

THE STORY AND THE MESSAGE OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA

FATIMA and DISTRICT

Fatima is about one hour's drive north from Lisbon in Portugal, which is bounded on the east by Spain and on the West by the Atlantic Ocean. It is a warm and sunny place in summertime.

About one mile from Fatima is the little hamlet of Aljustrel where the 3 children of Fatima lived. They were called Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta. Over a mile to the west of Aljustrel is the hilly countryside of Cova Da Iria which is where the children used to play together as they tended their sheep.



The photograph above shows their house in Aljustrel, which you can still visit to-day.

To the west of Aljustrel, on a hillside covered with olive trees, is a small rocky mound called Loca do Cabeco. It was here that the Angel appeared to the 3 children in 1916, the year before Our Lady

THE ANGEL of PEACE APPEARS to THE 3 CHILDREN

Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta were playing their games---perhaps echoes---or singing and dancing to the sound of Francisco's whistle, when suddenly they saw in the distance a very bright light advancing towards them. Lucia tells us that although it was a calm sunny day, suddenly there was a wind shaking the trees which made them stop playing and they then saw,

".....a light whiter than snow in the shape of a transparent young man who was more brilliant than a crystal struck by the rays of the sun..... Once he drew near us he said "Fear not. I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me".

On this, the first of 3 visits by the Angel of Peace, you will notice that the Angel asked the children to pray with him. This did not seem a strange request to these 3 children as it was their habit, every day, to pray the Rosary. But on this occasion the Angel taught them a very special prayer which they learned very quickly. We still say this prayer to-day:

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

Perhaps you would like to learn it and perhaps pray it sometimes---maybe when you pay a visit to Church, or after you have received Jesus in Holy Communion. It was at the third visit of the Angel that Francisco and Jacinta received their First Holy Communion.

At the second visit the Angel asked even more fervently that they pray, pray, pray, and in addition, make sacrifices. The Angel asked them especially to offer any suffering they had as a sacrifice to God, and in particular, in REPARATION (atonement) for the sins of people who do not pray.
At the third visit of the Angel, the children were already kneeling praying the prayer he had taught them, when he appeared to them carrying a chalice into which drops of blood fell from the Host above the chalice.
The Angel gave the Host to Francisco and Jacinta, and the chalice to Lucia saying to them,

“Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus, who is horribly insulted by ungrateful people. Make reparation for their crimes and console your God”



They spent the next year regularly praying the prayer that the Angel had taught them and often talked about it together, but they agreed they would tell no one what had happened. In a certain way, the Angel of Peace prepared them for what was to happen the following year.

OUR LADY APPEARS to THE 3 CHILDREN

On May 13th, 1917, Lucia who was now 10, Francisco who was 9 and Jacinta who was 7 were playing in the Cova da Iria around midday, when they saw two flashes like lightning. They fell back, startled, and, staring at the 3 ft high holm-oak tree nearby, they saw the Mother of God above it. As Lucia describes Our Lady,

“A Lady dressed all in white, more brilliant than the sun.....”

The children again fell back in fear, not knowing who the Lady was. Again Our Lady spoke to them as the Angel had done:

“Do not be afraid. I will not harm you.”

“Where are you from?”

“I am from Heaven”

“What do you wish of me?”

“I wish you to come here for six months in succession on the 13th of each month at this same hour. Later I will tell you who I am and what I want of you.”

“And will I go to Heaven too?”

“Yes, you will”

“And Jacinta?”

“Yes, she will”

“And Francisco?”

“Yes, but he must say many Rosaries”

Our Lady continued to speak with them a little longer. Lucia could hear and speak with Our Lady; Jacinta could see and hear Our Lady; Francisco could only see Our Lady. Finally she opened her hands and revealed a most wonderful light. She then asked them to:

“Pray the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world, and an end to the war.”

Our Lady then slowly rose in the air and began to disappear towards the east.

The 3 children stared after her, totally silent, unable to speak of what they had seen. Little Jacinta asked her cousin Lucia if she thought they had seen the Mother of Jesus, but Lucia hushed her gently at once. They agreed they would tell no one what they had seen.

Unfortunately, little Jacinta who was only 7, could not keep it a secret and she told her Mother who immediately came to Lucia's Mother, Maria Rosa, to ask if she knew anything about the children having seen Our Lady in the Cova da Iria.

Lucia's Mother was furious. And here began much of the suffering that Lucia was to endure, because as the youngest of seven, she was the darling of the family and loved her Mother dearly. Now here was her Mother threatening to beat her if she did not own up that it was all a pack of lies. She even dragged her off to the Priest to try and force her to deny it all, but the kindly Priest told Maria Rosa to let time open up and to allow the children to go back to the Cova on June 13th as the Lady had asked.

JUNE 13th

As she had promised, the Lady came back. Again she asked the Children to pray the Rosary every day. She said she would take Francisco and Jacinta to Heaven soon but she wanted Lucia to remain to establish Devotion to The Immaculate Heart of Mary. She must learn to read and write. Again Our Lady asked for prayer and for REPARATION for the sins by which God is offended.

This was a very great deal for three young children who had never been to School to begin to take in and to understand. They did, however understand that they were being asked to pray very specially and from then, they certainly tried to, especially Francisco who used to spend a long time each day, sitting on top of a rock praying his Rosary.

JULY 13th

When July came word had spread in the district that Our Lady was appearing in the Cova Da Iria. Hundreds of people were gathering there. This did not please the authorities at all because at that time there was a very real attempt to stamp out religion in Portugal, and make it the atheistic capital of Europe.

The people who were gathered saw something of a grey-coloured cloud above the holm oak tree and a cool breeze blew over the hillside even although it was mid-summer.

Immediately, at 12 noon the children saw Our Lady over the holm-oak tree.

Lucia: *What does Your Grace wish of me?*

Our Lady: *I want you to continue to pray the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world and an end to the war.*

Lucia: *I would like to ask you to tell us who you are; and to perform a miracle so that everyone will believe that you really do appear to us.*

Our Lady: *In October I will tell you who I am, and what I wish; and I will perform a miracle that everyone will see, and in this way, will believe.*

So, as before, Our Lady is asking for prayer, especially the Rosary. It must therefore be very important to our Lady that we all pray the Rosary---especially for peace and especially in Reparation for those who offend God, and who do not pray.

Each time Our Lady came, she opened her hands, and great rays of bright light shone from them. This time, however, when Our Lady opened her hands, Lucia says it was like a strong light piercing the earth beneath their feet. This is when Our Lady gave the children a picture of what hell is like. The vision lasted only a minute, then Our Lady asked them to pray for poor souls who may go to Hell because they have offended God, and they have no one to pray for them. Lady that we all pray the Rosary---especially for peace and especially in Reparation for those who offend God, and who do not pray.

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minute, then Our Lady asked them to pray for poor souls who may go to Hell because they have offended God, and they have no one to pray for them.

Our Lady: *God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If people do what I will tell you, many souls will be saved and there will be peace.*

This Apparition in July was a very long one.

Our Lady went on to tell Lucia that the war was going to end soon (meaning World War1, 1914-1918), but if people did not pray an even greater war would begin in the reign of Pope Pius XI. And it did. It was World War 2, 1939-1945.

Our Lady: *I will come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays (This we now practice as the Devotion of the Five First Saturdays.) Finally my Immaculate Heart will triumph.*

Our Lady then gave Lucia the prayer that is prayed all over the world to-day after each decade of the Rosary:

“O my Jesus, forgive us our sins; save us from the fire of Hell; lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy Mercy.”

Our Lady then left, as before, rising into the east. People watching heard a sudden sound like thunder.

AUGUST 13th

On this day thousands gathered in the Cova Da Iria. People said they saw a faint white cloud above the holm oak, and heard a peal of thunder, but Our Lady did not appear because Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta were not there.

They had been taken forcibly to Ourem where they were questioned and questioned for a long time and even tortured to try to force them to say they had made everything up. They were told to say that there had been no Apparition.

They were taken out of the room one by one and those left were told the other had been boiled in oil and the same was waiting for them.

Our Lady had asked them in June if they were prepared to accept the suffering that would be sent to them. They had said “Yes”, but they had not imagined anything like this.

However, they held firm, and would not, and indeed could not, admit that they had seen nothing. The Official had no option but to return them to their Parents.

Lucia’s mother, although she was glad to have her beloved daughter back, still asked her to stop what she believed was just childish imagination. It made Lucia very sad that her mother could not believe she was telling the truth. The mother of Lucia’s 2 cousins, Francisco and Jacinta was trying very hard to believe. Later in the month, when the 3 children were playing near a place called Valinhos, Our Lady did in fact appear to them again.

Our Lady: *I want you to continue to come to the Cova Da Iria on the 13th of the month; I want you to continue to pray the Rosary every day. In October, I will perform a miracle so that all will believe.*



Valinhos

September 13th

On this day, close to 20,000 people were in the Cova at 12 noon. They were aware that there was a sudden cooling of the air, the sun dimmed and there were raindrops like flower petals.

Something resembling a luminous globe was seen in the sky moving from east to west.

While the crowds marvelled at all of this and realised that certainly something out of the ordinary was happening, only the 3 Children saw Our Lady appear at the top of the holm-oak.

Our Lady: *Continue to pray the Rosary to obtain an end to the war..... do not wear ropes you have round your waist when you sleep.....* (this was a reference to the fact that in order to do penance and make Reparation, the 3 children had started to wear rough ropes round their waist next to their skin; they had also been giving away their food to poor children and eating only the bitter fruit that grew on the trees).....*in October I will perform a miracle for all to believe.*

October 13th, the last of the 6 Apparitions

News had spread widely that a miracle was to happen in the Cova da Iria in Fatima on October 13th. Newspapers in Lisbon carried the story. In other parts of the world, it was announced on radio (there was no television!) that 'Mary, the Mother of God is going to come to a little village in Portugal where she has been appearing since last May, and perform a miracle.'

72,000 people thronged the fields and hillsides of Fatima all that morning---poor peasant people, but also very wealthy people in fine carriages came. Many newspaper reporters came---many of them predicting with scorn that nothing was going to happen.

Just before noon, Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta struggled through the crowds to reach the holm-oak tree. The rain was pouring down and many stood knee-deep in mud. At 12 noon, Our Lady appeared and Lucia spoke to her:

Lucia: *What do you wish of me?*

Our Lady: *I wish a chapel built here in my honour.....I am the Lady of the Rosary..... Continue to pray the Rosary every day.....the war is going to end and the soldiers will return soon.*

Lucia: *I have many things to ask you....if you would cure some sick people....if you would convert some sinners.....*

Our Lady: *They must amend their lives, and ask forgiveness for their sins..... let them offend Our Lord no more.....He is already much offended.*

Our Lady then opened her hands to reveal the light but this time she pointed her hands in the direction of the sun. And was gone.

Lucia: *Look at the sun! Look at the sun!*

The clouds had parted to reveal the sun like a huge revolving disc...it started to rotate, spin rapidly and take on different colours which were reflected in the faces of the crowds....it then plunged in a wild zig-zag towards the terrified crowd who threw themselves on to the mud of the fields thinking the sun was coming straight at them..... and at the last minute, the sun zig-zagged back into the sky.

People stood up and every one of them was bone dry.

The whole event had lasted about 10 minutes. The newspapers reported it as, "The Day the Sun Danced" or "Como O Sol Bailou au Meio Dia em Fatima. It is now referred to as 'the Miracle of the Sun' While all this was taking place, Lucia had 3 visions. The first was of the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph; the second was of Our Lady of Sorrows and of the sorrowing Jesus on his way to Calvary; the third was Our Lady of Mount Carmel, crowned Queen of Heaven, and with the Child Jesus in her arms.



Photograph of the crowd watching the Miracle of the Sun

The lives of the three children turned out exactly as Our Lady had indicated. Francisco and Jacinta did die within 2 years of the Apparitions, having borne painful illnesses with great tolerance, offering it always for the conversion of poor sinners.

Lucia remained on earth for another 82 years. She learned to read and write. She entered the convent in Coimbra and became a Carmelite nun. She wrote 2 wonderful books about the Apparitions----'Fatima in Lucia's Own Words' and 'Calls From the Message of Fatima'.

She returned to Fatima only twice----in 1967 for the 50th Anniversary of the Apparitions and in May 2000 for the beatification of Francisco and Jacinta.

Lucia died on Feb 13th 2002 and her body lies with that of her 2 cousins in the Basilica in Fatima. Her soul, with that of Francisco and Jacinta, is surely in Heaven, as Our Lady promised.



Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us, and bring us Peace.