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Controversial Lead Article in the May Issue of The Marianist

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For Release during first week of May...

DAYTON, O., May — God does not govern the Church by means of private revelations such as those of Fatima, but by means of the ordinary laws by which He leads men to make their decisions.

Thus, warns Father Francis Filas, S.J., "Fatima and its message must be looked at in the whole context of the duties of one's state of life and the finding of God's will in obscure, humble faith in His official word and in His Church."

Father Filas' controversial opinions on Fatima are contained in the lead article in the May issue of The Marianist, devoted entirely to Fatima this month. The magazine is published at the Marian Library here.

"The disagreement among learned authors, the printed statements and interviews, many of which have been published with ecclesiastical approval, and the wildly exaggerated claims have all served to cloud issues and raise tempers" about the whole Fatima situation, the head of Loyola University's theology department writes.

Father Filas points out that every claim made about the Blessed Virgin's appearances at Fatima in 1917 concerns a private revelation.

"Therefore," emphasizes the Chicago Jesuit, "nothing stemming solely from this source may ever be construed as binding on Catholics as obligatory doctrine."

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Father Filas's thoughts on the facts and questions of Fatima were first aired last year in a much-publicized article in America entitled "What of Lucy's Promises?" In that article, the priest asked, "In the case of Sister Lucy, are we to consider her as some sort of infallible pipeline to the Blessed Virgin and to the eternally inscrutable counsels of God? What happens to belief in the infallible teaching authority of the Catholic Church if claims of an individual, even of a woman as sincere and as holy as Sister Lucy, are treated as the word of God?"

All Catholic authors, Father Filas summarizes, admit genuine supernatural apparitions of the Blessed Virgin to the children at Fatima. They also admit that Mary committed a message to the children and that the "prodigy of the sun" was a true miracle. He explains that the dispute centers in determining the authentic portions of the Blessed Virgin's message and the precise nature of the miracle of the sun.

"For me," the priest writes, "this is essentially the message of Fatima. We should ask pardon for our sins, we should amend our lives, and we should perform the duties of our state of life in a spirit of penitential generosity as a means of making reparation for the sins of the world."

Each item mentioned is contained already in the official teachings of the Church. Therefore, "Fatima in this would be doing what genuine private revelations are expected to do: It would be an occasion to remind people of a truth already contained in the official deposit of the faith."

The devotional recommendations from Fatima should not be taken as substitutes for the hard steps of asceticism or substitutes for the obligatory elements of Catholic belief, the priest warns.

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