

Prayer

June 2, 2024



The Message of the
Angel of Portugal

Introduction

In May of 1917, three children were tending their families' flocks in the Portuguese countryside when suddenly they saw a beautiful Lady descend from heaven. After talking with her and asking questions, the Lady, before departing, asked them to return to the same location at the same time for the next six months. Those familiar with this story will know that I am referring to the approved apparition of Our Lady of Fatima.

However, many do not know of the great prelude to this apparition, in which God prepared the souls of the three children to receive the visit and the message of Our Lady.

Throughout Salvation History God often prepared his people for the blessings and graces He intended to bestow upon them by sending messengers. The Greek word for "angel" in the New Testament is *ággelos*, which means "messenger." As Pope St. Gregory the Great explained, "the word 'angel' denotes a function rather than a nature. Those holy spirits of heaven have indeed always been spirits. They can only be called angels when they deliver some message.' In other words, when God sends one of the heavenly spirits (like Gabriel) to deliver a message, we call that spirit a "messenger," or "angel." (Heschmeyer, *Catholic Answers*).

In the Old Testament Abraham was visited by three angels who told him his wife would bear a son. Jacob wrestled with an angel. An angel guided Tobias. Joshua, Gideon, the parents of Samson – the Old Testament is replete visits of angel messengers. The visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary at the Annunciation is probably the most well-known angelic visit in the New Testament. Yet the New Testament also records angelic messengers sent to Zachariah, Joseph, the shepherds, Mary Magdalene and the women at the empty tomb, the Apostles, Philip, and Cornelius. The Old Testament prophets, St. John the Baptist, the Apostles – all were sent to prepare the people so that they would have the dispositions necessary to receive God's grace. At Fatima, an angel who called himself the Angel of Peace visited the three children in 1916 in order to prepare them for what was to come.

Many Catholics are aware of the three great secrets of Fatima. These secrets were parts of Our Lady's message to the children that she told them not to reveal until a particular time. Some, however, would consider the three visits by the angel to be the first great 'secret' of Fatima, because at the time of the apparitions of Our Lady, none of the children mentioned these visits. Lucia finally revealed the Angel visits 20 years after they happened.

The First Apparition of the Angel

In the spring of 1916, three shepherd children, Lucia Dos Santos, age ten, and her two cousins, Francisco Marto, age 9, and his sister Jacinta Marto, age seven, were tending their family's flock of sheep near their home, at a place called Cabeço. The children ate their lunch and then said the rosary as quickly as possible, saying on each bead only the first two words of the Hail Mary or the Our Father. The children had begun to play a game, when a strong wind shook the tree tops. They saw "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." (AA 22)

Lucia records in her memoirs:

“Then the angel spoke ‘Do not be afraid. I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me.’

Kneeling on the ground, he bowed down until his forehead touched the earth. 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.’” (Dos Santos 170-171)

What can we learn from this apparition?

First – reverence in prayer. Not everyone can kneel with their heads touching the ground. Yet we can learn that we need to be reverent when we pray. We need to always remember to whom we are speaking: Almighty God. “This means we should pray with respect for his infinite holiness and majesty, avoiding deliberate distractions, daydreaming, slouching, or any form of laziness or indifference.” (AA 23)

Second: This prayer, usually referred to as the Pardon Prayer, becomes a powerful introduction to intercessory prayer for sinners. Praying for the salvation of souls is at the very center of our Lady of Fatima’s message. She would tell them in the August 1917 apparition: “Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to hell, because there are none to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them.” (AA 24)

“When we pray the Pardon Prayer we are praying for faith, hope and charity to be renewed in the world. We need [these virtues] in our own day as desperately as they were needed in 1917. If we heed the words of the Angel of Peace and pray

the Pardon Prayer each day, or as often as we feel moved to do so, we have no idea how many souls will be brought closer to God. By praying for those who are not praying for themselves, we can hope that God will grant to those souls the graces [they need] to begin praying on their own. We can trust that Jesus and Mary will always be attentive to this prayer!” (AA 25)

The Second Apparition of the Angel

The second apparition of the Angel took place at the height of summer of the same year. The three little Shepherds, who had tended their flocks in the morning so as to avoid the hot afternoon sun, were playing during the siesta hours in the shade of the trees that surrounded the Santos well. Suddenly, the same Angel appeared:

“What are you doing?’ he asked. ‘Pray! Pray very much! The 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?’ (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 Angel Guardian, the Angel of Portugal. Above all, accept and bear with submission, the suffering which the Lord will send you.’” (Dos Santos 171)

The angel stressed the need for the children to pray even more than they had been doing. “The angel reminded them again that Jesus and Mary had plans for their lives. They needed to develop a strong prayer life to have the courage and generosity to respond to those plans.” (AA 27)

Let’s briefly break down the statement of the angel, for it contain some of the most important and basic elements of the Fatima message.

Sacrifices – “When the angel said to, ‘make of everything you can a sacrifice’, he was saying to make use of the many opportunities that come our way during the day to surrender our will, our preference, our desire, or our comfort, giving it to God, and possibly extending it to another person, as an offering of love. We deny ourselves in this way in order to give God a sign of our love for Him. Everything we have comes from God’s love for us. When we make sacrifices, we tell God we love Him for Himself, and not only for the good things He gives us.” (AA 28)

Reparation – The children are taught to offer their sacrifices to God in reparation for the sins by which He is offended. Reparation is an act of love to God to help make up for someone’s failure or refusal to love him.... When Christ offered his life on the Cross, he was making up for all the sins of mankind by his perfect obedience, out of love, to the Father. We are invited by Christ to share in His act of reparation by uniting our sufferings and sacrifices with His to atone for the sins of the world.” Not only would these sacrifices make reparation for sins, but they would also obtain the conversion of those who committed those sins. (AA 28-29)

Bearing sufferings humbly –One of the most powerful, but difficult, graces one can receive from God, is “to bear patiently, for the love of God, the trials and difficulties that come our way. This grace given by God is usually given to persons who are coming close to God.... God allows suffering to purify us from sin, to help us resist temptations and to strengthen us in the practice of virtue. Sufferings are often God’s way of purifying our love, drawing us away from attachments to the temporary things of this world so that we can seek after the eternal things of heaven.” (AA 29)

The Fruit of Peace – The angel told the children that peace would be the result of offering their sacrifices in reparation for sins and for the conversion of sinners. When everything is in right order - my relationship with God, within

myself and with others- then I will have peace. Peace can only come from within, from personal conversion of heart, from right ordering.

From then on, Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco began to offer to the Lord all that mortified them. Their favorite sacrifice was to pray for hours on end kneeling with their foreheads touching the ground and repeating the prayer the angel had taught them.

The Third Apparition of the Angel

The third apparition of the Angel was in the fall of 1916, possibly at the end of September or in October. The three little Shepherds were grazing their sheep at the Cabeco. After the second apparition the children were very faithful in praying the Pardon Prayer. They had been kneeling down with their heads on the ground, praying the prayer a number of times. Then, an extraordinary light shone upon them. When they looked up, they saw the angel....

“[...] holding a chalice in his hands, with a host above it from which some drops of blood were falling into the sacred vessel. 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 indifference with which He Himself is offended. And, 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 once more took the chalice and the host in his hands. He gave the host to me, and to Jacinta and Francisco he gave the contents of the

chalice to drink, saying as he did so: 'Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Repair 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." (Dos Santos 172)

The angel gave the children a powerful lesson in Eucharistic devotion. This apparition would instill in the children a very ardent devotion to Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Our Lady of Fatima's first appearance on May 13 was, at that time, the liturgical celebration of Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Since heaven's choices are never made randomly, our Lord chose this last apparition to stress the importance of Catholic Eucharistic devotion.

"The angel held aloft the Body and Blood of Christ for the children to adore. He himself bowed profoundly before the Lord's Eucharistic presence and taught the children to do the same. Eucharistic adoration and receiving Jesus in Holy Communion, along with attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, are the essential elements of our Catholic devotion to Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament." (AA36)

The Angel of Peace taught the children a prayer that focused on the Holy Eucharist. The prayer begins by adoring the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While saying this prayer, the children worshiped the Most Holy Trinity with great reverence. The prayer then goes on to offer the Eucharistic presence of Jesus in all the tabernacles of the world in reparation for outrages, sacrileges and indifference. What exactly is meant by outrages, sacrileges and indifference?

Outrages refer to serious acts of blasphemy and dishonor in regards to the Holy Eucharist. This can refer to the satanic profane use of the Eucharist, desecration of the Holy Eucharist by those who vandalize or destroy Churches and their tabernacles, or even the blatant disregard of consecrated Hosts that are found

on floors, pews, or in other areas of Catholic Churches after Mass. Reparation for these offenses consists of acts of adoration, love and faith to make up for the dishonor shown to the Eucharistic presence of Jesus. (AA 40)

Sacrileges occur when the faithful fail to give the Lord proper honor, especially when receiving him in Holy Communion. St. Paul in his 1st letter to the Corinthians says, “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.” (1Cor 11:27) Catholics must be in the state of grace to receive the Eucharist worthily. One who receives Communion while conscious of a mortal sin on his soul would be guilty of the sin of sacrilege. Regular confession helps us to remain in the state of grace, so that we are always ready to receive the Lord worthily. Saint John Paul II remarked that it was good to see a lot of people receive Holy Communion, but where were these same people when it came to Confession? He was afraid many of them were receiving the sacrament unworthily. The angel’s prayer provides a way to offer reparation for those who are receiving unworthily and to pray for their conversion. (AA 40-41)

Acts of indifference include times when we do not show proper respect and care toward our Lord in the Eucharist. Allowing ourselves to be distracted during Mass, talking needlessly in Church, dressing inappropriately, or sitting passively through Mass are only some examples. Behaviors such as these reveal a lukewarm heart. They indicate that we need to become more ardent in our love of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament. (AA 41-42)

“Through the angel’s three visits, the children were instructed in the ways of prayer; the importance of reparation, intercession and suffering; and the beauty and power of the Eucharist. Over the course of the next six months, the children put into practice all the angel had taught them. They were then ready to receive the first visit of their Blessed Mother”. (AA42)

By learning the lessons of the Angel of Peace, may all our prayers and sacrifices make loving reparation to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, help bring souls closer to God (including ourselves!), and be a means of bringing peace into our own hearts and our world.

May Mary's Heart Immaculate, be forever praised!

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