



Director's Letter No. 7

by Fr. Karl Stehlin, Director of the Militia Immaculatae

Pilgrimage to Fatima, August 2017

Dear Knights of the Immaculata,

It is an old tradition — going back even to the Old Testament, but given a special significance by the Apostles in the cenacle — to befittingly prepare ourselves for important days of grace. The anniversary which we will celebrate this August in Fatima together (for some, at least joined spiritually) may be described as unique and grand without exaggeration: 100 years of Fatima and the M.I.!

On the 19th of August, 2017, Our Lady favoured the three shepherd children (and through them, us as well) with the most personal of the six apparitions. She surprised the children at a place called Valinhos, away from the usual place of the apparitions — a place symbolic today for its tranquillity and reflection, in contrast to the bustling main shrine. There she spoke to the children with a sad expression on her face:

"Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to Hell, because there are none to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them."

Is it a coincidence that exactly 100 years later to the day we are allowed to gather at this place?

Please allow me, in order to set the mood for the pilgrimage, to quote a few thoughts from my book on Fatima, Volume I:

"Pray — pray — very much!" This repetition of the same word is also unique in Fatima. We can distinguish three elements in this cry of love.

First: *Our Lady with her sad eyes penetrating our eyes and souls, whispers to my heart: "My beloved child, please pray! Without prayer you will not save your soul, without prayer you cannot be united with God and you cannot receive His graces!"*

Second: *Our Lady doubles her request: "Pray, pray! You don't pray enough, my child! Please double your prayers, not so much in quantity, but in quality. Learn to pray well, with all your heart! Make efforts to be entirely addicted to your prayer, when you pray. And do it all for my Son's glory, for my honour and the salvation of souls! One Rosary said with much effort and desire to please me is better than 100 said with negligence and superficially."*

Third: Our Lady insists: "Pray, pray very much! You know that My Son asks you 'to pray always and never to cease'. Only if you are constantly united with God, can the grace of God constantly penetrate you and the gifts of the Holy Ghost inspire you. But I know that constant union with God is a special grace given only after many years of constant effort. However, the only way to achieve this goal of 'pray always and never cease' is to multiply your prayers, and to do them often and 'very much'".

The best way that we can correspond to this call of Our Lady and the spirit of Valinhos is to strive in these few remaining weeks before the pilgrimage for silence and the spirit of prayer. What does that mean concretely? That we constantly remove ourselves deliberately from the noise of this world, find "our Valinhos" in daily life, and spend time in silence with God and Our Lady. This time of silence before God will become the foundation and source of the rest of our prayer life throughout the day.

One proven means to practice unceasing prayer — even amidst the various occupations of the day — is the constant repetition of a certain ejaculatory prayer, like the prayer: "Jesus, Mary, I love thee, save souls". This prayer contains, in addition to the love of Jesus and Mary, the love for souls, and so it helps us to fulfil the double commandment of love and grow therein. Moreover, it corresponds completely to the spirit of Fatima:

1. "console God"

By praying sincerely "Jesus, Mary, I love thee" we console "God, who is so sad". We can unite ourselves in this way to holy Francisco, who saw in this his entire life's purpose. It is precisely in Valinhos that Our Lady shows us that she is sad, and so reminds us how much she and God desire our consolation for the flood of sins in our days.

2. "poor sinners"

This is the second request of Fatima, to which, especially, holy Jacinta dedicated herself. The necessity of sinners, revealed to her particularly in the vision of Hell, distressed her to such an extent that for the rest of her life she thought only of them, prayed for them, and sacrificed herself for them.

We encounter so many souls every day — a good opportunity to send them a "save souls" — pray for them. That's how this ejaculatory prayer reminds us in our daily lives continually of the need of souls, and of our mission to pray for them.

If we try for the next few weeks to live ever more faithfully in this spirit, we can surely give Our Lady great pleasure, and we will be well-prepared to go to meet her in Fatima.

Also, I'd like to invite you, from the 13th to the 19th of August, to pray a "novena" together; a profound prayer, composed for this anniversary year by an Irish monastery devoted to tradition (see below).

P. Karl Stehlin

Preparatory Prayer for the Anniversary Pilgrimage 2017

O Immaculate Virgin Mary, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, Woman clothed with the sun, thou who didst visit Fatima one hundred years ago to make known to all men thy maternal and Immaculate Heart, receive our act of total consecration to thee. Welcome us into the safe refuge of thy Immaculate Heart as into the ark of salvation prepared by the Holy Ghost for us and for all the children of the Catholic Church in East and West. Let each one of us find in thy Immaculate Heart this year a sanctuary of ceaseless prayer, a tabernacle of intimacy with the Most Holy Trinity, a hospital for the healing of every infirmity, a harbour of peace in the midst of the confusion that threatens even the bravest and most faithful souls. Inspire us to take up the rosary that thou so lovest, and to make it during this year the ceaseless prayer of our hearts and the expression of our desire to live and to die consecrated to thy Immaculate Heart. Turn our hearts to the Lamb who, once immolated upon the altar of the Cross, offers Himself still for our sakes from the altars of the Church and from the tabernacles where He abides hidden, silent, and so often forsaken. Let this year be for us a great and powerful manifestation of thy compassion for poor sinners and the beginning of the triumph of thy Immaculate Heart in the Church from the rising of the sun to its setting, and indeed in the whole world. Overcoming every resistance, be it of demons or of men, reveal to all souls the flame of love that burns in thy maternal Heart and the glory of the Father that shines on the face of His Christ, Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb. O clement! O loving! O sweet Virgin Mary!

(Composed by an Irish monastery devoted to tradition)