

The Real Secret: Evangelization Is Hard Work

by Karl Keating

A pretty girl was walking down the street. I was a teen-ager, and I had stopped my car at an intersection. The car ahead of me had made it across on the amber light and was coasting toward the red light at the next signal, which was about 50 yards ahead of me. The driver turned his head to the right, where a pretty girl was walking along the sidewalk. He kept looking at her and not at the road. I knew what was coming but could do nothing to stop it. As his car slow-motioned into the one stopped at the red light in front of him, I wondered how he would explain the crumpled bumper to his wife.

In May, when the Vatican announced the imminent release of the third secret of Fatima, I also knew what was coming. Organizations that had built up their donor lists by touting inside information about the third secret were about to have their comeuppance. Cardinal Angelo Sodano revealed the key points of the third secret and, in doing so he undercut two main contentions of the Fatima industry: that the third secret foretold extensive disarray within the Church and that the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary had not occurred.

When the Vatican issued the final text of the third secret on June 26 — accompanied by a photographic reproduction and translation of St. Lucia's original handwritten note, an introduction by Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and a theological commentary by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the congregation's prefect — it became clear that the third secret was only incidentally about internal disarray. Its main point was that an attempt would be made on the life of a pope, a prophecy fulfilled when Mehmet Ali Agca shot John Paul II in 1981. The commentary also reaffirmed what Sr. Lucia had said years earlier, that the Pope's 1984 consecration of the world sufficed (because when the entire world is consecrated to the Immaculate Heart, Russia, being a part of the world, is consecrated).

Not everybody has been satisfied with what the Vatican released. Michael Matt, editor of *The Remnant*, a biweekly paper at the fringe of the traditionalist-Catholic movement, thinks the Vatican has been dishonest. "We still believe that it is more than likely that at least some portion of the Third Secret was left unrevealed by the Vatican," he wrote to his readers. "We feel absolutely obliged to request the Vatican to please reveal the rest of the Third Secret of Fatima." This despite the fact that the opening sentence of the commentary affirms that the third secret is "published here in its entirety" (not to mention the fact that a copy of the original, handwritten text from Lucia was published with the commentary). Father Nicholas Gruner, a Canadian priest who runs the Fatima Center out of Fort Erie, Ontario (and who does not operate with the permission or under the authority of any Canadian bishop), has labeled the commentary a "whitewash."

"Why do we need 12 pages of commentary from Cardinal Ratzinger and some 26 pages of 'historical context' for a mere 25 [actually, 62] handwritten lines?" The reason, of course, was to forestall misinterpretations of the third secret: Cardinal Ratzinger was trying to anticipate and neutralize (unsuccessfully, it appears) self-serving positions that leaders of the Fatima industry ended up taking anyway. The commentary notes that "A careful reading of the text of the so-called third 'secret' of Fatima... will probably prove disappointing or surprising after all the speculation it has stirred. No great mystery is revealed, nor is the future unveiled." Near the end Cardinal Ratzinger adds, "Those who expected apocalyptic revelations about the end of the world or the future course of history are bound to be disappointed." Not just disappointed. Potentially, out of business.

One who is especially annoyed is Kathleen Keating (no relation to me). She writes an Internet column in which she opines that not only has the real third secret not been revealed, but John Paul II has been "gagged" by his handlers — and he has had it easy compared to his predecessors. Pope Paul VI, she thinks, was a prisoner for most of his pontificate and was kept "drugged and chained." John XXIII supposedly "fainted when he read the Third Secret" because it pointed to him as a likely antipope and as the one who would precipitate the collapse of the Church. His real fault, she thinks, was calling for the Second Vatican Council — which she and many other traditionalists oppose wholeheartedly and which they think was the proximate cause of all that is wrong in the Church today.

If Kathleen Keating is on the furthest fringe of the Fatima industry (she also believes that the human race is under the thumb of reptilian overlords from outer space, but that is another story). *The Remnant* and the Fatima Center nevertheless are far removed from its center. For years these individuals and groups have insisted that the third secret predicted the collapse of liturgy, belief and morals — and many of them said it predicted the imminent end of the world or, at least, a nuclear war. In short, they expected the ugliness in the world (or in the Church) to be wiped

out in one fell swoop, leaving a simpler life for the chosen few. Was such speculation wishful thinking in a ghoulish disguise? Instead, the message stresses the opposite. The world won't be saved by a miracle, after all. It will take exactly what Christ promised: Prayer, persistence and a willingness to suffer.

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