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Marian Mariology

CHAPTER 43



The veneration of Mary, when properly understood, permeates the entire life of the Church; it is a dimension of dogma and of piety, of Christology and of ecclesiology. This dimension needs to be made explicit today in connection with the problems of humanity. Mariology expresses something fundamental to the Christian life itself, to the Christian experience of the world.

Sound Mariology has always been understood in Christological terms. If the Gospel revealed nothing more than the fact that Jesus Christ, God and man, was born of Mary, this alone would be sufficient for the Church to love her and to draw theological conclusions from pondering this relationship of Mother and Son. We need no other revelations. Mary is a self-evident and essential *datum* and dimension of the Gospel.

Chapter one centers on Catechesis flowing from Byzantine Marian spirituality with commentary by Brother John M. Samaha, S.M. Chapter 2 discusses Mariology today with commentary by Rev. Professor Michael Lapierre, S.J. The remaining chapters are commentaries on various Marian topics by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J. (1914– 2000).

Chapter 43

Living the Fatima Message

by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

If we were to synthesize the Fatima message, it could be expressed in one sentence of the Blessed Virgin's: "Do whatever He (my Son) tells you" and you will be happy, already in this life and perfectly happy in the eternal life to come. The Fatima message is both a promise and a condition. Our Lady understands how the human heart is made to be happy. She also understands that our happiness is conditional.

What is the core of the Fatima message? The heart of the Fatima message is a divine imperative. Sin leads to unhappiness. Stop sinning, repent of your sins and you will enjoy God's blessings in time and eternity.

The revelations of Fatima are especially grounded on revelations that we find in the New Testament. If there is one theme that runs through the New Testament, it is the covenant or contract between Jesus Christ and those who believe in his name.

By actual count there are over one hundred and fifty promises in the New Testament, mainly in the four Gospels. A few of them follow: If you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you shall have life within you and I will raise you up on the last day. Be converted and become as little children and you shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Be merciful and you shall obtain mercy.

Jesus is Here

Jesus is here. He is here on earth in every tabernacle of every Catholic church in the world. To live the Fatima message today, we need daily miracles of grace in our lives. Miracles of light to see the truth in a world that is growing in darkness. Miracles of courage to stand firm in a world that has gone mad in its pleasure-seeking and self-indulgence. We need miracles of faith to believe our life does not end with death—that we have an eternal life awaiting us—thank God—a life awaiting us at the dawn of eternity.

We need miracles of hope to trust in Mary's Son in a world that is lost in hopelessness. We need miracles of love in a world that is murdering, in a world that is in constant conflict because of its unbelief in Jesus Christ who is Love become man. All these miracles are at our disposal performed by Jesus, Mary's Son, provided we believe He is in our midst in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Then, but only then, shall we live the Fatima message and continue living this message into the endless reaches of that everlasting life for which we were made.

End

A Bilateral Agreement

The New Testament would not be a covenant, would not be a contract, unless it was bilateral. We must respond to God's conditions to enjoy his promise of peace in this life and everlasting joy in the life to come. We must want to repent—we must want to pray—we must want to forgive—we must want to be humble—we must want to be chaste—we must want to believe—we must want to trust—we must want to love even unto death those who may not only not love us, but oppose us, persecute us, indeed, even hate us. We must use our free will—that's why we have a free will—to choose to surrender what we want in order to do what God wants. That in one single declarative sentence is the New Testament—the new covenant—the new contract.

What is the core of the Fatima message? Love God with your whole heart and you will be happy. Refuse to obey God and you will be unhappy. Sin leads to unhappiness. Doing God's will is a precondition for peace until death and everlasting joy in heaven with God.

Why is it so difficult to live the Fatima message today? Why should the Blessed Virgin have given us the Fatima message in our century? Why has our century had more death casualties in wars fought than in all the wars of human history up to 1900? Why has the Church had more martyrs since 1900 than in all the nineteen centuries since the first martyrdom of the founder of Christianity on Calvary? Why, in this age of world upheaval is the Church going through the most severe crisis in all her centuries of history? Why is it so important in our day to be told by Mary—Do what my Son tells you and you will be happy?

The underlying reason is that modern man has reached a point in history that I do not hesitate to call self-idolatry. The ancient Egyptians and Babylonians with their idol worship, with their golden calves, had nothing on us. Even once-Christian countries are becoming rapidly paganized. After thirty years of teaching non-Christian religions, I can assure you the essence of paganism is idolatry. The modern world is practicing the most insidious form of idolatry, the worship of self.

In the name of choice, over 60 million unborn children are murdered every year throughout the world. This global genocide is protected by what used to be called civil law. A better word would be uncivilized anarchy. In the name of liberty, the whole moral order is being subverted. It is as if the Ten Commandments were now outdated. The heart of a new morality has become the opposition of a created will to the divine will of God.

Demonic Pressure

Why is it so hard in our present day, to live up to the demands of Jesus Christ and the directives of Our Lady to do everything which her Son tells us to do? The reason is painfully obvious. The followers of Christ and the lovers of Mary are under superhuman pressure. I call it demonic pressure to conform to the Christ-less infidelity of our times. It is this Christ-less infidelity that is at the root of modern immorality. It is the abandonment of faith in Jesus Christ, the living God. Especially in living up to the demands of Jesus, in mastering our passions and not conforming to the sins of the flesh, which in our age have been elevated to a mystical morality. Those who in their pride refuse to submit their minds in humble faith to Jesus Christ always end up by losing their power of will, to control the passions of their bodies. Pride is a parent of lust. We find ourselves under constant demonic pressure to conform to the selfishness and unbelief and lechery of our age.

How are we to live up to the Fatima message today? What we are called upon to do is humanly impossible. We must, therefore, as a condition for survival, have access to and use superhuman means. We must use the sources of supernatural grace provided by Christ to obtain the light we need for our minds and the strength we need for our wills. Without this supernatural means to do the superhuman, the Fatima message will become the Fatima fable. Either we have recourse to the sources of divine grace available through prayer and the sacraments or we shall become casualties in the ongoing war between the followers of Satan and the followers of Jesus Christ.

Only heroic families will survive this war. Only heroic bishops, only heroic priests will survive this global conflict between the powers of darkness and the powers of light. Only heroic religious will be able to last. Only heroic men, women and children will remain Catholics and Christians and faithful followers of the Son of Mary by the year 2000.

The Age of Martyrs

This is the age of martyrs. I'm not sure what is more difficult, to die a martyr's death or, as we are being called upon to do, to live a martyr's life. Where can we get the light and strength we need to remain spiritually alive in the modern world? The sources are available. They are constant, humble prayer and frequent reception of the sacraments and devotion to Jesus Christ present in the Holy Eucharist.

What do we mean by constant prayer? We mean that constant readiness to do God's will. We call this prayer of the heart. It is a habitual disposition of a believing soul, like a child to do everything that Jesus wants of him here, now at this moment. I ask Him, "Lord what do you want me to do?" Then I decide to do it. Then I do it.

What do we mean by frequent reception of the sacraments? I mean at least monthly or better bimonthly reception of the Sacrament of Penance. I have no illusion how hard this can be, but I also have no illusion of how necessary it is. If there is one thing Our Lady stressed at Fatima, it was the imperative *repent*. That is what the Sacrament of Penance is all about. It is the sacrament of repentance. We humbly confess our sins and receive infallibly from Christ, through his priest, remission of our sins and the strength we need to resist sinful temptations.

What do we mean by frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist? We mean, if possible, daily Mass and daily Holy Communion. The Eucharist is both a sacrifice sacrament and a communion sacrament. It gives grace by our attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion. Without this grace, as Christ foretold, we cannot retain the life of God that we received at Baptism. With this grace we can pick up serpents, we can drink deadly poison—the deadly poison of the pagan world in which we live and survive. Indeed, we can thrive on the demonic pressures that our age puts into our lives.

If we are to live this Fatima message we must cultivate the daily habit of spending as much time as we can before the Blessed Sacrament—Jesus Christ on earth in our midst. My friends, this is not pious rhetoric. There is nothing less than a renaissance of devotion to perpetual Eucharistic Adoration in one country after another. In a recent conversation with an Irish bishop, I was told of fifteen parishes in his diocese where Eucharistic Adoration is practiced twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. As a former secretary to our Holy Father, this bishop knows where to obtain the strength we need to survive in the modern world.

We need miracles in our lives. If I were to summarize this conference, it would be with one imperative sentence, "Expect miracles." Why not? Jesus Christ is on earth—that's what the holy Eucharist means. It is the same Jesus who was conceived in the womb of Mary at Nazareth, who worked his first miracle at Cana because his mother asked Him. The same Jesus who preached to the multitude; who fed the five thousand hungry people on five loaves and two fishes. It is the same Jesus who healed paralytics, gave sight to the blind and restored health to deaf mutes. It is the same Jesus now on earth who raised Lazarus from the grave. It is Mary's Son. Except for Mary, there would be no Jesus Christ. The Holy Eucharist began in the womb of Mary. It is this Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament who was crucified on Calvary and then raised Himself back to life again on Easter Sunday.