



BISHOP'S REFLECTION
Special Edition
Third Apparition of Fatima - July 13, 1917

**“Our Lady showed us a great sea of fire which seemed to be under the earth.
Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form....”**

(Lúcia dos Santos, Visionary of Fátima)

The terrifying and horrific vision of hell, which the Shepherd Children witnessed, “lasted but an instant.” Lúcia tells us: “We looked up at Our Lady, who said to us, so kindly and so sadly: ‘You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. When you pray the Rosary, say after each mystery: *O my Jesus, forgive us, save us from the fire of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those who are most in need.*’”

Our Lady instructed the Little Shepherds: “Sacrifice yourselves for sinners, and say many times, especially whenever you make some sacrifice: ‘O Jesus, it is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.’”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

To be evangelized is to come to know, and believe, that Jesus is the Christ. To be evangelized is to have a personal relationship with the Son of God who gave his life for your salvation. Through his life, passion, death and resurrection, he has freed you from sin and the binding force of the Enemy.

He has set you free from sin and eternal death, hell, through the Sacrament of Baptism. This saving and evangelizing action of being set free can be found in the Sacrament of Penance and in the celebration of Holy Eucharist, the Mass. When we encounter the Risen Christ in the Sacraments, we are to be reminded that Jesus confronts sin and frees us from it - if we are repentant.

Our present experience of upheaval and uncertainty, due to the pandemic, civil unrest, lawlessness and confusion have created a sense of “dis-ease.” All is the fallout, the effects, of Original Sin. It’s time for all of us to come to terms with our *personal* sin which contributes to *communal* sin and, in turn, can have a negative and destructive impact on our society and upon the world which we are witnessing today. Throughout this world, as life goes on, if we realize it or not, time is steadily moving forward toward its end, and with it, the Coming of the Lord - our final destiny: Heaven or Hell.

In the meantime, as we keep this in mind, St. Cyril of Jerusalem has something to say in regard to this: “The present is a time for the acknowledgment of sins. Acknowledge what you have done, in word or deed, by night and day. Acknowledge your sins at a time of God’s favor(mercy), and on the day of salvation you will receive the treasures of heaven. Wash yourself clean, so that you may hold a richer store of grace. Sins are forgiven equally for all, but communion in the Holy Spirit is



given in the measure of each one's faith. If you have done little work, you will receive little; if you have achieved a great deal, great will be your reward."

St. Cyril continues to remind us: "If you have a grudge against anyone, forgive him. You are drawing near to receive forgiveness for your own sins; you must yourself forgive those who have sinned against you." As mentioned in Sacred Scripture: "He who conceals his sins will not prosper; he who confesses and renounces them will find mercy. If we acknowledge our sins, then God who is faithful and just, will forgive us."

We find in the words of Holy Scripture: "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and put a new and steadfast spirit within me." St. Augustine states: "For a clean heart to be created, the unclean one must be crushed. We should be displeased with ourselves when we commit sin, for sin is displeasing to God." So, we should cry out as St. Augustine mentions: "Heal me, O God, with the ointment of repentance."

Evangelization, freedom in the Risen Christ and deliverance from that which binds us, is to be found in the good news of Jesus, his Gospel. It is in the gospels that we come to know that: "The flesh - that part of you that is attracted to sin - has no more power over you. Because you have been baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection, you have died and risen with him. You have died to sin and no longer owe it any allegiance. Raised up with Christ, you now have a way out when temptation arises. To belong to Christ, one must have the spirit of Christ dwelling within one's heart. If you, by the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Let his good news wash over you today: you are not bound to sin. You don't owe it anything," said Word Among Us.

During this summer, as we find ourselves in these challenging times, let us: "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel." In example of the Children of Fátima, let us work together as the Church of the New Evangelization. Let us, as we encounter Jesus in the Eucharist, be a *reparative* remedy to sin in our society as we offer our sacrifices and prayers for our unrepentant brothers and sisters; they whom Our Lady refers to, in her motherly and endearing words as: "poor" sinners.

In all of this, as we move forward living out the New Evangelization in our lives, and in our parishes, may we, in these times of fear and doubt, be reassured as Our Lady reassured Lúcia: "My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God." (July 13, 1917)

Our Lady of Fátima, pray us *poor sinners*.

In the Peace of Christ,

Bishop Cotta