

COMMUNIONS OF REPARATION ON FIRST SATURDAYS



# The First Saturday Devotion



WORLD APOSTOLATE OF FATIMA, USA, INC.  
A PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE FAITHFUL  
UNDER THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY

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# The First Saturday Devotion

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Reverend Monsignor William Benwell, J.C.L., V.G., Vicar General, Diocese of Metuchen  
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After Our Lady showed the children the vision of hell she told them that God wished to save souls from it by means of establishing devotion to her Immaculate Heart. She spoke of war, famine and persecutions of the Church and the Holy Father which would occur if people did not stop offending God.

She said that to prevent these things she would return to ask for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart and the Communions of Reparation on First Saturdays. If her requests were heeded, Russia would be converted and there would be an era of peace. If not, Russia would spread the errors of Atheism throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church; the good would be martyred; the Holy Father would have much to suffer; and various nations would be annihilated.

IN THE DOROTHEAN CONVENT IN  
PONTEVEDRA, SPAIN – DECEMBER 10, 1925



*The promise and requirements*

Our Lady, accompanied by the Child Jesus, returned to Lucia as she foretold a little more than eight years before. It was during this apparition that the elements of the practice of the devotion were articulated and the promise associated with its successful completion was made. Our Lady said: *“I promise to assist at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, shall confess; receive Holy Communion; recite five decades of the Rosary; and keep me company for fifteen minutes while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me.”*<sup>1</sup>

**Important note:** Our Lady’s promise is not a guarantee that one will go to Heaven. The graces necessary will be supplied, but it is possible for an unfavorable disposition of mind and heart to render the graces ineffective.

THE CHILD JESUS APPEARS TO LUCIA  
– FEBRUARY 15, 1926

*Spread of the devotion and leniency  
concerning the confessional requirement*

A little over two months later the Child Jesus appeared to Lucia to encourage spread of the devotion, assuring her that His grace could overcome all obstacles.

During this apparition Lucia expressed concern about the difficulty some might have confessing on Saturday and asked if this requirement might be fulfilled within eight days. “Yes,” Jesus said, *“and it could be longer still, provided that when they receive Me, they are in the state of grace and have the intention of making reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”*<sup>2</sup>

1 Lucia Speaks, pp 31-32

2 Lucia Speaks, p 32

When she asked about those who might forget to make the intention He said “*They can do so at their next Confession, taking advantage of the first opportunity to go to Confession.*”<sup>3</sup>

This exchange provides an important insight into Heaven’s disposition toward human limitations and weakness and the ever-changing circumstances of everyday life on earth. We must be careful to avoid scrupulosity with regard to minor details of the devotion’s requirements and not demand more of ourselves and others than Heaven demands.

### OUR LORD’S REVELATION TO LUCIA – MAY 29-30, 1930

#### *The motives of the devotion’s reparation*

During this locution Our Lord identified the five categories of offences or blasphemies against the Immaculate Heart of Mary for which reparation is to be made. We find here as well, the basis for “five” First Saturdays, rather than seven which would correspond to the Seven Sorrows, or nine which would correspond to novenas. The five categories are:

1. Offences or blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception – its denial and/or ridicule.
2. Against her perpetual virginity – that she had relations with Joseph and had other children.
3. Against her Divine Maternity, refusing at the same time to accept her as Mother of all mankind – denying that she is the Mother of God and our Mother.
4. The implantation into children’s hearts indifference, contempt and even hate against our Immaculate Mother.
5. Insults directed against her sacred images – displays of indifference or ridicule, and the infliction of damage to them.

Again, during this locution, Our Lord communicated to Lucia Heaven’s disposition toward human limitations and weakness and the ever-changing circumstances of everyday life on earth. Lucia’s confessor had asked her if Sunday would not do in the event one could not accomplish all the obligations of the devotion on the First Saturday. He told her that those who could not accomplish all the requirements of the devotion on Saturdays could do so on the Sundays following, if their priests were willing to make allowances for just reasons.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMMUNION OF REPARATION AND THE CONSECRATION OF RUSSIA TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

### COMMUNION OF REPARATION

On July 13, 1917 Our Lady said she would return to ask for both. On December 10, 1925 she returned asking for the Communions of Reparation. Jesus followed her return first on February 15, 1926 and again on May 29-30, 1930 to encourage the spread of the devotion and further elaborate on its practice.

### CONSECRATION OF RUSSIA

It was on June 13, 1929 that Our Lady returned to ask for the consecration of Russia. She said to Sister Lucia: “*The moment has come in which God asks the Holy Father, in union with all the bishops of the world, to make the consecration of Russia, promising to save it by this means....*”<sup>4</sup>

3 Ibid

4 Lucia Speaks, p 37

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO

Sister Lucia drew a connection to the devotion and the consecration in a letter written to Father Goncalves. She wrote: *“If I am not mistaken, Our Dear Lord God promises to end the persecution of Russia, if the Holy Father condescends to make, and likewise ordains the bishops of the Catholic World to make a solemn and public act of reparation and consecration of Russia to the Most Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In response to the end of this persecution, His Holiness is to promise to approve of and recommend the practice of the already mentioned devotion of reparation.”*<sup>5</sup>

## THE POPE AND THE PEOPLE OF THE CATHOLIC WORLD



It is the Pope who is asked to make the act of reparation and consecration of Russia and to approve of and recommend the practice of the First Saturday Communion of Reparation. It is the Catholics of the world who are asked to practice the devotion.

## CONTROVERSY

A great deal of controversy abounds about the consecration performed by Saint

John Paul II with the bishops of the world on March 25, 1984. We would all do well to let the pope take care of the pope’s business and we tend to our own. We are called to practice this devotion, not to endlessly hound the pope and others about the consecration.

## PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF THE EVIL ONE

If we become convinced to spend time praying, doing penance and making sacrifices so that the pope will do something he has already done, instead of making our intentions reparation for sin, the conversion of sinners and world peace as Our Lady asked us to do, we will be playing right into the hands of the evil one, the master of lies and deception.

## WHAT WENT WRONG?

The consecration requested in 1929 was not performed until fifty-five years later. Why? Every observer has his own explanation. We’ll find out when we get to heaven. What we do know is that when it was finally done its objective was achieved in six short years. Persecution of the Church in Russia has ended; the government which for 70+ years brutally imposed Atheism on its people is rebuilding the churches it once demolished and encouraging them to turn back to God. The conversion of Russia is under way. This is clearly “a” triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

## THE POPE’S PROMISE TO APPROVE AND RECOMMEND THE DEVOTION

While the consecration was unfortunately delayed fifty-five years, by the time its effect ended the persecution in Russia in 1991, the Church’s approval and recommendation of the First Saturday Devotion had already long since occurred, and the practice of the devotion, although not yet

<sup>5</sup> Documents on Fatima & the Memoirs of Sister Lucia, p 284

adequately embraced by sufficient numbers, continues to spread. You can play a key role by embracing it yourself, and encouraging others to do so.

## THE POPE'S ROLE AND OURS

The Holy Father has done his part. The consecration has been done and the devotion approved and recommended. "The" triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, however, will not come to pass until sufficient numbers of us embrace the Message of Fatima and honor all of Our Lady's requests. This is our role.

## AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT THE FATIMA DEVOTIONS



In a homily delivered during his 2010 apostolic journey to Portugal on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the beatification of blessed Jacinta and Francisco Pope Benedict XVI told us: "*The substance of the Fatima message is not directed to particular devotions, but precisely to the fundamental response, that is to ongoing conversion, penance, prayer and the three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity.*"<sup>6</sup>

He has not told us that the Fatima devotions are unimportant. Rather, he wants us to understand that they are the means to an end - not the end itself. The end in the eternal order is the conversion of sinners required for the salvation of souls; in the temporal order, world peace. The practice of the devotions is a means of obtaining the graces necessary to achieve these ends.

Therefore, the practice of the Fatima devotions ought to lead to continual conversion from sin and growth in virtue in our own lives and in the lives of others, as well as progress toward peace in the world. This is the reason why the apostolate encourages participation in formation programs along with the practice of the Fatima devotions. World Apostolate of Fatima Prayer Cells are one example of the incorporation of formation into the practice of devotion.

## OBSTACLES TO THE PRACTICE OF THE DEVOTION

### TOO MUCH, TOO SOON

During the decades of the 1940's and 1950's the practice of all of the Fatima devotions was encouraged by the Church and widespread. Beginning in mid-1960-69 and until the pontificate of Blessed John Paul II, an unfortunate devaluation of Marian piety and devotion occurred, not on the part of the Church officially, but on the part of myriads of theologians, clergy and lay faithful who misread the intent of the Second Vatican Council. In addition and for the same reason, the teaching of the "content" of the Faith disappeared from both the pulpits and in the classrooms of our Catholic schools. Consequently, most Catholics under the age of fifty today have never heard of Fatima, don't know what a rosary is much less how to pray it, have never heard of a scapular, have no idea

what is meant by the “Real Presence” of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, practically never go to confession, and have an understanding of Mary’s role in salvation that is non-Catholic. In addition, and fundamental to Fatima devotions, the need of reparation for sin does not even occur to most people today because, as Blessed John Paul II frequently lamented there has been a loss of the sense of sin in the world today.

How can we expect people deficient in each of these prerequisites to begin cultivating devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary with the practice of this devotion? The same is true with regard to all of Our Lady’s Fatima requests. We need to begin at a much more fundamental level and, as they are aided by the graces they receive in small things, guide them gradually toward this devotion.

### A SCRUPULOUS DISPOSITION TOWARD INSIGNIFICANT DETAIL

Far too many people for too many years have been either deterred from even attempting the practice of this devotion, or, once having started and encountering a difficulty associated with one or another of the details of its requirements, quit. They quit because they’ve been given the misguided impression that Heaven is hovering over them monitoring every minute detail, ready to disqualify them and strip them of its promise on any occasion of the slightest variance.

On the contrary, this devotion, along with all of Fatima, has been entrusted to the Church. Church discipline and pastoral counsel operate in a manner reflective of God’s love and mercy. A long standing canonical principle which expresses this love and mercy goes like this: Favorable things are to be given a broad interpretation, while odious ones are to receive a strict interpretation. In asking for the practice of this de-

vation Heaven is expressing its desire, first and foremost, for a disposition of mind and heart which moves one to strive to please God by making reparation for sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The details of its practice are in no way of an odious nature. We must not be harder on ourselves or on others than Jesus is.

### A LIFE-LONG PRACTICE, NOT MERELY FIVE FIRST SATURDAYS FOR OURSELVES

Jesus taught that the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind and soul, and the second is like unto it – love your neighbor as you love yourself. On these two commandments depends the whole law and the prophets. The most common, everyday way we honor the first commandment is in keeping the second. Genuine Christian love is an act of the will in which we rank the attainment of the highest good of our beloved [others] above that of our own – that we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others.



Jesus said our salvation required that we deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. In other words, we are to imitate His life. Since the essence of His Incarnation, life, death and resurrection is sacrifice of Self for the sake of those He loves [us], we fail unless we make the salvation of the souls of others a high priority. If we do this, we need not be concerned about our own salvation.



To make five first Saturdays for ourselves to obtain the promise and then stop would be to neglect our responsibility in genuine Christian love for the salvation of the souls of our neighbors which would be inconsistent with the second greatest commandment.

Our motivation in the practice of this devotion should not be merely the promise associated with it. Rather, we should practice it all of our lives for the sake of the souls of our neighbors as well as our own. Our Lady told us that souls are being lost to hell because there is no one to make reparation for their sins. She implores us on their behalf. How can we deny her?

### AN INDIVIDUAL DEVOTION WITH NO COMMUNAL REQUIREMENTS

Many people labor under the misguided notion that, unless they can find a parish which conducts First Saturday Devotion, they cannot practice it themselves. While there are parishes which promote and provide for its practice by many individuals desirous and many people avail themselves of the opportunity, it is not really the parish conducting the devotion. It is, rather, individuals taking advantage of the provisions made.

The confession is always individual. The Holy Communion is always individual even though the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass itself has a communal dimension. The praying of five decades of the rosary can be done with others or individually. Keeping Our Lady company for fifteen minutes while meditating on the mysteries of the rosary can be done with others, although this



tends to interfere with the intimacy with us Our Lady desires.

## Q & A

### THE HOLY COMMUNION

**What if I cannot receive Holy Communion until the time of my parish's vigil Mass because there is no Saturday morning Mass there or at any church near my home?**

Saturday is a twenty-four hour period of time which begins and ends at midnight. A Communion of Reparation received during any Mass [or outside Mass] between midnight and midnight is received on Saturday, thereby fulfilling the Communion requirement.

**Must I attend Mass again on Sunday if my Communion of Reparation was received during a Mass of Anticipation during the Saturday vigil?**

No. The request is to receive Holy Communion, not to attend Mass. The fact that the Church grants fulfillment of the Sunday obligation to those who attend Masses of Anticipation during a Saturday vigil has no bearing whatever on the practice of this devotion.

**What if I work on Saturday evening, am sick, or some other circumstance prevents me from receiving Holy Communion until Sunday?**

In accord with the last paragraph under the section heading "Obstacles to the practice of the devotion" above, those who cannot receive on Saturday may do so on the Sunday following.

### THE CONFESSION

**What if I can't confess on Saturday?**

When Lucia asked Jesus if it might be valid to go to confession within eight days

He told her yes, and that it could be even longer still so long as they are in a state of grace when they receive Him and have the intention of making reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. She then asked about those who might forget to make the intention and was told they could do so at their next Confession, taking advantage of the first opportunity to confess. So, if you can't confess on the first Saturday itself, do so when you can.



## THE ROSARY

**Must I pray the rosary in church?**

No. It is always nice to be in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament, and many people therefore pray the rosary right before or after Mass, sometimes privately and sometimes as a group. But the rosary may be prayed almost anywhere.

**What if I forget the rosary on Saturday, or fall asleep late at night before finishing it, have I blown it? Must I start all over again?**

We refer you again to the last paragraph under the section heading "Obstacles to the practice of the devotion," and then especially to *A scrupulous disposition toward insignificant detail* under the heading "Obstacles to the practice of the devotion."

Forgetfulness is a human frailty which afflicts some more than others. Although there is a difference between forgetting and circumstantial inability, and one who continually forgets is seemingly not taking the devotion very seriously. A slip of the mind or fall into dreamland now and then is certainly acceptable in consideration of Jesus' disposition toward those who forget to make the intention at a later confession as articulated in the question under "The Confession" above.

Those who pray their rosary during the day on first Saturday rather than waiting until bedtime, or, if at bedtime, kneeling rather than lying in bed, avoid the danger of falling asleep. But should you fall asleep on Saturday, simply pray your first Saturday rosary on Sunday in addition to your daily Sunday rosary.

## KEEPING OUR LADY COMPANY FOR 15 MINUTES WHILE MEDITATING ON THE MYSTERIES

**Since it takes about fifteen minutes to pray the rosary, could this request not be fulfilled by saying a second rosary?**

"Keeping Our Lady company" is the essence of this request. When we keep someone company we are in their presence and usually conversing. There is an intimacy. Since the twenty mysteries of the rosary are the highlights of her life and that of her Son, she seems to be asking us to converse and commiserate about them with her. Meditation on the mysteries is a means of keeping us focused and providing opportunity for us to be moved by supernatural impulses to conversation with our Heavenly Mother. So, while the answer is not necessarily a flat no, praying a second rosary is ill-advised.

**Someone from among the group with whom I practice the devotion reads meditations on the mysteries aloud for fifteen minutes, and we all gain many wonderful insights. Is this an acceptable way to fulfill this request?**

Our Lady will be present among a group if she is invited, and she will definitely be pleased with what the group is doing. However, the gaining of insights is more akin to the acquisition of knowledge than to engaging in the kind of intimate relationship Our Lady seeks in asking us to "keep her company." So again, while the answer is not necessarily a flat no, we suggest it

would be more appropriate to gain insights from oral reading of meditations in another venue, and reserve this time for an intimate heart to heart conversation with Our Lady.

**Is it true that one must obtain a dispensation or permission from a priest whenever circumstances make it necessary to do one or more of these things on a day other than the First Saturday itself?**

No. One English translation from Portuguese taken from the May 29-30, 1930 discussion between Sister Lucia and Jesus is rendered as follows: Sister Lucia – “*And if one could not accomplish all these obligations on Saturday, would Sunday not do?*”<sup>7</sup> Jesus – “*The practice of this devotion will be equally accepted on the Sunday following the first Saturday, when, for just motives, My priests will allow it.*”<sup>8</sup>

In his book, *The Message of Fatima for Today*, Father Andrew Apostoli, C.F.R. paraphrases Jesus’ words as follows: “... *those who could not accomplish all the requirements of the devotion on Saturdays could do so on the Sundays following, if their priests were willing to make allowances for just reasons.*”<sup>9</sup>

It is instructive to note that, in a letter Sister Lucia wrote to Father Goncalves responding to his question about the acceptability of Sunday when Saturday is not possible, she wrote: “*It will be equally acceptable the practice of this devotion on the Sunday following the first Saturday, when My priests, for just reason, so grants it to souls.*” Notice that “*Will allow it*” is here expressed as “*grants it.*”<sup>10</sup>

Sister Lucia is writing an account of

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7 Lucia Speaks, p 34

8 Ibid

9 Fatima For Today, p 157

10 Documents on Fatima & the Memoirs of Sister Lucia, p 284

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what Jesus told her as closely as she could recall it. Father Apostoli is writing with the mind and heart of the Church to which Fatima is entrusted. Some well-meaning but misguided souls think the words “allow it” in Sister Lucia’s memoirs allude to a granting of permission or a need for an official dispensation. Father Apostoli’s words “willing to make allowances” obviously allude to a provision of means and opportunity.

Sister Lucia always deferred to the mind and authority of the Church in all matters pertaining to Fatima. In her book “Calls From the Message of Fatima” she expresses her disposition in the following words: “*I only say what I think, and what I have come to understand about it all. I willingly leave all interpretation of the meaning of the Message to Holy Church, because it pertains to the Church to do so; hence, I humbly and willingly submit myself to whatever it may wish to say or to correct, amend or declare.*”<sup>11</sup>

The apostolate recommends the adoption of Sister Lucia’s disposition, and discourages the contacting of priests to seek dispensations in these regards.

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11 Calls From the Message of Fatima, pp 131-132

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