

Fatima

A spiritual light for our times

The apparitions explained by

Fr. Karl Stehlin SSPX

Volume I



Kolbe Publications

Fatima

A spiritual light for our times

Fatima

A spiritual light for our times

Volume I

The apparitions explained by
Fr. Karl Stehlin, SSPX



Kolbe Publications

2017

English edition copyright © 2017 by
Kolbe Publications

Copies Available:

Kolbe Publications

286 Upper Thomson Road Singapore 574402

www.kolbepublications.com

email: sales@kolbepublications.com

ISBN 978-981-11-2628-4

Printed II

All rights reserved

Table of Contents

Foreword	7
Chapter 1	
Towards Fatima 2017	9
Chapter 2	
Spring 1916 — The First Apparition of the Angel to Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta	15
Chapter 3	
Summer 1916 — The Second Apparition of the Angel	24
Chapter 4	
Autumn 1916 — The Third Apparition of the Angel	31
Chapter 5	
13 May 1917 — The First Apparition of Our Lady in Fatima	40
Chapter 6	
13 May 1917 — The Immaculata amongst us	57
Chapter 7	
Between 13 May and 13 June 1917	63

Chapter 8

13 June 1917 — The Second Apparition of Our Lady:

The Immaculate Heart. 68

Chapter 9

13 July 1917 — The Third Apparition:

The Great Secret of Fatima 82

Chapter 10

Between 13 July and 19 August 94

Chapter 11

19 August — The Fourth Apparition in Valinhos 98

Chapter 12

13 September — The Fifth Apparition 114

Chapter 13

13 October — The Sixth Apparition 124

Chapter 14

13 October — The Miracle of the Sun 143

Foreword

This book aims to be an answer to the requests of all those who want to know more profoundly the message and the spirituality of Fatima.

The first goal of the following lines is to consider, meditate, and comment on the words, gestures, and actions of Our Lady during these apparitions, but also the words of the Angel of Fatima, as well as the reaction of the three children and those faithful who were present at the Cova da Iria.

The second goal is to help the reader to apply the message of Our Lady to himself and to fulfill her request for his own conversion, salvation, and sanctification.

The third goal is to penetrate the devotee of Fatima so deeply with the spiritual presence of the Immaculate Heart that he automatically wants to be an instrument in her Immaculate hands to make her known, and to make as many “poor children of Eve” follow in her footsteps as possible. For many years the “Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima” was the chosen instrument of the Immaculata to bring the message of Fatima to each home and the consequence was a flood of conversions.

As we prepare for the centenary of her apparitions, let us again become faithful children of Our Heavenly Mother, imitating the spiritual life of the three children of Fatima. Let us gather around her

as a small army, to become bridges and channels through which she may pass her graces into souls for their conversion and sanctification. Let this be so especially for the Knight of the Immaculata and the Legionary of Mary; that they may be apostles of Fatima, to make her known and loved by many!

Because of the eminent spiritual goals of this booklet, I want to direct the attention of the reader to the actual events of Fatima and then explain them. Therefore, neither footnotes nor references to the sources are given. All quotations and relations of the events are taken from the excellent book of **Fr. Michel de la Trinite “The Whole Truth About Fatima – Science and the Facts” Volume I.**

Whoever desires to approach the Fatima event scientifically or historically, will find in this book a full bibliography and all necessary historical proof of the authenticity of the quotations in this booklet.

“O gentle Immaculate Heart of Mary, be my salvation!”

(Preferred ejaculatory prayer of Jacinta)

Fr. Karl Stehlin
Singapore, 7 March 2016

CHAPTER ONE

Towards Fatima 2017

We Knights of the Immaculata desire to prepare the great jubilee of the 100th anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions in Fatima, as well as the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Militia Immaculatae. We want to bring to her feet as many souls as possible, to be her little army fighting for the triumph of her Immaculate Heart, the victory of the Apocalyptic Woman over the dragon and its beasts.

As Knights of the Immaculata, we have to live according to the rules of the MILITIA IMMACULATAE, and therefore we must know what she, through her instrument Saint Maximilian Kolbe, orders us to do. Therefore, each Knight should read and meditate from the book "The Immaculata."

As Apostles of Fatima, we have to answer her requests which she gave to the three children in Fatima, and spread them as much as we

can amongst the people, in order to ensure their salvation and bring them to Our Lord. Therefore, we must know the exact history of the apparitions, the words and deeds of Our Lady, as well as the lives and messages of the three chosen by her to transmit her great message for the latter times of the world.

First of all, we have to define: what are the apparitions of Fatima?

Fatima begins with a prelude in 1915 (see next page). In 1916, Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta had three apparitions of an angel in spring, summer, and autumn. In 1917, Our Lady appeared to them six times from 13 May until 13 October at a place called Cova da Iria, with the exception of August 1917. That day the children were brought into prison and could not be present at the place of the apparition. However, on 19 August, Our Lady appeared to them at a place called Valinhos. On 13 July, Our Lady promised to come again two times to establish the devotion to her Immaculate Heart and to ask for the consecration of Russia.

On 10 December 1925, she appeared to the postulant Lucia in Pontevedra, and on 13 May 1929, in Tuy. Both Jacinta and Sr. Lucia had further apparitions of Our Lady for their personal benefits. Sr. Lucia had several revelations from Our Lord and Our Lady (not visions, but like interior voices), who answered her questions concerning the practice of the devotion to the Immaculate Heart.

If someone wants to understand the full message of Fatima, he has to know all the details of the three apparitions of the Angel, and the eight apparitions of Our Lady Herself. It is also of utmost importance to collect the major words spoken by the children of Fatima about the subject, as well as to consider their life and behaviour as an authentic answer to the request of Our Lady. In this way, they become guides for us to live the message of Fatima, and so to become true apostles of Fatima.

The year 1915

The history of Fatima has an interesting prelude in 1915: the day of Lucia's first confession she had knelt before the statue of Our Lady of the Rosary in the parish church "to ask her with all the ardour of my soul, to keep my poor heart for God alone. As I repeated this humble prayer over and over again, with my eyes fixed on the statue, it seemed to me that she smiled and, with a loving look and kindly gesture, assured me that she would. My heart was overflowing with joy, and I could scarcely utter a single word."

After her first communion (Lucia was then 8 years old), she took over the care of the sheep of the family. One day, together with three other girls, she went into the surrounding fields to pasture the sheep: "Around midday, we ate our lunch. After this, I invited my companions to pray the Rosary with me, to which they eagerly agreed. We had hardly begun when, there before our eyes, we saw a figure poised in the air above the trees; it looked like a statue made of snow, rendered almost transparent by the rays of the sun. 'What is that?' asked my companions, quite frightened. 'I don't know.'

We went on praying, with our eyes fixed on the figure before us, and as we finished our prayer, the figure disappeared." This apparition occurred two times. Later, Lucia explained that "this apparition made a certain impression upon me, which I don't know how to explain. Little by little, this impression faded away, and were it not for the events that followed, I think I would have forgotten it completely."

What is the sense of these silent heavenly interventions?

First: If God is about to accomplish great things amongst men, He usually prepares those chosen ones so that they may become His fit and proper instruments. Lucia was a little child, full of common sense and a very simple soul. But she was chosen for an extraordinary life, which demands heroic humility and a deep love ready to suffer immensely.

These extraordinary tasks need extraordinary graces. The smile of Our Lady was the first deep and overwhelming contact with the supernatural world, and such “touches” sanctify the soul enormously. The Angel's presence gives an understanding of the greatness of this supernatural world, which makes a deep “impression” in the soul, so great, that human words cannot explain.

Second: After these apparitions, little Lucia's first few sufferings were from her family. Before, she was the cherished “little one.” Now, she had to learn what it costs “to have visions” and to be the confidante of Heaven. Far from profiting from it, from finding herself exalted and adulated, she lost everything that made her childhood happy. Speaking of the criticisms from her mother and her sisters, Lucia wrote: “I felt these contemptuous words and gestures very keenly, as up to now I had been used to nothing but caresses.”

LESSON FOR US

Already these silent preludes give us important lessons.

First lesson:

If great events are about to come, God prepares for them. He sends His messengers, angels and saints, to make the people open for the future graces. For Lucia, it was the smile of the Queen of the Holy Rosary (Saint Therese of the Child Jesus also was cured by the smile of Our Lady of Victories!) and the three silent apparitions of an angel. For us it is the grace of becoming Knights of the Immaculata, and the messengers sent to us are the great Marian Saints, to bring us close to our heavenly Mother. Saint Grignon de Montfort makes us understand how much we need her to sanctify ourselves, and Saint Maximilian brings us under her banner, so that we can fulfill the will of God and answer the call of Christ the King. We also should be closer

to Saint Michael the Archangel and to our Guardian Angel, who in similar ways are silent, yet give us deep heavenly “impressions.”

Second lesson:

Heaven, the angels and saints, and God Himself, are so infinitely above our experience, that God Himself must prepare us for this infinite light. The modernist and charismatic movements of today, as well as the numerous Protestant sects, have the sad merit of trying to destroy the true understanding of God’s infinite MAJESTY. If the children already tremble before an Angel appearing to them from quite far away, what must it be like to be before God Himself, the Creator of an almost infinite number of angels?

We are accustomed to talk to Jesus almost as we would talk to a colleague, and to approach our Lady like a nice, beautiful mother. We complain to them as if they are just a little bit more than we are.

If St. John falls on his knees before an angel because of his majesty; if the apparition of Saints made people fall on the ground, not having the courage to look into their eyes, how much this behaviour of deepest reverence differs from ours.

Therefore, we have to learn again to behave properly before the supernatural realities. Otherwise, we will never really meet them.

Third lesson:

The closer we come to God, the more we have to suffer. The children of Fatima will receive immense happiness and joy from Our Lady, but they have to “pay for it”. The same for us “Apostles of Fatima”: the more we want to serve God, the more the worldlings reject us. The suffering generally comes from people to whom we have been close to. If you want to serve Our Lady, you will lose your so-called friends. You will suffer misunderstanding, humiliation, derision, and contempt. But be assured that you will receive other friends; you will receive consolations the world does not know.



The family home where Lucia was born and where she lived until leaving Fatima definitively



The room in which Sister Lucia was born

CHAPTER TWO

Spring 1916 – The First Apparition of the Angel to Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta

The great drama of Fatima begins in 1916 with three apparitions of an angel. If an extraordinary event happens in our lives, we have to consider particularly its beginning and its end. The beginning initiates an important change in our life (e.g. beginning of studies, the conversion to the faith, the first meeting of the future spouse, the first signs of vocation etc.); the end is like the crown and summary of all, what happened to us through such an event (the final examinations after long studies, the sacrament of marriage, the priestly ordination, etc.).

Similarly, in great manifestations of God, a special attention is to be given to their beginnings and ends: the beginnings can be compared to the foundation on which the whole will be built, and the ends are like the accomplishment of the building.

Since 1916, Francisco and Jacinta had permission from their parents to join their cousin Lucia in taking care of the flocks of sheep of both families. Lucia was 9, Francisco just 8, and Jacinta was 6 years old.

One day in spring 1916, the children were with the sheep in the olive groves near their native village Aljustrel. As was their habit, around noon they prayed the rosary, and after a small lunch they began to play.

We had enjoyed the game for a few moments only, when a strong wind began to shake the trees. We looked up, startled, to see what was happening, for the day was unusually calm. Then we saw coming towards us, above the olive trees, the figure I have already spoken about. Jacinta and Francisco had never seen it before, nor had I ever mentioned it to them. As it drew closer, we were able to distinguish its features. It was a **young man, about fourteen or fifteen years old, whiter than snow, transparent as crystal when the sun shines through it, and of great beauty.**

We were surprised, absorbed, and speechless with amazement.

On reaching us, he said: ***“Do not be afraid! I am the Angel of Peace! Pray with me!”***

Kneeling on the ground, he bowed down until his forehead reached the ground.

Led by a supernatural impulse, we did the same, and repeated the words which we heard him say:

“My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love You! I ask pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love You!”

Having repeated these words three times, he rose and said:

“Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications.” Then he disappeared.

Let us meditate about this first intervention of Heaven:

1. The unusual, strong wind:

If we meditate on the great manifestations of God in the Bible, they are often linked with a sudden and mysterious wind: e.g. the prophet Elias on Mount Horeb, the Apostles in the cenacle on the day of Pentecost. Also, when the Immaculata appeared the first time in Lourdes, Saint Bernadette was surprised by “a noise which sounded like a gust of wind.”

Psalm 103 says: “You make the winds your messengers, you walk on the wings of the wind.” The Hebrew word for Spirit can be translated as “strong wind.” This first fact brings Fatima close to the great manifestations of God in the world. Through the wind God creates a supernatural atmosphere, which blows away all darkness and evil and brings light and heavenly peace.

2. The first words: “Fear not! I am the Angel of Peace.”

These words are like an echo from the Gospel. When the Angel appeared to Zacharias in the temple to announce the conception of Saint John the Baptist, or after having greeted Our Lady on the day of the Annunciation, he said: “Fear not, Mary.” When he appeared to Saint Joseph, or to the women coming to the tomb of Jesus on the morning of His resurrection, he said: “Fear not!”

3. The appearance of the angel:

When Lucia was asked about the appearance of the angel, she often declared: “Era de luz” i.e. “He was of light!” Here again an echo of the Gospel: the Angel who announced the Resurrection of Our Lord had an appearance as of lightning, and his clothes were white as snow (Mt. 28:3). And the evangelist describes Our Lord during His transfiguration: His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as snow (Mt. 17:2). “*God is light, and in Him is no darkness*” (1 Jn. 1:5), and whenever He deigns to manifest Himself to men (by the ministry of His angels or His Holy Mother), He appears always clothed in

splendour and light. This mystery of LIGHT is very often mentioned throughout the manifestations in Fatima.

4. The overwhelming divine presence: Lucia comments on the apparition of the Angel:

“The supernatural atmosphere which enveloped us was so intense that for a long time we were scarcely aware of our own existence, remaining in the same posture in which he had left us, and continually repeating the same prayer. The presence of God made itself felt so intimately and intensely that we did not even venture to speak to one another. “

The presence of God is something stupendous, even crushing, for our weak human faculties. But this “annihilation before the divine presence“ was for the three children the best school of true humility, which is the intimate knowledge of the infinite sanctity of God and the nothingness of the creature.

LESSON FOR US

1. The angels amongst us

Fatima begins with the apparition of the Angel. God wants to make us reflect and appreciate the existence of the “invisible world,” and its importance for us. The angels as pure spirits remind us that we are created for eternity: they are an echo of God’s transcendence, majesty, and holiness. In our materialistic world, which appreciates only what falls under our 5 senses, the presence of the angels is an important remedy; they proclaim the priority of the spiritual over the material, of the eternal over the temporal.

The angels are also a reflection of God's infinite beauty. In all apparitions of angels in history their incredible beauty is recalled, full

of brightness and light. As “beauty is the splendour and the glorious manifestation of the true and the good” according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, the angels make us love and admire what is true and good, and at the same time they give us a sound aversion towards all that is ugly, all that is false and evil!

Finally, they are a reflection of God's almighty power and strength.

Saint Michael the Archangel cast Lucifer and all his followers out of Heaven into Hell.

The translation of the name Gabriel is “power of God”. Rafael guides Tobias with great power to protect him from the greatest of evils.

In our times we feel extremely weak and deficient. First of all, each examination of conscience shows us that, within ourselves, we are completely degenerated in comparison with the strong generations of our ancestors. Secondly, because of the domination of the “powers of darkness” everywhere, in the measure that we live in the presence and under the protection of the angels, we are able to easily overcome all temptations.

Let us not forget that God sent the angels to protect us, to take care of us, and to be our guardians. In general, we totally underestimate their power and desire to assist us in all situations of our life. At Fatima, the Angel taught the children to pray and he prayed with them. If we were more aware of the presence of the angels at each Mass, their constant praise and adoration before each tabernacle, and their immense reverence and love towards their heavenly Queen, our spiritual life would immediately change because they would create the proper atmosphere in which our souls would open themselves towards God.

2. The majesty of God

This great majestic Angel, what will he say to the children? How will he behave? He kneels down on the earth and bows his forehead to

the ground, to pray to God. If one angel is already so majestic that the children can hardly breathe in his presence, what can we say if billions of angels together fall on the ground before **God's Majesty**?! *"All the angels stood around the throne, they fell before the throne on their faces and worshipped God"* (Rev. 7:11).

So, how does the great drama of **Fatima** begin? With a prayer!

And how does this prayer begin? **"Oh my God!"**

This brings to mind the tragic loss of the sense of God's infinite majesty and greatness. He is an Infinite Ocean! Creation is nothing before Him.

This means for us that the beginning and the end, the "unum necessarium" i.e. "the one thing necessary", the center of the world and of our life, is not us ourselves, but **GOD**: Oh my God!

And all creatures before Him are dust. Therefore, the prostration, the genuflection, are visible signs that we recognize the truth and appreciate God's domination and our submission: "You, O God, are the beginning and the end, the principle and the goal, the foundation and the top. I am just nothing; I can exist only because I am from You, in You, for You!"

3. Essential virtues: Faith, Hope, Love — the essence of our life!

The prayer continues by putting us into relationships with God. If God is all, then it is of utmost importance that we have the right attitude towards Him. And this is: "I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love you!"

I believe, I accept the invisible world of God, I am more convinced of what You reveal to me than does the visible world which surrounds me.

I believe, I accept, the reality of God; my eyes are open to the truth and to the only true life: God's being and action.

Adoration is the immediate reaction to God's revelation. If I understand through faith that God is my all, and I am completely dependent

on Him, then I must show it. Adoration is the recognition that God is my first principle and my last end, my all; and this gives a true understanding of myself: I am completely dependent on You, I belong to You.

Hope is the desire of fulfilling God's will, the desire to reach God. Whoever has seen God's greatness, happiness, and love, cannot but long after such an infinite joy. But hope is also the trust in God's promises. We can only hope and desire eternal bliss because God invites us to such a life, to be His own children, and because He has prepared for us a place in Heaven.

Love is a union of hearts. It is the perfect answer to God's love which created us, saved us, and which wants to give us a part in His own divine life. It is the summit of our life, the most noble and the best of what we can do, and in fact, is the only thing of value in our life.

"At the evening of our life we will be judged about how much we loved," says Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus and Saint John of the Cross.

4. Mystery of sin and the necessity of reparation

"I ask pardon for those who do not believe ..." It is extremely interesting and important that immediately after the description of the essence of our life (our relationship to God), the Angel teaches the children about the contrary, the negation of God: sin.

So from the very beginning of Fatima appears another theme which is completely forgotten today. It is that the history of the world and of man is a fight between two contradicting powers: The Kingdom of God and the tyranny of the devil; "Yes" to God and "No" to God (i.e. to NOT believe, adore, hope and love).

It would be the worst of all illusions to imagine a life in a "brave new world, a paradise on earth" and to further imagine that we will all be together in universal friendship and love.

No! There is war between saying “Yes” and “No” to the true God. Only those who remain in the attitude of “Yes” until the end will be saved. Our Lord’s declarations on this point are very clear.

But what shall be our attitude towards those who believe in the enemies of God, towards the followers of the “*non serviam*” of Lucifer? Hatred? Indifference? Anger? Unfortunately, these are so often our reactions towards the evil which surrounds us. We return evil for evil.

The Angel teaches another attitude: “I ask pardon for those...” This little sentence must be meditated on again and again. In particular, there are two things to be noted about this part of the prayer:

Firstly, it is, in fact, an act of contrition and penance: a begging for forgiveness.

The first act of love of a sinner is to repent for his sins and to ask pardon. As we are all sinners, we all have to ask pardon.

Who are “those who do not believe?”

Not only the others, but I also belong to “those.” How many times in my life is there lack of faith, of submission (adoration), of trust in God, of true desires, of love towards God and our neighbour?! The fact that I find myself now in the “light” is not thanks to my skill and generosity, but only thanks to the infinite mercy of God.

Therefore, I unite myself with all those who are now what I was once (maybe not long ago); to ask for forgiveness! This solidarity is a true act of love of our neighbour. True love seeks for our neighbour “all the best,” and the first “best thing” is the “forgiveness of sins,” because without this, one cannot be saved.

Secondly, this prayer shows what the real supreme good and the real supreme evil are.

If in the very beginning of Fatima the word “I ask pardon” appears, then we understand how horrible it is “not to believe, ...not to love God.” And one of the most important tasks of our lives will be to be

concerned about this, which is what the following apparitions of the Angel will confirm.



Spring 1916: The Angel first appeared near this cave, the Cabezo, to the three children. He called himself the "Angel of Peace" and taught them the first prayer of adoration

CHAPTER THREE

Summer 1916 – The Second Apparition of the Angel

Summer in Portugal is always very hot, and during noontime everybody takes a rest. So the children often spent that time close to the well in the garden of Lucia's home to play in the shadow of the trees. And there the Angel surprised them a second time saying:

“What are you doing?

Pray, pray very much!

The Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High. “

“How are we to make sacrifices?” I (Lucia) asked.

“Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners. You will thus draw down peace upon your country. I am its Guardian Angel, the Angel of Portugal.

Above all, accept and bear with submission the suffering which the Lord will send you."

This apparition brings some new aspects to the whole message of Fatima:

1. The Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary

Already at the end of the first apparition the angel mentioned: "The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications." This time he declares: "The Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy on you." During the third apparition (see next letter), he teaches the children the second part of the famous "prayer of the Angel" which terminates with the words: "Through the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of You the conversion of poor sinners".

These allusions bring us already into the centre of the great message of Our Lady. Obviously the children had to be prepared for such an important call from Heaven; therefore, the Angel in each apparition mentions the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

During the first apparition, the children pray to God Himself, but who is "attentive" to their prayers and exalts them? — The Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

In this very simple way we learn again, that there is only one way to God: through the mediation of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In this apparition the Angel announces to the children their future vocation, a gesture of infinite mercy towards them. That means for us: the task God gives us to accomplish in our life, the "designs" of the Most Holy Trinity, His Holy will, we receive them only through the mediation of the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Finally, at the third time, the grace of conversion of the poor sinners comes again.

It is only “by the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

Notice, that the first time the Angel says only “the Hearts...”

The second time he specifies: “The Holy Hearts”, and the third time he makes it fully clear: “The Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

In this way the children (and we after them) are invited to go always deeper in our meditation:

Firstly, we should ask what does “heart” mean?

It means the very centre of our personality, the most precious thing we have, our intimacy, the source of our life, the seat of our love. So when at this moment the Angel says that they are “attentive” towards us, means that they open their intimacy to us, they direct their love towards us; we are not indifferent to them. On the contrary, we are the objects of their loving attention.

Secondly, we have to understand that these hearts are special: they are **Holy!**

In the human heart is everything, from the best to the worst, as our Lord says: “From the heart, from our innermost being come the bad thoughts. Here sins starts. Here we get attached to all kinds of impurities etc.”

But these Hearts are Holy, which means perfect, without dirt or darkness, only beauty, light, and fullness of virtues, especially fullness of love.

Revealing this important detail, the Angel underlines their “designs of mercy.” What does that mean? If these hearts are turned towards us in immense love, they want to communicate to us their holiness: and this is exactly their “designs of mercy.”

Mercy (*miser cordia*) is a Holy Heart (*cor*), which turns towards the nothingness and misery (*miser*) of the poor sinner to fill him with its

infinite treasures. And what are these treasures? Their holiness, their incredible love, their eternal happiness.

Thirdly, they are the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart with their infinite merits.

What does this mean? These hearts are not something abstract, a theological metaphor, or a way of speaking by mystics. They are very concrete and have a concrete and visible history in our world.

The Sacred Heart had already appeared in history explaining to Saint John Eudes, Blessed Claude de la Colombiere, and especially to Saint Marguerite Mary Alacoque, what this “Heart” means exactly, what His desires are, what its importance is for us, how He wants to be worshipped, and what graces He gives to those who answer His request.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary is just about to reveal accurately the same things in Fatima. And if we enter in this concrete appeal from Heaven, we will really “save poor sinners” and receive many, many other graces.

2. The Angel of Peace, the Guardian Angel, the Angel of Portugal

This gives an important precision to what we already said about the role of the angels in our life. The titles which the Angel gives to himself show that he is involved in very concrete historical and political realities. At the moment of his apparitions we were in the worst epoch of the First World War. The people were longing for peace and the Angel promised exactly this peace, giving the means to obtain it: prayer and sacrifice. When the crimes of men have been compensated for and the Justice of God appeased, when the chastisement shall have led the sinners to conversion, then peace will come!

Moreover, we learn here, that not only does each one of us have a Guardian Angel, but even countries and nations. Now, the role of the Guardian Angel is to protect us from all evil and to guide us to Heaven. Therefore, not only our own souls, but also our countries are not profane societies, which would have nothing to do with God and our destiny. God wants to protect them through the angels to achieve their proper mission: to guarantee and promote a Christian world order by observing the commandments of God and proclaiming Our Lord Jesus Christ King of Nations.

How is this “Angel of Peace” the “Angel of Portugal?”

He did not reveal his name. However, in the breviary of 29 September we read: “Michael, the Angel of Peace.” Portugal always venerated Saint Michael the Archangel as their heavenly patron. There is even a feast in honour of Saint Michael the Archangel as the “Guardian Angel of Portugal.” Therefore, it is probable that the Angel of Fatima is none else than the chief and head of all angels in Heaven, which gives to the message of Fatima a very special weight and importance.

LESSON FOR US: the interpellation

1. What are you doing?

When God appeared to the great prophet Elias at Mount Horeb, He surprised him by saying to him: “What are you doing, Elias?”

Just the same with the children of Fatima: The Angel interrupted them suddenly when they were playing, asking, “What are you doing?

Pray, pray much!”

The masters of spiritual life invite us to ask ourselves often “what are we doing right now?”

They want to emphasize that the present moment is most important in our lives, because only NOW we live, not yesterday, not tomorrow. Only NOW can we please God or offend God, use or waste our time, etc.

Let us hear the voice of our Guardian Angel, who very silently asks us the same: "What are you doing right now? Do you fulfil the will of God? Are you doing something which helps you on the way to Heaven? Or are you wasting your time...?"

2. What is important in our life? Everything!

Even the banal nothings should become occasions to show our love to God.

If it is very difficult to make big sacrifices, to arrange important changes in our life, it is more than easy to "make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners." Our movements, work and rest, day and night, all the many small trials and difficulties, even all circumstances of our life can be transformed to an incredible greatness and value: "One act of love towards God is worth more than the whole natural cosmos," teaches Saint Thomas. And it will be exactly that, which will make Francisco and Jacinta saints after only two years of such life. How our banal, common, modest, and insignificant daily lives would change and become a source of salvation of many and of our holiness, if we answered more generously to the Angel's request!

3. Importance of sufferings:

Who professes "sacrifice" professes "sufferings."

The Angel emphasizes: "Above all, accept and bear with submission the sufferings which the Lord *will send you*."

Later, Sr. Lucia recalls these words of the Angel: "These words were indelibly impressed upon our minds. They were like a light

which made us understand who God is, how He loves us and desires to be loved, the value of sacrifice, how pleasing it is to Him and how, on account of it, He gives the graces of conversion to sinners. It was for this reason that we began, from then on, to offer to the Lord all that mortified us." Later on, Our Lady herself will continue this lesson which is of the utmost importance for our sanctification and for our role as "saviours of souls."

By now, we should have learnt by heart and meditated over and over again these angelic words, each one like a light in our life. First, we must learn to "accept" and not (as habitually) to refuse or to grumble when a suffering comes. Then we must understand that the sufferings in our life are not fatalities coming "by chance or by mischance," but they are sent from Our Lord because He loves us and therefore, He wants us to gain many merits. How many rewards He has prepared for those who in this world go along with Him on the Way of the Cross, on the way of sufferings!



Summer 1916: Aljustrel, the well of Lucia's family, where the Angel appeared before the three young shepherds for the second time. He announced himself this time as the "Guardian Angel of Portugal"

CHAPTER FOUR

Autumn 1916 – The Third Apparition of the Angel

This time the three little shepherds were with the flock at the same place where the Angel appeared to them for the first time (Loca de Cabeco).

“As soon as we arrived there, we knelt down, with our foreheads touching the ground, and began to repeat the prayer of the Angel. I don't know how many times we repeated this prayer, when an extraordinary light shone upon us. We sprang up to see what was happening, and beheld the Angel.

He was holding a chalice in his left hand, with the Host suspended above it, from which some drops of blood fell into the chalice. Leaving the chalice suspended in the air, the Angel knelt down beside us and made us repeat three times:

‘Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the sacrileges,

outrages, and indifferences by which He Himself is offended. Through the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of You the conversion of poor sinners.”

“Then rising, he took the chalice and the Host in his hands. He gave the Sacred Host to me, and shared the Blood from the Chalice between Jacinta and Francisco, saying as he did so:

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

“Once again, he prostrated on the ground and repeated with us, three times more, the same prayer ‘Most Holy Trinity...’ and then disappeared.

Moved by a supernatural force which enveloped us, we had imitated the Angel in everything, that is, we prostrated as he did and repeated the prayers that he said. We remained a long time in this position, repeating the same words over and over again”.

COMMENTARY

The central mystery in this third apparition is the most Holy Eucharist.

The angels guide us always to Our Lord, and concretely to Jesus Christ dwelling in the Most Blessed Sacrament. And in this brief account we find so much light and truth:

1. He was holding a chalice in his left hand, with the Host suspended above it, from which some drops of blood fell into the chalice.

Before we enter into the proper mystery that is being spoken of, this sentence itself is a deadly blow to all who deny the mystery

of the Blessed Sacrament. It underlines the Catholic truth and is a strong refutation of the Protestant errors, which are repeated by the Modernists. In fact, one of the worst attacks of the enemy in the latter times will be to diminish (and if possible to destroy) the Faith within the faithful by introducing the so called "ecumenical way", to present the different Christian religions as options and participants in the invisible "kingdom of God," where everybody has to appreciate and learn from each other. The result of such a "brotherly dialogue" is an internal contradiction: either Jesus is really present in the Host or not! Protestants say "no," Catholics say "yes." If both are only options, then there is no objective truth any more, but just subjective "views," and everybody can believe what he wants.

Against this plague, the Angel of the Eucharist rises up in Fatima declaring the Catholic doctrine as the only true one.

Moreover, he insists on making the following precision: I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all tabernacles of the world... This is almost a verbal repetition of the text in the Roman Catechism and the dogmatic formula of the Council of Trent. It specifies the very presence of Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Even more: The presence of Jesus in all tabernacles of the world is another insistence that He is in all tabernacles and only there: but where are the tabernacles? Only in Catholic Churches! What an incredible and amazing statement in 1916, when exactly 50 years later, the post-Vatican reforms provoked a universal diminishing of the Real Presence of Our Lord in the tabernacle among Catholics.

Let us now meditate on the contents of the vision itself:

What does "blood coming out of the Host" mean?

The Holy Host is the true Body of Our Lord united with His Soul, His Humanity, and His Divinity. If blood comes out of a body it means that the body is not in its normal healthy state, but it is ill, it is wounded, and the more blood it loses, the more its life is in danger.

And wounds mean sufferings! This happened to Our Lord when He suffered His passion and died on Calvary, suspended on the Cross.

If now the Host shows the same flood of blood coming out of His Body, that means that the Holy Eucharist, and specifically the Holy Mass IS the renewal, the presence of Calvary, of Our Lord crucified. And here we have the following amazing teaching of Fatima like a prophetic warning for the times to come.

As the Angel would say: "Attention, you children of God, the Eucharist, the Holy Mass is NOT the "paschal mysterium," the "gathering of the people of God" around the table to commemorate the Pasch of the Lord, a joyful banquet. It is not the definition of the Mass, which was to be issued in the first edition of the Novus Ordo Missae in 1969.

But it is the sacrifice of Our Lord on the Cross — its presentation and renewal on the altar. And you should kneel before the Host as I kneel with the children to adore the Holy wounds of Jesus, His incredible suffering and death, "for the remission of sins".

God foresees all things. He has foreseen the most terrible crisis to come into the world and Holy Mother Church. Therefore, He wants to assist us, to console us, to give light in the darkness. We must see the apparitions in Fatima in this dimension.

Finally, let us now ask what happened in the second half of the 20th century?

Who in the Church upheld the reality of the Real Presence of Our Lord?

Who kept the Traditional Catholic Faith in the Most Blessed Sacrament?

"The Society of Saint Pius X must therefore orientate the priest towards and have him concretize in his daily life his raison d'être: the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, what it all means, all that flows from it, all that complements it" (Statutes 2,2).

For almost 20 years, the Society of Saint Pius X was almost the only church institution to defend, proclaim, and promote the Traditional Faith in the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. When all over the world the Novus Ordo Missae devastated the faith of Catholics, destroyed the altars, and brought into minds a Protestant conception of the Eucharist, Archbishop Lefebvre and his spiritual sons were almost alone to uphold the message of the Angel of Fatima, and therefore they were severely punished. It was for these times that God sent the Angel, and afterwards Our Lady Herself, to comfort His faithful children, to give them courage in trials and persecutions, to show clearly what the Truth is, and to not let them be discouraged even by the highest churchmen, who are only servants of the Truth and not masters of the Truth.

2. “Leaving the chalice suspended in the air, the Angel knelt down beside us”.

We should never forget that the differences between the angels and human beings are almost unlimited. Saint Thomas proves that the inner value of one angel is more than the whole visible world. However, before the Most Blessed Sacrament, the Angel joins the children and accomplishes the same acts of adoration. How great GOD must be if the angels humble themselves before Him and consider themselves as dust and nothing, similar to all other creatures?

Another thing to note is the fact that the angel joins the children.

It is God's will that men and angels, the visible and invisible world, form one choir, one congregation united to praise and worship Him. The more the members of the Militant Church unite themselves with the members of the Triumphant Church (angels and saints), the more our worship is agreeable to God, and the more we are in the right

atmosphere to worship Him. In Heaven there is no sin, nor distraction, nor any other remnant of weaknesses which we unfortunately have here on Earth. Therefore, in joining the heavenly choirs (cf. preface of the Holy Mass), we are able to penetrate more deeply the atmosphere in which they live, and thus be freed from our own deficiencies.

Finally, this gesture of the Angel (with the children) shows the attitude which pleases God because the Angel, coming from Heaven, certainly cannot do anything which would not sovereignly please God. The prostration is a visible sign of making oneself lower, to exalt the object of our veneration — Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is God, and prostrating before Him we recognize that He is our first Principle and our last End, our King and Cause of all, what we are and what we have; and on the other hand, that we are completely dependent on Him and belong to Him in all things. This attitude of the true condition of a creature (I am nothing, God is everything!) is also the essence of humility, the only attitude which pleases God.

3. Reparation

Another truth of the Faith, less and less known, which the Angel of Fatima recalls with insistence, is the extreme gravity of sin and the necessity to make reparation through love.

The beginning of his prayer is already an act of reparation: “I ask pardon of You for those who do not believe...” It invites us to consider the immense injury done to God by all those who do not believe in Him, or believing, refuse to submit to Him through adoration, who do not hope and do not love Him. For all these faults, reparation must be done.

How?

By asking pardon in the name of sinners, in substituting oneself for them to obtain mercy for them!

During the second apparition, the Angel teaches the children the practice of sacrifice, offered in reparation to God, for the sins by which He is offended.

But what is the most perfect act of reparation?

The third apparition will teach us: the sins for which the Angel invites us to make reparation are the sacrileges, outrages, and indifference by which He Himself is offended.

And how do we have to make reparation? "Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men! Make reparation for their crimes..."

We offer to the Father, in the Holy Ghost, Our Lord Himself present in all tabernacles of the world. So we unite ourselves spiritually to Jesus Christ, offering Himself at the Mass in a sacrifice of satisfaction and propitiation "for the salvation of many." We offer His Body delivered up for us, His Blood poured out, His soul in awful agony, and finally His Divinity, which is full of "pardon and mercy" (cf. the Vision of Tuy of 13 June 1929). To these infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus we join those of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, His Mother, our Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix, to offer them together to the Heavenly Father and obtain from Him the conversion of sinners.

This act of reparation finds its ultimate reality in **HOLY COMMUNION**.

Already at this moment, the Angel teaches the children the famous, **COMMUNION OF REPARATION** which will become one of the essentials of the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

We should learn by heart the formula of the Angel, when he gives to the children the mystical communion.

This formula has a remarkable theological precision: Lucia shall receive the Host, and Jacinta and Francisco the Blood of the Chalice, but to all three the Angel says: "Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ," to show that whoever communicates under either

species receives Jesus Christ whole and entire, His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

It also brings to mind, in a striking manner, how Jesus is outraged in the sacrament of His love. And the most perfect expiation and reparation we can make for these “indifferences, negligence, and outrages” is to receive Holy Communion in the spirit of reparation, to “console our God.” This practice is so important that Our Lady will ask for it again (in Pontevedra on 10 December 1925).

As a summary of the apparition of the Angel, we can state: When reading the account of these apparitions, one can find in them not the slightest hint of vulgarity, nothing incongruous, childish, or banal. Nor is there anything emphatic or artificial, just profound truths, expressed simply and vigorously. With very simple words and gestures the most profound truths of our Holy Faith are expressed. The frequent meditations of these apparitions will bring us into the true divine atmosphere, and prepare us (as they prepared the children) to approach Our Lady or better to allow her to approach us. Moreover, if we accomplish what the Angels asks the children to do, we will learn the true attitude of a creature towards God, and the true appreciation of His presence amongst us, especially in the Blessed Sacrament.



Autumn 1916: The Cabego, the third appearance of the Angel. The Angel taught them the prayer of adoration and reparation to the Blessed Sacrament and gave them Holy Communion

CHAPTER FIVE

13 May 1917 — The First Apparition of Our Lady in Fatima

Before we enter into the presence of Our Lady and reflect on her admirable interventions to save us her beloved children, we must first of all be aware that we enter in a spiritual world which is inexpressibly holy, pure, and delicate.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe expressed this in his deepest words:

“When you get ready to read about the Immaculata, do not forget that you are then entering into contact with a pure living being who is without any stain whatsoever. Consider, too, that the words that you read are incapable of expressing who she is, for they are human words, drawn from human concepts, which present everything only in an earthly way, whereas the Immaculata is a being belonging entirely to God, and therefore, is to an infinite degree higher than everything around you ... Recognize honestly, too, that alone, without her help,

you are incapable of knowing anything about her, and consequently you cannot truly love her, and that she herself must enlighten you more and more, in order to draw your heart to herself in love."

If this is true about anything we read about her, how much more true is it when we start to face Our Lady herself and try to grasp her words and gestures.

A second preliminary reflection: we should not read the events of the apparitions just to recall a historical fact, as if Fatima would be just a meeting between the Mother of God and the three children. The visionaries are always only instruments chosen by her to be her channels and transmit her message. They are also the representatives of all men, to whom Our Lady speaks indirectly, whilst speaking directly to Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta. The words of Our Lady should go straight down into our heart, as if we would have been personally present in the Cova da Iria in 1917.

Here is the history of the first apparition written by Sr. Lucia:

"High up on the slope of the Cova da Iria, I was playing with Jacinta and Francisco.

Suddenly we saw what seemed to be a flash of lightning. 'We'd better go home,' I said to my cousins, 'that's lightning; we may have a thunderstorm'."

'Yes, indeed,' they answered.

We began to go down the slope, hurrying the sheep along towards the road. We were more or less halfway down the slope, and almost level with a large holm oak tree that stood there, when we saw another flash of lightning. We had only gone a few steps further, when; there before us on a small holm oak, we beheld a Lady all dressed in white. She was more brilliant than the sun, and radiated a light clearer and more intense than a crystal glass filled with sparkling water, when the rays of the burning sun shine through it.

We stopped, astounded, before the apparition. We were so close, just a few feet from her, that we were bathed in the light that surrounded her, or rather, which radiated from her. Then Our Lady spoke to us:

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

Where does Your Grace come from?

I am from heaven.

What does Your Grace want of me?

I have come to ask you to come here for six months in succession, on the thirteenth of the month, at this same hour. Later on, I will tell you who I am and what I want. Afterwards I will return here yet a seventh time.

Shall I go to heaven, too?

Yes, you will.

And Jacinta?

She will go also.

And Francisco?

He will go there too, but he will have to say many Rosaries.

Then I remembered to ask about two girls who had died recently. They were friends of mine, and used to come to my home to learn weaving with my eldest sister.

Is Maria das Neves in Heaven?

Yes, she is.

And Amelia?

She will be in Purgatory until the end of the world.

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?

Yes, we are willing.

Then you are going to have much to suffer, but the grace of God will be your comfort.

As she pronounced these last words “the grace of God will be your comfort,” **Our Lady opened her hands for the first time, communicating to us a light so intense that as it streamed from her hands, its rays penetrated our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see ourselves in God, Who was that light, more clearly than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors.** Then moved by an inner impulse that was also communicated to us, we fell on our knees, repeating in our hearts: “O most Holy Trinity, I adore you! My God, my God, I love You in the Most Blessed Sacrament.”

After a few moments, Our Lady spoke again:

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

Can you tell me if the war will go on for a long time, or will it end soon?

I cannot tell you that yet, because I have not yet said what I want.

Then she began to rise serenely, going up towards the east, until she disappeared in the immensity of space. The light that surrounded her seemed to open up a path before her in the firmament, and for this reason we sometimes said that we saw Heaven opening.

Let us now reflect on the words of Our Lady:

1. “Do not fear, I will do you no harm”

The first words of Our Lady, just because they are the first ones, are very important.

“Do not fear. I will do you no harm! “

Lucia explains: “The fear which we felt was not really fear of Our Lady, but rather fear of the thunderstorm which we thought was

coming. The apparitions of Our Lady inspired neither fear nor fright, but only surprise. “

100 years after her apparitions in Fatima we can find the deeper interpretation of these words: we live in a world of fear with so many powers of darkness to do us harm. Against that the first and principal declaration: “I, your mother, will do you no harm,” with me you have nothing to fear, no real harm can touch you if you hear me, follow me, accept me.

2. *“I am from Heaven”*

Certainly inspired by the Holy Ghost, Lucia found courage to speak and to ask the vision,

“Where does Your Grace come from?”

Then Our Lady gave her first reply, and she did not answer the question precisely:

“I come from Heaven,” would be certainly true.

No, she said literally:

“I am of Heaven” (In her first written account in 1922, Lucia herself writes: I myself am of Heaven!).

In these words, we already find her whole mystery.

When we ask with the angels and saints: Who are You, O Immaculata?

She will answer: I am of Heaven!

Of Heaven:

It is an echo of the Lord's Prayer: “Our Father, Who art in Heaven,” and of this Heaven she IS with all her being and personality.

Now all human beings are first of all “of the earth,” children of human parents. On the contrary, Mary is the only one in our human



"I am from Heaven"

lineage to be an exception from the common rule, being first and principally “of Heaven,” before being “of the earth.”

Why?

Because “God possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He had made anything from the beginning. I was present from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived ... I was with HIM forming all things” (Proverbs. 8:22–24, 30). The reason of “being” of Mary is submerged in the mystery of God: her life on earth will be only the visible expression of her “myself of Heaven.” Her essence, her foundations, her inmost intimacy is not creation but the Creator, is not time but eternity, is simply Heaven. She never will live for anything else but for God: in all her being, she will be only the daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son and the temple and Spouse of the Holy Ghost.

I AM:

She did not say, “I come from...” but, “I am...”

It is somehow the auto-definition of herself: My being, my identity, my self is “being of Heaven.”

Now Heaven is eternal life, is holiness, is light without darkness, eternal peace, and fullness of perfection: everything undefiled, immaculate!

Therefore, this self-presentation is a faithful echo of her answer to Bernadette's request:

“Who are you?”

“I AM the Immaculate Conception.”

There is yet another important detail to consider:

Properly spoken, only God can say, “I am!” because only He really IS. If creatures say, “I am,” they mean, “I have.” Nobody would reasonably say: I am Life, only I have life, nor I am truth, but I speak the truth. “I am” means full possession; “I am” means that I am the principle of what I have.

Therefore, only Our Lord, because He is God, can say: I am the Resurrection and the Life. Before Abraham was, I AM.

Is it then not exaggerated and even not convenient, when Mary said in Lourdes, "I am the Immaculate Conception," and in Fatima, "I am of Heaven?" It would be so, if she would speak of her own created being, which is strictly "nothing." If God allows her to present herself in that way, that means, that in her is really something essentially DIVINE.

What?

Thanks to her fullness of grace and her being free from all stains of sin, Mary received fully and totally the "gift of the Father and Son," the Holy Ghost sent by God into our hearts. So totally does the Holy Ghost dwell in her and penetrate her that nothing remains in her "of her own," but she is full of God. All her thoughts, words, and actions are more the thoughts, words, and actions of the Holy Ghost than her own. Therefore she can say: I AM.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe explains this admirable mystery:

"She is joined in an ineffable manner to the Holy Ghost because she is His Spouse; but this is true of her in an incomparably more perfect sense than anything this term can be, expressed among creatures. What kind of union is this? It is above all interior; it is the union of her very being with the being of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost dwells in her, lives in her, from the first instant of her existence, and He will do so always, throughout eternity. In what does this life of the Holy Ghost in her consist? He Himself is love in her, the love of the Father and the Son, the love by which God loves Himself, the love of the entire most Holy Trinity, a fruitful love, a conception. Among created resemblances the union of love is the closest. Holy Scripture affirms that 'the two of them become one body' [Genesis 2:24], and Jesus insists, 'Thus they are no longer two but one flesh' [Matthew 19:6]. In an incomparably more rigorous, more interior, more essential manner, the Holy Ghost lives in the soul of the Immaculate, in her very being, and makes

her fruitful from the first instant of her existence and throughout her life, that is, forever. “

3. The one unique necessity: everlasting things

What are the great themes which appear from the beginning of the visions of Fatima?

The Angel's apparition showed the absolute primacy of God, the honour of the Most Holy Trinity, the conversion to God, and the reparation for the offences against God. Our Lady will put the same themes into the hearts of children, when she later communicates God's light to them to submerge them in the depths of God's Majesty and infinite Love. Also, the first words spoken by Our Lady revolve exclusively around the after-death realities, first and foremost Heaven and Purgatory. During the third apparition she will conjoin, in a striking manner, the reality of Hell.

Again inspired by the Holy Ghost, Lucia asks THE question:

“And I, shall I go to Heaven?”

What a lesson for our materialistic and atheistic times, where almost everybody is turned completely towards the world and their short life therein. How often does the question arise in the minds of people nowadays, even believers, even zealous Catholics? This little question of Lucia is somehow the summary of the life of all saints, but also the goal of the work of redemption: that all in our life should revolve around the *UNUM NECESSARIUM*, the one thing necessary: “Shall I go to Heaven?” What did I do today to go to Heaven? O Mother Mary, you came to answer this question, and it will be “yes,” if I answer your request, as the children of Fatima answered you.

“And Jacinta? And Francisco? And Maria des Neves? And Amelia?”

These following questions show what is really important for us next. They contain the whole new commandment of Our Lord — the true

love of neighbour. And again, what a lesson for us, who are constantly occupied only with the material welfare of the world around us, and our 'love of our neighbour' is mostly limited to procuring material goods or earthly joys!

We should learn to look into the world with these questions: "What about my children, what about my friends, my neighbours, my relatives, my enemies, my fellow citizens, the other members of the Mystical Body etc.? What will be the outcome of their life? Will they go to Heaven?" And again the answer is in Mary's hand, and her answer will be again "yes" if the people use the necessary means to save their souls, especially that they "will have to pray many rosaries."

"Yes, they will!"

We should let ourselves be deeply impressed by this consoling promise of Our Heavenly Mother. This promise is for all those who will follow her and want to walk in the footsteps of the three small children. It is also remarkable that Our Lady reveals to Lucia that her friend Maria de Neves is already in Heaven, as normally such knowledge is almost never given with the exception of the canonized Saints. In this way, she confirms that her coming from Heaven to us has but one great purpose: to remind us about this unique necessity and to help us on the way to Heaven.

Purgatory:

"And Amelia?"

"She will be in Purgatory till the end of the world!"

Our Lady's catechism goes on with the important precision that "going to Heaven" is not such an easy thing. The way to holiness is an ardent labour and requires heroic generosity. If "going to Heaven" i.e. the salvation of the soul, holiness, and overwhelming happiness in the "Light that is God Himself" is certainly the main purpose of Our Lady's apparition, it is also important to know that only the "totally pure will see God," and as long as man is infected

by darkness (sin) he cannot unite himself with HIM, Who is pure light.

But as almost nobody finds himself totally pure at the moment of death, almost nobody could go to Heaven, if God's mercy had not created the "possibility of purification after death": Purgatory. But this place of purification is a spiritual fire, which purifies the souls through enormous sufferings. Our Lady uses the example of Lucia's friend, Amelia, to show how intense these sufferings might be: till the end of the world!" Which, translated into our language, means: full sufferings up to the end of all possibilities. If, according to the fathers of the Church, one minute in Purgatory is more than 100 years of worst sufferings here on earth, we can have an idea of what, "... till the end of the world" means.

Again, what a lesson for us, who are fully occupied with our earthly problems and sufferings, shut up into our little years on earth, and our little group of people surrounding us. Life on earth could be compared to a small hill, beyond which we can see an immense valley where every burning fire is filled with innumerable souls. And amongst them we can recognize our ancestors, relatives, and friends... And all of them have fixed their eyes towards Heaven AND towards this small hill, earth, from where they could get immense relief and often full deliverance of their pains, if only the people would not be occupied only with themselves, but have a small love of the neighbour to help them in their pains. Our Lady reminds us from the very beginning of her apparition about this gigantic world of Purgatory filled with billions of souls. She does this, first, to excite us to help them (because they all are her beloved children), and, secondly, to remind us that for many, many, years this could be our place after the short while on earth, if we do not care about "going to Heaven." The thought of Purgatory helps us to detach ourselves from our ridiculous little world and have a glimpse into the "other world," the essential and true one, and so to live in truth.

Finally, Our Lady gives us an important lesson about the Church: she appears here on earth to be with her children of the militant Church. But the reason for the existence of the militant Church is only to prepare for the triumphant One “in Heaven.” In between is the suffering Church, to give the poor sinners the chance to prepare themselves for eternal bliss after death. And all three are one Church, and what they unite is the grace of God and the instrument of God's graces, Our Lady.

4. The way to heaven: prayer and sufferings

Once the goal is fixed, Our Lady speaks about the means to be used.

“I do not promise to make you happy in this world, only in the next,” the Immaculata had said to Bernadette in Lourdes.

Similarly, in Fatima, after promising Heaven to the three children she immediately announces to them “suffering.” It is the royal road of the Cross which leads to the Light. In 1916, the Angel had already invited them to offer their sacrifices unceasingly to God: “And especially accept and bear with submission the sufferings which the Lord will send you.”

Today, Our Lady asks them to do much more: “Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for all the sins by which He is offended, and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?” Again Our Lady emphasizes the immense value of sacrifices, crosses, and sufferings for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

One could imagine, that after having shown the children the eternal things to come, Our Lady would have given them the advice to tell this to the others, to go to the priests to say Masses, to organize prayers, or other apostolic deeds.

No, the first means is not even prayer but sufferings voluntarily offered with the intention of reparation and conversion!

It is also of the highest importance that these sufferings be willingly accepted to bring forth their supernatural fruits. They must be an act of love towards God and towards one's neighbour, and in this way, they are the perfect fulfilment of the greatest commandments. And the more voluntarily they are accepted, the more they are acts of love and the more they bear fruits.

Therefore, Our Lady asks the children for their free agreement. And after obtaining it, she pronounces: "Then you will have much to suffer."

This shows us that the words of Our Lady are never "small talk", i.e. frivolous conversations. They engage one fully. If you say "yes," it will be "yes" with all the following consequences.

Besides sacrifices and sufferings, Our Lady will speak at each apparition about the other means to use: Prayer! And first and foremost, the daily Rosary. The Angel had already prepared the children for a life of prayer, insisting on small ejaculatory prayers, to which one could add the "Prayer of the Angel." We will see that each apparition in Fatima is also a way of educating us to have a regular and deep spiritual life. If we use these means, as the children of Fatima had used them, we will see the same effects in our heart as in their hearts.

Most important in such a life of prayer and sacrifice is the highest means given by God Himself:

"The grace of God will be your comfort".

On our way to Heaven we have certainly to make constant efforts. But it would be a great error to think that our holiness depends on them. Our efforts, important as they are, can only dispose us to the intervention of God Himself in our lives, when He gives us His light and His life, His grace, which transforms our souls to become holy. The proof of this truth follows immediately:

5. The vision in God

“As she pronounced these last words 'the grace of God will be your comfort,' **Our Lady opened her hands for the first time, communicating to us a light so intense, that as it streamed from her hands, its rays penetrated our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see ourselves in God, Who was that light, more clearly than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors.**”

A mysterious, astonishing vision, for it manifests in a striking fashion the universal Mediation of Mary to whom it is given, by an unfathomable grace, to introduce souls into the Light of God. Three times the children will contemplate this astonishing spectacle, which reminds us of the apparition of the “Virgin with the rays” (Miraculous Medal at the Rue de Bac in 1830).

And Lucia gives the important statement:

“We fell on our knees. It inspired us with **so great a knowledge of God** that it is not easy to speak about it.” According to the greatest specialists of Fatima, the very core of all the apparitions is in these three communications of “God's light” through the Immaculata.

Everything is of the utmost importance here.

First, the very gesture of Our Lady, who “**opened her hands for the first time, communicating to us a light so intense that as it streamed from her hands...**”. We should fall on our knees as the children did and look at her hands, those hands which held the Child Jesus, which worked hard during her whole life. But those hands are much more a symbol: we need our hands to communicate to others what we have. Opening my hands means I open my heart, I open myself, and I open the gates of my intimacy. As Mary is fullness of grace, “opening her hands, the ocean of graces overflows into the souls of all who stand by her. Lucia insists, saying, that the graces (the light) streamed from her hands, which means that the doors of paradise are not only opened by her, but **SHE IS THE GATE OF HEAVEN HERSELF.**”

What does she give? "A light so intense... GOD, Who was that light ...we could see ourselves in that light more clearly than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors." This "light" is reality, the only true reality; the rest is only shadow and nothingness. Here the children received one of the highest possible mystical graces, the "vision of God" Himself. What the children really saw and received at that moment, we can only define by the effects. The first reaction was the ejaculatory prayers: "O Most Holy Trinity, I adore you!" In this light, they saw only true God in three Persons, the ineffable mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. "My God, my God, I love You in the Most Blessed Sacrament!" In this light, they must have seen the presence of God in the world, a summary of the mystery of salvation, which culminates in the presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist.

Francisco would say later "I loved seeing the Angel. I loved still more seeing Our Lady. What I loved most of all was to see Our Lord in that light from Our Lady, which penetrated our hearts. I love God so much!"

The effects of the vision

All three were filled with a fullness of love and self-surrender. Not only at the moment of the vision, as they declared themselves, but in their physical lives till their death. One can say that the lives of the three were nothing but uninterrupted outbursts of love towards God, a living in His presence, a seeking of His will and good pleasure. These visions brought so many graces, that what God normally does during long years amongst His best friends (the saints), He accomplished here in a few minutes. Having experienced God's light, they did not want anything else other than HIM. And this grace is exactly what God wants to bestow on everybody who approaches the mystery of Fatima!

The sorrow of God

Francisco, in this vision of light, was especially impressed by one reality: "God is very sad because of so many sins! We must never

commit any sins again." In fact, he will spend his short life in particular contemplation of this mystery: "I am thinking of God, Who is so sad because of so many sins! If only I could console Him!" — Exactly the answer to the request of the Angel when giving them the mystical Holy Communion in 1916: "Console your God!"

Fr. Alonso explains that we have to distinguish between the exterior and the interior aspect of the message of Fatima. The exterior and visible one is more apologetic, that is, to prove before the world the authenticity of Fatima, to engage the faithful to accomplish the wishes of Our Lady. But the essential message, the "constitutive reality" of Fatima is only given by its interior aspect: it is a "particular experience of the divine world, of God and His will, the very communications of God by Our Lady to the world." We will come back to this essential aspect of Fatima after having meditated about all three "communications of the light of God" through Mary.

Summary of this first apparition

If you meditate often about this event on 13 May 1917, you will realize more and more how far Fatima is from the secular, and even the religious atmosphere of our times, which focuses on man and his life on earth, and considers this as the most important and only valuable aspect of life; and even if we believe in God, He is not an important factor, just somewhat an agency of security, a being far away from us who has nothing to do with our concrete lives. If Saint Pius X exclaims that we are in the time of the Antichrist because the people live and behave as if God didn't exist, then we understand better the importance of this first message of Fatima, where **GOD** is **ALL**. He is Light, and besides Him is only darkness. In this way, Fatima wakes us up from our illusions and makes us resist the lies of the rulers of the world. What matters is eternity: Heaven or Hell, and

the way to eternity: prayer, sacrifice, fighting against sin, salvation of souls, and above all, the incredible happiness of **GOD'S LIGHT: HIS LOVE!**



October 1917: Jacinta, and Lucia during their stay at Reixida

CHAPTER SIX

13 May 1917 — The Immaculata amongst us

“Thou art all beautiful, O Mary,” our liturgy chants.

This was also what Jacinta kept repeating after her contemplation of the Heavenly vision:

“O, what a beautiful Lady! O, what a beautiful Lady!” So beautiful that all images, all statues of the apparition disappoint her: “It is impossible to depict her as she really is, and we cannot even describe her with words of this earth.”

No doubt, the children of Fatima (as well as Saint Bernadette in Lourdes, Saint Catherine Labouré in Paris, and Melanie and Maximin in La Salette) had the privilege of seeing the glorious body of the Immaculate Virgin, Queen of Heaven and Earth: that body with which she was assumed into Heaven. They saw Mary, as she is now and forever, sitting at the side of her Divine Son!

It is worthwhile to contemplate her as she appeared to the visionaries, with all the details mentioned by Lucia. It will help us to approach and to love her much more than before!

1) As in Lourdes, Our Lady appeared very young; Lucia said around 15 years old. This astonishing youth evokes one aspect of her mystery. If we see children, our young people, we often think of their parents. The youth of Mary reminds us that she is the “eternal Daughter of the Heavenly Father.” This aspect makes us think about her origins, her creation, her birthday, but above all her conception, her Immaculate Conception. She comes somehow from the depths of the divine Light out of the “bosom of the Most Holy Trinity” and she always receives anew His power and light and beauty.

Youth means purity and beauty: the Immaculata! Mary is always fresh in her soul, heart, and body, because she is full of light and the life of God. We should often lift our eyes to this eternal beauty, the masterpiece of God's works, the living mirror and icon of His own eternal LIGHT.

2) Again, as in Lourdes, she appeared very small, scarcely five feet tall, Lucia said. This littleness has its meaning. It conveys something to us. In the breviary we sing about her: “When I was a little one, I pleased the Most High, and in my womb I brought forth God made man!” Before HIM she wants to be small, so small that she would disappear completely if possible. Her humility attracted God so much, that He chose her to become the Mother of God.

What a difference to us who only desire to become “great”, visible, known, estimated, appreciated and cannot tolerate to “disappear!” The way of holiness, however, is here: to become small and to wish to disappear, so that God maybe glorified.

3) **Another detail:**

She came very close to the three children. For a pedestal she had chosen a little holm oak, about a metre high. "We were so close, that we found ourselves in the light surrounding her, or rather emanating from her, about a metre and a half away, more or less." She always looks to the children, "her voice is soft and pleasant". Do we not desire to come close to our beloved if we really love them? And the more we love them, the closer we want to be to them! And when we are in their presence, we make sure not to speak anything or to behave in any way which would disturb the atmosphere of intimacy and love. This is exactly what happens in Fatima. But attention! It is Our Lady who comes close to us. She loves us so, so much.

It would be one of the greatest benefits for our life to understand and appreciate how much Our Lady wants to come close to us, to our hearts, to our lives, to each moment of our lives.

4) **"ERA DE LUZ":**

But the most important word to describe the figure of Our Lady is "light brighter than the sun." Lucia often declares: "We saw a Lady all dressed in white, more brilliant than the sun", a light so sparkling that it dazzled them: "She came in the midst of a great light. Again this time, she blinded me. From time to time I had to rub my eyes."

In short, it was her risen body in all the splendour of its glory in which she manifested herself at the Cova da Iria. And her body is similar to that of Jesus Himself during His transfiguration: "His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light" (Mt. 17:2). In the great vision of the glorious Christ at the beginning of the Apocalypse, Jesus appears "as Son of man, whose face was like the sun shining at full strength" (Rev. 1:16). When He throws Saul down to the ground on the road to Damascus, it was once again in the same light. "At midday I saw, on my way, a light from

Heaven, brighter than the sun, shining round me and those who journeyed with me" (Acts 26:13). The light was so intense that he lost his sight.

The sun is only the image of the divine light with which the risen bodies of Jesus and Mary shine. It was thus that the Virgin appeared at Fatima, like the Spouse in the Canticle of Canticles (Song of Songs): "fair as the moon, bright as the sun" (Song 6:10), and also like the Apocalyptic Woman: "a woman clothed with the sun" (Rev. 12:1). By her apparitions at the Cova da Iria, the Blessed Virgin confirms for us that as Mother of the "Sun of Justice," she has been clothed with the divine Light since her Assumption. While remaining a creature and fully human, she has penetrated, so to speak, into the sphere of the divinity.

5) The glorious body:

Although "all shining with light," the apparition nevertheless seemed to be a real human person of ineffable beauty: her body seemed like different "undulations of that ineffable light." When praying to her, we should sometimes first have a deep spiritual look towards her, and try to imagine how the children saw her: "the face, with infinitely pure and delicate lines, shines in an aureole of the sun. The eyes are black. The hands are joined on top of the breast. From the right hand there hangs a beautiful Rosary with white beads, brilliant as pearls, ending in a little cross of silver, which also sparkles. The feet gently come down onto a little ermine cloud, which floats over the green branches of the shrub. The dress, which is snow white, falls right down to the feet. A white veil (a veritable mantle), with edges adorned with fine, braided gold, covers the head, the shoulders, and falling almost as low as the dress, envelops the whole body."

The Church sings at the feast of the Immaculate Conception: "My soul shall be joyful in my God, for He has clothed me with the

garments of salvation, and with the robe of justice He has covered me, as a bride adorned with her jewels“ (Introit).

Is it not this way that she appeared in Fatima? Clothed with a robe of light, a symbol of the singular privilege from which she would benefit more than any other form, the grace of salvation; since, in view of the future merits of her Son, she was preserved from every stain of sin. Draped in a sparkling white mantle, resplendent in the golden flashes of light, she is the image of original justice rediscovered and restored in greater splendour: “He has covered me with the robe of justice.”

In the further descriptions, Sister Lucia also sees how Our Lady is “adorned with jewels.” She speaks particularly of one of them like a “ball of light,” but without further explanation. Visibly, Our Lady of Fatima wants to be recognized and identified exactly as the Spouse of the Canticles and the Apocalyptic Woman. The apparition is the visible expression of the Catholic doctrine about Mary in contradiction to any other religion: she is the Immaculate Conception (spouse of the Canticle of Canticles), the Virgin assumed into Heaven with body and soul (light), the Mediatrix of all graces, Queen of Heaven and Earth, who crushed the head of the dragon (Apocalyptic Woman).

Summary:

Fatima is not only a “message“. It is an overwhelming REALITY, the very presence of the Queen of Heaven here on earth. And she wants to approach us, and let us approach her. The more we have her in mind, consider her in this appearance full of light and majesty, but also full of humility and delicacy, the more she can protect and guide us, and preserve us from the dangers of error and sin. When looking to her with the eyes of the children of Fatima, we can only be

fascinated by such a vision, “blinded” by so much light! And living in this light we will easily discover the false lights, which tempt us by their worldly brilliance, and no longer be impressed by them anymore.



Lucia's family after the death of her father, Antonio, in 1919. Her mother, Maria Rosa, is seated and Lucia stands beside her. Behind from left are Lucia's brother and her sisters

CHAPTER SEVEN

Between 13 May and 13 June 1917

Not only the apparitions, but also the circumstances and the concrete life of the children during and after the apparitions have a great importance for us. The life of the children as a “re-action” to Our Lady’s “action” is also a message from Heaven. In fact, through all these secondary causes God, the First Cause, acts and reaches His goal. As a rule, we can say:

1) The children’s answers to the interventions of Heaven should become the pattern for our answers: the beatification of Francisco and Jacinta are a clear hint from Heaven, that in imitating them, we certainly are on the way of holiness.

2) The world around the children is exactly the same as the world around us. “And the world did not recognize HIM.” What the children got from the world is again a clear picture of what we are supposed to get from the world: hatred, persecution, and isolation.

It helps us to consider the “world” as it truly is, and what we have to expect from it, and how we have to behave in front of it.

3) The life of the children is a clear illustration of how God educates us within the banal circumstances of our daily life: their attitude towards God, towards the authorities, towards people, towards all kinds of trials, sickness, and even approaching death. It is the education in the laws of our fight in the militant Church, the education to assume and accomplish our role assigned by Divine Providence in our short life on earth.

First reaction of the children:

The apparition had filled the three children with an immense joy and a holy cheerfulness. They had never known anything like it, because the apparitions of the Angel in 1916 had a completely different effect on their souls. Sr. Lucia writes: “The apparition left us filled with peace and expansive joy. ... Francisco was overjoyed and expressed the happiness he felt when he heard of the promise that he would go to Heaven. Crossing his hands on his breast, he exclaimed, “Oh, my dear Our Lady! I'll say as many Rosaries as you want!... As for Jacinta, she could not contain her joy: That very afternoon, while we remained thoughtful and rapt in wonder, Jacinta kept breaking into enthusiastic exclamations: Oh, what a beautiful Lady.” Also, immediately after coming home, Jacinta told her parents with great enthusiasm what had happened.

Their life turned into continuous prayer: prayer becomes their consolation.

Sr. Lucia writes about Francisco: “From then on, Francisco made a habit of moving away from us, as though going for a walk. When we called him and asked him what he was doing, he raised his hand and showed me his rosary. If we told him to come and play, and

say the Rosary with us afterwards, he replied: "I'll pray then as well. Don't you remember that Our Lady said I must pray many rosaries?"

Generosity:

To Our Lady's request, "Will you accept to suffer," the children answered without hesitation: "Yes, we will!" It is the expression of the spiritual rule: the firmer an act of will, the deeper the love! This definite "yes" that Lucia pronounced at that instant, in the name of all three, was nothing less than an oblation to God as a victim of love; love for God in reparation for sin, to console His wounded Heart; love for souls also to obtain their salvation at any price.

Behold another lesson for us about the importance of an ardent desire at the beginning of our spiritual life. What counts is generosity, which allows the divine grace to penetrate us, as much as we have opened ourselves to it through the firm act of will: "Yes I want!" On the contrary, one of the deepest reasons for our spiritual failures is our weak will, our lack of decision. We turn around ourselves, we are literally "hanging around," because we don't say enough: yes! Or better, we don't answer clearly and firmly to her request, "Would you please?" — "Yes, I want, dearest Mother and Queen!"

Sufferings:

Lucia, the eldest of the three, had to undergo incredible hardships immediately after the apparition, and first of all, from her own family. Her mother was convinced that she told lies, and tried to prevail upon her by beating her, threatening her with sarcasm. The beautiful family life was gone forever and replaced by an awful feeling of being misunderstood. She became the "black sheep of

the family," a shame and a humiliation to everybody. And that happened in the delicate heart of a 10-year-old child!

"I was overwhelmed with bitterness. I could see that my mother was deeply distressed, and that she wanted at all costs to compel me to admit that I had lied. I wanted so much to do as she wished, but the only way I could do so was to tell a lie. From the cradle she had instilled into her children a great horror of lying, and she used to chastise any one of us who told an untruth."

"My sisters sided with my mother, and all around me the atmosphere was one of utter scorn and contempt. Then I would remember the old days, and ask myself: 'Where is all that affection now, that my family had for me just such a short while ago?' My one relief was to weep before the Lord, as I offered Him my sacrifice."

This lesson is particularly important for us. In fact, we often hear the lamentation of pious souls: "Since I converted to God and consecrated myself to Mother Mary, everything turns against me. Old friends abandon me, my own family rejects me, all kind of trials and tribulations fall on me, etc."

We find the answer in the very words of Our Lord: "If you want to imitate Me, then renounce yourself, carry your cross daily, and so follow Me. If they have despised Me, they will also despise you.... Because of Me, the world hates you!" It is quite normal that the devil gets angry when he loses his influence, when he is thrown out of a soul, when this soul becomes an icon of the Immaculata and so will become an enormous obstacle to his ambitions. Therefore, he tries to discourage the faithful, especially those who belong entirely to her.

But this is not the deepest answer as to why these tribulations fall upon us: the deepest answer is that Our Lord, together with Our Lady, embraced suffering and made the CROSS the symbol of His triumph. Suffering purifies us from being too attached to the nothings of this world. Moreover, suffering for the beloved is the greatest thing we can do in this world: "There is no greater love than

to give one's life for one's friends," says Our Lord. The law of the CROSS makes us also understand that we should not seek comfort and consolations amongst creatures. The praise of the world and the comfort of being cherished by men is a dangerous illusion.

The world around:

Our Lady certainly foresaw the reaction of Lucia's family and the religious authority, the parish priest. We also should not be too impressed that faith and fidelity towards Our Lord and Our Lady often provoke negative reactions even amongst the "good." All saints had to suffer first of all from their own closest ones, superiors, fellow brothers or sisters, family, etc. This was in the plan of Divine Providence; if we want to obtain eternal life we have to go through the fire of tribulations. Therefore, we should not be angry with those who have been chosen by God to be instruments of the purification of our pride, and school-masters of humility, and all other virtues. It would be quite easy to accept this "law of sufferings" if they would come only from the enemy, from people without an intimate relationship towards us. But if the humiliation and all kinds of negative signals come from the closest beloved, then the cross is really felt like a cross. If we carry that cross out of love, we do the best possible service to our beloved, who now may not understand us. During the 5 years after founding the M.I., Saint Maximilian was despised by his fellow Franciscan brothers, and was constantly ridiculed. His patience, humility, and spirit of sacrifice, however, won them over, one after the other, to the cause of the Immaculata.

But besides this trial of Lucia's, Providence also allowed some persons to believe the children: such were the parents of Francisco and Jacinta, and some other good Catholics of the surrounding villages. Therefore, on the 13 June, already around 50 people accompanied the children to witness the second apparition.

CHAPTER EIGHT

13 June 1917 – The Second Apparition of Our Lady: The Immaculate Heart

Here are the words of Lucia recalling the second apparition: as soon as Jacinta, Francisco, and I had finished praying the Rosary, with a number of other people who were present, we saw once more the flash reflecting the light which was approaching. The next moment, Our Lady was there on the holm oak, exactly the same as in May.

What does Your Grace want of me? I asked.

I wish you to come here on the thirteenth of next month, to pray the Rosary each day, and to learn how to read. Later, I will tell you what I want.

I asked for the cure of a sick person.

If he is converted, he will be healed during the year.

I would like to ask you to take us to Heaven.

Yes, I will take Jacinta and Francisco 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 the Devotion to my Immaculate Heart. To whoever embraces this devotion, I promise salvation; these souls shall be dear to God, as flowers placed by me to adorn His throne.

Am I to stay here alone? I asked, sadly.

No, my daughter. Do you suffer much? Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.

As Our Lady spoke these last words, she opened her hands, and, for the second time, she communicated to us the rays of that immense light. We saw ourselves in this light, as it were, immersed in God. Jacinta and Francisco seemed to be in that part of the light that rose towards Heaven, and I, in that which was poured out on the earth.

In front of the palm of Our Lady's right hand was a HEART encircled by thorns that pierced it. We understood that this was the IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, outraged by the sins of humanity and seeking reparation.

COMMENTARY

The revelation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

This 13 June 1917 has to be appreciated as the great day in the history of the world, when Almighty God allowed Our Lady to reveal to the world her greatest secret, her deepest intimacy, the infinite treasure received from the Most Holy Trinity, the inmost value of her personality and the source of her whole being: **HER**

IMMACULATE HEART! All future apparitions, as well as the life of the children of Fatima and the events around Fatima, are only an enhancement, a continuation, and an application of this mystery revealed on this day. We can make the following summary: Fatima is the revelation of the Immaculate Heart to the world, as well as the full heavenly explanation of the meaning, purpose, and necessity of the Immaculate Heart for all; it is, finally, the exhortation of Mary herself, what she wishes our answer to this revelation to be. Or yet shorter: Fatima shows who Mary really is for us, and how we have to react to such a will of God! And the keyword is the Immaculate Heart of Mary!

On this day, Our Lady, for the first time, announces the great design of God for the whole world, and she does this with two lapidary sentences each Apostle of Fatima should know by heart:

First: 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. To whoever embraces this devotion I promise salvation; these souls shall be dear to God, as flowers placed by me to adorn His throne.

Second: My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.

On this day, too, Our Lady shows for the first time in the history of the world her Immaculate Heart:

“In front of the palm of Our Lady's right hand was a HEART encircled by thorns that pierced it. We understood that this was the IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, outraged by the sins of humanity and seeking reparation.”

We can therefore distinguish two major parts: Our Lady speaks about her Immaculate Heart; afterwards, she shows it to the children, and through them, to the world. First, she explains the effects and power of her Immaculate Heart, if only the people would approach

it and follow its wishes; afterwards, she allows us to see her Heart itself, in other words, she opens her Heart to us that we may enter into this ineffable sanctuary of the Holy Ghost.

Both parts of this revelation changed the life of the children completely, and this is exactly what Our Lady wants to accomplish in each of us: through the contact of our heart with her Immaculate Heart we will be purified, we will receive its treasures, we will be submerged in the only great reality for which it is worthwhile to live: the overwhelming LOVE of God present in this heart and pouring out of this Heart.

Therefore, it is necessary for US to meditate word by word this manifestation of God's deepest mysteries:

1. The childrens' vocation: Our vocation

After a short introduction (Our Lady repeats her wishes and Lucia asks for the cure of a sick person), Lucia asks her: "I would like to ask you to take us to Heaven." The reason for this supplication was, on the one hand, the incredible beauty and happiness emanating from the Immaculata, and on the other hand, the trials she had to endure at the hands of her most beloved over the last month.

The short answer of Our Lady again opens our meditation to infinite horizons: *Yes, I will take Jacinta and Francisco soon. But you are to stay here some time longer.* Already the month before, she promised Heaven to her faithful children. In this apparition, she makes an important precision: she will certainly open the gates of Heaven to all poor children of Eve "who have recourse to her," but the "when," "where," and "how" depends on the essential task God assigned us for our short life on earth. Some she will take sooner, some later, depending on the specific vocation of each one. Our Lady uses the example of the three children to give us a clear illustration

and understanding of our vocation on earth; in the following vision, when she communicated to them again the Heavenly Light, **“we saw ourselves in this light, as it were, immersed in God. Jacinta and Francisco seemed to be in that part of the light which rose towards Heaven, and I, in that which was poured out on the earth.”**

The light has a double direction: towards Heaven, and towards the earth. Our vocation has a double direction, towards Heaven, and towards the world. Our ultimate direction is Heaven, and it will be “soon“. Therefore, our highest vocation, first on earth, will be “to love God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our strength.“ This will be the highest law and principle of our journey in this valley of tears. Later we will see that Francisco received a special grace to understand this love in the desire to “console God Who is so sad because of our sins.“

The second direction goes towards the earth, towards men, and explains our immediate vocation: *Jesus wishes to make use of you to make me known and loved.* It is the love of neighbour, that he may know and love his Heavenly Mother, and through her, find the way back to the only Way, Truth, and Life: Our Lord Himself.

In comparison to this essential vocation, all the other circumstances of our life are secondary. A short life or a long life, vocation to the priesthood, or religious life, or marriage, active or contemplative, poor or rich, public or hidden, at home or abroad... all these circumstances, certainly Our Lord, through Mary, will make known to us, if only we never forget the deepest and highest sense of our life, our essential vocation.

However, it is also good to think about Lucia's reaction: “Am I to stay here alone? I asked, sadly.“ Here we have the true perspective to consider our life on earth: as an exile, a valley of tears, a long and difficult pilgrimage, and a burden and cross. Here again, we realize how appropriate Fatima is for our times. So much attached to this

world and so indifferent towards eternity, we are in terrible need of being reminded about the true appreciation of our life on earth.

2. World devotion

Our Lady continues: *He wants to establish in the world the Devotion to my Immaculate Heart.*

She herself emphasizes the importance of Fatima. Until now she never appeared to require a special devotion for the whole world. Visibly, she wants her Immaculate Heart to be known and loved everywhere and by all people. Now we know that an overwhelming majority of the people in this world neither know nor love Our Lady. Therefore, we have to understand the requests of Our Lady as a missionary call to set the whole world afire with the presence of the burning fire of her Heart. In other words, the message of Fatima should not be understood only as a private devotion for our own spiritual comfort, but as a truly universal manifestation concerning the whole world. It is an echo of Our Lord's order: "Go into the whole world, teach all nations..." As Jesus Christ wanted His Church to be Catholic, universal, aiming at the conversion and sanctification of all people, Our Lady wants to manifest her Immaculate Heart to all nations, so that they may find in her the "way which leads them to God."

3. Incredible promises for our future and eternity

The universality and importance of the revelation of the Immaculate Heart is fostered by the most astonishing promises to motivate us lazy people to embrace that devotion. These promises concern first our future and eternity, and afterwards our daily life here on earth.

To whoever embraces this devotion I promise salvation; these souls shall be dear to God, as flowers placed by me to adorn His throne.

Only He Who can grant US salvation, God Himself, can give the promise of eternal salvation. However, here Our Lady clearly emphasizes: "I promise!" As she said before in Lourdes, "I am the Immaculate Conception," and in Fatima on 13 May, "I am of Heaven," so again, today, she declares, "I promise salvation." In fact, the mystery of the Immaculate Heart is the mystery of God Himself, Who chooses her amongst all creatures as His dwelling and presence: she is so full of God and His grace that whatever she says and does, God says and accomplishes through her. In other words, when she says, "I promise salvation," she is only the echo, or loudspeaker, of God, Who promises the greatest of all graces.

The object of the promise is, further on, explained in three terms; each of which is to be considered as a precision of the others. First, "salvation" is the reason of the coming of the Saviour. Salvation is the essence of each man's life: either salvation or Hell, either eternal happiness or eternal damnation. Because the whole world is addicted to sin, and consequently, everybody is in the greatest danger of losing his soul forever; this promise is so infinitely precious. The Heavenly Mother knows that in the latter times it would be very difficult for her children to be saved, so she comes herself and "promises salvation." To understand this word, one must understand the mystery of God: it is the overwhelming reality of the definite and everlasting victory against Satan, evil, and Hell. It is the eternal triumph of God's love, light, joy, mercy, fullness of grace, and abundance of goodness in us.

The second term used by Our Lady is astonishing: these souls are "dear to God." Generally, when meditating about our salvation, we have in mind its effect on ourselves, the final purification of all our sins, and the eternal reward in Heaven. But there is yet a higher consideration: God's final triumph in our soul touches HIS HEART to pour out Himself towards our littleness, and we become "dear to God."

What, in fact, is so “dear to God,” that it moves Him to overflow His gifts into our souls? It is our devotion and filial love towards the Immaculate Heart. Our Lord appreciates it so much when His Mother is honoured and obeyed. In this word, we have another allusion about the relationship between the Most Holy Trinity and the Immaculata. If already the devotion to her is so dear to Him as to move His heart to fill even the weakest sinners with superabundant graces, how dear to Him must be she herself?

The most astonishing promise however is the third and last one. Our Lady uses flowers as an illustration: flowers bring light, beauty, and joy into the house. The role of flowers is to “adorn,” to show the importance and exceptional value of that which they surround. When we meditate about this promise, we immediately think about the flowers at the altar, so close to the tabernacle and the place of the greatest sacrifice. They are privileged to almost touch the Body and Blood of Our Lord and express the highest virtues and love of the creatures towards their Creator and Saviour.

When Holy Scripture and the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church write about the happiness in Heaven, the eternal bliss and joy of the Saints, they have to use analogies and pictures (banquet, wedding, union of husband and wife...) to express what can never be expressed in our poor human language. What, then, can be the meaning of the picture used by Our Lady, that the souls devoted to her Immaculate Heart will be like “flowers adorning His throne?”

Our Faith teaches us that there will be degrees in Heaven, and the closer a Saint is to God's dwelling, the more he participates in God's infinite holiness and the more he benefits from God's infinite love. Therefore, Our Lady is always presented in Heaven next to the Holy Trinity, afterwards the greatest Saints (John the Baptist, Saint Joseph, Saint Michael the Archangel). This means that the Devotion to the Immaculate Heart will not only grant us salvation, make us agreeable to God, but promises an eminent holiness, and transforms our hearts

so that they become like “flowers before God,” always blossoming in His life-giving presence. This devotion will bring us to a deeper intimacy with Him, to a fuller access to the “majestic throne.”

Later, Our Lady will add other promises and specify these ones, especially “a holy death and her very presence at the moment of the personal judgment.” How dear must that devotion be to God, if He gives promises such as He has hardly ever given throughout history?!

4. Promises for now

The above-mentioned promises are certainly the most important concerning “the hour of our death” and eternity: “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul...?” But the second important moment of our life is “now,” because only the present moment is in my hands. “Now” I can please God or commit sin. Now we are in the middle of a war; now attacked by the devil; now on the pilgrimage to the eternal mountain-tops. Our Lady knows this, she knows that our life is a long suffering. And again she gives us a most amazing promise: *Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.*

“I will never abandon you”. We must understand the great value of this word. There is a poor sinner, who is too weak to get up from the spiritual mud — “I will never abandon you; as long as you live I stand by your side and offer you my Immaculate Hands and beg you to give me thine.” There is another poor sinner who fights, but almost every time loses the fight, and falls into the pit of sin — “I will never abandon you; never give up! Whenever you fall, immediately give me your hand and stand up again.

Don't stop trying over and over again!” There is a devout soul, who seems to make no progress in spiritual life, who passes through

trials, tribulations, dark nights, temptations, and discouragements – “I will never abandon you; all your sufferings I keep in my Heart; and at each moment, from my Heart, comes a special grace.”

There are two essential movements in our spiritual life: the negative one concerning our attitude towards evil, temptation, sin, attacks from the devil etc.; and the positive one, concerning our spiritual progress and coming closer to God; the first is marked by combat, hardships, and dangers; the second is marked by practising virtues, of pleasing God, of helping one’s neighbour. In both of them we encounter many difficulties: in the first one we must face dangerous enemies, fight all the time almost alone against millions. Humanly speaking we are lost: everything outside wants to bring us to capitulation; inside we are lazy, weak, fearful and corrupt. And at the moment when the enemy launches an attack to crush us definitively, the great promise: “My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge”. The little houses in the high mountains are called “refugio” because in storms they are the only places where security may be found.

In a war, the soldiers choose a hidden place called a “refuge” where they are secure and cannot be discovered by the enemy. The Immaculate Heart will be this for us in the midst of our spiritual war. “When you are tired of fighting, when you are mortally wounded, when you are discouraged and getting weaker and weaker, when darkness makes you afraid, when everywhere you are pushed to fall into sin, come to my Heart and find shelter, new strength. Here is the only place where nobody can harm you! “

And for the second movement of our life towards God, there is a big danger of losing the right path, to hesitate as to which direction to take, to make errors in important decisions, to make many efforts for nothing because we are not walking on the right path, or building our house on sand. “My Immaculate Heart will be your way which leads you to God! With me there is no error of direction! With me

there is never exhaustion, and all efforts are rewarded. In my Heart there is always light, and you will never lose the way. And the more you are in my Heart, the easier and quicker you find GOD! Not only at the end of the long way, but already here and now, because my name is: '*Dominus tecum*' : 'The Lord with you!' And my Heart is the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost."

5. The vision: the promise realized

Up to that moment, Our Lady spoke about the mystery of her Immaculate Heart. Now she goes a step further: **"As Our Lady spoke these last words, she opened her hands, and for the second time, she communicated to us the rays of that immense light. We saw ourselves in this light, as it were, immersed in God ... In front of the palm of Our Lady's right hand was a HEART"**. The Divine light is given to us through the Immaculate Heart. This mysterious infinite light, which somehow bathed the children, is a profound expression of the very essence of God, Who is light. The ultimate goal of the vision is God's light, the fountain and channel of this light is her Heart.

We all know the symbol of the "heart," which is the very depth of our being, the seat of all that is precious in us, but above all, the source of our love. We open our hearts only to our intimate friends, and only to the most beloved do we say: "You are in my heart! My heart beats for you! I give you my heart, etc." In this vision, Our Lady shows us her Heart, and allows us to have a look into the deepest mystery of her very being. Moreover, she introduces us into her Heart, which becomes our dwelling and refuge and way. Consequently, she treats us as the most beloved ones, worthy to receive such an immense love. If we think a bit about what we are: wretched sinners, bad children, and unworthy nothings, then we cannot finish without being amazed at such condescension.

The greatness, sublimity, and importance of HER HEART, revealed to us poor children of Eve, is explained by Our Lord Himself, when He said to Sr. Lucia: *With immense longing I desire the propagation of the cult and the Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, because this Heart is the magnet which attracts souls to Me; it is the burning focus, which emanates into the world the rays of My light and My love; it is, finally, the fountain from which come out into the world the living waters of My mercy.*

These words may be the deepest and greatest that have ever been said about Our Lady, and we should meditate on them very often.

It is the immense desire of Our Lord Himself that the whole world understand who she really is. These words express the incredible love of God towards us, when He wants to go to the extreme limits to save us poor sinners. But, if Our Lord has such a desire, how can we be so lazy, indifferent, and unconcerned, seeing so many people who have no idea about the mystery of the Heart of the Immaculata?!

Our Lord gives also an important precision: He wishes both “cult” and “devotion”. The devotion is our personal relationship to Mary, somehow our heart in her Heart. It is the attitude of a loving child always ready to give all honour and praise, attention, and time to such a loving mother. The cult is the public manifestation and recognition of God's masterpiece, expressed in public ceremonies of veneration and consecration.

Then Our Lord uses three images to depict exactly the role of the Immaculate Heart: a magnet of attraction to Him, a source of fire from which the whole world receives **HIS LIGHT** and **LOVE**, and a fountain never running dry of His infinite mercy. This means when contemplating with devotion her Heart, we always will be more attracted to Him; we will be penetrated by His own light to know Him more and more, and by His Love, to love Him in return, and in Him all other beings; and we will ever drink at the fountain of His mercy to make of us dirty nothings, children of God.

6. The sorrowful, Immaculate Heart

However, the shape in which the Immaculate Heart appeared is also important: not as in the pictures made of her purest Heart since the 18th century, presenting her Heart encircled with a crown of roses, and with the sword symbolizing her Seven Sorrows. Here she appears **“encircled by thorns which pierced it.”** Exactly as Our Lord showed His Sacred Heart. This means that the same crown of thorns piercing the Holy Head of Our Lord during His Passion and piercing His Sacred Heart “because of the indifference, negligence, and abandonment of so many souls,” also pierces the Heart of Our Lady, and wounds it immensely. Lucia writes: **“We understood that this was the IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, outraged by the sins of humanity and seeking reparation.”**

With these words, we understand the most important reason why Mary wanted to show us her Heart: she wanted to excite us to be touched, moved by such a love, and also such suffering for us unfaithful sinners. She “seeks reparation,” because she wants to change our heart of stone into a heart of loving compassion. If a child loves his mother and sees how she suffers, the child wants to console her, wants to repair the grief done to her, first by himself, then by others.

Summary:

Now that the core of the message of Fatima has been announced, the following manifestations will only be precisions and applications of the great mystery and importance of her Immaculate Heart. On 13 July, she reveals the great secret to show her role in the militant Church, especially in the final battles between the Apocalyptic Woman and the dragon with his two beasts. From 13 August to 13 September, she appeals to the children to hear and to observe the requests of her Heart. On 13 October, she works the great miracle as PROOF from

Heaven about the unique and outstanding importance of her Heart. In the year 1925, she explains to Sr. Lucia, in Pontevedra, what the devotion to her Immaculate Heart. Finally, in 1929, in Tuy, she asks for the Consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart.



"My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge"

CHAPTER NINE

13 July 1917 – The Third Apparition: The Great Secret of Fatima

Between 13 June and 13 July Lucia had to suffer one trial after another. Curious people who questioned the children about the apparition constantly assailed them. Her mother continued to try to convince her that she had lied. The parish priest tried to convince her that she was under the influence of the devil. Under such pressures she was very much tempted not to go to the Cova da Iria on 13 July. But when the time came, she was pushed by a mysterious force to join her cousins. On this day many people (about 3,000) came to the Cova da Iria to witness the apparition. When Our Lady appeared, Lucia was so ashamed about her doubts that she did not dare speak. Only when Jacinta prompted her to speak to our Lady did she open her mouth:

"What does Your grace want of me?"

"I want you to come here on the thirteenth of next month, and to continue to pray the Rosary every day in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary, in order to obtain peace for the whole world and the end of the war, because only she can help you."

"I would like to ask you to tell us who you are, and to work a miracle so that everybody will believe that you are appearing to us."

"Continue to come here every month. In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe."

And she continued:

"Sacrifice yourself for sinners and say many times, especially when you make some sacrifice: O Jesus, it is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

****[As our Lady spoke these last words, she opened her hands once more, as she had done during the two previous months. The rays of light seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw as if there were an ocean of fire. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the air with the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals.]**

Terrified and as if to plead for succor, we looked up at Our Lady, who said to us so kindly and so sadly:

You have seen Hell, where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end, but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the reign of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given to you by God that He is about to punish the "world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father".

To prevent this I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, and various nations will be annihilated.

In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me and she 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 preserved, etc. (sic). Do not tell this to anybody. Francisco, yes, you may tell him.]***

When you say the Rosary, say after each mystery: O my Jesus, forgive us, save us from the fires of Hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need.

After this there was a moment of silence and then I asked: "Is there anything more that you want of me?"

"No, I do not want anything more of you today."

Then, as before, Our Lady began to ascend towards the east, until she finally disappeared in the immense distance of the firmament.

** (The text between the two pairs of asterisks contains the great secret).



COMMENTARY

In the whole cycle of the apparitions, that of 13 July is unquestionably the most important. It is the central apparition which the two previous ones prepared for, and which the three subsequent ones were to confirm in a striking manner by their great miracles. "Indeed it was on that day," Lucia writes, "that Our Lady deigned to reveal to us the secret." Therefore, we have to distinguish two parts in this apparition: the words of Our Lady revealed then and the great secret, which itself contains three parts.

1. Announcement of the great miracle in October

After the terrible trials Lucia had to undergo since 13 June, we can understand this request. Who would believe little illiterate children?

Similarly, in Lourdes, Saint Bernadette, who had to suffer the same criticisms, asked Our Lady for a miracle. The answer from Heaven in Lourdes was the miraculous fountain of water from the hard rock.

The answer in Fatima would be the great miracle of the Sun.

However, there is a difference: when Bernadette asked for a miracle, Our Lady just smiled; when Lucia asked, she confirmed: "*Yes, I will work a miracle so that all may believe*". This prophecy, spoken three months in advance, would attract innumerable crowds to the Cova da Iria. In August and September, there would be more than 20,000 people; on 13 October, almost 100,000 people. In those times there were never gatherings of such immense crowds in the world simply because of lack of means of communication and lodging.

What is astonishing is the clear promise of Our Lady, without any condition, repeated twice in the apparitions in August and September. Never before had Heaven shown such condescension to the demands of men, to guarantee them with certitude the truth of the message.

It is also significant that Our Lady made this announcement immediately before revealing the great secret. This was to make them understand clearly that the great miracle in October would be the guarantee of the divine origin of the secret.

2. The great secret

Our Lady asked the children not to say anything about what they saw from the moment, when for the third time, she opened her hands and communicated to the children the divine light, until she gave them permission to tell Francisco, who, during all the time of the apparition saw everything but could not hear anything. This secret has visibly three parts, and Our Lady wanted them to be published in three different moments in the 20th century: the first part is the vision of Hell Lucia spoke about in the beginning of the 1930's. The second part she began to reveal first to her confessor in 1936, and to the world through her memoirs in 1941. She wanted the third part to be revealed in 1960.

This secret is unique in the whole history of the Church. It is packed with extraordinary meaning and touches all aspects of our life. Each of its parts, consists firstly of a solemn warning followed by historical prophecies of world-wide significance, and secondly, of a presentation of the remedy and the salvation. Our Lady shows explicitly the terrible threefold attacks of the enemy of mankind in our times, and presents her Immaculate Heart as the remedy given by Divine Providence for the latter times in the world. Below follows only a brief summary of the secret as the whole history of Fatima, after the apparitions (the history of the world and the Church in the last 100 years), is both the realization of the secret, and the disclosure of its profound meaning.

The first part of the secret concerns the personal life of each man, and particularly the end of our life on earth: if man remains

in sin and refuses or neglects to convert. The terrible vision of Hell would have killed the children if a special grace of God had not kept them alive. Heaven or Hell, an eternity of happiness or an eternity of suffering; that is, in fact, the ONLY really important thing in each of our lives! It is the very reason for the Divine Revelation, the coming of Our Lord, the institution of Holy Mother Church with its means of salvation, and also all Divine intervention, especially the apparitions of Our Heavenly Mother who loves her children so much, and does everything to preserve them from eternal unhappiness. Sr. Lucia will emphasize this essential sense of Fatima: "My mission is not to announce to the world the material chastisements which will surely come if the world does not pray and do penance. No. **My mission is to indicate to everyone the imminent danger we are in of losing our souls forever if we remain obstinate in sin**" (26 December 1957).

Already in this first part, it is obvious that the great secret is Heaven's answer to the events, atmosphere, and mentality of our times. Never before have things everlasting, and particularly the reality of eternal damnation, been so much neglected and denied even by the highest authorities of the Church. It is significant that the Second Vatican Council does not speak about Hell, and that all the post-conciliar reforms have a strong tendency to change the religious attitude of Christians from a vertical to a horizontal one: "horizontal", the traditional one expressed by Holy Scripture, the Fathers, Saints and Doctors, was to emphasize that life is very short, an exile, a pilgrimage, where only "one thing is necessary": to avoid Hell and to go to Heaven: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? " (Mt. 16:26)

Therefore, it is necessary to meditate on and to read this vision of Hell over and over again.

However, this part terminates with a message of consolation and overwhelming hope: in the latter times God's Divine Mercy allows His Mother to come and to open all the treasures hidden in her Immaculate

Heart as a sovereign remedy and a sure way of salvation. Concretely she announces that she will come back once more to establish in the world the “Devotion to my Immaculate Heart” which happened in Pontevedra on 10 December 1925.

The second part of the secret concerns the public and even political life of mankind here and now. It is the solemn warning, that the apocalyptic beast incarnate in Communism and Freemasonry will throw the whole world into an unprecedented disaster. It is the prophetic announcement of a further World War with its horrible consequences for both secular and religious life. But again, Our Lady presents as a remedy for the whole world her Immaculate Heart. Concretely she announces that she will also come another time to ask for the “Consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart” which happened in Tuy on 13 May 1929.

The third part of the secret begins with a declaration about the conservation of the true Catholic Faith in Portugal. When Sr. Lucia first wrote her memoirs in 1941, she was not then allowed to write down the third part of the secret. It happened only after her dangerous illness in 1944. The revelation of this third part of the secret, together with the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart, are certainly the most burning and exciting mysteries of Fatima, which until this day have not been realized, and therefore, demonstrates that Fatima is not a historical event that happened once in the past, but a mystery, which here and now has an essential importance for the Church and the world.

We will see that the third part of the secret concerns religious life and especially the worst crisis the Church has ever seen. As in the first two parts, it contains a solemn warning, a prophecy for our times, as well as the remedy.

The words concluding the whole secret of Fatima are the most consoling words Our Lady has ever spoken: “In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph”.

3. The famous prayer: O MY JESUS

Right after the end of the secret, Our Lady taught the children the marvellous prayer to be inserted into the Rosary at the end of each mystery: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins..."

Inserted between the "*Gloria Patri*" and the "*Pater Noster*", this little prayer enlarges the divine horizon of the Holy Rosary.

Forgive us our sins: the thought of our sins, which threatens to cause our ruin, is present everywhere in the message of Fatima. There is not one of the nine apparitions of the Angel and Our Lady that does not make some allusion to it. It echoes the invocation in the *Pater Noster*: "forgive us our trespasses", as well as in the *Ave Maria*: "pray for us sinners".

Deliver us from the fires of Hell: this supplication, the most urgent, refers, of course, to the vision of Hell, where the children saw an "ocean of fire". Hell is not an imaginary and far off danger from which we ourselves could escape. Hell is the just punishment for our rebellions against God and the hardening of our heart, where we would go without the pardon of Jesus. Without Him, without His Passion and His redeeming blood, we would be lost. This invocation is also an echo of the Holy Liturgy where the Church, just before the consecration, implores God: "Deliver us from eternal damnation, and number us in the flock of Thine elect". We pray in the Litany of the Saints: "From eternal death, deliver us, O Lord; That You would deliver our souls and the souls of our brethren, relatives, and benefactors, from eternal damnation, we beseech Thee, hear us!"

Lead all souls to Heaven: the ardent desire we have both for ourselves and for our dear ones to be saved is necessarily extended to all souls. Christ offered His life for all men, without exception, and God the Father "wishes all men to be saved". The Portuguese

original is "*Levai para o Ceu*" which actually means: take them, carry them, lift them, or better: draw them. It reminds us of the words of Jesus: "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself".

Especially those in most need of Thy mercy: these words are surprising: how can we ask Jesus to lead all souls to Heaven, and thus all without exception, and yet immediately add a formula which on the contrary is partial and restrictive? The words "all ...especially" seem to defy simple logic.

The answer: it is the logic of love, which would like to obtain from the Divine Mercy the salvation of all souls. But it knows that its request cannot be heard to its full extent. In this case, the loving soul immediately clarifies its request, and says to God: "I ask you to have mercy at least on some souls, and most especially on the souls of the greatest sinners, who most surely risk being lost". This is how the three children understood this prayer, which was constantly on the lips of Jacinta: 'Jacinta often sat thoughtfully on the ground and exclaimed: *'Oh Hell! Hell! How sorry I am for the souls who go to Hell! And the people down there, burning alive, like wood in the fire!'* Then, shuddering, she knelt down with her hands joined, and recited the prayer Our Lady had taught us: *'O my Jesus, forgive us our sins...'* "

We also should ask, in reality, what is "in most need"? It is certainly most agonizing for those who approach the "hour of death" and are not prepared. Was not Saint Therese of the Child Jesus "devoured by a thirst for souls, burned with the desire to snatch from the eternal flames the souls of the greatest sinners"? Hence her decision "to prevent (the horrible criminal Pranzini) at any price from going to Hell".

As a conclusion, this prayer is a brief summary of the most important and forgotten truths of our Holy Faith. It positions us as to the right view of the world, life, and men:

- 1) Jesus Christ Our Lord is the only Saviour, He is the centre of the world;
- 2) "My Jesus" is the infinite love of Jesus for my soul, that He wants to be fully mine. "My Jesus" is also the expression of my love for Jesus and thus the fulfilment of the greatest commandment "Love of God above all things";
- 3) The eternal fire is a striking reality and the unique necessary thing in my life is to be freed from it;
- 4) Heaven is the unique goal of our life;
- 5) "Lead all souls..." reminds us of the second goal of our life, the second part of the great commandment: to love our neighbour as Jesus loved him to love as a contribution to helping our neighbour to obtain eternal happiness;
- 6) "Lead, draw, carry..." The salvation is possible only if Jesus draws and carries us; without Him we cannot do anything. This thought makes us really humble;
- 7) "... in most need" gives us the understanding of the supreme hour of death, while praying especially for those dying who are not prepared.
- 8) "... of Thy Mercy": The infinite mercy of God wants us so much to be saved, and it is never too late to change and convert. Therefore, we should trust Him without limit.

4. The importance of ejaculatory prayers

Finally, in this great apparition, we receive a very simple and concrete teaching from Our Lady:

"Sacrifice yourself for sinners and say many times, especially when you make some sacrifice: O Jesus, it is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary".

It is the teaching of how to make sacrifices, how to carry our daily crosses, how to make the highest spiritual profit from our sufferings and trials: the intention counts, it must be out of love towards God and Our Lady (consolation, reparation) and out of love for the sinners (conversion). With these three ideas: consolation, reparation, and conversion, we put into daily practice the whole message of Fatima. And as we have to carry many crosses and trials daily, they become the occasions to recall Fatima all day long. This is “Fatima in action”, and this will bring us to holiness, as the children of Fatima, through their little prayers and sacrifices, became Saints.

Therefore we should observe the requests of our Heavenly Mother who knows what she is saying, when insisting on “say many times”: she knows how forgetful we are, therefore, we have to multiply the ejaculatory prayers as much as possible, one hundred times a day!

She also shows what the contents of these little prayers ought to be: flames of love from our little hearts toward her Immaculate Heart.



World War I

CHAPTER TEN

Between 13 July and 19 August 1917

The 3,000 people present on 13 July at the Cova da Iria had made known everywhere the announcement of the great miracle promised by Our Lady on the following 13 October. This forced the political power and the press to react. The first articles of the newspapers (all controlled by the Freemasons) tried to ridicule and caricature both children and events. On 11 August, the children, together with their parents, were summoned to appear before the local district administrator, who was old and ferocious, and a Freemason for 30 years. Lucia wrote: "The administrator was determined to force me to reveal the secret and promise him never again to return to the Cova da Iria. To attain this end, he spared neither promises, nor even threats. Seeing that he was getting nowhere, he dismissed me, protesting however, that he would achieve his end, even if this meant that he had to take my life".

On 13 August, a crowd of more than 20,000 people were present at the Cova da Iria. In the morning, the administrator came in his car to the house of Francisco and Jacinta, together with the archpriest of a major town in the region. He pretended that he believed the apparitions and had come for the security of the children. So, first he took them, together with the archpriest, to the presbytery, where the parish priest, in the presence of the administrator, interrogated the children again. After the interrogation, the administrator, declaring that he was convinced now, invited the children to be driven for their safety, to the place of the apparition. But instead of bringing them to the Cova da Iria, he turned towards his town (Ourem). When they arrived, the administrator shut them up in a room and declared that they would not get out until they had revealed the secret.

Meanwhile, the people waited at the Cova da Iria in vain for the arrival of the children. Somebody announced that the administrator had kidnapped them.

“I don't know what would have happened if we hadn't heard the clap of thunder. It was much the same as the last time (13 July). Many people were shocked and some of them began to cry out that they would be killed. Everyone began to spread out away from the tree (on which Our Lady already appeared 3 times), but, of course, nobody was killed. After the thunderclap came the flash of lightning, and then we began to see a little cloud, very delicate, very white, which stopped for a few moments over the tree and then rose in the air and disappeared” said eyewitness Maria Carreira. The majority of the pilgrims confirmed this scene. The people said to each other: “Certainly Our Lady came. What a pity that she could not see the children! “

In the meantime, the children were subjected to uninterrupted interrogations, nine in all. Only on 14 August were they questioned separately and also examined by a doctor, without any result. Therefore, the administrator decided to use stronger weapons: he put them into the public prison. Jacinta suffered horribly because

of the separation from her parents, Francisco was most hurt that he had missed the rendezvous with Our Lady. The prisoners were very good with the children and tried to console them. Sr. Lucia writes in her memories: *"Next, we decided to pray our Rosary. Jacinta took off a medal that she was wearing round her neck, and asked a prisoner to hang it up for her on a nail in the wall. Kneeling before this medal, we began to pray. The prisoners prayed with us ... Afterwards, Jacinta, who no longer wept during the interrogation, began sobbing as she thought of her mother: 'Jacinta,' I asked, 'don't you want to offer this sacrifice to Our Lord?' 'Yes I do, but I keep thinking about my mother and I can't help crying.' As the Blessed Virgin had told us to offer our prayers and sacrifices also in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we agreed, that each of us would choose one of these intentions. One would offer for sinners, another for the Holy Father, and yet another in reparation for the sins against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Having decided on this, I told Jacinta to choose whichever intention she preferred. 'I'm making the offering for all the intentions because I love them all... Suddenly a guard appeared, who in a fearsome voice called out to Jacinta: 'The oil is boiling now: tell the secret, if you don't want to be burned!'*

'I can't.'

'So, you can't, eh? Then I'll make you able to! Come!'

She left immediately, without even saying goodbye. Then Francisco confided to me with boundless joy and peace: 'If they kill us as they say, we'll soon be in Heaven! How wonderful! Nothing else matters!' Then, after a moment of silence: 'May God grant that Jacinta not be afraid. I will say an Ave Maria for her!'"

Shortly after, the guard came to look for Francisco, then Lucia — always the same scenario. The administrator made a third threat: all three of them would boil together! Still he did not obtain the secret or any kind of confession.

The next morning after a final interrogation, the children were conducted back to Fatima. As everyone was very upset at the adminis-

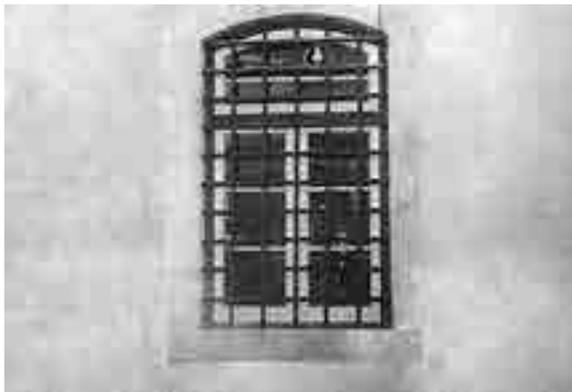
trator and also at the parish priest (the children were kidnapped when they left the parish office), the latter, understanding the trickery of the administrator, wrote a public declaration that he had nothing to do with “the odious and sacrilegious act which was committed by the sudden kidnapping of the three children”. Thanks to his public letter, the events of Fatima were published for the first time in the Catholic press.



The Mayor's home where he first took the children and kept them as his prisoners before transferring them to the jail



The Mayor of Ourem, Arturo de Oliveira Santos, who kidnapped the three children on August 13, 1917



The window of the jail cell in which the Fatima children were locked up with common criminals and where they were threatened to be boiled to death in oil if they did not deny Our Lady's appearance

CHAPTER ELEVEN

19 August 1917— The Fourth Apparition in Valinhos

On the afternoon of Sunday, 19 August, Lucia, in company with Francisco and John, his older brother, was pasturing the sheep in a place called Valinhos.

Suddenly I felt “something supernatural approaching and enveloping us”. Lucia asked John to run and call Jacinta. It was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

“In the meantime, Francisco and I saw the flash of light, which we called lightning. Jacinta arrived, and we saw Our Lady on a holm oak tree.”

“What do you want of me?”

“I want you to continue going to the Cova da Iria on the thirteenth, and to continue praying the Rosary every day. In the last month,

I will work a miracle so that all may believe. If you had not been taken to the city, the miracle would have been even greater. Saint Joseph will come with the Child Jesus, to give peace to the world. Our Lord will come to bless the people. Our Lady of the Rosary and Our Lady of Sorrows will also come“.

“What do you want done with the money that the people leave in the Cova da Iria?”

“Have two litters made. One is to be carried by you and Jacinta and two other girls dressed in white; the other one is to be carried by Francisco and three other boys. The money from the litters is for the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, and what is left over will help towards the construction of a chapel that is to be built here.“

“I would like to ask you to cure some sick persons.“

“Yes, I will cure some of them during the year.“

“(Then looking sad, Our Lady said): Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners: for many souls go to Hell because there are none to sacrifice themselves and pray for them.“

“And she began to ascend as usual towards the east.“

COMMENTARY

1. An exceptional apparition

Many experts of the apparitions in Fatima explain the unusual and exceptional character of this apparition as the love and mercy of our Heavenly Mother, who wanted to console the children after the most terrible trial they had to undergo the days before; and also to assure them that she would continue her visits despite the absence of the children on the thirteenth, caused by the wickedness of the administrator.

If these arguments are valuable, they seem, however, not to give a sufficient answer to quite a number of questions:

First, in Fatima, Our Lady announced to the children, with precision, the dates of her apparitions, repeatedly inviting them to come. Why did Our Lady change her “habits” this time and reveal herself so unexpectedly, so that Lucia and Francisco had to search for Jacinta, who was at her home?

Secondly, one cannot class this apparition as secondary and less meaningful than the others. It belongs to the cycle of the great Apparitions in the year 1917, because all three children had to be present (afterwards Our Lady will appear singularly to Jacinta and especially to Lucia in Pontevedra and Tuy). Furthermore, the apparition happens with the usual phenomena as all the others (the lightning, Our Lady standing on an oak tree, the departure of Our Lady); and the usual repetitions, to come the thirteenth of the next month, to say the Rosary every day, and since July, the announcement of the great miracle in October. Why, then, are the children not alone in this apparition (as on 13 May), but surrounded by people desiring to know more about the apparition? Would it not be more appropriate to give also, to this apparition, the usual solemnity and growing affluence of the people? One could answer that this apparition would concern more the children's personal spiritual life. It is the contrary: with insistence she speaks about the upcoming 13 October so that all may believe. Also for the first time, she asks for public veneration, speaking about processions to be made and the chapel to be built in the future.

Thirdly, Our Lady appeared to the three children always at the same place in the Cova da Iria. Why did she choose another place this time that was quite far from the usual apparitions, but quite close to the apparition of the Angel and the children's village?

Whatever the answers may be there must be a deeper reason for the choice of Valinhos, as Our Lady never does anything just by chance but purposely and intentionally.

Let us *first consider the place*: any visitor realizes that the difference between Valinhos and the Cova da Iria is striking. The latter, Fatima, has today become a tourist town with many hotels and a correspondingly worldly atmosphere (satellite T.V., internet, luxury rooms, restaurants etc.); the sanctuary itself gives the impression of exuberant life: one can hardly find silent minute; one ceremony follows the other; the loudspeakers communicate the singing and praying all over the place. The atmosphere of the Cova da Iria itself is very “modern”: the Capelinha disappears in a rectangular “thing”; beside the Statue of Our Lady is a bare rectangular table (bare except during the celebrations); a tabernacle is not seen (probably in the Capelinha, where nobody can enter except the guards). Opposite the Capelinha, looking straight ahead from the Statue of Our Lady to the end of the place where the columns start — where one can see something which should present itself as a permanent Christmas Crib — there is nothing but a composition of Masonic signs and an unworthy, ugly, and blasphemous representation of the Holy Family. To crown this atmosphere, an immense “sanctuary” has been built at the former place of the “Crux de alto” (a very beautiful Crucifix at the very end of the esplanade was done away with to make room for this temple), which represents everything else but a Catholic Church: the patterns are from a pagan Celtic temple; an abstract composition built mainly for ecumenical purposes. Over the years Fatima has lost much of its supernatural atmosphere; it has become a place where the devil celebrates many victories.

Valinhos, on the contrary, is a place of deep silence, far from the tourist area, with its chapel and the extraordinarily beautiful statue of Our Lady of Fatima, made of stone. The original rural atmosphere, the same as it was at the time of the apparitions, surrounds the place. Our Lady knows the future and maybe she wanted to give the pilgrims the gift to know Fatima, as it was originally, with its peaceful and supernatural atmosphere. Maybe she wants us also to enter into her disposi-

tions and find a place which reflects in immeasurable depths the beauty and the holy silence of her Immaculate Heart? We should appreciate the delicacy of our Heavenly Mother, who, in spite of those who want to destroy the authentic Fatima, gives us a remnant of the “original Fatima”, so that we may find her more easily and in a deeper manner.

The *second consideration* as to why she wanted the **children alone** to be present, could also be understood as a special hint of Our Lady, who certainly desires public acts of veneration and devotion, but not less, wishes that her children could somehow meet her individually and personally. As has been said, it is difficult to find time in the Cova da Iria to pray in silence and recollection. Also, the pilgrims are kept quite far from the Capelinha, so that a physical proximity is almost impossible. In Valinhos, however, the pilgrim can be as close to her as the children were during the apparitions. Fatima is above all the coming closer of two hearts: the Immaculate Heart of Mary reveals itself and wants to give itself totally to us; and we, answering the request of Our Lady, open our poor hearts, approach her more and more until the spiritual fusion of her Heart in ours. Because we are human beings and not angels, we need a physical expression of this great spiritual mystery: that we can be in front of her in silence, almost touch her, and be under the impression of her words spoken through us, like the children themselves.

This is certainly much more realized in Valinhos than in Fatima today! This seems to be confirmed by the last words of Our Lady during this apparition, which is a solemn appeal of the Heavenly Mother to each of her children individually; as if she said these words straight to our soul (see below).

Finally, why did Our Lady reveal herself so **unexpectedly** this time?

Maybe she wants to show us that the graces of God are always an unexpected gift, without any other reason than that of infinite Mercy

itself. Maybe she wants to remind us that her love is not bound to any “appointments” and “commitments”; her intervention can happen at any time and in all circumstances.

In my humble opinion there is more: unexpected sufferings provoke unexpected graces! The children were all but prepared for the worst trial they had in their lives: the ignoble kidnapping with threats of being killed. However, they carried these heavy crosses with heroic love and faithfulness towards Our Lady. Valinhos is a clear teaching from Heaven: the more we give, the more we receive!

Now, the most difficult moments in our life are those when trials and sufferings fall upon us totally unexpectedly and we are not at all prepared for them. Then even pious people, who ordinarily generously carry their crosses, would under such circumstances fail or at least show some impatience and fear. The children of Fatima showed their fidelity in extraordinary circumstances; and this provoked Heaven to send them graces in equally extraordinary circumstances.

Now, what were the very special graces Our Lady gave to them when appearing in Valinhos?

First, her very presence is certainly the greatest grace, but secondly, we have to read carefully her words and requests today to discover in them a special message from Heaven corresponding to the “specialty” and exceptionality of this apparition (see below).

2. Our Lady looking sad

It is remarkable that this is the only time Lucia describes the countenance of Our Lady.

Only this time did she emphasize that her face became sad when she pronounced her request, “Pray...” When she appeared in La Salette and Lourdes, the visionaries often pointed to the sadness, tears, and affliction of Our Heavenly Mother whenever she spoke

about the sins of her children on earth and their consequences. In Fatima, this note seems to be lacking except during this apparition.

If we consider that the apparition in Valinhos is a special invitation of Our Lady of Fatima to come very close to her, so close, that similarly, with the children, we could almost touch the fringes of her vestments (see #1 above), then we have to explain the sadness of Our Heavenly Mother as being immediately related to our presence before her.

In fact, we come to fall down on our knees before her loaded with all our miseries and sins. What can we offer her but thousands of insults and offences against her Divine Son; innumerable negligences and forgetfulness in the service of Our Lord; but above all, that notorious indifference which hurts the Sacred Heart of Jesus so much: after having received so many graces and proofs of His predilection and mercy, our answer is constantly more than miserable. She knows our whole life, and she also knows how many times we would have fallen into Hell if we had died then.

Should she not look sad? Is it not the eyes of Our Heavenly Mother penetrating our inmost being and discovering our whole misery? Her sadness shows us how much we hurt her Immaculate Heart, and how often we pierce her Heart with the thorns of our pride and selfishness, our impurities and negligences. Her sadness should wake us up to understand the horror of sin which ruins the beautiful palace of our soul, and which, above all, offends the all-good, the all-loving God. If we cannot tolerate that our most beloved persons are sad because of our faults, and we do everything to make them happy again, then should we not be touched so much more, to the depths of our heart before the sadness of Our Mother, who loves us so, so, much?!

Her sadness should provoke a strong reaction in us, a deep regret for our sins, a strong will not to harm her anymore, but on the contrary to console her, to please her, to make her happy. She herself indicates how we can do this in the words that follow.

3. *"Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners"*

This theme is already well known from the previous apparitions of both the Angel and Our Lady. From the beginning, Fatima is an urgent call for prayer and sacrifices: we can call these two terms the very keywords of the message of Fatima.

But this time, in the calm and silent atmosphere of Valinhos, spoken with the accents of deep sadness and motherly love for her lost children, has this request not a very special meaning?

Let us just repeat in our mouths and minds the very words of Our Lady: "Pray, pray very much!" This repetition of the same word is also unique in Fatima. We can distinguish three elements in this cry of love.

First: Our Lady with her sad eyes penetrating our eyes and souls, whispers to my heart: "My beloved child, please pray! Without prayer you will not save your soul, without prayer you cannot be united with God and you cannot receive His graces!"

Second: Our Lady doubles her request: "Pray, pray! You don't pray enough, my child! Please double your prayers, not so much in quantity, but in quality. Learn to pray well, with all your heart! Make efforts to be entirely addicted to your prayer, when you pray. And do it all for my Son's glory, for my honour, and the salvation of souls! One Rosary said with much effort and desire to please me is better than 100 said with negligence and superficiality".

Third: Our Lady insists: "Pray, pray very much! You know that my Son asks you 'to pray always and never to cease'. Only if you are constantly united with God can the grace of God constantly penetrate you and the gifts of the Holy Ghost inspire you. But I know that constant union with God is a special grace given only after many years of constant effort. However, the only way to achieve this goal

of 'pray always and never cease' is to multiply your prayers and to do them often and 'very much'."

The second means to please and console Our Lady and to save our souls and the souls of the poor sinners is **sacrifices**: it is significant that in Fatima the two terms "prayer" and "sacrifices" are very often mentioned together. Both are offerings to the Most High: prayer is the offering of our heart and soul, and sacrifice is the offering of our will and of all our actions. But this word "sacrifices" receives a special depth in Valinhos because the children were to experience the greatest possible sacrifices a man can ever have in this life: sacrifice of immense sufferings, sacrifice of offering his life (they were willing to be killed!), sacrifice of all kinds of humiliations, unpleasing and difficult situations etc.

This means that we should never take the word "sacrifice" as an abstract term. It is the hardships of our daily life we have to offer: it is the thousand little inconveniences and humiliations, the sufferings of body, heart, and soul which constitutes our "sacrifices".

The purpose of our prayers and sacrifices is the conversion of sinners, having in mind that we ourselves are the first sinners to pray for. Subsequently, our view should expand and we should see all people on earth, all sinners living in the darkness of deep errors, far from the true knowledge of God, and those who have once received light and grace, but have lost it for various reasons. Remember that during the same days as the apparition of Our Lady in Rome, the Freemasons celebrated their 200th anniversary and proclaimed the destruction of the Church and the final triumph of Satan before the very eyes of the Sovereign Pontiff. Maybe this explains also the special sadness of Our Lady on this day of her apparition in Valinhos.

But remember also that amongst the students in Rome, there was a young polish Franciscan friar preparing for two doctorates — in philosophy and theology, but especially for the holy priesthood. This brother, whose whole life had been a constant meditation about

the mystery of Our Lady, the Immaculate Conception, and her incredible power in the history of the Church, formed the resolution to found a little army in her service. It was in August 1917 that he spoke about this to his confessor, in the face of the overwhelming armies of the devil gathering, in those days, in the streets of Rome.

“She alone crushes Satan's head”, and “she alone has vanquished all the heresies all over the world”. Therefore she wants to gather around her those generous souls who want to be her servants, slaves, soldiers, and knights!

Some weeks later the Militia Immaculatae was born. And what kind of weapons does Saint Maximilian Kolbe give to his knights: “Above all **PRAYERS AND SACRIFICES**”. And his logic is very simple: only the grace of God can convert a sinner and sanctify him. But the graces of God we obtain above all through prayers and sacrifices.

4. “For many souls go to Hell because there are none to sacrifice themselves and pray for them”

This sentence alone makes this apparition one of the most important in the history of the Church. In a very simple way, Our Lady teaches us our role in the work of salvation: our main and fundamental task on earth.

It has just been explained that God's grace alone can convert sinners and free them from eternal damnation. Therefore, it was necessary that God became Man and offered Himself on the Cross to obtain pardon for sinners, to pay their debts, to cleanse them from their spiritual leprosy, and to restore the beautiful palace of their soul which they ruined by their sins. Therefore, all graces come from the Sacred Heart of Jesus offered on the Cross.

However, in this sentence, Our Lady attributes to our prayers and sacrifices the salvation of souls from eternal damnation, and if we do not pray, so many souls go to Hell.

This means that Our Lord wants to use us as instruments to help Him to save souls. Certainly it is true that He does not need anybody to accomplish His work of salvation, but He wanted us to be partakers of this most noble work of love and mercy done on earth. He wanted it so much, that He decided to make the salvation of many souls dependent on our generosity. Pope Pius XII in his encyclical “*Mystici Corporis*” teaches: “There is an awesome mystery that we can never sufficiently meditate on: the salvation of many souls depends on the prayers and voluntary penances of the members of the Body of Christ.” The Sacred Heart of Jesus said to St. Margaret Mary that, “one just soul can obtain pardon for a thousand criminals”.

In the light of these truths, let us once more meditate on the words of Our Lady:

First, she repeats that “so many souls go to Hell”: this is the grief of her Immaculate Heart and the reason for her sadness. But what is astonishing: Why do so many go to Hell? Because they are wicked?

Because they refuse the graces of God? Because they prefer the pleasures of the world to the will of God? Because they follow the maxims of the devil? All this is certainly right, but it is not the reason given by Our Lady here. **The reason is that they have nobody to pray and offer sacrifices for them!**

Secondly, behind this complaint is a most solemn request: “Because nobody prays, at least you, my beloved soul visiting me here in Fatima, you please pray and do sacrifices!”

To understand this urgent request of Our Lady, we must know that God established a law, that ordinarily, He will give His graces

only by **human instruments**. Our Lord gives His graces not by Himself, but through His instruments, the priests. Similarly, Our Lady, who is the Mediatrix of all graces, can give these graces generally only with the help of such instruments. A famous artist, a genius: he will not paint anything if he has no instruments with which to paint. In themselves the instruments are nothing, however, only through them will the picture be painted. Therefore, Our Lady, who wants the conversion and sanctification of her children so much, comes to us with tears in her eyes and begs: Would you please be so kind with me, your Mother, and help me to save souls? "Pray and do sacrifices, because so many people go to Hell, for they have nobody who prays and makes sacrifices for them!" We have many stories of Saints to confirm this truth, e.g. Saint John Bosco, who, while waiting for a train observes a man cursing God and committing awful blasphemies. He prays some ejaculatory prayers for the conversion of this man. The train arrives and John Bosco forgets about the situation. Some months afterwards, in a vision, he sees this man, who says to him that when dying in an accident, God gave him the grace of repentance because of the few ejaculatory prayers of the Saint.

So she, to whom I belong entirely, before whom I am only an unworthy wretch, approaches me in Valinhos like a beggar: "Help me to save souls! Be an instrument in my immaculate hands. Be not only my child and slave, be now my soldier and knight!" If I object that I am only an unworthy sinner, she will answer that she can paint beautiful pictures even with ordinary brushes!

Thirdly, Our Lady, with these words, reminds us of the very **purpose of our life**, which consists not only in loving God with all our hearts and minds, but also our neighbour, as Our Lord loves him. What is the special task in my life, my very place in the Mystical Body of Christ, my role in the militant Church? For what reason was

I born in such and such circumstances, country, mentality, epoch, etc.? For what reason have I received such and such gifts and talents? I exist on earth to “do good”, to help my neighbour to become happy forever and ever. But how do I fulfill this commandment? The answer of Our Lady is incredibly sad: “None at all! There is almost nobody to fulfill it!”

With shame I must ask: Did I ever love somebody in the way in which Jesus loved him? Our Lord gave His life for each one of us; Mary is the Mother of each man on earth. And I am completely indifferent about the lot of almost everybody on earth! I never think about them, and even if thinking about somebody, I almost never think about the unique necessity: his eternal salvation. Even for my beloved friends and relatives I do mostly only temporal good and neglect their eternal salvation. However, true love wishes one's neighbour “all the best”! All the best is “**THE BEST**”, the eternal **BEST**, Heaven without limit!

But if I almost never accomplish the great commandment of the love of my neighbour, I waste my time on earth. Once more, for what have I received so much time, acquaintances, talents etc.? Most people use these goods for their own egoistic pleasure, pride, vanity etc. sometimes for some “charitable action”. However we have been created to bring “permanent”, eternal fruits. What will remain from my life? Only that which I have done out of love for God and for the salvation of souls.

And because I have not done anything on this behalf, I risk my eternal damnation. And therefore Our Lady appears in Fatima, and particularly in Valinhos, to wake me up and offer her help, so that I may finally begin to fulfill this great and “new” commandment. So she takes me herself to the footsteps of the Cross: “Here I have received all people as my beloved children. Here are all the enemies of my Son — they offend Him, insult Him, and are completely indifferent towards such an immense love. However, I love them all even

in this state. I loved you also, when you were far from my Son, far away from me, lost in your sins! I asked graces for you and gave you all my love as your Mother, and so came the happy day of your conversion. Meanwhile, I have many other children who are now in that situation, in which you have been (maybe not such a long time ago!). And as I have found instruments to help me with your conversion and sanctification, so I ask you now to be my instrument for others, who are still in the darkness of error and sin! If you help me now to save them, you will, with me and through me, love them and so fulfill the commandment and become a saint!”

Finally, Our Lady reveals in these words **the deepest sense and the highest achievement of my life**. Again for what are we on earth? If I invented a medicine to add 20 years to everyone's life, I would be a famous benefactor of all mankind. However, after these 20 years, everybody would die anyway. If I can give somebody not only the sum of temporal goods, but also eternal salvation (that without me he would burn in Hell forever), what an eternal joy and gratitude to have done many “eternal” goods upon earth. What a jubilee of thanksgiving in Heaven of each soul who will praise God eternally in indescribable joy in Heaven; whereas without my small prayers, the same soul would burn forever and ever in the eternal fires of Hell. If I generously answer the request of Our Lady in Valinhos, I become the secondary cause of salvation of many, and enter the long line of the great missionaries and saints, “hunters of souls”: they used the time on earth given to them to the maximum extent, and made of it a seed of eternal happiness for themselves and many others.

What Our Lady asked for in Valinhos is what Saint Maximilian Kolbe describes as “the Knight of the Immaculata”, who is an instrument in her Immaculate Hands, who fights for her honour. She, through him, continues to crush Satan's head and vanquishes all

heresies and false ideologies all over the world. How? In converting the heretics, the sinners, and giving them graces. She gives these graces through her instruments, her channels.

How does a Knight become such a channel? "Pray and do sacrifices" is the answer in Valinhos.

Saint Maximilian comments: First of all apostolic prayers (ejaculatory prayers), sacrifices, resignation of our own will and choice of her will, good example, distribution of the miraculous medals, find "all honest means". These little nothings of our life done with love for God and for souls are the weapons of the knight. They are also the means which lead the children of Fatima to holiness.

Many prayers and even more sacrifices: this will be the whole life of the children of Fatima. Until the next apparition the children went out often to pray. They had to hide themselves from the unending line of curious and devout people who would not give them any rest, day or night. It was a great sacrifice not to get impatient when always answering the same questions, when regarded as curious beings etc. One of the most important visits in that period was that of Dr. Carlos de Azevedo Mendes, a young lawyer, who came to Aljustrel on 7 September. His detailed account about the meeting, the behavior and talks with the children, ends with this testimony: "To hear these children, to see them in their simplicity, and to examine them on all points impressed me in an extraordinary manner and led me to conclude that there is something supernatural in everything they say".



19 August 1917: The small chapel erected in the “Valinhos” area. Our Lady unexpectedly appeared here and repeated the promise of a miracle

CHAPTER TWELVE

13 September 1917 — The Fifth Apparition

At dawn on 13 September, all the roads leading to Fatima were full of people. By noon there were around 30,000 people waiting for the apparition. Lucia was very impressed by the simplicity of faith and generosity of the people who came from far to ask Our Lady for graces or simply to honour her. Arriving at the Cova da Iria, Lucia started to say the rosary with the people.

This time many of them saw Our Lady arriving.

Fr. Quaresma, who later became the Vicar General of the diocese of Leiria, was present on 13 September with two other priests:

With great astonishment I saw, clearly and distinctly, a luminous globe, which moved from the east to the west, gliding slowly and majestically through the space. My friends also looked and had the good fortune to enjoy the same unexpected and delightful vision. Suddenly the globe, with

its extraordinary light, disappeared. Near to us was a little girl dressed like Lucia and more or less the same age. She continued to cry out happily: "I still see it! Now it's coming down..."

Then the sun's brightness diminished and the atmosphere became golden yellow. Some people even reported being able to distinguish the stars in the sky.

Lucia: "What do you want from me?"

Our Lady: *"Continue to say the Rosary to obtain the end of the war. In October Our Lord will come, as well as Our Lady of Sorrows and Our Lady of Carmel. Saint Joseph will appear with the Child Jesus to bless the world. God is pleased with your sacrifices. He does not want you to sleep with the rope on, but only to wear it during the daytime."*

Lucia: "I was told to ask you many things, the cure of some sick people, of a deaf-mute ..."

Our Lady: *"Yes, I will cure some, but not others, because Our Lord does not trust them."*

Lucia: "The people would like to have a chapel here."

Our Lady: *"With half the money, make litters to be carried in procession on the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary; the other half is for the chapel."*

Then Lucia said that she offered her two letters and a little bottle of perfumed water that had been offered by a man from the parish of Olival. As she offered them to Our Lady, she said to her:

"I have been given these things. Do you want them?"

Our Lady: *"Those are not needed in Heaven. In October, I will perform a miracle so that all may believe."*

"Then Our Lady began to rise as usual, and disappeared."

During the time of the apparition, the majority of the pilgrims had enjoyed a marvellous spectacle: they saw falling from Heaven

a shower of white petals, or round, shining snowflakes which slowly descended and disappeared as they approached the ground. Another sign of her presence was a “pleasant looking cloud formed around the rustic arch which dominated the little tree-stump. Rising up from the ground, it grew thicker and went up into the air until it was five or six meters high; then it disappeared like smoke that vanished before the wind ... Everything happened as though some invisible thurifers were incensing the Vision liturgically”. In his letter approving devotion of Fatima, the Bishop of Leiria declared this phenomenon as “humanly speaking inexplicable”.

At the end of the apparition, the luminous globe could again be seen going up into the air and leaving the Cova da Iria in the direction of the east. Fr. Quaresma concludes: “The children had contemplated the very Mother of God, while to us it had been given to see the means of transport which brought her from Heaven to the inhospitable waste of the Serra de Aire”.

COMMENTARY

The two last apparitions of Fatima are more concentrated on making the apparitions known and believed. They have visibly a more apologetic and pastoral character: the apologetic one is the proof of the reality of the apparitions, and the miracles are the confirmation from Heaven that Fatima is supernatural. Furthermore, the apologetic argument analyzes the miracles and comes to the conclusion that Fatima is not only supernatural, but amongst all similar supernatural phenomena, absolutely outstanding and unique: one of the most important apparitions of Our Lady in all of history, maybe THE most important.

The pastoral aspect is to bring the pilgrims closer to Our Lady, and to disclose, somehow, in a sensible manner, to the hearts of the people, her greatness and essence. According to Saint Thomas, our

reason reaches the essence of things through the senses and understands the invisible realities through visible symbols. This is precisely the “pedagogy of Fatima”: Our Lady knows her children and wants to educate them by repeating the important lessons all over again throughout her apparitions, by giving striking signs and symbols to enter deeper into her mystery, and fostering with overwhelming miracles, the conviction about the reality and importance of Fatima.

Therefore in these last apparitions, the extraordinary signs have at least as much importance as the words and gestures of Our Lady. The miracles accomplished already since 13 August, but very specially witnessed by a great number on this 13 September, have first of all the apologetic role already mentioned: they were sensible proofs to convince the crowds of faithful gathered in the Cova da Iria of the reality of her presence. In fact, these signs would encourage innumerable pilgrims to return for the last apparition, to the point where there were almost 100,000.

After the apparitions these historical, extraordinary events would convert millions of people and deepen their relationship with their heavenly Mother.

As the words of Our Lady are very similar to those of 13 October, let us concentrate on the spiritual meaning of the supernatural signs before and during the apparition.

1. Luminous globe

After the apparition, Fr. Quaresma asked his companions, who seemed enthusiastic about what they had seen: “What do you think of that globe?”

“That was Our Lady,” was the immediate reply.

This was indeed the clearest conclusion spontaneously drawn by all those who had seen the mysterious luminous globe “slowly and

majestically gliding into space, going from east to west“ descend finally on the holm oak of the apparition, before going back into space, in the direction of the east.

This phenomenon may give an answer to a difficult theological question concerning all apparitions of Our Lady. In fact, many theologians assert that when the Holy Virgin appeared, her body remained in Heaven, and there was only a sensible form representing her on the spot of the apparition.

Here, on 13 September, it seems that Our Lady wishes to manifest, with splendour, her coming on earth and her return to Heaven, in an atmosphere of light and glory.

Another detail: the globe comes from the east and returns to the east. The holy Bible and the Church fathers are full of quotations about the spiritual meaning of the east. “East“ in Latin is “*oriens*“ which means offspring, originating, rising. From the east the sun rises, and from the east comes light into the darkness: therefore, the gates of Heaven are in the east, from where the Saviour came to redeem the world.

He Himself is “*Oriens*“; East, the eternal sun rising over the darkness of error and sin. Therefore, God wanted a miraculous star to appear in the east to bring the three kings to the newborn Lord, and to bring us who are “sitting in the tenebrous place and the shadows of death“ to the light of truth and salvation.

Psalms 19 predicts of the Saviour, that “He has set his tabernacle in the sun, and He, as a bridegroom coming out of His bridal chamber, has rejoiced as a giant to run the way: His going out is from the end of Heaven, and His circuit even to the end thereof; and there is no one that can hide Himself from His heat“. Visibly, Our Lord is compared to the sun itself coming from the far east (end of Heaven), passing over all until the far west, with incredible power (giant). Nobody can exist without His light and love (no one can hide himself from His heat).

In Fatima, the globe also makes its way from east to west, to return finally after the apparition and disappear in the horizon toward the east. Our Lady is “the tabernacle of the Most High”, “the Seat of Wisdom” out of which the eternal “Sun of Justice” comes. She is the “gate of Heaven”; through her come all the rays of her Son's light into the world and to souls. He wants her to “wander” from east to west, that means all over the world, inviting all nations, all people, and all generations to receive the light of truth. She comes from the east (“I am of Heaven”) into the dark and cold west, which means the world imprisoned in the darkness of error and the icy coldness of sin. She comes to us to open our minds, to enlighten our intelligence, to heat our cold hearts, and so takes us with her back to the east: when our Heavenly Mother comes to us, she never returns to Heaven alone. So let us be fascinated at the sight of this wonderful globe, and be filled with immense desire: “Mother, take me with you to your eternal dwellings, at least in spirit!”

2. The cloud

During all the apparitions since 13 June, many witnesses had noticed a thin white cloud, very pleasant to look at, forming above the holm oak. It remained there for the whole duration of the apparition, before gently going up in the sky towards the east, and finally disappearing. In August, almost everybody could see it. The same phenomenon took place on 13 September, but in an even more lavish manner, since the unusual cloud formed and then disappeared three times in a row, during the ten minutes Our Lady had spoken to the children.

This mysterious cloud which enveloped the apparition, as if to manifest its presence while concealing it at the same time; does it not remind us once again of the great apparitions of the Most High

in Holy Scripture? From the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, to the Transfiguration of Our Lord on Mount Tabor, the cloud always appears in sacred history as the symbol and the sensible expression of the Divine Presence. But how can we explain the fact that a creature, even the most sublime one, could attribute to herself this Divine prerogative?

In the Old Testament, the cloud is often related with the Ark of the Covenant. This Ark, hidden under the Tent, was like a movable sanctuary, the place where God had fixed His residence, accompanying Israel in its wanderings; and the Cloud manifested His presence. As soon as the Ark was introduced, "the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40, 34). After the building of the temple by Solomon, the Ark was solemnly carried in by the priests to the Holy of Holies. When taking possession of His temple, God manifested His coming again by the Cloud, which filled the ministers of the sanctuary with so much awe, that they were unable to move.

In Fatima, Our Lady appears as the living "Ark of the Covenant". As in the Old Testament, the Ark and the temple were filled with a Cloud which symbolized the very presence of God, so in Fatima, the Cloud fills and surrounds the place where Our Lady appears. When she comes, God comes in her and through her: this is the deepest meaning of the Cloud in Fatima.

Understanding who she is and for what she comes is, again, an important lesson: Our Lady never wants to be considered for Herself, she never wants to have the central place. When she appears, she directs us to the Most Holy Trinity whose sanctuary she is; she leads us to her Son, and she fills us with the Holy Ghost, who penetrates and changes hearts.

It is significant that not one of the pilgrims saw Our Lady, yet all witnessed the miraculous cloud. Is it not an exquisite sign from her, as if she would say: "Don't worry, my child, if you don't see me with

your eyes. You will see more, and realize deeper what I come for: you will be filled with God's presence and the graces of my Divine Son“?

3. A shower of petals of roses

When Saint Therese of the Child Jesus was about to die, she said to her sister: “I will spend my Heaven doing good on earth,” and she explained: “You'll see, it will be like a shower of roses“. It is clear, that this means “shower of divine graces“ which, through the Saint's intercession, God will abundantly send into the world.

In Fatima, Our Lady showed the miracle of the shower of rose petals several times: on 13 August and 13 September, but also on 13 May 1918, and once more on 13 May 1924. The bishop of Leiria was present at the Cova da Iria in 1924, and witnessed this miraculous event.

In 1830, Our Lady declared to Saint Catherine Laboure: “Come to the foot of this altar. Here, graces will be poured out on everybody who will ask for them with confidence“.

The shower of roses in Fatima is the same pressing invitation of Our Lady to come to her Immaculate Heart, where the people will receive God's graces so abundantly and so uncountable, as the flowers showering from Heaven were uncountable.

4. Admirable fruits of her presence

These supernatural signs, events, and miracles all have certain qualities that are worthwhile to ponder: they are all grandiose, overwhelming, majestic, so as to provoke stupefaction, astonishment, amazement, and admiration in people's hearts. Whoever experienced them, would momentarily and totally forget about himself

and be fully absorbed in this grandiosity; his heart, habitually shut up in its narrow little world, would dilate and breathe in greatness. Our Lady wants to show us what would happen with us when we approach her, when we allow her to speak to us, and when we live in her spiritual presence. In fact, what is one of the most distressing and common dangers amongst Catholics today? It is that they consider the truths of faith as boring and uninteresting; they perceive the holy liturgy and prayer life as a necessary evil, as a difficult burden and an unpleasant duty from which everybody would like to be rid.

In Fatima, Our Lady offers us one surprise after another: how one approaches the events of Fatima and, more precisely, whoever approaches the mystery of her Immaculate Heart, will be surprised to discover first, that she is so incredibly “great”; he will admire all the many historical facts and events; he will finish by forgetting his own petty ego and only with such a disposition is the motivation strong enough for him to despise the attractive world of sin and to follow the narrow path of salvation.

Another quality we can distil out of these miraculous events and manifestations is that they emanate an unearthly beauty and fill the heart with joy and peace. Witnesses abound to testify that the sight of the globe, the petals of flowers, and the cloud, were “pleasant”, “provoking joy and peace in the heart”. The pilgrim will find this peace and beauty in a striking manner when visiting the place where the Angel appeared the first and the third time (Loca de Cabeco) and also the place of the apparition on 19 August (Valinhos). Our Lady is “the beauty itself” and she wants to impart the brightness of her purest Heart to everybody approaching her. What a remedy in this world which cultivates junk, trash, and dirt, for which impurity and filth become a necessity, and where the children are surrounded by ugliness, monsters, and brutal, ferocious pictures. Whenever the devil attacks Our Lady, he wants to tarnish her beauty: therefore, he tries to bring the same ugliness into the very sanctuaries, and to

prevent people from finding peace for their eyes and souls when contemplating true beauty.

It was obvious that the weeks between the 13 September and 13 October would be full of various emotions. There was no moment of relief for the children because of the innumerable visitors of all kinds: pious pilgrims, and curious, fanatical adversaries. Everybody wanted to see them and interrogate them, often tempting them with promises and threats, to make them reveal the famous secret.

Lucia, as the oldest, suffered particularly from these threats, and was accused by her own family of being the cause of ruin and disaster. She was threatened, many times, that if the promised miracle did not take place, the fanatics would certainly kill them all. In this waiting period, so full of anguish, the children showed signs of an extraordinary confidence. Even the rumours of a bomb attack and other intimidations could not provoke any fear in their hearts. Nobody should blame the good faithful and the peasants: they fear that any fanatical enemy would be able to do the worst on 13 October without being punished by the masonic government. As a matter of fact, 4 years later, such a bomb would blow up the little chapel of the apparitions.

In spite of this agitated atmosphere, the children were filled with one thought expressed so beautifully by Francisco: "Are there many days left until the thirteenth? I'm longing for that day to come, so that I can see Our Lord again. ... But listen! Will He still be so sad? I am so sorry to see Him sad that I offer Him all the sacrifices I can think of. Sometimes I don't even run away from all those people just in order to make sacrifices".

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

13 October 1917 – The Sixth Apparition

Since 12 October, around 50,000 people had already arrived in Fatima so that they could be close to the place of the apparition. “The whole night and morning a thin, persistent rain fell, wetting the fields, muddying the ground, and penetrating with its cold humidity the women and children, men and animals, who were hurriedly advancing along the muddy pathways towards the place of the miracle” (testimony of Maria Madelana del Martel Patricio).

Meanwhile, in Aljustrel, the mother of Lucia was very disturbed at the thought of the tragedy that might follow, if the predicted miracle did not take place. Lucia didn't succeed in calming her. Finally, Maria Rosa and her husband decided to accompany their daughter saying, “if their daughter was going to die, they wanted to die by her side” (Sr. Lucia). On the contrary, the parents of Francisco and Jacinta were not afraid at all, because they believed in the apparitions of Our Lady.

"Once we arrived at the Cova da Iria, near the holm oak," Lucia recalls, "moved by an inner impulse, I asked the people to shut their umbrellas and say the Rosary." Up on the road, sheltered in their automobiles, all those who did not have the courage to venture into the claylike mire of the Cova witnessed a stupefying spectacle: "at the given moment," one of them writes, "this confused and compact mass shut the umbrellas, uncovering itself in a gesture either of humility or respect, but leaving me surprised and full of admiration, for the rain went on insistently, moistening everybody's heads, soaking and flooding everything".

At around one thirty in the afternoon, Lucia looked in the direction of the east and said to Jacinta: "Oh Jacinta! Get on your knees; Our Lady is coming! I already saw the lightning!" This time Lucia seemed to fall into an ecstasy: "The child's face, a witness recalls, became more and more beautiful and took on a rosy tint, and her lips became thinner". Jacinta gave Lucia a poke and said: "Speak, Lucia, Our Lady is already here!" Then Lucia came back to herself, breathed deeply two times like someone out of breath, and began her conversation with Our Lady.

"I want a chapel to be built here in my honour. I am Our Lady of the Rosary. Continue to say the Rosary every day. The war will end soon and the soldiers will return to their homes."

"I have many things to ask you: to heal some sick people and to convert some sinners, etc."

"Some, yes, others, no. People must amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins. They must not offend Our Lord any more for He is already too much offended."

"Do you want anything more?"

"Nothing more."

"Then neither will I ask anything more from you."

During the apparition, the crowd could see just as on 13 September, the same cloud forming around the holm oak, going up in the air

before it disappeared. Then Lucia shouted: "Look at the sun!" It was at this precise moment that the crowds could contemplate the extraordinary spectacle of the "dance of the sun". The rain had suddenly stopped, the clouds were quickly dispersed, and the sky was clear. "We looked easily at the sun which did not blind us... Everything was still and quiet; everyone was looking upwards. At a certain moment, the sun seemed to stop, and then began to move and to dance until it seemed that it was being detached from the sky and was falling on us. It was a terrible moment" (Testimony of Ti Sarto, the father of Francisco and Jacinta). The promise of Our Lady had been fulfilled to the letter: all had seen it (see a detailed account of the miracle in the next chapter).

During the ten minutes that the crowd witnessed the spectacular cosmic miracle, the three children enjoyed a still more beautiful spectacle. The Blessed Virgin fulfilled before their eyes her promises of 19 August and 13 September. It was given them to admire, right in the sky, three successive pictures:

The Vision of the Holy Family: "After Our Lady had disappeared into the immense distance of the firmament, we beheld St. Joseph with the Child Jesus, and Our Lady robed in white with a blue mantle, beside the sun. St. Joseph and the Child Jesus appeared to bless the world, for they traced the Sign of the Cross with their hands."

The Vision of Our Lady of Sorrows: "When, a little later, this apparition disappeared, I saw Our Lord and Our Lady; it seemed to me that it was Our Lady of Sorrows. Our Lord appeared to bless the world in the same manner as St. Joseph had done."

The Vision of Our Lady of Mount Carmel: "This apparition also vanished, and I saw Our Lady once more, this time resembling Our Lady of Carmel."

COMMENTARY

Importance of the message

Considering the apparitions of Our Lady in the Cova da Iria, generally, the essential event and the important point of the last apparition is the great miracle Our Lady promised to accomplish three months previously. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that the message in itself is very brief in comparison with the three first ones, and it seems to be only a repetition of what already had been spoken of several times. It is true, that this last apparition is certainly a solemn summary of the whole message of Fatima, as if Our Lady would resume her great message in some short sentences easy to memorize. The message appears to be similar to the question and answer method in our catechisms. In this way, even a simple soul will be able to keep in mind what the Heavenly Mother said.

However, the message is much more important than it seems at first sight, and this is because of the very declaration of Our Lady on this day: **“who I am and what I want”**. In reality, she had already expressed many times what she wants, and she will make more precisions about her wishes even after 1917 through the apparitions in Pontevedra and Tuy.

If now, on 13 October, she announces solemnly “what she wants”, she herself makes it clear that the message of this day must have a very special, outstanding, and exceptional meaning. To emphasize this importance, she announced to the children twice, in August and September, the visions they would be privileged to contemplate. As a rule, we can consider that if Our Lady announces something beforehand (and not only once), it will be exceptionally important. We also should not forget that it will be the last great apparition, like a culmination of the previous ones, and that this apparition is immediately linked with the great miracle of the sun: the announced three visions of the children take place at the same moment the people contemplate the great miracle, also three times foretold.

Let us now meditate on the different parts of the message, not in their chronological order, but to understand in the deepest possible manner who she is and what she wants.

And what does Our Lady want?

Let us begin with the request of Our Lady which made the greatest impression on the children.

Lucia writes: "Of all the words spoken at this apparition, the words most deeply engraved upon my heart are those of the request made by Our Heavenly Mother: "Do not offend Our Lord and God any more, for He is already so much offended". How loving a complaint, how tender a request. Who will grant me to make it echo through the whole world, so that all the children of Our Mother in Heaven may hear the sound of her voice!"

1) *"Do not offend God any more, because He is already too much offended."*

It has been said many times already how much sin offends God, and how important it is that we do not remain in our sin, but convert ourselves. Fatima is a solemn warning to all sinners about the disastrous consequences of sin. In these our times when people offend God and (even Catholics) consider it a "normal thing", when almost nobody knows how much it hurts God's heart, this warning is of highest actuality: "Stop it now, it is really too much!"

However, in this apparition and only in it, Our Lady emphasizes the strong words "**too much!**" What do they mean? We know that each sin, even the slightest one, is already "too much", and that it is an impossibility if we consider God's infinite majesty and mercy, and the fact that sin is somehow the negation of God and the effort to eliminate and annihilate Him. From the very first sin of Adam and Eve, and throughout all times, God is too much offended.

But today, the “woman clothed in the sun” working an incredible miracle so that everyone may believe, approaches “each one” of her children with indescribable delicacy: her eyes are bright like the sun, she is all burning with love like the sun, she stands for me in her majesty and her heart is speaking more than her lips: “my child, my beloved child! Please do not offend God anymore, because you have already offended Him TOO much! Innumerable times your thoughts, desires, words, and actions have deserved eternal punishment. How long will you continue to provoke God's infinite Holiness? I, your Heavenly Mother, come now to say to you, to tell you **what I want**: To save you, my children, at any price, from the fires of Hell. Hell exists, and as you have already offended God too much, you are one metre away from the eternal abyss. I, your loving Mother, can't stand this anymore! I weep and agonize for you! Please stop continuing this way; otherwise it will be too late. For so many who wouldn't stop sinning it became effectively too late!”

But this is not all. We have to grasp more deeply the sense of this anxious call: a noble heart can never say “enough” in his love, it wants to love more and more without limit. On the contrary, the slightest harm, the smallest offence towards the beloved is always “too much”, the loving heart cannot bear whatsoever hurts the beloved. And here Our Lady again laments: “Don't you see my Son's infinite love, all His blood shared for you, He Himself annihilated in the little Host for you to be close to Him in the Most Blessed Sacrament? He Who is almost always forgotten, abandoned, and neglected by you neither forgets nor abandons you! And also: don't you see my motherly love is greater than that of all mothers in the world put together?” In this way, she brings me before the intimacy of her Immaculate Heart to wake up my heart, to put fire in it, and to enkindle in it the love towards God. However, the first and fundamental act of love is to avoid all that makes the beloved weep and sad; and whatever would hurt Him is always “**TOO MUCH!**”

Let us enter another step deeper into the Heart of Our Mother and ask her about this “too much!” Surely she opens her Heart to me so that I may look into it for my salvation. We looked into this in the consideration above. But beyond her infinite love towards us, her lost children, she loves us in yet another way: let us never forget that the Immaculata in Heaven incessantly contemplates the very essence of God. More than any other creature, and more than all other creatures (souls and angels together) she knows and loves HIM. She understands that all creation, including herself, is strictly nothing before God, less than a little drop in comparison to an infinite ocean. Moreover, she enters as nobody else into the depths of His Infinite Majesty, into the very essence of the Most Holy Trinity: “God is Love!” Her only love is a faithful copy of the love of the Eternal Son to the Father, of the love of the Father to the Son, and of the love of both in Itself: **THE HOLY GHOST**. As the Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Ghost, she received **HIS LOVE** totally and fully in her Heart: the flames of her heart are the presence of the **GOD-LOVE** amongst creatures.

This love is “light”, and there is “no darkness in Him!” This means that God's love cannot tolerate any darkness. In Fatima, she came into the sinful darkness of this world, and does so to this day, as a conclusion of her requests, she tells us what she really wants. In the light of God's majesty and boundless love, hear the cry and outburst of her Heart that **IS LOVE**:

Do not offend God any more because He is too much offended! I beg you, let yourself be invaded by this bright, infinite ocean. He desires it with an unlimited desire! Come to my Immaculate Heart to learn from me how to recover “your first love which you have lost!”

Whosoever allows himself to be touched by these words and by the HEART from which they come, must answer immediately: “Oh yes! Too much already have I neglected and offended you. Too often have I insulted you! Give me the grace to change and not to offend you again, my Divine Love”.

It is not difficult to discover in this sentence the first essential themes of the message of Fatima: “conversion and reparation“. “Do not offend Him any more,“ means conversion. The reaction to the fact that God is “too much offended“ calls for reparation. This is also the comment of Sr. Lucia: “I consider then, that God willed only to make use of me to remind the world that it is necessary to avoid sin, and to make reparation to an offended God, by prayer and penance“.

2) *“Recite the Rosary every day”*

Nothing in Fatima has been repeated so much by Our Lady as this request. If ceasing to offend God, and henceforth to please Him, and so to save our souls are to be considered the goals of the apparition of Fatima, I present the Holy Rosary as the universal means to reach this goal.

Therefore, we can consider this 13 October apparition as a solemn conclusion of what Our Lady began to reveal already in the twelfth century to Saint Dominic, when she gave him the Rosary as a means of converting the heretics. Two centuries later, Blessed Alan de Rupe received the famous 15 special graces promised to those who pray the Holy Rosary with devotion. Again, two centuries later, the first Rosary Crusade, initiated by Saint Pius V, provoked the miraculous victory of the small Catholic army against the overwhelming majority of the Islamic Turks in Lepanto (1571), followed by similar miraculous victories in Manila (1646), Vienna (1683), Peterwardein (1716) etc. Again, two centuries later, Our Lady herself shows the world the importance of the Holy Rosary when she appears in France. Lourdes is a grandiose manifestation of the overwhelming power of the Holy Rosary. But nowhere did Our Lady ask for its recitation with so much insistence as in Fatima!

Before 1917, the Holy Rosary was prayed during the month of October and at some major occasions. Only since Our Heavenly Mother insisted six times to say it daily was this custom established all over the world. We realize the extreme importance of the Rosary when we consider its innumerable fruits and effects. But the most astonishing witness about its importance is Our Lady Herself, when, on this day, she reveals who she is: "I am Our Lady of the Rosary". We will meditate about this title below, and also give a brief answer to why the Rosary is so unique, so absolutely great. After the Holy Mass and the Divine Liturgy, it is the most important prayer in the Church.

In Fatima, Our Lady also shows some of the most important effects or fruits of the Rosary:

First of all, on 13 May, she declares to Francisco that he would go to Heaven, but he would have to say many Rosaries. Certainly, this intimation touches not only Francisco, but everybody. In other words, our salvation and particularly our **holiness** is intimately linked with the devotion to the Holy Rosary.

Secondly, when Lucia asked for the **healing of sick people**, or to help with other difficulties, Our Lady repeated so often that "they must recite the Rosary daily to receive these graces".

Thirdly, Sr. Lucia explained to Fr. Fuentes that now (for the latter times) God gives us two last means of salvation: the devotions to the Rosary and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. And if she said that they would be the last, then no others will be given. This shows us the very special importance of the Rosary in our apocalyptic times, so much so, that only these two devotions guarantee our fidelity and **perseverance during the final battles**.

Finally, on this 13 October, Our Lady reveals another great effect of the Rosary: it obtains the end of the war. Let us consider this last point thoroughly:

We are in the year 1917; the First World War enters into its most horrible and deadly phase. There was almost no family in Europe who had not had to send their sons into that war, and everyone was preoccupied with this issue. In this light, we can understand why Our Lady alludes several times to this World War and promises its end.

However, the message of Our Lady does not touch only the children or the people living in 1917, but through them touches all people of all ages. Similarly, we see in the Gospel that Our Lord Himself announces prophetically the destruction of Jerusalem (which will happen in the year 70), but He also interlaces this historical event with the end of the world. We can apply this prophetic language to Our Lady in Fatima: directly and immediately, she speaks about the end of the first World War and the return home of the soldiers. But these same words have also to be understood for all people of all ages. Everybody who comes to Fatima receives the promise of Our Lady: The war will end and the soldiers will return home! How are we to understand this? We must ask ourselves, what does “war” and particularly “end of the war” mean to us?

Firstly, this means that we are members of the Militant Church and our life is a Christian Warfare. The public wars of people and nations against one another are only an expression and a symbol of the war between good and evil, between grace and sin, between Our Lady and the devil, between Heaven and Hell.

In a war we need good weapons, but not only that. The soldiers must be skilled and well trained to use these weapons. The weapon “par excellence” given by Our Lady is the Holy Rosary. And if you use this weapon according to the wish of our “commander in chief”,

she announces solemnly that this war will end and the soldiers can come home, that they will finally reach their eternal home.

Secondly, this means that there must be one who wins and one who loses the battles; there must be a defeat and a victory: the victory, the true victory in this world is obtained by her, and through her by all of them who faithfully meditate upon the mysteries of the Rosary. This is confirmed by the Church, who declares the feast of Our Lady of Victories as also the feast of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary.

Thirdly, the end of the war and the result of the victory is PEACE. There is no victory or peace without her. She demonstrated this already through the miraculous victories from the 16th century onwards; this will also be her message in Tuy. In Fatima, Our Lady came to reveal that she is the only dispensary of the gift of peace, and she wills that we obtain this peace through the Rosary (see also the apparitions of 13 May, 13 July, and 13 September).

In other words, the Rosary is the great peacemaker in our life. The peace of weapons cannot be but an external condition of true peace which Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas define as the “tranquillity of order“. We know that our heart is a battlefield and “the devil turns incessantly around us like a roaring lion trying to devour us“. It is difficult to get peace into our souls and very often we are troubled, restless, and agitated. The smallest events make us lose the peace of our heart. How precious therefore is the promise of Our Lady, that the Rosary gives us the atmosphere of order and harmony. The highest and truest peace, however, is only a life in God's friendship, a life in sanctifying grace. And this grace is also granted and conserved thanks to the Holy Rosary. Furthermore, we can extend this promise to all situations and institutions which absolutely need the atmosphere of peace if they want to survive: families, schools, parishes, convents, villages, etc.

Effectively, on 13 October Our Lady told us what she wants. In a surprising and original way, she reminded her children about the goal of their life and the necessity of a radical turning away (= **conversion**) from all that offends God, and also the importance of consoling the Infinite Love which is “already too much offended” by making acts of **reparation** for sins. But she is not only a teacher who reminds us and teaches us about the unique necessity of the great truth of our life. As the best of all mothers, she gives us the necessary means to win the battle against the devil and sin. And here appears the third great theme of Fatima: **consecration**. Certainly this day she does not speak directly about the act of consecration, but explains the inner sense and the life of consecration, without which the most solemn acts and prayers would not have any meaning. The Rosary is the devotion which, in a very practical and simple manner, consecrates our daily life to God through Mary.

3) *“I am Our Lady of the Rosary”*

After having considered what Our Lady wants, we will now learn, who she is. Just as in Lourdes, although her confidants had recognized her right away, she did not wish to reveal her name just yet. Why this delay, why this mystery, if not to draw our attention still more to a name which is the concrete expression of the very mystery of the person?

In Lourdes, Our Lady had not revealed her name until 25 March: “I am the Immaculate Conception”; and Bernadette observed, “These are the last words she spoke to me”.

At Fatima as well, she did not reveal her name until the last of her apparitions in the Cova da Iria: “I am Our Lady of the Rosary”. To our knowledge this is the first time that Our Lady pronounced such words; and it is of utmost importance to explore them thoroughly,

as the Heavenly Mother (similarly in Lourdes) allows us to enter into the very essence of her being, of her ineffable mystery.

“I am...”

Strictly speaking, no creature can state such a thing: “I am!” because of ourselves we are nothing! Each creature should answer the question “who are you?” with the words of Saint John the Baptist: “I am not!” We have received what we are and what we have; this means we receive our being, our qualities, and our talents as a limited participation of the being and the perfections of God. We can never say: “I am wisdom” but only “I have received a part of God's wisdom”; or “I am the life”, but I have only received my life as a limited participation in God's life. Only God can say: “I am!” And He did precisely this when He revealed to Moses for the first time in history His very name: “I am Who am!” Afterwards, Our Lord Jesus Christ will also apply to Himself this Divine prerogative when He says: “I am the Life! I am the Truth! I am the Resurrection! Before Abraham was, I am!”

However, both in Lourdes and Fatima Our Lady says clearly “I am” to define her very essence and to reveal her deepest name. Is it not a blasphemy to arrogate for herself what only God can say? This objection was made in Lourdes at the canonical process during which the authenticity of the apparition was decided.

Saint Maximilian gives a marvellous explanation. He explains that the Holy Ghost in fact is the ever holy, ever “immaculate” conception of Father and Son, the bond of Father and Son, their mutual Love. He alone could say strictly and properly: “I am the eternal purest, holiest, Immaculate Conception!” Our Lady was created as the Spouse of the Holy Ghost:

“If among creatures the wife takes the name of her husband because she belongs to him, unites herself with him, becomes his equal and becomes, in union with him, the instrument through which new life

is created, how much more true this is in the case of the Holy Ghost's name. Immaculate Conception is the name of the Woman in whom He lives in that Love which is fruitful for the whole supernatural order".

Henceforth, Our Lady is the only creature that can say "I am!" because she is so totally united to the Most Holy Trinity, but very specially to the Holy Ghost. Saint Maximilian cannot find equivalent words to express how much the Holy Ghost and the Immaculata are one: she is the very presence of Him in this world; He is so much united with her that one can speak about a quasi-incarnation: "What kind of union is this? It is above all interior: it is the union of her very being with the being of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost dwells in her, lives in her from the first instant of her existence, and He will do so always throughout eternity".

"I am ... Nossa Senhora:"

What is the deeper meaning of "I am Our Lady..."? The Portuguese expression "Nossa Senhora" is the feminine form of "Senhor" (lord, master, royal dignity). Therefore one could almost translate the whole sentence: I am the Queen of the Holy Rosary." The term "Senhora" means authority, reign, and government. In fact, Fatima is an extraordinary manifestation of the royal power of the Mother of God, of the **OMNIPOTENTIA SUPPLEX** (pleading almightiness).

This sentence, however, is a problem. It would be grammatically correct to say: "I am your Queen, I am the Queen", etc. But she says: I am ... Our Lady!

Maybe she accepts the common expression "Our Lady", to show she is the "Lady" of all people. She loves this invocation so much that she wants it applied to herself. "I am really that which you name me: "Our Lady". You name me "Our Lady" and you are right, I am!"

By this uncommon expression she wants to explain that she is really "Senhora", the Queen who received from her Divine Son

the full royal dignity and executive authority. But this authority and power is “ours”, it belongs to us. Mary is “**Our** Lady”, part of ourselves: in other words her authority and power is just for our good, for our sake, and for our happiness.

“I am Our Lady of the Rosary”

Her royal authority is specified by the word “Rosary”. That means that the Rosary is the place and the atmosphere in which she exercises her being Queen and Lady.

What is the Holy Rosary?

“*Rosarium*” is the bouquet of the most beautiful roses of virtue, love, and holiness offered to the Most High for our salvation. It is the chain which joins Heaven with earth, the anchor which links the ship of the soul with the eternal harbour. It is a crown of the most beautiful jewels, the most precious gift made to the eternal King. “I am Our Lady of the Rosary” means: “I am myself the link between Heaven and earth, the ladder on which God descends to this world and on which we return to God. I am the “*Senhora*”, the authority to govern and to command all “roses”, all good works, and intentions of my children to be offered to God. I take all the jewels of my children and unite them with my virtues and my immense love and so make a worthy, immaculate crown to put on the head of my Divine Son as a supreme act of homage, adoration, and submission.

Once more: What is the Holy Rosary? It is the life, death, and resurrection of Our Lord revived, meditated on in our Heart with and in Mary! “I am Our Lady of the Rosary,” means that she is the “*Senhora*” of the life, death, and resurrection of Our Lord recalled and revived in our hearts and present on the altar for our salvation. But does it mean that the spiritual revival of the 33 years of life of Our Lord is in us? It means simply that Jesus Christ Himself enters our souls with His Precious Blood to cleanse us from our sins, to purify us from spiritual leprosy, to free us from the chains of the devil, and to convert us from

the way which leads to the eternal abyss. After having purified us, Our Lord fills our soul with the life of God, with His eternal light and goodness, and finally with His everlasting glory.

Our Lady is the Mother and Queen of this spiritual revival in Jesus Christ: she makes Him come again and again into the souls of her children with all the graces of conversion, purification, sanctification, and glorification.

But then the title “I am Our Lady of the Rosary” means: I am the Mediatrix of all graces!

Her Mediation is perfectly described in the Holy Rosary as we have already seen: she is the link, the bond from God towards us (theology names this the descending mediation: *mediatio descendens*), but also the bond from us towards God (theology names this the ascending mediation: *mediatio ascendens*). The Rosary is first the illustration of God's infinite mercy, and He comes from His eternal fullness and light into our darkness and nothingness; Our Lady is the channel through which the infinite light, grace, and mercy descend into our hearts.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe says: “*Gesta Dei per Immaculatam*” — all the “gestures” of God towards us through the Immaculata. Secondly, the Rosary is the illustration of our answer to God, of our return to God again through her, according to the old sentence of the Fathers: *Per Mariam ad Jesum*, or according to her own words: “my Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way which leads you to God”.

Her universal mediation — Our Lady explains this more concretely through the three visions the children could see while the pilgrims contemplated the miracle of the sun.

“We first had the vision of the Holy Family: St. Joseph and the Child Jesus blessing the world, and on the left, Our Lady, such as she appeared on the holm oak.”

“I am Our Lady of the Rosary, and first, of its joyful mysteries.” As Mediatrix she brings these mysteries into our heart and thus

brings us to know Our Lord in His Divine-human personality! Through her He came into the world; through her He was born in Bethlehem; through her Saint John was sanctified; and she brings Him into our souls (*mediatio descendens*).

But also through the meditation of the Rosary she brings us spiritually to Nazareth, to Bethlehem, to Egypt, and again to Nazareth so that we may imitate the hidden life of Our Lord and copy in our family life the life of the Holy Family (*mediatio ascendens*). In the measure in which we join the Holy Family and imitate their life we receive “the blessings of Saint Joseph and the Child Jesus”.

Scientifically

“Then the light changed and suddenly the Virgin appeared as Our Lady of Sorrows. Our Lord, Who blessed the multitude, replaced St. Joseph. Our Lord appeared in His adulthood, and He was dressed in red no doubt to remind us of the purple mantle in which He was dressed in the praetorium, during the scene of the outrages and the crowning with thorns.”

Our Lady is the “Senhora” of the sorrowful mysteries: when she stood beneath the Cross, Our Lord gave her all the fruits and graces coming from His thousands of wounds and His pierced heart. She collected in her heart all the fruits of the work of redemption, of His holy Passion and His death on the cross, where Our Lord declared that she become our Mother, to give all His graces to her beloved children (*mediatio descendens*). But through the meditation of these mysteries, she invites us to stand and kneel beside her on the footsteps of the Cross where Our Lord “will attract to Himself and to His heavenly Father” all those who faithfully persevere in His Faith and Grace; protected and guided by His Mother, the Mother of Sorrows (*mediatio ascendens*).

“This apparition also vanished, and I saw our Lady once more, this time resembling Our Lady of Carmel.”

She is, finally, the “Senhora” of the glorious mysteries: she brings us the triumph over the devil, sin, and damnation; she brings us life everlasting; she brings all the glories of the Triumphant Church into our soul. She gives us the scapular as a symbol of motherly care and protection (*mediatio descendens*). We want to wear the scapular faithfully and devoutly; we want to recognize and proclaim that we are her children and that she is, “Our Lady, Our Queen,” and so we prepare ourselves for a holy death (see promises of the Brown Scapular). This is the most beautiful fruit of the *mediatio ascendens*: a spiritual ascension in her and with her until the eternal resurrection and life in Heaven.

What is the great message of Fatima? Who is she who comes to rescue us in the darkest hours of this world?

“I AM OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY,” she says.

And that means: ***“I AM THE MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACES”***.

But where is the seat of all graces? Where is the very centre of my inmost being (“I am!”)?

IT IS MY IMMACULATE HEART!

We come to the conclusion that, in truth, Our Lady, through her short words during the last apparition in the Cova da Iria, delivered to us in its substance the whole mystery of Fatima; and it is exactly this mystery that everybody has to accept and believe. It is not just an option for a certain group of devotees to Our Lady. It is for all men living in this world: for the unbelievers, that they may convert; for the indifferent, that they may become zealous; for the sinners, that they may return to the state of grace; for the zealous, that they may become saints; for “all who are sitting in darkness and the shadows of death”, that they may find eternal life and everlasting peace. And we find all these categories of people present on this day in Fatima to become witnesses to one of the greatest miracles ever seen in history.



"I am Our Lady of the Rosary"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

13 October 1917— The Miracle of the Sun

It is easy to relate what happened at the Cova da Iria on 13 October: the witnesses to the event were innumerable, their testimonies agree, and the documents they left us are abundant. First of all, there are the numerous accounts which appeared immediately in the Portuguese press. It is noteworthy that the first publications to bear witness to it were the anticlerical papers. From November 1917, the diocese of Lisbon ordered the parish priest to interrogate the witnesses. Also, a thorough investigation was made in view of the canonical process. To this we have to add the investigations of famous historians who all wrote books about the witnesses they could reach and interrogate. All these inquiries resulted in the collation of an impressive number of accounts of the event, which were published during the lifetime of numerous witnesses.

In 1977, to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the apparitions, it was still possible to reunite more than thirty persons at Fatima who had attended the solar prodigy, and who were able to give their testimonies once again.

The reporter of the anticlerical newspaper "O Secolo" reports that at the arrival of the people he distinguished three groups: praying pilgrims, indifferent curious (among whom he counts himself), but also mocking unbelievers. One Portuguese historian, Leopoldo Nunes, notes that "at the moment of the great miracle there were present some of the most illustrious men of letters, in the arts and the sciences, and almost all were unbelievers coming out of simple curiosity". Even the national Minister of Education for the masonic government was there.

For the whole of 12 October it had been raining day and night. The days before it were marked by a very warm and dry gentle autumn, but suddenly the weather changed and brought that uninterrupted rain which transformed the dusty roads into muddy quagmires, and it became cold as in winter. At sunrise the weather looked threatening. Black clouds gathered right over Fatima. However, the people continued to swarm in. By ten o' clock the sky was completely hidden behind the clouds and it started to rain heavily. Swept by the strong winds and beating upon the faces of the people, it soaked the pilgrims, many of whom were without protection against the weather, chilling them to the marrow of their bones. Many people plodded through the mud to the famous oak tree praying and singing. How many came? One of the most important scientifically schooled witnesses, Dr. Almeida Garrett, posited the number 100,000.



13 October 1917: The crowd stood ankle deep in the mud in the pouring rain, waiting for Our Lady to appear and for the promised miracle



Their clothes were instantly dry and clean after the Miracle of the Sun

THE SERIES OF MIRACLES

Eight different miraculous events had been observed by all who were present in the Cova da Iria that day. It is important to consider them together to get a fuller understanding of what the famous “miracle of the sun” really was.

1. A Column of clouds

“It must have been about one thirty when on the very spot where the children were, a fine, slender, bluish column of smoke rose straight up to about six feet above their heads and vanished at this height. This phenomenon, which was perfectly visible to the naked eye, lasted a few seconds. Not having kept track of the time, I could not say whether it was less than a minute or longer. The smoke suddenly disappeared, and a few moments later the phenomenon took place a second and then a third time. All three times, and especially the last one, the beams went up and clearly disappeared in the grey atmosphere. I looked in that direction with my glasses. I was not able to see anything except the columns of smoke, but I remained convinced that they were produced by some censer with incense inside it being swung. Then some people worthy of faith told me that this phenomenon was a regular occurrence on the thirteenth of the five previous months, and that nobody had made any fire, either this time or the others” (Prof. Almeida Garret)

2. The sudden stopping of the rain

The sudden change in the weather surprised all the witnesses: “It was a rainy day with a thin, but steady rainfall. But a few minutes before the miracle it stopped raining”. “At this moment, I got out of

the car, and as I extended my hand to my wife to help her step out, suddenly all the clouds disappeared without the slightest breeze, and the sun was shining in a clear sky" (Prof. Ferreira Borges).

3. The vision of the sun

The reporter recalls: "Suddenly I heard a shout from thousands of voices and saw the multitude which straggled out at my feet here and there, concentrated in small groups around the trees, turn their backs and shoulders away from the point towards which, up to now, it had directed its attention, and turn to look at the sky on the opposite side.

Then they saw a unique spectacle, an unbelievable spectacle for anyone who did not witness it. From the road one could see the immense multitude turn towards the sun, which appeared free from clouds and in its zenith. It resembles a dull silver disc, and it is possible to look at it without the least discomfort. It might have been an eclipse which was taking place."

Dr. Almeida Garretts: "I veered to the magnet which seemed to be drawing all eyes and saw it as a disc with a clean-cut rim, luminous and shining, but which did not hurt the eyes. I do not agree with the comparison which I have heard made in Fatima: that of a dull silver disc. It was a clearer, richer, brighter colour, having something of the lustre of a pearl. ...

It was a remarkable fact that one could fix one's eyes on this brazier of light and heat without any pain in the eyes or blinding of the retina. The phenomenon, except for two interruptions when the sun seemed to send rays of refulgent heat which obliged us to look away, must have lasted about ten minutes".

4. The threefold dance of the sun

Suddenly the sun began trembling, shaking with sudden movements, finally turning over upon itself with dizzying quickness, spraying out rays of light of all the colours of the rainbow.

“The sun trembles, the sun made sudden incredible movements outside all cosmic laws, the sun “danced” according to the typical expression of the people”. “It seemed like a wheel of fire.” “At a certain moment the sun seemed to stop and then began to move and dance.” Thus, the “dance of the sun” was repeated three times.

5. “All the colours of the rainbow”

Dr. Almeida Garrett: “During the solar phenomenon, there were changes of colour in the atmosphere. Looking at the sun, I noticed that everything was becoming darkened. I looked first at the nearest objects and then extended my glance further afield as far as the horizon. I saw everything in amethyst colour. Soon I heard a peasant who was near me shout out in tones of stupefaction: “Look, that lady is all yellow”. Maria de Carmo recalls: “The sun took on all the colours of the rainbow. Everything took on the same colours: our faces, our clothes, the earth itself,” etc.

Father Ignacio Lourenco points out that objects took on different colours depending on their location: “objects around us turned all the colours of the rainbow. We saw ourselves blue, yellow, red ...”

6. The falling of the sun

Dr. Almeida Garrett: “Then, suddenly one heard a clamour, a cry of anguish breaking from all the people. The sun, whirling wildly, seemed to loosen itself from the firmament and advance threaten-

ingly upon the earth, as if to crush us with its huge and fiery weight. The sensation during those moments was terrible“.

Other witnesses: “The sun began to move and dance until it seemed that it was being detached from the sky and falling on us. It was a terrible moment...” “It seemed like a wheel of fire which was going to fall on the people...” “The sun at its zenith whirled upon itself; it detached itself in descending towards the right, all the while whirling with sudden movements never seen before, to the right and to the left; having almost arrived at the horizon line, it went back up to the zenith on the left, tracing a sort of winding ellipse as it went.”

All the spectators had the irresistible impression that the sun was going to fall on them. It was such a terrible moment that several people fainted. “Finally, the sun stopped and everybody breathed a sigh of relief.”

7. Everybody's clothes were dry

All these people, who were for the most part soaked to the bone, noticed with joy and stupefaction that they were dry: “It continues to rain so strongly that in spite of our umbrellas, nobody has a stitch of dry clothing left... The rain suddenly stops, the clouds split open, and the sun is visible in all its splendour. Our clothes were wet and our bodies cold: I still remember the delicious sensation that this warm caress of the sun gave me... Although it is true that the luminosity of the sun was diminished, its warmth lost none of its power. I feel my clothes almost dry now, although they were all wet only a few moments ago“ (Dr. Pereira Gens).



1917: The three seers in the company of pilgrims from Vila Nova de Ourem under the porch built by the Carreira family to mark the location of the apparitions



6 March 1922: The first little chapel of the apparitions blown up by dynamite placed there by the anti-clerical and masonic extremists. The present chapel was built upon the site of its ruins

8. The vision at a distance

A last marvellous fact is that the phenomenon could be admired as far as two or three miles from Fatima. There are even perfectly credible witnesses who were much further away from the Cova da Iria, who related how they had seen the unheard of spectacle of the dance of the sun, exactly as did the thousands of pilgrims gathered around the holm oak of the apparition.

On 13 October 1930, the ordinary of Leiria, Bishop da Silva, published his letter "A Divina Providencia", which proclaimed the Church's official recognition of the authenticity of the Fatima apparitions. In this letter, the bishop explicitly mentions the solar prodigy and affirms its miraculous character: "The solar phenomenon of 13 October was the most marvellous of all, and made the greatest impression on all those who had the good fortune to witness it ... And this crowd witnessed all the manifestations of the sun which paid homage to the Queen of Heaven and Earth".

By the voice of the Bishop of Leiria, the authority of the Church solemnly confirmed the unanimous sentiment of the Portuguese people, formulated by the multitude at the very moment of the prodigy: "Miracle! Miracle!"

COMMENTARY

1. Highest possible proof ever seen

No doubt the miracle of the sun in Fatima belongs to the most exceptional miracles ever accomplished in history. Each authentic miracle is like a stamp from Heaven, a personal signature from God to testify that the revelation or apparition is really from Him. The authentic miracle excludes the possibility of fakes and deceitful methods, but also the extraordinary signs and false miracles of the devil. The devil has

a certain power to deceive our senses (we hear extraordinary things, see a beautiful woman, smell, taste, and touch uncommon objects, etc.).

The miracle of the sun was a cosmic miracle which even the angels (also the bad angels) are not able to accomplish. They are not the masters of the natural law and the natural order of the world. Only God Himself can make an exception here. God almost never makes such miracles! To find something similar, one must go back to the Resurrection of Our Lord, the calming of the tempest, and further to the apparition of the Most High on Mount Sinai.

On the part of those who saw the miracle, it is no less exceptional and unique. God allowed even enemies to see it, Freemasons, unbelievers, critics, and all kind of curious people! This fact excludes all kinds of theories of collective hallucinations and other kinds of manipulation of the senses of thousands of people. An hallucination and other manipulations come from an over-excitation of the psycho-sensorial system and is always the effect either of troubles in the perceptive functions, or of the destruction of the conscious being. But all this cannot happen in a mind which is not at all inclined to any "excitation": on the contrary, he despises the "excited" and "exalted" pilgrims and keeps far away from any influence to his emotions. And these people saw the miracle and testified to it.

Since then, all doubt is excluded: Yes, it is indeed the Immaculate Virgin, who on each month since 13 May, came down from Heaven to speak with the three little shepherds and pass on her message to them. This miracle, the grand finale of the cycle of the six apparitions, is henceforth the indisputable proof of their authenticity, for God is truthful in all His works and He could not work a prodigy which would risk leading His faithful creatures into error. The great Solar Miracle thus appears to us as the visible, tangible, incontestable seal that God willed to place on the apparitions of Fatima, on the prophecies and terrible warnings, that His Immaculate Mother came to reveal at the Cova da Iria.

2. A miracle for our times

Strictly speaking, such miracles are not necessary for the Catholic Faith, which is solidly founded on the Divine Revelation of Our Lord Jesus Christ. However, for hundreds of years, the unbelievers use the progress of science to question and then to deny the supernatural order. Therefore in His great mercy, God decides to intervene in an extraordinary manner in our history, in such a way that His action, being directly visible and tangible, could be observed scientifically. These “scientifically proved miracles” appear only in our times, when modern science is in possession of the most highly proficient machines and tools, with which it claims to destroy the “faith of the simple”. With these computers, etc., the modern researcher scientifically discovered the messages of the “Holy Shroud of Turin”, the miraculous picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe, especially her eyes, which no man ever could paint, and several other visible witnesses of the supernatural order (e.g. Eucharistic miracles, tears of Our Lady, etc.).

Famous medical doctors of the whole world are confronted with such miracles when asked to analyze the water of Lourdes and the many cures provoked only by it. The solar prodigy of Fatima is also such a miracle for our times.

3. The mystery of light (sun):

MULIER AMICTA SOLE

The miracle of the sun is certainly, first of all, the exterior proof, the Divine seal and signature of all that happened in Fatima. But it is also a message in itself. And the very first message is that God did this miracle for the sake and glory of His Immaculate Mother. In the latter times of the world, God wants to show, in an incomparable manner, how much He wants Our Lady to be put at the centre of

man and his history; that after HIM she is really the **GREATEST BEING** amongst all. God solemnly confirms and underlines that she is really the Mediatrix of all graces, the link between Heaven and earth, and that **HER IMMACULATE HEART** is really our last hope. We can trust her fully: as she had promised the miracle three months before it happened, so it will be with all her promises, even the most unbelievable ones: the conversion of Russia, her final triumph.

But someone could ask: Why did God want to do this miracle with the sun? We could rather expect miraculous healing of the sick or other striking phenomena. The reason is that there is a very deep symbolic link between Our Lady and the sun: "Behold a great sign appeared in Heaven, a woman clothed in the sun, the moon under her feet..." (Rev. 12:1).

Does God not want to emphasize on 13 October that Our Lady, as she appears in Fatima, is the apocalyptic woman herself who is attacked by the dragon and later by the two beasts, but who finally alone will crush their heads and vanquish them, just like the brilliant light of the sun vanquishes all darkness?

If Jesus Christ names Himself the "Sun of Justice", and if Our Lady is "clothed in this sun", then the miracle of the sun in Fatima could mean that all light of grace and mercy, but also all justice and holiness is given to the Immaculata, so that everybody will receive the eternal light only through her.

The sun is the source of light, but Mary somehow rules the sun to give its light to whomsoever she wants to give it: another illustration of the Mediatrix of all graces.

4. The miracle and the great secret

In the second secret, Our Lady announces a sign given by God to show that the chastisement is very close and another war worse

than the first will break out very soon. We know that this sign was given in Europe through a mysterious nocturnal aurora on 25 January 1938.

But we can ask: is not the solar prodigy of 13 October also, in a veiled manner, "the great sign" given by God, "that he is about to punish the world for its crimes", as Our Lady said in her great secret?

In any case, it had certainly the appearance of a terrible chastisement hurled by God on sinful humanity, to persuade it to be converted. A few moments earlier, Our Lady had demanded sorrowfully that men must amend their lives, that they must ask pardon for their sins, "they must not offend Our Lord God any more for He is already too much offended!"

Indeed, it was a terrible moment when it appeared that the sun was about to fall upon the crowd: They cried out: "Oh Jesus, we shall be killed! Oh Jesus, we shall all be killed!" Others called on Our Lady to save them and recited acts of contrition. Father John Gomes Menitra said: "When I saw the sun fall on us, I shouted: We are going to die! ...I knelt on the pebbles, joined my hands, and asked pardon of the Lord for all my sins."

In the village of Arburitel, some miles from Fatima, all of the inhabitants saw the miracle. Their parish priest, Father Ignacio Lourenco wrote: "The sun suddenly seemed to come down in a zigzag, menacing the earth. Terrified, I ran and hid myself among the people, who were weeping and expecting the end of the world at any moment. Near us was an unbeliever who had spent the morning mocking at the simpletons who had gone off to Fatima just to see an ordinary girl. He now seemed to be paralyzed, his eyes fixed on the sun. Afterwards he was trembling from head to foot, and lifting up his arms he fell on his knees in the mud, crying out to Our Lady.

Meanwhile, the people continued to cry out and weep, asking God to pardon their sins... We all ran to the two chapels in the village, which were soon filled to overflowing”.

Many people at the Cova da Iria also believed that it was the end of the world.

We should ask ourselves: is not the solar prodigy of 13 October one of the signs announcing the second coming of Christ, prophesied by Our Lord Himself? “There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars... the powers of Heaven will be shaken” (Lk. 21:25). The resemblance is striking. The events of Fatima, with their grandiose character, unprecedented in the whole history of humanity, undoubtedly have very much to do with the latter times of the world, the apocalyptic times. Although the solar prodigy perhaps marked a beginning of the “last times”, it was not the sign of an imminent end of the world. For it also evokes the other major theme of the secret, the revelation of the great design of God for our times, by the mediation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

“When the people realized that the danger was over, there was an explosion of joy and everyone joined in thanksgiving and praise to Our Lady” (Fr. Lourenco). Mario Godinho adds: “From these thousands of mouths I heard shouts of joy and love for the Most Holy Virgin. And then I believed. I was certain that I had not been the victim of an illusion. I have seen the sun as I will never see it again”.

The chastisement did not occur with the end of the miracle, on the contrary: the pilgrims had the happy surprise of finding themselves perfectly dry, and during this last apparition of Our Lady there were even two miraculous healings.

Far from coming for judgment or chastisement, Our Lady had announced as early as 19 August and 19 September that in October, “Saint Joseph will come with the Child Jesus to give peace to the world, and Our Lord will give his blessings to the

people". On this frightened crowd which asked for grace and begged for pardon, the Holy Family poured out its blessings from the heights of Heaven. Terrible chastisement threatened us, to be sure! But God has a great design of Mercy: "He wishes to establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary".

In 1917, the mystery of Fatima had only begun. For Our Lady had promised to return to take our history into her hands, to remind us of the chastisements which threaten us, to renew her requests, and to announce with assurance her final victory. The unheard of prodigy of the "dance of the sun" is the pledge of her all-powerful mediation.

SUMMARY OF THE SECOND VOLUME

On 13 July 1917, Our Lady announced to the children that she would come again twice: to establish the devotion to her Immaculate Heart and to ask for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart. Furthermore, the great secret of Fatima should be published after some time, in 3 stages, and she would give the sign when the time came. This means that contrary to all other apparitions, the history of Fatima is not a series of fixed apparitions, but will conserve its full actuality and “continue to go on”, until all the requests of Our Lady expressed in Fatima have been fulfilled.

The following volume will have the name “**FATIMA CONTINUED**”, and we will see that the fulfilment has not yet come. Fatima is **NOT** an event to be considered as finished and belonging now to the past! As the latter times of the world are to be considered as the “Era of the Immaculate Heart of Mary” according to the Cardinal of Lisbon, we will learn from Our Lady herself what exactly the devotion to her Immaculate Heart is: what the concrete practices are, what its essence is.

The three children have been the first to fully practise whatever Our Lady said and asked for in Fatima. Through them **SHE** speaks to us; through their life and behaviour she teaches us how she wants to be loved. They are a striking example to show us how to fulfill Our Lady's will and so really belong to her as true children, slaves, apostles, and knights. We will see that the lives of each of the three children correspond to each of the three main themes of Fatima.

What about the great secret of Fatima, and especially about its last part? Many thorough analyses have been made about this, and

it will be good to make a summary about the present situation. All that concerns the third secret is itself an incredible illustration of the devil's final battle against the apocalyptic woman. The secret is **NOT** published, but **HAPPENS** before our eyes every day. As the centenary of the apparition approaches, we could name that chapter: "Fatima: a war of 100 years".

Finally, after so many years we perhaps could come to an initial conclusion about the role of Fatima in the Church, in the world, and in the life of everyone!

**DIGNARE ME LAUDARE TE VIRGO SACRATA
DA MIHI VIRTUTEM CONTRA HOSTES TUOS.**

In this book explaining the apparitions of Fatima, Fr. Karl Stehlin offers an inspiring way of renewing our reading of one of the most important events of our times. He puts forward the facts not only as something of the past, but as having repercussions in the life of the Church today.

Here we have solid doctrine and deep spirituality such as should be found in any literature on Our Lady.



Kolbe Publications

www.kolbepublications.com

ISBN 978-981-11-2628-4



9 789811 126284 >