



...HER RAVISHING SMILE!

By Bro MARIANO DI VITO, OFM Cap.

In her simple but extraordinarily profound life that is so significant to the present day, Thérèse of Lisieux recounts how she overcame her feelings of anxiety and panic while gazing on an image of Our Lady and being filled with the light of her motherly smile.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the Fatima apparitions (1917-2017) and here in our journal we wish to recall the strong message of prayer and conversion that came from this village in Portugal and which is still so relevant to our world and present times.

Unquestionably, the call to return, to make a U-turn ('convert' from the Latin *convertere* signifies in fact to 'turn around'), is at the heart of the message of the Lady dressed in white and which, even after 100 years, preserves all its dramatic actuality and still is, without overstatement, a real punch in the stomach to the world (our world!), that seems to have lost the way of the Gospel with all its revolutionary spirit.

However..., from Fatima, as in fact

in all her known apparitions, and recognised by the Church, everything comes from the Blessed Virgin's heart, from that ardent, sensitive, and open heart of a mother that beats with the boundless mercy of Christ's pierced heart.

The "ravishing smile" of Our Lady that Saint Thérèse saw, is the little way that allows all to enter that maternal heart and to be won over by the beauty of the Good, to separate ourselves from evil and to possibly even overcome it. An anxious, depressed and frightened soul, we know, is easy prey, not knowing how to put up any resistance it is easily swept along. In a similar way, nothing will hold back a proud, conceited and arrogant soul, blinded by resentment, hatred and desire for vengeance and that can cause itself and others untold of sufferings, wrongs and even death as our news bulletins continuously bear witness to with dramatic and gory evidence! That "ravishing smile" and ardent heart can fill us with strength, encouragement and peace, as well

as humility, considerateness, respect and forgiveness!

May Our Lady of the Smile, that includes really every image of the Blessed Virgin hanging on a wall of our home or kept protectively in a coat pocket become, in this month dedicated to her, the lodestone that draws our gaze, uplifts us and revivifies our crushed and discouraged souls, melts the hard ice of our egoistic and conflicting relationships, breaks the knots and chains of hatred, anger and rancour, and returns us to that right way that any number of reasons may have caused us to abandon or lose.

And without wavering, without second thoughts, drawn simply by the gentleness of her "ravishing smile."

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