On Saturday, October 13, I had the great privilege of processing through the streets of Rome, "on the very soil that the Apostles trod" (St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*), under the banner of Our Lady of Fatima while praying the Holy Rosary with approximately 200 other devotees of the Blessed Virgin – priests, religious, and lay faithful.



The Fatima Center Rosary Procession in Rome (Oct. 13, 2018), approaching St. Peter's Square.

This occasion marked the 101st anniversary of arguably the most spectacular event since the Resurrection of Christ: the famous Miracle of the Sun at Fatima (Oct. 13, 1917), a public prodigy of biblical proportions promised by Our Lady three months in advance (first mentioned during her apparition on July 13, 1917) and witnessed by some 70,000 people – believers and skeptics alike.

As readers will recall from my previous reports, I was in the Eternal City with members of The Fatima Center to cover the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, which began on Oct. 3 and is scheduled to conclude on Oct. 28. Aside from

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reporting on the synod, whose real objectives are becoming clearer by the hour (e.g., promotion of the homosexual agenda, acceleration of the Modernist revolution), our purpose for going to Rome was to offer public prayer and reparation, especially for sins related to the decades-long crisis in the Church. As the great St. Louis De Montfort wrote in his classic work, *The Secret of the Rosary*:

> "Public prayer is far more powerful than private prayer to appease the anger of God and call down His Mercy and Holy Mother Church, guided by the Holy Ghost, has always advocated public prayer in times of public tragedy and suffering."[1]

Sadly, our times more than qualify.

During my time in Rome (Oct. 4-14), The Fatima Center led two Rosary processions (Oct. 7 and 13), both of which included walking near the high walls of Vatican City and making a brief stop in St. Peter's Square.

As I mentioned in a previous report, this experience reminded me of the ancient Battle of Jericho, when God commanded the Israelites through Joshua: "Go, and compass the city, armed, marching before the ark of the Lord" (Jos. 6:7). Armed with our rosaries, "the weapon for these times" (St. Padre Pio), we marched into spiritual battle before the Ark of the New Covenant, Our Lady herself, "she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array" (Cant. 6:9). The wall that we sought to destroy was not the one made of brick which encloses the Vatican, but rather the diabolical barrier that stands between souls and their salvation, a barrier which has embedded itself deeply within the Church's hierarchy.

Sham Synod vs. Message of Fatima

For those with eyes to see and ears to hear, this diabolical barrier is very much in place at the current synod. Instead of teaching the basic truths of Faith with clarity and conviction to the Church's youth – many of whom have *never* been properly catechized – the *Instrumentum Laboris* (working document) and general discussions are hopelessly stuck on naturalistic and mundane topics with virtually *no connection* to the supernatural. As one

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notable critique of the working document put it, "The IL displays a pervasive focus on socio-cultural elements, to the exclusion of deeper religious and moral issues." Or as George Weigel described it:

> "The IL is a 30,000-plus-word brick: a bloated, tedious doorstop full of sociologese but woefully lacking in spiritual or theological insight. Moreover, and more sadly, the IL has little to say about 'the faith' except to hint on numerous occasions that its authors are somewhat embarrassed by Catholic teaching—and not because that teaching has been betrayed by churchmen of various ranks, but because that teaching challenges the world's smug sureties about, and its fanatical commitment to, the sexual revolution in all its expressions."

This is precisely why Our Lady's Fatima Message is so vital for our times, because it is a clear and concise compendium of the Catholic Faith expressed in terms so simple that even a small child can understand, yet also deeply rich and profound.

"Do not be afraid. I will do you no harm," Our Lady reassured the three little shepherds during her first apparition (May 13, 1917), reminiscent of the Angel Gabriel's words to Our Lady herself at the Annunciation (cf. Luke 1:30). "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?"

She poses this same question to each of us, while offering these consoling words: "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" (June 13, 1917).

The Final Battle – On Display at the Synod

More than once throughout her nearly 98 years of life, Lucia dos Santos (d. 2005) – the oldest of the three Fatima seers, who grew up and entered religious life (first as a Dorothean, then a Carmelite) – spoke about the "final battle" between the Blessed Virgin and the devil.

In 1957, for example, during an interview with Mexican priest Fr. Augustin Fuentes, Sister Lucia related:

> "**Father, the devil is in the mood for engaging in a decisive battle against**

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> **the Blessed Virgin.** And the devil knows what it is that offends God the most, and which in a short space of time will gain for him the greatest number of souls. Thus, the devil does everything to overcome souls consecrated to God, because in this way the devil will succeed in leaving the souls of the faithful abandoned by their leaders, thereby the more easily will he seize them." [Emphasis added]

This is precisely what is occurring at the youth synod! She continues:

> "That which afflicts the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Heart of Jesus is the fall of religious and priestly souls. The devil knows that religious and priests who fall away from their beautiful vocation drag numerous souls to hell. The devil wishes to take possession of consecrated souls. He tries to corrupt them in order to lull to sleep the souls of laypeople and thereby lead them to final impenitence."

How can one not think of the Church's decades-long clergy sexual abuse crisis when confronted with these words?

The synod's IL barely mentions the reality of sin – just a few passing references, mostly in the context of "young people and their request to be welcomed and forgiven" (IL, n. 79) – and is completely devoid of any exhortation to shun friendship with the world, which makes one "the enemy of God" (Jam. 4:4) and thus jeopardizes one's salvation.

Regarding this most serious topic, Sister Lucia emphasized again to Fr. Fuentes that

> "the devil is in the mood for engaging in a decisive battle against the Virgin. And a decisive battle is the final battle where one side will be victorious and the other side will suffer defeat. Also, **from now on we must choose sides. Either we are for God or we are for the devil. There is no other possibility.**" [Emphasis added]

Years later, in the early 1980s, she reiterated this theme of the "final battle" to then-Father Carlo Caffarra (later Cardinal Caffarra, d. 2017), who at the time was beginning his work as founding president (1982-1995) of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family.[2] In response to Fr. Caffarra's brief letter asking for prayers (he recounted this episode here), Sister Lucia sent a long reply (now kept in the Institute's archives) which includes the following revelation:

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> "**The final battle** between the Lord and the reign of satan will be about **marriage and the family.**" [Emphasis added]

Again, while the IL acknowledges the devastating effects of broken marriages and families on the faith of young people – in particular, the ongoing crisis of absent fathers (cf. IL, nn. 11-13) – it offers no substantial remedy for the problem. And the remedy, like the Message of Fatima, is very simple: "The time is accomplished, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Our Lady's Apostles of the Latter Days

What role is God and Our Lady asking each of us to play in this "final battle" which centers on "marriage and the family"? This is a question we must all ask ourselves and regularly spend time in prayer seeking the answer.

While in Rome, during the Rosary processions and my time spent covering the synod, I was struck repeatedly by the clear and rapid formation in our times of the two opposing sides mentioned by Sister Lucia ("Either we are for God or we are for the devil"). As St. Ignatius of Loyola paints the scene in his *Spiritual Exercises* (meditation on the Two Standards):

> "It will be here to see a great field of all that region of Jerusalem, where the supreme Commander-in-chief of the good is Christ our Lord; another field in the region of Babylon, where the chief of the enemy is Lucifer."

St. Louis De Montfort likewise describes the formation of two camps in *True Devotion to Mary*, emphasizing the increased prominence of Our Lady prior to the Second Coming of Christ:

> "**God has not only set an enmity, but enmities, not only between Mary and the devil, but between the race of the holy Virgin and the race of the devil; that is to say, God has set enmities, antipathies and secret hatreds between the true children and servants of Mary and the children and slaves of the devil.** They have no love for each other. They have no sympathy for each other. The children of Belial, the slaves of satan, the friends of the world (for it is the same things) have always up to this time persecuted those who belong to our Blessed Lady, and will in the future persecute them more than

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> ever; just as Cain, of old, persecuted his brother Abel, and Esau his brother Jacob, who are the figures of the reprobate and the predestinate. …
>
> But the power of Mary over all the devils will especially shine forth in the latter times, when satan will lay his snares against her heel; that is to say, her humble slaves and her poor children, whom she will raise up to make war against him."[3] [Emphasis added]

De Montfort goes on to ask, "But who shall those servants, slaves, and children of Mary be?" and proceeds to describe them at length:

> "They shall be the ministers of the Lord who, like a burning fire, shall kindle the fire of divine love everywhere.
>
> They shall be 'like sharp arrows in the hand of the powerful' Mary to pierce Her enemies (Ps. 126:4).
>
> They shall be the sons of Levi, well purified by the fire of great tribulation, and closely adhering to God (1 Cor. 6:17), who shall carry the gold of love in their heart, the incense of prayer in their spirit, and the myrrh of mortification in their body. …
>
> **They shall thunder against sin; they shall storm against the world; they shall strike the devil and his crew**; and they shall pierce through and through, for life and for death, with their two-edged sword of the Word of God (Eph. 6:17), all those to whom they shall be sent on the part of the Most High.
>
> **They shall be the true apostles of the latter times**, to whom the Lord of Hosts shall give the word and the might to work marvels and to carry off with glory the spoils of His enemies…**with the pure intention of the glory of God and the salvation of souls**, wheresoever the Holy Ghost shall call them. …
>
> **In a word, we know that they shall be true disciples of Jesus Christ, walking in the footsteps of His poverty, humility, contempt of the world, charity**; teaching the narrow way of God in pure truth, according to the holy Gospel, and not according to the maxims of the world [like many at the youth synod!]…**They shall carry on their shoulders the bloody standard of the Cross, the Crucifix in their right hand and the Rosary in their left**, the

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> sacred Names of Jesus and Mary in their hearts, and the modesty and mortification of Jesus Christ in their own behavior."[4]

May it please God to include us in this glorious army of the Immaculate. We have our marching orders. *Ad majorem Dei gloriam!*

Notes

[1] St. Louis De Montfort (trans. Mary Barbour, T.O.P.), *The Secret of the Rosary* (TAN Books edition), p. 97.

[2] Interestingly, according to the United States branch, "The Institute's establishment was to be announced at the Holy Father's Wednesday audience on May 13, 1981 [anniversary of Our Lady's first apparition at Fatima]. Because of the attempted assassination [of John Paul II], the Institute's Apostolic Constitution, *Magnum Matrimonii Sacramentum*, was instead given on October 7, 1982, the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. On that occasion the Institute was entrusted in a special way to the care of the most Blessed Virgin Mary under her title Our Lady of Fatima."

[3] St. Louis De Montfort (trans. Fr. Frederick Faber), *True Devotion to Mary* (Rockford: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1985), pp. 31-32 (n. 54).

[4] *Ibid*., pp. 33-35 (nn. 56-59).

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