

Pope John Paul II and the Collegial Consecration of 1984 [Blog](#)

Pope John Paul II's formal association with Fatima stems from the attempt made on his life in Rome on 13 May 1981, the anniversary of the first apparition at Fatima, when he was shot in St Peter's square.

All the evidence suggests that Mehmet Ali Agca carried out the assassination attempt under orders from the Bulgarian secret service, which was itself working with the KGB. It seems that the Communists were worried at the increasing influence of the Pope, particularly in Poland, and had decided to eliminate him.[1]

Fortunately the bullet wounds were not fatal and while in hospital recovering, the Pope carefully reviewed all the documents on Fatima. He certainly felt that Mary's intercession had saved his life, and his reading apparently convinced him that the consecration of Russia to Mary's Immaculate Heart was an absolute necessity if the world was to be saved from war and atheism.

Consequently on 13 May 1982, exactly a year after the assassination attempt, John Paul II was in Fatima, both to thank Mary for saving his life, and also to carry out a public act of consecration of the whole world, including Russia, to her Immaculate Heart. After this was accomplished, though, it became apparent that many of the world's bishops had not been informed in time.

Thus this consecration had not fulfilled the conditions of collegiality asked for by Mary at Fatima, that is that the Pope in union with the bishops of the world should consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart. Sr. Lucia, still living in the Carmelite convent at Coimbra, apparently made this known later to the Apostolic Nuncio in Portugal.[2]

Interestingly, in this 1982 consecration John Paul II specifically described Fatima as a place "chosen" by Mary, thus indicating official confirmation of its status and intimating that we are to understand it as the major "prophecy" of the twentieth century, whose urgent message cannot be ignored.[3]

During his homily the Pope made the following remarks:

"If the Church has accepted the message of Fatima, it is above all because that message contains a truth and a call whose basic content is the truth and call of the Gospel itself. "Repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mk. 1:15).

"These are the first words of the Messiah addressed to humanity. The message of Fatima is, in its basic nucleus, a call to conversion and repentance, as in the Gospel. This call was uttered at the beginning of the twentieth century, and it was thus addressed particularly to this present century. The Lady of the message seems to have read with special insight the 'signs of the times,' the signs of our time." [4]

John Paul II also spoke of Fatima during this homily in these significant terms: "The appeal of the Lady of the message of Fatima is so deeply rooted in the Gospel and the whole of Tradition that the Church feels that the message imposes a commitment on her." [5]

The Pope decided to renew the consecration in March 1984, with letters being sent to all the world's bishops in good time, including the Orthodox, asking them to join him in this action. On 25 March 1984, the feast of the Annunciation, John Paul II duly renewed the act of consecration in St Peter's Basilica in Rome, before the statue of Mary from the site of the apparitions at Fatima which was specially brought for the occasion.

Although the text used did not mention Russia, the Pope did specifically recall the acts of consecration made by Pope Pius XII in 1942 and 1952, the latter being essentially concerned with Russia. It also appears that John Paul II paused during the ceremony, and, according to the bishop of Leiria-Fatima, Alberto Cosme do Amaral, quietly included Russia in the consecration.

This action is understandable given the delicate political situation, and, it has been argued, with the understanding that God was leaving the Pope, as head of the Church on earth, to best judge the precise form the act should take. Certainly Russia was in the Pope's mind in the following reference:

"in a special way we entrust and consecrate to you those individuals and nations which particularly need to be thus entrusted and consecrated."

Although not all the world's bishops joined in the act of consecration, it appears that a "moral totality" did, thus satisfying the request of Mary. Following this consecration Sr. Lucia was again visited by the Apostolic Nuncio; this time she told him that the consecration of Russia had indeed been accomplished, and that God had accepted it.[6]

After nearly seventy years it appeared that the act of collegial consecration had finally been carried out.

Others, though, have taken the view that this was not the case, and this opinion cannot be dismissed lightly. If we look at the various requests and statements made by Mary to Sr Lucia in literal terms, then it can certainly be argued that the 1984 act of consecration did not completely fulfil these requests.

In July 1917, after showing the children hell, and describing what would happen if people did not repent, Mary continued:

"To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

Fr Messias Coelho, a leading Portuguese theologian and authority on Fatima, argues that although the text used in the 1984 consecration mentioned the world rather than Russia, as Mary requested, since Russia is part of the world then it is included in the consecration by implication. As he states: "Nobody can prove that the words Our Lady used, asked for a consecration of Russia alone; Russia is part of the world. If the world is consecrated, Russia becomes consecrated." [7]

This is obviously a true statement, but there also seems to be a danger of distorting Mary's words, as documented above, beyond their natural meaning.

It is clear that at present Russia has not been "converted," in the sense of being truly converted to Catholicism, or even Christianity in general. Nor is there much evidence of peace in the world. There also seems to be a definite link here between the consecration of Russia and the First Saturday Communions of Reparation, to the extent that it could be argued that they are jointly necessary.

This connection is also found in the following passage, which arose out of the 1929 apparition of the Trinity at the convent at Tuy, after which Sr Lucia corresponded with Fr Gonzalves:

"If I am not mistaken, Our Dear Lord God promises to end to the persecution of Russia, if the Holy Father condescends to make, and likewise ordains the Bishops of the Catholic World to make, a solemn and public act of reparation and consecration of Russia to the Most Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In response to the ending of this persecution, His Holiness is to promise to approve of and recommend the practice of the already mentioned devotion of reparation."

If taken literally, both parts of this request have not been complied with, in that Russia was not specifically named in the 1984 act of consecration, and similarly, the Pope has not approved and recommended the First Saturdays devotion of reparation in any official public sense.

If these two points are organically linked, as seems to be the case, then perhaps the consecration will not become fully effective until the First Saturdays devotion is officially promulgated by the papacy; this may help to explain why the "conversion" of Russia and true peace for the world are so slow in coming. This though would probably also require a feast day for Fatima linked with the canonisation of Jacinta and Francisco.

The theological consensus seems to be that the Pope has done as much as he can at present, and that therefore official promotion of the First Saturdays devotion is something for the future. If the above position is correct it is possible to see the 1984 papal consecration as somewhat similar to that of Pius XII in 1942, which shortened the Second World War.

That is it has led to the fall of communism and the end of immediate persecution in Russia and its former satellites, but it does not completely fulfil the requests made by Mary, although this does not mean that it is necessary to repeat it.

In the mid-thirties Sr. Lucia asked Jesus why it was necessary that Russia be consecrated to Mary's Immaculate Heart, receiving this reply: "Because I want My whole Church to acknowledge that consecration as a triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so that it may extend its cult later on, and put devotion to this Immaculate Heart beside the devotion to my Sacred Heart."

Again it is clear that at present the "whole Church" is far from acknowledging Mary's role and seeing the 1984 act of consecration as a triumph of her Immaculate Heart, and this too is probably a factor in limiting the effectiveness of the consecration.

At a meeting in Fatima in 1989 the bishop of Fatima was asked if Mary's request regarding the consecration of Russia had been fulfilled. He replied to the effect that this matter was the "business of the Holy Father," who as head of the Church was ultimately responsible for it. Fr Frederick L. Miller, who was also present, comments thus on the bishop's reply:

"I would certainly say that the Pope has done all that he can possibly do to fulfil Our Lady's request." As he points out, the essential concern of Catholics should be to live the message of Fatima rather than worry over whether the consecration has been done or not, a matter which is in the hands of the Pope alone.[8]

These points were reiterated by the bishop of Fatima in 1990, in the support he gave to visiting prelates, such as Cardinal Meisner, who expressed their belief that the consecration had indeed been done.[9]

We also have the testimony of Sr. Lucia, in 1989, in a hand-written letter to the Fatima Family Messenger, a Fatima magazine edited by Fr. Robert Fox, which apparently does confirm that the consecration made in 1984 was valid. In this letter she points out that previous consecrations were not fully efficacious, because they had not been made in union with the bishops of the world.[10]

Sr. Lucia produced another signed note, dated 3 July 1990, in response to a specific question from Fr Fox, of which the following excerpt is a translation from the Portuguese:

"I come to answer your question, 'If the consecration made by Pope John Paul II on March 25, 1984 in union with all the bishops of the world, accomplished the conditions for the conversion of Russia, according to the request of Our Lady in Tuy on June 13 of 1929'? Yes it was accomplished, and since then I have said that it was made. And I say that no other person responds for me, it is I who receive and open all letters and respond to them." [11]

Thus we have to weigh this categorical assertion against the negative points detailed above. Fr Fox further argues that the Pope was very careful to ensure that the wording of the act of consecration guaranteed collegiality. He points out that John Paul II explicitly recalled the two consecrations of Pope Pius XII, in 1942 when he consecrated the world to Mary's Immaculate Heart, and in 1952 when he consecrated Russia to her, offering these previous consecrations with his own act of consecration.

As Fr Fox states: "To say that the Pope was not consecrating Russia in union with the bishops of the world does violence to logic. It makes a taskmaster of God who nit-picks for fine details or wording rather than the intention of hearts." [12]

On balance then the most important authorities, including the Pope, the local bishop, prominent theologians, and finally Sr. Lucia herself, hold the view that the 1984 act of consecration of Russia was properly carried out. Perhaps it is not surprising that there is such controversy over this point, given the difficulties the various popes have encountered in attempting to make the collegial consecration.

Pius XII could have requested the bishops of the world to join him in both his 1942 and 1952 consecrations, but chose not to. Similarly Paul VI could have made the collegial consecration during the Second Vatican Council, when he was in the presence of the world's bishops, but he too chose not to or felt unable to take this step.

He may have felt that opposition to the message of Fatima, amongst certain members of the hierarchy and prominent theologians, rendered the carrying out of the full consecration impossible during his pontificate. This seems to be the import of Jesus' words to Sr. Lucia after the 1929 apparition of the Trinity:

"They did not wish to heed My request. Like the king of France, they will repent and do it, but it will be late. Russia will have already spread her errors throughout the world, provoking wars and persecutions of the Church; the Holy Father will have much to suffer."

Paul VI would also have weighed the effect of the full collegial consecration of Russia, and its apparent condemnation of the atheistic communist regime, on the lives of ordinary Christians who would undoubtedly have faced further persecution.

It is also probable that not enough people were living the Fatima message to make these earlier consecrations viable. And regardless of the view one takes of the 1984 consecration, it is obvious that still not enough people are taking Fatima seriously. Until this happens the full power and beauty of Fatima will not become apparent in the world.

Notes: [1] Carroll, Rise and Fall of the Communist Revolution, pp. 685-89; [2] Tindal-Robertson, Fatima, Russia & Pope John Paul II, pp. 7-11, 13, 18, 23. [3] Joseph de Sainte-Marie, Reflections on the Act of Consecration, pp. 1-4, 8. [4] Tindal-Robertson, Fatima, Russia & Pope John Paul II, p. 243. [5] Tindal-Robertson, Fatima, Russia & Pope John Paul II, p. 248. [6] Tindal-Robertson, Fatima, Russia & Pope John Paul II, pp. 23-27, 39, 253-56. [7] Fr. Robert Fox, The Collegial Consecration of Russia is Accomplished, (Augustine Publishing Company, Devon, 1990), pp. 3-6. [8] Miller, Exploring Fatima, pp. 100-1. [9] Tindal-Robertson, Fatima, Russia & Pope John Paul II, pp. 59-60. [10] Martins & Fox, Documents on Fatima, pp. 84-85. [11] Martins & Fox, Documents on Fatima, p. 86. Sr Lucia also wrote three letters to the journal 30 Days in which she confirmed that the collegial consecration had been accomplished, cf. Tindal-Robertson, Fatima, Russia & Pope John Paul II, p. 27. [12] Fox, The Collegial Consecration of Russia is Accomplished, pp. 13-15.

<http://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/Fatima1984.htm> - EWTN expert answer on 1984 Consecration