

Will You Join Me in Special Prayer This 100th Anniversary of Fatima?

Dear Parishioners,

I think that 2017 will be a critical year. I believe it will be a year of hidden blessings or one of something so shocking that it will usher in a blessing that will only be understood later. It has been one hundred years since the apparitions at Fatima and five hundred since the Protestant revolt. The revolt in 1517 ushered in a shocking, wrenching pruning of the Church. So did the apparitions in 1917, when Our Lady warned of great suffering if we did not pray and repent. God seems to *permit* (not *cause*) such things either as penance or as purification.

The last hundred years has seen horrifying warfare, death tolls in the hundreds of millions driven by ideological conflict, abortion on demand, the destruction of marriage and the family, sexual confusion and misbehavior, and the rise of the culture of death (the demand for the right to die and the right to kill). Indeed, Christendom in the West is in the midst of a great collapse: tepid and compromised faith, a tiny minority who attend Mass, and the growth of militant secularism. Who among us can deny that the Church, especially in the affluent West, has been under attack. We have preferred to sleep through most of it and make one compromise after another. Who among us can deny that we need another “counter-reformation”?

Two significant prophecies warned us of these events if we did not repent. For indeed Scripture says, *Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets* (Amos 3:7). And while many apparitions occurred (some approved, some not), two in particular stand out:

It is said that in 1884 Pope Leo XIII had an experience during which he heard God say that He would permit a period of one hundred years that would test the Church in [Job-like fashion](#). This alarmed Pope Leo enough that he penned the well-known [Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel](#) and asked that it be prayed at the end of Mass throughout the universal Church. Some dispute the accuracy of this and call it mere legend, but it is hard to deny that the attack/test occurred. But when and what is the hundred-year period? That leads to a second

In 1917, Our Lady appeared in the region of Fatima, Portugal to three young children: Jacinta, Francesco, and Lucia. Mary indicated that the horrific First World War was soon to end, a war that featured the use of chemical weapons so devastating that an international agreement was developed banning their use. However, she warned that an even more terrible war would ensue if people did not repent and pray. Our Lady went on to say that in the aftermath of the war, Russia would spread the errors of atheism and materialism, leading to grievous suffering for the Church and many of the faithful. She also prophesied that there would be a final warning of light in the sky just prior to the onslaught of this new war.

In order to provide veracity to her message, Our Lady promised a miracle at her final apparition. On October 13, 1917, the “Miracle of the Sun” took place, and as many as 70,000 people witnessed the sun dancing about in the sky and moving toward the earth.

In January of 1938, a display of the Aurora Borealis vividly lit the skies far south of its normal reach; newspapers throughout the world reported the event. Later that same year, Germany entered Czechoslovakia, and in 1939, Poland was invaded; the Second World War was underway, a consequence of our failure to repent.

More than 60 million people were killed in WWII. At the end of the war, Russia dropped the “Iron Curtain” and atheistic communism held sway in the Eastern Bloc. Churches were closed, clergy and religious were killed, and great suffering came to all who would not acquiesce. The prophecies of 1917 proved to be sadly and vividly true.

Another prophesy of the Fatima apparitions was kept secret until the year 2000; it spoke of the murder of a Pope as he walked past martyrs up a hill toward a cross in a ruined city. In 1981 St. John Paul II, nearly killed by an assassin, attributed



his survival to the prayers of many who *did* hear the call of Our Lady to pray. Cardinal Ratzinger, in his commentary on the “third secret” of Fatima, called it the *Via Crucis* (Way of the Cross) of an entire century [*]. Indeed it was: ruined cities, martyrs, and the long shadow of a cross over those years for the Church and the world.

A final aspect of the Fatima apparition came to light in 1981 when Sister Lucia wrote to Monsignor (now Cardinal) Carlo Caffara at the Vatican to thank him and to assure him of prayers for the founding of the John Paul II Institute on Marriage and the Family. In the letter she also related something she heard from Our Lady: a final battle will signal the end of the period in which we now struggle. Sister Lucia recounted Our Lady’s words as follows:

*The final battle between the Lord and the reign of Satan will be about marriage and the family. Don’t be afraid, ... anyone who works for the sanctity of marriage and the family will always be fought and opposed in every way, because this is the decisive issue. ... [H]owever, Our Lady has already crushed its head. [**]*

I think the period of 100 years of trial seen by Pope Leo is coming to its culmination. My premise is that, though it was foreseen by Leo in 1884, it actually began in 1917 with the warning of Our Lady. Her message was clear: pray and be converted or else suffer grievously the consequences of human sinfulness. It is clear that we have suffered grievously for our failures.

Attempting to follow Our Lady’s direction in 1917 at Fatima, three popes (Pius XII, John Paul II, and Francis) have consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. But arguments go back and forth about whether any of these was “valid” (e.g., Was the wording just right?). But no technicality can eclipse our failure to repent and pray; I believe that repentance and prayer are the true heart of Our Lady’s message.

And so here we are at the culmination of the battle. Though it is disheartening, the battle in the Church over the sanctity of Holy Matrimony has reached the highest levels, just as our Lady said. Cardinal is pitted against cardinal, bishop against bishop. In the wider culture, marriage has been redefined; biblical and Natural Law teachings have been set aside. At this point I don’t think that our culture has a definition of marriage at all; it’s whatever anyone wants to say it is. This is no minor error; it is a civilization killer.

Something tells me that this year of 2017 is going to be critical and that we had better pray—a lot more than we have in the past. Repentance is also crucial. Being sleepy in the battle cannot be an option. We are at a turning point. Perhaps the hundred years of trial are ending; they might end well or they might come to a dreadful conclusion. That is why we must pray.

Cardinal Ratzinger, in the same Vatican document referenced above reflecting on Fatima, said:

*The purpose of the vision is not to show a film of an irrevocably fixed future. Its meaning is exactly the opposite: it is meant to mobilize the forces of change in the right direction. Therefore, we must totally discount fatalistic explanations.... Rather, the vision speaks of dangers and how we might be saved from them. [***]*

Will you join me in praying with special fervency this year? We will be observing the First Saturday devotions that were requested by Mary at Fatima. This will be a communal way to engage the call to prayer. It involves attending Holy Mass, praying the rosary, and going to confession (that day or within one week) on the first Saturday of five consecutive months. Others also add the wearing of the scapular and/or making a consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Such a communal observance ought not to eclipse personal prayer and conversion; it is merely to augment it. Are there devotional practices you can undertake, such as the daily rosary, the Angelus, or the Chaplet of Divine Mercy? Are there sins you need to make special effort to avoid? Are there lawful pleasures you can set aside?

What will you do? This is a critical moment; I am convinced of it. Will you join me in special prayer this year, the 100th anniversary of the Fatima apparitions?

Msgr. Charles Pope
Pastor