



Celebrating Our Lady of Fatima

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On May 13, Pope Francis will be in Fatima, celebrating Mass on the 100th Anniversary of the first appearance of Mary to the young shepherd children at that holy place. As part of the celebration of this anniversary, Pope Francis has offered the following opportunity for a special plenary indulgence:

“The faithful, with devotion, can visit a statue of Our Lady of Fatima solemnly exposed for public veneration in any church, oratory, or proper place of prayer during the days of the anniversary of the apparitions, the 13th of each month from May to October 2017, and there devoutly participate in some celebration or prayer in honor of the Virgin Mary. In addition, the faithful must pray the Our Father, recite the Creed and invoke Our Lady of Fatima.

The faithful who, because of age, illness or other serious causes, are unable to get around, may pray in front of a statue of Our Lady of Fatima and must spiritually unite themselves to the jubilee celebrations on the days of the apparitions, the 13th of each month, between May and October 2017. They must also “offer to merciful God with confidence, through Mary, their prayers and sufferings or the sacrifices they make in their own lives.”

With the support of Father Dominic Antwi-Boasiako, St. Mary’s Church in Victoria will have a special statue of Our Lady of Fatima available for veneration on each of the days mentioned above.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches about our beautiful understanding of indulgences in #1471-1479. In this section it places this particular teaching in the context of interior penance, ultimately leading to a conversion of the heart. In the process of obtaining an indulgence the faithful person grows in holiness and the fruits of this holiness radiate outward. A plenary indulgence removes “all of the temporal punishment due to sin”, and it can be applied to oneself or for another. The entire teaching in this section of the Catechism from #1422 – 1498 is a testimony to the power of God’s mercy and our ability to participate in this mercy through our acts of penance and love.

In addition to a particular action such as the example above, there are three conditions that must be fulfilled each time in order to receive an indulgence: go to Confession and Communion, be interiorly detached from sin, and pray for the intentions of the Holy Father. In teaching about indulgences, the Church teaches about the power of the human heart cleansed by God, and this is at the center of the message of Fatima.

On May 13, 2000 then-Cardinal Ratzinger (now-Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) offered a deep theological commentary on this message. In the last paragraph of his commentary he wrote:

“I would like finally to mention another key expression of the ‘secret’ which has become justly famous: ‘my Immaculate Heart will triumph’. What does this mean? The Heart open to God, purified by contemplation of God, is stronger than guns and weapons of every kind. The fiat of Mary, the word of her heart, has changed the history of the world, because it brought the Saviour into the world – because, thanks to her Yes, God could become man in our world and remains so for all time. The evil one has power in this world, as we see and experience continually; he has power because our freedom continually lets itself be led away from God. Since God himself took a human heart and has thus steered human freedom towards what is good, the freedom to choose evil no longer has the last word. From that time forth, the word that prevails is this: ‘In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart; I have overcome the world’ (Jn. 16:33). The message of Fatima invites us to trust in this promise.”

Once again, I want to particularly thank each of you who has committed to pray the Rosary for the gift of peace in the world and for the family. As St. John Paul II invited us to pray this faithfully, I believe we can maintain our confidence in the power of this prayer – more than we ever know! May God bless you and your families, let’s keep each other in prayer.

+Brendan