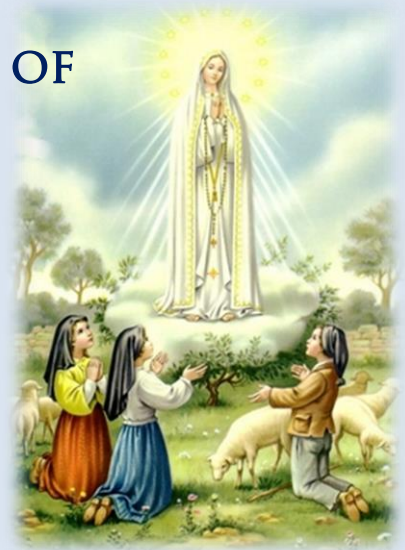


CELEBRATING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF *Our Lady of Fatima*

June 15, 2017

The Story of Fatima



On the first night of the novena, you heard about how the assassination of the King of Portugal led to the Freemasons beginning their anti-Christian government. “The Church suffered bitter persecution from the First Republic; churches were closed; religious demonstrations outside Churches were forbidden; priests and bishops were persecuted and their material possessions destroyed.” (p. 147) From outside appearances, it looked as if Portugal would go the same way as France or Mexico, except for two dedications which bore great fruit. From the beginning of her existence, in the 1500’s, Portugal had permission to celebrate a liturgical feast in honor of her guardian angel. Even more importantly, in 1640, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed the Queen of Portugal, and in 1646, the King and Queen of Portugal gave up wearing a crown, declaring that as Mary is the Queen of Portugal, she alone should wear a crown. With this great love and devotion to our Lady, her rosary, and the guardian angel of Portugal the people of Portugal were prepared to fight for the faith.

In 1916, the same year as the apparitions of the angel to Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta, the people began a Rosary crusade to fight the anticlerical government. They asked their priests to assist in the establishment of the Confraternity of the Rosary with a commitment to pray a daily rosary (in a group) preferably as a family, receive Holy Communion on Sunday, and the enthronement of an image of our Lady of the Rosary in their homes as part of its requirements. In spite of their commander’s disgust,

members of the military and police were joining the crusade. Heaven rejoiced and sent the angel to Cova da Iria – the Cove of Peace – to show the people of the world how to grow in holiness. With the mission of peace, the Angel taught the children to pray, “My God! I believe, I adore, I hope and I love you. I ask forgiveness for all those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love you.” Then he ended with the words, “The hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications.” As the country continued to pray the rosary for Portugal, the angel again appeared in Fatima to command the children to continue to pray and make sacrifices, noting that the Hearts of Jesus and Mary had designs on the children. And in the third visit, the angel taught the children to pray, “Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore you profoundly. 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 with which He is offended. And through the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary I pray for the conversion of sinners.” In this way, Heaven prepared the children for Mary’s appearance in Fatima.

May 13, 1917, after attending the Mass of the Souls, Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta took their sheep to the Cova da Iria. Having eaten the lunch and prayed their rosary, a flash of lightening interrupted the children’s play. It was then that the children saw, “a lady all dressed in white. She was more brilliant than the sun, and she radiated a light more clear and intense than a crystal glass filled with sparkling water, with rays of burning sun shining through it.” (p. 74) Our Lady’s simply requested they continue to pray the rosary and to come to the Cova da Iria, the thirteenth of each month for six months in a row. To the children, Mary’s presence brought peace, and joy. While Lucia saw, heard and spoke with Our Lady, Jacinta only saw and heard her, and Francisco just saw her and had to wait for the girls to tell him what she said. This was the way of every apparition of Mary and the angel. After she had spoken to

them, she ascended to Heaven and they began to pray, "O Most Holy Trinity, I adore you, my God, my God, I love you in the Most Blessed Sacrament."

Life in Fatima was about to change. While the children agreed to keep Mary's visit secret, Jacinta could not keep it silent and was unable to resist telling her mother. Mrs. Marto shared the story with her friends and it quickly spread throughout the village of Aljustrel. When the word reached Lucia's mother, Maria Rosa thought her youngest daughter was telling a lie. Whereas, Manuel Marto, the father of Francisco and Jacinta knew that it was true because Francisco was always honest. Sceptics and devotees to the apparition began to form sides and plan accordingly. Great crowds began to prepare to descend upon the Serra d'Aire in hopes of witnessing the promised June apparition.

June 13th was also the day of St. Anthony's feast and the parish feast. It is a huge celebration with Mass, a solemn procession, music, food, etc. The families of the three children hoped that this would draw the children's attention from the promised visit of the Lady. They encouraged the children to attend the events in the village and to admit that the apparition was a story, but to no avail. The children awoke all excited about once again seeing our Lady. They went to the Cova Da Aria to find that 50-70 people had arrived to join them, but not their own parents. Not wanting people to think they were promoting the apparition, the Marto's went to town to buy cattle, and the Santo's continued their daily routine.

The message of June; Jacinta and Francisco would soon join Our Lady in Heaven, but Lucia would be left to spread the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. To the fear of being alone, Mary said, "...And are you suffering much? Don't be disheartened, I will never leave you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God." (p. 86) Mary asked the children to continue to

pray the rosary, to continue coming on the 13th of each month, and for Lucia to learn to read. As she left, the children had an image of Our Lady holding her heart surrounded by thorns that pierced it.

This apparition led to the children talking to the parish priest. Father Ferreira did not call them liars but he did tell them, "It doesn't seem to me to be a revelation from Heaven...This could also be a deceit of the devil. We will see what the future reveals to us." (p. 89) Now along with the attacks from disbelievers was added doubts and uncertainty, a loss of peace by Lucia, to the point that she did not intend to return on the 13th of July.

July 13th, Our Lady returned peace to Lucia, and the three children went to the Cova da Iria to find approximately 2,000 to 3,000 people praying and singing as they made pilgrimage to the Mother of Our Lord. This time, the two mothers of the children secretly followed for the sake of protecting the children. Our Lady told them, "...continue to pray the Rosary every day in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary, in order to obtain peace in the world and an end to the war, because only she can help you." (97) Before leaving, she promised a miracle and confided a secret to the children (which we will speak of later in this novena.) Having shown them hell, and calling for penance, Mary taught the children to pray: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are in most need of Thy mercy." As we will discuss in later talks, this apparition had a transforming effect on each of the children, their spiritual lives and how they lived the rest of their lives.

The apparition in August suffered a delay due to the interference of the government. The president of the municipality of Ourem decided that it was time to put a stop to this event. First he summoned the children to appear before him on August 11th. The Santo parents thought it would be good for Lucia to appear and hopefully, she would finally admit it was all a lie, putting an end to the

entire affair. But the Marto parents said it was too great a journey and refused to bring Francisco and Jacinta. Mr. Marto went in their place and received a chastisement for not bringing the children. After interrogation by the administrator, and refusing to share the secret with the men present, the administrator ordered Lucia not to return to the Cova.

Since he had failed with the first interrogation, the administrator came to the home of Ti Marto on the 13th of August. He tried to get the children to ride with him and when they refused, he had them walk to the rectory to meet with him and the parish priest. By the time the pastor and the administrator finished their questions, because it was late, the children agreed to ride with the administrator to meet Our Lady of the Rosary at the Cova da Iria. Instead, he drove them to Ourem and locked them in his home. For the next two days, he tried to bribe the children, win their trust, threaten them, and eventually on the 15th, he put Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta in jail with hardened criminals, threatening to fry them in oil if they did not do as he commanded. When all else failed, the children were taken to the rectory and left on the front porch for their parents to claim.

More than 5,000 pilgrims came to the August apparition. They saw flashes of lightening, heard thunder, and watched as the usual cloud covered the holm oak tree, as they waited for the children to come. However it was not until the 19th of August, that Mary appeared to the children as they cared for the sheep in Valinhos. During this apparition Mary told them that they should build two litters for the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary and the remaining donations of money should go to the building a chapel at the Cova.

So many people came to the September 13th apparition that adults had to assist the children in being able to get to the Cova. Mary told them, "Continue to pray the Rosary to obtain the end of the war. In October Our Lord will come, as well as Our Lady of Sorrows and the Mount Carmel, and Saint

Joseph with the Child Jesus to bless the world. God is pleased with your sacrifices, but He doesn't want you to sleep with the rope; wear it only during the day." (p. 134) Everywhere people tried to touch the children, and to interview them until men stepped in to Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta to get home. Unfortunately, all this caused the families crops and fruit trees to be totally destroyed by the pilgrims. If this was not enough, so many people came to see the children that their parents had to sell the sheep. People began threatening to harm them if a miracle did not happen in October. All of these things led to an increased suffering for the Santo and Marto families.

When October 13th arrived, the area was inundated with between 50,000 and 70,000 people; pilgrims, curiosity seekers, skeptics and reporters. Lack of transportation, and rough terrain became more difficult by the continual rain, until everything was buried in the mud. For the first time, the children came to the Cova da Iria with their parents, who hoped to be able to protect them if things turned nasty. While Lucia spoke with Mary, the people witnessed the miracle of the sun and many underwent a conversion. Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta never saw the miracle of the sun. For them it was a time to be visited by the Holy Family and watch Jesus and Joseph bless the world; Our Lady of Sorrows and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and then Our Lady of Mount Carmel followed this. By the time the children had returned home that night, Lucia's braids had been cut from her head, and her scarf was missing. The six apparitions were now over and the time to begin living the message is here. Lucia had a mission to fulfill and it would take many years to complete. For Francisco and Jacinta time was short. As Francisco would frequently say, "A little while longer and Our Lord will take me there near Him and then I will see Him forever." May it be so for all of us!

Bibliography:

Silva, M. Fernando (2008). *The Shepherds of Fatima*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media.