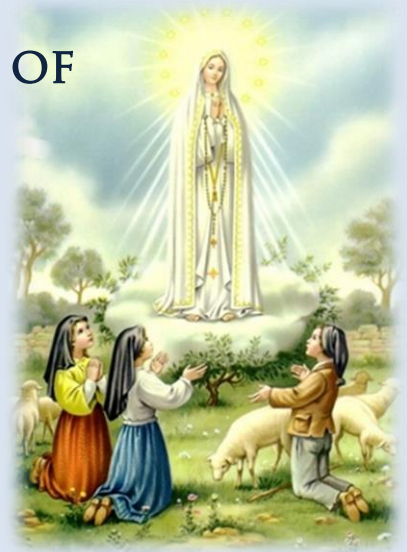


# CELEBRATING THE 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF *Our Lady of Fatima*



**June 14, 2017**

## **The Prayers of the Angel of Peace**

Pope St. John Paul II, on Oct 13, 1991 said, "Fatima is one of the greatest signs of the times in the 20th century because it announces many of the later events, and conditions them on the response to its appeals," (L'Osservatore Romano, October 24, 1991). His Holiness said the greatness of Fatima lies not so much in the miracle, but that it offers the specific response necessary to save mankind from self-destruction. (Haffert, *Message*)

The message of Fatima began, not with the apparitions of Our Lady in 1917, but with the apparitions of the Angel of Peace to the three children, which took place in 1916. By some, these visits by the angel are considered to be the first great 'secret' of Fatima, because at the time none of the children spoke about them. Only Lucia talked about this extraordinary event, 20 years after it happened. In a way, the angel introduced the children to the message that Our Lady would give them. Because they had to be the first to live the message, the angel taught them how to put it into practice.

If we were to summarize the message of the Angel of Peace, it would be the call to pray, the call to sacrifice and a call to offer oneself for the salvation of sinners.

## ***The Vague Angel apparitions of 1915***

Lucia's first encounter with the supernatural took place in 1915. Eight-year-old Lucia and three other girls from the area were pasturing their sheep on the southern slope of the Cabeço. About the event, Lucia wrote: "As far as I can judge, it was the Angel, although at that time he did not venture to make himself fully known." (Dos Santos, 4<sup>th</sup> Memoir: II.1)

What did she see? Lucia writes in her Memoirs:

"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."

The girls were quite frightened.

"We went on praying, with our eyes fixed on the figure before us, and as we finished our prayer, the figure disappeared."

Lucia resolved to say nothing about the event, but her companions told their families. Eventually news reached Lucia's mother. She asked Lucia what she saw:

"'I don't know,' and as I could not explain it myself, I went on: 'It looked like a person wrapped up in a sheet!' As I meant to say that I couldn't discern its features, I added: 'You couldn't make out any eyes, or hands, on it.'"

Lucia's mother was not concerned because no one took the children seriously.

The girls returned with their flocks to the same place, and the very same thing happened again two other times. Both times her companions told the whole story. After the third visit, Lucia's mother heard the talk and confronted Lucia. Once again Lucia told her mother that she didn't know what it was. However, others began to make fun of Lucia. Lucia wrote: "I felt these contemptuous words and

gestures very keenly, as up to now I had been used to nothing but caresses [she was the youngest of the family]. But this was nothing, really. You see, I did not know what the good Lord had in store for me in the future.” (Dos Santos, 2<sup>nd</sup> Memoir: II.1-2)

What did the Angel intend by these visits? To encourage the girls in praying the rosary? We can only speculate.

### ***The first apparition of the Angel***

In the spring of 1916, Lucia and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto, led their sheep to graze at the Cabeço. Rain began to fall, so the children found a place on the hillside to serve as a shelter. Even after the rain had passed and the sun had returned, the little shepherds spent the day at this spot, eating lunch, saying the Rosary and playing games. Lucia was then only nine years old, Francisco was eight, and Jacinta was six.

As they were playing, a strong wind suddenly blew, shaking the trees, and the children saw a figure approaching above the olive trees. Lucia wrote:

“...we began to see, in the distance, above the trees that stretched to the east, a light whiter than snow in the form of a young man, quite transparent, and as brilliant as crystal in the rays of the sun. As he came near we were able to see his features. We were astonished and absorbed and we said nothing to one another. And then he said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me.’

He knelt, bending his forehead to the ground. With a supernatural impulse we did the same, repeating the words we heard him say: ‘My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love You. I ask pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love You.’

After repeating this prayer three times the angel rose and said to us: 'Pray in this way. The hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications.'

And he disappeared. He left us in an atmosphere of the supernatural that was so intense we were for a long time unaware 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 was so powerful and intimate that even among ourselves we could not speak. On the next day, too, this same atmosphere held us bound, and it lessened and disappeared only gradually. None of us thought of talking about this apparition or any pledge of secrecy. We were locked in silence without having willed it." (Dos Santos, 4<sup>th</sup> Memoir II.1)

Lucia, however, after her experience the previous year, did not forget to enjoin silence on her cousins about this and the future apparitions of the angel. It is interesting to note that Francisco, in all three of these apparitions, sees the angel but does not hear anything the angel says. Francisco learns the prayers by hearing his sister and his cousin praying it along with the angel. Only after the apparition, once the supernatural intensity has faded, will Francisco be able to question Lucia and Jacinta about what the angel said.

### ***The Meaning of the first apparition***

The word "angel" means messenger. In this first apparition, the Angel does not identify himself by his name but by his mission. He is the "Angel of Peace." Peace for mankind is the promise of Fatima. Appearing a year later Our Lady said that if the world responds to her message, "An era of peace will be granted to mankind." More recently Sister Lucia has said that all the wars of the past century, after the Fatima apparitions, could have been avoided if the world had responded." (Haffert, *Message*)

The Angel of Peace invites us to pray with him. When we pray for the reign of God in the world, all the angels and saints are joined with us in that prayer. In the Communion of the Saints we need never to think that we are alone in our prayer. The saints and angels in heaven, the souls in purgatory, and those on earth join their voices together daily in a chorus of praise, petition, and thanksgiving to God.

He asks us to pray in reparation for all who deny God, and to believe, to adore, to trust, and to love Him. The definition for reparation is the act or fact of making amends. With respect to God, it means making up with greater love for the failure in love through sin. (Hardon, "Reparation"). In this prayer, not only do we ask forgiveness for those who do not believe, hope, adore or love God, but state that we will make reparation by actively and generously growing in our own relationship with God through our own faith, adoration, hope and love of Him.

The Angel of Peace concluded his message with reference to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. He said these Sacred Hearts eagerly await their prayer of supplication. Why did the Angel say that the Hearts of Jesus and Mary await this prayer? Should he not have said that God awaits it? In His Mercy (as Our Lady of Fatima would reveal in due time) God has entrusted the peace of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, one with the Sacred Heart of Her Son.

We deserve God's Justice but two Hearts were present on Calvary: The Heart of Jesus pierced by a lance and the Heart of Mary pierced by sorrow. These are times of God's Love manifested through those two Hearts. These two Sacred Hearts together restored man to God's grace which the two hearts of Adam and Eve together had lost for us. (Haffert, *Message*)

The Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the angel tells us, want us to cooperate in the salvation of the world through our prayers of humble petition. They are "attentive" to our prayers. We are encouraged to entrust our needs and the needs of others to the listening and loving Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

### ***The 2<sup>nd</sup> Apparition of the Angel***

The 2<sup>nd</sup> apparition, according to Lucia, must have been at the height of the summer, when the heat of the day is so intense that the shepherds had to bring the sheep home before noon, only to let them out in the cooler evening hours. The three children were spending the siesta hours in the shade of the trees which surround the well outside of Lucia's home. Lucia wrote:

“Suddenly we saw the same angel right beside us. ‘What are you doing? Pray! Pray very much! The hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to God, the Most High.’

‘But how are we to make sacrifices?’ I 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, bear and accept with patience the sufferings God will send you.’”

(Dos Santos, 4<sup>th</sup> Memoirs: II.1)

### ***The Meaning of the second apparition***

The apparition begins with the Angel asking: "What are you doing?" This is a good question to keep in our mind as we go through our day. There can be a two-fold lesson here. First, are we attentive on how we choose to spend time? Image your guardian angel appearing to you and saying, "What are you doing?" Do I need to be doing this? Would I be embarrassed? Or is there a better use of my time?

The children, however, were playing. The second lesson of this question points instead to intention. Even the time playing can be offered to God. God wills that we make of whatever we are

doing a sacrifice, something holy. (The word "sacrifice" means "to make holy.") How else can we offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to God? It is through the offering of our daily duty to the Lord.

Whatever we are called to do through the faithful living of our vocation, our state in life, this is how we will grow in holiness, make reparation, and obtain graces for others.

The Angel adds, "The Hearts of Jesus and Mary have merciful designs on you." Their Love can no longer be contained. They desire to enflame all hearts with love of God. God is not a disinterested bystander. He has merciful designs on all of us. His divine providence is at work, the path that will lead us to Him in Heaven. We only need to embrace His will for us, responding with faith, trust and love. We are not asked to do something new. We are asked "above all" to accept whatever God may send us in the course of the day, uniting our hearts to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary who offered all for love of us.

Here, as in the first apparition, the angel identifies himself by his mission rather than his name. He is the Guardian Angel of Portugal. Guardian angels are part of the Church's constant tradition. The role of the guardian angel is both to guide and to guard; to guide as a messenger of God's will to our minds, and to guard as an instrument of God's goodness in protecting us from evil. This protection from evil is mainly from the evil of sin and the malice of the devil. But it is also protection from physical evil insofar as this is useful or necessary to guard the soul from spiritual harm. (Hardon, "Guardian Angel"). Besides our own personal guardian angel, it is also a pious belief that each nation has its own angel to protect it. Isn't it a comforting thought that God has given our country a guardian angel who is working continually to help us? Our angel is probably working very hard. On our part, we can lament the increasing amount of sin and violence present in our country. But what can we do? As the angel tells us, we can offer up the trials of each day in reparation, not only for individuals, but also "to draw down

peace upon your country." (Haffert, *Message*) Here is how we can help bring peace upon our country! Let's not let the simplicity of it deter us from action.

What was the children's reaction to this apparition? Lucia writes: "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 and how it pleases Him; how He receives it for the conversion of sinners. That is why from that moment we began to offer Him whatever mortified us."

(Dos Santos, 4<sup>th</sup> Memoirs: II.1)

### ***The 3<sup>rd</sup> Apparition of the Angel***

The third apparition happened in September or October, for the children we no longer returning home for siesta, but out with their flocks. Lucia writes:

"... the Angel appeared to us for a third time, holding in his left hand a chalice and over it, in the air, was a host from which drops of blood fell into the chalice. Leaving the chalice and the host suspended in the air, the Angel prostrated on the ground and repeated this prayer three times: 'Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly, and I offer You the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifferences by which He is offended. And by the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg the conversion of poor sinners.'

After that he rose, took again in his hand the chalice and the host. The host he gave to me and the contents of the chalice he gave to Jacinta and Francisco, saying at the same time, 'Eat and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ terribly outraged by the ingratitude of men. Offer reparation for their sakes and console God.'



Once more he bowed to the ground repeating with us the same prayer thrice: 'Oh, Most Holy Trinity etc.' and disappeared.

Overwhelmed by the supernatural atmosphere that involved us, we imitated the Angel in everything, kneeling prostrate as he did and repeating the prayers he said." (Dos Santos, 4<sup>th</sup> Memoir: II.1)

### ***The Meaning of the third apparition***

This apparition calls us to a loving and faith-filled recognition of Jesus present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist. What reverence the Angel shows Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. This challenges us to examine our attitude whenever we enter a church. Are we attentive to the Lord? Do we truly recognize He is present in the Eucharist? Or do we walk into a Church or chapel and merely go through the familiar motions of reverence, our hearts and minds engaged in the business of the day? During our time in adoration, do we speak with and adore our Lord, or are we so busy "doing our prayers" that we never really spend time just being with Him, adoring Him present with us? After Communion, do we reflect on the fact that we are now living tabernacles containing Jesus before Whom all the angels of Heaven fall down to adore? We say we believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, but do our actions reflect what we say we believe?

As Blood dripped from the Host to the chalice, the Angel offered Jesus in the Eucharist to the Trinity in reparation. He then prayed that sinners be converted "by the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary".

Nothing offends the Hearts of Jesus and Mary more than irreverence to the Blessed Sacrament. Indeed, Our Lady, following the apparitions of the Angel, would request a special Communion of Reparation on the First Saturday for five months in honor of Her Immaculate Heart, just as Jesus had

previously asked for a Communion of Reparation on the nine First Fridays in honor of His Sacred Heart. When speaking of the desecration of the Eucharist, the Angel may have been referring to events in the following year (1917) when many churches in Portugal were vandalized and the consecrated hosts desecrated. In Lisbon alone, between 1910 and 1917, at least 42 churches and chapels were vandalized and desecrated. (Silva, 67) How many more churches have been vandalized and consecrated hosts desecrated since then? It is in loving adoration of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament that we can make reparation for the many offences Our Lord suffers through His humble presence in the Eucharist.

Francisco did not at once understand what had happened, but he did not want to remain in doubt. His lack of comprehension is very understandable because, apart from his being a child, Communion under the species of wine was not practiced at that time. Jacinta must have received special lights so that, in spite of her young age, she could answer her brother with such conviction.

“...Francisco asked (Lucia): ‘The angel gave you Holy Communion, but what did he give to me and Jacinta?’

‘It was also Holy Communion,’ answered Jacinta with unspeakable happiness. ‘Didn’t you see that it was the Blood that fell from the Host?’

‘I felt that God was in me but I didn’t know how!’ Then, prostrating himself on the ground, he remained for a long time with his sister, repeating the prayer of the angel: ‘Most Holy Trinity...’” (Silva, 66)

As in his two previous appearances, the Angel refers to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. He tells us to pray for the conversion of sinners through Their "infinite merits." We usually apply the word "infinite" only to God. But the Angel is affirming here what was said by St. Louis de Montfort: "Mary is by Grace what Jesus is by nature." Many other saints and doctors of the Church have spoken in a similar manner. Her Heart is truly one with His. Their Hearts form One single Flame of Love.

In Her very first apparition, following the three messages of the angel, Our Lady would explain: "God wishes now to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart." This devotion is the door to life in the Divine Will. In the course of the Fatima apparitions to follow, it would become clear that Jesus now desires "that devotion to the Immaculate Heart of My Mother be placed alongside devotion to My Own Sacred Heart." (Haffart, *Message*)

If there is something "new" in the messages of the angel, perhaps it is that all three times the Hearts of Jesus and Mary were acknowledged. The Angel prepared the way for the Queen of Angels by announcing the essence of the entire message of Fatima, which, in the words of Pope Saint John Paul II, offers to the world "the specific response necessary to save mankind from self destruction." (Haffert, *Message*)

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