

This evening, I have the singular honor of being asked to begin the Rosary Novena for the World Apostolate of Fatima.

My name is Father David Jenuwine, and I am the chaplain for the World Apostolate of Fatima. I am also the assistant at the Cathedral in Saginaw - where I help out with daily Masses, fill in across the street at St. Mary's hospital for the chaplains there ... I like to think that part of my job is spoiling the convent dog - to the consternation of the good sisters ... and in my free time I raise a small garden behind the Cathedral, and chase bats out of the Rectory, which is a beautiful 19th century home.

Today is also the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. This feast dates from the sixteenth century, when in 1573 Pope St. Pius V asked the entire Christian world to pray the Rosary as Europe was being besieged by the Turkish armada. And at Lepanto, the European navy - seriously outnumbered, outmanned, and outgunned by the Muslim armada - won the victory.

In a sense the Feast of the Rosary shows how Our Lady's powerful intercession can help us overcome insurmountable odds in any circumstances.

For this evening's Mass, we will use the readings of the Sunday; and because of the importance of this event as the opening of our Rosary Novena, and the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary ... we are praying the prayers from that particular feast; and I have chosen to wear white vestments in honor of Our Lady.

Most anyone familiar with Fatima knows of the Miracle of the Sun on October 13, 1917. On this, the last apparition, 70,000 people observed the sun dance in the sky ... and near the end the sun appeared to swoop down over the crowd. Not only did this frighten the crowd, many expecting to die ... but it also left the crowd and

the ground, which had been soaked by a strong morning rain, as dry as a bone.

Yet, many are unfamiliar that during the Miracle of the Sun - the three children, with whom Our Lady spoke, saw something entirely different. As Lucia writes:

Our Lady having disappeared in the immensity of the firmament, we saw, beside the sun, Saint Joseph with the Child Jesus and Our Lady clothed in white with a blue mantle. Saint Joseph and the Child Jesus seemed to bless the world with gestures which they made with their hands in the form of a cross.

Soon after, that apparition having ceased, I saw Our Lord and Our Lady, Who gave me the impression of being Our Lady of Sorrows. Our Lord seemed to bless the world in the same manner as Saint Joseph.

That apparition disappeared and it seemed to me that I saw Our Lady again, this time as Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

These three successive visions seem to tie in with the Rosary - which is a big part of the message of Fatima. In each of Her six apparitions, Our Lady asked that the Rosary be prayed. In this particular vision granted to the three children, the mysteries of the Holy Rosary are played out: the child Jesus and St. Joseph with Our Lady - that is, the Holy Family - seems to point to the Joyful mysteries of the Rosary; Our Lord and Our Lady of Sorrows points to the Sorrowful Mysteries; and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel - wearing a crown and holding the Scapular points to the Glorious Mysteries.

And here we are, nearly 95 years to the date from that vision which occurred during the Miracle of the Sun.

This weekend's readings all seem to focus in some way on family and marriage - husbands, wives, children, and siblings.

Marriages in the ancient world were big deals - primarily as a way to survive in a hostile world - whether against the forces of nature or the forces of other tribes and nations. Not to mention in bringing up children for the continuation of the human race ... the propagation of the species, so to speak ... as well as the family name.

In our own day and age, marriage has somewhat devolved in the minds of many into nothing more than a big party and a little legal contract. How many times have you heard people say - "It's just a piece of paper!"? As if the only purpose of marriage was to have a way to dictate inheritance rights or visitation rights or how to apply the tax code.

But from a spiritual perspective, marriage is much, much more than a contract.

In Genesis, after Adam had named all the animals - and I want to point out that there are over 60,000 animal species on our planet - and 20 times that when you add in insects, bugs, and all the slimy things in the oceans ... so Adam's naming of all the animals was less an afternoon's event, and an awful lot more like a serious research project - maybe taking several months or years.

But after all of that research ... and after all of that work, "*none [of the animals] proved to be [a] suitable partner for*" him.

And we all know the rest of the story - which culminates in Adam's recognition that Eve was "*at last ... bone of [his] bones and flesh of [his] flesh*".

This language, "*bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh*" is the language of a covenant. And while sparing you the detailed

theological and philosophical nitty-gritty of the difference between contracts and covenants ... a nutshell explanation is that a contract is an exchange of goods and services; while a covenant is an exchange of persons - a gift of our very selves.

That is why when St. Paul explains in his Letter to the Ephesians that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross for our salvation ... the total Self-gift of the Son of God for the People of God ... that it is only fitting to call the Church the Bride of Christ, and to call Jesus the Groom. Saint Paul goes on to call this cosmic and divine marriage a "*great mystery*" ... meaning that it is something not easily understood ... nor is it so easily defined.

That is why in the Gospel Jesus tells us, "*what God has joined together, no human being must separate*". A Church annulment is far from being a legal divorce - rather an annulment looks to see if there was something held back ... some failure to complete the full exchange of persons ... resulting in an incomplete gift of selves ... an impediment, as it is said, or an obstacle ... to fulfilling the great mystery of this divine covenant of Holy Matrimony.

And it is also why the bishops of the Church oppose the efforts by the federal and state governments to re-define marriage as a collection of legal fictions ... in a sense cheapening and degrading the great mystery of the covenant of marriage ... and re-defining it to suit current social trends.

The great mystery of covenants applies as well to all the Sacraments - in Baptism we are given to God as children - becoming sons and daughters of God ... and becoming sharers in the Divine Life of God; in Confirmation we are given the gifts of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us for our mission - so that we might bring the Spirit of God and the message of the Gospel out into the world. In the Eucharist, we are given the Body and Blood, Soul and

Divinity of Jesus Christ - as spiritual nourishment for our daily life ... and to renew, at least weekly, our covenant with God at this altar.

In all of the Sacraments - covenants are made and renewed; strengthened and restored ... persons are given to one another ... persons both human and Divine ... and in this way, we imitate and live out the life of the Trinity - in whose image and likeness we are created.

Blessed Pope John Paul II, when asked about his Papal motto - *Totus Tuus*, gave a detailed explanation. *Totus Tuus*, is Latin for "Totally Yours." And the late Holy Father meant this in relation to Our Lady. In the book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, he explains:

Totus Tuus. This phrase is not only an expression of piety, or simply an expression of devotion. It is more. During the Second World War, while I was employed as a factory worker, I came to be attracted to Marian devotion. At first, it had seemed to me that I should distance myself a bit from the Marian devotion of my childhood, in order to focus more on Christ. Thanks to Saint Louis of Montfort, I came to understand that true devotion to the Mother of God is actually [centered on Jesus Christ], indeed, it is very profoundly rooted in the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption.

In speaking of "*the mysteries of [Christ's] Incarnation and Redemption*", Blessed John Paul was echoing what we hear in the Second Reading:

[Christ] "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels," that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

And at the end of the reading, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us:

*He who consecrates and those who are being consecrated
all have one origin.*

In a few short minutes, we will pray Blessed John Paul's 1982 Prayer of Consecration of the Modern World to the Immaculate Heart. We have already been consecrated - given over - to God in Baptism. We have received the divine life of God. We are partakers in the greatest mysteries of Heaven and Earth.

Let us, in that prayer, re-dedicate ourselves to the mission of Our Lady of Fatima ... the Mission of the Church ... the Mission of the Gospel ... the Mission of Jesus Christ ...

And as we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ - let us pray that the graces of this Most Blessed Sacrament might strengthen the bonds of all of our covenants - with God and with others - so that we might ... as bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh ... live more deeply the great mystery ... giving ourselves more fully ... to God ... and to one another.