jesus and Mary are ever open to receive our prayers and to help us in all of our needs.

For our part, let us follow the counsel of the same Angel, given to the shepherd children, during his second apparition: "Offer prayers and sacrifices to the Most High." Let us do, as the Angel went on to instruct the children:

Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an action of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners. You will thus draw down peace upon your country. I am its Guardian Angel, the Angel of Portugal. Above all, accept and bear with

submission the suffering which the Lord will send you.

Let us, in imitation of the saintly shepherd children, accept happily suffering for the sake of the forgiveness of sins and the repair of the disorder which sin always introduces into our personal lives and into the world. Let us be realistic about the great evils which beset the world and the Church, and, at the same time, let us be full of hope in the victory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for which we battle each day with the incomparable spiritual armaments of prayer and penance, and of reparation for sins committed.

I conclude with words of Pope Saint John Paul II, on the occasion of his visit to the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima on May 13, 1982, the first anniversary of the attempt on his life:

My heart is oppressed when I see the sin of the world and the whole range of menaces gathering like a dark cloud over mankind, but it also *rejoices with hope as I once more* do what has been done by my Predecessors, when they consecrated the world to the Heart of the Mother, when they consecrated especially to that Heart those peoples which particularly need to be consecrated. Doing this means consecrating the world to Him Who is infinite Holiness. This Holiness means redemption. It means a love more powerful than evil. No “sin of the world” can ever overcome this Love.

Once more this act is being done. *Mary’s appeal is not for just once*. Her appeal must be taken up by generation after generation, in accordance with the ever new “signs of the times”. It must be unceasingly returned to. It must ever be taken up anew.

Grateful for the great spiritual gift of the 2017 Fatima Centennial Summit, let us hear the Message of the Mother of God anew in our hearts and let us respond to it with all our heart.

Thank you for your patient attention. May God bless you and your homes.

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE