

Blessed Jacinta's Heroic Suffering

In this excerpt of a speech given by Cornelia Ferreira at *Our Lady's Army of Advocates* conference in Boston, Massachusetts we see the inspiring example of a small child offering her sufferings in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart.

by Cornelia Ferreira

The three Fatima children were called to take different aspects of the messages to heart, in line with their temperaments. In this way, each has highlighted for us one of the main points of the total Fatima message.

Let's consider Jacinta first. Even when just five or six, she was very sensitive about the feelings of Jesus. She obeyed her mother instantly when told not to play with some village children who engaged in "improper talk," because the Child Jesus doesn't like such talk. She loved to kiss and hug the Crucifix with great devotion, even before she knew why Jesus was nailed to the Cross.

When Lucy described Our Lord's sufferings, Jacinta was moved to tears. She often asked Lucy to repeat the account, and each time she would weep, saying: "Our poor dear Lord! I'll

never sin again! I don't want Our Lord to suffer any more!"

Save Souls from Hell

This compassion for Jesus was an intimation of the grace she would receive of compassion for sinners. She was only seven when Our Lady showed the children a vision of hell, with demons and human souls burning in a sea of fire amid shrieks and groans. This vision filled her with such horror, Lucy tells us, "that every penance and mortification was as nothing in her eyes, if it could only prevent souls from going there" and she spent her remaining days as a reparatory victim for sinners.

Jacinta would often exclaim, "Oh, hell! Hell! How sorry I am for the souls who go to hell! And the people down there, burning alive, like wood in the fire!" She would remain on her knees for long periods of time, repeating

the prayer Our Lady taught them to say after each decade of the Rosary:

“O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need.”

Our Lady had said to “pray very much and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to hell, because there is no one to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them.” So Jacinta would urge Francisco and Lucy: “We must pray very much to save souls from hell! So many go there! So many!”

Her greatest desire was that Our Lady would show hell to other people, as she was convinced this would convert a great many. If Jacinta were here today, she would probably consider it a terrible tragedy that hell is hardly mentioned in the Catholic Church so as not to “scare” children and even adults. The very idea of hell is disappearing, and some priests are even making people omit the prayer Our Lady gave us to say between the Rosary decades.

Little Jacinta asked Lucy which sins sent people to hell. Lucy named missing Mass on Sunday, stealing and bad language. So, even when Jacinta

was ill, she insisted on attending Mass on weekdays, saying she was going for sinners who skipped Mass on Sunday. And when she heard bad language, she covered her face in sorrow, saying, “Don’t those people realize that they can go to hell for saying those things?” Showing compassion for the ignorant, she would ask Jesus to forgive them because they didn’t know they were offending God, and she would immediately pray for them the prayer: “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins ...”

Sacrifice for Sinners

Constantly seeking opportunities for mortification, sometimes Jacinta would give up a meal, offering this as “a sacrifice for sinners who eat too much.” She inspired Francisco and Lucy to join her in giving their lunches to poor beggar children they regularly met whilst tending their sheep. Their lunch would then be acorns. But, as a further sacrifice, Jacinta would pick unripe bitter acorns to eat. One hot day they even gave away their water to the poor children. Perhaps their constant sacrifices of food weakened Jacinta and Francisco so that they eventually came down with the influenza that caused their deaths.



Blessed Jacinta of Fatima

Jacinta often exclaimed:

“Oh, hell! Hell! How sorry I am for the souls who go to hell! And the people down there, burning alive, like wood in the fire!”

“Pray very much and make sacrifice for sinners; for many souls go to hell, because there is no one to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them.”

According to Sr. Lucy, at Our Lady’s apparition in June 1917, the children received infused knowledge and great love for Her Immaculate Heart. Then, in July, Our Lady prophesied the outbreak of World War II because of the *sins* of mankind. Only the establishment of devotion to Her Immaculate Heart through the Consecration of Russia and the *Communions* of Reparation on First Saturdays could prevent this and assure peace, She said. This greatly saddened Jacinta because she was too young to receive Holy Communion, and so could not make reparation in *this* particular way for

sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

But in Jacinta’s attitude towards the coming war we see not only that her life was lived on a supernatural plane, but also that the Holy Ghost’s gifts of wisdom and understanding were highly developed in this little child. She was consumed, not so much by the thought that so many people would die in the war, but that “almost all of them” would go to hell, as she put it. “If only they would stop offending God,” she said, “then there wouldn’t be any war and they wouldn’t go to hell!”

Who, today, dares to acknowledge the truth of Our Lady of Fatima's warning: *wars are the fruit of sin*. How many naturalistic reasons are blamed instead: poverty, social inequality ... Even religious differences are blamed; so modern churchmen dialogue with heretics and idolaters and plant olive trees for peace instead of acknowledging that God is punishing the world for the sins of heresy and idolatry that greatly offend Him.

How blind is the world to count on *man* to end war through naturalistic means: money, development, human rights, interfaith prayer! And how many souls are lost through war *every* day because the most admirable Immaculate Heart of Mary is ignored or scorned!

Jacinta's Final Illness

In 1918, "Spanish flu," which actually began in the United States, became a world pandemic. It caused terrible damage to the lungs, killing most people very rapidly. It would raise Jacinta's mortifications to new heights because she died slowly and painfully. She spent the first phase of her illness at home, offering up everything without demands or complaints.

Many of her visitors stayed

for long periods, as they sensed something supernatural about her. Overhearing their conversations, she would correct what she considered improper: "Don't say that; it offends the Lord our God." She taught prayers to the children who also loved to visit; she prayed the Rosary with them, and counselled them not to sin so as to avoid offending God and going to hell.

One day, Our Lady appeared to her and asked if she wanted to convert more sinners. When Jacinta generously agreed, she was told she would go to a hospital and suffer a great deal for conversions, in reparation for sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and for love of Jesus.

A few months after this apparition, as *Francisco* was on the point of dying and entering Heaven, Jacinta told him with childlike simplicity: "Give all my love to Our Lord and Our Lady, and tell them that I'll suffer as much as they want, for the conversion of sinners and in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

Soon after, Jacinta spent two months in the hospital, suffering greatly. Because she didn't improve, she was sent home with

a large open, festering wound in her chest. The wound became infected and the pus poured out as she grew weaker.

Yet she continued to devise further mortifications. She cheerfully accepted food she disliked, whilst refusing what she liked. She forfeited sleep at night by not turning over in bed to relieve her pain. The children had the habit of often reciting the Angel's prayers with their foreheads touching the ground, even during the night. In spite of her pain, Jacinta forced herself to continue that penitential practice, but confided to Lucy that she could no longer touch the ground with her head because she would fall over, so she only prayed on her knees.

The Hospital in Lisbon

Our Lady again appeared to Jacinta, telling her that she would go to a hospital in Lisbon where she would suffer much more and then die alone. Jacinta was terribly frightened at the thought of dying alone, but when Lucy told her not to think about it, she replied that she wanted to, as that increased her suffering, giving her more to offer up. Her one consolation was that Our Lady had said She would come to take her to Heaven. Like St. Thérèse, the Little Flower of

Fatima resolved to spend her Heaven doing good on earth.

In February 1920, Jacinta entered a hospital in Lisbon, where she was operated upon for purulent pleurisy. Two ribs on her left side were removed using only an imperfect *local* anaesthetic that could not suppress all the pain.

During the operation her only words were: "Ouch! Jesus! Ouch! My God!" The pain was renewed each time the bandages were changed, but she was only heard to invoke Our Lady. "Patience!" she said. "We must all suffer in order to go to Heaven!" The hospital staff were greatly edified by Jacinta's behavior. They observed that she forced herself to hide her sufferings. She never complained, prayed a great deal, and her purity was such that she wept when she had to be unclothed for the surgeons.

Our Lady Comes for Jacinta

Our Lady appeared to Jacinta and told her the day and hour of her death. She died as prophesied, completely alone at 10:30 p.m. on February 20, 1920. She was nine years old. We can be sure that the Blessed Mother had come to take Her beloved daughter straight to her eternal reward! In her coffin,

four days later, her body looked asleep and beautiful, and in spite of the time it had lain exposed to the air, and the purulent nature of her illness, it emitted a perfume like fragrant flowers.

Church Bells Miraculously Tolloed

As the coffin was being taken out of the church, the church bells miraculously tolled by themselves.

Before leaving for Lisbon, Jacinta displayed her deep love for Jesus and Mary and a remarkable understanding of the revelations of Fatima in these instructions to Lucy:

*“You will remain here to make known that God wishes to establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.... Tell everybody that God grants us graces through the Immaculate Heart of Mary; that people are to ask Her for them; and that **the Heart of Jesus wants the Immaculate Heart of Mary to be venerated at His side.** Tell them also to pray to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for peace, **since God has entrusted it to Her.** If I could only put into the hearts of all, the fire that is burning within my own heart, and that makes me love the Hearts of Jesus and Mary so very much!”*

St. Louis de Montfort tells us why, in the *latter days*, Mary is to be venerated at the side of Christ. He says She has to be made known and revealed by God so that, “through Her, Jesus Christ may be known, loved and served.” This is mainly because She hid herself in this world through profound humility, “having obtained from God, the Apostles and Evangelists that She should not be made manifest.”

Mary Is God’s Masterpiece

But because She is God’s “masterpiece,” “She must be seen and recognized so that Jesus Christ may also be.”

“[F]or the greater knowledge and glory of the Most Holy Trinity,” She “must shine forth” so that She might return to the Catholic Church all the Church’s enemies and persecutors, including the Mohammedans and Jews. It is Mary Who is meant to “sustain the valiant soldiers battling for Christ.” Hence, when She is triumphant in this monumental battle for souls, She will be venerated at the side of Jesus. **FC**

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