

Meditations: May 13, Our Lady of Fatima

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the feast of Our Lady of Fatima, on May 13th.

- Praying the holy Rosary with new momentum
- Peace is the result of prayer and reparation for sins
- Mary's Immaculate Heart will triumph over sin

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY stands out in the history of Marian piety because of our Lady's apparitions at Fatima. In 1917 much of the world was engulfed in the sufferings

caused by the ongoing war. While various countries confronted one another and refused to back down, trying to solve their problems with the force of violence, in Portugal our Lady revealed to some children the path to true peace. The prayer the Church sets forth for today's Mass sums up the message of Fatima: "O God, who chose the Mother of your Son to be our Mother also, grant us that, persevering in penance and prayer for the salvation of the world, we may further more effectively each day the reign of Christ."^[1] Our Lady conveyed to the three young shepherds the need for a life of prayer and penance in order to welcome the peace of her Son. The message of Fatima is an echo of those words of Jesus at the beginning of his preaching: *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel (Mk 1:15).*

Jacinta, Francisco and Lucía, after their encounter with our Lady, began to pray the Rosary daily and offer sacrifices to God. The fidelity of these three young children to Mary's motherly request has opened up a path of hope for many people throughout the world. Since Fatima, devotion to the holy Rosary has gained new momentum. Today many people who pray the Rosary add the prayer that the mother of Christ taught the young shepherds: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those who most need your mercy." What great consolation we find in praying the holy Rosary! Mothers and fathers have recourse to it to insistently ask for the conversion of their children, workers who confront a precarious financial situation, young people who want to dedicate their best energies to living and sharing the joy of the Gospel... It is a prayer that has

changed the history of many people's lives and can change ours as well.

HEEDING THE MESSAGE of Our Lady of Fatima, we want to be persevering in our prayer and reparation for sin. The Gospel tells us that Jesus insisted on the need *always to pray and not lose heart (Lk 18:1)*. Saint Paul, in turn, exhorts the early Christians: *rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer (Rom 12:12)*. Peace arises in a heart that has the audacity to believe in the power of prayer and rests trustingly in God's arms.

Our Lord is pleased when He sees our prayer. His hands uphold the history of all humanity, both our personal history and that of all those around us. The Book of Revelation uses the image of the aroma of incense when speaking about prayer: *And the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the*

hand of the angel before God (Rev 8:4). Seeing our insistent petition, our Lord acts in history to bring it to fulfillment. Hence we need to persevere in our prayer. Mary wants to teach mankind to trust her Son, even when it can sometimes seem He isn't listening to us. At the wedding in Cana, Jesus doesn't seem ready to carry out a miracle. But our Lady insists. Our Mother sees in her Son's reply not a call to do nothing, but an invitation to be daring. So she turns to the servants and says: *Do whatever he tells you (Jn 2:5).* And the miracle takes place.

“Mary, teacher of prayer. See how she asks her Son at Cana. And how she insists, confidently, with perseverance. And how she succeeds. Learn from her.”^[2] Saint Josemaría's words of advice can help us to win many gifts from our Lord through our prayer.

THE ADVOCATION of Our Lady of Fatima is closely linked to devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. As Cardinal Ratzinger said: “*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 any kind. Mary’s *fiat*, the word spoken by 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 remain so for all time.”^[3]

The apparitions of our Lady at Fatima speak about the danger that humanity runs if it abandons prayer. Our Lady, however, does not want us to fall into a pessimistic view of history. Her Immaculate Heart will triumph. By following the example of Mary’s unbroken dialogue with God, we too can avoid sin, which is the worst evil. The apparition at Fatima

shows us “the power which stands opposed to the force of destruction: the splendor of the Mother of God and, stemming from this, the summons to penance. Thus the importance of human freedom is underlined: the future is not in fact unchangeably set, and the image which the children saw is in no way a film preview of a future in which nothing can be changed. Indeed, the whole point of the vision is to bring freedom onto the scene and to steer freedom in a positive direction.”^[4]

Our prayer, simple and trusting, involves us in the history of the world. It is not the naivety of someone who is unaware of the problems, nor the indifference of someone who only thinks of calming their conscience. The litany of the Rosary, for example, unites us with all those who are suffering: the sick, sinners, migrants... Praying for them will make us feel, with God’s help,

our own responsibility to bring them comfort. We can address Our Lady of Fatima with Blessed Alvaro del Portillo's words: "We want to place ourselves in your Immaculate Heart. Thus we will have the joy and peace of the children of God. May everything that makes you sad, cause us sorrow as well. And then, set deep in your most loving Heart, you will place us in the Heart of your Son."^[5] —

^[1] — Roman Missal, *Collect Prayer*, Memorial of Our Lady of Fatima.

^[2] — Saint Josemaria, *The Way*, no. 502.

^[3] — Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Commentary*, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 13 May 2000.

^[4] — *Ibid.*

^[5] — Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, *Prayer at Fatima*, 15 November 1985.

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