A Crisis of Faith

Earlier this week, Pew Research Center summarized their findings about U.S. adult Catholics and belief in transubstantiation and the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist as follows:

> Transubstantiation – the idea that during Mass, the bread and wine used for Communion become the body and blood of Jesus Christ – is central to the Catholic faith. Indeed, the Catholic Church teaches that "the Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life.'"
>
> But a new Pew Research Center survey finds that most self-described Catholics don't believe this core teaching. In fact, nearly seven-in-ten Catholics (69%) say they personally believe that during Catholic Mass, the bread and wine used in Communion "are *symbols* of the body and blood of Jesus Christ." Just one-third of U.S. Catholics (31%) say they believe that "during Catholic Mass, the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus."

For those under age 40, the percentage drops to 26%.

Granted, the numbers vary significantly between those who attend Mass "weekly or more" (63%) versus those who attend "monthly/yearly" (25%) or "seldom/never" (13%). Nevertheless, this new study shows that a whopping 37% of U.S. Catholics who attend Mass "*weekly or more*" believe that "the bread and wine are symbols," rather than the actual Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

As Steve Skojec of *OnePeterFive* has already pointed out, these tragic statistics don't really demonstrate "a dramatic decline" over the past 25 years or so (similar results were published in 1994, as Skojec mentions). They *do*, however, confirm what traditional Catholics and others have known for decades: faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist has dramatically declined *since the Second Vatican Council* (1962-1965) and the so-called "liturgical reforms" that issued therefrom. And "this continuing downward trend," as Skojec observes, "has occurred despite a younger generation of priests who have embraced the 'reform of the reform,'" which would suggest that a reverent *Novus Ordo* is not sufficient to remedy the problem (again, a foregone conclusion for traditional Catholics).

In short, the Church continues to suffer from a massive crisis of faith among her members regarding the *reality* of the Most Blessed Sacrament: that at every Holy Mass, when the

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priest utters the words of consecration – "This is My Body," and, "This is the Chalice of My Blood" – the bread and wine are entirely changed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ Himself. The number of souls who routinely receive Holy Communion "not discerning the Body of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:29), which leads to judgment and condemnation (if done with knowledge and consent), is staggering. What is the proper response for faithful Catholics who love Our Lord and desire to make Him known and loved in the Blessed Sacrament? The answer, it seems, was given by Heaven over 100 years ago at Fatima.

The Angel of Peace

Although I have no statistics to prove it, I'd be willing to bet that most people who know something about Fatima and the supernatural events that occurred nearby the Portuguese village associate them exclusively with the Blessed Virgin Mary, who appeared to three shepherd children a total of six times from May to October, 1917. Many people familiar with Our Lady's apparitions, even Catholics, are sadly oblivious to the *angelic apparitions of 1916*, which prepared the three seers for the coming of Our Lady.

Lucia dos Santos (1907-2005), the eldest of the three seers and the only one to live beyond childhood – more commonly known by her religious name, Sister Lucia – left for us in her *Memoirs* a stunning account of the three angelic apparitions that preceded those of Our Lady. In the spring, summer, and autumn of 1916, Lucia and her two younger cousins, Francisco and Jacinta Marto, were visited by "the Angel of Peace," as he identified himself. In her *Second Memoir*, Lucia describes his appearance as that of "a young man, about fourteen or fifteen years old, whiter than snow, transparent as crystal when the sun shines through it, and of great beauty."

She continues:

> "On reaching us, he said:
>
> 'Do not be afraid! I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me.'
>
> ***Kneeling on the ground, he bowed down until his forehead touched the ground***, and made us repeat these words three times:
>
> 'My God, I ***believe***, I ***adore***, I ***hope*** and I ***love*** You! I ask pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love You.'
>
> Then, rising, he said: 'Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to

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> the voice of your supplications.'
>
> His words engraved themselves so deeply on our minds that we could never forget them. From then on, we used to spend long periods of time, prostrate like the Angel, repeating his words, until sometimes we fell, exhausted."[1] (Emphasis added)

How many of us (myself included) can honestly say we spend even *short* periods of time "prostrate like the Angel, repeating his words"? And yet, it is precisely this sort of prayer that embodies and fosters true *adoration* of Almighty God – not only the exterior posture, which is important, but also the interior acts of faith, hope, charity, and reparation expressed by the words of the Angel's prayer.

While *adoration* was clearly the focus of his first visit, the Angel's lesson during his second visit centered on the value of *prayer and sacrifice*. He appeared suddenly one summer afternoon, interrupting the children's play with a rather abrupt question:

> "'What are you doing?' he asked. 'Pray, pray very much! The Most Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy on you. ***Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High.***'
>
> 'How are we to make sacrifices?' I asked.
>
> 'Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act of ***reparation*** for the sins by which He is offended, and in ***supplication*** for the conversion of sinners. You will thus draw down peace upon your country. I am its Angel Guardian, the Angel of Portugal. Above all, accept and bear with submission the suffering which the Lord will send you.'"[2] (Emphasis added)

Sacrifice, *reparation*, and *supplication* for the conversion of sinners. This is the essence of the Holy Mass, which is *the Sacrifice of Christ* on the Cross – "the Lamb of God…Who taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) – made present in an unbloody manner. Yet how many Catholics believe that the Holy Eucharist is not only the Body and Blood of Christ (Real Presence) but also, and specifically, *His Body and Blood offered in sacrifice*?[3]

"Make reparation…and console your God"

Adoration, *sacrifice*, and the *Real Presence* are intimately related, and the Angel Guardian

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of Portugal – who some experts believe is St. Michael the Archangel[4] – demonstrated this truth in spectacular form during his third and final apparition.

When he returned in the fall of 1916, the Angel found the children prostrate and praying the prayer he had taught them the preceding spring ("My God, I believe, I adore…"). As Lucia recounts,

> "I don't know how many times we had repeated this prayer, when an extraordinary light shone upon us. We sprang up to see what was happening, and beheld the Angel. He was holding a chalice in his left hand, with the Host suspended above it, from which some drops of Blood fell into the chalice. Leaving the chalice suspended in the air, the Angel knelt down beside us and made us repeat three times:
>
> **'Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I *adore* You profoundly, and I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, *present* in all the tabernacles of the world, in *reparation* for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference with which He Himself is offended. And, through the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of You the *conversion of poor sinners*.'**
>
> Then, rising, he took the chalice and the Host in his hands. He gave the Sacred Host to me, and shared the Blood from the chalice between Jacinta and Francisco, saying as he did so:
>
> **'Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men! *Make reparation for their crimes and console your God.*'**
>
> Once again, he prostrated himself on the ground and repeated with us, three times more, the same prayer 'Most Holy Trinity…' and then disappeared."[5] (Emphasis added)

When I first learned about these angelic apparitions, and particularly this final apparition, I remember being *blown away* by the profundity of it all: the Eucharistic miracle (bleeding Host), the theological richness of the prayer, the startling urgency of the Angel and his call to "[m]ake reparation…and console your God," the fact that we *can* console Almighty God by our reverence towards Him in the Blessed Sacrament. In the words of Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, author of the three-volume masterpiece *The Whole Truth About Fatima*,

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> "For our part we must meditate on these wonderful words [of the Angel] and profit by them. … By their simplicity and their great richness, by their doctrine, so traditional and yet so fresh and original, and in their clear accentuation of certain aspects of dogma, they already demonstrate their supernatural origin. …
>
> At Fatima, the words of the Angel, brief as they are, already present themselves as a first formulation, a first synthesis of the unique message, which constitutes for our century a condensation of the Gospel, or better still, by its precise and dogmatic character, *a catechism*, perfectly adapted to our times of apostasy."[6]

If Catholics in general are ever to overcome the widespread apostasy that afflicts them and regain their faith in the Real Presence, they must encounter the magnificence of the "*mysterium fidei*" (1 Tim. 3:9). They must see Christ in all His glory, like St. John on the island of Patmos, and fall "at His feet as dead" (Apoc. 1:17), overwhelmed by His majesty. And ordinarily speaking, aside from Eucharistic miracles and heavenly apparitions, this encounter is facilitated through the same means employed by the Angel of Peace: traditional catechesis, traditional prayer, and profound reverence for Our Eucharistic King.

May all Catholics learn to imitate the three little shepherds of Fatima, who themselves humbly imitated the Angel of Peace, and make "reparation for the outrageous, sacrileges, and indifference by which [Christ] Himself," really present in the Holy Eucharist, "is offended."

For a phenomenal presentation on this subject, CFN invites readers to watch the following video conference by David Rodríguez, Th.M. entitled "The Message of Fatima and the Latin Mass":

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[1] *Fatima In Lucia's Own Words* Vol. I (ed. Fr. Louis Kondor, SVD), 20th edition (May 2016), p. 78. See here for "Circumstances and Dialogue of the 1916 Apparitions" available online.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 78-79.

[3] According to the "Brief Critical Study of the *Novus Ordo Missae*" (aka "The Ottaviani Intervention"), which Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci presented to Pope Paul VI in 1969, the obscuring of the sacrificial nature of the Mass is at the root of the serious theological problems with the new rite concocted by Msgr. Annibale Bugnini and his *Consilium* (with

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Paul VI's blessing).

[4] "Who is this «Angel of Peace» that came to Fatima as a precursor of Our Lady? We cannot say with certitude, since he chose not to reveal his name explicitly. We might point out however that good Portuguese historians are inclined to recognize in him St. Michael the Archangel, their patron and protector, who had always been venerated as the Guardian Angel of their country." Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, Volume I: *Science and the Facts*, trans. John Collorafi (Buffalo: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1989), p. 93 (available online here).

[5] *Fatima In Lucia's Own Words*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

[6] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *op. cit.*, p. 82 (available online here).

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