

A Reading from the Holy Gospel According to John,

There was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.

When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." [And] Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim.

Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it.

And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.”

Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Never underestimate the **powerful intercession** of the Blessed Virgin Mary. You and I do not and that is **why we**

are here tonight to honor Mary under the title of Our Lady of Fatima and to ask for her powerful intercession, on this special occasion – **the 100th anniversary** of her third apparition to three shepherd children: Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta.

The passage from the **Gospel according to John** that we just heard is an **example** of Mary's powerful intercession. Her **concern** is for a **couple**, about to be embarrassed at their wedding because they ran out of wine. The **result** her motherly love and care for them not only saves this newly married couple from embarrassment, but **leads them and the people around**

them, who have started to follow her Son, **closer to him**;
reminding them and all of us: *“Do whatever he tells you.”*

The story of the **apparitions at Fatima** echo the **same message**, *“Do whatever he tells you,”* in particular with regard to Christ’s **saving mission**, the mission of establishing the **Kingdom of God**, the place where God’s will is done, where sin and death are no more.

In fact, speaking about the message of Fatima in 1991, **Pope St. John Paul II** said, *“Mary’s message at Fatima can be synthesized in these clear, initial words of Christ [at the start of his public ministry]: “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel (Mk 1:15).”* (Columbia

Magazine, May 2017, pg. 20)

On **two occasions**, I was blessed to **travel to Fatima**.

The first time was on a **college trip** to Spain and Portugal.

Fatima was not on our itinerary, but it just so happened to be an **optional day trip** from the hotel we were staying at and I took advantage of the opportunity to go.

On this first trip, I remember **being in awe** of the place itself and what happened there. I busied myself **taking pictures** of all the main attractions, **buying souvenirs** for myself and others at the many shops in town, and **lighting candles and saying prayers** for people back home, particularly those who asked for them. On this first trip, sadly, **I was a tourist**.

The **second time** I went to Fatima was when I went to **World Youth Day in Cologne**. It was part of our spiritual journey. Right after this trip I was **heading to the seminary**. So, I was a little **more mature, spiritually**. Instead of taking pictures and buying souvenirs, **I prayed**. Not a laundry list of requests as before, but **from my heart**, turning to the Blessed Mother and **asking her to help me** to be a humble and faithful servant of the Lord – like she was; **begging her to help me draw closer to the Lord** and to **do his will** in all things, especially by always **saying “yes”** to my vocation. On this trip I was not a tourist. **I was a pilgrim.**

And that, my friends, is the **point of the story and the message of Fatima** – **Not** to make us **tourists** who are fascinated by *what* happened 100 years ago, but to **make us pilgrims**, who turn to the **Blessed Mother** every day, asking for her **powerful intercession** to help us on our **journey** back to God, on our journey from this life to the next.

With this in mind, let us **begin our reflections on the third apparition** of the Blessed Mother to the three shepherd children: Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta.

On **May 5th, 1917**, **Pope Benedict XVI** began a nine-day **novena** to Our Lady of the Eucharist for an end to **World War I**. During this time, he prayed for **peace**. And

it was on May 13th, 1917 – the **ninth day** of the novena – that the Blessed Mother first **appeared** in Fatima.

To **prepare the children** for this miraculous experience, an **Angel of peace** appeared to them three times before Mary did, encouraging them to **pray, sacrifice, and offer up their sufferings** for the conversion of sinners.

Between May and October of 1917, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared **six times** in Fatima to the three children. The **first time**, in May, she was described by them as a *“beautiful lady.”* And, she asked them to come the 13th day of **every month** for six months in a row. Only after this would she tell them what she wanted of them.

But before she departed from them Mary asked the three children to **offer themselves** to God and to **bear all the sufferings** he would send them as an **act of reparation** for the sins by which he is offended, and in supplication for the **conversion of sinners**. Mary also promised the three children, that in the midst of their suffering, God would be their **comfort**. Finally, she told them to **pray the rosary** every day for peace.

The **second apparition** took place on June 13th. By now, **people started gathering** with the children because **word** of the first apparition **spread**. It was during this second apparition that Mary first mentioned her son's

wish to establish **devotion to her Immaculate Heart**. And she promised **salvation** to those who embraced it.

The **third apparition** took place on **July 13th, 1917**.

One hundred years ago, today! This was the **most informative** of all the apparitions. **Thousands of people** were present. During this apparition, the Blessed Mother revealed to the three children the so-called **secret of Fatima**, comprised of three parts. First, they saw a **horrifying vision of hell** and within it the souls of the damned and the demons. Mary said, "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**."

The **second part** of the secret had to do with promoting certain **Marian devotions**. Mary spoke of a **terrible war** (in reference to World War II) that would break out “if people did not cease offending God.” Yet, she said, “In the end, my **Immaculate Heart will triumph.**” She also promised that **Russia** would be **consecrated** to her and be **converted**; and a period of **peace** would be granted to the world.

This, in fact, did happen on **March 25th, 1984**. Pope St. John Paul II, along with all Catholic bishops **consecrated Russia and the whole world** to her Immaculate Heart. And on **December 26th, 1991** the **Soviet Union finally**

collapsed and the door to **new evangelization** was opened.

The **third part** of the secret of Fatima was described as a **vision of a “bishop dressed in white,”** going up a steep mountain **toward a cross** while praying amid the bodies of **martyrs** along the way. Upon reaching the summit, he fell to the ground, **shot to death** by soldiers. **Others** were also shot at by soldiers, and **angels** gathered the blood of the martyrs.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, when he was prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, said that **this vision was filled with figurative language** and therefore could be interpreted **symbolically**. Accordingly,

this vision, taken as a whole, **represents the 20th century as “a century of martyrs, a century of suffering and persecution for the Church, a century of World Wars”**

(Columbia, May 2017, Pg. 22).

In the **remaining apparitions**, Mary asked for a **chapel** to be built in her honor, she revealed herself as the **“Lady of the Rosary,”** and during the last apparition on October 13th, 1917, approximately 70,000 people witnessed the **sun giving off beautiful colors**, like that of a rainbow, and **dancing** in the sky, a **sign** that the Blessed Virgin **Mary had indeed appeared** to the three children. As a result, many **people converted** and **some were cured**.

So much **more can be said to describe the apparitions** of our Lady of Fatima, in particular what was

revealed to Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta during the third apparition. For the purpose of our reflections, it is **important to recognize** that during her apparitions, particularly the third one, **our Lady simply reaffirmed the teaching of the Church** on: heaven, hell, purgatory, the Trinity, angels and demons, the Eucharist, sin, the necessity of **prayer and penance**, the power of her **intercession**, the importance of the **Rosary and the brown scapular**, the **love** that the hearts of Jesus and Mary have for us, and the **power** of her Immaculate Heart.

So, what are we to make of all of this? If we remain at the level of fascination by *what happened* one hundred years ago, then you and I become **mere tourists**, like I was

on my first trip to Fatima – at a distance, taking pictures, buying souvenirs.

But, if we take the **message of Fatima to heart and live it, then we become pilgrims** – inviting the Blessed Mother to accompany us on our journey back to God, on our journey from this life to the next.

How? **Bishop Cunningham** put it so beautifully in his column on the 100th Anniversary of Fatima. Quoting Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, he said, **“The message of Fatima ‘is a call to faith, a call to conversion, and to peace and hope.”**

Pope Francis recently went to Fatima to remind all of us today of these **four calls** – faith, conversion, peace, and hope.

Faith and conversion because of **sin**. Peace and hope because, as Pope Francis said in his homily during the canonization of Francisco and Jacinta, **“We have a Mother!”** Under her mantle of light we are **safe**. We are reminded that **God does not abandon us**. Rather, his **light dwells within us** and protects us.

As **pilgrims**, tonight we **embrace the powerful intercession** of Our Lady of Fatima to **help us do the three things** that she asked the children to do when she appeared to them: (1) Pray the **rosary** everyday for peace,

(2) **Consecrate** ourselves to her **Immaculate Heart**, wearing the brown scapular as a sign of this, and (3) **Offer up** our daily duties and sufferings for our own sins and the sins of the world.

Fatima reminds us that **hell is a reality**. But, so too is **heaven**. “When we remain **close to her maternal heart**, Mary brings us to her Son” (Cunningham) as she did at the **Wedding Feast of Cana**, reminding us, “*Do whatever he tells you,*” because in him we find the **fullness of life and love, the fullness of hope and peace**, and the gift of **salvation**.

Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us!

*Source for information on apparitions:
“At Fatima, Our Heavenly Mother Said...” by Catherine Moran*