

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This past Friday, October 13, we celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun in Fatima. When I started looking up Fatima, I couldn't find any help about how to celebrate this anniversary. Hmm... to create something just for our parish with no support?!!! Too much for me! I did two things right away: I put together a committee to brainstorm what to do, and I decided I needed to learn more about Fatima, so I started reading. The committee came up with some exceptional ideas, and so we had great activities and speakers throughout the year. I want to give a shout out to the committee and all the hard work they put into planning the events, as well as helping to execute them!!!! Thanks!

As I read and learned more about the apparitions at Fatima and Our Lady's message, I came to understand one thing even more than before: Our Lady desires, longs, *begs* for us to have a deeper, more intimate relationship with her Son, Jesus Christ! It's all about relationship! The apparitions, the "Secrets" of Fatima, all boil down to the truth that (as I've said before) "God wants to marry us." He is calling us to break away from those habits of actions, words and thoughts that hurt us, others, and our relationship with God. To live the message looks like this: 1) Conversion; 2) Prayer, specifically the daily rosary for peace; 3) Sacrifice; and 4) First Saturday Reparation.

First, **conversion**. We're called to repent, to convert, to turn away from sin. Sin, again, is NOT merely breaking the law ("whoops, I broke God's law... He must be so mad at me!"), it is hurting or breaking relationship with God. He gives us the 10 Commandments and the moral teaching of the Church not because He says, "Follow this, *or else!*" Rather, it is because we don't see clearly how we hurt our relationship with God, and He wants to make it clear to us... so we can stay close to Him! So we're called to turn away from our sin, and to live in ways that help us grow closer to God.

Second, **prayer**, especially the **daily rosary for peace**. Prayer does not help our relationship with God; it **IS** our relationship with God. Prayer is not about saying words (which sometimes we do and sometimes not), but about getting close to God, communicating with Him (which can happen in non-verbal ways). The rosary, which Our Lady many times has implored us to pray, draws us into this relationship. We take Mary by the hand, and walk *with her* through the Mysteries of God's love for us. By meditating on each of the Mysteries, Mary reveals the Heart of Jesus in more profound ways than we can grasp by our own intellect. As we get to know Jesus more, we get to love Him more... you have to know Him in order to love Him! Praying the rosary daily for peace, brings our hearts to unite closer to Jesus' Heart, who so longs for peace in our world, and in each of our hearts.

Third, **sacrifice**. When the Angel appeared to the children at Fatima (in 1916), he taught them how to sacrifice. He said to offer each part of their day to the Lord. That's it. (It wasn't until the children had the vision of Hell that they started actively looking for mortifications.) Remember that the word sacrifice comes from the Latin words *sacrum facere* – "to make holy." It is about making each part of our lives holy, by offering each part to God. The requirement of sacrifice is to offer what we already have – our sufferings, our burdens, our troubles... yes, and our joys, our consolations – everything to Jesus. Do you see how intimate Jesus wants to be with us, how this is all about relationship? He wants to be a part of everything we do! He wants to be with us always! He is so in love with us, He longs to be an intimate and integral part of our lives. He uses this gift of our sacrifices as a way to pour grace upon us and upon the world.

Finally, **First Saturday Communion of Reparation**. Our Lady, and then later Our Lord, appeared to Lucia to ask for the Communion of Reparation. She asked that on the First Saturday of five consecutive months, we pray five decades of the rosary, go to Confession (or sometime soon before in order to be in a state of grace for Communion), receive Communion, and spend fifteen minutes meditating on the Mysteries of the Rosary. All of this is done with a specific intention – making reparation (repairing) for the wounds in Our Lady's Immaculate Heart. Our Lady is so hurt by sin, by the indifference so many have to God's infinite love, and by the offenses people have toward her – distaining her, and disparaging her. In this prayer on First Saturdays, we are not "jumping through hoops" or doing some magical actions, but in our relationship with her as our Mother, we are wiping the "balm" of our love on her wounds. Our love is making up for the hatred, scorn, and indifference of so many others.

My reflection on Fatima has called me to a deeper relationship with God, specifically through the hands of Mary. I pray that this year has helped you grow closer to Our Lord, as well!