



1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

MAY 2021

THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA IS TRULY MOTHER'S DAY

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www.catholicexchange.com

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Mother's Day in the United States usually finds people celebrating in a big way. Mothers are showered with gifts, and restaurants experience one of their busiest days of the year as families treat Mom to dinner. People in the United States were celebrating Mother's Day on that May 13, 1917, when our Blessed Mother first appeared at Fatima.

But that May 13 was Mother's Day in a universal way, as our heavenly Mother came to bring peace to families, to countries, to the world — to give us her motherly message that we must cease offending our Father and live by His laws.

On May 13, 1967, the fiftieth anniversary of Fatima — a Saturday, and the eve of Mother's Day — Pope St. Paul VI released his apostolic exhortation *Signum Magnum*, reminding us that Mary is Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church, and that she "continues to fulfill from heaven her maternal function as the cooperator in the birth and development of divine life in the individual souls of redeemed men." Simply put, she's our Mother, our spiritual heavenly Mother.

Was it a coincidence that Fatima's anniversary and Mother's Day fell on the same day? What a providential connection there appears to be between Mary's motherly concern for us and honoring our Mother!

Don't we honor our mothers on Mother's Day because they want the best for us? Hopefully that means that they strive for our salvation, first and foremost. Our Mother Mary certainly strives for the salvation of all her children. Fatima is perfect proof. At Fatima, our Blessed Mother shows herself a mother who guides and teaches her children the path to God.

In *Signum Magnum*, Pope Paul VI wrote specifically about our Mother's influence through example and how we should follow it. He said that just as parents' teachings become stronger by their example, "the immaculate Mother of God attracts souls in an irresistible way to imitation of the divine model, Jesus Christ, of whom she was the most faithful image."

He affirmed, "It is therefore the duty of all Christians to imitate in a reverent spirit the examples of goodness left to them by their heavenly Mother. . . . It is, in fact, a natural thing that the children should have the same sentiments of their mothers and should reflect their merits and virtues."

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FEASTS FOR MAY

The feasts on the General Roman Calendar celebrated during the month of May are:

- | | |
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| 1 Joseph the Worker, Opt. Mem. | 22 Rita of Cascia, Opt. Mem. |
| 2 Fifth Sunday of Easter, Sunday | 23 Pentecost Sunday; Whitsunday, Solemnity |
| 3 Philip and James, Feast | 25 St. Bede the Venerable; St. Gregory VII; St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, virgin, Opt. Mem. |
| 9 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday | 26 Philip Neri, Memorial |
| 10 Damien de Veuster, priest; John of Avila, Opt. Mem. | 27 Augustine of Canterbury, Opt. Mem. |
| 12 Nereus and Achilleus; Pancras, martyrs, Opt. Mem. | 30 Trinity Sunday, Solemnity |
| 13 Ascension of the Lord; Our Lady of Fatima, Opt. Mem. | 31 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Feast |
| 14 Matthias, Feast | |
| 15 Isidore the Farmer (USA), Opt. Mem. | |
| 16 Ascension or the Seventh Sunday of Easter, Solemnity | |
| 18 John I, Opt. Mem. | |
| 20 Bernardine of Siena, Opt. Mem. | |
| 21 Christopher Magallanes and companions; Eugene de Mazenod (Canada), Opt. Mem. | |

The feasts of St. Athanasius (May 2) is superseded by the Sunday liturgy. The Solemnity of the Ascension (May 13) is celebrated on May 16 (Sunday) in most dioceses in the United States. ☐

THANK YOU

... a small and simple phrase that comes from a grateful heart!

Psalm 106:2

To Evelyn & Robert and All Prayer Warriors
We appreciate very much your kindness and thoughtfulness
for your prayers for the eternal repose of our dear Elio de Bernardino.
From the bottom of our hearts,
THANK YOU!!!
May our Good Lord bless and protect us all.
Mila & Sheryl

OUR CENACLE CORNER

Seeking a deeper relationship with God
through meditation of passages from Holy Scriptures

Psalm 91
God Our Protector

GOD TOUCHED ME

Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.

Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. — 1 Chronicles 16:24

FROM THE SPIRITUAL DARKNESS, GOD CALLED OUT

By Frank Batino, a Devotee

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." Luke 16:13

Since I can remember, I have been calling out to God. I have prayed, went to church on Sundays and holy days of obligation, volunteered in church, brought truckloads of people to attend religious seminars and prayer meetings and helped my fellowmen in need.

When my daughter was still a baby, she was very sick and had to have a lot of medical procedures because of her kidneys. I prayed to God and asked Him to heal her. I also promised that after her successful chemotherapy, I will bring the whole family to Lourdes and Rome. She became well so my wife and I and four children in tow, went there to thank God for healing my daughter. I have always reached out to Him, or so I thought.

It was in 2002 when my siblings told me that there was a run for the search of Yamashita's buried treasure located on our family property. They convinced me to form a group to explore it. Convinced with the prospects of the hunt, I decided to do an early retirement and went to our hometown.

My mind was focused on the excavations where we found 10 feet of clay, then 10 feet of sand and gravel, followed by 10 ft of shale and sand, 10 feet of tar. We also found heart shaped stones, then triangle stones. We interpreted this as truly there's something buried underneath since there was consistency in the height of everything we found – as though, it was planned to cover up some treasure. The excavation reached 87 feet below sea level. We secured the excavation on all sides with steel and cement so it will not cave in.

Since the treasure was buried in our property and we had no intention of sharing it outside the family, this excavation was done in secret. For about a year, a nephew and I lived in a four-wall structure with a roof. We never got out of the "cave". Food and water, and whatever else we needed was brought to us during the night. We didn't shave nor cut our beard/hair but rather grew them really long, looking like some hermits. While confined in those four walls, I started to see and sense presence of low spirits in the form of a big dog, sometimes, a big cat. It was scary and I prayed to God for protection.

When it was time to bring in the pumps, transformers, emergency generators and other big equipment, I no longer could hide the diggings – it was time to end my recluse and include my neighbors. We worked on the excavations during the day, and in the evenings, we prayed and had bible study. I brought people to attend religious seminars wherever and whenever available and continued with our Bible Study and sharing experience with the assistance of a lay minister.

For our hometown's upcoming fiesta (a festival, typically dedicated to a patron saint to express gratitude for a good harvest or sometimes meant to celebrate a particular season) I decided to build a big chapel and a basketball court for the community. The basketball court was not only a venue for sports, but it was also a place for the community to hold a party and dance the night away! And dance they did – and soaked themselves wet and got sick because the basketball court was an open courtyard. My heart broke for those who got sick and those whose fun and amusement was cut short because of the rain. I then had to find a contractor to do steel roofing structure of the basketball court. The project took about two months to complete and has now become an all-purpose structure for the community where a variety of events/activities take place on a regular basis.

I tried to extend a helping hand whenever, wherever and however, I can -- a grandmother asking to finance a surgery of a grandson; a mother begging money for her family's meals for the day; or some help to bury their dead. I thank God I have a very supportive and compassionate wife who was likewise willing to help.

After some time, the excavation funds ran out and my siblings reneged on their share of the expenses. So, I went back to the USA to source out for funds. I was going home to mortgage my house and use portion of the proceeds to continue the exploration for the Yamashita treasure.

Back home with my family in Beaumont, this very good couple-friend of ours have been unrelenting in inviting my wife and I to join them in their First Saturday prayers in Los Angeles. I hesitated, thinking that I have joined a lot of prayer meetings in the past and that they were all one and the same. They start with interest and enthusiasm, then after a very short time, they lose interest and stop whatever it is they are doing. Leaving things incomplete. Just like a wildfire burning out quickly. After some thought, however, I joined them at the 2000 Hail Mary devotion. Sometime during the devotion, my wife who had had serious back pain and other health issues went in for a "pray over" by a man who receives locutions or messages/private revelations from God. God calls him Son Helper. My wife narrated her experience to me. She said that the Son Helper started with blessing her forehead with oil as his right hand rested on her head, prayed. Then his hand ran through her back and stopped exactly where she was hurting. She felt a weighty hand emitting heat, giving her relief.

We came back for the group's 1st Saturday Devotion the following month. Our friends encouraged me to go for the pray over, but I didn't. I just joined in for their devotional prayers and cenacle.

My wife and I found ourselves driving to LA again for the third time in a row to be with this devotional group. And this time, I went in for the pray over. At the pray over, a message was given to me as follows: "My son, what are you doing? You spent so much time, money and effort looking for treasure on earth that is not for you." I was perplexed and did not know what to say.

Each month [during 1st and 3rd Saturdays] thereafter, my wife and I are driving about 87 miles each way to Los Angeles to pray with the group. After about three months, before the 2000 Hail Mary [a 3rd Saturday], my siblings kept on texting me to go back to continue the treasure hunt. Then, at the next pray over, another message was given to me: "Don't go back to the place where you spent so much money, time and effort. Do not believe those people." I, finally decided, to ignore their texts. It was then, I realized that I was serving two masters. I asked my friend if he had told the locutionist about what I did in my hometown, but he said he has not said a word about it. Since then, I stayed and joined all the devotions, projects, activities and pilgrimages of The Spiritual Army of God the Father ministry.

In 2012, our hometown was planning a 100-year celebration of the Cross carved by my great-grandfather. As the story goes, there was a wildfire, and all the trees were burned down except this one particular tree called Kamagong. My grandfather used this wood to carve out the Cross which we have enshrined in the chapel I built. I had no intentions of attending this anniversary thinking that I'd rather use my funds to pay off the loan I incurred "looking for treasure on earth that's not for me." The Lord, however, through His message to His Son Helper, told me to go and buy an image of the Sto. Nino in Cebu, which was my port of entry in the Philippines, to get to my hometown. Measurement specifications were given as to the image that I need to get.

In love and obedience, I went to Cebu City, found and purchased the image with the exact length and width specified in the message. Yes -- the vendor quickly pinpointed the Image that I wanted, the only one amongst the many hundred images he has for sale! With Sto. Nino in tow, I hurried for our boat ride, then hopped on to a bus which mechanically broke down along the way. So, then I had to wait for a 15-passenger van, which unfortunately had a flat tire, and the driver had no spare. It took about 45 minutes for the tire to be fixed. We have to be at the bus station where the last Big Bus going to my hometown of Agay-ay in San Juan, Southern Leyte leaves at 7:00 PM. It was at this time that I seriously talked to Sto. Nino begging Him to please delay the departure of the bus so we can be in time for the Mass the following morning in Agay-ay. Otherwise, we will

have to be sleeping out in the cold in the marketplace and miss the entire celebration. We arrived at 9:00 PM! To my thankful disbelief, the last departing bus was still there and there was only ONE seat left. I was escorted to the seat and while finally seated and relieved, I overheard the other passengers wondering which VIP the bus was waiting for. When they saw Sto. Nino, they were amazed and said it was indeed a VIP. We made it to the Mass and the festivities and Sto. Nino was enshrined at the chapel.

Are you wondering what were left off of our excavations? There were two springs in our town and the other excavators diverted the waters and these flowed into our excavation site. So now, it is a water well serving the townspeople. God rendered our treasure hunt into something beneficial to the people.

Today, 13 years later, the members of The Spiritual Army of God the Father – which now includes my wife, my daughter and myself – carry on their devotion and commitment to God as they continue every day to seek a deeper relationship with Him learning and trying to live His Word. I'm grateful and thankful for the path that God has led me to tread with the loving assistance of my brothers and sisters in the Ministry – putting a stop in my treasure hunt and averting my homelessness!

With all that I have gone through, I would like to share the lessons I have learned. When you pray, know and understand what you are praying for. Adversity should not be seen as a negative sign, but it should be viewed as a challenge as you get closer to God. With this in mind, I feel that I do not have any problems or challenges. Obedience to God is most important. Do not be distracted by material things because God should be foremost in our heart, mind and soul.

It is also through the cenacle of The Spiritual Army of God ministry that I have come to fully understand the phrase "lukewarm soul." What stuck in my mind is that a lukewarm soul is one who prays and goes to church but when faced with decisions whether to attend devotions and prayers (spiritual actions) as opposed to attending a birthday party (earthly pleasures), he chooses the party (earthly pleasures). We must rank God first before ANYTHING or ANYONE.

Let us pray to the Holy Spirit and ask for guidance so that we can do things that are pleasing to God. Our God Almighty is first and foremost. Blessed is His Name! ☐

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

WALKING WITH GOD FOR PROTECTION

BY VICTOR ARANETA

In the present world of uncertainties and disarray, we do not understand our surroundings and even ourselves. One can easily be disillusioned and anxious where life is going, and our compass of spirituality has stopped. Even our personal attendance in church is replaced by cyber persona and our pastor/priest is enveloped by the advancement of technology called ZOOM. The reason is avoidance of sickness. We have forgotten that life is vulnerable even as we



sleep in the night. Our relationship with God becomes conditional with our health not knowing that walking with God encompasses viruses and diseases. He protects us from the Fowler's snares, and He holds us in the palm of His hands, sheltering us against His pinions AND RESCUES US FROM THE DESTROYING PLAGUE! Our Bible even clearly states that one of David's reliance is God's arms of protection.

We even duplicated the passage of Psalm 91 and puts it within our reach

and sight, but we surround and conclave ourselves inside the house that in the end we reckon it as our shield to disarm the plague that harms us. Where is our trust in God that shelters us from the destroying plague? One can only guess that the house we can see, and touch is much better protection than thousands of years of God's assurance from a book coming from a Divine Person who created and died for us as our invisible protective shield! What AN IRONY OF FAITH AND A BLATANT DISPLAY OF HYPOCRISY OF TRUST IN GOD!

In this we pray, God let these trying times be the witness of our faith and trust in you. Help us endure this lukewarmness of our hearts but rather instill in our whole being that nothing can separate us from Your assurance of protection that YOU WILL RESCUE US FROM THE DESTROYING PLAGUE WE ENCOUNTER TODAY, IN JESUS NAME WE PRAY, AMEN. ☐

Upcoming Events

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION

MAY 1, 2021

VIA ZOOM @ 11:00 AM

IN LOS ANGELES

1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION

MOTHER MARY'S CROWNING

AT THE CENACLE HOUSE

IN LAS VEGAS @ 1:00 PM

1ST SUNDAY DEVOTION

MOTHER MARY'S CROWNING

MAY 2, 2021

STATIONS OF THE CROSS GARDENS

THE MONASTERY OF THE ANGELS

IN LOS ANGELES AT 10:00 AM

ST. SHARBEL CATHOLIC CHURCH

10325 RANCHO DESTINO RD

LAS VEGAS, NV 89183

MASS AT 9:30 AM FOLLOWED BY

DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS AT THE CHAPEL

1ST FRIDAY DEVOTION

MAY 7, 2021

IN LOS ANGELES:

VIA ZOOM @ 9:00 PM

IN LAS VEGAS:

AT THE CENACLE HOUSE

2000 HAIL MARY DEVOTION

SATURDAY, MAY 15, 2021

IN LOS ANGELES:

VIA ZOOM @ 11:00 AM

IN LAS VEGAS

AT THE CENACLE HOUSE

THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA IS TRULY MOTHER'S DAY

The wisdom in Paul VI's words is quite evident. If earthly mothers want their children to be good, how much more does our heavenly Mother want us to be good? We do that by listening to her and imitating her. She made it simple at Fatima.

Don't we also honor our mothers for the counsel they gave us, advising us on which pursuits may be beneficial to us and which would likely lead us into danger or even ruin? Didn't our Blessed Mother in her apparitions at Fatima make it very clear to the children, and to us her children, the spiritual disasters, not to mention the temporal ones, resulting from following the ways of the world?

Did we listen to our mothers when they cautioned us to put those matches down so we wouldn't get burned? Sure, we did. But not enough of us listened to our heavenly Mother on Mother's Day, May 13, 1917, and later that summer when she said, "If you do what I tell you, many souls will be saved, and there will be peace. This war will end, but if men do not refrain from offending God, another and more terrible war will begin."

One look at the history of the twentieth century and today's secular society tells us that most of our Mother's children have not listened but remain disobedient and have become further corrupted.

When we honor our mothers on Mother's Day, do we think of the times they helped us with our bruises and hurts? And doesn't a mother comfort her child who calls in the middle of the night after waking from a nightmare? Our heavenly Mother will do the same if we call to her and listen to her advice to quell the nightmarish attacks upon all that is good in this world. The tiniest whisper to her will have her by our side to help.

We know that two dreadful "nightmares" surround the degradation of motherhood and marriage. In 1981, Sister Lucia wrote to Cardinal Carlo Caffarra, who, in a 2008 interview, revealed, "In that letter we find written, 'The final battle between the Lord and the kingdom of Satan will be about marriage and the family.' Don't be afraid, she added, because whoever works for the sanctity of marriage and the family will always be fought against and opposed in every way, because this is the decisive issue. Then she concluded, 'Nevertheless, Our Lady has already crushed his head.' "

Our Mother Mary prayerfully intercedes for us, her children, and gave us the remedy back in 1917 to extinguish these "night-mares." John Paul II pointed to that remedy again in his homily in Fatima 1982, when he said, "The call to repentance

is linked, as always, with a call to prayer. . . . The Lady of the message indicates the Rosary, which can rightly be defined as 'Mary's prayer': the prayer in which she feels particularly united with us. She herself prays with us."

Good mothers keep after their children to get them on the right path. Our Blessed Mother certainly does. In each appearance, she reminded us, "Continue to say the Rosary every day in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary to obtain the peace of the world and the end of the war, because only she can obtain it." Again, she would repeat herself, saying, "I want you to continue saying the Rosary every day."



At Fatima, on May 13, 1982, John Paul II reminded us of Our Lady's motherly love: "In the words of Fatima, we seem to find this dimension of motherly love, whose range covers the whole of man's path towards God. The solicitude of the Mother of the Savior is solicitude for the work of salvation: the work of her Son. It is solicitude for the salvation, the eternal salvation, of all."

A mother never gives up on her children. "In the light of a mother's love we understand the whole message of the Lady of Fatima," John Paul II noted. "She not only calls us to be converted: she calls us to accept her motherly help to return to the source of Redemption."

The motherly directions of Our Lady of Fatima are as crucial as ever. As her children we're called to follow them. We have to ask ourselves: Do we honor our mothers only on Mother's Day? The answer should be, "Of course not." What better way to honor our Blessed Mother and make every single day of the year Mother's Day for her than by following

the counsel and requests of Our Lady of Fatima? □

This article is adapted from a chapter in the book, *The Fruits of Fatima: A Century of Signs and Wonders*. It is available as an eBook or paperback from your favorite bookstore, or online through Sophia Institute Press.

To learn more about Fatima, check out the articles "Third Secret of Fatima: The Best-Kept Secret of the 20th Century" by Fr. Nicholas Sheehy, LC and "Why Does Our Lady of Fatima Call Us to the Daily Rosary?" by Joseph Pronechen.

Joseph Pronechen is staff writer with the National Catholic Register since 2005. His articles have appeared in a number of national publications including *Columbia* magazine, *Soul*, *Faith and Family*, *Catholic Digest*, and *Marian Helper*. His religion features have also appeared in *Fairfield County Catholic* and in one of Connecticut's largest news dailies. He holds an MS degree and formerly taught English and courses in film study that he developed at a Catholic high school in Connecticut. Joseph and his wife Mary reside on the East Coast.