

International Confederation of Christian Family Movements  
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**THE LEGACY  
OF THE 'MADONNA' OF FATIMA  
TO TO-DAY'S FAMILIES**

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For the last 50 years I have nearly always been present at the assemblies of this Confederation. I have grown in my commitment to the CFM-MFC, with many past and present couples like Pat and Patty Crowley, the Leroux's of Canada, the Samaniego of Venezuela, the Amarin's of Brazil, Father Sam Palmer of the U.S., the Clancy's of Ireland and hundreds of others. Their memory and love for the Confederation are present with us these days as we assemble at the feet of the Madonna of Fatima.

**“The School of Mary”**

Of all the international meetings organised by this Confederation, this assembly in the Sanctuary of the Madonna of Fatima is and will remain a landmark for future generations.

I think what has brought the CFM-MFC to Fatima, is our love to Our Blessed Mother in a moment when families in the Western World are under pressure, crises and turmoil. Even our Confederation is at a turning point.

Pope John Paul II used to exhort us “to go to the school of Mary” to learn the virtues and values we need for our families.

We came to “the school of Mary” to ask the Madonna of Fatima to renew, strengthen and render our family organisations more relevant to the world. Through Mary we learn how to make CFM-MFC in our dioceses and parishes more relevant for to-day's needs, an instrument of evangelisation in the Church.

In “the school of Mary” we can listen to the legacy which the Madonna of Fatima has entrusted to our families and how we can transmit this legacy to other families, especially where there is physical and psychological suffering.

“Family, live and transmit the Faith” was the appeal to all families we heard from Pope Benedict XVI in Valencia, Spain, last year at the

5<sup>th</sup> World Meeting of Families. We are at “the school of Mary” to renew our faith, the marriage vows and for our spiritual growth through Mother Mary.

We are here on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first apparition of the Madonna on the 13<sup>th</sup> Mary 1917, to the three shepherd children Lucia, Francisco and Giacinta. Since then millions of Catholics, non-Catholics and even Moslems who venerate the Madonna of Fatima have come to this holy place.

So much has happened in the world in these ninety years, during which we have seen some of the messages entrusted to the three children, have come true. Mary choose just three children from a farming family, for it was through this family that she gave us Her legacy. Today she is calling your family to pass on her message.

“Since the end of World War One up to the Vatican Council Two, we have seen”, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said, “that in the Church we have had two great spiritual movements, which have been consolidated with the Marian Movement, which is rooted in the apparitions of La Salette, Lourdes and Fatima which have spread in all the Church. The other is the liturgical Movement which generated the Ecumenical Movement, the biblical and lay movement.” (1)

These words form the scenario or backdrop to our Assembly. Because as a lay and ecumenical confederation, which begins its family meetings with the reflection of the gospel, we arrive to discern and as a result we incarnate God’s word (Gospel Enquiry) in our Action for the Community.

### **Prayer, Penance and Conversion**

In “the school of Mary” we can integrate other origins, philosophy and methodology of CFM-MFC with the legacy of the Madonna of Fatima . The legacy of Fatima should vigour our belonging to CFM-MFC. I hear the words of Mary at the wedding feast of Cana to the servants, echoing in our hearts: “Do whatever He tells you” (John 2,1-12). Mary during these days will see if we have “no more wine” and She will intercede to Her Son to change “the water into wine.”

All we have to do is to listen with an open heart and mind to the Holy Spirit to penetrate into the message of the legacy of the Madonna of Fatima. From here we will “Go, to teach and heal “ the families in our community.

(1)Benedict XVI, Maria Chiesa Nascente, San.Paolo, Milano, 1998

Through living the legacy of Mary, the Church will respond to the pressing issues of today and not try to just repeat what was done in the past. It is up to lay people and couples, now more than ever before that we have to respond to the appeal of the Madonna of Fatima for “Prayer, Penance and Conversion.”

We have to reach out and “throw our nets in the deep” to bring back the families to Our Mother. This means that this Confederation should find new ways and means how to visit families in their homes, above all families of the needy, the poor the broken marriages, the single parents and those who feel abandoned. These marginalised people need to feel the presence of Christ, the love of Mary and the warmth of the Church..

The Church loves and cares through us for these people. In this way our groups can become basic Christian Communities, as in Latin America, or parish cells, as at San Eustorgio in Milano and other countries.

After the death of Giacinta and Francesco, Lucia asked Our Lady if she will remain alone. The reply was “Jesus wishes to use you to make Me known and loved.” She also told her, what she wishes to tell us today, “Do not be afraid I will never abandon you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and your “cammino” (walk) will lead you to God.” Yes, Jesus is “using” the family to evangelise other families, for the future of the world and the future of evangelisation depend on the family.” (2)

### **The First Legacy of Fatima**

I wish to present to you very briefly the main messages, which form the legacy of the Madonna of Fatima to us. This legacy should be incorporated as a pillar for the future programmes of this Confederation. The first legacy of Fatima is a call to **prayer**, which was the exhortation right on the first apparition on the 13<sup>th</sup> May, 1917, while the three children at about midday were playing at Cova de Iria. “Do not be afraid. I will do you no harm” said Mother Mary to the children.

“Recite the Rosary every day, to obtain the peace in the world and the end of the war.”

Once again in the third apparition on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1917, the Madonna told them:

“I wish you to come here on the thirteen of each month, to continue to pray the Rosary every day in honour of the Madonna of the Rosary, to

(2) John Paul II, “Familiares Consortio”

obtain the peace of the world and the end of the war.”

Prayer through the daily Rosary is the way to Peace in the world. The Peace which Jesus wishes to humanity: “My peace I give you, not the peace of the world.”

**Peace begins at home**, which the Church calls “the domestic Church.” The peace of Christ is often missing in many homes and the breakdown in marriage is often caused because of lack of prayer, for only if the family prays together, it stays together.

We are all hungry for peace but if we want peace among nations, the end of wars, of terrorism, of hatred, the threat of war of religions and every form of violence we all have to be “builders of peace.” Peace does not come only from the United Nations, from the G8 or from around the conference tables.

### **The Rosary**

Mary has given us a very forceful instrument of peace in the world and for the conversion of sinners, especially of the war lords who spend billions in arms and let those in starvation perish. Suffice to remember that UNICEF states that 40 thousand children die daily of starvation and malnutrition.

In his Apostolic Letter on the “**Rosary of the Virgin Mary**” of the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2002, John Paul II wrote:

“The Rosary is also the prayer of the family and for the family. There was a time when the recitation of the Rosary fostered the unity of the family. This form of prayer should not be lost.” The Pope exhorts us:

“All those who dedicate themselves to the pastoral care of families should promote with conviction the recitation of the Rosary. The family that prays together, stays together.”

Praying the Rosary for the children, and much more with the children is not only the solution of every problem, but a spiritual help which should not be undervalued.”

Let us make this exhortation the programme of our confederation. The Pope ends his exhortation with these strong words:

“I wish this appeal of mine, should not end unheard.”

### **The Second Legacy of Fatima**

The second legacy is the Madonna’s appeal, or better command for “**Sacrifice for sinners and reparation.**”

On the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1917 the Madonna showed the children the pains of hell. “You see”, she told them “hell and how the poor sinners fall into hell. If these souls did what I tell you, many would have been saved and have peace.”

The children understood the legacy the Madonna entrusted to them and in their simple ways started making some sacrifices as a reparation. Every time they made some sacrifice they recited the prayer the Madonna thought them:

“Oh Jesus, pour your love, for the conversion of sinners and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

In the third apparition the Madonna spoke to the children about the end of the war and “under the pontificate of Pope Pius XI, the start of another even greater war, which will be a punishment to the world for its crimes....To avoid the war, I will ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart and the receiving of Holy Communion every first Saturday. If people listen to my request, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. If not, there will be a spread of errors in the world, which will give rise to wars and persecutions. The good will be martyred. The Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be destroyed. Finally, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia, which will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.”

Looking back to the past decades we have seen these words come true to the relief of humanity. The prophecy was the fall of communism, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the revival of the faith in Russia, in Eastern Europe, and the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by Pope Pius XII. The “Perestrojka” of Moscow spread to all the countries of Eastern Europe. Gorbavioic after meeting Pope John Paul II in the Vatican stated, “We now have changed our attitude towards the problems of the past, with wanting to hide in a very simple manner, for example the question of religion.”

### **The Assassination of the Pope**

However the tragic attempt to assassinate John Paul II on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1981, was part of the prophecy of the Madonna. This provoked great suffering and fear in all the world, but the year after on the 13<sup>th</sup> May coinciding with the first apparition, the Pope came here to thank his Mother and uttered the words of Jesus on the Cross “Woman, this is your Son” (John 19,26). The bullet fired by the hired killer Ali Agca who was forgiven by the Pope when they met in the prison of Regina Coeli, in

Rome, was placed by the Pope in the crown of the statue of the Madonna of Fatima.

The so called “Third Secret of Fatima” prophesied the murder of “a bishop in a white cassock in St Peter’s Square”, which was first read by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, when Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith, and made known to us by Pope Paul II. The facts are now known, but some contend there is still a “Fourth Secret of Fatima”, but Card. Tarcisio Bertoni, the present secretary of state denied such an existence. <sup>(3)</sup>

This background helps us to give an in depth understanding of the legacy of the Madonna to contemporary families and to our Confederation. The prophecies of the Madonna about the events in the world and the Church, concern closely all families especially those whose sons and daughters have gone to fight wars that could be avoided. Much more so because the family today is heavily under pressure from secularism, individualism, hedonism, sexism and politicians pay only lip homage to the family.

One million and two hundred thousand assembled for the Family Day on the 16<sup>th</sup> May in Rome in defence of the traditional family and in protest of the left wing government wanting to introduce legislation to put on the same level with our families those who only co-habit , and to recognise between the same sex companionships (like PACS in France) and granting children for adoption to these couples. This mass rally was not called by the Church, but by the lay associations of Italy, at which even families of different religions and cultures took part only a few days before the statue of the Madonna of Fatima was brought to Rome.

The same protests need to be made against the European Union and those countries in Europe, which now sadly include some Catholic countries, have passed legislation which undermine the traditional family and recognised other forms so called “families”. Pope Benedict XVI and various hierarchies have spoken in defence of marriage between one man and one woman, while denouncing repeatedly other forms of legislation which run against the natural family.

### **Missionaries of the Legacy**

I wish to conclude with some concrete pastoral suggestions for action, as the response of this Confederation of Fatima entrusts to us here at “the School of Mary”.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2006, when I addressed in Strasbourg the European Parliament on the Family Day, I had already made some very positive proposals. They do not seem to have had a follow-up.

3) Antonio Socci, Il Quarto Secreto di Fatima, Rizzoli, Milano, 2006

From Fatima we have to leave as **missionaries to families**, to whom we have to transmit the legacy of Fatima. We have to become **Families of the Madonna of Fatima**, ready to outreach to other families. We have to go out to reach families in our neighbourhood “to teach and heal”.

Our response to the Madonna should be **to recite and promote the Rosary with the whole family**, at least every Saturday. Ours should be a Crusade for the Rosary, in the firm believe that “the family that prays together, stays together”.

In our consumer society **penance and sacrifice** have become taboo, for we are breeding children who want comfort, while millions are living in poverty. (2.7 billion live with less than 2 dollars a day). This Confederation has always been aware of the social needs of the poor, but now we have to promise as a response to the Madonna, our commitment for **personal penance and sacrifice** in the family as reparation for the sins of the world. Some families as I have seen in Latin America and elsewhere, do away with soft drinks and limit eating sweets.

My final prayer is to discover the legacy of the Madonna of Fatima to every family and to promise in a solemn way at the concluding Eucharist **to be missionaries of all and to all families, who through Mary may meet Jesus**. So many families need God and cannot make it alone. They need our testimony and action.

With St. Augustine, the great patron of my city Milano, I end “Our souls are restless until they find, through our Madonna of Fatima, her Son Jesus Christ.”

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Since then he was called by the Italian bishops to establish the marriage counselling centres in Italy. For ten years, he was Director of the “International Centre for Family Studies” in Milan, and for 20 years he worked as director for public relations, the press and ethics at the “Scientific Institute University Hospital San Raffaele”, in Milan.

He published several books and articles. The latest this year on “Ethics at the service of the Sick Person”.(Ed. Paolini)