

- One of the great joys of being a priest is seeing people come to faith in our Lord. Sometimes it is a terrible suffering that leads a person to God. Other times it's simply the feeling that something's missing in a person's life that makes them search out God.
- Really, there's no end to the reasons or circumstances that our Lord uses to draw souls to Himself. And this shouldn't surprise us, for we know that it is God's great desire that all men be saved.
- *God wants us.* He wants us to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this life so that we can be happy with Him eternally in the next life.
- And the Gospel tells us today, to get Heaven, we must go through Jesus Christ, Who is "the way, the truth, and the life." For "no one comes to the Father except through [Him]."
- This is why our Lord invites His disciples to have faith in Him in today's Gospel.
- We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. By no other means can we hope to get to Heaven.
- And for those of us who do place their faith in Jesus, He goes to prepare a place for us in Heaven, and He promises to come back to us at the end of our lives and take us to Himself. All we must do is surrender to His will and ask for His mercy for our sins.
- Honestly, my brothers and sisters, our Lord doesn't ask much of us. And He promises us so much more than He asks of us.
- Moreover, our Lord is willing to go to extraordinary lengths to get our attention and draw us to Himself. One of the most beautiful and extraordinary things that our Lord does to draw men to Himself is to send His holy mother to us.
- As hopefully all of you know, this weekend the Church around the world is celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first of six apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to three shepherd children at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917.
- Those of you who've been to Fatima know what a special place it is, marked as it is by our Lady's presence.
- When Our Lady appeared to Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco for the first time on May 13, 1917, she told the three children that they would each go to Heaven, although she did say that Francisco would have many rosaries to pray first.
- More poignantly, Our Lady asked them if they would be willing to bear all the sufferings God sends them in atonement for all sins and for the conversion of sinners.
- When they agreed to this request, Mary told them that they would have much to suffer, but that the grace of God would be with them and would strengthen them. She also asked them to pray the Rosary daily for peace in the world, and to bring an end to World War I.
- Reparation and the Rosary: these are the things that Our Lord's Immaculate Mother asked of her three young ambassadors in Fatima. This was her will.
- And as Our Lady has always been perfectly united to the will of Our Lord, we know for certain that He, too, desires that we make reparation for sin and that we pray the Rosary daily – for peace in the world and peace in our souls.
- At the first apparition, Our Lady asked the children to return to the same spot on the 13<sup>th</sup> of the month for 6 months, and over the course of those apparitions Our Lady renewed her plea for reparation and the Rosary, while also revealing secrets to them of things that would occur in the future.

- What has always struck me about Fatima is the fact that Our Lady appeared to three insignificant children in a very insignificant little town in what was at the time a very poor country.
- The Blessed Virgin did not entrust her message and her secrets to the rich and powerful. She went to the poor and lowly, and in this choice we hear her plea to each of us to be poor and lowly of spirit.
- Moreover, the Fatima apparitions are apocalyptic in nature, and they are marked by Our Lady's sadness for man's sins and how they offend our blessed Lord. She was sad as well because of the consequences man must suffer for his sins.
- As is always the case with her apparitions, when Our Lady appears in this world, she always tries to draw people to her Son. Her apparitions are never about herself, but about Jesus. Mary always points us to Him *because* He is the means of man's salvation.
- And our readings today make that invitation to us to turn to Our Lord. In addition to our very consoling Gospel passage that invites us to trust in Our Lord, in our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading St. Peter exhorts us to come to God as "living stones", "chosen and precious" in God's sight.
- St. Peter tells us how we, who are members of Christ's Body, are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation," and God's own people, and that we are called to praise Him Who has "called [us] out of darkness into His wonderful light."
- It's so beautiful what God desires for us, and yet how often do we turn away from Him through sin, or go in search of fulfillment outside of our Lord and His Church?
- Acting as if Jesus isn't enough, so many of us today seek spiritual fulfillment in things like yoga, New Age practices, and non-Christian religions and philosophies – even many who profess to be Christian and should know better.
- So many of us turn our backs on God and willingly embrace terrible and immoral things like fornication, contraception, and pornography for the sake of our own selfish pleasures. And we mock and scorn the Church and Her teachings as being old-fashioned and unreasonable.
- Yet when we willfully turn away from Christ and His Church and seek fulfillment and salvation elsewhere, we take a huge risk: we risk our very souls.
- Our Lady at Fatima made that very clear. If we turn away from Our Lord, His Church, and His commandments, we turn away from salvation.
- *Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except through Him.*
- During these next five months in which the Church celebrates the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions at Fatima, I'd like to invite all of you to give careful consideration to heeding the pleas she made to Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta.
- Pray the Rosary daily; make reparation for sin with daily penances. Be converted and turn away from your sins, and beg God as well for the conversion of sinners.
- Have faith in God and pray for peace: peace in the world, peace in our homes, peace in our hearts and souls.
- Our Lord desperately wants all of us to turn to Him, to honor Him, and to love Him as He deserves. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima, may we do just that: for the glory of God, for the conversion of sinners, and for the salvation of our souls.
- Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us!