**Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, our conversion and Russia**

During her third appearance in Fatima on July 13, 1917, in the presence of around five thousand pilgrims, Our Lady said to the three shepherd children, “*I want you to … continue to say the Rosary every day … to obtain the peace of the world and the end of the war.” If men do not stop offending God, however,* ***following the present First World War****, “****another and more terrible war****” will come.* ***“To prevent this****, I shall come to the world to ask that* ***Russia be consecrated to my Immaculate Heart****, and I shall ask that on the First Saturday of every month Communions of reparation be made in atonement for the sins of the world. If my wishes are fulfilled, Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, then Russia will spread her errors throughout the world, bringing new wars and persecution of the Church; the good will be martyred and the Holy Father will have much to suffer; certain nations will be annihilated. But in the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and the world will enjoy a period of peace.”*

Pope John Paul II was the first to have the original statue of Our Lady of Fatima brought to Rome to show the world that he desired to fulfil Mary’s request. He consecrated the world and Russia to Mary’s Immaculate Heart in St. Peter’s Square on March 25, 1984. Sr. Lucia confirmed the validity of the consecration that the Pope, “*with the bishops who wanted to unite with His Holiness, made the Consecration as Our Lady requested*.”

The large-scale effects of this total surrender to Mary were seen very quickly. In March 1985, just one year later, Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the CCCP. His Perestroika political reforms eventually lead to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union and the entire Eastern Bloc, resulting in an opening of the Iron Curtain. No politician thought that something like that could happen. Even Pope John Paul II said, “*Those events remain surprising for their vastness and especially for the speed with which they occurred.”*

Mikhail Gorbachev gave credit to the Slavic pope during his legendary visit to the Vatican at the beginning of December 1989. “*Without you, Holy Father, the Berlin Wall never would have fallen.”* The recently accessible military documents of the Warsaw Pact reveal how dangerously close Europe and the world were to being involved in a nuclear war during the 1980’s.

Despite all the positive developments, we still find ourselves today in Europe and worldwide in an extremely precarious situation and have to admit, that we too have not complied with God’s wishes through Mary. Therefore, Pope John Paul II renewed the consecration to Mary on October 8, 2000, in the presence of 1,500 cardinals and bishops and spiritually united with all the bishops of the world. In it he described so fittingly the dramatic situation in the world, which has continued to worsen to this day. “*Humanity now has instruments of unprecedented power: we can turn this world into a garden, or reduce it to a pile of rubble. … Today as never before in the past, humanity stands at a crossroads.”* Since Pope Francis has spoken more than once that the Third World War has already begun, even if it is being played out in individual “chapters”, we should not hesitate to make it clear to ourselves that we are in the middle of the realization of the vision from the Third Secret of Fatima. In this vision, an angel stood above Our Lady with a fiery sword which flashed and gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; Mary, however, revealed her motherly power. Sr. Lucia saw that the flames “*died out in contact with the splendour that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: ‘Penance, Penance, Penance!’”*

This dramatic call to penance is meant for us—the call to conversion and loving correspondence to grace. Like never before, the affliction, fear and danger everywhere should lead us to renew our faith in the saving power of Our Lady. We take refuge through the consecration, therefore, in the Heart of Mary, in her motherly womb. Indeed, Sr. Lucia said in 1992, *“What is still missing and what Our Lady requests is the effective consecration of our hearts, our communities and families.”*