

## From Death and Despair to Prayer and Hope

It was 1917 and a devastating war was dismantling Europe politically, socially and economically. It was the same year in the U.S. sent in her troops and weapons, adding to the conflict that had already claimed millions of lives. In Russia the communist revolution began its cultural and religious purge of which the consequences are still visible today in many countries. May 13th, of the same year, the Blessed Mother appeared in Fatima asking for conversion, and granting her intercession for a lasting peace. She predicted however, the possibility of a new and terrible war if mankind would not change its spiritual and moral behavior.

In the midst of war, the possibility of a more terrible war and the promise of our Lady's intercession for peace, the Pious Union of St. Joseph sent an appeal to the priests of Europe and the world, inviting them to join the Confraternity. They were invited to celebrate Mass at least once a year for those dying in war, epidemics, violence and oppression. The same Pope Benedict XV joined this initiative and, in his letter to the DiRector of the Pious Union, wrote: "Since the Roman Pontifex is the first among the ministers of the altar, we want to sustain this praiseworthy initiative and at the same time precede with our example to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice for the dying every first day of the month."

The example of the Pope was followed by all of his successors while thousands of cardinals, bishops and priests took up their part in the Perpetual Mass of the Pious Union of St. Joseph, celebrating Mass for the suffering and dying. Among them we remember St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Louis Orione, Blessed John XXIII, Blessed James Alberione and many priests for whom the Holy See is considering Beatification.

Priests continue to be invited to join this mystical chain of Eucharistic celebration, so that every day there is a group of ministers of the altar asking God for compassion and mercy toward those who are taking their last step in this life.

Today the Pious Union of St. Joseph presents to all the faithful a prayer offering which may be made by all who are willing to join spiritually with the Perpetual Mass throughout the world.