

# Howard P. Kainz Replies

## An Epilogue for the Disappointed

I certainly agree with John Martin about the overarching importance of Fatima during the twentieth century. It was an extraordinary intervention by the Mother of God, warning the faithful of impending threats and offering the means to obviate or mitigate those threats. The late theologian and physicist Fr. Stanley L. Jaki also agreed. He traveled to Portugal to undertake a thorough scientific investigation of eyewitness accounts and depositions regarding the “miracle of the sun,” resulting in a massively researched book, *God and the Sun at Fatima* (1999). He concludes that Fatima is arguably the most important event of the twentieth century, a providential sign for an era that was to witness so many incredible acts of inhumanity and immorality.

Martin summarizes some of the detective-like sleuthing carried out by Fr. Nicholas Gruner and his associates at the Fatima Center, who are concerned that Catholics, and the Vatican in particular, have fallen far short of fulfilling Our Lady’s requests. One glaring fault, in their opinion, is the alleged truncating of the third secret when the contents of the revelations were revealed by Pope John Paul II on June 26, 2000, and the omission of a veritable “fourth secret” that was supposedly withheld from the public. As Martin mentions, Fr. Gruner and his cohort believe that “the third secret spoke of apocalyptic horrors and high-level apostasy in Rome itself.” So they have concluded that it was in the interest of the Roman hierarchy to keep this part of the secret out of publication. It was, says Martin, “not exactly the kind of thing one wants spicing up the conversation.”

Another, perhaps even more glaring fault, they allege, is the failure of John Paul II, after soliciting the cooperation of the bishops of the world to make the requested consecration on March 25, 1984, to use the correct *wording*. The Pope did not mention Russia by name, but only in a diplomatic circumlocution that would be understood by the participating bishops and those familiar with the Fatima message, but would not arouse the ire of the belligerent U.S.S.R. The Pope presumably wished to avoid contributing to heightened persecution and martyrdom of Catholics behind the Iron Curtain at that time, especially in his native Poland, where the Solidarity movement was being threatened with destruction by Soviet forces.

I have discussed both of these allegations, and the evidence proffered by the Fatimists for them, in my November 2011 NOR article, “On Fatima & the Private Interpretation of Private Revelation.” I have no new insights or rebuttals to add, nor have I come across evidence since then that would cause me to revise my position.

Briefly, with regard to an alleged “fourth secret,” I argued that if the Vatican willfully falsified the contents of the third secret, then we would have to believe that a succession of popes and bishops have been liars; and this belief is simply unacceptable to orthodox Catholics. It would also require us to believe that Sr. Lucia herself is also a liar. About the official Vatican release of the text of the third secret, she stated in an interview in 2000 that “yes, this is the Third Secret, and I never wrote another.” If we can’t believe the popes or even the primary Fatima visionary, then there is *no credible authority* on Fatima in whom we can trust. It is highly doubtful that our Blessed Mother would have orphaned us in this manner.

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Also, I suggested that if the supposedly undivulged secret is, as alleged, a warning about the crisis of faith and discipline in the Church since the 1960s, then it is not all that earth-shattering. That crisis is quite obvious to many of us without any special revelation.

As for the purported corroboration of the dire warnings in the third/fourth secret that came to light in the messages given to Sr. Agnes Sasagawa in 1973, which involved a bleeding and weeping statue of Mary: In 1984 John Shojiro Ito, the outgoing bishop of Niagata, Japan, the diocese in which the reported revelations occurred, wrote just before his retirement, "I do not find in these events any elements which are contrary to Catholic faith and morals. Consequently, I authorize, throughout the entire diocese, the veneration of the Holy Mother of Akita, while awaiting that the Holy See publishes definitive judgment on this matter."

But in 1990 Peter Seiichi Cardinal Shirayanagi, president of Japan's bishops' conference, told *30 Days*, an Italian Catholic news magazine, that "the events of Akita are no longer to be taken seriously." Then, in 1999, in response to a formal query presented by the traditional Catholic British magazine *Catholic Order*, Archbishop Ambrose de Paoli, the apostolic nuncio to Japan, stated, "The Holy See has never given any kind of approval to either the events or messages of Akita." One wonders then if it really could be "Fatima's voice" that resounds in these unapproved revelations, as Martin suggests.

With regard to Pope John Paul II's consecration: The Fatimists are grasping at straws when they insist that Russia must be consecrated *by name*. Nowhere does the Virgin Mary — or Sr. Lucia, even in Martin's quote — specify any such thing. From Sr. Lucia's perspective, the sticking point was not explicit mention of Russia but that the consecration be done in concert with the bishops of the world. That is why Pope Pius XII's October 1942 consecration of the world to Mary's Immaculate Heart, in which he made a definitive reference to Russia ("the peoples separated from us by error or by schism"), was not considered valid. Nor was his December 1942 attempt, in which he repeated the words of the earlier consecration. Pius XII even wrote an apostolic letter, *Sacro Vergente Anno* (1952), in which he specifically consecrated the Russian people to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but this too was inadequate because the bishops of the world did not participate. Even Pope John Paul's early attempts to consecrate Russia, in June 1981 and May 1982, were unsuccessful and for the same reason.

It wasn't until John Paul's March 1984 consecration that the task was accomplished. Sr. Lucia herself verified this in a 1989 letter: "Publicly, in union with those bishops who wished to associate themselves with His Holiness, he made the consecration in the way in which the Blessed Virgin had wished that it should be made. Afterward people asked me if it was made in the way our Lady wanted, and I replied: 'Yes.' From that time, it is made!" In fact, she stated in 2001 that whenever her convent would receive a petition from Gruner and company to redo the consecration, they "simply threw it away."

As for evidence that the consecration was successful and that Russia is being converted, we can point to the completely unpredicted crumbling of the Berlin wall in 1989, followed by the dismantling of the Soviet Union, which was declared miraculous even by secularists who profess

not to believe in any religious genre of miracles. Our Lady had asked for the consecration of Russia and First Saturday reparations — otherwise, Russia “will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and

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persecutions against the Church.” Russia is no longer spreading the error of communism throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions (though some traditionalist Catholic publications have taken to reinterpreting the “errors” of Russia as Darwinism or secular materialism, or some other such thing, evidently in an attempt to discredit history itself). If any one group is spreading its errors throughout the world it is the non-Russian *Islamists* in Egypt, Iran, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Syria, Pakistan, Albania, Nigeria, Mali, and other countries, who are shedding blood and causing wars, and subjecting Catholics and other Christians to persecution and martyrdom. One can be forgiven for lack of knowledge of these onslaughts against the faithful, since the mainstream media tend not to focus on such stories.

The Orthodox Church in Russia — which, unlike Protestant communions, is a *bona fide* “sister Church” with apostolic succession and all seven sacraments, according to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s 2000 instruction *Dominus Iesus* — has flourished slowly but surely since the demise of the U.S.S.R. The conversion of an *entire nation* like Russia would depend on over a hundred and forty million individual free-will movements — major, life-changing decisions that often take decades to complete — and cannot be expected to take place overnight in a great dramatic metamorphosis. Even the coming of the Holy Spirit described in Acts 2 did not bring about the conversion of all of Judea, or even all of Jerusalem. Even Our Lady of Guadalupe was not able to convert the *entire* Aztec nation to Catholicism. Fr. Jaki’s interpretation of Our Lady of Fatima’s prediction about conversion has significant merit: “Fatima was not meant to be a heavenly token about a never-never land on earth.... The conversion of Russia, whatever that may mean, will be a slow process, as are all large-scale conversions. Only those would think otherwise who naively telescope the often painfully slow processes of ecclesiastical history into quick phases of triumph.”

Our Lady assured Sr. Lucia that Portugal would always “preserve the faith.” But statistics show that only 11.7 percent of Portuguese Catholics attend Mass weekly. The Eucharist is the “source and summit” of the Catholic faith, and if Portugal as a nation can be considered to be “preserving” the faith with such a poor witness, then it isn’t unrealistic to argue that the “conversion” of the entire Russian nation is well underway. Truthfully, the nation of Portugal isn’t doing any better at preserving the faith than other Catholic nations. Think of St. Patrick’s promise that Ireland would keep the faith until the end of the world. According to the *Irish Times*, weekly Mass attendance in Ireland in 2012 stood at only 33 percent — not stellar by any means, but almost three times better than Portugal. If we consider Abraham’s dialogue with God in Genesis 18 concerning the contemplated destruction of Sodom, we get the impression that God might be satisfied with a city or country if He could find even a faithful minority or remnant.

It seems that Fr. Nicholas Gruner’s ego has overshadowed his praiseworthy mission of spreading the message of Fatima. About the time my NOR article came out, a book entitled *Russian Sunrise* by Bruce Walters, M.D., was published and has since been continually promoted and sold on the Fatima Center website. In this novel, a thinly disguised version of Fr. Gruner appears as the protagonist, “Fr. Nicholas Gottschalk,” who is described as a priest in Detroit who is “without doubt the world’s bestknown Fatima advocate.” He heads an

“organization, known as the Fatima Herald,” which “seeks to proclaim the full truth about Fatima.” Unfortunately, he has been “persecuted for decades by powerful men in the Church hierarchy,” and one of the characters in the novel states that “Father Gottschalk in Detroit often spoke about the ‘Vatican party line,’ likening it to the Communist party line that once ruled Russia.”

Along with the Gruner protagonist, an avatar of Pope Benedict XVI also appears as another main character in the novel. He is called “Nicholas VI,” and is described as “the first German pope,” who “had grown up in Bavaria, where he and his identical twin brother Frederick had been talented pianists and composers.”

As the plot unfolds, some young American descendants of Russian nobility are introduced who are, through coincidence of mutual interest in music and Catholic and Orthodox traditions, instrumental in getting Pope Nicholas to consider some of Fr. Gottschalk’s demands. The Pope replies, “For decades he [Gottschalk] has been a big thorn in the side of the Vatican. Because of him, we have never enjoyed complete peace about our Ostpolitik, or about our project for Christian unity through ecumenical dialog. Father Gottschalk has kept traditional Catholics stirred up, believing the consecration of Russia is the only viable path toward peace, because it is Heaven’s mandate.”

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In the ensuing chapters, Russian civil and ecclesiastical authorities, with the encouragement of some Russian-Americans, take Fr. Gottschalk’s writings seriously, and present to the Pope a “Russian Request” for renewal of the consecration of Russia. The Pope, moved but uncertain, leaves his twin brother to take his place, and travels incognito to Detroit, where he goes on retreat, looking for guidance. Jesus appears to him and in no uncertain terms tells him that he should implement the re-consecration before it’s too late. The Pope issues a proclamation that includes this line: “The gratitude of the Holy Father to Father Gottschalk for his untiring work and manly courage in promoting the consecration of Russia in the face of much skepticism and persecution by many highly placed members of the hierarchy of the Church, is hereby acknowledged.”

After the consecration of Russia is completed in 2015, the vast majority of Russians undergo “a conversion of heart” and “voluntarily and eagerly embrace the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.” They also become convinced that they need to go beyond democracy to re-establish a Christian monarchy. This latter development is facilitated by the young Russian-Americans, who turn out to have unmistakable credentials as successors to the Romanov Tsardom. Pope Nicholas, when all is prepared, goes to Russia to crown Tsar Mikhail and Tsarina Mariya. In the end, “a plaque honoring Father Gottschalk would be erected in each of Russia’s Catholic cathedrals, both Roman Rite and Orthodox Rite.”

(My apologies for these “spoilers” to anyone who plans to read *Russian Sunrise*.)

Many of us who feel that our accomplishments and contributions to the Church or the world have not been sufficiently recognized may in unguarded moments have had fantasies similar to the plot of this novel. But a return to reality — and to humility — is always necessary. We can take on the authority of two successors to Peter that the consecration of Russia has been accomplished, with an authoritative verification from none other than Sr. Lucia herself that “it was accepted by Heaven.” And we can rest assured that peace will eventually come to the world, as Our Lady promised.

There are, however, major obstacles to the emergence of peace at this moment in history. Let us recall that at Fatima Our Lady admonished us that wars are caused by sin, and that the sins that send most persons to Hell are “sins of the flesh.” Probably the paramount “sin of the flesh” in the world now is the use of contraceptives, among Catholics as well as others, and not just in Russia or the U.S., but in the world as a whole. In my September 2009 NOR article “Contraception & Logical Consistency,” I brought out the inevitable logical connections that the widespread acceptance of intentionally non-procreative sexual intercourse must have.

If we can visualize Our Lady dialoguing with God about conditions for world peace, might we expect God to say, “Well, the majority, even Catholics, are offending against the natural law, as well as the laws of the Church, but let’s grant them a peaceful world, and they may reform”? This is hard to imagine. We can’t wait on the conversion of Russia; we have to attend to our own personal conversion and work for the conversion of the Church and our own nation.

On the other hand, on a more hopeful note, one of the best harbingers of the possibility of peace in the world is the drive toward authentic ecumenism that emerged from Vatican II. So many divisions have come from the fracturing of Christian unity by heresies and schisms over the centuries; and possibly the most hopeful sign is the ongoing movement toward unity between Catholics and Orthodox. In fact, according to a recent AsiaNews report (Feb. 7), “Relations between the Russian Orthodox and Catholic Church in recent years are experiencing a positive trend,” due to what Kirill, the primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and the patriarch of Moscow, called the “clear recognition of the need to join forces in defense of traditional Christian values and counter some threats of modernity, such as the aggressive secularism which

“No apparition is indispensable to the faith; Revelation terminated with Jesus Christ.... The apparitions that the Church has officially approved — especially Lourdes and Fatima — have their precise place in the development of the life of the Church in the last century. They show, among other things, that Revelation — still unique, concluded and therefore unsurpassable — is not yet a dead thing but something alive and vital.”

— *Pope Benedict XVI*

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threatens the moral basis of social and private life, the crisis of family values and the persecution and discrimination of Christians in the world.” There can be no doubt that a Catholic-Orthodox reunion would be earth-shaking and miraculous, like the surge of energy caused by the sudden closing of an electrical circuit, establishing a glorious sign of revived Christianity tantamount almost to the triumph envisaged by the apocalyptic visionaries and the *Russian Sunrise* novel.

But patience is of the essence. Conspiracy theories will not accelerate the process; in fact, they are a hindrance in that they distract us from the urgent tasks at hand. Fortunately, in the past few decades, God has granted us saintly and dedicated Popes who have not played tricks on us but who have provided us with the leadership we need in these troubled times, and who have, with the cooperation of the faithful, implemented Our Lady’s wishes.

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