

The Hundred Years War

By Leo Darroch

On the vigil of Pentecost 1987 Pope John Paul II inaugurated a Marian Year which ran from Pentecost Sunday, 6th June 1987, until the 15th August 1988, the feast of The Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven. What prompted the Holy Father to declare this year of special devotion? In his homily at the vigil celebration he joined with..."all his brothers in the episcopate...to deepen awareness of the maternal presence of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and of the Church." He also hoped to experience, throughout the coming year, the living and active guidance of the Mother of God: her maternal presence and intercession. This has been a particular role of the Mother of God down through the ages. Her numerous apparitions have occurred often during troubled times when she has offered advice and guidance to the world on how to attain peace. These apparitions have never simply been random events. God, in His infinite wisdom, shows greater consideration and love than this for His souls. Throughout history every appearance of His Blessed Mother has been for a particular purpose, and peace in the world has been a constant theme. Our Lady, Queen of Peace, is no empty title.

On May 13th 1917 one such apparition took place. Three small children playing on a hillside in Portugal had their play disturbed by "flashes of lightning" from a clear blue sky. The story of Our Lady of Fatima is so well known, at least to European Catholics, that the details do not need to be repeated here but there is one aspect of this story which does, perhaps, bear closer scrutiny.

During that first apparition in May 1917 Our Lady asked the three children to come back on the 13th of each month and at the same hour, for six months. On July 13th, her third appearance, Our Lady stressed the need for the daily recitation of the Rosary to obtain peace for the world and to speed the end of the First World War. She would announce who she was in October. When asked once again by the children in September who she was, Our Lady replied that she would tell them her name "only on October 13th." Why the gentle but firm insistence on October, and why particularly the 13th? Was this date chosen simply because she knew it was to be her final appearance, or was there perhaps something especially significant about this particular date? I believe it to be the latter. Everything about the visitations had a special significance. To illustrate my point; the children said Our Lady always appeared from the east and departed towards the east. This happened on each and every appearance. Why the east? Why not from the north, or the south, or the west,

or any combination of these? Why not simply appear on the spot where she was seen by the children? No, it was always from, and to, the east.

Michael Davies, in his book *Pope Paul's New Mass*, explains how "...the Christians of antiquity found a rich and seemingly inexhaustable symbolism in the eastward direction. Our Lord had faced the west while redeeming mankind on the Cross and by looking towards the east we are actually facing Him because the Sacrifice of the Cross is made present during the Mass." St. Thomas Aquinas taught that the eastward direction symbolised both Paradise lost and Paradise regained. There is a tradition that when the Sol Justitiae returns like "lightning flashing" (my emphasis) from east to west, it will be during the celebration of Mass. Even in the Old Testament the prophet Ezechial declared, "And behold the glory of God of Israel came in by the way of the east." In this respect surely His Blessed Mother is the supreme example of the glory of God. For nearly two thousand years up to the introduction of the new order of Mass in 1969 the priests of the Catholic Church celebrated Mass facing the east, leading their flocks and facing the rising sun, the symbol of the Resurrection and of heavenly paradise.

But to return to Fatima. Our Lady's words were clear; "ONLY ON OCTOBER 13th." What, then, was the message of 1917? The miracle of the sun is perhaps the most vividly remembered event - notice how, once again, the sun played a prominent role - but the message itself may have become blurred with the passage of time. Our Lady explained to the children that Our Lord wished to establish in the world devotion to her Immaculate Heart. If this were done many souls would be saved and the world would have peace. The First World War was ending, she said, but if men did not cease from offending God a new, and worse one, would begin; that Russia should be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart. If her demands were listened to Russia would be converted...else that country would spread her errors throughout the world, arousing wars and persecutions against the Church. Good men will be martyred, she said, the Holy Father will have much to suffer; many nations will be annihilated, but in the end her Immaculate Heart would triumph and a period of peace would be given to the world. A sombre message indeed but one with hope. As indicated earlier, God does not act without a reason. The question keeps returning. Why choose this particular moment in time to send His Blessed Mother with such a warning? The answer perhaps may be found away from Fatima. On October 13th, 1884, after he had celebrated Mass in his chapel, Pope Leo XIII stopped at the foot of the altar steps and stood there motionless for about ten minutes. The various members of the Vatican staff who were in attendance described how he seemed to be in a deep trance, his face ashen. He later explained

that as he was about to leave the altar he heard two voices coming from the direction of the tabernacle. One voice boasted that he could destroy the Church but he needed time to do it ..." seventy-five to one hundred years, and a greater power over those who will give themselves over to my service." The other voice challenged him to do so if he could ..." You have the time; you will have the power."

Pope Leo's understanding was that this was a conversation between Christ and Satan and that Satan had been granted a certain period of time in which to do his worst. He also explained that he understood that Satan, if he failed to achieve his objective by the end of the allotted time, would suffer a most crushing defeat. To offset the many and willing helpers of Satan, Our Lord promised a greater power to the forces of good if they would recognise this power and use it. After hearing all this Pope Leo was inspired to compose his prayer to St. Michael the Archangel invoking his help in the coming battle against the wickedness and snares of the devil. St. Michael had triumphed once before in the heavenly conflict with Satan and he could triumph again. After he had composed his prayer the Pope ordered it to be recited throughout the world by priests and congregations after all Low Masses, for the protection of the Church and the salvation of souls. This, I believe, was the real beginning of the drama. A drama on a global scale and involving not only the Catholic Church but eventually almost the whole of humanity. October 13th 1884, was, in effect, the beginning of the hundred years' war.

The first major eruption of this challenge from Satan against the Church took place towards the end of the nineteenth century in the final years of Pope Leo's pontificate; namely, the rise of modernism. Pope Leo died in 1903 and the fight was taken up by Pope St. Pius X, an inspiring standard bearer for the forces of good. St. Pius X described modernism as the synthesis of all heresies; in fact, the ultimate heresy. Recognising the appalling effect the modernist influence would have upon the Church, Pope Pius X, in July 1907, published the syllabus *Lamentabile Sane* which condemned and proscribed some 65 serious errors. This syllabus of errors was closely followed by his encyclical *Pascendi Gregis* in September 1907. In his encyclical *Pascendi Gregis* he declared that, "...these latter days have witnessed a notable increase in the number of the enemies of the Cross of Christ, who, by arts entirely new and full of deceit, are striving to destroy the vital energy of the Church and, as far as in them lies, utterly to subvert the very Kingdom of Christ." He explained how modernism leads to atheism and to the annihilation of all religions; how those who wished to destroy the Church were not only among its open enemies but in her very bosom; how its members were not only among the laity but in the

ranks of the priesthood itself; how those enemies of the Church put themselves forward as reformers of the Church and attack all that is sacred in the work of Christ, not sparing even the Person of the Divine Redeemer, whom, with sacrilegious audacity, they degrade to the condition of a simple and ordinary man. Satan had wasted no time and had obviously begun to sow his destructive seeds with a vengeance and also with a great deal of devilish cunning, so to speak, by attacking the Church from within.

This initiative of Pope St. Pius X met with some opposition but in the main the great majority of the Catholic clergy and laity accepted his authority without question. He had done his duty and the problem which could have had a catastrophic effect upon the Church was contained, at least for the moment. Satan was rebuffed temporarily.

The early years of the twentieth century saw growing unrest in Europe. In 1904 Britain and Russia came close to war. 1908 saw a revolution in Turkey. Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, which in turn antagonised Italy. By 1910 Benito Mussolini, the future dictator of Italy, was beginning to establish himself as a revolutionary socialist. He edited the socialist newspaper *Avvenire* which was violently anti-clerical. He abused the Catholic Church and described the Vatican as a gang of robbers. In 1912 Italy occupied Tripoli. Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia defeated the Turks, and Serbia claimed northern Albania. Austria then mobilised her troops and Russia followed suit. Britain, France, and Germany joined forces to quell the danger and Albania was set up as an independent state. By this time the European pot was well and truly coming to the boil.

In Russia, the revolutionary movement, led by the Bolsheviks, was gaining ground. Its most influential figures being Lenin, the middle class intellectual, and Stalin, a peasant and a more practical man. Although described by Trotsky as, “the Party’s most eminent mediocrity,” Stalin had the ability to get things done and this ability he used to ruthless effect in later years.

Such was the scenario which preceded the First World War. The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo was enough to ignite the powder. Between 1914 and 1918 Europe was torn asunder in a war the like of which the world had never seen before, or could ever have imagined. Germany, France, Russia, Britain, all the major powers became embroiled. At first Italy was not involved but public climate changed after the battle of the Marne and in August 1914 Mussolini, who had advocated neutrality, then revealed his true colours. The newspaper, *La Voce*,

reported on October 13th 1914 that he had changed his anti-interventionist policy. Italy eventually declared war in May 1915 and by the end of the conflict had lost 600,000 men.

The war itself quickly degenerated into a most appalling nightmare for those young men who were caught up in its fury. Young men died in their millions in conditions so horrific they beggared description. It was into this world of misery and death and destruction, this devil's playground, that God sent His Blessed Mother to Fatima in 1917 with her dire warnings, but with such a simple and hopeful solution. Our Lord had promised in 1884 a greater power to the forces of good if they would only recognise it and use it. By sending His Blessed Mother He fulfilled His promise.

It has been suggested that it would have been better if Our Lady had appeared on one of the battlefields. Certainly, it would have been more dramatic and the impact may have been greater, but we know from history and experience that this is not God's way. In the event, He chose three young peasant children tending sheep on a remote hillside in Portugal. But why choose simple peasant children? Why choose Portugal? And why choose that particular time? Perhaps peasant children because in their ignorance and innocence they would not distort, or place their own interpretation on, Our Lady's words. They simply repeated what they had been told and it would be for others to judge their significance. Perhaps Portugal because in spite of its innumerable political squabbles and internal strife it had remained a neutral haven in the European and world conflicts.

But why that date of October 13th? This is the most important question of the three. Consider again the central theme of Our Lady's message. She asked that Russia, the only country mentioned by name, should be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart. If her demands were listened to, Russia would be converted, else that country would spread its errors throughout the world, arousing wars and persecutions against the Church. In August 1917, in the middle of the series of the Fatima apparitions, the Bolshevik party in Russia elected a new Central Committee with Lenin and Stalin in leading roles. Two months later a Military Revolutionary Committee was appointed by the executive of the Soviet on October 13th. What happened next is common knowledge; Russia descended into virulent atheistic Communism and indeed spread her errors throughout the whole world. Was it simply a coincidence? On the very same day, October 13th 1917, that Lenin and Stalin took effective control in Russia, Our Lady appeared in her final apparition to the three children and announced to the world who she was, thus giving credence and substance to the

messages she had given the children. The world had been warned. Was it indeed a coincidence, or a timely divine intervention?

Shortly after the first anniversary of the Russian Revolution the Great War ended and in Russia Stalin had moved himself quietly and efficiently into the seat of power. His ascent to power produced what must be regarded as the darkest period in the history of Russia and contributed directly to chaos and misery and oppression in innumerable countries around the world. It brought forth an unprecedented reign of terror and the dignity of man counted for naught. How right had been the Mother of God to warn the world against this evil.

Lenin's attitude to religion was quite clear. He thought that every religious idea, every idea of God, every flirting with the idea of God was unutterable vileness. The Soviet law guaranteed freedom of religion but it also guaranteed freedom of anti-religion and the authority and resources of the state and the party were mobilised against religious observance. Anti-religious propaganda was co-ordinated, official, pervasive. Immediately following the revolution, anti-church legislation was introduced, church schools and seminaries were confiscated, the teaching of religion in schools was forbidden, and the civil wedding ceremony was declared to be the only valid form of marriage. A newspaper, *The Godless*, was formed and in 1925 its supporters founded the Godless League, the function of which was to co-ordinate anti-religious propaganda. The major Christian feasts of Christmas and Easter were downgraded in favour of the secular New Year's Day and May Day. Such was the paranoia that even Sunday was abolished and between 1929 and 1940 there were officially only six days in the week. However, this was so impractical and eventually so unworkable as to be a dismal failure.

Such was the indescribable evil that Stalin visited upon his people that between ten and fifteen million people died in the 1932 - 1934 famine and its attendant epidemics, and by 1938 as many as eight million people had been consigned to labour camps. During his tenure of power it has been estimated that about forty million of his people died as a result of his policies. Our Lady's warning about Russia became fact within such a remarkably short period of time.

In Germany, the picture was little better. In 1933 Adolf Hitler had become Reich Chancellor and immediately began to pursue his dream of a master race. Residents of institutions who had physical or mental disorders, many of whom were disabled soldiers from the First World War, were callously murdered. In Germany, as in

Russia, the individual counted for nothing, being simply a cog in the party or state machine. In 1937 Hitler invited Mussolini to Germany to see his huge war machine. Shortly after Mussolini's visit an event happened that could have changed the course of history in Europe. His wife, Rachele, declared, "In October 1937 my husband had another opportunity to change the destiny of both himself and his country" [The Real Mussolini. Rachele Mussolini. Saxon House. Chap.1, pp.8]. A dramatic statement indeed. During a visit to the U.S.A. their son, Vittorio, a film producer, received an invitation from President Roosevelt to visit him at the White House. The invitation was for October 13th 1937. President Roosevelt told Vittorio he wanted to meet his father to have a personal conversation with him. Italy, he suggested, with its history, its geographical position and containing the seat of the Catholic Church, held a unique position. "Signor Mussolini is the only man who can keep a balance in Europe. Germany and Russia are at opposite poles from America and we can do nothing with them" [Ibid. pp.8]. Unfortunately for the world, Mussolini doubted Roosevelt's sincerity; his links with Hitler were by then too close for a change of sides. We can only wonder how events in Europe would have unfolded if Mussolini had accepted Roosevelt's invitation of October 13th. History shows, however, that only 22 years after Our Lady's warning at Fatima the new and worse conflict which she prophesied, came to pass.

Whereas in the First World War the great majority of casualties were soldiers on battlefields, the second great war engulfed the whole world and many millions of civilians, men, women and children, perished. Great cities were flattened and Europe, in particular, became a teeming mass of refugees; many fleeing, many searching. Everywhere was death, misery, disease and despair. St. Maximilian Kolbe, who perished in a German concentration camp, said, "Modern times are dominated by Satan and will be more so in the future. The conflict with Hell cannot be engaged in by men, even the most clever. The Immaculata alone has from God the promise of victory over Satan."

Although the war began in September 1939, Mussolini did not bring Italy into the hostilities until 11th June 1940. There was no enthusiasm for the war from the Italian people who looked upon it as "Mussolini's War." It was not a happy adventure and things did not go well. In July 1943 King Victor Emmanuel dismissed Mussolini and replaced him with Marshall Badoglio. In the event, with Mussolini stripped of power, the lack of enthusiasm of the government became manifest and on October 13th 1943, some six years to the day after Roosevelt's invitation and twenty-six years to the day after Our Lady's message, the Badoglio government, in an attempt to throw off the yoke of Hitler, declared war on

Germany. By this time the Italian people were caught between the German armies in the north and the allies in the south and only wished for an end to the whole sorry business. Eventually the allies triumphed and Hitler, the great architect of the war, committed suicide, his dream of a thousand year Reich in part tatters. Mussolini, also, came to an ignominious end. The Pope of the war years was Pius XII. He was elected in March 1939. He suffered greatly during the years 1939 to 1945 but he guided the Church with dignity and courage through that difficult time. He was falsely accused of being pro-Nazi but in fact he recognised Nazism as being more or less on a par with Communism as a threat to Christianity. Communism, though, was seen as a greater long term danger. In fact, his first encyclical *Summi Pontificatus*, published in October 1939, condemned the political and religious policies adopted by the Russian and German governments. This so annoyed the German authorities that the Gestapo received orders to prevent its distribution. Pope Pius XII was a great teacher and he left a remarkable legacy to the Church with a wide range of encyclicals. *Mediator Dei*, for example, had a profound affect on Douglas Hyde the editor of the *Communist Daily Worker*, who at the time of its publication was feeling his way towards Catholicism. In an anonymous letter to the *Catholic Herald* on 9th January 1948 he described the encyclical as “useful and timely” at a time when the divisions of the post-war world were all too apparent. “Communism,” he explained, “far from uniting the human race is splitting it horizontally and vertically.” It was the Mass, he said, which was potentially the most unifying event in man’s history [I Believed. Douglas Hyde. The Reprint Society, London. Chap. XXII. pp.249].

Pope Pius XII was later likened by Pope Paul VI to St. Gregory the Great, and was described by Pope John XXIII as “Excellent Teacher, Light of Holy Church, Lover of the Divine Law.” Fulsome praise indeed. Through his guidance the Church weathered the storms of the war years and emerged battered but unbowed into the calmer waters of the 1950s. He had a great love of Our Lady. In 1942 he consecrated the world to Mary’s Immaculate Heart. In 1944 he instituted the feast of The Immaculate Heart of Mary. In 1950 he promulgated the dogma of the Assumption, and in 1952, 35 years on from Fatima, he consecrated Russia to Mary’s Immaculate Heart. In 1954 he commanded in his encyclical *Ad Coeli Reginam* that every parish in the world should make an Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary every year on the feast of the Queenship of Our Lady. Pope Pius XII surely recognised the power and influence of the Mediatrix of all Graces. At his death in 1958 he left the Church full of optimism for the future and confident and expanding, particularly in the mission lands.

On October 13th 1884, if we recall, Pope Leo XIII heard Our Lord promise to give greater power to the forces of good. Pope Pius XII was surely given to the Church as a force of good at a time when Stalin and Hitler were rampant. His funeral took place on October 13th 1958, 41 years to the day after the final Fatima apparition, and 74 years to the day of Pope Leo's experience in his private chapel. There can be no dispute that the fortunes of the Catholic Church changed dramatically after his death.

The situation in Russia by this time had also changed. Stalin was dead and Nikita Krushchev was in power. It appeared, on the surface at least, that a more liberal era had dawned in the USSR. Krushchev had denounced Stalin and many political prisoners were released. Alas, it was simply window-dressing and the oppression remained largely unchanged. Who of those who saw it will ever forget his appalling behaviour at the United Nations in October 1960 when he alternated appeals for disarmament with violent menaces. October 12th 1960 saw the most disorderly day in the history of that organisation, with Krushchev ranting about, "the nakedness of colonial plunder" and, "slave traders and slave owners." On October 13th his behaviour had not improved and he threatened the U.S.A. with war. The Times, in reporting the debate of October 13th 1960, said Mr. Krushchev once more rattled his rockets in the face of his audience. The world trembled and, no doubt, Satan danced with glee. On that same day a huge crowd had gathered in Fatima to pray for peace. They were joined in spirit by many millions around the world who had heeded the words of Pope John XXIII to pray for world peace at that particularly difficult and tense moment.

After his warmongering speech, Krushchev abruptly cut short his visit to New York and caught a plane at midnight to fly home nonstop to Moscow. It was learned later that he had been summoned urgently back home because a huge nuclear explosion had occurred that day in Russia killing and injuring a great number of that country's most eminent nuclear scientists and other personnel and caused immense damage to their nuclear industry. Was this simply an accident or divine intervention in response to prayer? We can merely conjecture, but if we are asked to pray for peace it is not unreasonable to expect some kind of divine response occasionally.

Krushchev's behaviour at home was as appalling as it was abroad. In January 1960 the full force of the law was brought against any religious practice that could be regarded as illegal. In 1961 the Patriarch of Moscow "voluntarily" surrendered the Orthodox Church to the administrative control of the state. Also in 1961 the World Council of Churches accepted the Russian Orthodox Church, which, with its

claimed 40 million followers, became the biggest voice on the Council. Therefore, its policies came in part to reflect Soviet wishes. When Our Lady appeared at Fatima in 1917 there were 22,000 Orthodox churches in Russia. By the middle of the 1960s (during the Second Vatican Council) only about 7,000 remained. After Pope Pius XII died in October 1958 he was succeeded by John XXIII. In 1961, in his apostolic constitution *Humanae Salutis*, he spoke of the rise and growth of the apostolate of prayer and the emergence of a clergy better equipped in learning and virtue, and a laity more conscious of its responsibilities within the bosom of the Church. He spoke about living in one, “of the most glorious periods of the Church” and described the Church of Christ as being, “so vibrant with vitality.” For the Church to be in such a healthy state, generally speaking, after the debacle of the Second World War, was in effect a magnificent tribute to Pope Pius XII.

Through the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 1965) Pope John XXIII hoped to give to the world an example of peace and concord among men and an occasion for new hope. Never have such high hopes and expectations been so cruelly dashed by the subsequent reality. A General Council is a great event and for two years learned scholars, from laymen to cardinals, worked intensively to produce the preparatory documents. Monsignor Carbone, of the General Secretariat declared that no other Council had had a preparation, “so vast, so diligently carried out, and so profound.” All these documents were completely orthodox but unfortunately the driving forces within the Council were liberal by nature and these clerics, by energetic manoeuvring, were able to overturn all these documents at the very first hurdle and have them rejected by the Council Fathers. This happened on October 13th 1962, 45 years on from Fatima and 78 years on from 1884. The pendulum was swinging to and fro.

History was made at a Council of the Catholic Church when observers from non-Catholic Churches were invited to witness the proceedings. Among these ‘observers’ were members of the Russian Orthodox Church and it has since been alleged that they came only after receiving assurances from Rome that there would be no debate on, or condemnation of, Communism. This allegation, which has never been denied, is remarkable indeed in view of Our Lady’s clear and specific warning at Fatima. This was also astounding in view of the increased persecution and suppression of Christianity in Russia at that time. During the Council, in October 1965, 450 Fathers from 86 countries signed a document demanding a solemn re-affirmation by the Council of the longstanding doctrine of the Church against Communism. This document was handed to the Secretary of the Council but it somehow ‘disappeared’ and the initiative was suppressed. As if this were not

enough, one of the first reforms which came out of the Council was the abolition, in September 1964, of the prayers prescribed by Pope Leo XIII in 1884 against Satan and supplemented in 1934 by Pope Pius XI for the Church in Russia. The prayer of Pope Leo invoking the aid of St. Michael against, “the wickedness and snares of the devil” and, “Satan and all the wicked spirits who wander through the world for the ruination of souls” which had been offered as a daily supplication by priests throughout the world for 80 years was suppressed more or less overnight. By this time Satan seems to have swept into overdrive in his efforts to destroy the Church.

How could any great Council of the Church, particularly this one which, we have been told ad nauseam, was moved and guided by the Holy Spirit, allow this to happen? We know now, of course, what problems have beset the Church since those heady days of the Council and many of the fears of Pope St. Pius X have come to pass. Thousands upon thousands of priests and religious have abandoned their sacred vows. Seminaries, monasteries and convents have closed because of the dramatic collapse in vocations. Millions upon millions of the laity have abandoned the practice of their faith and among many of those who have doggedly clung to their faith there is utter disaffection. Oh yes, the fruits of the Council soon became apparent. On the 29th June 1972, the great feast of Saints Peter and Paul, Pope Paul VI in recognising the “confusion” and “absurd contradiction” in the Church said, “Satan’s smoke has made its way into the Temple of God through some crack” [l’Osservatore Romano. English Edition. 13th July 1972]. Later that year he described the devil as a “prince of the world” [Ibid. 23rd November 1972]. In a radio interview in 1973, Cardinal Felici, Secretary General of the Council, revealed that that when he had declared the ritual words, “Exeunt omnes” (Everyone out), one who did not obey was the devil. Perhaps the reason for this is that everyone appears to have forgotten about him.

In addition to what they do say, the sixteen official Council documents are also very revealing for what they do not say. In 475 pages [Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents. Ed. Austin Flannery O.P. Fowler Wright Books Ltd.] there are innumerable references, confetti-like, to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, redemption, holiness, love, faith, sanctification, the sacred, heaven and earth, and such like. This is all well and good as far as it goes. But salvation and redemption from who and from what? The very occasional references to penance, evil, darkness, and fallen man have to be searched for. There is no mention whatsoever, in any document, of Hell. Satan is mentioned by name only twice, the devil only three times, the “evil one” twice, and “the prince of this world” only once. A total of only eight references in 475 pages, and this from a Council the

members of which had lived through the misery of two world wars and the birth and rise of militant Communism and Nazism. Truly remarkable. Pope Paul VI, in describing the Council, said it had a different aim, “it was seeking dialogue between the Church and the world.” [Dialogues Avec Paul VI. Fayard 1967. pp.162]. Well, the Council certainly achieved this aim. In fact, in this particular dialogue the world seems to be having by far the greater say. What a boost for “the prince of this world” in his hundred years war.

Everywhere now within the Church there is dissension, disobedience, denial of authority, bitterness, and perhaps worst of all, apathy. Cardinal Ratzinger describes the liturgy as the very core of our faith and yet it is within the liturgy where the greatest upheaval has taken place and caused the greatest distress to the laity and the greatest damage to the universal Church. The traditional Mass of centuries has been unceremoniously dumped along with the universal Latin; one of the great foundations of the Church. This, undoubtedly, has been Satan’s greatest triumph in the hundred years’ war. He struck from within to the very heart of the Catholic faith. The walls were breached, the foundations had been undermined, the Temple had been rocked. He won a great battle, but did he win the war?

In his letter, mentioned earlier, to the Catholic Herald, Douglas Hyde, still at this time a nominal Communist, said, “At 11.30 p.m. on Christmas Eve I was twiddling the knob of my radio. Unable to get out to Midnight Mass I wanted at least to bring it to my fireside. And as I switched from one European station to the next I tuned in to one Midnight Mass after the other. Belgium, France, Germany, Eire, yes, even behind the Iron Curtain, Prague. It seemed as though the whole of what was once Christendom was celebrating what is potentially the most unifying event in man’s history. And the important thing was it was the SAME MASS [his emphasis]. I am a newcomer to the Mass but I was able to recognise its continuity as I went from station to station, for it was in one common language [I Believed. Douglas Hyde. The Reprint Society, London.Chap.XXII. pp.249-250].

And now this, “most unifying event...in one common language,” has been turned into a tower of Babel, a confusion of tongues, and where even from parish to parish there is often no similarity of celebration. It has been a cause of division and resentment which has split the Church from top to bottom and to a degree undreamed of throughout its entire history by even its most ardent enemies. The Church is grievously wounded but it is not destroyed. It must be said quite clearly and factually that the old Mass was removed by the clergy; the laity was not involved at all. Remember the words of Pope St. Pius X some 65 years previously,

“The Church’s enemies are...in her very bosom...we allude...to the ranks of the priesthood itself.”

But there is great cause for hope. The history of the Church provides many examples of the laity holding fast to the faith in the face of ‘developments’ being foisted on them by clergy. In England, in 1964, there were a few far-sighted lay people who were becoming very worried by the developments coming forth out of the Second Vatican Council. Even at that early stage it was becoming clear that serious changes were underfoot and that the proposal for the introduction of the vernacular into the Mass for example, after nearly 1600 years of Latin, would create a new type, a new style, of Mass which would not be acceptable to many of the faithful. In England, Geoffrey Houghton-Brown, a layman, decided to try and defend the Latin Mass as handed down by our ancestors and made an appeal in the personal column of The Times newspaper directed to “anyone wishing to preserve the ancient Latin liturgy.” The date of the first advert was October 13th 1964; how remarkable that this particular date was again prominent within the hundred years span, and also coincidentally, the second anniversary of the overturning of the preparatory documents of the Council. Replies to the advert poured in and about 1500 signatures were received within three or four months. Another appeal was launched in Cambridge at the same time when two ladies advertised in The Tablet. Most of the Catholic press ignored the petition and some priests forbade their parishioners to sign it. Meanwhile Geoffrey Houghton-Brown was refused an advert in The Tablet, Universe and Catholic Herald. From these initiatives by the laity The Latin Mass Society was formed. The society struggled in its early days but in 1971, some seven years after its formation and two years after the New Mass had been introduced into the Church, fifty distinguished scholars, writers and historians, under the initiative of the Latin Mass Society, directed an appeal to Pope Paul VI, through Cardinal Heenan, to save the old Mass from extinction. The Pope consented and the old Mass was saved, albeit restricted specifically to England and Wales. Nevertheless, it was saved, and it was protected and nurtured in England and Wales, the land of the Reformation martyrs, until the ‘English’ indult was widened worldwide by Pope John Paul II some 13 years later in 1984. At the time it carried no special significance but is it a coincidence that the Latin Mass Society was started on October 13th, thereby saving the old Mass for the world.

If one looks for absolute precision, the hundred years war ended on the 13th October 1984, the centenary of Pope Leo XIII’s experience in his private chapel. Satan undoubtedly won many battles but he did not win the war; the Church of Christ is still standing, tottering, perhaps, but not destroyed. On the 14th October 1984,

within 24 hours of the ending of Satan's allotted one hundred years, Cardinal Augustin Mayer promulgated Pope John Paul II's universal indult which restored the old traditional Latin Mass to the Church. Professor Louis Salleron stated, "There will be struggles, disputes and hairsplitting, but it is already too late. The authentic Mass has been restored." The clergy may have tried to consign the old Mass to the history books but it was the laity, the footsoldiers, who demanded its return. The Congregation for Divine Worship had received no fewer than 600,000 letters asking for the return of the traditional Latin Mass. The foundation stone of the Temple had been returned. The timing was impeccable, was it not? It is a cause for rejoicing but not euphoria. It is simply a start on the long road back to sanity, and order, and dignity, and reverence. The first step has been taken but it will be a very long journey.

Pope John Paul II asked us all to play a full part in the Marian Year celebrations. Our greatest ally in the restoration of order in Our Lord's Church is without doubt His Blessed Mother ... "But in the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph." That being so, what has happened since the 100 years war ended? As mentioned above, the old Mass was restored to the universal Church the day after the hundred years war ended. The faithful could not have asked for a better signal that Satan had not triumphed. But the message of Fatima was that in the end it would be Our Lady's Immaculate Heart that would triumph. And triumph she did. Although the timing may have been unintentional, the inauguration of a Marian Year so soon after 1984 was perhaps the icing on the cake. Our Blessed Lord must have been well pleased. The results are there for all to see. In 1989, a mere 12 months after the close of the Marian Year, the Communist world fell apart in the most spectacular and unexpected fashion. In Poland, in August, the people elected a coalition government after historic free elections, Hungary held elections in October and the Communist party declared itself obsolete, in East Germany the Communist leader was deposed on October the 18th and the Berlin Wall began to crumble, in November the Communist party surrendered its monopoly on power, Bulgaria also crumbled in November, and just before Christmas the Rumanian people ridded themselves of the evil dictator, Ceausescu. Perhaps the most moving incident in the Rumanian revolt was when the people of Timisoara knelt in their thousands to recite the Lord's Prayer; Thy kingdom come, indeed. Events can probably be best expressed in an editorial in the Sunday Telegraph of 24th December 1989. It is worth quoting virtually in full.

“Tidings of comfort and joy in 1989.

Not since the birth of Christ has there been such sensational good news to rejoice the hearts of mankind as there is this Christmas. Christ is born again. For once it is possible to make such a claim without risk of blasphemy. For that is indeed what is happening right across the vast expanse of communism’s Godless empire. It is almost too good to be true - a veritable miracle. Not only have the communist tyrants failed to extirpate Christianity, in spite of their worst efforts at suppression, but it is Christianity that ends up as the one force capable of overthrowing them.

...It was the Christian message of hope that George Orwell forgot when issuing in Nineteen Eighty-Four his great cry of despair about the future of man under totalitarianism. Like all the other rationalists of his time he could find no reason to suppose that totalitarianism, once imposed, could ever be overthrown. He forgot the power of Christ the King. Stalin was right. The Pope has no divisions. In that respect he is as naked as the babe born in a manger all those centuries ago. Ceausescu had countless divisions, as did Honecker, Jaruzelski and all. But the events of recent months have once again demonstrated that God’s mysterious ways are more than a match for even the most ruthless of men.”

In addition to these major, and dramatic, happenings there have also been other events which highlight October 13th as a date of special significance. On October 13th 1990, the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia reclaimed St. Basil’s Cathedral in Moscow for worship and a service was held there for the first time since 1918. But the most dramatic event of all, particularly in connection with Our Lady’s message of 1917, took place on October 13th 1991 and makes a most fitting end to this article. I can do no better than to quote directly from the bi-monthly periodical published by Fr. Werenfried van Straaten, O.Praem. (Aid to the Church in Need), in December 1991.

“The second miracle began in July when our Brazilian colleague, Jose Correa, was negotiating with the head of the Russian state radio. Suddenly the latter asked him why he, as a Brazilian, was involved with radio programmes for Russia. Correa explained that he had come to know our Organisation because of his interest in Fatima and Russia and thus had ended up in the radio apostolate. When the Russian wanted to know more about Fatima, Correa told him what Mary had revealed about Russia in 1917. Visibly moved, the official said that he himself was an atheist, but that this subject would most certainly be of interest for the “believers” in Russia and therefore he suggested making a radio, or better still, a television report about it. Subsequent discussions with the head of the television department also ran

smoothly. The atheist officials proposed setting up a direct radio and television link Moscow/Fatima via satellite on October 13th 1991. Thus direct from Portugal, the Russian people would be informed about the events in Fatima which until now had been silenced.

With help of many friends and thanks to several contemplative communities which surrounded Fatima like a praying phalanx, on October 13th the improbable, what many held to be the impossible, happened: at one go the message of Fatima spread across the entire Soviet Union. It was a glorious victory for Mary when 900,000 poor in spirit with lighted candles, singing, praying and waving handkerchiefs gathered around her statue to commit themselves for the conversion of the materialistic West and of unhappy Russia. For the first time the diplomats who had always prevented the word “Russia” from being mentioned in Fatima were ignored. In their sermons and the bidding prayers, the Catholic Archbishop of Moscow and the Bishop of Fatima openly implored Mary’s blessing on Russia, as I did in my closing words to our Russian brethren. 150 television and 350 radio transmitters in the Russian republic relayed the 75-minute-long programme, which was also broadcast in almost all the other republics of the Soviet federation. Apart from the studio in Moscow where 70 pupils from an Orthodox Sunday school and many adults watched the celebrations and asked questions, the programme reached between 30 and 40 million people. For countless people it was a revelation of Mary’s desire to overcome at last all dissention and through prayer, conversion and penance to restore the unity of all Christians in her Immaculate Heart. The choir of the Orthodox cathedral had wanted to take part in the ceremony in Fatima, but the Moscow authorities could not issue the exit visas in time. Instead, the choir’s chants in honour of Mary were dubbed over when the icon of Our Lady of Kasan, which is in Fatima, appeared on the screen.”

“But in the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph.”