

Dear Faithful of Our Lady of Fatima,

It has been good to see many of you over the week at Adoration and times of quiet prayer before Our Lord in the Tabernacle. And at the same time, especially as Sunday arrives, please know that your absence from your spiritual home fills your priests with genuine sadness. At the moment, so much seems lost for us all, each in our own way. So much that we love and value and have always needed in living our Faith and our vocations seems to have been taken from us.

(Side but VERY Important Note-Let us remember that even being deprived of the sacraments through no fault of our own does not get in the way of God's work in our lives. He will always give us what we need. *"Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you, says the Lord almighty..." Epistle from Saturday before Passion Sunday, Isaiah 49:15*)

Nevertheless, I suspect that many of us, having lost, at least for the moment, so much that we love about our Catholic Faith and the Sacred Liturgy, may feel that we have lost Him or that He has turned away from us!

I have been struck the last days and spoken to some of you about Caryl Houselander's meditation on the 5th Joyful Mystery from the chapter 'The Lost Child' in her The Reed of God....most of which Joyful Mystery was not at all joyful for Our Lady and St Joseph. They searched for Him sorrowing!

I have always been struck by Houselander's point that He was, in fact, **not** lost at all! He knew exactly where He was and, even more extraordinarily, where they were. He knew their sorrow, their deep worry in having lost both their own son and the Son of God. Why would He do this to His parents? Why, in particular, would He do this to His Mother?

The answer is quite simple and clear, and yet deep and beautiful: He knew her. He knew what her response would be. St Luke makes it very clear that even when they had finally found Him, His Mother didn't understand His explanation of being *"...about His Father's business."* But Christ knew that Our Lady was still willing to endure the sorrow, the worry, the confusion.

But why was He sure that she would be so willing? Why did she even "treasure these things in her heart"? There are many explanations that Caryl Houselander gives for this. I would like to share two of them.

- 1- She knew that His Will is always best. Her 'Fiat' to the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation was not a onetime poetic response. 'Fiat' was how she lived her entire life. Despite the confusion, uncertainty, worry and even sorrow, Our Blessed Lady was willing to endure this loss of her Christ-Child. But she was willing to endure not only this trial, but each and every trial, most especially standing at the Foot of the Cross. She knew absolutely that following the Will of God was what would allow her to not only keep her deep and trusting peace in the midst of life's storms, but even be able to *'treasure all these things in her heart'*.

- 2- Our Blessed Lady was also willing to go through this agony of losing Christ because she knew that we too would have to live this loss. We too would have to search for Him at times and have a sense of having lost Him. She wanted us to know that we are not alone in sensing His loss. She has gone before us on this road. She has been where we might perhaps find ourselves today.

And so for us, just as with Our Blessed Mother and St Joseph, Christ is not lost. He is never lost, regardless of how it feels to us. He knows exactly where we are today, each of us individually, just as He knew exactly where His parents were. And most importantly, those graces of Faith and Trust, of Hope and Love that He has been preparing for us are waiting to be poured out.

Let us all look to our Heavenly Mother today, this week, this Lent and beyond. Let us trust that whatever storms come into our lives, we can continue to strive to repeat her words and live by them-words that simply echo the words of her Son when He taught us to pray, "Thy Will be done!" This is the path of Trust and Love, even in her most painful sufferings, which she walked while here on earth. And this is the path she wants to walk again with each of us today and every day.

As we begin Passiontide, a time when Our Blessed Lord found Himself alone many times, we have the opportunity to be present to Him in our hearts, in the Tabernacle, in each soul that crosses our path. And there we find ourselves, on the Royal Road of the Cross, not alone and not lost, but under the mantle of our Heavenly Mother.

Assuring you again of the prayers of your priests!

May God Bless you all!

Fr. McNeely