

Welcome to the second night of the World Apostolate of Fatima's Rosary Novena. Don't worry about if you missed yesterday - I'm sure you can always make it up in Purgatory somehow.

The apparitions of Our Lady to the three children at Fatima occurred on the 13th of each month beginning in May of 1917 and ending on the 13th of October in 1917. In the previous year, the three children also received apparitions from an angel.

Two of the children, Francisco and Jacinta Marto, were beatified in the year 2000 on May 13. At the time of the apparitions, Francisco was around 9 when the apparitions began. He died roughly two years later after the Influenza Outbreak that swept Europe in 1918. In all six apparitions of Our Lady to the three children, one thing was constant - that being daily recitation of the Rosary.

In my article in the newsletter that went out before the Rosary Novena, I spoke of how 5 Decades of the Rosary - or one set of Mysteries - takes approximately 20 minutes. That's all. Oddly enough, a half-hour television show without the commercials takes about the same time.

If you have a favorite show, I encourage you to take advantage of a "two for one" deal. That is, give up your favorite show - and offer it up for the conversion of souls; and during that newly found half-hour, pray the Rosary.

In praying the Rosary, it is important that we reflect in some way on the mysteries. This can be difficult - but shouldn't be cause for discouragement if you find your mind wandering. If you feel tempted to throw in the towel - DON'T! Fidelity to prayer is more important than quality in prayer. Not that you shouldn't strive for quality prayer time.

In today's Gospel, we hear from St. Luke the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan.

Jesus is approached by a teacher of the Law who gives a nice laundry list version of the "Great Commandment" to love God and love our neighbor.

St. Luke tells us that this teacher, "*wish[ing] to justify himself*" asks Jesus "*And who is my neighbor?*"

Jesus' answer is the parable of the Good Samaritan.

I would like to propose that all of us are much more comfortable with laundry lists of obligations, and much less comfortable with truly fulfilling those obligations.

In the parable, the priest and the levite both cross over to the other side of the road. We may quickly pass judgement on them for this, but in the Law of Moses, contact with a dead body results in ritual impurity. If the priest and the levite were on their way to perform their temple duties - they very well may have believed that fulfilling that particular obligation as more important out of their love for God. Or perhaps they juggled the idea of service of God over service of neighbor, and felt that God was giving them the opportunity to put Him first ... and leave their neighbor behind.

Awkwardly, if we listen to the final response of the teacher of the Law, we hear him in referring to the Samaritan say: "*The one who treated him with mercy*" - notice that the teacher of the Law cannot even bring himself to say the word "*Samaritan*" ... such was the antipathy between Jews and Samaritans.

In the *Diary of St. Faustina*, Our Lord asks St. Faustina to come to the chapel at a certain time the next day. Yet in the midst of that day, she is assigned menial duties by her superiors.

Torn between the two things - St. Faustina follows the orders of her superiors and is devastated that she misses her appointment with Jesus in the chapel. When she finally makes it to the chapel, Jesus is waiting for her and praises her. After all, she had vowed obedience to her superiors before God; and Jesus tells her that he is pleased that she kept her vows in this way.

Focusing back in on Blessed Francisco, he was what we might call in the 21st century ... "laid back." In her memoirs, Sister Lucia Dos Santos - the third of the children - wrote that Francisco was quiet, passive, and submissive. But, not that he didn't have a mischievous side. Nonetheless, he was not opposed to letting others use his things - and if something were taken from him, that didn't bother him either. He was drawn to nature - feeding wild animals, and interested in lizards and snakes. She relates that what he most enjoyed was sitting atop a high rock in the mountains to sing or play his flute.

Now, remember, Francisco was only 9 years old. He was the middle-child of the three Fatima children ... and the only boy.

Many times during the apparitions, Francisco didn't hear what Our Lady said - sometimes all he received was the vision, but not the auditory portion of the apparition.

Francisco embraced Our Lady's admonitions in a very serious manner. During the apparitions, the children were called to pray, sacrifice, make reparation, and suffer.

The children would give their lunches away to those less fortunate; and avoid even drinking water. Offering up these sacrifices in reparation for sins against the Immaculate Heart of Mary as well as for the conversion of poor sinners. For a time, the children wore harsh ropes around their waists that scratched and itched - offering

up the discomfort as a sacrifice. Yet, in one of the apparitions they were told by Our Lady not to do that particular penance.

Francisco also had a great devotion to the Eucharist. He referred to Our Lord in the Tabernacle as “Hidden Jesus,” and desired to spend as much time as possible in adoration of Our Blessed Lord in the Eucharist.

Francisco is said to have told Lucia and Jacinta:

*I loved seeing the Angel, but I loved still more seeing Our Lady. What I loved most of all was to see Our Lord in that light from Our Lady which penetrated our hearts.*

*I love God so much!*

*But He is very sad because of so many sins!*

*We must never commit any sins again.*

The promise of heaven was foremost in Francisco’s mind. He endured imprisonment and threats with great courage ... embracing any opportunity to suffer and make sacrifices for souls and for reparation. He desired to spend as much time in prayer as he could in eager anticipation of heaven.

Indeed, so too must we - poor adults living in a more complicated world - pray for the graces to embrace the Message of Our Lady of Fatima with as much zeal as this little peasant boy.

As we approach this altar to receive the Most Holy Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ - let us pray for those graces. Let us, too, ask for the intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary and Blessed Francisco and Jacinta - that we might become more zealous for souls and grow to have a more intense love for God.