

“Prayer, Sacrifice, and Acts of Self-denial for the Conversion of Sinners: at the Request of Our Lady of Fatima”

1. **One of the hardest concepts for Christians to grasp in the modern world is the reality of the redemptive meaning of suffering: that if we offer our sufferings to God each day that He uses them for great spiritual good.** We need to remember what Our Lady of Fatima said at her 6 apparitions from May 13 - October 13 in Portugal in 1917 during WWI and right before the Spanish Flu pandemic - Our Lady told the 3 shepherd children: **St. Francisco, St. Jacinta** and now as of last week (June 22, 2023) **Venerable Lucia** (who lived to be 97 – after our Lady said it would only be a short time on earth ☺ - to promote the Fatima message) that they needed to pray well the Rosary daily (no more half-heartedly and with shortcuts on the prayers, so they could get back to playing games) and offer sacrifices for the conversion of sinners who are in danger of going to Hell. **Are we doing that? If not, we need to!** During the apparitions, which happened on the 13th of each month from May 13, 2017 to October 13, 2017, we are going to focus on the visit **on July 13, 1917**, when Our Lady showed the children **the reality of hell** in a vision. Lucia describes it in her memoirs: "*She, Our Lady, opened Her hands once more, as She had done the two previous months. The rays [of light] appeared to penetrate the earth, and we saw, as it were, a vast sea of fire. Plunged in this fire, we saw the demons and the souls [of the ppl damned]. The latter were like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, having human forms. They were floating about in that way, now raised into the air by the flames which issued from within themselves, together with great clouds of smoke. Now they fell back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fright (it must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people at the apparition site say they heard me). The demons were distinguished [from the souls of the damned] by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals. That vision only lasted for a moment, thanks to our good Heavenly Mother, who at the first apparition had promised to take us to Heaven. Without that, I think that we would have*

died of terror and fear." It was pointed out by our Lady that more souls go to Hell for sins of the flesh than for any other reason. This is frightening, especially in our time over 100 years later which has lost a sense of the sacredness of our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, that what we do with our bodies matters to God, and who we are in God in terms of our identity – as men and women created in God's image. **If we reject those truths then you end up with increasing identity confusion.** In our time we also see the gravely disordered effects of the mass confusion of humans immersed in the sins of the flesh all over the world, and the devastating effect it has esp. on young people. We who have the gift of Faith need to daily pray and do penance for the gift of purity for ourselves and all people in the world, and for the conversion of all those living in the sins of the flesh with defiant hearts and minds. And if we have slipped up in this area, please make a good Confession in the Sacrament as soon as possible, asking God for the gift of chastity.

2. **Hell and Heaven are real** – We just heard about the reality of Hell from Our Lady, so what are we doing to help ourselves and others get to Heaven? One of the biggest helps in this regard is to offer our daily sufferings, frustrations and difficulties in union with Mary to Jesus for the conversion of people: our self and others. **To offer up our daily duties and sufferings in love with Mary to Jesus is the noblest thing we can do each day.** As Jesus says in the Gospel this weekend: ***Whoever does not take up his Cross and follow after me is not worthy of Me.*** Every day we have the opportunity to offer many things to God in love, in reparation for the good of souls – not just our daily duties but also daily acts of prayer and sacrifice. As was related about the seers at Fatima: *Lucia said that Our Lady emphasized Acts of Reparation and prayers to console Jesus (Francisco focused on Jesus's sad look in his mind, Jacinta on helping to convert hardened sinners) for the sins of the world.* *Lucia said that Mary's words were, "When you make some sacrifice, say "O' Jesus, it is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary."* *Also, at the apparition of 13 July 1917, Lucia said Mary told the children that sinners could be saved from damnation by devotion to the Immaculate Heart, but also by making "sacrifices". They heard Mary repeat the idea of sacrifices several times. Her vision of hell prompted them to ever more stringent self-mortifications to save souls.* *Among many other practices, Lucia wrote that she and her cousins wore tight cords around their*

waists, flogged themselves with stinging nettles, gave their lunches to beggars, and abstained from drinking water on hot days. Francisco and Jacinta became extremely devoted to this practice. Lucia wrote that Mary said God was pleased with their sacrifices and bodily penances. Remember in regards to penance, we have to factor in our daily circumstances and our overall Cross in life; so for example, if one is in good physical health giving up eating and drinking at times is a good penance; if one is already in frail health that doesn't make sense to possibly further damage one's health – so that person's call to do penance may be different than food: e.g., for an older person or sometimes a younger person offer up the pain of one's arthritis, etc.- maybe waiting on taking pain medicine a little longer into the day - as Mother Angelica who had great physical pain used to say: take one Tylenol instead of two sometimes. Be creative in your penitential practices by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and regular reflection, as well as consulting with your Confessor and/or spiritual director to be wise and prudent with this.

3. **Prayer and sacrifice for the conversion of sinners:** This is what our Lady of Fatima asked the shepherd children and us to do until Jesus comes back someday. This should be a main focus of our spiritual life. So often we get caught up in the world and the distractions of this life. Remember each day to offer your day to God in company with Mary. Let's humbly ask Our Lady today to pray for us to obtain for all of us **the grace** to always offer our suffering, be it physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual for the purification of our soul and the conversion of others to God – since we are all connected in the Mystical Body of Christ: remember all the good we do helps others and conversely all the sins we do brings down others spiritually - a spiritual concept foreign to our American mentality of radical individualism which affects all of us to some degree – ponder freedom for good vs. selfishness and the 4th of July. **Instead of complaining about the difficulties of life, let's unite them with Mary for the conversion of sinners,** so that someday through her intercession and motherly protection we may overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil and be able to enter into the glory of Heaven to live in the fullness of the love and life of the Blessed Trinity, with Mary and St. Joseph and all of the Angels and Saints, and with the many other souls we helped get to Heaven with us – which is the greatest act of charity we can do for another person. God bless you.