

# Fatima's Unfinished Business

by Catherine Pearson

---

The following was a presentation given at *The Fatima Challenge Conference* in Rome on May 6, 2010.

## PART I What Is Not Done?

Hello, good evening. I want to thank Father Gruner and all the other representatives of this organization for inviting me to participate here with you as well as for all the work they have done for so many years on behalf of Our Lady of Fatima.

My topic here today is "Fatima's Unfinished Business: Not Just What, But Why".

One could hardly imagine a more auspicious setting in which to tackle the challenge of that topic than here at this conference, among you, its organizers, speakers and participants. Because it is evident from the speakers we have already heard, and from what many of them have studied and written about in the past, that this is a group able and

willing to put the story of Fatima in its proper context.

The story of Fatima is not just the story, even the remarkable and compelling true story, of the Queen of Peace coming down to earth to bring a message of peace as well as urgent admonitions to three innocent children. Nor is it simply a message meant not only for them but for the whole world, and confirmed by the irrefutable and astonishing Miracle of the Sun, witnessed by tens of thousands.

No, Fatima is all that and more. It is, as the late Father Malachi Martin pointed out, the pivotal event of the past hundred years, the lens through which the momentous struggle between good and evil for the souls of men in our time can be seen in all its formidable and frightening

reality. It is the prism through which we can see the comprehensive pattern reflected in what might otherwise seem disparate and disconnected challenges in the contemporary world – challenges in the supernatural, historical, religious, moral and geo-political spheres.

Here, at least, is a group united in its love for, and trust in, the Queen of Heaven, and in its radical desire to know the whole truth of our precarious existence, confident that whatever tribulations we may face, in the end Her Immaculate Heart will indeed triumph. Here is a group of men and women who know and love their Catholic Faith, who are loyal to the teachings of the Church and to the Holy Father, and who appreciate their Catholic history – the source of all good in contemporary civilization, whether those on the receiving end are aware of it or not.

Today so many people, so many Catholics, trying to make sense of the perils and degradations assailing their world and their families, focus on a particular arena such as liturgy or politics, or cling to the solace of particular de-

votions or movements within the Church, but are unable to see the big picture. They are looking at only a small section of the hide of the proverbial elephant. Through the lens of Fatima and with the grace of courage which the Holy Spirit does not fail to provide, we can learn to connect the dots even if we recoil from the picture that emerges.

### **Is There Unfinished Business?**

As we've all listened for these past three days, and today as well, speaker after speaker has confirmed what most of us already knew, or at least strongly suspected, from our own reading and research over many years. There is indeed unfinished business of Fatima. There is indeed unfinished business in the story of Fatima, in the mandates given to mankind and to the Holy Father by Our Blessed Lady, when She appeared to Lucy, Francisco and Jacinta in 1917, and which She and Our Lord elaborated in subsequent apparitions to Sister Lucy in her convent.

As we were reminded dramatically on Tuesday, there is unfinished business regard-



From left, Suzanne Pearson, Catherine Pearson and Father Gruner at *The Fatima Challenge*, May 2010. Catherine is the author of this thought-provoking article as well as “*Now is the Time*,” which we featured in *The Fatima Crusader* Issue 91.

ing the Third Secret. And as we have been reminded today, there is unfinished business regarding the Consecration of Russia.

The many discrepancies in regard to the Secret have not been explained. Among them:

- The dimensions and appearance of the paper on which it was written;
- The location of, and writing on, the envelopes;
- The abrupt change of position of Sister Lucy in 1989;
- The heavenly versus the allegedly human origin of the 1960 release date and of

the “O My Jesus” prayer;

- The particulars in the vision released in 2000 versus the interpretations that have been given to it;
- Whether its significance belongs to the future or entirely to the past;
- What Sister Lucy actually told Cardinal Bertone in 2000 and 2001.

One can go on and on with these minutiae, each detail put forward by the Vatican serving only to raise more unanswered questions. And, of course, there is the piece of unfinished business regard-

ing the Secret that no one can credibly deny: the withholding of the words of Our Lady. This is clear both from intrinsic and extrinsic evidence:

- There is the unstated content of the famous “etc.”;
- There is the fact that the comment about faith in Portugal has no connection to preceding subjects and can only relate to what follows;
- There is the fact that Our Lady felt it necessary to explain the vision of hell, which by Lucy’s description was no doubt clear from the “video” aspect even if there had been no “audio” to explain it; yet we are to believe that Our Mother saw no need to explain the vision of the “Bishop dressed in White,” which we know, from the many interpretations already offered for it, is not self-explanatory;
- There are the specific references to Our Lady’s “words” by those who have read the Secret – not only Sister Lucy herself, but also Cardinal Ottaviani (and, notably, by the spokesman for Pope John XXIII, who, in explaining his decision

not to release the text, said that “although the Church recognizes the Fatima apparitions, she does not pledge herself to guarantee the veracity of the words which the three little shepherds claim to have heard from Our Lady”).

And there is also the fact that descriptions of the content of the Third Secret, made prior to 2000 by persons known to have read it, point to elements that were not in the vision. We have comments from Cardinals Ottaviani, Oddi, Ciappi, and then-Cardinal Ratzinger, as well as from Father Malachi Martin (who said he was shown it by Cardinal Bea at the time Pope John decided not to release it), and not least from Pope John Paul II himself in 1980. Without betraying the verbatim text, all these readers of the Secret have testified to content that is compatible with the vision released in 2000 but that is definitely not contained in it.

While the whole truth about the Secret cannot be known with certainty – after all, it is a secret – one might think that there would be little room for doubt in the

case of the Consecration of Russia. Over and over again, until 1989, Sister Lucy insisted on three conditions to fulfill Our Lady's request for the Consecration of Russia: (1) that Russia be specifically named as the country being consecrated; (2) that it be done in a public and solemn manner; and (3) that the Pope must perform the consecration together with all the Catholic bishops of the world.

If one takes those conditions literally, it is simply a matter of historical record that no consecration has been done that fulfills them:

- Russia has never been mentioned by name except in an apostolic letter sent by Pope Pius XII to the peoples of Russia in 1952. The text included a statement of consecration, but no ceremony had taken place.
- Public consecrations by several Popes, although seemingly done in response to the request of Our Lady of Fatima, were consecrations of the world, not of Russia or any other particular country.
- And while several of these consecrations involved many bishops, none came

close to involving all the bishops in the world.

Because the consecration manifestly has not been done per Our Lady's instructions, the debate has tended to shift to the question of whether whatever was done instead was close enough to count, from God's point of view.

Cardinal Bertone reported that during his lengthy interviews with Sister Lucy in 2001, she told him that "the consecration desired by Our Lady was made in 1984 and has been accepted in Heaven." While the first half of that sentence is impossible to reconcile fully with her long-standing insistence that Russia must be named, the latter point that it has been accepted in Heaven is not totally at odds with a position she had taken all along: that God and the Blessed Mother welcome even flawed attempts to comply with Her wishes, even if they fall short of fulfilling Her requests and thus of bringing the promised benefits. For instance, Sister Lucy insisted that Pius XII's 1942 consecration of the world helped bring World War II to an end, even as many today (and perhaps Sister Lucy her-

self) credited John Paul's 1984 consecration with helping to bring about the collapse of Soviet Communism.

As great as those blessings are, however, they are not the conversion of Russia nor the period of peace that Our Lady promised if the Holy Father would consecrate Russia as She requested. Nor do they fit the scenario Our Lord had painted for Sister Lucy so long ago: a conversion of Russia so dramatic indeed – and following so directly on the Pope's consecration of that nation – that it would convince the entire Church worldwide of Mary's power and of the importance of devotion to Her Immaculate Heart.

Yet it is possible that by the 1980s, the Holy Father and even Lucy herself had resigned themselves to the conclusion that nothing more was possible in our time. Even in the first years of his pontificate, John Paul II had told an audience in Germany that it was too late to avert the tribulations that Our Lady of Fatima had warned of, and that these could only be mitigated, especially by praying the Rosary.

So perhaps Sister Lucy could consistently maintain: a) that the consecration to which Mary's original promises had been attached had not been done and perhaps could no longer be done, but; b) that a form of consecration that God found acceptable under the circumstances had been done and that significant blessings would flow from it. This is not implausible considering that ours is a merciful God who, even in the Old Testament, demanded the conversion of a whole city but was ready to settle for ten people.

One can almost envision Pope John Paul – who considered himself the “Fatima Pope,” who felt such gratitude toward Our Lady and so clearly rested his pontificate in Her maternal arms – saying in effect, “Here it is, Mother; it's the best You're going to get.” And Holy Mary bestowing the blessings such as we have seen to date with the words, “Here it is, dear son; it's the best you're going to get.” And then both of them looking into each other's eyes and Our Lady adding through tears, “But if only you knew how much more I wanted to give



you.”

But must we settle for half a loaf? Should we not aspire to obtain all the blessings Our Lady promised? Should we not do everything in our power to avert the calamities She warned of and to which Our Lord alluded in mentioning the fate of the King of France? Though Our Lord said it would be late, perhaps it is not yet too late. The earnest desire of those here present that our Holy Father should indeed consecrate Russia by name, requiring all the bishops to join him, flows naturally from the answer to the last of our factual questions: Does the evidence show that Russia has been converted?

As we heard convincingly this morning, one can only infer from observing the real-world evidence that the consecration has not taken place, because – despite the very possible causal relationship between Pope John Paul’s 1984 consecration and the collapse of Communism in the Soviet bloc five years later – it is impossible to support the thesis that the conversion of Russia has already taken place. By almost every criterion – whether in religious

practice, individual morals, popular culture, freedom of religion, accountability in government, or pursuit of peace – the current situation in Russia, as we heard earlier today, is in some ways as bad or nearly as bad, and in some ways even worse, than when the Soviet regime still governed.

### **But Why Not Do It?**

Despite Vatican efforts to close the book on Fatima speculation, the controversy has continued unabated. But most of the argumentation has focused on establishing the “what” of controversial Fatima issues – where does the truth lie regarding the Secret, the Consecration, all those issues I’ve just listed? But in a real sense, those questions have now been answered. While obviously not answered in every detail, nor answered to the satisfaction of sceptics within the Vatican or in the outside world, nevertheless in an objective sense, by those who have spent the time to research them, the key points are settled. Indeed, I can only imagine how frustrating it must be to many in this room who have been

trying for decades to get the Vatican to acknowledge the simple facts that their own research established long ago.

But in many ways the most important question we have to ask ourselves is not just “what,” but “why.” Or perhaps I should say: “Why not? Why not just release the text of the Secret? Why not just consecrate Russia by name?”

---

### Releasing the Full Secret

---

I’ll leave for another occasion most of the “whys” about the Secret, though they are intriguing and important. In fact, I must digress there just for a moment. We must wonder, for instance, why the spokesman for Pope John XXIII said that the Secret would not only not be released in 1960, but most probably “will remain forever under absolute seal.” Why would Cardinal Ottaviani say that it would be sent to “one of those archives that are like a well” where it would “sink deeply into the dark, black depths”? Why did Pope John Paul II say in 1982 that the Secret could be “misinterpreted,” and Cardinal Ratzinger say in 1985 that its premature

release could result in “sensationalism” – both well after the Pope’s recovery from the 1981 assassination attempt?

The possibility that the Secret might paint an unflattering picture of contemporary churchmen or warn of dire chastisements to come – one or both of which have been suggested by actual readers of the Fatima Secret – does not seem in itself a likely reason for suppressing the message. After all, other approved apparitions have been equally unsparing – La Salette warning of apostasy among the hierarchy and Akita warning both of that and of dire physical chastisements, including “fire falling from the sky,” killing “a great part of humanity.” Then-Cardinal Ratzinger indeed stated that the Message of Fatima is similar to those of other Marian apparitions and specifically Akita.

It may well be that the release of such a warning in the much more publicized case of Fatima could have more widespread repercussions than the same warnings in lesser-known apparitions, even causing panic among the faithful, as some have feared.



**Giuseppe De Carli, co-author of Cardinal Bertone's book *The Last Secret of Fatima*, was willing to come forward to try to defend his position at *The Fatima Challenge*. De Carli learned many facts from *The Fatima Challenge* that had apparently been**



**withheld from him. On his departure, he warmly embraced Father Gruner and said: "Thank you, Father Gruner, for the great work you are doing." On May 11 and 13, 2010, just a few days after he came to *The Fatima Challenge*, he heard Pope Benedict XVI tell him and the whole world, "Anyone who thinks the prophetic mission of Fatima is over is deceiving himself." On July 13, 2010, Mr. De Carli passed away. Please join us in praying for the repose of his soul.**

Pope John Paul II himself, during a candid exchange with German intellectuals in 1980, questioned whether the publication of the Fatima Message – if it indeed referred to tidal waves and millions of fatalities, as some had speculated – would be desirable. But just as he went on, moments later, to urge that we must prepare for great trials and even martyrdom, and must intensify recourse to the Rosary, one might also conclude that depriving the faithful of heavenly warnings, even frightening ones, would unfairly deprive them of the

impetus they might need in order to prepare.

Fear of alarming people does not then, on balance, seem an obvious reason for second-guessing the Mother of God, who asked that the Secret be made known, just not before 1960.

It's possible, though, that there were narrower, more specific reasons. In the same meeting, Pope John Paul II said that his "predecessors in the Petrine Office diplomatically preferred to postpone publication so as not to encourage the world power of Communism to make certain

moves." Similarly, Cardinal Ottaviani had said in 1967 that the Secret was something so delicate that it was necessary to avoid letting it "fall into alien hands". As late as 1996, Cardinal Ratzinger echoed the concept of "strategic postponement," saying that "divulging of the Secret should be done only when it will not be able to create one-sidedness and disequilibrium."

Malachi Martin was one of those who placed such concerns in a geopolitical and even military context. The "world power of Communism" to which Pope John Paul II referred was not something Fr. Martin felt had dissipated in 1989, and he considered it entirely possible that recent Popes have feared that an untimely release of the Third Secret of Fatima would endanger the West by exposing its vulnerabilities to its enemies, because there is some highly sensitive factual information in the specific words of Our Lady.

That startling scenario, if true, would explain why the Secret has been handled so gingerly, almost as an item of military intelligence,

and placed seemingly in the personal portfolio of the Secretary of State, an otherwise odd disposition of matters concerning miracles and apparitions.

Without knowing the answers to all our "whys" and "why nots" about the Secret, it is impossible to say with absolute certainty that the reason or reasons the Holy See has not released the full text of the Secret are not good reasons, perhaps good enough even to justify the course they have chosen.

**What we can say is that the current position of pretending that the unreleased Secret does not exist is one that cannot be sustained forever, and that in and of itself damages the credibility of the Holy See.**

And we can also say that whatever prudential conditions during the past fifty years may have counseled against the release of the Secret were surely foreseen in 1917 by Our Lady, and that making the leap of trust to do what She asked, whatever its apparent costs and risks, may well be less risky and less costly than the consequences of not doing what She asked.

---

## Consecrating Russia By Name

---

Today, however, I would like to focus most directly on the Consecration of Russia. This is an act to which the almost unimaginable blessings of compliance and the dire consequences of non-compliance are specifically attached. Unlike the Secret, its entire contents are already known. There is no potentially damaging strategic information to fear placing in the wrong hands, nothing unflattering about apostasy or immorality in the Church that one might fear would cause scandal.

It seems such a simple request, such a modest, innocent request on the part of Our Mother, to perform a happy ceremony in which She is honored in a special way by consecrating to Her Immaculate Heart a country for which She has shown Her maternal affection often throughout history, and where She has long been honored in art, in popular piety, and in the liturgical life of the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church as well.

One has to ask, even if it were sort of done before, or

really done before, or isn't absolutely necessary, or we can be sure Our Mother is willing to settle for less ...

### Why not do it anyway?

What's the downside? What harm would it do? Why has it been held for seventy years as something absolutely out of the question? Unspeakable even, or unthinkable? Why?

This has seemed to me to be an important issue to explore, not in order to cast blame – **but to try to identify what these mysterious impediments might be, the better to work to have them removed.**

In this context I think it is also important to keep in mind the scenario I've just painted with respect to the fear of divulging the Secret. If there are global enemies in whose hands the Secret of Fatima could be used to unleash great harm on mankind, might not the same shadowy forces be in a position to threaten the Vatican with retaliation for the Consecration of Russia? I'm not asking you to accept this scenario as a reality, but just to keep it in mind as a possibility. Meanwhile, let's take a look at some other reasons that might explain the reluctance of the Popes to

consecrate Russia by name as Our Lady requested.

**One theory turns on the reliability of Sister Lucy's testimony** – as to what Our Lady originally requested and the specific response it requires. If Vatican sources doubted Sister Lucy's credibility in relaying Our Lady's request, it would undermine any sense of certainty or urgency about doing any consecration at all. And if they doubted her credibility in relaying Our Lady's promises, they might fear a potential loss of face for the Church if the Holy Father made a point to follow the Fatima formula exactly and no conversion of Russia or period of peace followed.

That such concerns might arise in the case of private or even semi-public revelations is a given. It is precisely to avoid exposure to that type of scandal that the Church refrains from endorsing reported apparitions before they have ended, the prophecies of mystics before they have been validated by history, or the sanctity of holy persons while they are still alive. That could perhaps explain why the Secret was buried in 1960 and given a retroactive spin in 2000.

But this explanation – the credibility concern – does not hold up under scrutiny in the case of Fatima. It was the spectacular Miracle of the Sun in 1917, and the chilling accuracy of Our Lady of Fatima's predictions concerning World Wars I and II and the Cold War, that already led numerous Popes to a far more public embrace of Fatima than the usual rule of prudence for phenomena-in-progress would allow. And in fact, the Vatican claim that the consecrations of the world have already fulfilled Mary's request already exposes it to the challenge of proving Mary's request. So why should consecrating Russia create any new risk in that regard?

If the Holy See, under a whole succession of pontificates, really questioned the Fatima phenomenon, wanted to close the book, discourage popular interest, etc., there are numerous ways it could do this. But far from distancing themselves from this "private revelation," the Popes have openly embraced it with public prayers, granting of indulgences, instituting the universal Feast of the Immaculate Heart and the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima on May 13,

visits to the Fatima Shrine, and in correspondence or visits with Sister Lucy. And several have carried out consecrations clearly in response to Our Lady's Fatima requests:

- In 1942 Pius XII publicly consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, making an allusion that could be interpreted as referring to Russia. And later, in the encyclical *Ad Caeli Reginam*, he directed all the bishops of the world to join him in renewing that consecration in 1954.
- In 1952, responding to a request by Russian Catholics, Pius XII consecrated the peoples of Russia to the Immaculate Heart, but in an apostolic letter without ceremony or bishops.
- During the 1954 Marian year, having invited the bishops to join him, Pius XII renewed the 1942 consecration.
- At the closing of the 1964 session of the Vatican Council, Pope Paul renewed Pius XII's consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart and entrusted the entire Church to Her care.
- Pope John Paul II, who

publicly credited Our Lady of Fatima for saving his life during the 1981 assassination attempt, consecrated the world to Her Immaculate Heart during his convalescence in 1981 and again very publicly in 1982 at Fatima.

- Again in 1984, John Paul II consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, inviting all bishops to join him. Some, but by no means all, bishops did take part in simultaneous celebrations in various basilicas around the world.
- Finally, in October 2000, Pope John Paul II, again in a very public ceremony with nearly fifteen hundred bishops present, "entrusted" the "world" to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This despite the Vatican's firm policy since 1989 of insisting that everyone, including Sister Lucy, acknowledge that the 1984 consecration had already satisfied Our Lady's requests.

We can learn several things from this series of efforts: (1) the Popes have not hesitated to publicly embrace the apparition and Message of Fatima;

(2) the Popes haven't considered it embarrassing to do the consecration again just because it has been done before; and (3) the Popes have been concerned each time that they haven't really accomplished what the consecration requires.

Perhaps the world at large, even the Fatima followers, would long since have given up on ever seeing the unfolding of Mary's three-part scenario (the Consecration of Russia, the conversion of Russia and the era of world peace) if the Popes themselves, especially Pius XII and John Paul II, had not seemed so earnestly to desire it, even when unable to bring themselves to take the needed steps to make it happen. If it clearly had been done right the first time, why did each of them keep trying to do it over again and again, at least three times each? Why did Pope John Paul II, less than a week after the 1982 consecration, explain the failure to mention Russia with the words, quoted in *L'Osservatore Romano*, that he "tried to do everything possible in the concrete circumstances"? Two years later, why did he feel compelled

to add, after completing the consecration formula in 1984, an extra prayer that was not in the script: "Enlighten especially the people whose consecration and entrusting You, Yourself, are awaiting from us," much as Pius XII had included a veiled allusion to an unnamed Russia in his world consecration of 1942?

Why did John Paul II feel he had to do still another consecration in 2000, after the Vatican had been insisting since 1989 that the '84 consecration had accomplished everything that was needed? Why did both these Pontiffs repeatedly send high-level emissaries to question Sister Lucy about what, exactly, Our Lady had required? And why did John Paul II repeatedly ask close aides, after one or the other of his world consecrations, whether they thought that what he had done had satisfied Our Lady's conditions for the Consecration of Russia?

Clearly these Popes sensed that more was needed; they wished to comply but felt they could not. They tried to do as much as they possibly could without mentioning Russia by name – the invis-





Above (left to right), Father Gruner, John Vennari, Christopher Ferrara and John Salza during *The Fatima Challenge* Crossfire panel on the topic: “Conversion of Russia’ Means Conversion to the Catholic Faith.” Don’t miss reading the transcript of their responses, beginning on [page 17](#).

ible line they dared not cross. Reasons of prudence, apparently, made that impossible. In light of that history, iden-

tifying, revisiting and reassessing those reasons is more important than ever.

## PART II

### Why Have They Not Done it?

In the September 2008 issue of *Inside the Vatican*, my article “Now is the Time,” that some of you have seen, pointed out that fear seems to be the major animating force behind the Vatican’s policy on the Consecration of Russia. Pope John Paul II began his pontificate with the exhortation to the faithful that became, in a sense, his motto, “Be not afraid.” But “afraid”

is precisely the term that the Vatican’s reaction to the thought of consecrating Russia by name, from the 1930s right down to today, seems to elicit. So we have to ask ourselves, “Just what are they afraid of?”

#### Six Possible Fears

In considering what fears might be holding the Popes

back from consecrating Russia by name – and we can probably boil them down to no more than half a dozen – it is important to remember that we are looking at potential impediments on two levels. There are fears that might be a factor in the thinking of the Holy Father himself; and there are those that might motivate others in the Vatican who are in a position to promote, expedite, delay or derail a papal action such as a collegial Consecration of Russia.

#### **First Fear:**

We have already seen that, over the past decades, the Popes have not hesitated to associate the Church and their own persons with the Fatima apparition, nor feared to undertake consecrations in response to Our Lady's requests. They have evidently not feared that they were exposing the Church to unacceptable embarrassment in the event their actions produced no results, or that the credibility of prior consecrations would be undermined by doing another. We do not know to what extent such concerns on the part of other Vatican officials may have de-

layed or diluted the actions taken by the Popes, or whether doing the consecration in a manner meticulously fulfilling all of Our Lady's requirements – consecrating Russia by name in a solemn public ceremony in which all the bishops participate – would raise the expectation stakes to the point that the Holy Father or his bureaucracy would fear the loss of credibility if no dramatic conversion of Russia followed. But we know that they have been willing to attach that risk to partial consecrations in which the likelihood of a disappointing outcome would in fact be greater. So let's eliminate, for now, this first possible fear, the fear of disappointing results.

#### **Second Fear:**

A second fear, and the one that was probably the predominant one during the Soviet era, is the fear that if one were to publicly consecrate Russia, retaliation by the Soviet regime would follow. Many people at the time very rightly believed that the Communists' terrible persecution of Christians, and especially Catholics, would get even worse if the Holy See

did anything to provoke the Russians.

### Third Fear:

Now, supposedly anyway, the threat from the Soviet government is no longer with us, but today a third fear, another kind of fear emanating from Russia, is often mentioned – the fear of offending the members or leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church.

### **A Real Impediment – But Is It the Real Reason?**

This third fear – the fear of offending the Orthodox – is more than speculation; it is probably the most widely expressed current explanation among those conceding there's a Vatican taboo against mentioning Russia in a consecration. And we know that it has affected the Church in the past. Certainly that concern loomed large in the mind of Pope John XXIII, who was keen on securing Russian Orthodox participation in the Vatican Council, and this concern was reflected in the policy of accommodation toward the Soviet bloc that his successor Pope Paul VI also supported before and after his elevation to the Chair of Peter. The same logic that underlay

their lamented promise that Vatican II in its documents would not contain any condemnation of Communism, might also serve to rule out a Consecration of Russia.

Communism has now supposedly bitten the dust, but keeping Catholic-Orthodox reconciliation on a fast track has continued to be a major concern of both John Paul II and Benedict XVI. As *Inside the Vatican* reported in November 2000, a leading Cardinal, one of John Paul II's closest advisors, stated off the record that the Pope had been counseled not to make mention of Russia in any consecration ceremony because it would offend the Orthodox. Just three or four years ago, a high-level Vatican source said privately that the Orthodox themselves had flat-out told their Catholic counterparts that any mention of Russia in a consecration would bring all dialogue between the Holy See and the Russian Orthodox Church to a screeching halt.

If that is true, it may solve the long mystery of why no Popes – no matter how Fatima-minded – have dared to consecrate Russia by name. In light of the remarkable

improvement in Catholic-Orthodox relations that we see unfolding in this pontificate, the pressure to avoid offending the Orthodox and precipitating such a tragic setback may be stronger now than ever. But if that's what's blocking the Fatima consecration, it just takes the mystery to a new level. Why should the Consecration of Russia offend the Orthodox?

A consecration of a country, after all, is not an anathema or an exorcism. It is an invocation of a special blessing and protection. That Mary should single out a particular nation for such an honor is a sign of Her special maternal affection. When Our Lord told St. Margaret Mary to get the King of France to consecrate that nation to His Sacred Heart, France was a Catholic country that treasured its title as "eldest daughter of the Church." This request came long before the Revolution and Reign of Terror revealed the types of problems against which the consecration might have protected that nation had it been carried out ahead of time. When Sister Lucy conveyed to the bishops of Portugal Our Lady's request

for an episcopal consecration of that country – a separate request not to be confused with Her request for the Consecration of Russia – the Portuguese bishops happily complied. Many believed that that act brought great blessings and protection to Portugal for years to come, including sparing that nation from involvement in either the Spanish Civil War or World War II.

One might expect that any nation that honors the Blessed Mother would consider it an enviable privilege to be uniquely selected for such a dignity by Holy Mary Herself. The Russian Orthodox do honor Mary, and while they may not accept the Fatima miracle and Message as such, unlike some so-called "branches of Christianity", they do believe that She can and does intervene personally in human history. Their own tradition is rich with officially accepted Marian miracles and private revelations, often associated with particular icons.

So, if theological issues do not appear to pose an impediment, why might the Fatima consecration offend the

Russian Orthodox? This is important to explore, because, if the real underlying issues can be identified and addressed openly, perhaps they can be resolved together on the basis of reason, good will and true dialogue. Perhaps, then, the impediment can be removed, rather than the benefits of the consecration forfeited.

One reason might be national pride. Would the Russian Orthodox be insulted as Russians by the suggestion that they need to convert more than the people of other nations do? Our Lady's request for the Consecration of Russia came in the context of discussing not only its need for conversion (something which all people, even those in the state of grace, need to strive for constantly) but also its future errors, persecutions, and responsibility for wars, martyrdom, and annihilation of nations. Would this context make the consecration seem like a rebuke or exorcism, even though it is not so by its own nature?

This would be understandable but is not a likely explanation. Since those latter evils are so widely identified with Soviet communism

rather than with the Russians as a people, it would seem that Orthodox Christians – many of whom also suffered greatly under the Soviet regime – would more likely see any rebuke as directed toward their former oppressors rather than to themselves. It should be possible to make clear that being consecrated to Our Lady – whether by oneself or someone else – does nothing to limit the freedom of an individual or a nation, and serves only to make them the special beneficiaries of the loving protection of the Mother of God. This thought might be anathema to an atheist regime, but could not be a more natural honor for a culture as steeped in Marian devotion as Russia, and Russian Orthodoxy, have been. Indeed, it is the Russian Orthodox Church that has always promoted the idea that “Holy Russia” has inherited a truly unique role in Christendom and salvation history. In a sense, Our Lady of Fatima's request confirms and validates that belief. Indeed, one definition of the word “consecrate” is to “set apart” as sacred. Being a nation thus set apart by the Fatima consecration

resonates perfectly with the Russian tradition. On the other hand, that meaning of the word is lost entirely when the whole world is consecrated.

If, then, the idea of being consecrated to Our Lady is not likely to offend Russian Orthodox as Russians, is the idea of being consecrated by the Roman Pontiff likely to offend them as Orthodox? It could be a simple turf issue. Because of the numerical and historical preeminence of the Orthodox Church in Russia, it is possible that they would regard any Papal action specifically about Russia as presumptuous, as an invasion of Orthodox turf. At a deeper level, it is possible that any Catholic prayers aimed at “the conversion of Russia” – especially in this post-Soviet era when some feel it has already converted from Communism – would be opposed as aiming at a conversion from Orthodoxy to Catholicism.

The latter, though a perfectly appropriate desire and prayer intention on the part of Catholics, would understandably be a sensitive point for the Orthodox. This, even more than the “turf” issue, is

a potential objection that truly affects the Russian Orthodox not simply as Russians but as Orthodox, and relations between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches as distinct religious entities and thus as potential rivals for the hearts of the faithful. Given the Vatican’s long-time goal of reconciliation with the Orthodox, the current challenge of declining Western civilization that cries out for the joint witness of a reunited Church, and the very promising developments in recent months in relations between the Vatican and the Russian Orthodox Church, one can readily understand the Holy Father’s reluctance to do anything that would derail that process.

But the unresolved differences between the two Churches, and thus their potential rivalry for the soul of Russia, were not caused by Fatima, and refusing the Fatima consecration will not make them go away. Indeed, in my article in *Inside the Vatican*, I made the case for a startling conclusion – that the potential of Fatima to unite the great Eastern and Western branches of Christianity is



Ed Faust delivering a speech on “Fatima and Catholic Spirituality” at *The Fatima Challenge*. An excerpt of his speech begins on [page 88](#). In the foreground you will see our television cameras videotaping the speeches and providing close-to-live coverage on the Web at [[www.fatimachallenge.com](http://www.fatimachallenge.com)]. Conference talks are also available on DVD from the Fatima Center. See information for ordering on [pages 75](#) and [95](#) of this issue.



much greater than its potential for further dividing them.

The tragedy of the Great Schism is that the Catholic and Orthodox Churches are so close in belief, in prayer, in culture, in devotion, in liturgical and sacramental life, and yet for all these centuries have remained divided. Both trace their theology and hierarchy to apostolic roots. Their creeds differ in only a handful out of countless articles of faith. They call together on common saints who shared their millennium of joint history. Their liturgical practices – especially looking at the Orthodox alongside Catholicism’s Eastern Rites – would be hard for casual

outsiders to differentiate. The exalted position of the Mother of God – not only in theology, personal piety, and art, but even in the practical experience of Her intervention in history and in the lives of men – is a powerful unifying dimension that the Catholic and Orthodox Churches share. Yet the unity both profess to desire has eluded them. Ironically, they cannot get closer together, not in spite of, but because of, the fact that they are so close already.

If the Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches were Protestant denominations, Christian splinter groups, theological movements, or

gatherings of self-ordained ministers, they could sit around a table and rethink their doctrines and compromise their differences, because all those are entities created by human beings. But neither the Orthodox churches nor the Catholic Church feel they have the right to compromise on doctrine, worship or jurisdiction. Each Church professes that it has faithfully transmitted authentic Christian doctrine from apostolic times, that its liturgy has developed organically from the beginning, and that the authority claimed and exercised by its hierarchy are rights and responsibilities of unbroken apostolic derivation.

These claims to immutable truth and authority stand in such striking contrast to the rest of the Christian world that they should create a powerful bond between Catholic and Orthodox, pulling them together. And they do, but only to the point where both, to be faithful, must insist that further compromise is impossible. It is clear that such an impasse cannot be broken by mere human means.

Enter Our Lady of Fatima,

promising to convert Russia. At first blush, She appears to be treading on the very ground from which the Orthodox would recoil. But there is not a Catholic Mary and an Orthodox Mary; there is just one Mother of God, to whom both have had recourse throughout Christian history, and to whom both can look with entire confidence. What type of conversion does God seek from Russia? Catholics and Orthodox would no doubt answer that question differently if asked, but the beauty of Fatima is that no one has to figure out, decide or agree on what type of conversion She had in mind, in order to fulfill Her requests and claim Her promises.

The key is in the actual wording of Our Lady of Fatima's request and promise:

"I shall come to ask for the Consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart ... If My requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. ... The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

Notice who gets which

tasks. Mary does not say to the Holy Father or to anyone else, "If you convert Russia, I will bring peace." Instead, not just once but twice, She says: "If you consecrate Russia, Russia will be converted." It leaves it to Her to solve the question of what kind of conversion they are supposed to have.

Let us suppose that Russia is consecrated by the Pope together with all the Catholic bishops, just as Our Lady requested. Catholics and Orthodox alike will be able to take their cue for conforming to the will of God in their relations by watching what happens next. It could be any or some or all of the following:

- Perhaps very visible changes will occur in the public arena – a different standard of public service, an end to every type of abuse of authority, flowering of social justice, emergence of harmonious institutions of governance, reconciliation between regions and ethnic groups, disappearance of political corruption and organized crime, international policies reflecting a deep-seated commitment to peace by civilian and

military alike, and honoring of God in the public square.

- Perhaps, instead, the change will be at the individual level, a moral transformation prompting Russians to turn with loathing from vices such as abortion and pornography and drunkenness, stirring great longing for chastity and lifelong marital commitment, revolutionizing the conduct of business and education, elevating the level of unselfishness reflected by acts of charity and desire for children, and cementing all the above with a flowering of faith and religious fervor.
- Perhaps Orthodox leaders and ordinary faithful will indeed suddenly find themselves seized with a desire to reconcile with Rome and no longer feel an impediment to submitting to Papal authority and magisterial teaching.

Or perhaps a religious revival in Russia will bring a surge of vocations, a rebirth of monasticism, and greatly increased participation in the liturgy and the sacraments, not only among

Catholic Russians but also, or even especially, among the Orthodox, making it clear to both that Heaven looks with favor on Russian Orthodoxy.

The conversion of Russia, whatever form it took, would cause mankind to look with great hope for fulfillment of the next promise – the era of peace – and would surely also have the result that Our Lord told Sister Lucy was its ultimate purpose: a great outpouring of gratitude and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. And such a dramatic turnaround in the religious and moral life of the people and government of Russia, following quickly upon the Pope's consecration, will give cues needed both by Catholics and Orthodox about the direction in which the Holy Spirit is trying to lead them. We know as Catholics that the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit, and I am confident that the Orthodox also – if they really believed that a certain course was what God and His Holy Mother desired – would want to move in that direction.

On reflection, then, there is no real reason why the Orthodox should oppose a

papal Consecration of Russia. There is no downside for them. If the gesture were in fact empty, meaningless, inappropriate and/or not a fulfillment of a genuine heavenly request, or brought no visible results, it would have no impact at all. But if in fact God does will it, and it results in any or all of the types of conversion in Russia that I described earlier, it would prove to have been an inestimable blessing for the Russian people, for Orthodox-Catholic relations, and for the entire world.

So I think, in a certain way, that while fear of offending the Orthodox is the reason most often given today for the Vatican's reluctance to consecrate Russia by name, I suspect that this fear – Number 3 on the list I've been presenting – may be a red herring. I think the issue is real. I think it's important to elicit a response from Russian Orthodox leaders, so that we can either deal with it substantively if it's an impediment, or put it behind us if it's a red herring. But meanwhile we also need to examine some of the other possible impediments, other fears that may be impeding a

decision to proceed with the Consecration of Russia.

## Impediments Within the Church

### The Fourth and Fifth Fears:

Some of these reflect opposition arising within the Church herself. Let's talk about two that come to mind, the fourth and fifth potential fears. I mentioned earlier the possible fear that Mary wouldn't deliver, and why I believe that that concern can safely be dismissed. Another possible source of opposition would be from those within the Church who, on the contrary, fear that such a consecration would do too much rather than too little. Certainly, during the century that separates us from Our Lady's apparitions at Fatima, there have unquestionably been those within the Church who have opposed any "over-emphasis" on Fatima, and who might fear that an attempted Consecration of Russia – even, or even especially, one with dramatic results – would send the wrong theological message or elevate the wrong factions in the Church, from their perspective. Those who want the

Church to soft-pedal piety, mysticism, Marian devotion, fear of hell, reparation and sacrifice, conversion of sinners – in short, Mary's whole agenda – would understandably feel threatened by Our Lady of Fatima. These are the Fatima-obstructors that one might legitimately refer to as "enemies of Our Lady," as opposed to Her sons who are held back merely by ignorance, misunderstanding or timidity.

I do not believe that the Holy Father, past or present, is among such persons, but I do not doubt that some exist within the Vatican bureaucracy and among the bishops. One presumes that any self-professed Catholic, even those promoting a contrary agenda, would not take it so far as to deliberately deny peace to the world, but of course they would not believe, in any event, that Our Lady would be capable of bringing about peace by the means She described.

But besides such doubters of Our Lady, we also know that some administrative and pastoral positions in the Church are in fact occupied by out-and-out non-believers,

whether moles planted there by enemies of the Church or simply errant sons who have lost the faith. It is possible that such wolves in sheep's clothing are in positions enabling them to argue against and obstruct the Consecration of Russia. One can only hope and pray that they are few in number and declining in influence.

The fact that it might take more than simply the desire of the Holy Father to consecrate Russia brings us to the fifth potential fear: What if it is objectively not possible to fulfill Our Lady's condition that all the Catholic bishops of the world participate in the consecration? What if a consecration mentioning Russia by name were scheduled, with all the Catholic bishops directed to participate, but some of them refused? Sister Lucy had indicated that some leeway was possible for bishops prevented from participating by a hostile government or other hindrance, but clearly a deliberate boycott could vitiate the entire exercise. If indeed the Vatican believes it would pay a price in the geopolitical or ecumenical arenas if it chose to consecrate Russia by name, much less

would it be willing to take this risk if it could not deliver what Mary requested in any event.

A number of different solutions to that potential problem have been suggested. For instance, the Holy Father could announce in advance that any diocesan bishop who refused to participate had ipso facto submitted his resignation and it had been accepted, leaving his See vacant. This is a ready option but one that any Pope would regard with grave misgivings, especially not knowing the extent of the potential disobedience. As late as 1987, Cardinal Stickler said that the consecration had not been done, and that the uncertainty about assuring participation by all the bishops was the reason. John Paul II was also known to have concerns about this.

The fear is not an idle one when one considers that, sadly, some bishops are almost certainly numbered among the wolves in sheep's clothing just mentioned. But if the Holy Father were determined to proceed with a Fatima-compliant Consecration of Russia and recalcitrant bishops were the only impediment, I am confident that le-



gal minds within the Church could fashion an appropriate technical solution. The fact that this question is little discussed points to a lack of urgency to solve the problem. This is as one would expect as long as fears of external consequences continue to rule out consecrating Russia by name in any event.

[**Note of Publisher:** We write to the bishops every month. There are less than ten who have the boldness to say they would not obey.]

### **Could There Really Be Some External Threat?**

#### **The Sixth Fear:**

That brings us to our last fear scenario. What if a threat from an external source is in fact the mysterious impediment preventing the Vatican from consecrating Russia by name?

This is not as unthinkable as one might imagine. In fact, until 1989 it was the most widely accepted explanation. As I mentioned earlier, until the collapse of the Soviet Union, many assumed that fear of retaliation by the Soviet government prevented the Church from acting in a forthright manner on anything to do with Russia. Certainly Fatima's prophetic

description of Russia's destructive role in 20th Century history is something which the Russian government of that time might well have found offensive. The vulnerability of Christians within Soviet territory gave them means as well as motive to do harm in retaliation. As late as Pope John Paul II's 1984 consecration, this fear may well have stopped the mention of Russia. Now, in the post-Soviet era, this explanation is harder to sustain.

The external threat, however, may not have gone away. One potential concern is the possibility that the Soviet threat might not be as dead as people think. All the prudential reasons that applied during the Soviet era would still be applicable if experts within the Vatican believed that the potential for the retaliation from that quarter still exists. A small but intellectually respectable minority in world opinion does advocate a need to be wary of a sleeping Soviet tiger. Some critics, including former KGB agent Anatoliy Golitsyn, go so far as to allege that the entire drama of change in the Soviet Union in 1989 was a choreographed

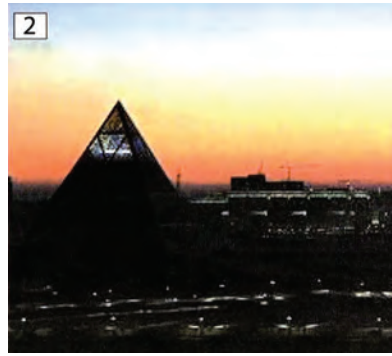
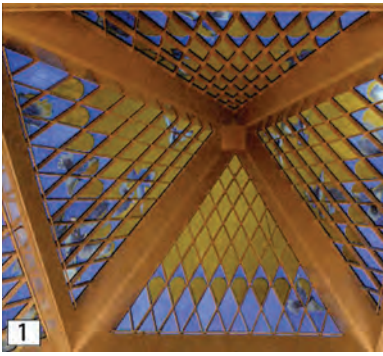
deception designed to lull the West into complacency. While every indication suggests that the Vatican policymakers believe that the collapse of Soviet Communism was a genuine and perhaps Heaven-sent breakthrough, it is not beyond possibility that their public stance masks private concern. If indeed there are still threats from that quarter, they would have to be taken seriously.

Finally, we must keep in mind that the threat need not come from within Russia for the naming of Russia in a Fatima consecration to be its trigger point. Nor – after a century in which the “errors of Russia” have indeed spread throughout the world – can we necessarily assume that the forces most powerfully arrayed on behalf of those errors in today’s world all operate out of Russian territory.

We know that Mary has real enemies, if only the infernal ones mentioned in Scripture. It should not surprise us if at least some of those seeking to delay or prevent the Consecration of Russia by name were motivated not by fear of failure

or of collateral damage to the Church but were literally working at cross-purposes to Our Lady. They would seek to prevent compliance with Mary’s wishes because they truly don’t want the conversion of Russia, the coming of true peace to the world, or the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. These, if any such do exist, would be enemies the Vatican recognizes as such, but dares not offend for the same reasons one might obey a blackmailer or terrorist hostage-taker. Unlike the former USSR, though perhaps including it, these enemies need not have any particular stake in Russia as such. They just have a stake in destroying the Catholic Church.

Like the anti-Marian ideologues within the Church, these external enemies could act from within by positioning themselves in places where they can manipulate the thoughts and fears of others, reinforcing the perception that the Consecration of Russia is something that would be problematic in a variety of ways, something it would just be better not to do, or at least not to do right now. They could bring their



**Astana: (1) At the apex of the esoteric-geomasonic pyramid designed by Sir Norman Foster. At this level, the “initiate” is “illuminated”, so a Pythagorean capstone of sun-drenched splendor greets the visitor on the “quest”. Foster appears to have designed most of the new buildings and precincts in this city dedicated to satan. (2) The Foster structure at night. Read about this in “Is the Antichrist Coming Next?”, beginning on [page 3](#). [Photos from *Soviet Analyst*, Vol. 31, Numbers 6 & 7 (2010 A.D.).]**

influence to bear directly on the Holy See, or convince the Orthodox to maintain a position Rome would not want to cross.

But it's also possible that an external enemy – acting brazenly as an external enemy – could be wielding actual threats of dire harm. A direct threat could be of many types – physical violence to persons or destruction of places, disclosure of damaging secrets, economic reprisal against Vatican institutions, provoking schisms or apostasies, or triggering ecological disasters. The threats could be aimed narrowly at the Holy Father, or the Vatican, or Catholics worldwide, or whole nations, or indeed – if

it involved weapons of mass destruction – at the whole world.

No one at the Vatican has ever suggested that its hands on Fatima have been tied by an external enemy of this type, but it's a possibility that can't be ruled out, especially if, when push comes to shove, no other reasons for fearing the mention of Russia hold up under scrutiny. My own opinion, for what it's worth, is that this scenario – while frightening to contemplate – is more plausible than any of the other scenarios. A genuine fear of this kind would explain more of the unanswered questions than fear of offending the Orthodox, or of

setting up expectations that Mary cannot fulfill, or of not being able to mobilize all the

bishops, or of over-emphasizing Marian devotion in the life of the Church.

## PART III

### The Stakes are Huge

From the beginning, Rome has dealt with Fatima not so much as a private revelation but as a delicate matter of diplomacy fraught with geopolitical consequences. Even before 1960, there was concern about the Secret falling into the wrong hands, and restrictions on Sister Lucy's ability to speak freely.

In 1989 she was silenced almost completely. When the Vatican announced the release of the Third Secret in 2000, it went to great lengths to interpret the vision with a retrospective 20th Century spin. Like the 1989 clamp-down on doubts about the 1984 consecration, this slant seemed calculated to cut off further speculation about what might be going on in the world, and particularly in Russia, that might constitute a threat to peace in general, and to the Church in particular. The orchestration of the release and even the highly nuanced crafting of the ex-

planatory statement bespoke the language and art of diplomacy. Given the key role that Cardinal Bertone played in the delicate management of that affair, which struck me as the premier diplomatic challenge of John Paul II's post-millennial years, it seemed almost inevitable to me, upon the election of Pope Benedict, that this prelate – though otherwise without diplomatic experience – would be named as Secretary of State, and in that capacity continue to manage the Fatima saga.

#### **The Fatima Challenge**

What sort of geopolitical reality provides the context for the Fatima challenge?

We know that Mary and Her Enemy [satan], since the dawn of history, are locked in a monumental struggle, and this struggle is over individual souls as well as over the temporal order as it moves either toward the era of peace

She promised or toward submission to the Antichrist. We know that the Holy See, the fortress of Christ's vicar on earth, is always under diabolical attack – like other military strategists, the Enemy doesn't go after privates and ignore generals. We know that for decades Russia was the home base for the largest and most technologically advanced officially-atheistic empire the world has known; while giving thanks for its implosion, one cannot dismiss the possibility – even likelihood – that there remain on its territory at least some loyal human remnants of the devil's elite forces (see photos on [pages 2, 22 and 51](#)), along with the tools to make them dangerous.

We know also that the forces of atheistic humanism, while on retreat in their totalitarian guise, are alive and well in capitals throughout the world, building from victory to victory as they strip from human society its foundation in divine law and enshrine in its place abortion, perversion, pornography and a host of other abominations. We know that Marxism-Leninism was but one expression of a multi-faceted monster that

has gained ground century by century, orchestrated by shadowy forces behind the scenes.

Our Lady of Fatima came to Earth in a critical moment in this cosmic battle. Are we following Her leadership? Yes, war requires strategy, and sometimes strategy requires defensive moves, such as playing possum, buying time, and not letting the enemy know how much you know. But sometimes it also requires going on the offensive.

In the Fatima scenario, we are in a race against time. I mentioned earlier, in regard to the Third Secret, that some observers believe that the suppressed message might provide secret intelligence to evil forces, and the Church, by her silence, is buying time for the “good guys” to close the “technology gap” that is leaving them vulnerable. But it might also be true, in regard to the consecration, that it is the “bad guys” who need to buy time – that they are desperately seeking to delay the full Consecration of Russia by name until they have consolidated their power. In the perhaps unlikely event that

the “external threat” scenario I have laid out were to prove true – if there are unseen but powerful forces pressuring either the Vatican or the Orthodox with dire consequences if Russia were to be consecrated – it would surely be better to confront them now rather than later.

It is frightening even to imagine that there could be an evil player powerful enough to blackmail the Holy See, but if there were, its allegiance would clearly be diabolical, and there would be no reason to believe that bowing to its demands would avert whatever harm it had threatened. Satan doesn’t fight fair. It could all be a cosmic game of “chicken,” in which the threat of post-consecration reprisal is a bluff, in which it is the Enemy’s side that is desperately trying to buy time for an assault that it is preparing but not quite ready to launch, and in which the consecration would in fact halt rather than bring on the threatened calamity.

Earlier I mentioned Pope John Paul II’s haunting reminder, “Be not afraid.” Yet, as we have seen, he and every other Pope who has tried

to respond to the requests of Our Lady of Fatima has appeared to be afraid to mention Russia by name. Whether the debilitating fear is of a catastrophic diabolical reprisal or simply of normal human consequences – such as ecumenical setbacks, political complications, or public embarrassment – it is time to call satan’s bluff. Mary’s request is simple. The Church has acknowledged its authenticity. All that remains is to do what She asked.

And time may be running out.

Pope John Paul II, speaking in 1980, said that the punishment Our Lady had warned of could no longer be avoided, only mitigated. It is tragic to think of the toll in human sorrow arising from the evils of the past century – the “worse war” (World War II) that Our Lady predicted, the scourge of Nazism, the subjugation of Eastern Europe, the persecutions of the Church in Russia, Spain and still today in China, and the countless millions of murders spewing from the Pandora’s box of Bolshevism – Lenin, Stalin, Mao, even the worldwide abortion holocaust got its



start in Soviet Russia. How much of this could have been avoided had Our Lady's requests been acted upon, say, in the early 1930's?

In the thirty years since Pope John Paul made those comments, besides the attack on the Holy Father himself, we have seen the worldwide moral crisis worsen exponentially – the war on the unborn has morphed into cloning and embryo exploitation; homosexualist demands have morphed from tolerance for perversion to intolerance for contrary views; popular culture has sunk deeper into violence and degradation.

Despite the welcome fall of the Soviet regime, the global arena has seen unabating wars in the Middle East, genocide in Africa, ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, nuclear saber-rattling in Korea, the September 11 attack and the whole rise of militant Islamism, acceptance of torture, and the global specter of terrorism. The phenomenon of globalization – increasingly concentrating economic and political power in fewer hands and larger entities – offers potential for human advancement but also makes

individuals more powerless and evil potentially harder to fight.

In the shadowy gray areas where “acts of God” are not always easily separable from the work of human hands – perhaps human hands aided by diabolical interference – we have seen a cascade of humanitarian and ecological disasters: starvation, drought, strange weather patterns, tidal waves, hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, and climate change along with breakthroughs in technology for electronic snooping, frightening new diseases, designer babies, and advances in chemical and biological weapons technology. Many have observed changes in the physical environment that government and media refuse to address.

It would seem obvious that if, by a simple act, the Holy Father and the bishops could instead bring about the wholesale conversion of one of the world's largest nations and a period of peace for the entire world, it would be better to do so sooner rather than later. And that, from the devil's point of view, even a short delay may represent a cov-

eted victory if it enables him to unleash some as yet unknown new plague – literal or figurative – upon mankind.

Who knows what plans he might be fine-tuning at this very moment – new charismatic tyrants being groomed to lead tomorrow’s mobs somewhere in the world, new scandals being orchestrated to destabilize and bring down governments, new visions of evil being nurtured in the minds of terrorists, new ways to undermine marriage and family life, new wars between nations or whole civilizations, new scandals and persecutions to cripple the Church?

Who knows where he might be hiding nuclear weapons, conspiring to put them in the wrong hands? Who knows what horrors he might be perfecting in some unknown laboratory, almost ready to move from the drawing board to the evening news – a new disease, a new type of natural disaster, a genetically manipulated monstrosity, or a new weapon of mass destruction?

Time is not on our side. The approach of the 2017 centenary of the Fatima apparitions cannot be comfort-

ing to us when we recall the warning Sister Lucy received, more than 80 years ago, from Our Lord Himself – that since His ministers “follow the example of the King of France in delaying the execution of My command, they will follow him into misfortune.” We, like Sister Lucy, know the context of that reference. On June 17, 1689, Our Lord, through St. Margaret Mary, commanded the King of France to consecrate that country to His Sacred Heart. The reigning monarch, and each of his successors, were told of Our Lord’s request, but advised not to do it, for whatever reasons that must have seemed “prudent” at the time. Exactly one hundred years later, June 17, 1789 – considered by some historians as the launch date of the French Revolution – King Louis XVI was confronted by a defiant National Assembly in the sequence of tragic events which would end in his execution four years later.

A succession of Popes have similarly postponed the fulfillment of Mary’s request for the Holy Father to perform a solemn Consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart in union with all the

**Bishop Joseph R. Rodericks, Emeritus Bishop of Jamshedpur, India, was a longtime friend and supporter of the Fatima Center. Bishop Rodericks sent a letter to all the bishops of India encouraging them to come to the *Last Chance for World Peace Conference* at Tuy, Spain and Fatima in October 2006. He also signed various letters encouraging priests, bishops and Fatima experts to attend *The Fatima Challenge* held in Rome in May 2010. Bishop Rodericks passed away to his eternal reward on July 14, 2010 at the age of 88. Please pray for the repose of his soul.**



Catholic bishops of the world. "Pray very much for the Holy Father," Our Lord had also told Sr. Lucy. "He will do it, but it will be late! Nevertheless, the Immaculate Heart of Mary will save Russia. It has been entrusted to Her."

And so the clock is ticking.

### **How Will Rome Respond?**

Our struggle – the Holy Spirit tells us through St. Paul – is "not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers, the rulers of this world of darkness, the evil spirits in high places." (Eph. 6:12) Our infernal adversary has never

lacked for lieutenants here on Earth, and human structures and networks through which to organize them. While their identity is always masked and remains hidden to many, at this conference I have been struck by the clarity with which speakers and participants alike appear to know their enemy and name it openly. Perhaps the urgency of the hour has trumped the usual caution.

The race is on. We don't know for a fact whether the Lord will grant us the full hundred years vouchsafed to the kings of France, or if so, whether He will call time at precisely that moment. But we must certainly ask our-

selves how these potentially precious seven years can best be used to advance Our Lady's triumph, even as Her enemies work at cross-purposes, knowing that every delay postpones that blessing and gives new evils more time to flourish.

We can be certain that, even as we speak, sinister forces continue to meet behind closed doors, strategizing death and destruction for mankind, immorality and apostasy, control of governments and institutions, and hoping to forestall the reign of Christ by bringing down His Church.

What counter-strategy is the Church preparing?

While, of course, the paramount response of all Catholics must be to practice and promote the acts of prayer, penance and devotion to the Immaculate Heart that She requested of all of us, and to pray as well that the Holy Father and the bishops will fulfill the specific roles addressed uniquely to them, the most pivotal question is how our Holy Father himself sees these challenges.

Upon the election of Pope Benedict XVI, the editor

of Britain's *Catholic Herald* wrote in the secular *London Spectator*, "One of the joys of reading Ratzinger is spotting how often he subtly tiptoes away from John Paul's obsessions; it would be surprising if we were to hear any more about Fatima during this pontificate." Thank Heaven, we can dismiss this assessment as typical of the bias and ignorance we encounter in the media every day, whether Catholic or secular. The forthcoming visit of His Holiness to Fatima underscores what knowledgeable persons already knew: we have indeed another truly Marian Pope, one who takes with "absolute seriousness" the intervention of Our Lady into history at Fatima.

Yet, recalling then-Cardinal Ratzinger's central role in spinning the 2000 Third Secret vision as a closed book, we do have to ask ourselves whether (or, perhaps, to what extent) he personally believes that the warnings of Fatima have been fully revealed, acted upon, and consigned to 20th Century history, or whether – shielded by the tactical protection of that public stance – he, also be-

hind closed doors and in his own heart, is grappling every day with the burden of how to respond to the unfinished business of Fatima.

There have been a number of fragmentary and unconfirmed reports that raise fascinating questions, and it would be a good challenge for the scholars among us to check them out. A Catholic internet site reported that when Cardinal Ratzinger spoke at St. Peter's Church in New York City on January 27, 1988, someone said to him, "Your Eminence, I would like you to ask the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, to consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, immediately and in union with all the bishops in the world." His reported response – simple, straight-forward, and startling in light of the post-1984 Vatican policy – was: "I know it has to be done!"

In mid-2005, after he became Benedict XVI, multiple on-line sources picked up an item that had appeared in the May-June issue of the French magazine *Sous la Bannière*, in which an anonymous source claimed that Cardinal Ratzinger had recently told

an Austrian bishop who is a friend of his, "I have two problems on my conscience: Archbishop Lefebvre and Fatima. As to the latter, my hand was forced." Without imputing accuracy to the anonymous report, in the event that it is true, it would be very interesting to determine by whose hand and for what reasons the Cardinal felt forced.

Certainly the Holy Father is not naïve about the warfare in which he and the Church are engaged, the perils of our time, the prophecies of St. John Bosco and St. Pius X and others, and the significance of the Fatima timetable. Interestingly, I was told that a visitor to the Vatican last year took the occasion of a meeting with the Holy Father to ask him what he considered to be the greatest danger facing the Church today. One can well imagine the large range of possible concerns Pope Benedict might have cited: Encroaching state secularism? Anti-life-and-family legislation? Loss of faith? Liturgical breakdown? The vocations crisis? The pedophilia scandal? The global economic collapse?

Persecution of Christians? Militant Islam? Wars, AIDS, and other problems in the world?

His revealing answer – again simple and straight-forward – was “Freemasonry.”

Clearly, the Barque of Peter is under attack, as John Bosco foresaw. We don’t need to rely on the type of unconfirmed reports that I’ve just shared to know that a monumental struggle is taking place, that time is of the essence, and that our Holy Father understands the stakes.

Like John Paul, who had told his listeners in 1980 to prepare for great trials and be ready to give up even life during the coming tribulation, Pope Benedict has also emphasized the theme of martyrdom. From the beginning of his pontificate, in his meetings with bishops, he has exhorted them about the importance of being willing to lay down their lives for their sheep. At his own installation Mass, he spoke at length of this fidelity to the point of martyrdom required of the bishops and of the Holy Father himself. He asked the faithful to “pray for me, that I may not flee for fear of the wolves.”

We must surely do that. In the face of the Fatima mystery, the Fatima challenge, the greatest need for the Church, for the Holy Father, for all of us, is to take to heart the charge repeated so often by Pope John Paul II, but which in the case of Fatima eluded his grasp: “Be not afraid!”

As we come to the end of this Easter season, we do well to remember the words we sing each year in the Easter Sequence, *Victimae Paschali Laudes*: “*Mors et Vita Duello Confluxere Mirando*” – “Life and death are struggling together in an awesome conflict, a wondrous duel.”

No matter how terrifying the battle, we know that it has already been won by Our Lord Jesus Christ. In that confidence we can face the unfinished business of Fatima, praying to hasten the day when our Holy Father will consecrate Russia, Russia will be converted, the Immaculate Heart of Mary will triumph, and a period of peace will be granted to mankind.

Thank you very much. 

**Note:** This is a somewhat more detailed version than what was presented at the conference, since for reasons of time some portions were omitted or paraphrased on delivery.