

What is devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary?

If someone were to ask you what devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means, would you be able to answer them? Would you think it important to do so? Do you know yourself what this devotion is?

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Introduction

I think we should all reflect on these questions. The dramatic words of Our Lady, on June 13, 1917, to Lucy, one of the seers of Fatima, incite us to do so. It was the second apparition of Our Lady at Fatima. At this point, the Blessed Virgin had just promised that Jacinta and Francisco would soon go to heaven but it would not be so soon for Lucy. She had a mission to accomplish. Our Lady, then spoke these three sentences: "Jesus wishes to make use of you in order to make me known and loved. He wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. To whoever embraces this devotion, I promise salvation; those souls will be cherished by God, as flowers placed by me to adorn His throne."

The third sentence is the most striking for us. Our Lady promises salvation to those who embrace the devotion to her Immaculate Heart. That should be enough to interest any soul to discover the essence of this devotion. But what is more, Our Lady says that those souls who have this devotion will be as flowers placed by her before the throne of God. Could there be any better result of our life here on earth, than to bathe in the presence of God and please Him for eternity?

Our Blessed Mother says that those souls devoted to her Immaculate Heart will one day be united in the company of great saints like St. Thérèse the Little Flower. Since this is true, considering the Church's approval of the Fatima Message, it is absolutely necessary for each one of us that we understand what is meant by devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This is especially true for us in modern times, as is clear from the second sentence in the quote above. Jesus "wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart." Clearly, that means it was a devotion which was not present in the Church up until Fatima. God knew that it would not be needed until our times, and thus He awaited the opportune moment to establish it.

Our sources: In this article, without having recourse to any other sources than Fatima, we would like to discover what this devotion is, in order to practice it and live it, and thus, save our souls. We would like to do this in two parts:

1. The basic meaning of this devotion according to the six apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima.
2. Additional clarifications, thanks to the apparitions of the Angel of Portugal and the apparitions of Pontevedra, Tuy, and Rianjo.

Part I: Devotion to the Immaculate Heart according to the Fatima apparitions

Consecration and Reparation: If we are to become flowers before the Throne of God, we must realize in what this devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary consists. The common consensus from the interpretation of the Fatima Apparitions is that this devotion is very simple, and in fact could be reduced to three words: "Consecration and Reparation". I say three words because the "and" is an equally important word as both Consecration "and" Reparation are necessary for this devotion. We will see, however, that both are really themselves quite straightforward, and may be lived by the most simple child, as they were first by the three children of Fatima. We will see what Consecration and Reparation mean, and the practices associated with them in this devotion.

Consecration

In the first apparition on May 13, 1917, the Blessed Virgin Mary asked the children a fundamental question upon which all the succeeding graces they were to receive, depended. Their response may be compared to Our Lady's "Fiat" (May it be done to me according to Thy Word) at the Annunciation. The question is extremely simple, so is the response. Our Lady asked: "Are you willing to offer yourselves to God to bear all the sufferings He wants to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and for the conversion of sinners?" "Yes, we are willing." There you have the very substance of the devotion to the Immaculate Heart. In Our Lady's question is included both the idea of Conse-

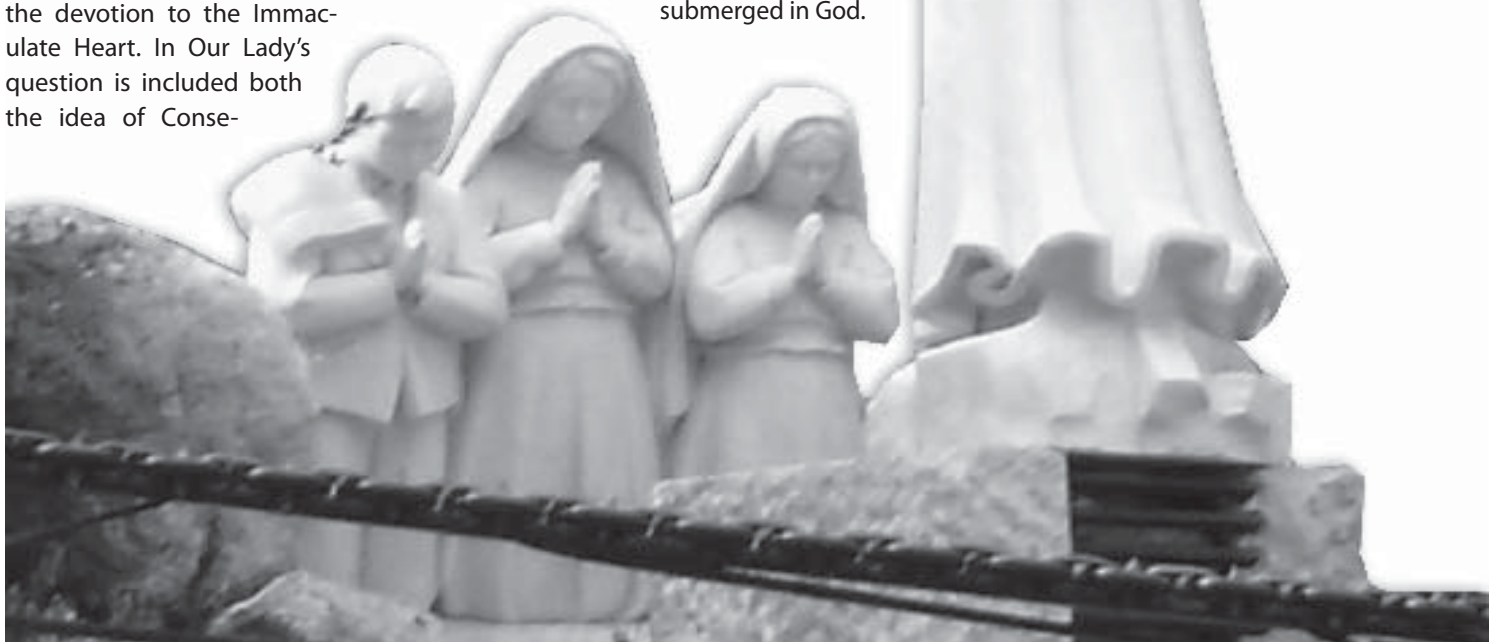
cration and Reparation. She is asking what is most dear to her heart from these children.

1. That they completely offer themselves to God. (Consecration).

2. That they do so as an act of Reparation to God, (she will explain for which sins later), and for the conversion of sinners. These are the two intentions dearest to the Heart of the Blessed Virgin. The Immaculate Heart has not yet been mentioned by Our Lady of Fatima but we have the substance of the devotion. It is on June 13th that the children were formerly introduced to the Immaculate Heart. When Lucy almost balked at the suffering which lay before her to propagate this devotion on earth, with the

words: "Am I to stay here alone?" The Blessed Virgin replied: "No, my daughter. Are you suffering a great deal? Do not lose heart, I will never forsake you!

My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God." It was at the moment when she pronounced those last words that she opened her hands and communicated to the children the reflection of an immense light. In it they saw themselves as submerged in God.



Lucy declares: "Jacinta and Francisco appeared to be in the part of that light which elevated itself to Heaven, and I in the part which spread itself on the earth. In the palm of the right hand of Our Lady there was a Heart, surrounded by thorns which seemed to pierce it. We understood that it was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity, which demanded reparation." "It seems to me that on that day, that reflection of light had as a principal goal to instill in us a knowledge and a special love towards the Immaculate Heart of Mary... Since that day, we felt in our hearts a more ardent love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary." We may say that at that moment, the children understood the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Practices related to Consecration

The first aspect of this devotion, that is, Consecration, may be linked to certain practices dear to Our Lady:

1. The daily Rosary;
2. The wearing of the Brown Scapular;
3. The Morning Offering.

The Rosary: There was no request more repeated at Fatima, apart from Reparation, as that of the prayer of the Rosary. In each of the six apparitions, Our Lady asked the children to pray the Rosary, or to continue praying the Rosary (5 decades – according to the Portuguese). It would be redundant to give all the quotes here. In all except the September apparition, she used the expression "pray the Rosary every day". Finally, she solemnly called herself by the name of Our Lady of the Rosary on October 13, 1917. Thus for one truly consecrated to the Immaculate Heart, the Rosary is the most basic prayer of one's daily life. This is not to say, it is considered greater than the Mass, it is simply, something one cannot miss, on any day.

The Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel: Another sign of Consecration to Our Lady is the wearing of the Brown Scapular. This was indicated by Our Lady who appeared during the miracle of the sun on October 13, 1917, as Our Lady of Mount Carmel. This linked the wearing of the brown scapular and the devotion to the Immaculate Heart. In this age of immodesty and human respect, the scapular is a special garment of consecration for men and women. The strings of the brown scapular usually show up when wearing an immodest garment. Blessed Jacinta warned that:

"the sins that bring most souls to Hell are the sins of the flesh. Certain fashions are going to be introduced which will offend Our Lord very much. Those who serve God should not follow these fashions. The Church has no fashions: Our Lord is always the same." While some may be tempted to remove the scapular instead of dressing modestly, truly consecrated souls never hide their devotion to Mary nor remove it, to make themselves more at home in the world.

The Morning Offering: While some of these practices may seem merely external, it is the spirit in which they are practiced, which gives them life. This spirit is laid out well in the Morning Offering prayer, which contains in a nutshell, the entire devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This prayer was not given by Our Lady but it was formulated according to Fatima while the Church still held to Traditional practices. I give it here as we find it on page 9 of the book, *Christian Warfare*: O my God, in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, (here kiss your brown scapular as a sign of your consecration), I offer Thee the Precious Blood of Jesus from all the altars throughout the world, joining with It the offering of my every thought, word and action of this day. O my Jesus, I desire today to gain every indulgence and merit I can and I offer them, together with myself, to Mary Immaculate, that she may best apply them to the interests of Thy most Sacred Heart. Precious Blood of Jesus, save us! Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us! Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us!

Notice for the moment, how in this prayer, we offer our every thought, word and action of the day to God in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We have therefore offered everything we have. There is nothing closer to total consecration than this. If we are offering all our thoughts words and actions, we must take care to do them well, so as not to offer a lame victim to God.

The second phrase illustrates the act of Consecration even more clearly: O my Jesus, I desire today to gain every indulgence and merit I can and I offer them, together with myself, to Mary Immaculate, that she may best apply them to the interests of Thy most Sacred Heart. Our merits and the indulgences we gain are our spiritual property, by this, we have just given all to Mary Immaculate and renounced our rights.

Consecration of Russia

The above prayer then summarizes well, the aspect of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary contained in devotion to the Immaculate Heart. But there is a public act of Consecration requested by Our Lady also: the Consecration of Russia. On July 13th, Our Lady of the Rosary declared: "To prevent this, [war, famine, persecutions] I shall come to ask for the Consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays." It would only be at Tuy, on June 13, 1929, that Our Lady would come back and request the Consecration of Russia. But already, we see that the spirit of Fatima is not only that we should consecrate ourselves to the Immaculate Heart, but countries, cities and enterprises should also make this Consecration. We see also the importance of praying that the Pope, in union with the Bishops of the world, consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Thus, the importance of our present Rosary Crusade.

We have seen then the first aspect of the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary: that of consecration both individual and private. But there is another aspect of this devotion, no less essential and without which it cannot exist: Reparation.

Reparation

We cannot deceive ourselves and think we are truly devoted to the Immaculate Heart, no matter how many Rosaries we say, how scrupulously we wear her scapular, nor how many pictures we may have of her hanging in our home or our workplace, if we do not make Reparation. Reparation is the fuel for the love of the Immaculate Heart, without it our devotion is dry and sterile. Our Lady clearly indicated Reparation as an essential mark of devotion to her Immaculate Heart at Fatima. Remember on May 13th, the Blessed Mother stipulated the first conditions for further graces: "Are you willing to offer yourselves to God to bear all the sufferings He wants to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and for the conversion of sinners?"

The prayer of Reparation: On July 13th, Our Lady indicated to the little children how they were to make reparation, by a very simple prayer. "Sac-

rifice yourselves for sinners, and say often to Jesus, especially whenever you make a sacrifice: O Jesus, it is for love of Thee, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the offences committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

This prayer has three parts: 1. It affirms our love of Jesus; 2. It requests the conversion of sinners (an intention very dear to the Heart of the Blessed Virgin); 3. It repairs specially those sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Which sins these are, will become clearer at Pontevedra. We remark that Our Blessed Mother wants us to say this little prayer often whenever we make a sacrifice. Many Catholics, make their morning offering, but few offer their actions during the day to keep the fire of that offering alive. Many see their lives as a constant cross and sacrifice, but fail to offer individual actions to Jesus, and formulate a supernatural intention. This prayer could be said, when we have to brush our teeth, wash the floor, stop at a red light (or obey some other civil law), or when we have to put up with some one disagreeable, or do anything in our duty of state, which we do not particularly like. The possibilities for sacrifice are innumerable even in a very ordinary life. Our Lady wants this sacrifice and reparation. It was after she taught the three children this prayer that the Blessed Virgin showed them Hell and 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 prayer: "O my Jesus": After enunciating the three secrets of Fatima, Our Blessed Mother taught the children another prayer of reparation to be recited after the decades of the Rosary: "When you pray the Rosary, say after each mystery: O my Jesus, forgive us [our sins], save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need [of Thy mercy]."

Reparation and the conversion of sinners: Mary, Our Mother, insisted on the aspect of reparation for the conversion of sinners, because her Heart suffered immensely under the cross at Calvary to save them. Thus we understand her declaration of August 19, 1917 related by Lucy: "Then looking more sad, Our Lady said: "Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to Hell because they have no one to make sacrifices and pray for them."

Sacrifices: The children, were very impressed by this request and made all kinds of sacrifices. Lucy relates one in particular: "Some days after [the apparition of August 19], we were following a path with our sheep and I found a piece of rope which had fallen from a cart. I took it and amused myself by attaching it to one of my arms. I did not take long to notice that the rope hurt me. I then said to my cousins: 'Look, that hurts! We could attach it around our waist and offer this sacrifice to God.' The poor children accepted my idea immediately and we then decided to share that rope among the three of us. A sharp stone, rubbing on another, served as a knife. Whether because of the size and roughness of the rope, or because sometimes we squeezed it too much, that instrument made us suffer horribly. Sometimes Jacinta shed some tears because of the discomfort which the rope caused her. I told her on several occasions to take it off, and she replied, 'No! I want to offer this sacrifice to Our Lord in reparation and for the conversion of sinners.'"

Our Lord took note of their sacrifices and even the rope. Thus, Our Lady would declare on September 13th: "God is satisfied with your sacrifices, but He does not want you to sleep with the rope. Wear it only during the day." We are perhaps terrified by such generosity, but Our Blessed Mother later told Sister Lucy, no doubt in order to ease the fear of faint-hearted souls: "The sacrifice required of every person is the fulfillment of the duties of his state in life and the observance of God's law." Therefore, God does not require extraordinary sacrifices of most souls, but only that which pertains to the keeping of their duty of state and the Ten Commandments. Finally, on October 13th, with a sorrowful air, the Blessed Virgin warned: "Men must not offend the Lord Our God any more, for He is already too much offended!" It is clear, the message of Fatima urges us to repair our offenses already committed, and thus avoid committing new ones. A soul in the business of reparation, is rarely one involved in destruction. Those, however, who have no care for reparation, easily fall into new offenses.

Practices of Reparation

The essential practices of reparation given at Fatima are the First Saturdays of Reparation, and to offer often the sacrifices contained in our duty of state with the simple ejaculatory prayer: "O Jesus, it is for love of Thee, for the conversion of sin-

ners, and in reparation for the offences committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary." If we do that we can say we are making reparation like the children of Fatima, if not, we may wonder if our reparation is up to par.

Fatima points

If I may add, a personal reflection, we might consider these acts of sacrifice and ejaculatory prayers, as Fatima points. Many credit cards today offer a point system for rewards. Some companies offer points just for purchasing their products. Gaining Fatima points could be an incentive to offer various actions throughout the day with the above ejaculatory prayer. Fatima points earn for us true devotion to the Immaculate Heart. Have you earned your Fatima points today?

Communion of Reparation

The second reparatory practice, which could equally earn such Fatima points, is "the Communion of Reparation of the First Saturdays". It was announced, but not made explicit, on July 13, 1917 by Our Lady of the Rosary. The Blessed Virgin did not yet speak of Five First Saturdays. That was reserved for the apparition of Pontevedra. Nevertheless, souls who are truly consecrated to Our Lady and want to repair will not limit their reparation to five Saturdays in their life. They will make Reparation every day, and try to renew it more solemnly once a month on the first Saturday, if possible; by a Communion and Confession of Reparation. Such was the practice of Sister Lucy who was promised heaven by Our Blessed Mother and had the spirit of true devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Thus, we have given, from the very apparitions of Fatima the two essential aspects of devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so conducive to salvation: Consecration and Reparation. With these two pillars, generous souls will be able to easily scale the heights of sanctity and one day become flowers before the Throne of God.

In Part II, we hope to show how these aspects of Consecration and Reparation were illustrated by the apparitions of the Angel of Portugal, and those of Our Lady at Pontevedra, Tuy and Rianjo.