

Address by J. M. Haffert

to the International
Seminar for Priests,

July 20, 1969,

the Bishop of Fatima
presiding.

Is This Now The Most Important Apostolate?

ST. GRIGNION DE MONTFORT SAID:

But the power of Mary over all the devils will especially shine forth in the latter times, when Satan will lay his snares against her heel: that is to say, her humble slaves and her poor children, whom she will raise up to make war against him. They shall be little and poor in the world's esteem, and abased before all, like the heel, trodden underfoot and persecuted as the heel is by the other members of the body. But in return for this, they shall be rich in the grace of God, which Mary shall distribute to them abundantly. They shall be great and exalted before God in sanctity, superior to all other creatures by their lively zeal, and so well sustained with God's assistance that, with the humility of their heel, in union with Mary, they shall crush the head of the devil and cause Jesus Christ to triumph.

The importance of Fatima staggers the imagination. It confirms the "prophecies" and recent teaching of saints like Peter Julian Eymard, Grignion de Montfort, John Bosco, and so many others. It is like a climax to all the Marian apparitions since four hundred years ago...when Our Lady gave to the world a portrait of herself praying in the sun.

Six experts, appointed by the Bishop of Fatima in 1968, are

now studying which elements of the message of Fatima are most important. They have a difficult task because the message is complex. As Cardinal Tedeschini said when he came to Fatima as legate of Pius XII in 1951: "Fatima is an affirmation of the gospel". And it is deeply linked with both the past and the future.

Some experts feel that Fatima can be understood only in relation to all the Marian apparitions

which have preceded it. They feel that each apparition, after the "portrait apparition" in Mexico, conveys part of the total message given to the world at Fatima. Others feel that there are still important elements Lucia may clarify before she dies, or that may be made public after her death.

All agree, however, that



In 1531 Our Lady appeared in the principal city of America clothed in white, blue and brown and praying in the sun. In the same colors she appeared in the sun at Fatima: "So that everyone may believe".



Above, Lucia (with whose help the Blue Army pledge was written) with Pope Paul VI at Fatima, May 13, 1967.

Fatima is of staggering importance. It is a supernatural intervention at a critical moment of history.

Claudel called it "An explosion of the supernatural".

Many relate this intervention to the threat of worldwide atomic war. They substantiate this by the prophecy of Our Lady that "entire nations will be annihilated" and by the miracle of the sun, recalling that when the President of the United States first announced the bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, he said that man had learned "to use the power of the sun". And it is capable of destroying "entire nations".

Many Elements

Obviously, with a message of such great importance, the world could not wait to know at least the essentials required by God at this hour to turn back the tide of Communism and to bring into the world an atmosphere of God's Grace and of international peace. In general, they were stated clearly at the very time of the apparitions:

"Men must cease offending God, Who is already so much offended."

But we were also exhorted to reparation, penance, the Rosary, sacrifices for sinners, specific prayers taught by angels, consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and a devotion which had begun shortly before in the Church: The five first Saturdays consisting of rosary, meditation on rosary myster-

ies for fifteen minutes, confession and communion, all in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on five consecutive first Saturdays. Finally there was the demand for the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

What Is Basic

The ability to sift out exactly what the INDIVIDUAL Catholic had to do was further complicated by the fact that some parts of this message were made public in 1917, but other parts were withheld until many years later. Indeed, the last major apparition to Lucia... in which the sign for the conversion of Russia was given... took place in June, 1929. It was made known to Pope Pius XII only in 1940! It first became known to the world when it was published by the Bishop of Fatima in 1967, Jubilee year of Fatima, in a booklet containing the official transcript of Lucia's own words concerning all the apparitions.

So even now, we cannot say everything about the message of Fatima. And for many years one group or another will continue to emphasize this or that aspect of a message so varied, as each one views it from the perspective of personal need and personal devotion.

Lucia Explains

But Our Lady did not intend that we should be left guessing as to what the individual Catholic is expected to do in the wake of this "explosion of the supernatural". She said to Lucia: "You must remain here some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you to make me known..." And when Lucia felt these words like a "Sword piercing my heart" Our Lady added: "I will never leave you."

So in the midst of all the confusion, Lucia had been left in the world to speak to us. And in 1946, when the Bishop of Fatima invited two American writers to speak at length with Lucia, one of them spent his entire time... four consecutive hours... on only one question: "What does Our

Lady WANT of us? What must the individual Catholic do in order that Communism may be turned back and the annihilation of nations averted?"

One of the reasons Lucia's answer took so many hours to reduce to simple statements is because the man interviewing her could hardly believe what she said. She spoke of an OFFERING of our daily duties, each day, and of living that offering.

But had Our Lady of Fatima said anything like this?

Lucia's "Formula"

She spoke of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and of directing all our Marian devotion... especially the Rosary... towards sanctification of our daily duty. And the first Saturdays? She said they were important primarily as a means of purging oneself each month, of renewing one's purpose. The main requirement was the offering of sacrifices required by our state in life, using our devotion to Mary by consecration and Rosary, every day.

Towards the end of that four hour interview, with Lucia's help, a promise was formulated. It reads as follows:

"Dear Queen and Mother, who promised at Fatima to convert Russia and bring peace to all mankind, in reparation to your

Below, Pope Paul with the Rosary at feet of Our Lady of Fatima.



Soul Magazine

Immaculate Heart for my sins and the sins of the whole world, I solemnly promise: 1) To offer up every day the sacrifices demanded by my daily duty; 2) To say part of the Rosary daily while meditating on the Mysteries; 3) To wear the Scapular of Mt. Carmel as profession of this promise and as an act of consecration to you. I shall renew this promise often, especially in moments of temptation."

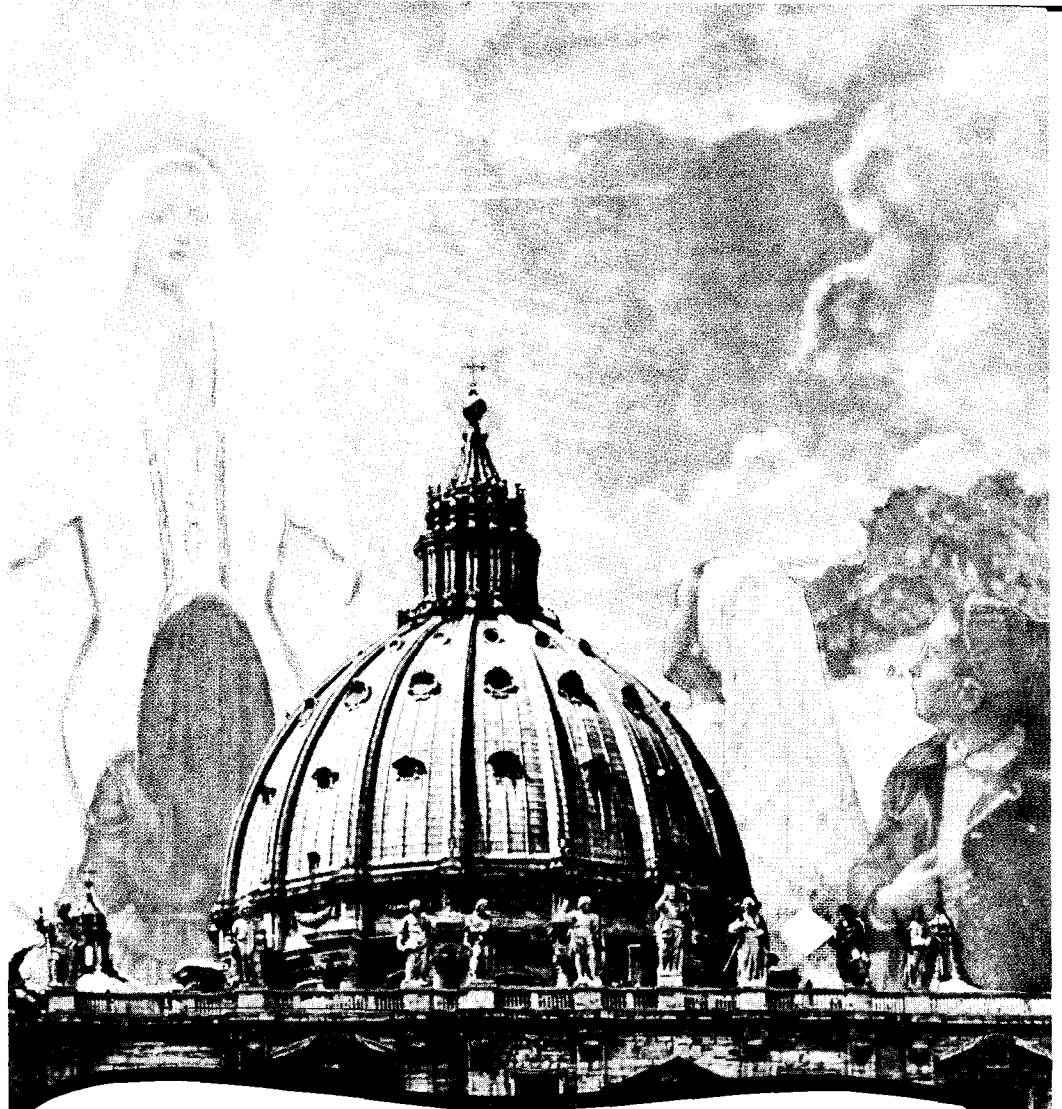
Bishop Approves

Fearful that he might have misunderstood, the American went back to see the Bishop of Fatima. He presented the brief promise with furrowed brow and asked anxiously: "Your Excellency, do you think this is indeed what people must do?" As the Bishop read the simple promise, his face brightened with almost every word. He handed back the promise and said:

"You may promulgate this as coming from me."

It was as though the Bishop himself had been longing to see the essential message of Fatima reduced to a simple, usable formula. From that time until his death he defended and promoted the formula throughout the world.

It happened that the American writer who received this formula from Lucia was editor of a magazine in the United States which had 160,000 subscribers. And immediately upon his return



- A PARTIAL INDULGENCE is granted to:
 - That individual among the faithful who, in CARRYING OUT HIS DUTIES and bearing with the trials of life, raises his mind in humble trust to God, adding - even mentally - some pious invocation;
 - That individual among the faithful who, led by a spirit of faith, mercifully expends himself or his goods in the service of needy brethren;
 - That individual among the faithful who, in a spirit of penance, freely abstains from something licit and pleasing to himself.
- To the following practices are granted a PLENARY INDULGENCE.*
 - Adoration of the BLESSED SACRAMENT for at least a half-hour;
 - Pious reading of SACRED SCRIPTURE for at least a half-hour;
 - The STATIONS;
 - The ROSARY said in common (five decades suffices).

"USUAL CONDITIONS"

* A Plenary Indulgence may be acquired (only once a day) upon fulfilling the conditions of CONFESSION (may be several days before or after the work; also, one Confession suffices for several plenary indulgences); COMMUNION; and PRAYERS ("Our Father" and "Hail Mary" sufficient) FOR THE HOLY FATHER'S INTENTIONS (Communion and Prayers preferably on same day as prescribed work). To gain a plenary Indulgence it is required that all attachment to sin be absent.

— 1968 ENCHIRIDION INDULGENTIARUM



Notice how the Fatima message, with its stress upon sanctification of DAILY DUTY, the BLESSED SACRAMENT, ROSARY and MORTIFICATION, seemed to anticipate the gold-mine of spiritual treasures with which the Church recently attempted to enrich every Catholic by means of indulgences. (Save this notice as a reminder to yourself to reap immeasurably what is offered.)

to America he began a campaign for signatures to the promise.

By the end of one year, over one and a quarter million American Catholics had signed the pledge.

Among them was a priest in Plainfield, N. J., who had attributed a cure of heart disease to Our Lady and made a vow to do all he could, for the rest of his life, to make her known. He preached the message of Fatima in his parish with great insistence.

One day, as he was about to begin his sermon, he wondered how many of those spread out before him in the church were actually doing what Our Lady asked, and he said:

"So that we may know who

Although the Blue Army began in 1947, it was not formally organized until 1950. In that year the Most Rev. Joseph Correia da Silva, Bishop of Fatima, sent the statue below as his personal gift to the U. S. Centre of the Blue Army with the prayer: "Through it may the Blessed Mother grant... to the Blue Army and to all those associated with it... a flood of graces and favors." During the ensuing years, the mantle of the statue changed to blue, although the tunic... with the same pigment... remained white. The Bishop's secretary said of the aged Bishop: "It seemed that he clung to life until the Blue Army was established in the world."



is fulfilling Our Lady's requests in this parish, let those who have made the promise wear something blue...and we, in this parish, will be Our Lady's Blue Army against the red tides of atheism."

From that day the idea of wearing something blue...and of calling those who signed the pledge the "Blue Army of Our Lady"...spread to neighboring parishes, to the entire United States, and finally to the world. It so pleased the Bishop of Fatima that he encouraged the building of a center at Fatima to promote fulfillment of the Fatima "pledge" under this title and his secretary once said: "It seems that His Excellency clings to life until the Blue Army is established in the world."

Clarified By Opposition

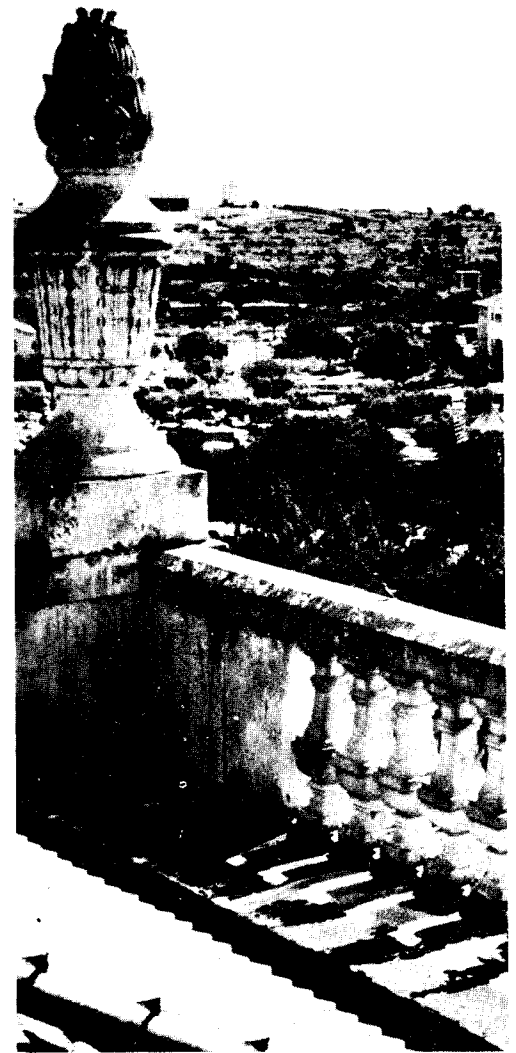
Opposition came to the pledge from many sides, particularly because of the morning offering and the scapular... which were not mentioned at Fatima.

Our Lady's first request of the children had been: "Do you wish to offer up to God all the sufferings He desires to send you in reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners?" And the last thing Our Lady did, during the miracle of the sun itself, was to hold forth the Scapular.

But was this enough to choose these practices as a part of only four essential things to be done that the multiple requests of Our Lady of Fatima might be fulfilled?

Almost at once France asked permission of the Bishop of Fatima to substitute the miraculous medal for the scapular in the wording of the pledge.

The Bishop answered in the VOICE OF FATIMA, which was then published simultaneously in four languages, that the Blue Army had been correct in choosing the Scapular of Mount Carmel



"and no other" as the sign of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. And His Excellency referred to a recent statement of Pope Pius XII to this effect. Lucia later said, when pressed on this point by V. Rev. Howard Rafferty, O. Carm.: "The scapular and the rosary are inseparable." And we can trust that final opposition was laid to rest by Pope Paul VI who, in his message to the first International Marian Congress after Vatican II said:

"You will make known our will and our exhortations which we base upon the dogmatic constitution of the Ecumenical Council Vatican II, which is in complete conformity with our thought and indeed upon which our thought is based:

"That one ever hold in great esteem the practices and exercises of the devotion to the



Above: International Centre of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima taken from the Basilica.



In 1967, golden jubilee of the apparitions, the Blue Army sponsored a chartered flight around the world with the Bishop of Fatima to present "Jubilee Statues" of Our Lady which had been blessed by Pope Paul. The Bishop of Fatima (right foreground above) spoke in each country of the message of Our Lady of Fatima in the world."

most blessed Virgin which have been recommended for centuries by the Magisterium of the Church'. (#67) And among them we judge well to recall especially the Marian Rosary and the religious use of the Scapular of Mount Carmel... a form of piety which is adapted by its simplicity to the spirit indeed of everyone, and is most largely widespread among the faithful for an increase of spiritual fruit. *

"In these times when we instruct the Christian people, it is necessary constantly and clearly to inculcate the realization that insofar as the Mother is honored, so the Son... for Whom all exists (cf. Col. 1, 15-16)... will be known, loved, glorified as He should be, and that His commandments will be observed (#66, Constitution De Ecclesia, cited above); it is also necessary to advise the faithful that piety toward the Mother of God is not to be found in a sterile and passive sentimentalism nor in a certain vain credulity, but on the contrary that it proceeds by that true faith through which we are carried through a recognition of the eminence of the Mother of God, driven to a filial love toward our Mother and to the imitation of her virtues.'" (ibid, #67).

The Holy Father, in his letter to Cardinal Enriques to prepare His Eminence for the role of personal Legate of His Holiness at the Mariological Congress, continued:

"This then is what you will say, and that to which you will exhort the faithful using great care and solicitude to see that the holy solemnities over which you will preside in our name may be honored with total faith and a veneration full of devotion to the Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Church, Mother of Grace and of Mercy, Mother of Hope and of Holy Joy, she by whom we have access to Jesus and to the sources of salvation

*(Pius XII, Ep. Neminem profecto latet, 11 Feb. 1950; A. A. S. XLII, 390).



Above: Msgr. Colgan, founder of the Blue Army, greeting Pope Paul VI.

which are in Him, by a royal, direct way." *

Pledge Only First Step

Today, under the guidance of the present Bishop of Fatima and an International Council, the Blue Army of Our Lady promotes that simple pledge prepared with Lucia in 1946 as a "response to the message of Fatima".

It considers the pledge as an initial step, or the beginning of that life in Grace which the fullness of the message of Fatima promises. It does not pretend that the pledge contains ALL that Our Lady wishes of us.

As we look back at the past two decades of the Blue Army we can see the Hand of God in its origin, its development in the world, its sanction by the Bishop of Fatima and its approval by Rome. (The International Centre

*(L'Osservatore Romano, April 2nd, 1965)



at Fatima was dedicated by Eugene Cardinal Tisserant not only in his own name, but as a legate of Pope Pius XII. And when the Cardinal returned to Fatima in 1967 with Pope Paul VI, he expressed regret that because of the brief time and vastness of the crowds he had not been able to proceed to the Blue Army House.)

But the greatest proof of the importance of the Blue Army pledge, which was prepared under Lucia's own guidance in 1946, is not so much in the many millions who have signed it but in its spiritual effect. And about this spiritual effect we have few statistics. Our time here would not permit enough specific examples to corroborate beyond doubt the wave of holiness that has been sweeping the world in the wake of the Blue Army of Our Lady.

Staggering Importance

It is difficult to believe that one little step like the Blue Army pledge... implemented by a morning offering and two very simple devotions... could make saints!

Yet this is what we have experienced, year after year, in nation after nation.

Out of the Blue Army has grown a movement of all-night vigils to the Blessed Sacrament which are now being made every month by thousands of lay persons all over the world! Out of the Blue Army has come a minor army of victim souls... who WELCOME suffering as a blessed way to obtain the conversion of more sinners!

As one who has been involved in this movement from the

Msgr. Colgan (extreme right) asks Father Pio (extreme left) to accept all Blue Army members as his "special children". John Haffert (facing Fr. Pio from doorway) heard Fr. Pio say: "Russia will be converted when there is a Blue Army member for every Communist."

beginning I dare to say that nothing strikes me more out of the entire fact of Fatima, outside of the miracle of the sun itself, than the wave of holiness which follows in the wake of the fulfillment of this simple pledge. So much Grace from such a little practice!

Of course we are most easily aware of great manifestations of love and devotion like the all-night vigils. For example, in May of 1969, a Blue Army vigil was held for the first time in a church in New York... and the intention of each was to obtain the conversion of one thousand souls who would otherwise be lost. A priest who participated was so impressed with the atmosphere of holiness developed during the night that he exclaimed at the closing Mass: "I am convinced that you did obtain, in this night of love, one thousand souls for every person in this church."

And how many had come to this vigil, despite the fact that there was another vigil that same night in the same city and in neighboring cities?

There were almost five hundred lay persons there.

That would be five hundred thousand souls.

And what about the crusade among the sick? What about the hundreds of thousands who have made the pledge and whose lives are unknown to us?

Recently, a man was crushed in a fearful accident at Charleston, S. C. The lower part of his body was smashed, pelvis broken, bladder ruptured. For some inexplicable reason he never lost consciousness, and he never complained. As he was being taken to the hospital he merely asked if anyone could say the rosary with him. Later when an airline Captain said he had never seen such courage, the injured man said:

"All For Sinners"

"It is all for sinners. I am a member of the Blue Army."

This man joyfully accepted incredible suffering as though he

personally had heard those words Our Lady first addressed to the children of Fatima: "Do you wish to offer up to God all the sufferings He desires to send you in reparation for the sins by which He is offended and in supplication for the conversion of sinners?"

What was the story of this injured man? Where had he obtained such heroic faith and devotion? Had he been a devout man all his life?

Here we come to the most amazing part of this example... and perhaps of the message of Fatima as it takes effect in the world:

This man had led a careless life. One day, in the back of a church, he saw a Blue Army pledge. He decided to make it.

That, and that alone, changed his life.

Within one year he not only gave up sin, but became a daily communicant. Then he began to say not just five decades of the Rosary a day, but fifteen. (How many do this!) And then he began to long that he might obtain graces for others AS SOMEONE'S PRAYER HAD OBTAINED GRACE FOR HIM.

Can this be described as anything less than a wonder of Grace, from the Mother of all Graces? from the anxious Mother who came at Fatima not so much to frighten us with prophecies of events as to save us?

How Blue Army Works

Today, as twenty years ago, the Blue Army of Our Lady rests primarily on that simple pledge. The major goal of the Blue Army is to cause ALL Catholics to make that pledge and to live it.

Among the practical means of promoting the pledge are publications, such as SOUL in the United States, the VOICE in England and Australia, RALLY in Asia, SOL DE FATIMA in Spain, APPEL DE NOTRE DAME in France, CUORE DEL IMMACOLATA in Italy, and so on. Books and pamphlets are published in all

major languages and distributed from centers in most countries around the world.

But personal contact is the most important means. And this is organized by Blue Army militants, governed by a set of rules approved "ad experimentum" by the Holy See in 1956. They are based on Canon Law and provide for a diocesan director and a priest counselor to any lay militants.

First Saturdays

Militants endeavor to have



In 1956, on the occasion of the dedication of the International Centre of the Blue Army at Fatima by His Eminence, Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, a set of rules to govern the Blue Army was approved for presentation to the Holy See. Officials at this meeting seen above, left to right, are: Most Rev. Joseph Correia da Silva, first Bishop of Fatima; Cardinal Tisserant; Bishop John Venancio, then Auxiliary Bishop of Fatima and now Bishop; and Monsignor Colgan, founder of the Blue Army, who conducted the meeting. Leaders of the movement from all parts of the world participated. The rules were adopted unanimously and have remained unchanged to the present time.

pamphlets and pledges available at the backs of churches, and to provide programs (such as the Pilgrim Virgin) explaining the message of Fatima in the various parishes. Above all, they promote the First Saturday devotion as a parish program, adopting the slogan: "First Saturday is Parish Day!"

Many who might not sign the pledge will at least promise to make the five First Saturdays... and before the five months are over, they are almost certain to sign the pledge. Sometimes the contrary is true. Some who would not make the five Saturdays, do agree to make the pledge. But then they follow by making the Five Saturdays, and they develop

a spirit of penance, reparation, meditation, and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

The Ultimate Goal

The Blue Army sees the pledge and the First Saturdays not so much as goals to be achieved, but as means to the goal: Life in Grace. The pledge and the first Saturday devotions are their PRIMARY MEANS.

Today, at least in the United States, the Blue Army goes beyond the First Saturdays and the pledge in the CELL movement... which

is an application of the message of Fatima in depth.

Two or three Blue Army members (this is the "cell") meet once a week for a meditated Rosary. They then discuss the spiritual ills of the day as manifest in events and in the public press. They encourage each other, as did the three children of Fatima, in the spirit of reparation. They practice the prayers taught to the children by Our Lady and the angels. And they try to become like the children of Fatima: Victims for sinners.

When the "cell" grows to five or more members, it divides. That is how it grows. That is how it multiplies the holiness of Fatima in the Church. And that is

why it is called a spiritual "cell".

Importance of Blue Army

Never before in the records of history has God permitted a miracle at a predicted time and place "So that everyone may believe."

Never before now... before this atomic age.

Cardinal Tisserant called the Blue Army "The response to the requests of Our Lady of Fatima." That is what it was in the beginning, and that is what it is now.

Anyone who recognizes the importance of Fatima must recognize the importance of APPLYING the message of Fatima in the world. And for that reason the Blue Army is of paramount importance.

If we do believe, we must act. And the Blue Army is Fatima in action.

That miracle was performed... in the presence of hundreds of thousands of witnesses... to prove that if the requests of Our Lady are heard the reign of Christ will finally come to the world, but if they are not heard, even entire nations will be annihilated.

In closing, we feel impelled to add one final thought although we find it very difficult to put into words.

The Battle Is Real

There is a battle being fought. It is worse than the battle exploding in Asia or lifting its

bloodstained head out of the Sinai desert.

It is the battle between Satan and Our Lady.

You can serve in Catholic Charities, or even Propagation of the Faith. You can serve in the Sodality or even the Legion of Mary. And you may go for years in those apostolates without suffering contradiction, or public disgrace, or the apparent end to all your labors.

But not in the Blue Army.

Sometimes the blows against Blue Army militants and against the very name "Blue Army" seem mortal. It is as though a part of the body... in England, in America, even in Portugal as we once witnessed... is suddenly crushed to death. The leaders become victims of cruel, incredible rumors. Or they actually defect, sometimes accusing the Blue Army of being Communistic!

And then... where the body seemed crushed to death... after a short time there is a stirring. Life is there! It is as though the humiliation and apparent defeat were sources of a new life. And suddenly the body there is not only alive, but stronger than ever!

For this reason, that American priest... Monsignor Harold Colgan... seems indeed (as he claims himself) to have spoken out of an inspiration from Our Lady when he gave to this apostolate the name "Army".

Only if we win the spiritual war (which Our Lady proclaimed to the death against Satan in 1917) shall we end the less important

wars which so preoccupy the world.

I myself heard Father Pio, the famous stigmatic priest who died last year in the odor of sanctity, say:

"Russia will be converted when there is a Blue Army member for every Communist."

Over the vesting table in his sacristy, Father Pio had a statue of Our Lady of Fatima, and every day... as the spiritual father of all who KEEP the Blue Army pledge... he prayed for every member of the Blue Army. Lucia and the Carmelite Sisters of Coimbra do the same. So do cloistered sisters in many parts of the world. So do many, many dedicated souls.

And that is the fuel of this army: The fuel of holiness, derived from the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the triumph of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in all hearts in all the world.

When the Blue Army, with the Bishop of Fatima, took the Pilgrim Virgin to Czechoslovakia in October of 1967, Archbishop Tomasek of Prague said emotionally: "You have brought us the sign of our hope".

This is the mission of the Blue Army of Our Lady in all the world: To bring Our Lady's moral presence to all... to enable all to reach out and actually clasp the hands of their mother by means of the rosary and the scapular.

It is Our Lady Herself who does all the rest.

These refugees from Soviet-occupied East Germany, like countless others, need hope. But how many realize Our Lady of Fatima is that hope?

