

## WAF England and Wales Launch Mass for Centenary of the Five First Saturdays Devotion

by Donal Anthony Foley, Board Member, WAF England and Wales

The Holy Mass to launch the five-year programme to prepare for the Centenary of the request for the Five First Saturdays Devotion took place at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday, 22 February 2020. The afternoon's events began at 2:00 pm with a procession of the Centennial Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, accompanied by the Relics of Saints Jacinta and Francisco. This is a different statue from the National Pilgrim Virgin Statue, since it is focused on the Immaculate Heart and thus also on the First Saturdays devotion.

This is a devotion of REPARATION to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and involves going to Confession, receiving Holy Communion, reciting five decades of the Rosary and keeping Our Lady company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, all with the intention of making reparation to her.

If a person does this on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, then in return, Our Lady promised to assist them, at the hour of death, with all the graces necessary for salvation. In other words, this a promise of the GRACE OF FINAL PERSEVERANCE which is a great grace and a guarantee of heaven.

The congregation of between 700-800 enthusiastically greeted the statue as it processed around the cathedral to be received by Canon Jason Jones, the WAF National Spiritual Director. He recited the prayers for England and Wales, and then the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary were prayed, led by Jerry Rivera, the WAF National President. Fr Richard Nesbitt, Diocesan Spiritual Director for Westminster, concelebrated the Holy Mass.

Holy Mass began at 2:50 pm. The Gospel reading was from St Luke and dealt with the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, a theme which Fr Jason expanded on during his homily. In this, he also pointed out the connections between the Divine Mercy devotion of St Faustina and the Message of Fatima, saying that Jesus had said to her that mankind

would not have peace until it turned to his Divine Mercy, while at Fatima, Our Lady had promised a time of peace for the world providing her message was heeded, as well as the triumph of her Immaculate Heart. As Canon Jason said, it will be for Catholics to live both the Fatima and Divine Mercy messages, and thus the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary will bring about the reign of Christ, the king of Mercy.

Canon Jason also spoke about how at the July 1917 apparition, she gave the central and most important part of her message, which focuses on the necessity of reparation through the Five First Saturdays devotion, and the consecration of Russia. Later on, in December 1925, Our Lady appeared to Sr Lucia at Pontevedra in Spain to more fully reveal the Five First Saturdays devotion.

And so, the Launch Mass inaugurated the five year countdown to the centennial celebration of the 1925 apparition which will take place in December 2025, with each year having a different point of reference and theme.

At the end of Mass, everyone recited the Act of Consecration of England and Wales to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which was originally recited by Cardinal Griffin at Walsingham in 1948. Then Fr Richard spoke a brief word of thanks to all who had helped to make the event such a success, and a general blessing was given with the Relics of Saints Jacinta and Francisco.

The afternoon's launch event and the Mass were enlivened and enhanced by the exceptional singing of the Filipino-British group, The Haraya Choir, and in particular the Offertory hymn, "Take and Receive" by Fr Manoling Francisco, SJ.

The hope of the World Apostolate of Fatima is that those who take up the First Saturdays devotion will carry it on beyond the initial five first Saturdays, and so develop a commitment to frequent confession and attendance at Mass, and a meditative way of reciting the Rosary. If this happens, then it will ultimately lead to a great spiritual renewal for the country and the triumph of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart.