

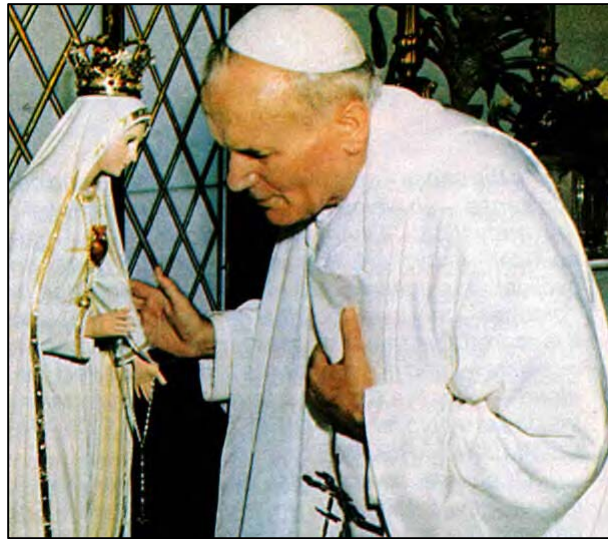
First Sunday in Advent, 2007

“It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep; ... the night is passed, and the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light.”

(Colossians 1. 12–13)

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“The coming of God’s Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the ‘First Covenant’. He announces Him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel. Moreover He awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming.²” When the Church celebrates the Liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the Faithful renew their ardent desire for His second coming. By celebrating (earlier this year on June 24th and August 29th) the precursor’s birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: “He must increase, I must decrease.³”



For us just now, knowing “the hour” can surely refer to the Church’s New Year. A time for us to make our resolutions on the way we must live this coming year as devout and loyal members of the Mystical Body of Christ. So the Holy Ghost uses St Paul to admonish us to put off the things of darkness – the only darkness is sin – and to put on the armour of Light –Jesus is the Light; He is the divinely appointed leader of the army of God’s kingdom on earth. And we must be part of that army who will follow our unfailing leader to victory over sin and death. And every soldier of Christ must be fully loyal and devoted to the One who leads us; and Who demands of us that we must be one on mind and heart with Him and one in purpose. We must follow the road He maps out for us listening to no other voice but His. As the antiphon of the final psalm at matins reminds us: “At the coming of the most high King let the hearts of men be purified, that we may worthily go to meet Him; for He really will come,

¹ Romans 13:11

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 522

³ John 3:30

and without delay.” His first command—“Seek and you shall find.” To those who seek is granted a more intimate knowledge of Christ and His heavenly Father. But seek they must. There lies our first resolution: We must seek all the means the *Magisterium* of the Church offers us—encyclicals, apostolic constitutions, apostolic letters, the Catechism of the Catholic Church etc.

Sadly there are many who do not seek; some who refuse to seek or even to listen to the supreme authority of the Church. In a recent publication which claims to represent tradition we find a heading: “*90 Years of Fatima and the cover-up continues.*” Sister Lucia asked permission from Rome to write a book that would put and end to all such speculation. Without adding anything to these events and occurrences (Our Lady’s Messages) the publication of Lucia’s book, authorised by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, the fruit of prolonged meditation, and bearing the date of 25th March 1997, provides what we might call her authorised explanation of the whole of the Fatima message. On May 13th 1982, Pope John Paul II went as a pilgrim to Fatima. Referring to the message that had been entrusted by the Virgin Mary to Jacinta, Francisco, and Lucia, the Pope said: “If the Church accepted the Message of Fatima, it is above all because it contains a truth and a summons which are in essence the truth and the summons of the Gospel itself.”

A few quotes from the eighth Call of the Message: “Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Make reparation for their crimes and console your God.” And Sister Lucia expanding on this writes: “This call which the Message addresses to us is very explicit in the Gospel, but very many people misunderstand it, have forgotten it, ignore it, turn their backs on it and, saddest of all, revile it. When Jesus Christ revealed His intention of remaining with us in the Eucharist in order to be our spiritual food, our strength and our life, the Pharisees were scandalised and did not believe. But Our Lord insisted: ‘I am the Bread of Life ... if anyone eats of this Bread, he will live for ever; and the Bread which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh ... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His Blood, you have no life in you.’” It is clear from these words that if we do not receive the food of Holy Communion, we shall not have within us the life of grace, the supernatural life that depends on our union with Christ through receiving His Body and Blood in Communion. It was for this that He remained in the Eucharist, in order to be our spiritual food, our daily bread which sustains the supernatural life within us. And notice this: “God sees our confession and confirms the pardon granted to us in His name by the priest, to the extent to which He sees in our heart Our repentance for having offended Him and the resolution we have made not to offend Him again.” And again: “Enclosed within our Tabernacles, offered on our altars, our Saviour continues to offer Himself to the Father as a victim for the remission of the sins of all human beings, in the hope that many generous people will wish to be united to Him, to become one with Him by sharing in the same sacrifice, so that with Him they can offer themselves to the Father as victims in expiation for the sins of the world ... as the Angel taught the three children to pray: ‘Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly, and I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the insults, sacrileges and indifference with which He himself is offended. And through the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of You the conversion of poor sinners.’”

The *Calls from the message of Fatima* which our Lady makes to us covers a book of some 296 pages. How much of it do we really know? It is through such messages approved by the Church that our Blessed Mother leads us, through her divine Son, to know God and so to love Him that we will refuse Him nothing. Finally, from Sister Lucia: “It is in the name of Christ her Son that Mary intercedes for us with the Father. And it is in the name of Christ, present in the Eucharist and united with us in Holy Communion, that we unite our humble prayers to those of Mary so that She can address them to the Father in Jesus Christ, her Son.”