Last Friday, on the Feast of the Annunciation and the 38th anniversary of John Paul II's consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pope Francis consecrated "the Church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine" to the same Immaculate Heart. Following a Lenten Penance service held in St. Peter's Basilica, the current Successor of Peter sat before a statue of Our Lady of Fatima and accomplished the act of consecration which the Vatican had announced just ten days prior.

Two days after that surprise announcement — a response to an appeal from Ukraine's Catholic bishops — CFN broke the news that Archbishop Christoph Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, had sent a letter to Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), informing him: "In the context of the tragic events unfolding in Ukraine, the Holy Father, Pope Francis will lead an Act of Consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25th next."

The Vatican's official representative in America further informed Archbishop Gomez that Pope Francis "intends to invite each Bishop, or equivalent in law, together with his priests, to join in this act of consecration, if possible, at an hour corresponding to 5pm Rome time," an invitation which Francis did indeed extend via a letter dated March 21:

> "I ask you to join in this Act by inviting the priests, religious and faithful to assemble in their churches and places of prayer on 25 March, so that God's Holy People may raise a heartfelt and choral plea to Mary our Mother. I am sending you the text of the prayer of consecration, so that all of us can recite it throughout that day, in fraternal union."

The "Act of Consecration" Text

The "text of the prayer of consecration," released with the Pope's Letter to Bishops, runs just over 1,000 words and contains clear allusions to hallmarks of the Francis pontificate. "We stopped being our neighbor's keepers and stewards of our common home," the text reads in the second paragraph, and continues, "We have ravaged the garden of the earth," both obvious references to his 2015 eco-encyclical *Laudato Si*.

The "Act of Consecration" likewise laments that "in our own day … fraternity has faded," harkening back to his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* "on Fraternity and Social Friendship" — itself inspired by the heterodox "Document on Human Fraternity" signed the previous year. The text even invokes Our Lady under the novel title of "Queen of the Human Family,"

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rather than "Queen of Families" (Litany of Loreto),[1] asking her to "show people the path of fraternity."

On the other hand, the text also includes traditional Marian invocations and pious appeals, imploring that through Our Lady's intercession "God's mercy [may] be poured out on the earth and the gentle rhythm of peace return to mark our days." The affirmation that God "has given you [Mary] to us and made your Immaculate Heart a refuge for the Church and for all humanity" calls to mind the following words of Our Lady spoken during her second apparition at Fatima (June 13, 1917): "My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God."[2]

Interestingly, the only allusion to a Marian apparition found in the "Act of Consecration" refers not to Fatima but to Guadalupe: "Say to us once more: 'Am I not here, I who am your Mother?'" Our Lady spoke these words to Juan Diego (Dec. 12, 1531) to assure him that his uncle, Juan Bernardino, who had suddenly become deathly ill, would be cured.

The crucial portion of the text appears towards the end and reads (emphasis added):

> "Therefore, Mother of God and our Mother, ***to your Immaculate Heart we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves, the Church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine***. Accept this act that we carry out with confidence and love. Grant that war may end and peace spread throughout the world."

Two days before these words were uttered by Francis in Rome, Bishop Athanasius Schneider observed:

> "In comparison with the wording of the two previous acts of consecration, made by Pope Pius XII (in 1952) and by Pope John Paul II (in 1984), the words and form of the consecration that will be used by Pope Francis on March 25 more clearly express the requests of Our Lady of Fatima. Pope Francis has even added the word 'solemnly' to 'consecrate,' an expression lacking in the formulas of 1952 and 1984…."

Consecration of Russia: Our Lady's Request and Specific Instructions

In order to properly evaluate the consecration made by Pope Francis, it is necessary to

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recall the words of Our Lady at Fatima and the specific instructions she gave to Sister Lucia concerning the consecration.

It is in the second part of the Secret of Fatima — the three-part message[3] given by Our Lady during her third apparition (July 13, 1917) — that she mentions Russia (emphasis added):

> "When you see a night illumined by an unknown light [see here for details], know that this is the great sign given you by God that He is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father. To prevent this, **I shall come to ask for the consecration of *Russia* to my Immaculate Heart**, and the Communion of reparation on the First Saturdays [see here for details]. **If my requests are heeded, *Russia* will be converted, and there will be peace**; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated. **In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate *Russia* to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.**"[4]

Roughly twelve years later (June 13, 1929), Our Lady returned as promised and announced to Lucia, who had since entered religious life: "The moment has come in which God asks the Holy Father to make, and to order that in union with him and at the same time, all the bishops of the world make the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, promising to convert it because of this day of prayer and worldwide reparation."[5]

Thus, we see that the requested consecration includes several specific conditions:

- It must be **(1)** the Pope who publicly performs the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary — hence, **(2)** he must *name Russia explicitly* as the object of consecration.
- The Pope **(3)** must "*order … all the bishops of the world*"[6] to "make the consecration of Russia" to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart **(4)** "*in union with him* and *at the same time*" (emphasis added).
- In order for the consecration to actually "convert" Russia, **(5)** the public ceremony must involve a conspicuous "day of prayer and worldwide reparation."

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Based on the official documents quoted above, as well as the events of March 25, we know that Pope Francis publicly performed the consecration and explicitly named *Russia* as an object of consecration — the first time a pope has ever named Russia during a public consecration ceremony.

However, we also know that he *did not order* but only *invited* all the bishops of the world to participate. While many of them did respond to his request,[7] we do not yet know if a large majority of Catholic bishops (i.e., a number approaching moral unanimity) participated in what Our Lady specified must be a *collegial* act. Since the Pope did not initiate a system for confirming bishops' participation, this is factually difficult to determine. Immediately following the consecration, Catholic News Agency reported that "every U.S. diocese participated in one form or another." Nevertheless, Sister Lucia was clear on this point, emphasizing multiple times over a period of more than 40 years that the bishops *must* participate in union with the Pope.[8]

As to Our Lady describing the day of consecration as a "day of prayer and worldwide reparation," she did not provide detailed instructions on this point. Pope Francis did say in his Letter to Bishops, "This Act of Consecration is meant to be a gesture of the universal Church," while encouraging all bishops to invite "the priests, religious and faithful to assemble in their churches and places of prayer on 25 March, so that God's Holy People may raise a heartfelt and choral plea to Mary our Mother." And further, the consecration was made in the context of a Penance service during which individual sacramental confession was encouraged and the Pope himself went to Confession and heard confessions.

We Shall Know by the Fruits

Our Lord tells us in the Gospel, "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matt. 7:16). While He was speaking about discerning between true and false shepherds, the same principle can be applied to human acts and whether or not they conform to God's will, including the recent consecration.

What is the fruit for which we should look? Our Lady herself told us: "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

The *conversion of Russia* (meaning a return to Catholic unity)[9] and a subsequent *period of peace* are identified by Our Lady as the *direct fruits* of the proper consecration of Russia. If these fruits fail to manifest in the relatively near future (i.e., months to years), we will know that God and Our Lady still await the consecration which will finally yield those miraculous fruits.

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In the meantime, let us heed Our Lord's instruction to "watch and pray" (Mark 13:33).

UPDATE (3/30/2022): Today, I joined *OnePeterFive* editor-in-chief Timothy Flanders on the 1P5 podcast to further analyze the Pope's recent consecration of "ourselves, the Church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine" to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, all in light of Our Lady of Fatima's specific request and instructions:

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[1] The title "Queen of Families" was added to the Litany of Loreto by Pope John Paul II in 1995.

[2] Sister Maria Lucia of the Immaculate Heart (Fr. Louis Kondor, ed.), *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs* (20th edition, May 2016), p. 177.

[3] In short, the Secret consists of **(1)** a vision of hell, **(2)** prophecies concerning the 20th century and the means of preventing "wars and persecutions of the Church", and **(3)** a vision of "a Bishop dressed in White," whom Lucia described as "the Holy Father," walking "through a big city half in ruins" and filled with dead bodies, who is himself eventually martyred "by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him" (published by the Vatican in 2000). For evidence that the third part ("Third Secret") contains more than just a vision (i.e., words of Our Lady explaining the vision), see here and *The Secret Still Hidden* by Christopher A. Ferrara.

[4] *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words*, p. 179.

[5] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* Vol. II: *The Secret and the Church* (Buffalo: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1989), p. 555. This account of Our Lady's words was written by Sister Lucia in 1930 to her confessor, Fr. José Bernardo Gonçalves, and published for the first time in 1984 by Fatima scholar Fr. Antonio Maria Martins. Regarding this account, Sister Lucia noted at a later date (quoted by Frère Michel): "I gave an account of this revelation to the confessor, who was then the Reverend Father José Bernardo Gonçalves, a Jesuit. His Reverence asked me to write it down, which I did, giving the paper to His Reverence on June 13, 1930." In 1936, she wrote a more detailed account of the vision and message she received at Tuy (June 13, 1929), once again addressed to Fr. Gonçalves, in which the phrase "and to order that" is missing from Our Lady's words: "The moment has come when God asks the Holy Father to make, in union with all the bishops of the world, the consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart, promising to save it by this means." (*Ibid*., p. 464, 504 [note 4]). This later account is the one included in the official collection of Sister Lucia's memoirs as an appendix (cf. *Fatima in*

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Lucia's Own Words, p. 198).

[6] As explained above, the instruction to "order" all the bishops to participate in the consecration appears in Sister Lucia's 1930 account of Our Lady's words at Tuy (1929). Lucia reiterated the need to *order* the bishops to participate in letters addressed to Fr. Gonçalves. Frère Michel quotes from one such letter (May 1930): "The good Lord promises to end the persecution in Russia, if the Holy Father will himself make a solemn act of reparation and consecration of Russia to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, as well ordering all the bishops of the Catholic world to do the same." (*The Whole Truth About Fatima* Vol. II, p. 465). In 1937, Bishop José Alves Correia da Silva of Leiria-Fatima wrote the same to Pope Pius XI on Lucia's behalf: "This religious asks me to communicate to Your Holiness that, according to a revelation from Heaven, the Good Lord promises to end the persecution in Russia, if Your Holiness deigns to make and order all the bishops of the Catholic world equally to make, a public and solemn act of consecration of Russia to the Most Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary…." (*Ibid*., p. 644).

[7] *LifeSiteNews* published an international list of those episcopal conferences and individual bishops who publicly stated they would participate prior to the consecration.

[8] See Ferrara, *False Friends of Fatima* (Pound Ridge: Good Counsel Publications, 2012), pp. 49-51.

[ix] Fr. Joaquin Alonso, the official Fatima archivist for over 16 years who had numerous interviews with Sister Lucia, wrote the following about Lucia's position on the conversion of Russia in his 1976 book, *La Verdad sobre el Secreto de Fátima* ("*The Truth about the Secret of Fatima*"): "Lucy has always thought that the conversion of Russia does not extend only to a return of the Russian people to the Christian-Orthodox Religion, while rejecting the Marxist Atheism of the Soviets, but that it refers simply and fully to the total and integral conversion by a return to the unique and true Roman Catholic Church." English translation quoted by Frere Francois de Marie des Agnes in *Fatima: Intimate Joy, World Event*, Book IV, *Fatima: Tragedy and Triumph* (Buffalo: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1994), pp. 306-307. Ferrara provides a slightly different English translation in *False Friends of Fatima* (pp. 81-81), as well as Fr. Alonso's original Spanish text (p. 82, note 145).

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