

FATIMA

The Twofold Prophecy: *The announcement of the great miracle and the secret (Friday, July 13)*

While Lucy remained submerged in the same anguish, and Jacinta and Francisco were troubled, not knowing what to do, the crowd gathered little by little at the Cova da Iria. Many curious people, and already many of the faithful, trusting in the reality of the apparitions, were among them.

Since June 13, some persons had come to recite the Rosary at the foot of the little holm oak. But it was especially Maria Carreira who felt intensely how much this place, where Our Lady had chosen to appear, was already a holy place.

«From that time I always went to the Cova da Iria. At home I felt quite another person. I began to clean up a bit round the tree, and make a little clearing. I took away the gorse and prickles and cut paths with a pruning saw. I took away some of the stones and hung a silk ribbon on one of the branches of the tree. It was I who put the first flowers there

In her increasing fervour, no doubt shortly before July 13, Maria Carreira decided to do more:

«She wanted to mark the spot of the apparitions by a rustic monument: aided by her husband and her children, she raised a portico like the Portuguese peasants love to erect in their celebrations. Two tree trunks, roughly squared off, attached to the ground, supported a third horizontal part, upon which was mounted a cross and two lamps, whose flame was lit day and night...

«They also erected around the holm oak a wall of dry stones about eighty centimetres high. This little wall had on its east side an opening which could be closed by a wooden grate.

«Such was the first “sanctuary” of Fatima.»



On the morning of July 13, Maria Carreira was of course at the Cova da Iria. And this time her husband, her daughters and her son John, the cripple, accompanied her.

I. THE EVENTS OF JULY 13 «MOVED BY A STRANGE FORCE»

«On the following day, when it was nearly time to leave (Lucy relates), I suddenly felt I had to go, impelled by a strange force that I could hardly resist.¹ Then I set out, and called to my uncle's house to see if Jacinta was still there. I found her in her room, together with her brother Francisco, kneeling beside the bed, crying. "Aren't you going?", I asked. "Not without you. We don't dare. Do come!" "Yes, I'm going", I replied. Their faces lighted up with joy, and they set out with me.

«Crowds of people were waiting for us along the road, and only with difficulty did we finally get there.»

Led by her sister-in-law, Maria Rosa agreed to go along to the Cova da Iria, to see what was going on. But they remained at a distance, so as not to be recognized. A touching detail, which illustrates their perplexity, is that they left for the Cova holding a blessed candle in their hand. «If it is anything evil», they said, «we will light the candles!»

Mr. Marto had resolved to be near the children. Not without difficulty, he succeeded in clearing a path for himself through the crowd. There were now a few thousand persons, perhaps three or four thousand. Here is Ti Marto's account:

«And so I got to my Jacinta. Lucy was kneeling a little way off saying the Rosary which the people were answering aloud. When it was finished, she got up so quickly that it seemed as if she were pulled up. She looked to the east and then cried out: "Shut up your umbrellas" (used for the sun), "Our Lady is coming!" I looked as I hard as I could but could see nothing.»
Then the apparition began.

THE APPARITION: THE REVELATION OF THE GREAT SECRET

Lucy looked at the vision without daring to speak to it. Then Jacinta intervened: «Come on, Lucy, speak! Don't you see that She is already there and wants to

1. On several occasions Bernadette felt drawn to the grotto by a mysterious and irresistible impulse. Here the fact is especially remarkable because Lucy had firmly decided not to return there any more.

Speak to you?»²

THE PREDICTION OF A MIRACLE.

– What does Your Grace want of me? I asked.

– I want you to come here on the 13th of next month, and to continue praying the Rosary every day in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary, in order to obtain peace for the 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.

«I then made some requests, but I cannot recall now just what they were.³ What I do remember is that Our Lady said it was necessary for such people to pray the Rosary in order to obtain these graces during the year.»

THE PRAYER OF REPARATORY OFFERING.

«And She continued:

– Sacrifice yourselves 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”.»⁴

THE GREAT SECRET

THE VISION OF HELL. «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 it were a sea 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 conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every

2. Testimony of Theresa dos Santos, one of Lucy's sisters, who was present at the apparition and described it for Father Ferreira.

3. Echoes of these requests are found in the report of Father Ferreira and many other witnesses. Lucy requested several healings, and some conversions. Our Lady said she would heal some, but others no. «As for the crippled son of Maria Carreira, she said that she would not cure him nor relieve him of his poverty, but that he must say the Rosary every day with his family. «One of those recommended was a sick person from Atougia who asked so be taken soon to Heaven. Our Lady gave the reply: “Tell her not to be in a hurry. I know very well when I shall come to take her.”»

4. Lucy revealed this prayer for the first time in a letter of May 13, 1936, and again in 1937, in her Second Memoir. It is not part of the great secret.

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. (It must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me.) The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals.»

Here, in her Third Memoir, Sister Lucy added: «This vision only lasted a moment, thanks to our good Mother in Heaven who, in the first apparition, had promised to take us to Heaven. Were it not for that, I believe we would have died out of fright and fear.»

After the vision of hell

The seers immediately after the apparition of July 13 and the vision of hell. The snapshot was taken by Mario Godinho, near the church in Fatima.

THE GREAT PREDICTION OP OUR LADY.

«Terrified and as if to plead for succour, 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 you by God that He is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine and persecutions against the Church and 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 against the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated.⁵

5) The third part of the secret, written down by Sister Lucy on January 2, 1944, logically belongs here. It has still not been revealed.

«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. 6

«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.»]

THE URGENT SUPPLICATION FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS. «When you say the Rosary, say after each mystery: “O my Jesus, forgive us, save us from the fire 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 ATMOSPHERIC SIGNS

While this was going on, Ti Marto relates, «the crowd was so silent that you could have heard a pin drop.» And, like Maria Carreira and some other witnesses, Mr. Marto, who was very near the seers, perceived an unintelligible murmur: «then I began to hear a sound, a little buzzing rather like a mosquito in an empty bottle. But I couldn't hear any words!» This mysterious murmur was heard by only a few rare witnesses.

However, two other unusual phenomena were noticed by a much greater number: «The luminosity of the sky noticeably decreased, as during an eclipse, the whole time the ecstasy of the children lasted.» At the same time, the temperature, which was very hot, went down noticeably, and the tint of the light was modified. The atmosphere became yellow as gold.

In addition, a whitish cloud, rather pleasant to look at, formed around the seers. Here is the testimony of Mr. Marto:

«I saw what looked like a little greyish cloud resting on the oak tree, and the sun's heat lessened and there was a delicious fresh breeze. It hardly seemed

6. In the two Memoirs of Lucy, the texts of the great prophecy of the secret are identical, word for word. However, there is this difference: in the Fourth Memoir, Sister Lucy added this last phrase, which thus takes on capital importance. Logically, it comes right before the conclusion: “In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph.”

like the height of summer.

«Finally, after Lucy interrogated the vision for the last time, we heard a large clap of thunder and the little arch which had been put up to hang the two lanterns on, trembled as if in an earthquake. Lucy, who was still kneeling, got up so quickly that her skirts ballooned around her, and pointing to the sky she cried out: “There She goes! There She goes!” And then after a moment or two: “Now you can’t see Her any I more.” All this, too, was for me a great proof!»

However, as many people as there were who noticed these things, it seemed that not all had equally noticed these initial extraordinary physical phenomena. We will return later on to this surprising disparity of perceptions.

The curious crowd pressed around the seers until they were in danger of suffocation. Mr. Marto, grabbing Jacinta in his arms, managed to carry her to the road. There, a young engineer from the area, Mario Godinho, who had agreed to drive his mother to the Cova da Iria although he himself was incredulous, offered them his automobile. But before returning to Aljustrel, they stopped before the church at Fatima, where Mario Godinho wanted to photograph the three seers. Thus, he took the first photograph that we have of them.

What were the two thousand pilgrims thinking that day, as they left the Cova da Iria? This time we have a document which gives us a clue. On their return, the evening of July 13, several parishioners of Olival came to report their impressions to their good parish priest, Father Faustino Jose Jacinto Ferreira. The latter made a report in the Bulletin of the Council of Vila Nova de Ourem, O Ouriense, for which he was responsible: «Everybody», he writes, «or at least the great majority, were satisfied simply to see the way the children presented themselves, spoke (with the Vision), asking questions, relating requests,... and awaiting the moment of the response, which nobody else heard.

«This, I am told – for I was not a witness – in the presence, according to various estimates, of eight hundred, a thousand, well over a thousand, and even two thousand people, who in the most admirable silence recited prayers at one moment, made supplications at another, and at other times wept.»

After the account of the end of the apparition, the dean of Olival, visibly won over by the enthusiasm of his faithful, concluded: «It was simply admirable; but for the moment, I say nothing more.»

Indeed, prudence was a necessity. This article, the first – it appeared on July 20 –, would also be the only one, in all the Catholic press, to speak openly in favour of the events of Fatima. This extreme reserve would last until the day after October 13.

II. THE TWOFOLD MESSAGE OF JULY 13

In the whole cycle of the apparitions, that of July 13 is unquestionably the most important. It is the central apparition which the two previous ones prepared for and the three subsequent ones were to confirm in a striking manner by their great miracles. «Indeed it was on that day», Lucy writes, «that Our Lady deigned to reveal to us the secret.»

So true is this that the message of July 13 appears to us very clearly divided into two parts: there are the words which were divulged immediately, and the long text of the secret which the seers carefully kept hidden. However, what is important is that the two parts of the message are very closely connected.

THE PROPHECY OF A MIRACLE

The great novelty of this apparition, the decisive word which would attract innumerable crowds to the Cova da Iria for the last three months, is the announcement of a great miracle.

Like Bernadette at Lourdes, it was Lucy who requested this of Our Lady. Did she do this of her own accord, or by the counsel of her parish priest or family? We do not know. In any case, she presents her request: «I would like to ask You to tell us who You are, and to work a miracle so that all may believe that You are appearing to us.» Although the request of Lucy reminds us of Bernadette's request, the response of Our Lady is very different: At Lourdes, when Bernadette followed the advice of Father Peyramale and asked Her to make the rosebush in the grotto bloom, Our Lady was content to smile. In this case, and here is the decisive, prodigious event, She accedes to her request: «Continue to come each month. In October, I will say who I am and what I want, and I will work a miracle so that all may believe.»

Thus She announced three months in advance the place, day and hour of the promised great miracle. It was a clear promise, without any condition or the least ambiguity. On August 19 and September 13, Our Lady repeated it in the same terms. Never before had Heaven shown such condescendence to the demands of men, to guarantee for them with certitude the truth of a message.

Already, by this solid link between the prophecy and the miracle, the event of Fatima is unheard of, incomparable.

THE GREAT SECRET

It is significant that Our Lady made this announcement of the «miracle so that all will believe» immediately before revealing to the three seers Her great prophetic secret. This was to make them understand, in all clarity, that the miraculous realization of the miracle would guarantee the divine origin of the secret, as well as the fulfilment of this prophetic secret. Thus the great miracle of October 13 was closely associated, by the Blessed Virgin Herself, not only with the whole of Her message, but especially with the prophetic secret of July 13.

We will not comment now on this text, which is packed with meaning. It is the expression of insistent requests, a solemn warning followed by historical prophecies of a worldwide significance. The history and content of this extraordinary message, which we can affirm is unprecedented in all the history of the Church, will be the subject of the next two volumes of our work. We will show, in offering a literal commentary, how it has been fulfilled in every respect, point by point. Let us content ourselves here with only those remarks necessary for a good understanding of subsequent events.

IN THE DIVINE FURNACE.

It was when Our Lady «opened Her hands again as in the two previous months», that the children had the vision of hell. This month, no doubt the Blessed Virgin remained in this attitude while She revealed the secret. And the supernatural light which they received then was not limited to the vision of hell. Once again, as on May 13 and June 13, they enjoyed a sort of vision of God:

«In the third apparition (Lucy reports), Francisco seemed to be the one on whom the vision of hell made the least impression, though it did indeed have quite a considerable effect on him. What made the most powerful impression on him and what wholly absorbed him was God, the Most Holy Trinity, perceived in that light which penetrated our inmost souls.

«Afterwards he said: “We were on fire in that light which is God, and yet we were not burnt! What is God?... We could never put it into words. Yes, that is something indeed which we could never express! But what a pity it is that He is so sad! If only I could console Him!”»

This great sorrow of God, which reveals to us His Fatherly Heart, outraged by our sins, and as it were overwhelmed by the chastisements which these sins justly draw down upon us, profoundly marked the soul of Francisco during the first three apparitions. He never forgot it, and his whole ideal would be to pray and sacrifice himself to «console God».

THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY.

The apparition of July 13 also marks the high point of the revelation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the centre and very heart of the whole message. The three apparitions of the Angel, followed by those of Our Lady on May 13 and June 13, had prepared this revelation which the great secret expresses in all its fullness. But it is a remarkable fact that in the last three apparitions there is no more mention of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This great design of divine mercy for the salvation of the world would not be unveiled until later...

That is why, on July 13, Our Lady solemnly announced that She would come back. She kept Her promise and returned on December 10, 1925 at Pontevedra, to manifest once again Her Heart pierced with thorns, and to request the practice of the communion of reparation on the five First Saturdays of the month. And She came back one more time, on June 13, 1929, at Tuy, to ask for the consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart.

Russia? On July 13, Lucy did not yet know what this word meant. Yet she always affirmed having heard the words, «a Russia». Similarly, she is sure of having heard «no reinado de Pio XI». «We did not know if it was a Pope or a king», she confided to Father Jongen in 1946, «but the most Holy Virgin spoke of Pius XI.» As for the announcement of «a night illumined by an unknown light», it was fulfilled to the letter during the night of January 25-26, 1938.7 An immense, engrossing history which we follow step by step in all its details... right up to our own crucial hour.

A PERFECT HARMONY

Let us point out here, since it is important for critical purposes, what perfect harmony there is between the two parts of the message, that which was divulged immediately (Fatima I), and that which remained secret a long time (Fatima II). The convergence of themes, which marks the profound unity of the same message pronounced by the Blessed Virgin the same day, is striking.

7. In Volume II, we will publish the scientific documents which testify to this. Among others, we will quote long excerpts from the Bulletin of the Astronomical Society of France, from the year 1938.

“ONLY SHE CAN HELP YOU.”

The secret of the secret is that God wills to give us everything through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin, in response to our devotion to Her Immaculate Heart, not only spiritual goods but even temporal peace, and this for the whole world. Has anyone noticed that one of the words of Our Lady, faithfully reported by Lucy to her parish priest the next day, has the same vigour, the same exclusivity? «Continue to pray the Rosary every day... to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war, for only She can help you.» It is , equivalent to saying: there is no salvation for us except through the Blessed Virgin; this was already the essential core of the secret of Fatima which was disclosed as early as July, 1917.

THE OBSESSIVE FEAR FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS, which is the other key of the secret, with its terrible first part, the gripping vision of hell, was clearly manifested at the very moment of the apparition, inscribed on the faces of the seers. All the witnesses in fact noticed the great sorrow which suddenly overwhelmed them. Those who were very near were very much moved by the sudden cry which fell from the lips of Lucy. At this moment, says Ti Marto, «Lucy took a deep breath, went as pale as death, and we heard her cry out in terror to Our Lady, calling Her by name.»

Is it not this same fright, distorting their faces, which is still visible on the photograph of the three seers taken by Mario Godinho, a few minutes after the apparition?

“PRECIOUS PEARLS.” It was also on July 13 that Our Lady revealed the only two prayers She taught the children, the one just before the secret, to invite them to sacrifice, and the other right after, to complete each decade of the Rosary. These are two very brief formulas, which show once again the humility and also the great pedagogy of the Virgin Mary. They are almost ejaculatory prayers which can easily come unceasingly to our lips. They are two precious pearls which, in a few words, synthesize the whole essence of Her message...

AN URGENT SUPPLICATION FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS

Right after the end of the secret, Our Lady continued: «When you say the Rosary, say after each mystery:

“O my Jesus, forgive us,
deliver us from the fire of hell;
lead all souls to Heaven,

especially those most in need.”» 8

“O MY JESUS.” The two prayers taught by Our Lady are addressed to Her Son, to Jesus, our “God-Saviour”. This alone suffices to destroy the calumnies of the reformists opposed to Fatima under the fallacious pretext that Her message is not Christocentric enough! What an error! At Fatima, Our Lady willed to add to the great prayer in Her honour this short invocation addressed to Jesus the Saviour. Inserted between the Gloria Patri to the Holy Trinity, the Our Fathers and the Aves, which supplicate our Father and Mother in Heaven, this little prayer enlarges the divine horizon of our Rosary.

“FORGIVE US!” The thought of our sin, this sin so profoundly rooted in us and 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 the most Blessed Virgin which does not make some allusion to it. Each of the four prayers taught to us, brief as they are, all make some mention of it. This prayer, which is no exception, echoes the litany of Paters and Aves: “Forgive us our trespasses”, and “pray for us sinners”. 9

“DELIVER US FROM THE FIRE OF HELL!” This supplication, the most urgent, refers of course to the vision of hell. The concrete evocation of its terrifying fire was willed expressly to call to mind the description of hell sketched by Lucy. Yes, it is willed by Our Lady, who is the sovereign teacher, that this word hell always remind us of this devouring fire, which most exactly expresses its terrible reality.

«Livrai nos do fogo do inferno!» The expression is strong and vigorous, and deliberately so. Not only «preserve us», but more exactly, «deliver us»! It makes explicit the last request of the Our Father, with the same verb, «but deliver us from evil». This is to say that hell is not for us an imaginary and far off danger, from which we can escape by ourselves. No, it is the just and certain culmination of rebellions against God and hardening of the heart, where we would go without the pardon of Jesus, our Saviour, and without the help of

8. Here we give the text from the Fourth Memoir, in the most literal translation. However, the version usually adopted is substantially exact: “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of Thy mercy. This beautiful prayer has been quoted with a number of variants. and it is still interpreted in various ways. Some believe that the second request concerns the souls in Purgatory. In an appendix we will justify the version we have adopted, and the explanation we propose.

9. Read the beautiful parallel established by our Father between the Our Father and the Hail Mary. CRC 182, October 1982.

His grace, full of mercy. Without Him, without His Passion and His redeeming Blood, we are already lost. We owe our salvation to Him alone, and He desires that we ask Him: «O my Jesus, deliver us from the fire of hell!»

The prayer of Fatima is very close to what the liturgy says: «From eternal death, deliver us, O Jesus!» implore the litanies. And the prayer of the Roman Canon, stating clearly the intention of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, says: «Deliver us from eternal damnation (ab aeterna damnatione nos eripi), and number us in the flock of Thine elect.» The same vigorous expression is found in the Litany of the Saints, and this time it makes quite clear who is meant by the “us”: it is we ourselves and all our dear ones who have the faith, and we implore pardon for ourselves: «That You would deliver our souls and the souls of our brethren, relations and benefactors, from eternal damnation, we beseech You, hear us! Ut animas nostras . . . ab aeterna damnatione eripias, te rogamus audi nos!»

It is an urgent supplication, but it is also full of an immense trust. For in hope we are already sure of obtaining the forgiveness of Our Saviour, and eventually reaching the happiness of Heaven... Thus, our horizons are enlarged, leading us to the second part of the prayer:

“LEAD ALL SOULS TO HEAVEN.” Our ardent desire to be saved, ourselves and our dear ones, is necessarily extended to all souls. Christ offered His life for all men, without exception, and God His Father «wishes to save all men»; so why shouldn't all souls go to Heaven? The little prayer becomes... a universal prayer. It is mystical, and it expresses a true and ardent charity. «Lord», Father de Foucauld loved to repeat, «if it could be possible, make all men go to Heaven!»

«All souls», «as almas todas», or in the version most often quoted by Sister Lucy, «as alminhas todas», with this diminutive of commiseration, «all these poor souls», just as we would say, «poor sinners». «Levai para o Ceu!» Lead them to Heaven! The word can hardly be translated: take them, carry them, lift them right up to Heaven! And perhaps even better, as Father Simonin and Dom Jean-Nesmy translate: «Draw all souls to Heaven.» It reminds us of the words of Jesus on the evening of Palm Sunday, just before entering into the work of His redemptive Sacrifice: «“Now is the prince of this world cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” He said this to show by what death He was going to die.» «Omnia traham ad meipsum.» Lifted up on the Cross, like a new brazen serpent, He will heal all those who look at Him, the only Saviour, «Whom they have pierced». And soon, ascending

to Heaven, He will take a host of prisoners with Him.

“ESPECIALLY THOSE MOST IN NEED.” These last words bewildered Canon Formigao. Indeed they are surprising: How can we ask Jesus to lead all souls to Heaven, and thus all without exception, and then immediately add a formula which on the contrary is partial and restrictive? The words, “all... especially” seem to defy simple logic.

And yet the formula is surely authentic, and the difficulty disappears when we consider that it concerns the salvation of souls, which is always a pure and infinite mercy of God. The logic here is one of love, full of implications which cause the too narrow framework of the exact relation of the concepts to explode. The suppliant soul, in the zeal of its love, would like to obtain from the Divine Mercy the salvation of all souls... but it knows that its request cannot be heard in all its extension... it does not merit it. In this case, it immediately clarifies its request, and says to God: “I ask You to have mercy at least on some souls, and most especially, as a priority, on the souls of the greatest sinners, who most surely risk being lost!” Such is the logic of the saints...

This is how the three seers understood this prayer, in the light of its immediate context, the vision of hell.¹⁰ A striking passage from the Memoirs shows us how the little prayer of Our Lady often returned to the lips of Jacinta, and not only between decades of the Rosary, but to implore often the salvation of souls:

«Jacinta often sat thoughtfully on the ground or on a rock, 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! Pardon us, save us from the fire of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need.”

«Now», Sister Lucy continues, «Your Excellency will understand how my own impression was that the final words of this prayer refer to souls in greatest

10. See the letter of Sister Lucy to Father Gonçalves, May 18, 1941: The last supplication has been applied to the souls in Purgatory, “because it seems that the meaning of these last words were misunderstood; but I believe that Our Lady was referring to souls in the greatest danger of damnation. This continues to be my impression, and no doubt you will believe the same thing after having read the part of the secret I have written down, and knowing that Our Lady taught this prayer during the same apparition.” (*Memorias e cartas*, p. 443).

danger of damnation, or those who are nearest to it.»

These last words turn our attention towards those in their last agony. In all the myriads of Ave Marias we shall have prayed all during our life, we ask the Mother of Mercy to pray for us «at the hour of our death». But all these hardened souls who outraged Her unceasingly and never invoked Her? It is for them, in their place that Our Lady makes us pray during our Rosary.

This priority accorded the greatest sinners, was not understood, and was the principal reason why the original version of the prayer was abandoned for so long in favour of another, more classical one. Yet this prayer brings us to the full reality of the Gospel. It is the priority given to the erring sheep for the twofold reason that it is lost, and that its salvation will show more strikingly the untiring Love of its Good Shepherd! It was St. Therese of the Child Jesus who, «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 at any price from going to hell», the horrible criminal whose three murders had monopolized the news. On him also, «this poor unfortunate Pranzini», did she wish to pour out the salvific and «divine dew» of the Blood of Jesus.

We will see that this concern for the salvation of the greatest sinners is a frequent theme in later revelations granted to Sister Lucy. It was equally the constant thought of Jacinta:

«Jacinta remained on her knees like this for long periods of time, saying the same prayers over and over again. From time to time, like someone awaking from sleep, she called out to her brother or myself: “Francisco! Francisco! Are you praying with me? We must pray very much, to save souls from hell! So many go there! So many!”»

THE LITTLE PRAYER OF REPARATORY OFFERING

Sister Lucy humbly confesses in her second Memoir: «During this month (June 13 - July 13), I lost all enthusiasm for making sacrifices and acts of mortification... To reawaken my fervour which had grown cold, Our Lady told us: “Sacrifice yourselves for sinners, and say often to Jesus, especially each time you make a sacrifice:

‘O Jesus, it is for love of You,
for the conversion of sinners,

and in reparation for sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”»

Here is a very simple prayer, whose significance is immediately grasped. Again it is to Jesus-Saviour that our offering is addressed, but in addition to the desire to please Him through love, in accomplishing the action we offer Him, two other intentions are added. And the whole richness of this prayer consists precisely in their indissoluble bond of reciprocal implication, which causes each of these intentions to remind us of the other two. Note how the thought of the salvation of sinners is found inserted there like a wedge between the two acts of love for Jesus and Mary. This shows to what extent the missionary intention is at the very heart of the message of Fatima, as necessarily flowing from the true love of the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

This prayer is also an act of reparation, wonderfully implementing the two prayers by which the Angel invites us to repair the offences done to God our Father, and to Jesus-in-the-Host, «present in all the tabernacles of the world». Here, the reparation is addressed to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We will not insist on that point here, for it will be the subject of the great revelation of Pontevedra...

Jacinta, Lucy and Francisco, photographed between July 13th and August 13th by Joachim Antonio do Carmo, in the garden of the Marto family.

«"O, my dear Our Lady! I'll say as many Rosaries as You want!" And from then on, he 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...»

III. FROM JULY 13 TO AUGUST 13:

A HIDDEN AND HEROIC LIFE

SACRIFICES TO SAVE SOULS FROM HELL. Sister Lucy never ceased to repeat that the vision of hell profoundly marked the souls of the three seers.¹¹ On May 13, 1936, she would even write: «... This vision which would make such an impression on all three, especially Jacinta, whose character was even changed.» And in her third Memoir:

11. In Volume II, we will quote all the relevant texts of Lucy's incomparable Third Memoir during the chapter on the vision of hell. Indeed they are the most eloquent and authoritative commentaries.

«... some of the things revealed in the secret made a very strong impression on Jacinta. This was indeed the case. The vision of hell filled her with horror to such a degree that every penance and mortification was as nothing in her eyes, if it could only prevent souls from going there.»

THE LITTLE PRAYER OF OFFERING. So much did she take to heart sacrifices for the conversion of sinners that she never let any occasion go by, and each time she repeated the prayer taught by Our Lady, thus conferring on the sacrifice offered its whole meritorious value as an act of love, both reparatory and missionary:

«Ever since the day Our Lady taught us to offer our sacrifices to Jesus, any time we had something to suffer or agreed to make a sacrifice, Jacinta asked: “Did you already tell Jesus it’s for love of Him?” If I said I hadn’t, she answered: “Then I’ll tell Him”, and joining her hands, she raised her eyes to Heaven and said: “Oh Jesus, it is for love of You, and for the conversion of sinners!” »

A SUPERNATURAL DISCRETION. Although our three shepherds, with a charming spontaneity, did not fear to confide to one another all their acts of virtue, without the least return for themselves, with all other people they always kept absolute discretion.

This is why Lucy decided not to make known the pressing invitation of Our Lady, «sacrifice yourselves for sinners», and the prayer of offering, although they were not part of the secret properly speaking. Jacinta was very surprised at this:

«Why can’t we say that the Lady told us to make sacrifices for sinners?» And Lucy, with a mature supernatural insight, which was also a great common sense, answered quite simply: «So they won’t be asking what kind of sacrifices we are making!»

What wisdom in this decision! Since they had no priest to confide in, and Our Lady Herself was their guide, they felt irresistibly moved by a special grace to follow Her inspirations. Without this absolute discretion, all their heroic sacrifices which today arouse our admiration – to the very extent that they made sure to keep them carefully hidden – would only have been vain hypocrisy and proud ostentation.

Moreover, their secret sacrifices and prayers did not prevent them from keeping, in ordinary life, the habits natural to children that age. «We continued to play as before», Sister Lucy explains to Father Jongen. «Some people said to us:

“You saw the Holy Virgin, therefore you should no longer amuse yourselves.” But what could we do, if not amuse ourselves? Should we have remained immobile, like the statue of our Foundress on her altar?» These words, which show perfect psychological and spiritual health, also witness to a true mystical spirit. It was not the role of children of that age to give lessons in mortification to those around them. Our Lady asked them to make sacrifices in secret, and it is their example that now instructs us.

“YOU WILL HAVE MUCH TO SUFFER.” «The doubt which had tormented me from June 13 to July 13», Sister Lucy writes, «disappeared during this last apparition. Thanks to Our Good Lord, this apparition dispelled the clouds from my soul and my peace was restored.»

However, sufferings would not be lacking to the three seers, who on May 13 had freely offered themselves as victims. While awaiting the persecutions from the adversaries of the Church, Lucy continued to feel cruel persecutions from within her own family. It was clear that for Maria Rosa, since she had to choose between the testimony of her daughter and confidence in her parish priest, the choice must necessarily be in favour of the priest...

THE TRIAL OF THE THIRD INTERROGATION

«My mother (Lucy recalls) was more and more distressed by the progress of events. She made a new effort to oblige me to confess that I had lied. One day, she called me and said that she was going to take me to the priest’s house. “When we get there, you will kneel down, tell him you lied, and ask for pardon.”» 12

PRAYERS AND TEARS. «As we were going past my aunt’s house, my mother went inside for a few minutes. This gave me a chance to tell Jacinta what was happening. Seeing me upset, she shed some tears and said: “I’m going to get up and call Francisco. We’ll go and pray for you at the well. When you get back, come and find us there.”

«In effect (Lucy writes), we chose this spot for our more intimate talks, our fervent prayers, and our tears as well – and sometimes very bitter tears they were. We mingled our tears with the water of the same well from which we drank. Does this not make the well itself an image of Mary, in whose Heart we dried our tears and drank of the purest consolation?»

12. This visit to the presbytery undoubtedly took place on July 14, the day after the apparition, for the interrogation by Father Ferreira bears that date.

AT THE PRIEST'S HOUSE. «As we walked along, my mother preached me a fine sermon. At a certain point, I said to her, trembling: "But mother, how can I say that I did not see, when I did see?" My mother was silent. As we drew near the priest's house, she declared: "Just you listen to me! What I want is that you should tell the truth. If you saw, say so! But if you didn't see, admit that you lied."

«Without another word, we climbed the stairs, and the good priest received us with the greatest kindness and even, I might almost say, affection. He questioned me seriously, but most courteously, and resorted to various stratagems to see if I would contradict myself, or be inconsistent in my statements. Finally, he dismissed us, shrugging his shoulders, as if to imply: "I don't know what to make of all this!" » 13

"OUR LADY WILL ALWAYS HELP US." «On my return, I ran to the well, and there were the two of them on their knees, praying. As soon as they saw me, Jacinta ran to hug me, and then she said: "You see! We must never be afraid of anything! The Lady will help us always. She's such a good friend of ours!" »

«BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED»

Since July 13 the flow of curious people, as well as the faithful who came to the Cova da Iria to recite the Rosary, continued to increase. Lucy relates: «My poor mother worried more and more, as she saw the crowds who came flocking from all parts.» Lucy's mother said: «These poor people come here, taken in by your trickery, you can be sure of that, and I really don't know what I can do to undeceive them.»

Frozen with obstinacy in this attitude, Maria Rosa became harsher and harsher towards her daughter. The following episode shows it:

«A poor man who boasted of making fun of us, of insulting us and of even

13. During the months that followed, the attitude of Father Ferreira remained disturbing. It would seem reasonable that he tended to be in favour of authenticity. For he was well aware that there was no evidence, no fact, no words attributed to the Apparition which would betray a diabolical manifestation; on the contrary. This explains his cold objectivity and even amiability during the interrogations, and, as we will see, some of his public declarations.

Yet, at the same time, for reasons that we do not know, he could not bring himself to admit that these were authentic apparitions. This whole affair caused him so much trouble, and exhausted him so, that his animosity towards the seers and the Marto parents only increased... But let us leave this delicate question to return to Jacinta and Francisco.

going so far as to beat us, asked my mother one day: "Well, ma'am, what have you got to say about your daughter's visions?" "I don't know", she answered. "It seems to me that she's nothing but a fake, who is leading half the world astray." "Don't say that out loud, or somebody's likely to kill her. I think there are people around here who'd be only too glad to do so." "Oh, I don't care, just as long as they force her to confess the truth. As for me, I always tell the truth, whether against my children, or anybody else, or even against myself."

«And, truly, this was so. My mother always told the truth, even against herself. We, her children, are indebted to her for this good example.»

In the meantime, poor Lucy, who also had to give testimony in favour of the truth, suffered terribly. Indeed from that time, any reason to persecute the seer seemed justified. All the accounts, ringing out with truth as they do, show us to what degree of heroic suffering Lucy endured, to certify the veracity of her testimony.

THE LOSS OF THE COVA DA IRIA. «In the intimacy of my family, there was fresh trouble, and the blame for this was thrown on me. The Cova da Iria was a piece of land belonging to my parents. In the hollow, it was more fertile, and there we cultivated maize, greens, peas, and other vegetables. On the slopes grew olive trees, oaks and holm oaks.

«Now, ever since the people began to go there, we had been unable to cultivate anything at all. Everything was trampled on. As the majority came mounted, their animals ate all they could find and wrecked the whole place. My mother bewailed her loss: "You now", she said to me, "when you want something to eat, ask the Lady for it!" My sisters chimed in with: "Yes, you can have what grows in the Cova da Iria!"

«These remarks cut me to the heart, so much so that I hardly dared to take a piece of bread to eat. To force me to tell the truth, as she said, my mother, more often than not, beat me soundly with the broom-handle or a stick from the woodpile near the fireplace.»

Granted, one can excuse the recriminations of Maria Rosa, who being physically and emotionally exhausted could only with difficulty feed her family. What is certain is that outwardly the apparitions were nothing but a source of sorrowful trials for the seers as well as for their parents. At least nobody could say that they drew any kind of profit from them, whether honours or riches... Quite the contrary.

God is terribly demanding for His privileged ones, and no doubt the hardest thing for Lucy was this opposition of her mother, whom she continued to cherish tenderly, for her mother was also suffering.

"I SAW THE HAND OF GOD IN IT ALL." «... In spite of this, mother that she was, she then tried to revive my failing strength. She was full of concern when she saw me so thin and pale, and feared I might fall sick. Poor mother! Now, indeed, that I understand what her situation really was, how sorry I feel for her! Truly, she was right to judge me unworthy of such a favour, and therefore to think I was lying.

«By a special grace from Our Lord, I never experienced the slightest thought or feeling of resentment regarding her manner of acting towards me. As the Angel had announced that God would send me sufferings, I always saw the hand of God in it all. The love, esteem, and respect which I owed her, went on increasing, just as though I were most dearly cherished. And now, I am more grateful to her for having treated me like this, than if she had continued to surround me with endearments and caresses.»

In reading the letters that the little boarding student at the college of Vilar, near Porto, wrote to her mother from 1921 to 1925, we discover with amazement that the seer's heart was filled with a very tender and overflowing affection for her mother... as if she had always been treated with tenderness. Such virtue is surely the mark of a soul profoundly abandoned to the action of grace.



OUR LADY OF VICTORIES CHURCH,
consecrated on March 1, 1997
by H.E. Bishop Fellay,
is a mission church of the
Society of St. Pius X
* * *

The SOCIETY OF ST. PIUS X
is an official congregation
of Roman Catholic priests
and celebrates *exclusively* the

TRADITIONAL LATIN TRIDENTINE MASS, the Mass
canonized for all time by order of the Council of
Trent through the Papal Bull *Quo Primum*
by Pope St. Pius V in 1570.



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