

“ARE YOU HEEDING FATIMA?”

By LESTER M. DOOLEY, S.V.D.

Fatima is today the most magic of words in the Catholic vocabulary.

Fatima spells Mary.

Fatima presages peace.

Fatima is Mary's ultimatum.

Fatima is heaven's demand.

Fatima means salvation.

So momentous is Fatima that the noted author of “Our Lady of Fatima,” William T. Walsh, recently returned from Portugal, gave utterance to this statement: “Nothing is so important as making known what the Mother of God asked in her apparitions at Fatima in 1917. The future of our civilization, our liberties, our very existence depend upon the acceptance of her commands.”

The year 1917 will be recorded in history as of prime importance. On May 5, 1917, Pope Benedict XV had appealed for peace to Our Lady Mediatrix of All Graces. On May 13, eight days later, Our Lady appeared at Fatima in the first of six apparitions to three little children, Jacinta, age seven, Francisco, age nine (sister and brother, both now dead), and their cousin Lucy, age ten (now Sister Mary Lucy of the Sorrows*) and laid down her peace terms.

On May 13, 1917, our now gloriously reigning Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, was consecrated a bishop—the very day that Our Lady first made her appearance at Fatima.

During October of 1917, the same year and month of the last apparition at the Cova da Iria, Communism began its world-wide movement for conquest. Also in 1917 the message of Fatima, Communism's counterpart, began its world-wide movement to lead men back to God and point the way to peace. That Fatima is the exact counterpart of Communism is unquestionable from the prediction of Mary in her third apparition, July 13, 1917: “If my requests are heard [soon to be noted], Russia will be converted and there will be peace.”

With startling Insistency fortified by a six-fold repetition from May 13 to October 13, 1917, our Blessed Lady visited this earth at Fatima and showed her interest and power in the affairs of the earth. This of course is nothing new. Repeatedly she had done just that many times in the world's crisis. We need but recall here three of the many instances: the story of St. Dominic's rescuing France from the depressing heresy of the Albigenses through his preaching of the rosary . . . Lepanto, where the Turkish power over Catholic Europe was broken . . . Vienna in 1716, when, thanks to recourse to the rosary, Charles VI conquered the Turks, whose devastating hordes were threatening the very existence of Christianity.

Now when Communism is again threatening to engulf all mankind in “its darkest hour since the deluge,” when, to quote Pope Pius XI, “This modern revolution [Communism] threatens everywhere and exceeds in amplitude and violence anything yet experienced in preceding persecutions directed against the Church, Mary again appears to intercede for men and to point out to them the means of delivery.”

To quicken our enthusiasm and step up our zeal, let us recall her warning words, the punishment that will come in the wake of our indifference and lack of co-operation: “If they listen to my requests, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. If not, she will scatter her errors through the world, provoking 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 it will be converted, and a certain period of peace will be granted to the world.”—From the third apparition, July 13, 1917.

To add emphasis to these words of Our Lady, Sister Lucy (the one surviving visionary of Fatima) simply answered an unequivocal yes to this question: “Does this mean in your opinion that every country without exception will be overrun by Communism?”

View the world today. So threatening is the danger of World War III that the eminent orator, Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, in his last series over the Catholic Hour, under the general topic of “Light Your Lamps,” made the startling

**In 1948 Sister Mary Lucy of the Sorrows entered a Carmelite convent.*

statement: "Only a miracle can save us." Then he told the simple story of Fatima.

The inference was clear: You must bring Fatima into your homes, your lives. In this way the iron curtain will be spiritually atomized, and in God's own time that curtain will assume the beautiful blue of this mantle of Mary the Mother of God.

Action is then the cry of the times. There is not a moment to be wasted. Everyone to his post. But first we may legitimately put the questions: "Why have I not heard of this before? Why has the light of this message been left so long under a bushel? Why was it not given deserved publicity?"

Let us consider the secular angle of the question and then the Church's attitude.

I. The Secular Powers.

For many years before the time of the apparitions of Fatima, Portugal had long been embroiled in civil disturbances almost exclusively of an atheistic and anticlerical character. In sixteen years there had been as many revolutions and overturns of government.

In 1917, when Mary graciously descended to her land (Portugal is fondly and affectionately designated as the Land of Holy Mary), the rulers of the State were definitely inimical, even openly antagonistic, to the Catholic religion. Repeated attempts had been inaugurated to stamp out godliness and religion. Ridicule, scorn, open warfare, and even bombings were used to carry on a campaign of godless, devilish hatred and bigotry.

The secular press ridiculed the apparitions. The army sent soldiers to prevent the gathering of pilgrims and the paying of due homage at the place of Mary's appearance. Hostile and vilifying processions were held to belittle the piety and devotion of the faithful. Truly the dungeons of deepest hell were set in motion by his Satanic Majesty's earthly representatives and satellites. Is it any wonder that in the face of such diabolical hatred and opposition Fatima—from a purely human point of view—was slow to claim the attention it rightly deserved?

II. The Church's Stand.

More than thirty years have passed since Mary's first apparition to the three little children at Fatima, in May of 1917. During this time the Church authorities, while they remained alert to the possibilities of a heavenly message, maintained a discreet, almost unbearable silence. They neither openly condemned Fatima nor openly approved its cult.

Up to 1930 legitimate ecclesiastics took no definite step toward a satisfying decision on Fatima. In the year 1918, however, a preliminary investigation was begun by the local pastor. Then on August 5, 1920, a bishop was consecrated for the newly-created Diocese of Leiria, a cut-off of the Archdiocese of Lisbon. Further investigations were now begun by an approved committee.

This committee questioned the three children and other trustworthy witnesses. The Bishop of Leiria studied the findings of the committee and himself became convinced that Our Blessed Lady, the Lady of Light, had really dignified the place called Cova da Iris. So on October 13, 1930, through a pastoral letter the Bishop declared formally that the visions were worthy of credence and that official permission was thereby given to practice devotion to Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima.

What a red-letter day that was in the annals of Marian devotion! From that day onward the cult of Fatima rose in an ever increasing crescendo, until on May 13, 1948, there were some seven hundred thousand pilgrims assembled there to hear the voice of the Holy Father at Rome deliver his sermon on the wonders of Fatima.

With this approbation of the highest Catholic authority there can now be no let up in our enthusiasm to carry out the ardent wishes of Mary as she expressed them at Fatima.

We shall now elaborate more fully upon the message of Fatima itself, keeping always in mind our responsibility to carry out most exactly and religiously not only the requests of Mary, but her demands. If World War III is already under way, our apostolate must step up its activity. Otherwise. . . .

Briefly then. . . .

There were six apparitions of Our Blessed Lady to three little shepherd children at Cova da Iria in Fatima, some seventy miles north of Lisbon, Portugal. God in His gracious goodness, however, had gradually prepared them for these visits of Our Lady of Light by a threefold visit from an angel who called himself the Angel of Peace. He taught

them some beautiful prayers, told them that the hearts of Jesus and of Mary were attentive to the voice of their supplications, asked them to prostrate themselves while they were praying, and admonished them to accept the sufferings that God would send them.

What was his appearance? As a transparent young man of about fourteen or fifteen years of age, far more brilliant than a crystal, penetrated by the rays of the sun—or, as Lucy describes it, “like snow that the sun shines through until it becomes crystalline.”

This was in the year 1918. These three appearances and the conversations that ensued served as a beautiful background and a becoming preparation for the first apparition.

THE FIRST APPARITION—May 13, 1917

The first apparition of the beautiful Lady in white took place on May 13, 1917.

What did she say?

What did she look like?

How long did she stay?

In a soft, pleasing voice she banished their fears, assured them that she would not harm them, and said that she was from heaven. She requested them to offer themselves to God, to endure the sufferings He would send as an act of reparation for the sins whereby He was offended, to ask for the conversion of sinners, and to make amends for the blasphemies and offences committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Lucy answered in the affirmative for the three of them.

Mary bade them say the rosary daily to obtain peace for the world and to bring about the end of the war. She asked them to come to that identical spot the Cova da Iria, at the same hour, around noon, on the thirteenth day of six successive months.

As she appeared to the three children, Mary could be described as a Lady in White atop a small three-foot evergreen. She was all light and appeared more brilliantly illuminated than the finest volume of water shot through and through with the most glaring rays of the sun. Her face was beyond the power of words to describe—not sad, but grave. Her hands were folded, with rosary beads of pearl suspended between the fingers of her right hand. She was so dazzling that the children could not look upon her steadily because it made their eyes blink. The vision lasted about ten minutes.

How vividly this vision of unearthly beauty of Our Lady in White impressed Lucy may be gathered from her answer to this question put to her on May 20, 1946, on the occasion of her visit to the scene of the apparition:

“Does this statue in the shrine at Cova da Iria look like the Lady you saw there?”

“No not much. I was disappointed when I saw it. For one thing it was too happy, too *alegre*. When I saw Our Lady, she was more *triste*, or rather more compassionate. But it would be impossible to describe Our Lady, and it would be impossible to make a statue as beautiful as she is.”

THE SECOND APPARITION —June 13, 1917

True to Mary’s request the three children were at Cova da Iria on the thirteenth day of the following month, June, at the appointed time. Mary kept her date with her little charges. Her coming from the East was preceded by a brilliant light, and again she appeared above the small evergreen bush.

To Lucy’s query, “What does Your Excellency want of me?” the Lady replied, “I want you to come here on the thirteenth day of the coming month, to recite five decades of the rosary every day, and to learn to read.”

On this historic occasion a secret was disclosed to Lucy that has since been made public in obedience to Our Lady’s wish. The secret was that Lucy must remain on earth longer than Jacinta and Francis (they died shortly afterward) in order that she, Lucy, might spread devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In vision the children saw a heart surrounded by thorns, which seemed to prick it. They understood that it was the Immaculate Heart of Mary afflicted by the sins of mankind, for which penance and reparation were demanded.

THE THIRD APPARITION—July 13, 1917

This apparition, attended by some five thousand spectators, is of momentous importance.

In this third apparition Our Blessed Lady again insisted on the recitation of the rosary “every day in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary to obtain peace for the world, and the end of the war; for she alone can save it.”

“O my Jesus, pardon us.

Save us from the fire of hell.

Draw all souls to heaven,

Especially those in most need.”

The children were exhorted to continue to come to this identical spot on the thirteenth day of the next month. She promised that in October she would reveal her identity and would work a great miracle to convince the people of her trustworthiness.

The three children were also shown a terrifying vision of hell. The climax of the apparition was the announcement that to save souls the Lord desires the devotion to her Immaculate Heart to be inaugurated. Our Lady is quoted as saying:

“You see hell, where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world the devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If they do what I will tell you, many souls will be saved, and there will be peace. The war is going to end [World War I]. But if they do not stop offending God, another and worse one will begin in the reign of Pius XI.

“When you shall see a night illuminated by an unknown light, know that it is the signal that God gives you that He is going to punish the world for its crimes by means of war, of hunger, and of persecution of the Church and of the Holy Father.”

“To prevent this, I come to ask the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart and the communion of reparation on the first Saturdays. If they listen to my requests, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. If not, she will scatter her errors through the world, provoking 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 it will be converted, and a certain period of peace will be granted to the world.”

It would seem that at this juncture in the revelation the Church authorities have seen fit to keep secret to date part of this disclosure of Our Blessed Mother. On several occasions, it may be recalled, when Sister Lucy was asked further about the contents of certain revelations, she contented herself with saying that for some they would bring joy, for others grief or sadness. Doubtless this is true of this particular message, and our spiritual guides feel that the times are not yet ripe for its disclosure.

Competent students of Fatima’s message think that the last words before the section that has been reserved are these: “Various nations will be annihilated.” Here follows the break, but the happy event foretelling Mary’s victory is then, subjoined: “In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph.” We are given to understand that during the interval between the destruction of various nations and Mary’s triumph the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary will have taken place, Russia will have been converted, an era of peace will have been conceded to mankind, and consequently Mary’s foretold victory will be complete.

We should be deeply grateful for the comforting words of Mary’s disclosure about her ultimate triumph. As evidence of our thankfulness let us set to work with heart and hand to participate in that glorious victory by spreading the devotion to her Immaculate Heart. What could be clearer than these awesome predictions of Our Blessed Mother? To neglect to carry out at once the behests of the Lady of Fatima is tantamount to utter indifference to the danger of World War III.

Again Our Lady asked the children to do penance for sinners and requested that they recite this prayer often, especially when they made sacrifices: “O Jesus, it is for Your love; for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for

**This sign Lucy believed to be the unusual appearance of the Northern Lights during the night of January 25-26 1938, which shone with an extraordinary lustre both in Europe and in America.*

the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” More will be said later on about the devotion of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the communion of reparation on five successive first Saturdays.

THE FOURTH APPARITION—August 19, 1917

In the meantime these children of predilection were experiencing opposition, persecution, and ridicule from various sources-but especially from the anti-clerical Government, from the secular press, from their own families, and not infrequently from apparently well-meaning clerics.

The local magistrate, who was perhaps the equivalent of a small-town policeman, had actually kidnapped the three children and thus effectively prevented their convening at the Cova on August 13, the appointed day for the fourth apparition of Our Lady. Foiled in his efforts to wrest from the children the contents (secrets) of the apparitions-even when he threatened to boil them in seething oil and kill them-he finally released them and restored them to their families on August 16.

On August 19, as they were pasturing their flock at the place called Valinhos, not far from the Cova da Iria, the Lady in White again appeared to them. She expressed her deep sympathy for them because they had been prevented through no fault of their own from keeping their appointment six days earlier and showed her vexation with the one who had been responsible for their absence.

Because of this she foretold that the coming events to signalize her October apparition would be less splendid than were intended. The money that pious souls were voluntarily leaving at the Cova was to be used, said Our Lady, to solemnize the coming feast of the Holy Rosary (October 7).

She again asked them to come on the thirteenth day of the two following months and again exhorted them to practices of prayer and penance: “Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to hell because there is nobody to make sacrifices and to pray for them.” Then she disappeared.

THE FIFTH APPARITION—September 13, 1917

An attendance of around forty thousand graced the occasion of the fifth apparition, so notably had the appearances of Mary gripped the hearts of Portugal’s faithful.

Very punctually Mary appeared, accompanied by the traditional preliminaries that prefaced these visitations. A globe of light appeared . . . the sky became tinted . . . the evergreen seemed to move as under a burden and Our Lady was visible to the three chosen little ones. Something new was added in this apparition. According to trustworthy witnesses there cascaded from the skies a shower of white flakes like our snow here on a winter’s day. No one could capture or imprison these flakes; they defied observation; they disappeared even as attempts were made to gather them up.

Mary tells the children to persevere in the reciting of the rosary for the cessation of the war. She promises to cure a number of afflicted ones. She exhorts the children to keep their appointment with her on October 13, at which time she will have with her St. Joseph and the divine Child. Then she gradually dissolves in the East, and Lucy, the one living seer, utters the words, “She is going.”

THE SIXTH APPARITION—October 13, 1917

By this time rumours of the monthly marvels at Fatima had spread like wildfire throughout Portugal and for miles beyond. Enthusiasm and interest in Mary’s visitations reached new heights. It was natural, then, that people should look forward eagerly to the last of these apparitions, at which, Mary had promised, there would be such a display of her powers as would convince the most sceptical of the supernatural quality of these visits to earth.

But the ruler of the powers of darkness did not by any means sit idly by. Exercising the might of the power that God permits him over the forces of nature, Satan stirred up the elements to conspire against the faithful who might set out to behold the power of Mary in this sixth and last apparition. The wind let loose in violence, whipped the waves into whitish foam, and descended in mighty fury upon the trees and pine forests surrounding Leiria. Great rain clouds discharged their contents in drenching torrent upon the trudging people, some seventy thousand in all, soaking them to the skin as they slashed and splashed irresistibly onward to Fatima. Nothing, not even the fury of the elements, could

stay their forward march.

Punctually at the hour of noon Lucy announced the coming of the Lady.

“Who are you?” asked Lucy.

“I am the Lady of the Rosary,” came back the answer.

Again emphasis was placed on the reciting of the rosary. Men must repent of their sins, change their lives, and no longer offend Our Lord. Mary promised that if men changed their ways of living the war (World War I) would speedily terminate and she would answer their prayers. Finally she expressed the wish that a chapel be erected there in her honour.

As Our Lady spread her hands, a familiar gesture to the children, Lucy exclaimed, “Look at the sun.” And behold the great star of day took on the appearance of a silver globe, at which all could gaze without blinking. The rain suddenly ceased. And then the wonder happened. The sun began to spin, to gyrate like a gigantic wheel. In its circular movements it cast forth on all sides lustrous colours that included those of the prism and the rainbow and tinted all nature in the vicinity of the Cova. Once, twice, thrice it stopped. . . . and began again its fantastic mesmerizing, dizzying spinning on its axis. Then while the kneeling terrified multitude (devout believers, sceptics, freethinkers, and a motley group of nondescripts) drank in the magnificent spectacle, there were shown in an aside, as it were, three beautiful tableaux—shown to the three children alone:

The first tableau: The Holy Family appeared to them, St. Joseph, the divine Child, and Our Lady. Our Lady was dressed in her traditional robe of white with a blue mantle, St. Joseph in white, the divine Child in bright red. This tableau is taken to signify the joyful mysteries of the rosary.

The second tableau: Our Lady appeared in the traditional figure of Our Lady of Sorrows, but without the sword piercing her heart. Beside her stood Jesus. They were much as we represent them in the fourth station of the cross, Our Lord, looking pityingly from tired, bloodshot, pensive eyes. This tableau is taken to symbolize the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary.

The third tableau: Our Lady appeared crowned as Queen of Heaven, the divine Child upon her knee. She was garbed according to the traditional picture of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. This tableau is taken to represent the glorious mysteries of the rosary.

But wait. All is not over. As the tableaux slowly dissolved, another prodigy of nature was at hand.

To appreciate this prodigy of nature, imagine yourself one of that kneeling, awestruck crowd still looking skyward, still fascinated by the spectacle of a myriad-coloured, gyrating, spinning, dancing ball of fire. Maybe your eyes still burn and smart from your having trained them so steadily upon such an apparent miracle of nature. As you gaze, you behold the sun standing stock-still But no . . . there is action there

To all appearance the rotating motion of spinning, to which the sun has just been subjected, would seem to have wrenched it free from its wheel base. For now it is detached from its place in the firmament, and in terrifying, ever-increasing speed it is hurtling itself earthward with precipitous force and lunging power towards the cringing, crouching, abject, terrified, awed, praying crowds below.

Sharp cries of terror rend the air. Acts of contrition are heard. Petitions for mercy and pardon ascend from contrite hearts of saint and sinner alike. Surely this presages the crack of doom.

But the end does not come. An unseen hand stays the sun in its mad, careering course earthward . . . and a minute later the sun is shining serenely again in its usual place in the heavens. And look—the drenched, bespattered garments of the people are found to be perfectly dry.

This was the sun-miracle, attested by many eye witnesses both good and bad, believers and non-believers, seen by people many miles away. No astronomical observatory recorded it. Did it portray perhaps the divine vengeance surfeited beyond measure with mankind’s sins and on the verge of striking the human race but stayed in its course by the power of Mary—that power with which we are asked to co-operate by carrying out the tremendous message of Fatima?

MARY'S PEACE TERMS

Let us now develop more specifically the four-point programme of Mary's ultimatum, her peace terms to mankind. If we fulfill the demands of these terms, then the promise will be verified: There will be the conversion of Russia and longed-for peace. We have this on the infallible word of Mary herself. Who can doubt that word?

Her peace terms are as follows.

1. Penance.

2. The recitation of the Rosary.

3. Devotion and consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart.

4. Communion and reparation to her on five consecutive first Saturdays.

Sister Lucy said that the danger of World War III will disappear as soon as a sufficient number of people are fulfilling the demands of Our Lady of Fatima. How natural, then, to conclude that no other apostolate is more necessary than a crusade whose one objective is to get people to fulfill Fatima. Who knows but that you who are now on the verge of bringing Fatima into your life may be the one required to fill that quota. So begin today to become a promoter of Fatima's message. For Mary asks so little and promises so much.

1. Penance

Each apparition insistently emphasizes penance: "I have come down to warn the faithful to amend their lives [in plain English-to do penance] and ask pardon for their sins. Men must not continue to offend the Lord, already so deeply offended." This repeated demand for penance deeply impressed all the children so much that they entered upon a course of penance far beyond their years. We quote here the words of Lucy some years after the apparitions: "That which has remained most deeply imprinted on my heart is the request of our heavenly Mother begging us no longer to offend Almighty God, who is already offended too much."

Even little Jacinta, the youngest of the trio, goes on record as saying: "Oh, if men only knew what eternity is, how they would make all efforts to amend their lives . . . The sins of the world are too great. The sins which lead most men to hell are the sins of the flesh. Oh men must do penance. If they amend their lives, Our Lord will still pardon the world; but if they do not, the chastisement will come."

In what does this penance consist? According to Sister Lucy, Our Lady's essential request at Fatima is that we fulfill our daily duties and offer for sinners the sacrifices entailed in the performance of those duties—that is, the avoidance of sin, which presupposes a willingness to make constant daily sacrifice if need be. It means that we must practice charity, live purely, avoid theft, give up bad language and undesirable companions, books, people, places, things.

Offer these sacrifices for the conversion of sinners, and you fulfill the first request of Our Lady's ultimatum. Who among us cannot apply himself more painstakingly in the carrying out of this everyday penance precisely because the fulfillment of duty confronts us daily and hourly? Hence the conclusion is logical and legitimate: He who cravenly shirks the duties of his state as religious or lay person is to the degree of his shirking retarding the day and the hour of Mary's triumph.

You have a personal responsibility. Our Lady gave us a sign for the conversion of Russia and the consequent dawning of permanent peace: "When a sufficient number are offering sacrifices and fulfilling Our Lady's demands . . . Russia will be converted and there will be peace." Examine your conscience in this matter: "Do I keep God's commandments in my state of life? If not, I am deferring by just that much the fulfillment of Mary's first ultimatum at Fatima-penance.

2. The Recitation of the Rosary

Fatima, sometimes referred to as the Lourdes of Portugal, reiterates the message of the rosary. At Lourdes, Our Lady appeared eighteen times and invited Bernadette to recite the rosary with her. In each apparition at Fatima, six in all, Our Lady insisted on the recitation of the rosary. When she made her appearances, she held the rosary in her clasped hands. In the last, great episode she identified herself as the Lady of the Rosary. To Lucy's direct question,

“Who are you and what do you want?” Our Lady replied, “I am the Lady of the Rosary, and I have come to warn the faithful to amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins. They must not continue to offend Our Lord, Who already is so deeply offended. They must say the rosary.” Through the rosary today, as in past times of peril that have threatened civilization, Mary has again come to save men from the evils that overwhelm them.

In the apparitions of Fatima she requested after each decade the recitation of these prayers:

“O my Jesus, pardon us.

Save us from the fire of hell.

Draw all souls to heaven,

Especially those in most need.”

In and for our times Father Peyton, C.S.C., has inaugurated a crusade for the family rosary—the saying of the rosary in the family circle—to bring back to the home life its splendour and hardiness.

Herewith a few contributing answers to the question, “Why Recite the Family Rosary?”

1. Because the family rosary joins two or three together in God’s name, with God therefore in their midst. “Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

2. Because it raises the family circle to a supernatural level. Not so much as earthly father, mother, son, daughter does the family pray but rather as children of God united in a higher family circle, where God is Father and Mary Immaculate is Mother.

3. Because it unites parents and children in devout prayer. The family rosary is a practical way to strengthen the unity of family life, which is so easily weakened by the modern way of living: father working in office or factory . . . brothers and sisters at work, in school, or at play . . . each absorbed in his own interests. The family rosary unites them even for a few short moments in loving prayer to God and His Blessed Mother.

4. Because it is an antidote to the spirit of the godless world. Today more than ever there is need of a powerful weapon to protect family life. Worldliness and worldly doctrines—sworn enemies of Christian life—strike first at the family. Newspapers and magazines lay the family open to modern false doctrines. The motion pictures make a joke of family life. It is the family that must be saved if the world is to be saved. The weapon? The family rosary. In the past the rosary has been powerful against the forces of evil. It will accomplish even greater things today if families use it.

5. Because it fosters vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. If families in a parish are weak, the parish life is weak and vocations to priesthood and religious life are few. If family life is strong, the parish is strong and Catholicity will be militant and vocations numerous. The family rosary can fashion this strength. Remember Father Peyton’s slogan: “The family that prays together stays together.”

3. The Consecration of the World to the Immaculate Heart of Mary*

The third apparition may well go down in history as an epoch-making event. It was on July 13, 1917, that Our Lady told Lucy, “Our Lord wishes that devotion to my Immaculate Heart be established in the world.” If this was done (this revelation has now been disclosed, and it consisted mostly in the establishment of devotion to the Immaculate Heart), many souls would be saved, the war would end, and there would be peace. If this was not done, dire calamities would be visited upon mankind.

“To prevent this [these disasters] I come to ask the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart and the communion of reparation on the first Saturdays. If they listen to my requests, Russia will be converted and there will be peace In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph . . . and a certain period of peace will be granted to the world.”

Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is taking root all over the world.

On October 31, 1942, on the occasion of the solemn closing of the celebration in honour of the apparitions of Fatima, Pope Pius XII obeyed the message of Fatima and consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

**A formula of consecration composed by Pope Plus XII and used by him on October 31, 1942, at the conclusion of the Fatima Jubilee Celebration, when he consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary was solemnly renewed on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1942, at the great Basilica of St. Peter.*

Unmistakably His Holiness referred the consecration to Russia when he prayed: “Give peace to the peoples separated by error or discord and especially to those who profess such singular devotion to thee [Queen of Peace] and in whose homes an honoured place was ever accorded thy venerated image [today perhaps often kept hidden to await better days].”

Is this sufficient? No. Christians individually and collectively must re-echo the Holy Father’s voice by a similar consecration of their homes, their families to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This consecration should take on the form of an earnest programme of Christian living under the maternal protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

How practice and spread this devotion?

1. Consecrate yourself by any formula to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Such consecration simply means your desire to honour her, to belong to her, to obey her. This simple consecration would suffice: “Immaculate Heart of Mary, I consecrate myself to thee.”

2. In your homes have a picture or a painting portraying the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Honour it by aspirations throughout the day. Meditate piously upon it. Recite your prayers before it. On feast days of Our Lady burn a vigil light before it. Adorn it with flowers.

3. Honour the Immaculate Heart on the first Saturdays of each month. Receive Holy Communion on that day in reparation for the indignities heaped upon Mary’s Immaculate Heart. Recite and meditate upon the rosary.

4. Invoke the Immaculate Heart of Mary daily.

5. Spend yourself in spreading this devotion, for upon it and Mary’s other requests depend the peace and salvation of the world.

When will this be accomplished? Mary answers us through Sister Lucy: “When a sufficient number of people are fulfilling Our Lady’s requests.” One of them is the establishment of devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

To impress upon our hearts the necessity of this devotion, read the words of little Jacinta (shortly before her death) to Lucy: “You must remain here below to make the world know that Our Lord wishes devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary established in the world. Tell everybody that God gives graces through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Tell them to ask graces from her and that the Sacred Heart of Jesus wishes to be venerated together with the Immaculate Heart of His Mother. Ask them to plead for peace from the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for the Lord has confided the peace of the world to her.”

So important does the Church regard the spread of this devotion that on August 22, 1945, Pope Pius XII instituted the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary with a proper office and Mass and extended it to the whole world.

1. All the faithful who say the approved prayers in honour of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and have the intention to continue this holy practice for nine consecutive days may gain an indulgence of five years once a day.

2. A plenary indulgence may be gained after the novena is finished, on the usual conditions of confession, Holy Communion, and prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father.

—Pope Pius XI, April 29, 1933.

4. Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays

It was during the apparition of July 13, 1917, that Our Lady referred to the communion of reparation that she desired to be made on the first Saturday of each month. The great promise connected with the five first Saturdays however was not made known until December 10, 1925. On that day the Blessed Virgin appeared to Lucy in her cell in the convent and said: “See, my daughter, how my heart is encircled by thorns with which ungrateful men pierce me at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You at least try to console me and announce that I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who on the first Saturdays of five consecutive months confess, receive Holy Communion, recite part of my rosary, and keep me company for a quarter of an hour, meditating on its mysteries with the intention of offering me reparation.”

The confession may be made eight days prior to or following the Sunday on which Holy Communion is received.

The meditation and the recitation of the rosary are separate requirements and need not be done at the same time. If the meditation is united with the rosary, one may pause for that span of time that will make up fifteen minutes to reflect devoutly on the mystery proposed either before or after the decade. Or one may simply take twice as long to

recite the mysteries while one ponders meditatively on the contents of that phase of Christ's or Mary's life that is proposed. This meditation may be extended to one, several, more, or all of the mysteries as long as the fifteen-minutes' meditation is observed.

The intention must be to do this in order to console and thus make reparation, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

A sermon of fifteen minutes' duration on the same subject matter may be substituted for the meditation. Religious fulfill this requirement if they take a mystery or several mysteries of the rosary for their Saturday meditation. Those therefore who practice this devotion of the five first Saturdays fulfill the conditions already laid down by the Church for the gaining of a plenary indulgence. For years such a Saturday was devoutly referred to as "Atonement Saturday."

By June 13, 1912, the Holy See had already sanctioned the gaining of a plenary indulgence by all who under the usual conditions (*The usual conditions refer to Confession, Communion, a visit to a church, and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father.*) on the first Saturday of any month perform special exercises of devotion in honour of the Blessed Mother in reparation for the blasphemies against her name and her prerogatives.—"The Raccolta," No. 335.

Hence we say that one who fulfills the fourth peace term of the Blessed Mother at Fatima automatically fulfills the conditions already granted and in existence for "Atonement Saturday."

Our Lady went so far as to reveal to Lucy the beauty and distinction resulting from this practice of devotion to her Immaculate Heart: "These souls will be dear to God and resemble flowers placed by me before the throne God."

Can you with the memory of the horrors of the past war hesitate to accept Fatima into your life and thus help prevent World War III? Have you forgotten . . . brutality in concentration camps? the bombings? the war of nerves? The wholesale slaughter? the blood, tears, suffering, separation, starvation, outrages committed on men and women, religious and lay people? the anguished waiting of mothers, wives, sweethearts? the telegrams bearing crushing announcements?

There is but one alternative: Carry out religiously, unhesitatingly Mary's message at Fatima. Otherwise Russia will "scatter her errors through the world, provoking wars and persecutions of the Church. . . . Various nations will be annihilated."

We must wake from our indifference to Mary's requests at Fatima. We must not hesitate for a single instant to begin to carry out her Fatima demands.

Fatima is a small town in Portugal. Yet Fatima, where Mary appeared six times to three children and made four definite requests, may be your own kitchen, your nursery, your office, your truck, your desk, your classroom, your "night out."

Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, Mary comes to you with her Fatima requests: Accept your daily work and the sacrifices involved in it; keep the laws of your state of life and offer the sacrifices for the conversion of sinners; say the rosary daily; cultivate a devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary; practise devotion of the five first Saturdays. This is Fatima brought home to you. Sell yourself on Fatima. Then take the message to others—that nothing else is of quite such importance as to put Fatima in your life . . . in others' lives. Every time you carry out the message of Fatima, you help bring nearer the hour when Russia's might will crumble and over that nation will be spread the beautiful blue of the mantle of Mary.

And now the burning, practical question:

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

In general: Spread the message of Fatima, distribute literature on Fatima, distribute rosaries, talk Fatima, heed Fatima, live Fatima twenty-four hours a day.

Specifically: Become a promoter.

A promoter is one who furthers a cause. In this case you broadcast the message of Fatima. As a promoter for Our Lady's ultimatum delivered at Fatima:

1. You help offset Communism.
2. You help save souls from hell by your penances.
3. You help extinguish the fires of national hatred.
4. You work and pray for a just and lasting peace.

5. You placate by reparation the anger of God and console the Immaculate Heart of Mary by helping establish devotion to her Immaculate Heart.

6. You inaugurate or renew the rosary devotion and a communion of reparation to Mary on five first Saturdays, paralleling the nine first Fridays to the Sacred Heart.

Let us all, in the words of Pope Benedict XV “in this humanity’s tragic hour” consecrate ourselves to her—if we would not be lost.

One of the saddest and most tragic comments on World War II was made by Pope Plus XII: “It need not have been.” It could have been prevented. To our query, “How?”, our heavenly Mother answered that it depended on men’s amending their ways, doing penance, ceasing from sinning, coming back to God, spreading devotion to her Immaculate heart. But Fatima’s message was disregarded, and grim war broke upon the world.

We are now once again much in the same position as were the people facing World War II. To our advantage we have before us the tragic result of men not heeding formally the message of Fatima. Let not the same tragedy overtake us. To prevent World War III, let us be up and doing, wise with the wisdom of the Holy Ghost and of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, who asks for penance, prayer, the recitation of the rosary, consecration and reparation to her Immaculate Heart. She asks so little and promises so much. Heed Fatima. Obey Fatima. Spread devotion to Mary’s Immaculate Heart. In this lies our peace, our security.

The dawning of a better world, the conversion of Russia, an era of peace and security for mankind—these blessings can be yours “when a sufficient number are offering their sacrifices and fulfilling Our Lady’s requests.”

You may be the one necessary to make up that “sufficient number.” Animate yourself anew. Look upon your sacrifices, your prayers, your efforts as so many weapons to atomize the iron curtain and convert it magically into the blue mantle of Mary before the tragedy of World War III breaks upon us in penalty for our neglect of Fatima’s message. Recall Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen’s words: “It will take a miracle to prevent war, but the miracle will come if we do our part by carrying out the requests of Our Lady of Fatima.” Become a promoter.
