

THE FATIMA APPARITIONS

~ AS RELEVANT TODAY AS IT WAS FOR PEACE IN 20TH CENTURY ~



Statue and Sanctuary of Our Lady of Fatima in Fatima, Portugal today

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church began the formal investigation of the Fatima apparitions in 1922 and declared them "worthy of credence" in 1930. Millions of pilgrims come to Fatima yearly to give honor to Our Lady of Fatima by praying to God for peace, by worshipping her Son, Our Lord, and celebrating in the Mass His great love for us.

In the following paragraphs, an overview of the angel's and Our Lady's messages at Fatima in 1916 and 1917 are presented in chronological order as well as the words of Our Lady and Jesus given after 1917 to Blessed Jacinta and the surviving visionary, Sister Lucia, who died in 2005, a month before her 98th birthday.

THE 1916 VISITS OF THE ANGEL OF PEACE

Spring of 1916: To prepare the three young, peasant children of Fatima for the apparitions of the Blessed Mother in 1917, God sent an angel three times in 1916. The angel first appeared to the children in the spring in an area called the Cabeco as they were pasturing their sheep. After the children had eaten their lunch and prayed the Rosary, a strong wind came and the angel appeared. The eldest of the children, Lucia, described in her memoirs the angel as being a young man in his early teens who appeared "whiter than snow, transparent as crystal... of great beauty". The angel then said:

"Fear not, I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me."

The angel invited the children to pray with him and he knelt on the ground and reverently bowed until his forehead touch the ground. The children then did likewise and the angel proceeded to teach them this prayer, known as the "Pardon Prayer":

"O my God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love Thee. I ask pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love Thee."

As angel recited this prayer three times, the children repeated it after him. Before disappearing, he told them to:

"Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications."

In her memoirs Lucia described the profound impact that the apparition had on the children, an experience that could have been comparable to ecstasy, a powerful experience of the presence of God.

Summer of 1916: The angel appeared to the children a second time by the well near Lucia's home as they played in the shade during siesta. The angel gently said: "What are you doing?" and continued speaking:

"Pray, Pray a great deal. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary have merciful designs on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices continually to the Most High. Make everything you do a sacrifice, and offer it as an act of reparation for the sins by which God is offended, and as a petition for the conversion of sinners. Bring peace to our country in this way... I am the Guardian Angel of Portugal. Above all, accept and bear with submission all the sufferings the Lord will send you."

In his book "Fatima for Today", Fr. Apostoli points out that this message of the Angel of Peace contains some of the most important elements of the Fatima message which are:

- Sacrifice and Reparation;
- Intercession for the Conversion of Sinners;
- Bearing Sufferings Humbly; and
- The Fruit of all this will be Peace

Fall of 1916: In the fall of 1916, the children were grazing their sheep again at the Cabeco, the site of the Angel's first apparition. They had been kneeling with their heads touching the ground praying multiple times the Pardon Prayer that the angel had taught them earlier. Suddenly an extraordinary light shown upon them as the angel appeared again. He was holding in his left hand a chalice above which was suspended a Eucharistic Host with drops of Jesus' Blood falling from the Host into the chalice. The angel left the Host and chalice suspended in the air as he knelt aside the children. They all prostrated with foreheads touching the ground before the vision of the Host and chalice as the angel taught them to pray the "Angel's Prayer":

"Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore Thee profoundly. I 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 indifferences whereby He is offended. And through the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of poor sinners."



Statues of the Angel of Peace distributing Holy Communion to the children

Like the Pardon Prayer, the angel taught the children to repeat this prayer three times. He then rose and gave the consecrated Host to Lucia (she had already received her first Holy Communion whereas Jacinta and Francisco had not yet done so) and had Jacinta and Francisco drink directly from the chalice and he said:

"Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Make reparation for their crimes and console your God."

The angel then bowed down to the ground, repeating the Angel's Prayer three times and then departed, having fulfilled his teaching mission that would prepare the children for the apparitions of the Blessed Mother. In his book, Fr. Apostoli explained that in addition to underscoring what the angel had taught the children in the first two apparitions, in this third visit he taught them the importance of Eucharistic Devotion which includes:

- The Celebration of the Mass;
- Receiving Jesus in Holy Communion; and
- Periods of Eucharistic Adoration before Jesus.

Lucia explained in her memoirs how overwhelming was the experience, which could be described again as ecstasy. They also experience peace and happiness in their souls, which seemed to stay with them, as well as extreme physical exhaustion. During the months that followed, the children would put into practice what they had learned.

THE 1917 APPARITIONS OF OUR LADY

Historical Context: In 1917 World War I, which began in July of 1914, had intensified continuing with no end in sight. In March of 1917, Russia plunged into political turmoil which undermined its military effort in the war. Then four months after the Bolshevik (Communist) October 1917 Revolution, it accepted a humiliating peace treaty with Germany, ending its involvement in and support of the Allies in the war. Historian Martin Gilbert wrote that with the withdrawal of Russia, "The omens for Germany were good" since it would only now need to fight primarily

France and Great Britain on Germany's western front of the war until the United States troops would arrive months later.

The United States had declared war on Germany back in April 1917 but the long period needed to train, equip and transport troops delayed their arrival in Europe. Their positive impact on the outcome of the war began in the summer of 1918 that led to the defeat of Germany in November 1918.

Unfortunately the 1919 Treaty imposed on Germany after the war by the Allied Powers contained the seeds for World War II that began in 1938 with German takeover of Austria. And the Communist takeover of Russia would have a much longer negative impact shortly after World War II with the beginning of the Cold War, initially in Korea, that lasted until 1991.

It is notable that after factoring-in the 13-day difference between the Gregorian calendar used in the West and the Julian calendar used in Russia in 1917, the Blessed Mother's October 13th apparition likely occurred on the same day that Lenin was crossing the border into Russia to instigate and lead the Communist October revolution.

Thus in May 1917, God sent the Blessed Mother to Fatima seeking to avoid another world war and the extensive damage that atheistic Communism would cause Russia and its disastrous spread elsewhere in the world.

May 13, 1917: In May of 1917, Pope Benedict XV called for a Novena in honor of the Blessed Mother as the Queen of Peace. On Sunday, May 13th, the eighth day of that Novena and at that time the feast day of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, the three children had attended an early Mass and later while tending their sheep, there were bright flashes of light, like lightning, and Our Lady appeared above a small tree, dressed in white and in a radiant light more brilliant than the sun. She quickly spoke to calm them from being overwhelmed by the apparition:

"Do not be afraid. I will do you no harm."

Lucia would be the only one to speak to Our Lady. All three could see Our Lady but only Lucia and Jacinta could hear her. Lucia then asked: "Where are you from?"

Our Lady: "I am from Heaven."

Lucia: "What do you want of me?"

Our Lady: "I came to ask you to come here on the thirteenth day for six months at this same time, and then I will tell you who I am and what I want. And afterwards, I will return here a seventh time." [The seventh apparition was to Lucia on June 16, 1921, the eve of her departure from Fatima to a convent school.]

Lucia: "Will I go to Heaven?"

Our Lady: "Yes, you will."

Lucia: "And Jacinta?"

Our Lady: "She also."

Lucia: "And Francisco? Will he go to Heaven too?"

Our Lady: "Yes, but first he must say many Rosaries."

Lucia then asked of the fate of two young women who had recently died: "Is Maria Neves already in Heaven?"

Our Lady: "Yes, she is."

Lucia then asked about Amelia who had died in circumstances involving immoral behavior.



Statue of Our Lady of Fatima

Our Lady: "She will be in Purgatory until the end of the world." [In his book, Fr. Apostoli provides his thoughts on why there could be such a serious temporal punishment for sin and how this is a powerful reminder on the need to live a virtuous life. Our Lady next states the need to pray and sacrifice for the souls in Purgatory as reparation on their behalf.]

Our Lady: "Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?"

Lucia: "Yes!" [for all three].

Our Lady: "Then you will have much to suffer, but the grace of God will be your comfort."

In her memoirs Lucia described how Our Lady then opened her hands and an intense light "streamed forth from her hands, its rays penetrated our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see God, Who was that light, more clearly than we see ourselves in a mirror..." The children then fell to their knees, repeating in their hearts:

"O Most Holy Trinity I adore Thee. My God, my God, I love Thee in the Most Blessed Sacrament."

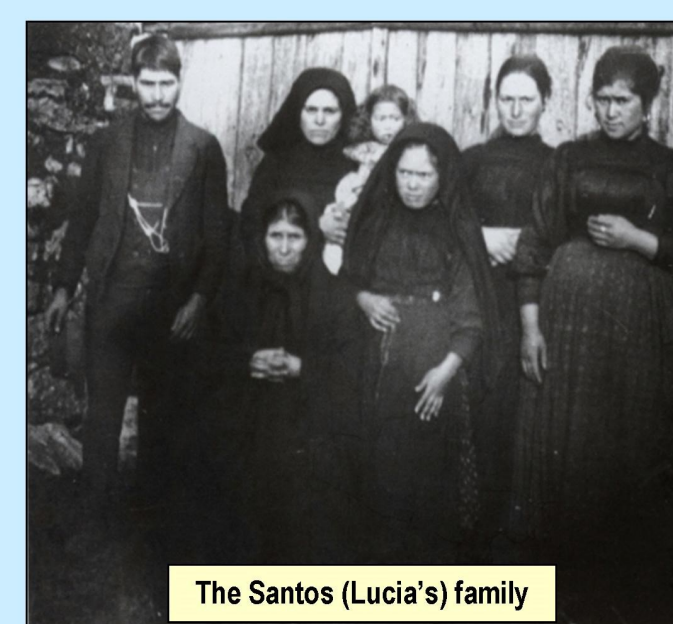
As the children remained kneeling surrounded by the wonderful light, Our Lady then asked the children to:

"Pray the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world, and the end of the war."

Our Lady then rose toward the eastern sky, disappearing in the distance.

In his book, Fr. Apostoli underscored the importance of praying the Rosary today for peace: "Our Lady's request that they pray the Rosary daily for peace was the only request she repeated in all six of her apparitions to the three visionaries. How powerful this prayer must be if it can obtain peace for the world".

June 13, 1917: After the May 13th apparition, the suffering that Our Lady told the children they would endure began immediately upon their return home. With the exception of the father, Francisco's and Jacinta's family did not believe them and their siblings laughed at them. For Lucia, matters were worst. Her mother strongly disbelieved her and tried to get the parish priest to admonish her yet he was prudent and told the mother to not stop Lucia from returning to the apparition site. Still even friends and neighbors turned against her. She did not want to return to see Our Lady in June yet when the time came she did return with Francisco and Jacinta.



The Santos (Lucia's family)

When the children arrived at the site at noon on June 13th, there were about fifty people present who joined the children in praying the Rosary. After finishing the Rosary, the children saw a light approaching and Our Lady appeared on the small tree again. The other people present saw only a small white cloud hovering over the shrub where Our Lady was appearing to the children. Lucia asked: "My Lady, what do you want of me?"

Our Lady responded: "I want you to come on the thirteenth day of next month and to pray the Rosary every day and I want you to learn to read. Later I will tell you what I want." [Fr. Apostoli explained Lucia would need to read and write since her mission would be to spread the message of Fatima.]

Lucia asked for the cure of a sick person.

Our Lady: "If he is converted, he will be cured within a year." [Fr. Apostoli commented how in the Gospels Jesus would look for a true and living faith for His miraculous cures.]

Lucia: "I want you to take us to Heaven."

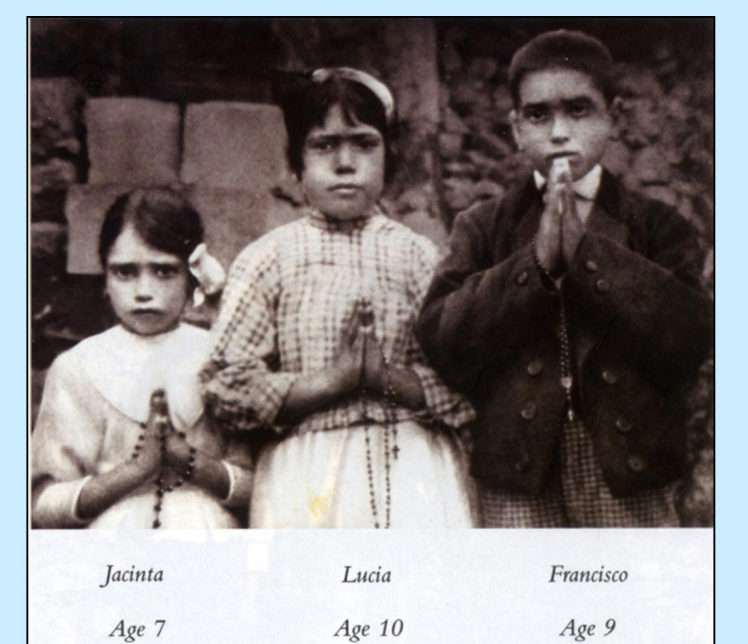
Our Lady: "Yes, I will take Francisco and Jacinta soon, but you are to stay here some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart." [Lucia lived almost 87 more years carrying out her mission.]

Lucia: "Must I stay here all alone?"

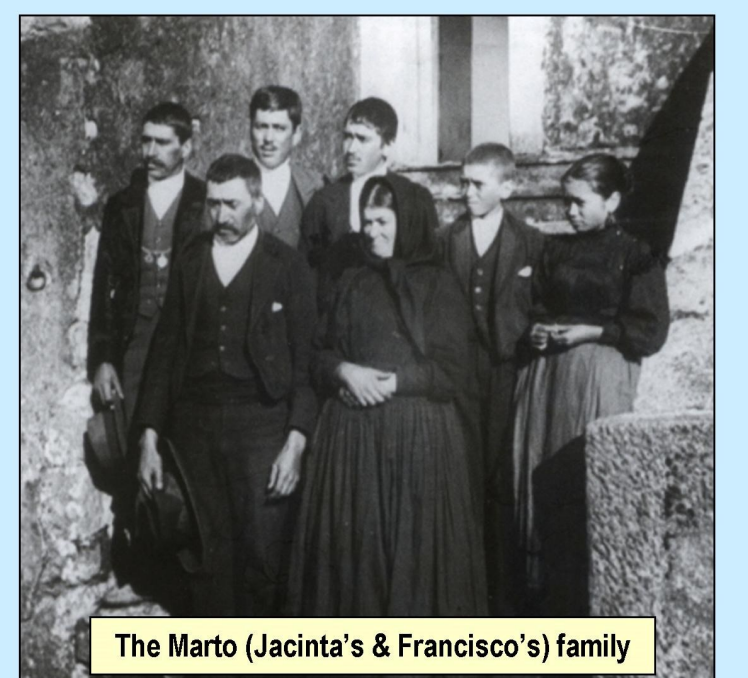
Our Lady: "No, my child, and would that make you suffer? Do not be disheartened. My Immaculate Heart will never abandon you, but will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God."



Statue of Our Lady of Fatima



Jacinta Age 7, Lucia Age 10, Francisco Age 9



The Marto (Jacinta's & Francisco's) family

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