

Our Lady of Fatima

Throughout the Old Testament God, in His great mercy, chose prophets to call His people back to Him. In recent times God is sending His Mother. One of the apparitions of the Mother of God in this century took place in 1917 at Fatima, a little village in Portugal. Our Lady came there to warn us of the harm we would inflict upon ourselves as a result of our sins: wars, famines, plagues, persecution of the Church and the loss of many souls in Hell. God, in His great mercy, wished to save us from these miseries through the Immaculate Heart of His Mother. Our Heavenly Mother revealed at Fatima a plan of hope for this world which continues to plunge headlong toward its own destruction.

In 1915 an Angel appeared to four little girls, among them Lucia de Jesus dos Santos. While saying the Rosary they saw what looked like a cloud that was whiter than snow, slightly transparent, with a human outline. This same apparition took place on two more occasions, leaving the girls in a state of amazement.

One year later Lucia was tending sheep with her two cousins, Francisco and Jacinta Marto. This time the Angel came with very distinguishable features. He said to them: "Don't be afraid. I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me." He then knelt and, bowing with his forehead to the ground, prayed three times: "My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love Thee! I beg pardon of Thee for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love Thee!" Then He said to the children: "Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications." With these words the Angel left them. The children felt so enveloped by God's Presence that they remained bowed to the ground for a long time repeating this prayer. This special atmosphere which they felt then gradually left them. Soon the three children were back to spending their days playing games together.

Lucia, the oldest of the children, was born on March 22, 1907 and was the youngest of seven. Francisco was born on June 11, 1908 and Jacinta on March 11, 1910. One day, while the three were playing, the Angel visited them again and said, "What are you doing? Pray! Pray a great deal! The Hearts of Jesus and Mary have merciful designs for you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High." Lucia asked how they were to sacrifice. The Angel responded, "With all your power offer a sacrifice as an act of reparation for the sinners by whom He [the Lord] is offended, and of supplication for the conversion of sinners. Thus draw peace upon your country. I am its Guardian Angel, the Angel of Portugal. Above all accept and endure with submission the suffering which the Lord will send you."

Only Lucia and Jacinta heard the Angel. Francisco had to learn what he said from them. By the light of grace the children understood the value of sacrifice. They spent many hours repeating the prayer he had taught them. In Autumn of that year the Angel appeared to them again. He was holding a chalice in his hand with a Host suspended over it from which drops of Blood were falling into the chalice. Leaving the Host and chalice suspended in mid-air the Angel prostrated himself on the ground praying three times, "Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore Thee profoundly and offer Thee the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges, and indifference by which He Himself is offended. And, through the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of poor sinners." Then the Angel arose and gave the Sacred Host to Lucia. The contents of the chalice were given to Francisco and Jacinta while he said, "Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly insulted by ungrateful men. Make reparation for their crimes and console your God." Then the Angel again prostrated himself, praying three times, "Most Holy Trinity. . ."

On May 13th, 1917 the children were again playing their games, this time building castles out of rock in the field. Suddenly they saw a flash of light. Believing it to be lightning, even though the sky was clear, the children gathered the sheep and started for home. They took refuge under a tree about a hundred yards away. They saw a flash of light again. They began running, going about a hundred yards further when suddenly they saw, standing

over a small holmoak tree, a Lady dressed in white more brilliant than the sun. She said, "Don't be afraid. I won't hurt you! I am from Heaven. I come to ask you to come here for six months in succession, on the thirteenth day at this same hour. Then I will tell you who I am, and what I want. And afterwards I will return here a seventh time." (Our Lady appeared at the holmoak a total of six times. To this day there are only conjectures about when the seventh apparition took or will take place.) Lucia asked if the three of them would go to Heaven. The Lady said they would except that Francisco would have to say many Rosaries first. Lucia asked about two of her friends who had died. The Lady responded that one was in Heaven but the other would be in Purgatory until the end of the world. The Lady went on to say, "Do you wish to offer yourselves to God, to endure all the sufferings that He may please to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended and to ask for the conversion of sinners?" Lucia responded, "Yes" for all three of them. Then the Lady said, "Then you will have much to suffer. But the grace of God will be your comfort." With this the Lady opened Her Hands and enveloped the children in light. Moved by an inward impulse, they fell to their knees praying, "O most Holy Trinity, I adore Thee! My God, my God, I love Thee in the Most Blessed Sacrament." Again the Lady spoke saying, "Say the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war" [World War I].

Up to this point the visions of the children remained secret. This time Jacinta told her mother about her experience. News spread quickly around the village exposing the children to ridicule and disbelief. On June 13th Our Lady appeared again at the same spot, known as the Cova da Iria, and said to the children, "I want you to come here on the thirteenth day of the coming month and to recite five decades of the Rosary every day." Lucia asked if the Lady would take them to Heaven. The Lady responded that Jacinta and Francisco would be taken soon. But Lucia would have to remain to help establish in the world devotion to Her Immaculate Heart. Lucia began to cry thinking she would be left all alone. Our Lady comforted her by saying She would not forsake her. Then the children saw a Heart in Our Lady's right hand with thorns encircling It. They understood that this was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity, for which reparation had to be made.

On July 13th crowds began to gather for the apparition. This time Our Lady said, "I want you to come here on the thirteenth day of the coming month, and to continue to say five decades of the Rosary every day in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary to obtain the peace of the world and the end of the war. For She alone will be able to help." Lucia asked for a miracle to prove Her appearances to people who doubted. The Lady responded, "Continue to come here every month. In October I will tell you who I am and what I wish, and will perform a miracle that everyone will have to believe. . . Sacrifice yourselves for sinners and say many times, especially when you make some sacrifice: `O Jesus, it is for Thy love, for the conversion of sinners and in reparation for sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.'"

With these words light streamed from the Lady penetrating the earth. The children saw demons and people immersed in a sea of fire. From them came shrieks and groans of despair. Our Lady then said, "You see Hell, where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them God wishes to establish in the world the devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If they do what I will tell you, many souls will be saved, and there will be peace. The war is going to end. But if they do not stop offending God, another and worse one will begin in the reign of Pius XI. When you see a night illuminated by an unknown light, know that is the great sign God gives you that He is going to punish the world for its crimes by means of war, of hunger, and of persecution of the Church and of the Holy Father. To prevent this I come to ask the consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart and the Communion of reparation on the first Saturdays. If they listen to my requests, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. If not she will scatter her errors through the world, provoking wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer [Jacinta later had more visions concerning a future Pope's suffering], various nations will be annihilated. In the end My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and it will be converted and a certain period of peace will be granted to the world. In Portugal the dogma of the Faith will always be kept. Do not tell this to anyone. Francisco, yes, you may tell. [This became known as the secret, only part of which is disclosed here] When you

say the Rosary, say after each Mystery, `O my Jesus, pardon us and deliver us from the fire of Hell. Draw all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need."

The governor of the area was a former Catholic turned Mason who was very set against the Church. On August 13th he offered to take the children to the apparition site in his carriage. Once they got inside he kidnapped them. He locked them in a room of his house. The next day he took them to the Town Hall. The children were questioned. He was especially interested in the "secret" which the Lady told them. The children would not tell him. Finding that he was getting nowhere he threw them in jail. After they spent a short time in the jail he questioned them again. At one point the governor threatened to throw them in boiling oil. Even this failed. He kept them locked up overnight at his house. The next day he questioned them again. Finally, seeing that his efforts were useless, he released them.

On August 19th the Lady appeared to the children in a different place. She said, "I want you to continue to go to Cova da Iria on the thirteenth day and to continue to recite the Rosary every day. In the last month [October] I will perform the miracle so that all shall believe. . . Pray, pray a great deal, and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to Hell because they have no one to sacrifice and pray for them." Lucia asked the Lady what to do with the money that the crowd had left at the Cova da Iria. She said some should be used for a procession on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary and the rest should go for the support of the chapel which the people would build.

On September 13th the crowd had grown so much that the children could barely make their way to the apparition site. That day Our Lady said, "Continue to say the Rosary to bring about the end of the War. In October Our Lord will come also, and Our Lady of Sorrows and Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and Saint Joseph with the Child Jesus, to bless the world. . ."

October 13th was a very rainy day. Yet this did not keep believers and non-believers from coming to witness the miracle the Lady had promised. Some estimated the crowd at around 70,000. The Lady came at noon and Lucia asked Her, "What do You want of me?" She responded, "I want to tell you to have them build a Chapel here in My honor. I am the Lady of the Rosary. Let them continue to say the Rosary every day. The war is going to end, and the soldiers will soon return to their homes." Lucia asked Our Lady if She would grant some requests given to her by the people. Our Lady said, "Some yes, others no. It is necessary that they amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins. Let them offend Our Lord God no more, for He is already much offended." As Our Lady ascended from their sight She opened Her Hands and pointed toward the sun. The children then saw in the sky three tableau of the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary. Then the Holy Family appeared. St. Joseph and the Infant Jesus blessed the crowd three times. Next only Lucia saw Our Lady of Sorrows beside Her Suffering Son Who also blessed the crowd. Finally the children saw Our Lady of Mount Carmel with the Infant Jesus upon Her knee.

The crowd, on the other hand, saw something very different. The people stared at the sun which started dancing in the sky. Then it whirled rapidly, emitting flames of fire which reflected many different colors upon the earth. Finally it appeared to be plummeting from the sky toward the crowd which frightened the people very much. Some thought it was the end of the world. Then the sun reversed its direction and returned to its normal position in the sky. As the people regained their senses they noticed still another miracle. Although it had been a very rainy day now the ground and even their clothes were dry.

The public apparitions ceased but the children, from time to time, would still see Our Lady. Toward the end of October, 1918, Francisco and Jacinta became ill with influenza. On April 4th, 1919 Francisco died of this disease. He had spent the remainder of his short life in prayer and penance. He was often seen praying before the Most Blessed Sacrament. Francisco, with great insight for his young age, talked about "the hidden Jesus" in the tabernacle. Jacinta's agony would last longer. She offered up heroic sacrifices during her illness. She developed pneumonia and then pleurisy. She was taken to a hospital at Ourem. After two months she returned home with an incision in her chest. A doctor on pilgrimage visited Jacinta and said she should go to the

children's hospital in Lisbon. So mother and child set out on the journey. In Lisbon they stayed for a few days at an orphanage run by a Franciscan nun, Mother Godinho.

Mother Godinho had an opportunity to converse with Jacinta. Jacinta told her that war is the punishment for the sins of mankind. If people would repent Jesus would save the world but if they did not He would punish it. She talked about the importance of Confession, that it was a Sacrament of mercy and that it was necessary for salvation. Jacinta mentioned the great charity we must have, even for the wicked, and that we should never speak ill words about anyone. She emphasized the value of patience and that it would bring us to Heaven. Jacinta said that many people were in Hell due to the sins of the flesh. She prophesied that certain women's fashions would be introduced which would be very offensive to Our Lady.

When Jacinta was at the hospital in Lisbon the doctors talked about performing an operation. She said that it would all be in vain because she was going to die. She even had someone write to Lucia informing her of the day and hour of her death. Mother Godinho continued to converse with her. Jacinta prophesied other incidents about certain people and these later came true. Because of her weakened state only a local anaesthesia could be given for the operation. They removed two ribs and left an open wound in her chest the size of a fist. She suffered very much but never complained. Four days before her death Our Lady came and took all her pains away. On February 20th, 1920, she died. Fifteen years later her body was moved to a cemetery at Fatima and was found still whole and incorrupt.

A small chapel was built by the people to Our Lady. In 1922 a bomb destroyed this chapel. Another bomb placed at the holmoak above which Our Lady stood during the apparitions did not explode. Many years later a great shrine to Our Lady of Fatima was built which included a hospital, convent and retreat house.

In 1921 the Bishop, due to the numerous pilgrims who came to see Lucia and her family, told Lucia to attend the school of the Sisters of St. Dorothy near Oporto where she would be unknown. At the school the Mother Superior changed her name to Maria of the Sorrows. Lucia was told not to speak about the apparitions. In 1925 Lucia joined the Sisters of St. Dorothy.

On December 10, 1925, Our Lady, with the Child Jesus beside Her, appeared to Sister Lucia in her room. She was holding out Her Heart surrounded by sharp thorns. Both asked for reparation to be made to the Immaculate Heart. Our Lady promised to assist with all the necessary graces for salvation at death those who would make the Five First Saturdays. That is, those who, for five consecutive first Saturdays of the month, would go to Confession, receive Holy Communion, recite the Rosary and spend fifteen minutes meditating on the Mysteries of the Rosary, all with the intention of making reparation to Her. (Later Our Lord said that Confession could be on another day as long as one receives Holy Communion in the state of grace.)

On May 29, 1930 Our Lord explained to Sr. Lucy that the five Saturdays were in reparation for: 1. Those who deny the Immaculate Conception. 2. Those who deny Our Lady's virginity. 3. Those who deny Our Lady's Divine maternity and that She is the Mother of all mankind. 4. Those who cause children to have indifference, contempt or hatred toward Our Lady. 5. Those who commit outrages against Holy Images of Our Lady.

In 1927, at the Convent in Spain to which she was transferred, Lucia, in a vision, received permission to reveal two parts of a three-part secret which she received from Our Lady at the Cova da Iria during the July 13th apparitions: the vision of Hell and the urgent need for devotion to the Immaculate Heart. The third part of this secret was given to the Bishop and later was given to the Pope. Sr. Lucia asked that it not be made public before 1960. This part of the secret has never been made public.

In 1929, during Lucia's weekly Thursday Holy Hour between 11 P.M. and midnight, she saw a cross of light appear above the altar. On the cross was Jesus Crucified. From Our Lord's wounded side and His face drops of Blood fell onto a Host, then into a chalice below, which were suspended in the air. From the left arm of the cross large letters reading "Grace and Mercy" made of what appeared to be water ran down upon the altar. On

the top of the cross was the image of the Eternal Father. Before Him was a dove of light representing the Holy Spirit. Beneath the right arm of the cross was Our Lady of Fatima with Her Immaculate Heart in Her left hand. In the midst of this vision Our Lady made a request for the Pope to consecrate the world to Her Immaculate Heart in union with all the Bishops of the world, making a special mention of Russia.

This request was brought to the attention of the Pope. Our Lord told Sr. Lucy He wanted this consecration so that, by Our Lady's triumph, devotion to the Immaculate Heart would spread throughout the whole Church placing it beside the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Our Lord said that the Holy Father would make the consecration but it would be late. He added that the Immaculate Heart would save Russia.

World War II began just as predicted by Our Lady of Fatima. In 1938 unusual lights appeared in the sky which, according to Lucia, was the sign promised by Our Lady before God's punishment of the world. Shortly thereafter the war began with the annexation of Austria by Hitler during the pontificate of Pope Pius XI. In 1942, Pope Pius XII consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart. He did not, however, do this in union with all the Bishops. Our Lord told Lucia that He was pleased with this act although incomplete according to His desire. Because of it He promised to end World War II. But the conversion of Russia would not take place.

Some people thought, based on the example of the Fatima children, that the sacrifices requested by Our Lady were too great for them to perform. In 1943 Our Lord told Sr. Lucy that the penance He now desired was the fulfillment of one's duties in life and the sacrifices required in the observance of His Law. This type of penance was possible for everyone.

In 1944 the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was put on the Church Calendar to be celebrated on August 22nd. After Vatican II the Church Calendar was revised changing the celebration of August 22nd to the Saturday following the Feast of the Sacred Heart, which is always the Friday after the Feast of Corpus Christi.

In 1946 John M. Haffert, a great promoter of the Brown Scapular, asked Sr. Lucy to help him formulate a Fatima message pledge which people could make. In 1947 Msgr. Colgan, inspired by the Fatima messages, began the Blue Army. A little later he met John Haffert who told him about the Fatima Pledge. Fr. Colgan appointed him to spread the Blue Army in the U.S. The Blue Army became the greatest apostolate for promoting the messages of Fatima.

In 1948 Sr. Lucia entered the Carmelite convent in Coimbra, Portugal. Later she took for her religious name Sr. Maria of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In an interview with John Haffert that same year Sister said the most important request of Fatima is the fulfillment of one's daily duty. Praying the Rosary aids one in doing this. The First Saturdays help one to free oneself from sin and renews the commitment to fulfill one's daily duties. Two years later in another interview with John Haffert Sister explained that wearing the Brown Scapular is also part of the Fatima message. It is a sign of one's consecration to the Immaculate Heart.

Russia continued to spread her errors all around the world, fulfilling Our Lady's prophecies. An attempt was even made on the life of Pope John Paul II on May 13th, 1981. The Holy Father believed that Our Lady of Fatima saved his life. This led him to see that the only way to save the world from atheism was the consecration requested by Our Lady of Fatima. On March 25, 1984, the Holy Father consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. According to Sr. Lucia this consecration was accepted by Our Lady. The result was the peaceful fall of Communism a few years later.

Certainly we see the mercy of God in the Fatima apparitions. God really wishes to have mercy on the whole world. He forewarns us of evils which will befall us, by our own fault, if we do not return to Him. He gives us His Mother to help us and guide us. Had we responded to His grace World War II would never have happened, Russia would have been converted sooner and the world would have peace. It is evident that we have not lived the Fatima messages as we should. How patient God has been with humanity! God wishes all people to save their souls. Because we are all part of God's family His mercy allows us to make reparation for the sins of

others. This not only consoles God for their offenses but can bring about the conversion of the offenders. If wars and punishments come upon the earth it is still God's mercy. By allowing these events He wishes sinners to turn to Him with a purpose of amendment and say, "My Jesus, mercy." And those in the state of God's grace, some lukewarm in their love of God and neighbor, are brought to greater fervor and more detachment from the passing things of this world. God is our Father. He doesn't want us to suffer. But sometimes it is necessary for the salvation of many souls.

Let us respond to Our Lady's messages by living God-centered lives and by fulfilling the requests of Our Lady of Fatima, the fulfillment of our daily duty and the keeping of God's Commandments, making the Five First Saturdays, wearing the Brown Scapular as a sign of our consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and praying the Holy Rosary every day!

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