

ALLOCUTIO, LEGION OF MARY, MELBOURNE SENATUS, 2 JULY 2017

Mary's appearance at Fatima on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1917 contained the heart of her message, with the famous three 'Secrets' – the contents of the first two made public only in the early 1940s and the third only in 2000. It was also July when Mary first said she would work a miracle in October – in her words, 'so that everyone can believe'. This is crucial, since the proof of the supernatural given by the Miracle of the Sun lies not only in the amazing phenomenon itself but also in the prediction of its place, day and hour, three months in advance, by three little children.

The First Secret was the vision of hell, which God and Mary thought good to show to children aged 7, 9 and 10. In a time when many people have hang-ups just mentioning hell, even to adults, Mary's action shows true love and genuine concern for everyone's safety. Jesus himself preached hell many times (e.g. *Mt* 8:12; 13:40-42; 22:13-14; 24:50-51; 25:30; 25:41-46; *Mk* 9:43-48; *Lk* 12:4-5; 13:24-28; 16:22-26; *Jn* 5:28-29; 15:6). Likewise, Mary doesn't hide the danger but clearly exposes it – so that we can take steps to avoid it.

Pope Francis' Homily at Fatima in May went straight to the point: 'The Virgin Mother did not come here so that we could see her. We will have all eternity for that, *provided, of course, that we go to heaven*. Our Lady foretold, and warned us about, a way of life that is godless and indeed profanes God in his creatures. Such a life – frequently proposed and imposed – risks leading to hell.'

It was in July that Mary taught the children the famous prayer, instructing that it be prayed after each mystery of the Rosary: 'O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell; lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy.' What joy it must give Our Lady that in so many places around the world where the Rosary is said, this prayer she herself gave us is now added to each decade as she wished, with great benefit to souls.

The Second Secret told how God wished to save sinners from hell by establishing in the world devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart. 'If people do not cease offending God', Mary warned, a worse war would 'break out during the Pontificate of Pius XI' [1922-39]. What would become World War II indeed already started with Japan's invasion of China in 1937. But Mary also predicted 'a night illumined by an unknown light' would be a sign to Lucia, the surviving seer, of imminent punishment of the world 'for its crimes'. Sr Lucia saw this sign in the extraordinary aurora borealis of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1938, one of the largest in centuries, visible all over Europe. Six weeks later, Germany annexed Austria, the first Nazi expansion beyond German borders.

What Mary called God's 'punishments' in this world are best seen as strong medicines, sufferings to restore us to spiritual health. But to prevent the punishment, Mary said, she would come to ask for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart and the Communion of reparation on the First Saturdays. God wants our conversion, not our destruction.

In July 1917 it was unclear why Russia would need consecration particularly, but communism was to take power there only 25 days after the Miracle of the Sun. Mary then appeared to Lucia on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1929, making the request already forespoken in the Second Secret, for Russia to be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart by the Pope in union with all the Bishops.

‘If my requests are heeded’, Mary said, ‘Russia will be converted, and there will be peace.’ Much is said of the Consecration of Russia as the condition for peace, but forgotten is the role all Catholics were called to play by Communions of Reparation on the First Saturdays. St John Paul’s Act of Consecration of 25<sup>th</sup> March 1984 spiritually opened the path to the astounding collapse of European communism and the Soviet Union just a few years later, but we still must do our part for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart to be complete.

Some have been disturbed by controversy over whether the Consecration has truly been made. True, the consecrations by Pius XII in 1942 and 1952 and John Paul II in 1982, while valuable, did not sufficiently involve the Bishops, Lucia held, so were not the *collegial* consecration God wished, to manifest this as an act of the whole Church.

However, Lucia affirmed, the 1984 Consecration *did* fulfil heaven’s wishes, with the involvement of the College of Bishops, all invited by the Pope to take part. Possibly Lucia herself was uncertain at first whether it was valid, but she affirmed it many times from the late 1980s. She wrote to Sr Mary of Bethlehem (29<sup>th</sup> August 1989), ‘They then asked me if it was made as Our Lady requested, and I said, “Yes.”’ Her letter to the Pope (8<sup>th</sup> November 1989) confirmed this again: ‘Yes, it has been done, as Our Lady asked, on March 25<sup>th</sup> 1984.’ Lucia is our only channel for knowing the consecration of Russia was needed in the first place, so it makes no sense to reject her assurances.

Even if some bishops did not join in, this would not remove the moral unanimity of the act – as at a General Council, the collegial consensus by which a Council affirms its teachings isn’t removed by a few negative votes by bishops.

Bl. Alexandrina da Costa received revelations from Jesus that the *world* was to be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart. This is why Pius XII and John Paul II consecrated *the world, with special reference to Russia*. Lucia’s spiritual director told her to make her request to Pius XII in this form, and Lucia, praying before the Blessed Sacrament, was reassured this was God’s will. (Fatima converges with other divine messages, which complete each other.)

True, Russia was not mentioned by *name* in the 1984 Consecration. St John Paul, with a shepherd’s concern not to make difficulties for the Church in Russia, avoided the actual word ‘Russia’, yet in the context still clearly *referred* to it. Sr Lucia explained: ‘God knew that the Pope’s intention was Russia...What is important is the intention, like when a priest has the intention to consecrate a Host. Our Lady never requested that Russia be specifically mentioned by name.’ Our Lady left the details of the Consecration to the discernment of the appointed Shepherds; we mustn’t invent our own conditions.

St Teresa of Avila said, ‘...my God is not in the least meticulous. He does not look at trivial details; and, if you are trying to please Him in any way, He will surely accept that as your gift.’ (*The Way of Perfection* Ch. 23) The Consecration is done: as the Holy See has stated, ‘Any further discussion or request is without basis’. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *The Message of Fatima* (2000)) God does not want scrupulous repetitions, but trust.