A Reply to Joanna Bogle Respecting the Third Secret of Fatima

Part III: Father Dollinger's Revelation and Pope Benedict's Negation of the Vatican Party Line

As the first two columns in this series should have made clear, the enduring controversy over the Third Secret of Fatima is a mysterious and complex affair. But Joanna Bogle thinks she has it all figured out, and that Catholics who disagree with her are crackpots to be declared ecclesial non-persons in the manner of an ideological purge.

In the article which prompted this series, Bogle appears to view the case as closed merely because an unsigned Vatican press release, quoting two isolated phrases from a purported statement by the Pope Emeritus this past May, rejects the recently publicized testimony of his friend and colleague Father Ingo Dollinger that before the vision alone was published in 2000 then-Cardinal Ratzinger had admitted to him that there is a text pertaining to the Secret that mentions "a bad Council and a bad Mass."

While Dollinger's testimony is another piece that fits perfectly into the evidential mosaic indicating the existence of a suppressed text, the case for its existence has never depended on him. Nevertheless, let us consider the press release Bogle thinks is the beginning and the end of the whole controversy:

> "Benedict XVI declares 'never to have spoken with Professor Dollinger about Fatima', clearly affirming that the remarks attributed to Professor Dollinger on the matter "are pure inventions, absolutely untrue", and he confirms decisively that 'the publication of the Third Secret of Fatima is complete'."

First observation: The press release is a characterization of hearsay statements attributed to Benedict, who issued no statement of his own directly to the public. We are offered only three isolated phrases without context. Why no first-hand statement from Benedict himself, who certainly has no fear of speaking directly to the public on other matters? In fact, he has just signed a deal for the publication of his autobiography, a move that seems difficult to square with his avowal upon abdicating the papacy that he would retire from view and live out his life in prayer and solitude. Indeed, since his abdication under mysterious circumstances, including what his own secretary called "a dramatic struggle," Benedict has carried on a substantial public life of statements, lectures, interviews and appearances at

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major Vatican events. Yet where the Third Secret is concerned — but only here — we are to believe that Benedict must hide behind a Vatican press release and cannot speak on his own behalf.

Second observation: Is it likely that Benedict would declare that his friend and colleague is a boldfaced liar who simply invented his entire story? Here it would be well to provide the context of Fr. Dollinger's testimony as reported by the One Peter Five blogsite. Having already been told by Ratzinger that the Third Secret involves a "bad Mass and a bad Council," Dollinger, like Catholics around the world, could not believe the Vatican's "official" version of the Secret:

> "When, on 26 June 2000, Dr. Dollinger read and heard what the Vatican had finally published as the remaining Third Secret of Fatima, he was upset and deeply shaken because of the incompleteness of the message [which he realized due to his earlier conversation with Cardinal Ratzinger about the content of the Third Secret, M.H.]. He had explicitly come from Germany to Rome to be present for the public release of the Secret. But upon hearing the text as revealed, he went at once – with his well-known spontaneity – to St. Peter's Basilica in order to speak in person with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger about the just released words of the Message. He had also said an extra prayer that he would meet and speak with Cardinal Ratzinger there in the sacristy alone.
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> "After the Mass at St. Peter's, he therefore went into the sacristy reserved for the cardinals and met Cardinal Ratzinger – who was alone and in the process of re-dressing himself – and right away he started talking with him about the just-revealed Third Secret. Dr. Dollinger greeted Cardinal Ratzinger – to whom he always had access – and said to him that what had just been published that day could not be everything. He knew that Cardinal Ratzinger would not lie since he was so pure. Finally, Cardinal Ratzinger admitted: "Yes, there is still something more" and then he left the sacristy very quickly – most quickly – even as if he had realized that he had already said too much. As soon as Dr. Dollinger returned to Germany, he immediately related everything that happened to his secretary who remembers very well, and in detail, the whole story."

Does it seem likely that such a detailed account is nothing but a fabrication by an elderly priest who had nothing to gain from lying and everything to lose?

Third observation: The phrase "never to have spoken with Professor Dollinger about

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Fatima", which is placed between quotation marks and thus purports to be the words of Benedict himself, is a dead giveaway that the press release is not to be trusted. If he were really speaking for himself in the first person, Benedict would not say "never to have spoken with Professor Dollinger about Fatima" but rather "I have never spoken with Professor Dollinger about Fatima." This is merely someone's characterization of what Benedict purportedly said.

Furthermore, does it seem likely that Father Dollinger and his friend and colleague Cardinal Ratzinger never spoke about Fatima at all throughout their long relationship? Or is it more likely the case that Pope Benedict does not recall any such conversation, which would undermine the entire "official denial"? As it is clear that Benedict will not actually be speaking for himself on this matter, the answer remains unclear. What is clear is that the press release lacks credibility.

At any rate, immediately after publication of this fragmentary hearsay "denial of Pope Benedict", Fr. Dollinger emphatically confirmed his account, rejecting the claim that he had invented the whole story. Later, however, he resigned himself to the "official denial": "If Rome has denied it, then we have to be silent and not to defend ourselves." One is reminded of a line from Yes, Prime Minister (a popular British TV comedy series): "First rule in politics: never believe anything until it's officially denied." Anyone who thinks the present-day Vatican apparatus is not involved in power politics but only the humble performance of its solemn duty to defend the Faith is beyond credulous.

Fourth observation: Declaring "The publication of the Third Secret of Fatima is complete" is hardly a denial of the specific claim that a related explanatory test, expediently deemed mere "annotations" by Sister Lucia (see Part I), has not been published. The only way to negate that claim would be to state unequivocally: "Sister Lucia created no text in which the Virgin's purported words explaining the meaning of the vision published in 2000 are recorded. The one and only text Lucia created pertaining to the Third Secret has been published." But that is exactly what the Vatican will not do despite repeated demands for a direct answer, even though it knows this has always been the real issue.

It is worth noting that Antonio Socci attempted to obtain a direct answer from Cardinal Bertone by waiting with other reporters outside the hall where Bertone was about to defend the "official version" so that he could pose this question to the Vatican Secretary of State: "Your Eminence, are you ready to swear on the Gospel that the famous phrase of the Madonna contained in the Third Secret of Fatima noted by the Vatican in 2000 — 'In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc.', said the Madonna — is not followed by anything else?"

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Socci, targeted for removal from the premises if he showed up, was manhandled by security guards and thrown out of the building. The other reporters were left alone. As Socci recounts the incident (also reported in the major Roman newspaper Corriere della Sera):

> "It was a shameful thing. I had only wanted to ask one question for one minute and to receive a terse response: yes or no. But Cardinal Bertone, alerted to my presence, entered directly into the auditorium through a service door. A stratagem that made everyone present laugh. Afterwards, three Vatican gendarmes pushed me outside the place, saying that I could not give interviews. A ridiculous scene that astounded my colleagues who were present and put me in a difficult position, seeing that I am a strenuous defender of the Vatican."

At least Bogle does not advocate the use of physical force against those who dare to buck the Vatican party line she so unthinkingly defends. She prefers the approach of stigmatization and marginalization.

The remainder of Bogle's catty diatribe need not detain us very long. She repeats no fewer than five times the party line's insistence that the Message of Fatima is reducible to prayer and penance and that the events depicted in the Third Secret, to quote the Vatican commentary of 2000, "belong to the past." On the contrary, none other than Pope Benedict XVI destroyed that claim during his pilgrimage to Fatima in 2010, revealing that the Secret concerns not only the pedophile scandal but also:

> "realities involving the future of the Church, which are gradually taking shape and becoming evident…. As for the new things which we can find in this message today, there is also the fact that attacks on the Pope and the Church come not only from without,but the sufferings of the Church come precisely from within the Church, from the sin existing within the Church. This too is something that we have always known, but today we are seeing it in a really terrifying way: that the greatest persecution of the Church comes not from her enemies without, but arises from sin within the Church…"

But this is exactly what we don't see in the vision published in 2000, which depicts only an attack by external enemies on the Church and the Pope who is executed on a hill outside a devastated city. So where might we find what Benedict alluded to? Bogle, of course, doesn't want to know. But thoughtful Catholics everywhere do, and Socci was right to declare that

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"The Pope has now reopened the dossier of Fatima in such a precise and obvious way, that everyone who, in the last years, had rushed to give praise to the official Curial version is now caught in panic in the face of the Pope's words…"

In light of Benedict's explosive revelation that the Third Secret concerns how sin within the Church is a greater threat to her than external enemies, we can add another piece of evidence to the mosaic. We now know from Cardinal Caffarra that Sister Lucia, writing in light of what the Virgin had revealed to the seers, warned him in a letter sent in the 1990s that "the final battle between the Lord and the reign of satan will be about marriage and the family. Don't be afraid, because anyone who works for the sanctity of marriage and the family will always be fought and opposed in every way, because this is the decisive issue."

Suitably informed by the last surviving Fatima visionary, Cardinal Caffarra was one of the five cardinals who, during the disastrous "Synod on the Family" — widely and justly ridiculed as the "Sin-Nod" — contributed to a book defending the Church's traditional teaching, affirmed by both John Paul II and Benedict XVI, on the impossibility of the divorced and "remarried" receiving absolution and Holy Communion without a commitment to abandonment of their immoral relations. That book was literally stolen or diverted from the mailboxes of the Synod participants by Cardinal Baldisseri, handpicked by Pope Francis to preside over a gathering that merely concealed the predetermined outcome later revealed in Amoris Latetia. That document has rocked the Church to its foundations precisely on the matter of marriage and family.

But what about prayer and penance, which certainly are an integral part of the Fatima message? For what intentions would Bogle have us pray and do penance in light of Fatima? Her prior ideological commitment will not allow her to mention the intentions Our Lady of Fatima actually indicated: that Russia be consecrated by name to Her Immaculate Heart and thus converted and reunited with Rome; that the Immaculate Heart triumph and devotion to the Immaculate Heart be established in the world; that true peace reign in society and in the hearts of men under the Social Reign of Her divine Son, Christ the King, who sent His Mother to Fatima because He wishes devotion to the Immaculate Heart to be placed alongside devotion to His Sacred Heart. All very "pre-Vatican II," you know.

Nor does post-conciliar correctness permit Bogle to mention Our Lady's ultimatum that if Her requests were not granted, there would be wars (including World War II), famines and persecutions of the Church and that ultimately "various nations will be annihilated." Hardly in keeping with the post-Vatican II notion of the God who is only mercy and never condemns or punishes anyone.

Finally, there is Bogle's parting kick in the shins, delivered to Father Nicholas Gruner more

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than a year after his passing (a literary harridan has no shame). Bogle quotes a letter she received from Cardinal Burke after she complained to him about Father Gruner and the "Fatimists": "You are correct that there is much confusion about the message of Our Lady of Fatima, caused especially by Fr Nicholas Gruner, a priest who is not in good standing in the Church, and that this confusion is harmful to many good people who are being led astray about the important message of Our Lady of Fatima."

Father Gruner was validly incardinated in the Archdiocese of Hyderabad, whose then Archbishop refused to rescind the incardination under pressure from none other than the corrupt Sodano. He died a priest in good standing. That fact aside, Bogle manages to commit four logical fallacies in a single paragraph: **(1)** poisoning the well (don't believe any of those crazy "Fatimists" because Father Gruner was not "a priest in good standing"); **(2)** argumentum ad hominem (Father Gruner's contentions concerning Fatima are false because he was "not a priest in good standing"); **(3)** non sequitur (Father Gruner was not "a priest in good standing," therefore all of his claims concerning Fatima must be false); and **(4)** the argument from authority (Cardinal Burke told me that Father Gruner was misleading people, therefore ipso facto Father Gruner was misleading people).

Even if Father Gruner had never lived, however, the facts would still be what they are, and they would still require rational consideration rather than Bogle's cheap shots. But Bogle does not want anyone to notice her instinctive application of what happens to be one of **Saul Alinsky's Rules for Radicals**, namely Rule 12: "Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.… Go after people… people hurt faster than institutions. (This is cruel, but very effective. Direct, personalized criticism and ridicule works.)"

Reduce the Fatima event to Father Gruner and then blacken his name, even after his death. That's the demagogic ticket!

Bogle concludes with a schoolmarmish harrumph: "It is time to stop being led astray, and to get on with the prayer and penance." One wonders how much prayer and penance Bogle has devoted to what Our Lady of Fatima actually called for: the conversion of Russia and the Triumph of Her Immaculate Heart — the very subjects post-conciliar correctness seeks to banish from the memory of the Church.

Bogle is right about one thing: It is time to stop being led astray regarding Fatima. That is, it is time to stop listening to ideologues like Joanna Bogle and to do what any Catholic should in view of the gravity of the situation in the Church and the world today, of which the Third Secret in its integrity is undoubtedly a warning: review the evidence concerning the Secret dispassionately and reach your own intellectually honest conclusions. For intellectual honesty is the last thing you will encounter in Bogle's unworthy propaganda.

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