

OBSERVANCE OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE APPARITIONS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AT FATIMA, PORTUGAL

What is the Immaculate Heart?

My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.

Our Lady spoke these words to Lucia dos Santos, the eldest of the three visionaries of Fatima, when the Blessed Mother appeared in the Cova da Iria, on June 13, 1917. The shepherd children asked Our Lady to take them to Heaven, and she told them that Francisco and Jacinta would be in Heaven with her very soon, but Lucia would have to stay on earth a bit longer. (In fact, Lucia lived for another 87 years!).

Lucia was, understandably, very sad that she would not be soon in Heaven with the Blessed Mother and her cousins, and she asked, “Will I stay here alone?” Our Lady answered, “No, my daughter... Don’t lose heart. I will never forsake you.” She then spoke those words about her Immaculate Heart being a refuge and a path to God.

But what does it mean that her Immaculate Heart will be our refuge? And how is Mary’s Heart the way to the Lord?

Saint John Paul II shed light on this when he consecrated the world to Mary’s Immaculate Heart on 1984. Addressing Our Lady, he said, “You who have a mother’s awareness of all the struggles between good and evil, between light and darkness, which afflict the modern world, accept the cry which we...address directly to your Heart. Embrace with the love of the Mother and Handmaid of the Lord, this human world of ours, which we entrust and consecrate to you... We have recourse to your protection, holy Mother of God!”

He went on to say, “Immaculate Heart! Help us to conquer the menace of evil, which so easily takes root in the hearts of people today...” And he asked Mary to deliver us from famine, from war, from sins against life, from hatred and every kind of injustice, and even from the loss of awareness of good and evil. He then asked that, through this consecration, there be revealed to the world once more “the power of merciful Love!”

So, the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a protection of sorts. Entrusting ourselves to Mary’s Immaculate Heart will do just that – protect us from the evils of the world and open us up to God’s profound mercy for us and for the world.

In his commentary on the Fatima apparitions, then – Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger spoke about the heart as being the “center of human life” because it’s where reason, will, temperament, and sensitivity converge” and where there is an interior unity. He wrote that “the Immaculate Heart” is a heart which, with God’s grace, has come to perfect interior unity and therefore ‘sees God.’”

Thus, to be devoted to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means “to embrace this attitude of heart, which make the *fiat* – ‘your will be done’ – the defining center of one’s whole life,” Ratzinger wrote.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary, then, shows us the path to God because it helps us to imitate Mary’s “yes” – her “yes” which united her will to God’s will. That is the path to God, and that is a central message of Fatima.

By imitating Mary and by entrusting ourselves to her Immaculate Heart, we, too, can seek God’s will for our lives in everything, thus uniting our wills to His holy will and bringing about peace in our families and in the world. Mary’s Immaculate Heart will lead us there.



Act of Reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

O Most Holy Virgin Mother, we listen with grief to the complaints of your Immaculate Heart surrounded with the thorns placed therein at every moment by the blasphemies and ingratitude of ungrateful humanity. We are moved by the ardent desire of loving you as Our Mother and of promoting a true devotion to your Immaculate Heart. We therefore kneel before you to manifest the sorrow we feel for the grievances that people cause you, and to atone by our prayers and sacrifices for the offenses with which they return your love. Obtain for them and for us the pardon of so many sins. Hasten the conversion of sinners that they may love Jesus and cease to offend the Lord, already so much offended. Turn your eyes of mercy toward us, that we may love God with all our heart on earth and enjoy Him forever in Heaven. Amen.