

THE PASTOR'S CORNER

IF YOU WANT PEACE...

When an angel first appeared to three shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal, in the spring of 1917, and a little while later the Blessed Virgin Mary came to them in apparition, nearly the whole world was overwhelmed with a “Great War,” the “Spanish Flu” pandemic, and the rise of communism in Russia. The notion that the Mother of God would appear to illiterate peasant children and provide an answer to the ills that plagued humankind must seem absurd. One might just as well suggest that the rulers of nations put their heads together and find several children living in the middle of nowhere who, barely touched by the evils that worried about more weighty responsibilities than keeping lambs in the fold, could tell them how to fix everything. The illogic of God (and perhaps His humor) finds plausibility in familiar circumstances two thousand years ago of three kings who followed a star to a small village called Bethlehem where a family from similar peasant stock brought a newborn into the world. With the shepherds from a nearby village who themselves saw and heard angels, they beheld the answer to our “inexpressible groanings” (Romans 8:26) in the exhortation of the mother of Jesus to pray the Rosary.

At each of the seven apparitions of Our Lady to the children, she asked Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta to pray a Rosary for peace in the world, urging everyone to devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary to save souls and end war. She asked them to include a prayer to Jesus at the end of each decade, to “forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need of [his] mercy.” In the sixth apparition, the children asked the Blessed Virgin if they would come to Heaven themselves. Mary assured them they would, but not before Francisco first prayed many rosaries. She promised an end to the First World War but the inevitability of another worse war if the world did not stop offending God. She exhorted, in one of three secrets entrusted to the children, the pope to consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart.

A perspective on the last century and its beginnings in the twenty-first might lead us to conclude that we need a solution to the plagues of modernity more than ever. Besides a pandemic and racial disharmony and all the political divisions that still consume most of the column

inches of every newspaper and the airtime of the broadcast media there is the spectre of uncountable lives killed in ignorance of the sanctity of human life. The number of unborn children whom God knew before they were conceived in the womb far surpasses the millions upon millions murdered by Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, and every other enemy of human life that ever lived. To our shame, we have enshrined the deliberate killing of a human life in the womb as a human right. In truth, any human right finds its origin in the knowing the love of God and neighbor and having the opportunity to love as perfectly as our heavenly Father does. Does this make our “throw away” society the enemy of human life, and therefore the enemy of God? I worry.

Years ago, the prophet of our age, Mother Theresa of Calcutta suggested that the fruit of abortion would be a nuclear war. While that possibility seems less real to us, her calculus is inerrant. She understood well, from an intimate experience of the fruits of evil in poverty in the world, that every sin has unintended and unimagined consequences for everyone — unless there are men, women, and children who intercede for the world with prayer. The coincidence in October of Respect Life Month and the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary are timely reminders to seek the wisdom of three shepherd children if we care for the world and pray the Rosary!



The Children of Fatima — Lucia, Bl. Francisco, Bl. Jacinta
Source: Wikimedia Commons.