

Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

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Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, without doubt, is one of the most important subjects of the Message of Fatima. Already in the first and second Apparition of the Angel of Portugal we hear of the Heart of Mary which, together with the Heart of Jesus, is attentive to the voice of the supplications of the Three Little Shepherds and has designs of mercy on them. In the third Apparition, for the first time, the adjective Immaculate is added to the Heart of Mary, through whose merits, united to those of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus the Little Shepherds are urged by the Angel to make supplication for the conversion of sinners. We note first of all a repeated joining of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary which is certainly not by chance, but a sign of the will of Jesus Himself communicated to the Little Shepherds and which will find explicit confirmation in the words of Jacinta: *“Tell everybody that God grants us graces through the Immaculate Heart of Mary; that people are to ask her for them;*

and that the Heart of Jesus wants the Immaculate Heart of Mary to be venerated at His side.” (Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words p. 132)

The authenticity of this desire will also be confirmed afterwards by the Magisterium of the Church with the Encyclical *Haurietis Aquas* On Devotion to the Sacred Heart in 1956 of Pope Pius XII who will explain its theological reason: *“In order that favors in greater abundance may flow on all Christians, nay, on the whole human race, from the devotion to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, let the faithful see to it that to this devotion the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God is closely joined. For, by God’s Will, in carrying out the work of human Redemption the Blessed Virgin Mary was inseparably linked with Christ in such a manner that our salvation sprang from the love and the sufferings of Jesus Christ to which the love and sorrows of His Mother were intimately united. It is, then, entirely fitting that the Christian people - who received the divine life from Christ through Mary - after they have paid their debt of honor to the Sacred Heart of Jesus should also offer to the most loving Heart of their heavenly Mother the corresponding acts of piety, affection, gratitude and expiation. Entirely in keeping with this most sweet and wise disposition of divine Providence is the memorable act of consecration by which We Ourselves solemnly dedicated Holy Church and the whole world to the spotless Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”* (Para. 124)

It was in the Apparition of Our Lady in the month of June that a knowledge and special love of Her Immaculate Heart was infused into the Little Shepherds. From that moment with her heart overflowing with joy, Jacinta couldn’t help expressing frequently to Lucia the love she had for the Heart of our Heavenly Mother: *“The Lady said that Her Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God. Don’t you love that? Her Heart is so good! How I love it!” (Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words, p. 127)* Jacinta loved the Immaculate Heart so much, most of all for its goodness which, by an extraordinary grace of Our Lady Herself, she, along with Lucia and Francisco had experienced and understood.

The dictionaries of Mariology tell us that Sacred Scripture, when it speaks of the heart, refers to the center of psychological, moral and religious life; it is the place where the dispositions of man, good or evil, are formed; it is the center of moral life, as beginning and origin of responsibility, as conscience; it is considered also the center of cognitive life and therefore it represents the interiority of man and his profound inwardness.

To have a good heart, therefore means that in the depths of a particular person there is a will that involves the mind in the search and realization of what is good. But what is “goodness”, to whom or to what does it refer? First of all it can only refer to the origin of all reality, that is to say, to God. God is the source of life; it is He Who possesses it fully from eternity without having received it from others. He is infinite in everything, also in His goodness, which is in a certain sense, the attribute which refers to us most closely since it is because of this goodness that He created us. We can say of someone that he is good the more he loves, that is to say, the more he tries to make others happy, and doing everything he can to give them what can truly make them happy. God is infinitely happy, or better, He Himself is happiness, so infinite and overflowing that He wants to communicate it also to others and this same desire to communicate His own happiness to others is also a part of His infinite happiness. A God closed-in on Himself, who would not want to share Himself, would be imperfect in his love and in his happiness and the creation of man and of all things would remain without logic or meaning. If we reflect well, a God like this would be simply absurd. It is much more reasonable to believe what the Word of God reveals to us, and that is to say, that God has created man for love and every other reality has been created so that man could use it not in an egoistic way, but guided by the law of love, in order to grow ever more in the possession of this infinitely happy life of God to the point of possessing it fully in Heaven. It is in view of the realization of this plan of God that all created things acquire their own goodness. This goodness of creation is underlined seven times in the account of creation (Gen 1: 1-31). Therefore, when Jesus responded to the rich young man: *“Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.”* (Mk10:18), He certainly does not deny the goodness of what He Himself as God has created, but only to clarify that all goodness refers to God, Who is Himself infinite goodness and source of every good that is in His creatures to whom He transmits His goodness like a spark, according to their purpose in creation.

Sacred Scripture reveals to us also that God has not only created, but He has also recreated. Becoming Man in Jesus Christ, and accomplishing the work of Redemption through His Passion, Death and Resurrection, He has restored what man had destroyed through sin, that is to say his friendship with God. Therefore, in Christ, God has shown His face, that is to say His Word has assumed flesh or a human nature becoming visible in this way to the eyes of man. Christ, the Word of God, has continued to speak, completing God’s revelation, telling us all that was necessary to know and revealing it to us in His human-divine Person: Who He truly is, the goodness of His mind, of His will, of His dispositions and of His project towards man, his interiority. We can say that Jesus has opened to man His heart so that man could know the heart of God more deeply. Jesus has done this not only with His words but also, and most of all, with His works in perfect harmony with what He was preaching. For example: the love and goodness of God toward man preached by Him in many ways had its ultimate proof then in the Passion. In it, the gift that Jesus makes of himself assumes the form of a holocaust. We can consider it as the maximum expression, in human terms, of what the love of God is for man. Only God could have a heart so great and merciful to think of and to realize such an abasement in order to raise to Himself and to His happiness a creature so ungrateful toward Him.

But the feebleness of man is so great that he still allows himself be seduced by the idea of being able to reach his full happiness already in this world, and independently from God. Our Lady, in the Apparition of July, said that She would request the Consecration of Russia to Her 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.”* (Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words p. 179)

But what are these errors? Pius XI will point them out very clearly in his Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* of 1937: *“...there is in the world only one reality, matter, the blind forces of which evolve into plant, animal and man. Even human society is nothing but a phenomenon and form of matter, evolving in the same way. By a law of inexorable necessity and through a perpetual conflict of forces, matter moves towards the final synthesis of a classless society. In such a doctrine, as is evident, there is no room for the idea of God; there is no difference between matter and spirit, between soul and body; there is neither*

survival of the soul after death nor any hope in a future life... Refusing to human life any sacred or spiritual character, such a doctrine logically makes of marriage and the family a purely artificial and civil institution, the outcome of a specific economic system. There exists no matrimonial bond of a juridico-moral nature that is not subject to the whim of the individual or of the collectivity. Naturally, therefore, the notion of an indissoluble marriage-tie is scouted. Communism is particularly characterized by the rejection of any link that binds woman to the family and the home and her emancipation is proclaimed as a basic principle. She is withdrawn from the family and the care of her children, to be thrust instead into public life and collective production under the same conditions as man. The care of home and children then devolves upon the collectivity. Finally, the right of education is denied to parents, for it is conceived as the exclusive prerogative of the community, in whose name and by whose mandate alone parents may exercise this right... What would be the condition of a human society based on such materialistic tenets? It would be a collectivity with no other hierarchy than that of the economic system. It would have only one mission: the production of material things by means of collective labor, so that the goods of this world might be enjoyed in a paradise where each would "give according to his powers" and would "receive according to his needs." Communism recognizes in the collectivity the right, or rather, unlimited discretion, to draft individuals for the labor of the collectivity with no regard for their personal welfare; so that even violence could be legitimately exercised to dragoon the recalcitrant against their wills. In the Communistic commonwealth morality and law would be nothing but a derivation of the existing economic order, purely earthly in origin and unstable in character. In a word, the Communists claim to inaugurate a new era and a new civilization which is the result of blind evolutionary forces culminating in "a humanity without God." (Para. 9, 11, 12)

Sadly, the words of Our Lady have shown themselves to be prophetic. All of us today know at least a part of the disasters provoked by this doctrine which didn't appear from nothing, like a mushroom, but it has been the consequence of many sins committed by man which, had already caused so much injustice, unhappiness and wickedness in society and that have been the fertile soil to, first of all, favor the birth and then the spread of this ideology. Reflecting well, we remain astonished at considering how such a concentration of lies so outside the objective order of reality was diffused so largely and rapidly with the Russian Revolution. Evidently, it has been 'supported' by unscrupulous and very powerful men. The eruption of the communist revolution in Russia can be compared to the explosion of the oil platform which happened in the Gulf of Mexico. This also did not happen by chance but was caused by someone not fulfilling his duty properly. After the explosion, the overflow of the oil began to spread polluting the sea more and more. The Bolshevik revolution was also like a black spot which, starting from Russia, has continued to pollute a vast part of the world and not only that part which was under the military dominion of her empire, until at last the remedy offered by Heaven was applied, that is to say the Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In 1984, with Pope John Paul II, the Consecration in the manner requested by Our Lady Herself to Sr. Lucia in 1929 was accomplished. A few years later, in 1989, without striking a blow, the fall of the Berlin Wall would mark the end of the Soviet communist system, which had appeared to be invincible.

Certainly, until today, things in the world don't seem to have changed much since 1989 and evil seems to still be in control. It is true, nevertheless, that the time of the tanks is ended and it is a little as if, even though late, the leak from which that oil was coming forth has been stopped. But, by this time a good part of the waters in the Gulf of Mexico have been strongly polluted.

Indeed, from the time of the request of Our Lady until 1984, a long time had passed and the reasons for this delay seem to be incomprehensible. The will of Our Lady was that this Consecration would have been made by the Pope in union with all the Bishops of the world. It could be that the consent of the Bishops was growing slowly, notwithstanding the good will of the Popes who lived in that period of time and who have always shown a great openness towards the Message of Fatima. Sr. Lucia revealed that Our Lady Herself was sad on account of this: *"Later, in an intimate communication, Our Lady complained to me saying: 'They did not wish to heed my request! ...Like the king of France, they will repent and do it,*

but it will be late. Russia will have already spread her errors throughout the world, provoking wars and persecutions of the Church: the Holy Father will have much to suffer.” (Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words, p. 198)

In fact, we see how those errors of communism that Pius XI denounced are still strongly influencing our way of thinking and acting. For example, how much difficulty we have at times believing that God exists or in believing in His benevolent Paternity, that He is truly close to us and always acts in view of our good; how much difficulty we have in seeing in our neighbor a brother, son of the same heavenly Father and therefore, one whom we must always love and respect because he is sacred as much as ourselves. How easily we see him at times more like an enemy from whom we have to defend ourselves or like someone to crush when we find ourselves in a condition of human superiority, or simply as an object, as a material substance, to exploit for our egoistic interests, at times without mercy. After all, what sense is there in speaking of pity or of compassion towards what we consider only matter? Even the way of understanding human love and the family, often so trivial and in evident contrast with their natural reality and with what our faith teaches, suffers from the influence of those errors. How easily in every sphere we let ourselves be guided by a mere utilitarian view of life!

Yes, we still feel the very heavy effects of that ‘Black spot’, but the remedy continues to be the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Rightly so, in the Litanies Our Lady is also invoked as ‘*Mirror of Justice*’. We can truly compare Her Immaculate Heart to a mirror so clear that it can reflect in the most perfect way the divine light projected from above “*The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world*” (Jn 1, 9).

A Heart so pure and perfect that God has created and has thought (made) as the most fitting to form for Himself a human heart, capable of loving every man with divine love. Perfect is the union of mind, will and of sentiments of love which abide in the Heart of Jesus, which is the Heart of God, and of the Heart of Mary which is the heart of a creature who receives and returns continually in the most perfect way the love which the Creator pours over Her. Fatima reminds us that Jesus has given us the Virgin Mary as Mother. So close to God and so close to us, Her Maternal Heart expresses in terms humanly closer to us, the infinite tenderness of the love of God. When Jacinta was thinking of the Heart of Mary it was as if her own heart was putting on wings. “*I have also mentioned already how Jacinta chose from the litany of ejaculations which Father Cruz suggested to us, this one: ‘Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation!’ After saying it, she used to add sometimes, with the simplicity that was natural to her: ‘I so love the Immaculate Heart of Mary! It is the Heart of our dear Mother in Heaven! Don’t you love saying many times over: ‘Sweet Heart of Mary, Immaculate Heart of Mary?’ I love it so much, so very much.*” (Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words, p. 128)

Contemplating with love the Immaculate Heart of Mary, looking at oneself in it and receiving the reflection of its merciful love, of its joy and all other virtues, thus it was that Jacinta became in her own way a ‘mirror of perfection’ and a model of material and spiritual charity, as many facts related by Sr. Lucia testify. This perfection was also recognized when the Church declared the heroicity of her virtues.

Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the practice of the Five First Saturdays of the month will help us also to look at ourselves in the mirror of perfection of the Virgin. Then, our soul also will reflect Her holiness. We will experience the beauty and the joy of a charity full of gratitude and adoration towards God and of solicitude and mercy towards our brothers, who in their turn may surely be inspired to imitate it. To spread itself like a spot of oil this time it will be the light and joy of Christ which will shine once more in the whole world illuminating the darkness and the sadness in which it is wrapped. Our Lady will spread her celestial mantle over the tormented waters of this world, on which will be reflected, as never before, the clear blue of the sky and the ruinous effects of all the ‘black spots’ produced by the sins of humanity will finally be absorbed. If it is true that today it seems improbable that this will happen, it is also true that we must not forget the words of Our Lady: “*In the end my Immaculate Heart will*

triumph!” (Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words, p. 179) To us this statement sounds like a promise or, even better, as a certainty. Indeed Our Lady, always faithful to her word and to the commitments made before God, will certainly fulfill what she has promised.

Fr. Cesare concludes his paper with these relevant quotations from Pope Benedict XVI.

“I would like finally to mention another key expression of the “secret” which has become justly famous: “my Immaculate Heart will triumph”. What does this mean? The Heart open to God, purified by contemplation of God, is stronger than guns and weapons of every kind. The fiat of Mary, the word of her heart, has changed the history of the world, because it brought the Saviour into the world—because, thanks to her ‘Yes’, God could become man in our world and remains so for all time. The Evil One has power in this world, as we see and experience continually; he has power because our freedom continually lets itself be led away from God. But since God himself took a human heart and has thus steered human freedom towards what is good, the freedom to choose evil no longer has the last word. From that time forth, the word that prevails is this: “In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart; I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33). The message of Fatima invites us to trust in this promise.”

Source: *Theological Commentary on the Message of Fatima* by Joseph Card. Ratzinger
Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
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“Charity in truth places man before the astonishing experience of gift. Gratuitousness is present in our lives in many different forms, which often go unrecognized because of a purely consumerist and utilitarian view of life. The human being is made for gift, which expresses and makes present his transcendent dimension. Sometimes modern man is wrongly convinced that he is the sole author of himself, his life and society. This is a presumption that follows from being selfishly closed in upon himself, and it is a consequence — to express it in faith terms — of original sin. The Church's wisdom has always pointed to the presence of original sin in social conditions and in the structure of society: “Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals”

(Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, n. 34)