

## The Message of Our Lady of Fatima: Then and Now

Last week, we commemorated the first apparition of our Blessed Mother to three children in Fatima on May 13, 1917. Her message? Pray and offer sacrifices for the conversion of the world, because hell is real. This has been her message in most of her apparitions throughout the centuries. As the world has kept its main focus on the control of the Covid-19 virus, which has not seemed to work despite the lockdowns, we must shift our focus on listening to God and what He is trying to tell us by allowing this seemingly losing battle against the Covid-19 virus. We must recognize man's sinfulness and the need to repent of the grievous sins the whole world has continued to commit until the present time.

As I continue to study Sacred Scriptures, it becomes more and more apparent to me that God has allowed this worldwide pandemic in order to call us to repentance and conversion. All throughout the Old Testament, we read of mankind, specifically the Israelites, God's chosen people, who have become unfaithful to the one True God time and again, worshipping false idols, offering child sacrifices to pagan gods, and living despicable lives, truly unworthy of God's love and faithfulness. God would punish them by withholding His blessings, sending plagues, and allowing them to fall into the hands of their enemies. In many instances, these battles resulted in overwhelming defeat with thousands of lost lives. This scene is becoming all too familiar even in this day and age. Our present battle is against the Covid 19 virus and we are losing. But God remains patient as He was patient with the Jews. He gave them many chances of turning their hearts back to Him and forgiving them each time they repented.

God allowed the Israelites to suffer in order for them to mature in their faith and enjoy once again the intimate personal relationship He so desired with His chosen people. He is doing the same to us, His beloved children. He sent us His only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ to become one of us, to teach us the right way to live and love, to the point of suffering a humiliating death on the Cross for our salvation. Jesus gave us the Church and the sacraments to help us walk in righteousness. He promised that He will be with us to the end of time, and He has kept his promise, but many have rejected Him. Despite all that our Lord has done for us, we have been unfaithful, disobedient, and indifferent. The world has become more ungrateful and evil over the centuries. The killing of the innocent unborn has reached its height especially in the United States and Europe at the turn of the millenium. According to the WHO there are approximately 40-50 million abortions per year worldwide, amounting to about 125,000 abortions per day. New York State, particularly New York City, has one of the highest number of legal induced abortions in the entire United States. To top this great evil, New York State passed the Reproductive Health Act early this year. With this legislation abortion restrictions have been eliminated and it is now legal to kill an innocent unborn baby up to the third trimester and even just before normal delivery. But this was not satisfactory enough, the One World Trade Center and other landmarks were lit in pink to celebrate the passage of this bill. How do you think God feels about this?

Even during this pandemic, when all elective medical visits and surgeries, including cancer and cardiac surgeries are being cancelled in order to conserve the state's medical resources to save lives afflicted with the Coronavirus, the abortion clinics have been allowed to remain open as they consider abortion an essential medical procedure. So as the entire world is trying to save lives, these abortion facilities are killing thousands of innocent vulnerable lives. How do you think God feels about this?

These evils that I have mentioned do not even include the removal of God in public schools, the approval of same sex marriage, contraception, illicit drug use, apostasy, euthanasia, and other such evils that are tearing our world apart. In Canada, sodomy has been decriminalized for 16 year olds and above. Most of Europe, particularly Italy which used to be devoutly Catholic, have lost their allegiance to God. They have become atheists, agnostics, and moral relativists. Church attendance has dropped dramatically and many are no longer practicing any religion at all. The modern world's god has become his own self.

Is it surprising then, that this pandemic started in China, a country that has strictly limited childbirth and forced abortions to accomplish this? Is it surprising that the rapid spread of the virus has involved the entire world, with the United States topping the list of cases among all nations? Is it surprising then that New York State, particularly New York City has the most cases of Covid 19 infections and death? Is it surprising that the very young children are only mildly affected with very few deaths? Is it surprising that studies are showing that the virus, which affects almost every organ system is unlikely transmitted sexually? Can you ignore the hands of God trying to protect human reproduction?

Deep in my heart I know that God is chastising us, as a loving Father reproves the children he holds dearly, for our own eternal good. He wants us to value life at every stage from conception to natural death, because every human being is precious in his heart. He has always willed procreation from the very beginning for children prosper mankind. Let us not forget that He even created us in His image and likeness! But we need to repent, transform our hearts, and amend our lives in gratitude and obedience to our loving Father who has given us our life and divine providence. We cannot remain indifferent and presume that God is merciful and would never punish us. He is merciful, indeed, but He is also just. We need to express a sincere desire not to return to our sinful ways. We must renounce the evil that dominates our world. We must not only pray for the conversion of this corrupt and Godless world. We must offer sacrifices as our Lady of Fatima exhorted us through the three children. We must actively help in transforming the hearts of our leaders and their followers. Perhaps our heavenly Father who is loving, merciful, and faithful yesterday, today, and always, will relent in his punishment. Perhaps then we will begin to see a halt in the spread of the coronavirus. Amen.

Submitted by: Cecilia Cervantes