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October 7, 2011

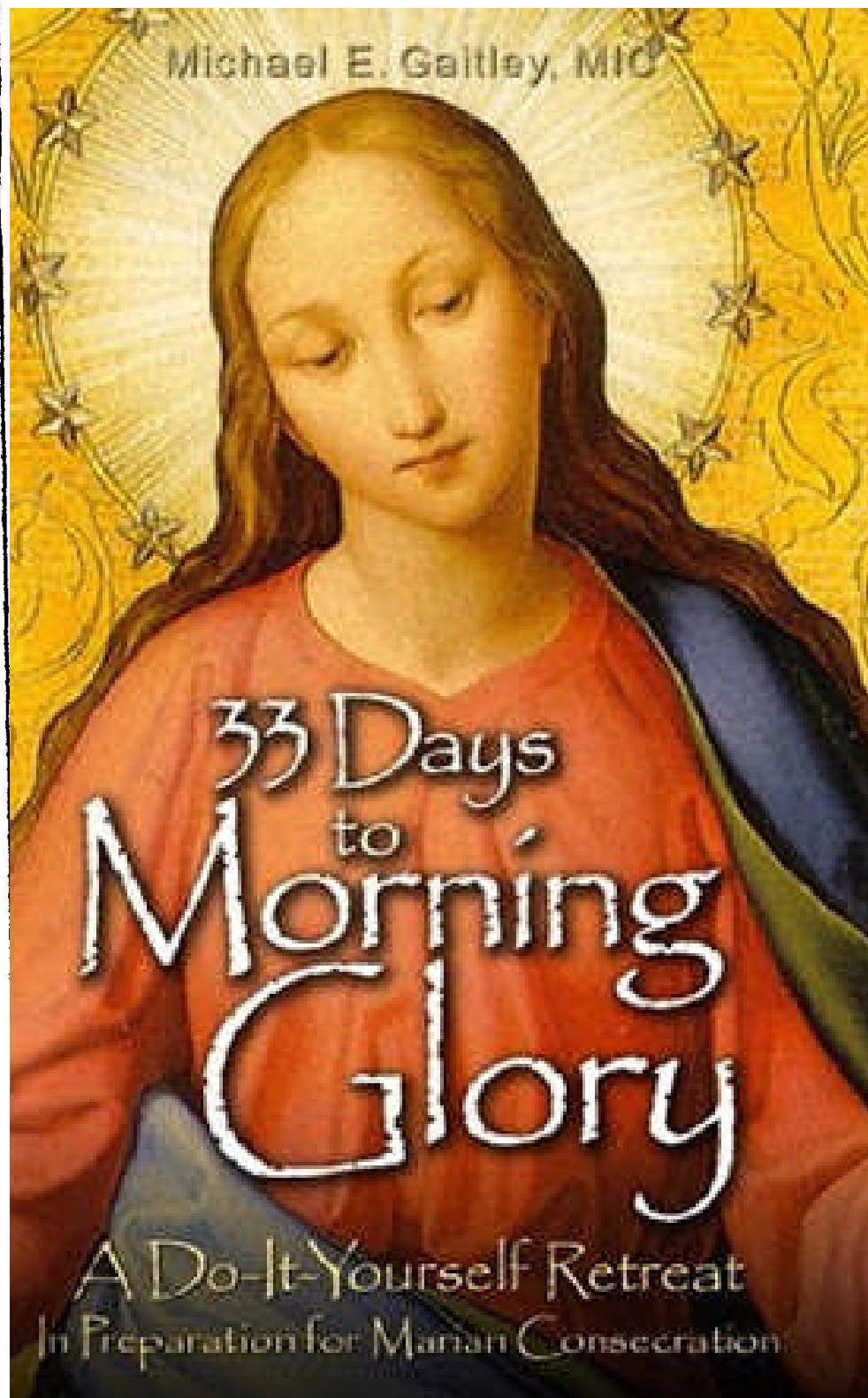
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June 24, 2012
Feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist
Most Reverend Timothy A. McDonnell, D.D.,
Bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts

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Now, the very first apparition of Our Lady of Fatima happened on May 13, 1917, at 5 p.m. Exactly 64 years later, May 13, 1981, at 5 p.m., a small, open-air jeep rode out into St. Peter's Square, carrying Pope John Paul II, who warmly greeted pilgrims gathered in the square. At one point, the jeep stopped so the Pope could take a little girl into his arms. After he gave her back to her jubilant parents, the jeep continued on its way through the sea of waving, cheering pilgrims. Suddenly, a gunman fired two shots at the Pope from close range. The first bullet grazed his elbow. The second struck him in the abdomen and ricocheted inside him, shredding intestines and piercing his colon. Miraculously, the bullet missed the main abdominal artery by one tenth of an inch. Had it been struck or even grazed, John Paul would have bled to death on the way to the hospital. Realizing this blessing, the Pope stated that "One hand fired, and another guided the bullet."⁸²

What hand guided the bullet? John Paul believes it was the hand of Our Lady of Fatima (the May 13th anniversary was not lost on him). In fact, after the shooting, he asked for the envelope containing the last secret of Fatima, the one about the "bishop dressed in white." Then, with Fatima much on his mind, he thought to consecrate the world to Mary's Immaculate Heart as soon as possible, and he began composing an act of entrustment, which he solemnly prayed less than a month later. Even before this, within a week of the shooting, he repeated his own personal consecration to Mary in a recorded address to the pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square: "To you, Mary, I repeat: *Totus tuus ego sum.*"⁸³

On March 25, 1984, in St. Peter's Square, before the official statue of Our Lady of Fatima that had been flown in for the occasion, John Paul made a more solemn entrustment of the world to Mary's Immaculate Heart. He concluded the prayer with the following words:

Let there be revealed, once more, in the history of the world the infinite saving power of the redemption: the power of *merciful Love!* May it put a stop to evil!

May it transform consciences! May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all the *light of Hope!*

After learning of the Pope's solemn entrustment, Sr. Lucia, the lone survivor of the three Fatima seers, declared that it fully satisfied Our Lady's original request. Five years later, the horrific, Soviet, totalitarian regime that had terrorized millions of people suddenly came to an end.

That victory won, the Pope didn't rest. What he once called the "century of tears" was far from over. To confront the ongoing evil and injustice in the world, he forcefully proclaimed, with growing frequency, the saving power of God's "*merciful Love.*" His efforts to promote this message culminated in the establishment of the universal Feast of Divine Mercy Sunday in 2000 and a solemn Act of Entrustment of the world to Divine Mercy in 2002. Three years after this entrustment, the great Marian Pope, the great Mercy Pope, died on a first Saturday and the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday. Mary had saved his life at the dawn of his pontificate so that, through him, her divine Son could lead the Church to the victory of Mercy and the triumph of her Immaculate Heart.

Today's Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Have mercy on us and on the whole world!

DAY 23

Maternal Mediation

As one of our guides to Consecration Day, Blessed John Paul II is a *triple gift*. Not only is he a Marian saint, like our other three guides; not only is he brilliant and thoroughly trained in theology, like de Montfort and Kolbe; but he is also a Pope. Therefore, his words carry the teaching authority of the successor of St. Peter ... and the authoritative weight of an Ecumenical Council! Well, this is true in the sense that his teachings on the Mother of God are deeply rooted in the authoritative Mariology of the Second Vatican Council. Because of this dependence on