



# Relationship with GOD

More than Just SUNDAY

## A Peace Plan from Heaven

May 13 will mark the 100th Anniversary of the apparitions of Our Blessed Mother Mary to three shepherd children in the small village of Fatima in Portugal. Taking place in 1917, Our Lady appeared six times to Lucia, 9, and her cousins Francisco, 8, and his sister Jacinta, 6, on the 13th of each month between May and October.

It is important to make a distinction between public Revelation, the definitive teachings of Christ through the Catholic Church and “private” revelation, such as apparitions of Mary. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “Throughout the ages, there have been so-called ‘private’ revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history” (Paragraph 67). In other words, Our Blessed Mother is intentionally drawing our attention to a particular aspect of the faith that we believe, but in which we may have grown lax. Our renewed practice is critically important in our personal lives and for the whole world.

No private revelation has been shown more approval, by more popes, than that of Fatima, both by their words and by their official visits. The upcoming canonization of Jacinta and Francisco is arguably the most powerful indication of that approval.

Our Lady appeared to the three children in 1917 against the backdrop of the First World War, which had introduced Europe to horrific forms of violence. The following year, the Communist revolution rocked Russia, and the next six decades would see the people of that country and of the rest of Eastern Europe oppressed by militant atheistic governments.

Mary reassured the children in a gentle voice, saying “Do not be afraid; I will do you no harm.” She told Lucia, “I come from Heaven.” She asked the children if they would “pray the Rosary every day, to bring peace to the world and an end to the war.”

On June 13, as Mary appeared to the three children, Lucia asked, “What do you want me to do?” The Lady responded, “Continue to pray the Rosary every day and after the Glory Be of each mystery, add these words: ‘O my Jesus, forgive us our sins! Save us from the fire of Hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy.’”

Before the apparitions began, the children were devout in the Catholic Faith and spent time in prayer each day. While allowing the sheep to graze, they were committed to praying the Rosary at noon. However, being “ordinary” children and desiring to play games every chance they could, they began praying the “quick Rosary.” They would pray the first two words of each prayer: Our Father, Hail Mary, Hail Mary..., in order to be as brief as possible. When Our Lady explained that many individuals go to Hell because there are none to pray and make sacrifices for them, the children understood the importance of the Rosary and its wonderful power to bring souls to God.

In 1917, Mary spoke of a second World War that would take place if people did not cease offending God. This message that Our Lady gave to the children of Fatima was for the whole world. As we know, that war took place and sadly millions of lives were lost. The people of that time did not heed Mary’s warning.

God loves us so much that He desires for us to know Him and receive His personal love. We offend God when we don’t make time for Him each day in prayer.

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Praying the Rosary is essential because we think about events in the life of Jesus and Mary. We encounter Christ through quietly thinking about how He faced various situations in life, which prove to be helpful in our own circumstances. Further, we are transformed by praying the words of three profound prayers: the Our Father, which Jesus gave us; the Glory Be which gives glory to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and the Hail Mary which asks for her intercession as the Mother of God. If praying the Rosary each day seems too daunting, start out by praying a decade, and a Rosary will be completed every five days.

As we anticipate the 100th Anniversary beginning on May 13, it seems that we are facing a similar situation, with the real danger of war. Let us heed the request of Our Lady to pray the Rosary. We can trust that this Peace Plan from Heaven, first given in 1917, can still be put into action today and bear the results that Our Lady promised to the three children at Fatima!

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