

“In the End, My Immaculate Heart Will Triumph”
Tenth Annual Novena to the Immaculate Heart of Mary
The Fruit of Her Pondering: the Words of Our Lady
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Last night we were privileged to hear about the apparitions at Fatima, Portugal in 1917. Tonight we will focus on another aspect of those apparitions: “In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph.” What was the context of these words? Was there a particular reason for Our Lady to give us this message?

On May 13th, Mary asked the three children to return on the 13th of every month through October, making a total of 6 appearances. It was during the July 13th apparition that Our Lady gave a disturbing warning, a supplication for prayer and conversion, and a very hope-filled message. Let me share with you the message from Our Lady, and then we’ll delve into what it means for us. The following are from Lucia’s memoirs.

“The first part is the vision of hell.

“This vision lasted but an instant. How can we ever be grateful enough to our kind heavenly Mother, who had already prepared us by promising, in the first Apparition, to take us to heaven. Otherwise, I think we would have died of fear and terror.

“We then looked up at Our Lady, who said to us so kindly and so sadly:

““You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end: but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out... [there will be] war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father. To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of the Russia to my 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. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated. ***In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph.*** The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.”

While these images and messages are understandably disturbing, I think we can find solace and inspiration in the words of Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. He wrote a commentary on the secret of Fatima when he was a Cardinal. He wrote: “For one terrible moment, the children were given a vision of hell. They saw the fall of ‘the souls of poor sinners.’ And now they are told why they have been exposed to this moment: ‘in order to save souls’ – to show the way to salvation... To reach this goal, the way indicated... is devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. A brief comment may suffice to explain this. In biblical language, the ‘heart’ indicated the center of human life, the point where reason, will, temperament, and sensitivity converge, where the person finds his unity and his interior orientation. According to Matthew 5:8, the ‘immaculate heart’ is a heart that, with God’s grace, has come to perfect interior unity and therefore ‘sees God.’ To be ‘devoted’ to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means therefore to embrace this attitude of heart, which makes the *fiat* – ‘your will be done’ – the defining center of one’s whole life.”

In the first part of this secret of Fatima, we see a pattern that can help us through life. The children see hell. Why? To save souls through devotion to the Immaculate Heart. Then the children are told of disturbing world events, the result of sin. What is the message that follows immediately? To prevent this, consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart and make the First Saturday devotions. Again, the children are told that if there is not enough prayer and penance, terrible things will happen. Immediately after this, they hear, “In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph.”

This pattern of our sin and its consequences followed with a divine promise of help through a woman is a pattern as old as time. When did the triumph of the Immaculate Heart begin? Right after Adam and Eve committed Original Sin, God said, speaking to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.” Evil was ushered into the world a short time after its beginning. Yet, when mankind was expecting God to leave him miserable and bereft, a just recompense after willfully rejecting God’s plan, does God leave us in misery? No! He gives us hope, and this hope is brought to us by a woman. This woman will be at enmity with the devil. Enmity means she will repel the devil because of her purity, because of her Immaculate Heart. Throughout the thousands of years of the Old Testament, the Chosen People anxiously await the immaculate woman who will give birth to the Messiah. This hope gave the Israelites the strength

they needed to endure horrible hardships: generations of slavery, occupation, exile, and persecution.

Then we arrive at the coming of the Messiah. None of Herod's machinations or the plots of His other enemies can prevent Christ from fulfilling His mission. And His Mother is with Him through it all. Christ's ultimate triumph is His Passion, Death, and Resurrection. This triumph is ours to share. A poignant illustration of this can be found in the lives of our martyrs and all who are persecuted for the Faith. Tonight I'll focus on Cardinal Mindzenty.

Cardinal Mindzenty was imprisoned in his native land of Hungary when it was taken over by Communists. He was repeatedly tortured and suffered all kinds of cruelties at the hands of the Communists. In his memoirs of those years, he writes of a holy card that he was miraculously able to keep during that time. It had an image of Jesus, scourged and crowned with thorns, with the caption underneath, "Devictus Vincit," "Defeated, He conquers." This spiritual truth gave the Cardinal strength through his suffering. It gave him hope to unite his defeat with Christ's on the Cross and thus share in Christ's triumph. In a homily given at a German concentration camp, our Holy Father said, "[God's] 'vengeance' is the Cross: a 'No' to violence and a 'love to the end.' This is the God we need... the God who has countered violence with his own suffering; who in the face of the power of evil exalts his mercy, in order that evil may be limited and overcome." In the dark evil of Communism, Cardinal Mindzenty stood out as a bright light, witnessing to the love of Christ. Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, "The evil one has power in this world, as we see and experience continually; he has power because our freedom continually lets us be led away from God. But since God himself took a human heart and has thus steered human freedom toward 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 invited us to trust in this promise." *Evil no longer has the last word*. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph.

So what kind of triumph are we talking about? Dr. de Carli has some thoughts on the matter: "Stalin once asked, 'how many divisions does the pope have?' At Fatima, Our Lady seemed to offer an unequivocally clear response: The pope's divisions are the millions of unarmed Christians who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of Christ and the Church. The geopolitical scene has completely changed since Stalin's time, and it would seem that the pope's

divisions have won the struggle.” Cardinal Ratzinger wrote that “Faith and prayer are forces that can influence history and that in the end prayer is more powerful than bullets and faith more powerful than armies... No suffering is in vain, and it is a suffering Church, a Church of martyrs, which becomes a signpost for man in his search for God... From the suffering of the witnesses there comes a purifying and renewing power, because their suffering is the actualization of the suffering of Christ himself and a communication in the here and now of its saving effect.”

Dr. Giuseppe de Carli interviewed Cardinal Bertone about the Fatima message. This interview is transcribed in the book “The Last Secret of Fatima,” which is a wonderful book. In the introduction Dr. de Carli writes, “‘The demons and souls... like transparent burning embers;... war... and persecutions of the Church; ...Penance, penance, penance! And we saw an immense light that is God.’ These citations from the Secret suggest what a strange and unusual journey in the footsteps of God this book has turned out to be. For the cardinal and me, the journey began in hell, but, almost without realizing it, we ended up in paradise.”

This pattern is present today. When any number of evils happen, uplifting and heroic stories shine brightly in its midst. Think of all the inspiring, heroic stories we have heard associated with 9/11, Greensburg, Hurricane Katrina, our martyrs of yesterday and today. These are examples of the power of love. Pope Benedict said that our God is identical with love, with the good. When confronted with any number of evils, we must remember that the love of God is stronger. It inspires us with the courage to do the good and resist evil.

Since the Incarnation, we have come to realize the salvific effect of suffering. St. John of the Cross wrote that just as there is no glory without the Cross, so there is no Cross without glory. God will never allow the Cross to be the end of the story. If we unite our sufferings with Christ, if we suffer for love of Him, our sufferings turn into a share of His Cross, and resurrection, new life, always follows. These sound like beautiful ideas, but how do we apply them and benefit from them in our ordinary, every day experiences?

When times get rough, what can we do? Will evil have the last word in a given situation in our lives? The choice is ours. Fr. Benedict Groschel once said that some find it easier to surrender to God’s will in big things, but find the little, every day frustrations much harder to handle with love. He said that if he found the friary burned to the ground, he could easily comfort his brothers with reflections on God’s will and surrendering to unexpected tragedy. In the next sentence he said, “But Heaven help the cook that burns my soup!”

Don't we often find this is true in our own lives? Sometimes we can make a big sacrifice in the realm of stewardship, or some service to the Church, or bear a big hardship as God's will, yet we just can't find patience for a certain co-worker or family member. It could be just a tiny pet peeve, but we just can't deal with it today. Or perhaps we are very competent at work, or a sacrificial volunteer at Church, or a tremendous soccer mom who gives all to the family, yet we hear one word of criticism and we are heartbroken, miserable. We each have a weakness, and when that weakness is attacked we surrender in defeat. How can we find strength when we are weak? Is the situation helpless? No! There is hope: "In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph." Turn to Our Lady, your Heavenly Mother. Perhaps one of the following practices may help.

A very familiar Catholic phrase that seems delightful to moms and a torture to children is "offer it up." I can remember several instances of hearing this phrase when it was exactly the last thing I wanted to do. My natural response to the phrase "offer it up" was "I don't *want* to!" The phrase "offer it up" doesn't sound so trite when we look to Mary's Immaculate Heart as a model. Our Lady offered her entire life to the Lord.

During Jesus' passion and death, Mary stood at the Foot of the Cross, uniting her sufferings to His. If she had despaired, if she had abandoned Him, if she had separated herself from Him to wallow in her misery, evil would have triumphed over her. Yet such is not the case. In the sorest of trials, she offered it up, and this intimate share in His Passion gained her an intimate share in His glory. As our Holy Father says, "evil no longer has the last word." In the end, her Immaculate Heart triumphed, and she reigns now as Queen of Heaven and Earth. This triumph is replayed over and over as we go through trials and offer it up, uniting ourselves to Jesus through Mary. In our own lives, let us offer it up, and realize that this act can be our Fiat, giving us strength and ensuring that evil will not have the last word.

Practice the presence of Mary. When I taught second grade, I would sometimes tell the children at the beginning of the day to remember that Our Lady will be watching over them to help them be good. When making a decision, think: What would make Mary most pleased with me? At the end of the day reflect on your actions and ask yourself: Is Mary proud of what I did? If so, ask her to help you continue doing well tomorrow. If not, she still loves you and will help you do better, especially if you ask. This 2nd grade Marian practice can help us no matter what

our age to resist the power of temptation. She can give us the strength to choose love. In this way we experience a foretaste of the final triumph of the Immaculate Heart.

This devotion of asking her guidance also works when making big decisions. The biggest decision we make in our lives is to follow our vocation. From that point on, our vocation gives us the parameters for all other decisions. If married, we consider our spouse and family and not just ourselves for the rest of our lives. If called to the priesthood or religious life, that too guides us in our everyday decisions. Our vocation gives us direction, it tells us what is the best way for us to get to Heaven. Ask Mary's help when discerning this choice, and after we have committed to a vocation with vows or promises witnessed and accepted by the Church, ask her help to live your vocation to the fullest every day. When an elderly priest was asked when he decided he wanted to be a priest, he replied, "This morning." That is an example Our Lady will help us follow: keeping our initial fervor every day. Surrender to your Mother and let her Immaculate Heart triumph over you. Don't resist her guidance, and you will never regret it. Mary will help us discover the beautiful truth of this verse from Jeremiah, "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! plans to give you a future full of hope." (Jer 29:11)

Use aspirations, such as: "Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for me/us!" "Sweet Heart of Mary be my salvation!" "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, help me!" "Help me, Mother!" These short prayers take only a single breath and can be like a shot in the arm, giving us just the strength we need to choose love in any given situation. Some refer to aspirations like these as a battle cry, something that gives courage to strive for victory.

Take refuge in her Immaculate Heart. Our Lady of Guadalupe said, "Am I not here who am your Mother? Do you have need of anything else? Let nothing afflict you, nothing worry you." Take comfort in this sentiment from her Heart. Tell her about your woes, and know that she really cares. Sometimes we just need someone to talk to. With Our Lady, we need never be alone in hardship or joy. In her love, she shares it all with us, as any good mother does. Some might wonder if we are always to go to Our Lady and when should we go to Our Lord. A key thing to remember is that Mary will never let us stop with her. Every time we go to her, she brings us closer to her Son. So we need not fear that we are paying too much attention to her. Fr. Frederick Miller, an expert on Our Lady, said that we know we love Our Lady too much when we love her more than Jesus did. I don't think there's any danger for us!

We have an instinct as to who we need when. Growing up and to this day, I just knew where to go when I needed something. Sometimes I needed a good listener or someone to give advice or someone to just be with me and thus give me strength, and I would go to my father. Sometimes I needed sympathy, consolation, in a word, a mother's love, and I would go to Mom. Sometimes I needed a friend, a companion, and I would go to one of my brothers. Just as we have these natural modes of recourse in our family life, so God provides for these needs spiritually. Sometimes we need the love of Christ, sometimes we need the companionship of the Saints, and sometimes, nothing else will do except the love of Our Mother. God knows we need a Mother's love, so he gave her to us so we would always have her.

All of these devotions – offering it up, practicing the presence of Mary, aspirations, and taking refuge in her heart – are available to give us strength in the every day struggles of life on earth. Having a practice of seeking strength from Our Lady will also give us strength when big trials come upon us. With these practices we can share in her triumph. There is always hope! Don't be discouraged in small or great trials. Our Lady is bigger and God has given her the ability to help her children. The devil probably knows your weaknesses and works to tempt you especially in those areas. If we want to defeat him, we must have recourse to Our Lady. If every time you're tempted, you have recourse to her instead of giving in, pretty soon he'll stop because he doesn't like the result. In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph.

My friends, sometimes life is hard. Sometimes this world looks very dark. What we find in the Fatima message is a light to give us hope in the darkest of times. Cardinal Bertone said in an interview about Fatima that "There are certain times in history when it seems that the forces of evil are making a particularly concerted assault on the world. But they never stand unopposed. They must reckon with the resistance of another force, a power of love that upsets or, if you will, derails the course of events. Moreover, love seems to have won."

Sometimes we get to the point that we think we can't possibly handle any more pain or sorrow or stress in our lives. And then it gets worse! What are we to do? Turn to Our Lady! She is our Morning Star. We call her the Star of the Sea. In Sacred Scripture the sea is a symbol of chaos, of something bigger than ourselves that we can't control. When a storm swells and the sea rages, sailors look for a light, a star, to guide them. This light gives them hope that the storm will not defeat them. In the night time of our trial, let us turn to Mary Immaculate, Star of the Morning for hope.

Some words and phrases are met with a seemingly universal cheer: snow day, vacation, all you can eat, tax refund. While these pleasures are legitimate, they are passing. Tonight we present you with a phrase that we hope will bring lasting peace in any situation. “In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph.” Remembering this promise can give us a spiritual light that will pierce through the darkest of times.

Let’s end with a passage from the consecration prayer John Paul II wrote and used when he consecrated Russia and the rest of the world to the Immaculate Heart in 1984:

Immaculate Heart! Help us to conquer the menace of evil, which so easily takes root in the hearts of the people today, and whose immeasurable effects already weigh down upon our modern world and seem to block the paths toward the future!

From famine and war, deliver us!

From nuclear war, from incalculable self-destruction, from every kind of war, deliver us,

From sins against the life of man from its very beginning, deliver us.

From hatred and from the demeaning of the dignity of the children of God, deliver us.

From every kind of injustice in the life of society, both national and international, deliver us.

From readiness to trample on the commandments of God, deliver us.

From attempts to stifle in human hearts the very truth of God, deliver us.

From the loss of awareness of good and evil, deliver us.

From sins against the Holy Spirit, deliver us.

Accept, Oh Mother of Christ, this cry...Help us with the power of the Holy Spirit to conquer all sin: individual sin and the ‘sin of the world,’ in all its manifestations.

Let there be revealed, once more, in the history of the world the infinite saving power of the Redemption: the power of merciful Love! May it put a stop to evil! May it transform consciences! May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all the light of Hope!

All quotes and facts from Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Ratzinger, Cardinal Bertone, Sr. Lucia, and Dr. de Carli are taken from the book The Last Secret of Fatima, published in 2008.

All other stories are recorded from memory of various presentations and homilies.