

**‘In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph’**

On 25 March, the Church worldwide rejoiced in the renewed Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary made by Pope Francis in union with the Bishops of the world, and joined by so many of the priests and faithful: ‘Mother of God and our Mother, to your Immaculate Heart we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves, the Church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine.’

As legionaries, we especially rejoiced to see this and take part in it. It was a moment of hope, that the renewed Act led by the Holy Father in fulfilment of Our Lady’s requests at Fatima would bear new fruits of peace and salvation for our troubled world.

Mary told the three children of Fatima on 13 July 1917: ‘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 shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.’ (*2nd Secret*)

And on 13 June 1929, Our Lady appeared to the surviving seer, Sr Lucia, in her convent at Tui in Spain, and made explicit the request for consecration already forespoken in 1917: ‘The moment has come in which God asks the Holy Father, in union with all the bishops of the world, to make the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, promising to save it by this means.’ It is interesting to look at the papal consecrations that followed, and some ‘coincidences’ of dates in which we might discern the divine plan.

Pius XII first consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on 31 October 1942, in a radio broadcast for the close of Fatima’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations – although the world’s Bishops did not take part, and Russia was not explicitly mentioned.

Even so, the very next day, 1 November 1942, the tide of World War II turned, with the key battle of El Alamein starting to shift in the Allies’ favour as their troops marched out for Operation Supercharge. The Axis had no further major victory till its final defeat in 1945. (Churchill would write, ‘It may almost be said, “Before Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein, we never had a defeat.”’) On 8-10 November, French North Africa fell to the Allies; 12-15 November 1942 was the decisive battle for Guadalcanal; and 19 November 1942 the turning point in the battle for Stalingrad. On 28 February 1943, Sr Lucia, who in her convent would have known little of military matters, wrote to a Bishop that God had shown her the war would be shortened because of the Consecration. Final Allied victory came with Japan’s surrender, 15 August 1945 (Feast of Our Lady’s Assumption).

Pius XII’s Consecration of 7 July 1952 added a new element to his first Consecration, in that it was specifically Russia that was explicitly consecrated (though the Bishops still did not take part). In less than a year Stalin had passed to his eternal destiny, and de-Stalinisation followed in the Soviet Union – some mitigation of the worst brutalities of communism.

The Consecrations by St Paul VI in 1964 and by St John Paul II in 1982 added no notable new elements, though doubtless they bore their own fruit. But it was the Consecration by John Paul

II on 25 March 1984 that Sr Lucia said first truly fulfilled Our Lady's requests. All the Bishops of the world were invited to take part, and Russia was at least alluded to in the Consecration, even though not explicitly named.

It is understood that Sr Lucia continued to receive heavenly communications throughout her life; and she affirmed (for example, in letters of August and November 1989, and in a videotaped interview with Cardinal Ricardo Vidal on 11 October 1993) that heaven had truly accepted this act of the Pope and Bishops. As she 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.'

Within a year of the 1984 Consecration, Mikhail Gorbachev had come to power in the Soviet Union. The peaceful collapse of communism in Eastern Europe followed in 1989, to the world's amazement; and on Christmas Day 1991, exactly 9 months and 7 years from the Consecration, the Soviet flag was lowered over the Kremlin for the last time, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist. This was surely the primary 'conversion of Russia' as promised by Our Lady, and the promised 'period of peace' was indeed also granted to the world, with the great reduction at that time in the danger of nuclear war and in the propagation of communism.

Sr Lucia even stated that a nuclear war would have taken place in 1985 were it not for the 1984 Consecration. Such an assertion might easily be dismissed by the wider world; and some might even explain away as mere chance the various coincidences of dates. However, we already know from the Miracle of the Sun of 13 October 1917 that the whole Fatima event has no other reasonable explanation than the hand of God – and so it is only reasonable to take notice of these other things as well.

And Sr Lucia responded to those who pointed out that Russia was still hardly a paradise on earth: 'The word "conversion" means a change; it does not mean that evil will disappear, but that there is a conversion from evil to good.'

The promised 'period of peace' may now seem to threaten to draw to a close with the invasion of Ukraine. And since the Consecration was already completed in 1984, can we expect any special results from this renewed Act by Pope Francis? It can be said that he has fulfilled Our Lady's requests even more clearly than John Paul II, with the explicit mention of Russia (that some had continued to insist was necessary). So we can well hope that God will answer this act of devotion with some further extraordinary blessing of peace and conversion, to show forth the graces we receive when we trust in the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Sr Lucia did say in her 1993 interview, 'Fatima is still in its third day. We are now in the post-consecration period. The first day was the apparition period. The second day was the post-apparition, pre-consecration period. The Fatima week has not yet ended. Fatima has just begun.' And she explained, 'People expect things to happen immediately within their own time frame. The Triumph [of the Immaculate Heart] is an ongoing process.'

So we ourselves will continue to fulfil the requests of Our Lady – by our daily Rosary, by our penances, and in particular by making the Communion of reparation on First Saturdays (which Mary also requested on 13 July 1917 as the other condition for peace besides the Consecration). And so, we will hasten the final Triumph that Jesus has willed for the honour of his Mother's Immaculate Heart.