

The Immaculate Heart of Mary Pierced with Thorns

(Wednesday, June 13)

I. THE EVENTS : THE FESTIVAL AT THE VILLAGE

«The 13th of June, feast of St. Anthony, was always a day of great festivities in our parish», Lucy relates. «My mother and my sisters, who knew how much I loved a festival, kept saying to me: “We’ll see if you’ll leave the festival just to go to the Cova da Iria, and talk to that Lady!”» Indeed the feast was one of the most solemn: was not the Saint at the same time national Patron of Portugal and Patron of the parish?¹

In Fatima on that day, «Mass was sung in honour of the great patron, and there was also a sermon and a procession. Youths and girls, then as now, prepared for the festivities which the saint was expected to patronise. The bells rang and alms and food were distributed. Fathers of families drove ox-carts decorated with branches of trees, flowers, flags and bedspreads, carrying wife and children to the festival, where some 500 people would be rewarded with free meals. They passed round the church several times and then stopped in front of the veranda where the priest gave his blessing.»

What an attraction for the children! But for our three seers the question did not even arise: it was all decided; since they had promised Our Lady, they would go to the Cova da Iria! Only the prohibition of their parents could have prevented them. But this order did not come, because the parish priest had counselled them, very wisely, to leave the children free to do as they wished.

Jacinta desired very much that her mother accompany her. «Oh, mother», she kept saying, «come with us tomorrow to see Our Lady!» But on the morning of the 13th, when the little child woke up, her older brother told her that their parents had already left, and would not be back until evening. Not knowing what to do, Ti Marto had found an escape. Not daring to go

¹ St. Anthony was Portuguese. He was born at Lisbon in 1195 and died at Padua on June 13, 1231. Originally he was a Canon of St. Augustine, but later he joined the Franciscans of Coimbra. He is one of the most popular Portuguese saints.

to the Cova da Iria, and to avoid taking part in the festival, he decided to go with his wife to Pedreira to buy some oxen. «When we get back», he told Olimpia, «this affair of the children will be finished with. What a business it is to be sure!»

In haste our three shepherds led their flock to the Valinhos, for the grass was abundant there, and they could return more quickly to their house, in a little more than an hour. «On the day itself, nobody said a single word to me», writes Lucy. «Insofar as I was concerned, they acted as if they were saying, "Leave her alone, and we'll soon see what she'll do!"»

After mature reflection, Maria Rosa had decided that if, in spite of the festival, the children were to go to the Cova da Iria, she would follow them, hide, and see what happened. If nothing extraordinary occurred and anyone attacked them, she would intervene, especially as the parents of the younger two had gone off for the day. True, she risked making a fool of herself. But too bad! «I'll start for the church», she whispered to her eldest daughter, «and you stay here and tell me what happens.» This indeed was the wisest and most courageous solution.

No sooner had she gotten half-way to the church when she encountered five or six people from a neighbouring hamlet who asked to see «the children who had seen Our Lady». Then Maria Rosa lost her nerve: «There are more and more people going to the Cova da Iria», she told herself. «I won't be able to get there without somebody seeing me. Somebody is sure to notice. These people look respectable. Well, we must see... and may God's will be done. I shan't leave here.» «The fear of being the laughing-stock of everybody was her weakness», Dom Jean-Nesmy justly comments. So she went off to the village for the festival.

Meanwhile Lucy also went in the direction of Fatima... But it was to lead a group of friends who with her made a solemn communion. She succeeded so well in this that more than a dozen children preferred to follow her rather than remain at the festival. Around eleven o'clock, with Jacinta and Francisco they arrived at the place of the apparitions.

THE WAIT AT THE COVA DA IRIA

Already several dozen persons were present, who had come from neighbouring hamlets for the most part, and some of them even from Torres Novas, more than sixty miles away. From the parish there was hardly anyone except Maria Carreira, a believer from the very beginning, whom we shall hear so much about later on. Father De Marchi, to whom she freely confided, quotes at length her recollections, which are always of the highest interest by their charming simplicity and their great precision.

«I had always been sick», she relates, «and seven years previous I had been given up on by the doctors. They gave me only a short time to live.» She had barely heard of the apparitions when she became interested in them, went to Aljustrel to interrogate the seers, was impressed with them, and believed the truth of what they had said. She also decided to be present on June 13 at the Cova da Iria.

«My husband showed me where the place in question was, and he added: “You want to go there? Don’t be a fool! Do you think you’ll see Her?” “I know very well I won’t see Her”, I answered. “But if somebody said that the King were going by, nobody would stay at home, everybody would go out looking for him. And they say that Our Lady is coming there, and we shall not make any effort to go see Her?”

«As I had made my decision, I would not have missed June 13 at the Cova da Iria for anything in the world. On the evening before I said to my children: “What if we don’t go to the festival of St. Anthony tomorrow but to the Cova da Iria instead?” “What for?” they answered. “No, we’d rather go to the festival.” Then I turned to my crippled boy, John. “Do you want to go to the festival or with me?” “With you, mother”, he said. So on the following day, before the others started for the festival, I came here with my John, who hobbled along on a stick.»

As we shall see later on, there was nothing in this lady that savoured of fanaticism, or a perpetual quest of the miraculous... quite the contrary. A woman of heroic courage, and great common sense, it was her profound

faith and her love for the Most Holy Virgin which, not without a special grace from God, made her sense almost immediately that there was an authentic supernatural fact, and later on verify it with her own eyes. When Lucy had arrived, Maria Carreira hastened to ask her:

«“Which is the oak tree where Our Lady appeared?” “This one”, she said, putting her hand on it. It was a holm oak about a metre high, a nice strong sapling. It was very well shaped with regular branches.»

And then, without any excitement or disturbance, they awaited the hour of the apparition. As it was very hot, the little seers and their companions moved back a little bit to be in the shade. They began to play.

«Those of us who had come a long way, continues Maria Carreira, began to eat lunch and to offer some to the children, who each accepted an orange, which, however, they didn't eat. I can still see the three of them with the oranges in their hands. Then a girl from Boleiros began to read aloud from a book of prayers which she had brought.

«As I was ill and feeling weak and tired, I asked Lucy if she thought Our Lady would be long in coming. “She won't be long now”, was her reply, and she watched for the signs of the arrival. We said the Rosary meanwhile and when the girl from Boleiros was beginning the Litany, Lucy interrupted, saying there would not be time.»

Then, another witness relates, «Lucy got up, and arranged her shawl, the kerchief covering her head, as well as her other clothes, as if she were getting ready to go into church, and she turned towards the east, awaiting the vision.»

«Suddenly she got up and called out: “Jacinta, Our Lady must be coming; there's the lightning!” They all ran to the holm oak and we behind them. We knelt down on the rocks and stones. Lucy lifted up her hands as if she were praying and I heard her say: “Your Grace asked me to come here; please tell me what you want.”»

There were now a good fifty people around the seers, grouped near the holm oak. Their word alone was responsible for the three or four thousand present on July 13... But now we must let Lucy speak. The account is taken from her fourth Memoir.

THE APPARITION: THE REVELATION OF THE IMMACULATE HEART

June 13, 1917.«June 13, 1917. As soon as Jacinta, Francisco and I had finished praying the Rosary with a number of other people who were present, we saw once more the flash reflecting the light which was approaching (which we called lightning). The next moment, Our Lady was there on the holm oak, exactly the same as in May.»

THE THREE REQUESTS OF OUR LADY.

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

— I wish you to come here on the 13th of next month, to pray the Rosary each day, and to learn how to read. Later, I will tell you what I want.

I asked for the cure of a sick person.

— If he is converted, he will be healed during the year.

THE HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY HAVE DESIGNS OF MERCY ON YOU.

— I would like to ask you to take us to Heaven.

— Yes, I will take Jacinta and Francisco soon. But you are to stay here some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you to make Me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart.² To whoever embraces this devotion I promise salvation; these souls shall be dear to God, as flowers placed by Me to adorn His throne.

² Here the text of the Memoirs is incomplete. In a later account written for her confessor, Father Aparicio, at the end of 1927, Sister Lucy added this vitally important phrase.

— Am I to stay here alone? I asked, sadly.

— No, My daughter. Do you suffer a great deal? Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.

THE VISION IN GOD. «As Our Lady spoke these last words, She opened Her hands and for the second time, She communicated to us the rays of that immense light. We saw ourselves in this light, as it were, immersed in God. Jacinta and Francisco seemed to be in that part of the light which rose towards Heaven, and I in that which was poured out on the earth.»

THE GREAT REVELATION OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY. «In front of the palm of Our Lady's right hand was a heart encircled by thorns which pierced it. We understood that this was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity and seeking reparation.»

THE LITTLE SECRET OF JUNE 13. «You know now, Your Excellency, what we referred to when we said that Our Lady had revealed a secret to us in June. At the time, Our Lady did not tell us to keep it secret, but we felt moved to do so by God.»

THE MARVELLOUS SIGNS³

Around noon, everyone heard Lucy suddenly cry: «Here is the lightning!... Our Lady will arrive!» But only the three children had seen it.⁴ The others

3 Canon Barthas, in *Fatima 1917-1968*, devotes a special chapter to them, called "The Atmospheric Signs", giving a summary of various statements by the witnesses.

4 Regarding the "lightning" which announced Our Lady's arrival, Sister Lucy in her *Memoirs* adds a useful clarification, which even dispels a seeming contradiction: «The flashes of lightning were not really lightning, but the reflected rays of a light which was approaching. It was because we saw the light that we sometimes said we saw Our Lady coming.» (Indeed Francisco told Canon Formigao on September 27: «I see her coming from the side where the sun rises and stopping on the oak tree.» Jacinta said the same thing. And on October 19, Lucy declared to Father Ferreira of Lacerda: «The Lady arrived, coming from the east.»)

«But, properly speaking, we only perceived Our Lady in that light when she was already on the holm oak tree. It is because we do not know how to explain ourselves, and to avoid

saw neither the lightning, nor Our Lady...

Manuel Gonçalves, a young peasant, thirty years old, from the hamlet of Montelo, was present. An intelligent man with great common sense, he would be interrogated at length, on October 11, 1917, by Canon Formigao. «When Lucy speaks to Our Lady», he explained, «she speaks loudly. I myself heard her in June because I was near her. Some people say that they heard the sound of the reply.»

AN UNUSUAL MURMUR. Indeed, Maria Carreira and other witnesses relate that between the words of Lucy, they heard something like the murmur of a very fine, but unintelligible voice.

Let us pay attention to the account of our peasant, Maria Carreira, who better than anyone else was able to observe and relate with precision what she had seen and heard: «Then (after Lucy had begun to speak to Our Lady), we began to hear something like the sound of a very faint voice; but we could not understand what it was saying; it was like the buzzing of a bee.» On July 13, Ti Marto also declared that he had perceived this slight noise which he was not able to describe very well.

«During the vision», another witness notes, «the branches of the tree were bent down all around it, as though the weight of Our Lady were really resting on it.»

However, it was especially at the end of the apparition that the most astonishing signs took place, as if the Blessed Virgin, in Her goodness, had willed to give these good people who had come to see Her some reflections of the apparition, as a certain pledge of Her invisible presence in the midst of them.

questions, that sometimes we said we saw Our Lady coming and other times we said we didn't see Her coming...» (In this sense Lucy told Canon Formigao: «I do not see where She comes from.»

«When we said we saw Her coming, we were referring to the approach of the light, which after all was Herself. And when we said we did not see Her coming, we were referring to the fact that we really saw Our Lady only when She was on the holm oak.»

«IT SOUNDED SOMEWHAT LIKE A ROCKET.» «When Our Lady left the tree», Maria Carreira relates, «it sounded somewhat like a rocket, a long way off, as it goes up. Lucy got up very quickly, and with her arm outstretched cried, “Look, there She goes! There She goes!”»

«THE BRANCHES LEANED TOWARDS THE EAST.» «I noticed an astonishing fact», another witness relates. «We were in the month of June and the tree had all its boughs covered with little sprouts. Now at the end of the apparition, when Lucy announced that Our Lady was leaving in the direction of the east, all the branches of the tree picked up and leaned in the same direction, as if Our Lady, as She left, had let Her dress rest upon the boughs.»

«A LITTLE CLOUD WENT UP TOWARDS THE EAST.» As for Maria Carreira, as she continues her account, she describes another phenomenon, as gracious as it is astonishing, which she noticed the moment Lucy declared: «Look! There She goes! There She goes!» It was «a little cloud... which went up gently in the direction of the east, until it finally disappeared completely. Certain people said: “I still see it; there it is...” until finally nobody claimed to see it. The little children remained silent, their eyes fixed on the same point in the sky, until finally Lucy declared: “There, now we can’t see Her any more. She has gone back into Heaven, the doors are shut!”»

«THE SHOOTS OF THE HOLM OAK... AS IF SOMEONE HAD STOOD UPON THEM.» «We then turned towards the miraculous tree and what was our admiration to see that the shoots at the top, which had been standing upright before, were now all bent towards the east, as if someone had stood upon them.»

AFTER THE APPARITION. «Then we began to pull off twigs and leaves from the top of the tree, but Lucy told us to take them from the bottom where Our Lady had not touched them... Somebody suggested that we should say the Rosary again before going home, but others who had come a long way said that we could say the Litany now and the Rosary on the way back to Fatima.

«After the Litany we all went back to Fatima with the children, praying as we went, and we arrived as the procession was just starting. People saw us arrive and asked us where we had come from. We replied, from the Cova da Iria, and that we were very glad to have come from there. Some of them were sorry at what they had missed, but it was too late then.»

Thus the first fifty pilgrims of June 13, as they returned to their homes full of joy and fervour, spread the good news everywhere: Yes, it was true, Our Lady had appeared a second time at the Cova da Iria! And it was not finished, She would come on the 13th of each month until October! So well did they communicate their enthusiastic confidence that right during the harvest season, on July 13, instead of a few dozen there were thousands present for the rendezvous...

II. A FIRST SECRET:

THE REVELATION OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

«What did the Lady say this time?» the three seers were unceasingly asked. Jacinta, lowering her head, contented herself simply to repeat: «We must recite the Rosary every day. Our Lady will come back on the 13th of each month until October. Then She will say who She is and what She wants.»

However the questions became more pressing, and guessing very quickly that the seers had not said everything, the people asked them: «Our Lady said nothing else to you?» And then, so as not to lie, they were constrained to give an answer. «Since this apparition», Lucy writes, «we began to say... "Yes, She said something, but it is a secret." If we were asked why it was a secret, we would shrug our shoulders, and lowering our heads, we would say nothing.»

Indeed, during the apparition Our Lady had revealed many things of the greatest importance. However, they could not reveal them because they were all closely linked together. Being interiorly moved to keep silence, this is why they decided to say nothing of the great Message and the graces received that day. All the more so because these graces were all related

to the mysterious vision they had had when, for the second time, Our Lady opened Her hands and communicated to them the «reflection of the immense light» emanating from Her.

THE IMMACULATE HEART, PIERCED WITH THORNS

In this light, they felt «as if submerged in God». It was a sublime vision: through the rays coming forth from the hands of Mary, they saw themselves submerged in God... and in the great light of God, it was given to them to contemplate the secret of Mary, to see Her pierced Heart. «In front of the palm of Our Lady's right hand was a heart encircled by thorns which pierced it. We understood that this was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity, and seeking reparation.»

Here we are at the very centre of the message of Fatima, at the heart of its Secret. This is why, to conform to the desire of Sister Lucy, we will devote a long chapter of our second volume to this revelation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.⁵⁵ However, we can already relate the effect of the apparition in the soul of Francisco:

«He was very impressed by the reflection of light... At the time, he did not seem to understand what was happening, perhaps because it was not given to him to hear the accompanying words of Our Lady. For this reason, he asked later: “Why did Our Lady have a heart in Her hand, spreading out all over the world that great light which is God?”

«Sometimes he said: “These people are so happy just because you told them that Our Lady wants the Rosary said, and that you are to learn to read! How would they feel if they only knew what She showed to us in God, in Her Immaculate Heart, in that great light!”»

The fruit of the vision for the three seers was an intimate knowledge and an ardent love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Lucy says that it was like

⁵ Regarding a book on Jacinta to be written by Canon Galamba, Sister Lucy wrote: «In my opinion, it would be pleasing to God and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (if) one chapter would be devoted to the subject of hell, and another to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.»

an infused virtue which was granted to them that day:

«I think that, on that day, the main purpose of this light was to infuse within us a special knowledge and love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary, just as on the two other occasions it was intended to do, as it seems to me, with regard to God and the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. From that day onwards our hearts were filled with a more ardent love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary.»

Jacinta especially was overflowing with fervour: «From time to time she would say to me: “The Lady said that Her Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God. Don't you love that? Her Heart is so good! How I love it!”»

THE GREAT DESIGN OF GOD FOR THE WORLD

For the first time, without insisting, but already in all clarity, Our Lady revealed to the children the great project of the Heart of Jesus for our century: «Jesus wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart. To whoever embraces this devotion, I promise salvation.» What marvellous, decisive words!

However the hour had not yet come when the great design of divine mercy was to be made known and the Will of God to be expressed openly to everybody. This was for the future, which in 1917 Our Lady wished only to prophesy and prepare for. For She had chosen Her instrument, Her messenger...

«THE HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY HAVE DESIGNS OF MERCY ON YOU»

These mysterious words, pronounced by the Angel in 1916 near the well, undoubtedly had not been understood by the three seers at the time. But with the passing of time, they came to be seen as a veiled announcement of what the Blessed Virgin, a year later, would come to reveal in all clarity: the designs of God over each of them and the broad outline of their future.

THE VOCATION OF JACINTA AND FRANCISCO. Since May 13, all three had but one and the same desire, which was energetically expressed by Francisco: «What I want is to go to Heaven!» But did they not already know they were going? They had received the promise, but this was not enough for them. What they desired now was to go to Heaven soon, without delay...⁶ Lucy quite ingenuously — but what perfection of soul it manifests! — requested it of Our Lady: «I would like to ask you to take us to Heaven.» And Our Lady answered: «Yes, Jacinta and Francisco, I will take them soon...» What an admirable response! It is the response of a sovereign: «I will take them soon.» Has not Her divine Son crowned Her as Queen and Gate of Heaven, Janua coeli, as the Litany says?

From then on their vocation is marked out. To be going to Heaven soon, what joy! But it was ; also a permanent stimulus in the pursuit of sanctity: there remained for them only a short time to repair for sins and console God, to pray and offer sacrifices for the conversion of sinners. Hence they would apply themselves to it with all the more ardour.

Lucy relates for us a few recollections of the time from June-July 1917:

«From time to time Francisco would say: “Our Lady told us that we would have much to suffer, but I don’t mind. I’ll suffer all that She wishes! What I want is to go to Heaven!”

«One day, when I showed how unhappy I was over the persecution now beginning both in my family and outside, Francisco tried to encourage me with these words: “Never mind! Didn’t Our Lady say that we would have much to suffer, to make reparation to Our Lord and to Her own Immaculate Heart for all the sins by which They are offended? They are so sad! If we can console Them with these sufferings, how happy we shall be!”

«When Jacinta saw me in tears, she tried to console me, saying: “Don’t cry. Surely, these are the sacrifices which the Angel said that God was going to send us. That’s why you are suffering, so that you can make reparation to

6 «She was so beautiful», St. Bernadette said, «that after seeing Her once one would be willing to die to see Her again!»

Him and convert sinners.”»

«But you», Our Lady had told Lucy, «are to stay here some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you, to make Me known and loved.» Lucy then expressed her sorrow, for which we can easily understand the reasons: the hardship of remaining on earth, of being alone, being without her dear companions, having to endure the lack of understanding and persecutions of those around her. «Shall I remain here all alone?» she asked with sorrow. And, as though the Most Holy Virgin had anticipated her question, She responded: «No, my child. Do you suffer a great deal? Do not be discouraged. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.»

Then She opened Her hands. On May 13, right after announcing that God’s grace would comfort the seers, Our Lady had filled them with ineffable graces by the light issuing from Her hands. So also on June 13, the vision of the Immaculate Heart followed right after the promise that it would be Lucy’s refuge and the way that would lead her to God.

Here there is a moving resemblance to the works of St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, who in one of his most beautiful canticles attributes to Mary words very similar to what Lucy heard: «She says to me in Her language, when I am in my struggles, Courage, my child, courage; I shall not abandon you.»

A new cause for astonishment is that, in the same Light of God, the children were able to see the symbolic expression of their different vocations. After the vision, Francisco was very surprised: «You were with Our Lady», he said to Lucy, «in the light going down to the earth, while Jacinta and I were in the light going up to Heaven.» Lucy explained to him the meaning of this. The prophecy that she expressed by her own understanding is noteworthy, for it was fulfilled to the letter:

«“That is because you and Jacinta will soon go to Heaven”, I replied, “while I, with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, will remain for some time longer on earth.” “How many years longer will you stay here?” he asked. “I don’t

know. Quite a lot." "Was it Our Lady who said so?" "Yes, and I saw it in the light that She shone into our hearts." Jacinta confirmed the very same thing, saying: "It is just like that! That's exactly how I saw it too!"»

«I WANT YOU... TO LEARN HOW TO READ»

These words of Our Lady, which Lucy made known immediately — they are found in the report of Father Ferreira —, were very astonishing for Maria Rosa: «What difference does it make to Our Lady whether you know how to read or not?»

On October 11, when Canon Formigao asked Lucy if she was learning to read, she had to say no. «How then», he replied, «can you fulfil the order Our Lady gave you?» Lucy said nothing. She explains in her Memoirs: «I kept silence so as not to have the blame put on my mother, who had not yet given me permission to go to school. At home they said that I wanted to learn to read out of vanity. Until then, almost no little girls learned to read; school was only for boys. It was only later on that a school for girls opened at Fatima.»

In fact Our Lady was looking further ahead, for She was well aware that Her messenger could not learn to read right away. When She declared, «I want you... to learn how to read. Later I will tell you what I want», Our Lady was announcing the great apparitions of Pontevedra and Tuy in 1925 and 1929. The report of Father Ferreira expresses it in a more precise manner: «I want to ask you... to learn to read so I can tell you what I want.»

Let us note in passing that we have here a typical example of the perfect concordance between "Fatima I" and "Fatima II" [see Part II of this book for an explanation of these terms]. In the message of June 13, the request to go to school (Fatima I) harmonizes perfectly with the announcement of the vocation of Lucy and her future mission (Fatima II); and this request cannot even be explained very well except in reference to that part of the dialogue which remained secret in 1917.

III. THE GREAT TRIAL OF LUCY

«NO ONE IS A PROPHET IN HIS OWN COUNTRY»

«In the course of this month (Lucy relates), the influx of people increased considerably, and so did the constant questionings and contradictions. Francisco suffered quite a lot from all this, and complained to his sister, saying: "What a pity! If you'd only kept quiet, no one would know! If only it were not a lie, we could tell all the people that we saw nothing, and that would be the end of it. But this can't be done!"»

There were also the curious who never ceased to overwhelm the children with questions to try to extort their secret from them. «All the women wanted to know», Ti Marto recalls. They went so far as to offer Jacinta their best jewellery... But the little one was unshakeable: «I will not tell you anything!» she answered. «Even if they gave me the whole world, I will not tell the secret!»

There were also the scoffers. They were numerous, because in the parish, with the exception of Maria Carreira and a few others, nobody believed in the apparitions yet. «A woman standing in a doorway, hands on hips, shouted at Lucy: "Do you think I believe your visions?" and the boys would taunt: "Look, Lucy, there's Our Lady on the roof!" And these were the least of the affronts.» However all these insults, all these affronts, were not the most painful trial for the seers...

THE SECOND VISIT TO THE PRESBYTERY

«At this time (Lucy writes), the parish priest learned what was happening and sent word to my mother to bring me to the presbytery.⁷ My mother felt she could breathe again, thinking the priest was going to take responsibility for these events on himself. She therefore said to me: "Tomorrow we're going to Mass, the first thing in the morning. Then, you are going to the

7 Father Ferreira interrogated the seers on June 14 (Documentos, p. 500). The dialogues with her mother and visit to the priest's house related by Lucy can thus be given a precise date: the afternoon and day after this apparition.

Reverend Father's house. Just let him compel you to tell the truth, no matter how he does it; let him punish you; let him do whatever he likes with you, just so long as he forces you to admit that you have lied; and then I'll be satisfied."

«My sisters also took my mother's side and invented endless threats, just to frighten me about the interview with the parish priest. I told Jacinta and her brother all about it. "We're going also", they replied. "The Reverend Father told our mother to take us there too, but she didn't say any of those things to us. Never mind! If they beat us, we'll suffer for love of Our Lord and for sinners."

«Next day I walked along behind my mother, who did not address one single word to me the whole way. I must admit that I was trembling at the thought of what was going to happen. During Mass, I offered my suffering to God. Afterwards, I followed my mother out of the church over to the priest's house, and started up the stairs leading to the veranda. We had climbed only a few steps, when my mother turned round and exclaimed: "Don't annoy me any more! Tell the Reverend Father now that you lied, so that on Sunday he can say in the church that it was all a lie, and that will be the end of the whole affair. A nice business, this is! All this crowd running over to the Cova da Iria, just to pray in front of a holm oak bush!"

«Without more ado, she knocked on the door. The good priest's sister opened the door and invited us to sit down on a bench and wait a while. At last, the parish priest appeared. He took us into a study, motioned my mother to a seat, and beckoned me over to his desk. When I found that His Reverence was questioning me quite calmly, and with such a kindly manner, I was amazed. I was still fearful, however, of what was yet to come. The interrogation was very minute and, I would even venture to say, tiresome.»

Father Ferreira had begun by interrogating the two little ones. Francisco had answered with simplicity on everything he could speak about. Jacinta however said nothing. No doubt annoyed, the parish priest had said to her: «You don't seem to know anything; sit down there or run away if you like.» Jacinta took out her Rosary and started to say it, while Father Ferreira

started to question Lucy, who answered well. From time to time Jacinta got up and told Lucy to explain things properly. At that, Father Ferreira said rather crossly to Jacinta: «When I was asking you questions, you didn't know anything and wouldn't say a word, and now it's the other way about.» The scene is taken from real life and shows how false it is to claim that Lucy was the only one to testify...

«ALL THAT IS AN INVENTION OF THE DEVIL.» At the end of the interrogation, the priest pronounced his judgment:

«It doesn't seem to me like a revelation from Heaven. It is usual in such cases for Our Lord to tell the souls to whom He makes such communications to give their parish priest or confessor an account of what has happened. But this child, on the contrary, keeps it to herself as far as she can. This may also be a deceit of the devil. We shall see. The future will show us what we are to think about it all.»

These last words, especially because they were pronounced so calmly, were to plunge Lucy into a terrible darkness...

THE GREAT TRIAL OF DOUBT

WHAT IF IT WAS THE DEVIL? «How much this reflection made me suffer, only God knows, for He alone can penetrate our inmost heart. I began then to have doubts as to whether these manifestations might be from the devil, who was seeking by these means to make me lose my soul. As I heard people say that the devil always brings conflict and disorder, I began to think that, truly, ever since I had started seeing these things, our home was no longer the same, for joy and peace had fled. What anguish I felt!»

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF JACINTA AND FRANCISCO. «I made known my doubts to my cousins. "No, it's not the devil", replied Jacinta, "not at all! They say that the devil is very ugly and that he's down under the ground in hell. But that Lady is so beautiful, and we saw Her go up to Heaven!" Our Lord made use of this to allay somewhat the doubts I had.

«But during the course of that month, I lost all enthusiasm for making sacrifices and acts of mortification, and ended up hesitating as to whether it wouldn't be better to say that I had been lying, and so put an end to the whole thing. "Don't say that!" exclaimed Jacinta and Francisco. "Don't you see that now you are going to tell a lie, and to tell lies is a sin?"...»

A TERRIBLE NIGHTMARE. «While in this State Of mind, I had a dream which only increased the darkness of my spirit. I saw the devil laughing at having deceived me, as he tried to drag me down to hell. On finding myself in his clutches, I began to scream so loudly and call on Our Lady for help that I awakened my mother. She called out to me in alarm, and asked me what was the matter. I can't recall what I told her, but I do remember that I was so paralysed with fear that I couldn't sleep any more that night. This dream left my soul clouded over with real fear and anguish.»

«My only relief was to go off by myself to some solitary place, there to weep to my heart's content. Even the company of my cousins began to feel burdensome, and for that reason, I began to hide from them as well. The poor children! At times, they would search for me, calling out my name and receiving no answer, but I was there all the while, hidden quite close to them in some corner where they never thought of looking.»

THE PERSECUTIONS CONTINUE. «The devil will be there for sure», her mother said, echoing the words of Father Ferreira, who took no trouble to hide his opinions, which were entirely against any supernatural explanation of the events. «Mr. José Alves, an inhabitant of Moita — a hamlet of Fatima — who had been one of the first to believe in the apparitions, speaking one day with the parish priest of Fatima, was openly told by him: "All that is the invention of the devil!"»

Such statements only increased the determination of Maria Rosa to use any means she could to make her daughter deny her account. To be sure, Father Ferreira advised her not to beat her daughter physically. But before the commission of inquiry for the canonical process, she would declare that he had authorized her to strike fear into her, and assured her that, like it or not, the little one would admit she had lied.

THE FIRST CONFESSION OF JACINTA AND FRANCISCO. Around this time, no doubt shortly after the second apparition, Jacinta and Francisco asked to make their first confession... surely with the secret hope of being able to make their first communion right after. How much they desired it! Ti Marto told Father de Marchi how he led them himself to church. After some "bitter-sweet" remarks exchanged in the sacristy between Ti Marto and Father Ferreira, the children made their confession. However, for communion, the priest saw fit to make them wait one more year. They also received their share of trials.

«I WILL NOT GO BACK TO THE COVA DA IRIA»

During this time, poor Lucy, fearfully impressed by the double authority of her parish priest and her mother whom she greatly revered, sank more and more into the night of doubt and temptation. It seems that the devil, foreseeing that the message of July 13 would be a decisive event, in his rage pulled out all the stops against the little seers:

«The 13th of July was close at hand, and I was still doubtful as to whether I should go. I thought to myself: "If it's the devil, why should I go to see him? If they ask me why I'm not going, I'll say that I'm afraid it might be the devil who is appearing to us, and for that reason I'm not going. Let Jacinta and Francisco do as they like; I'm not going back to the Cova da Iria any more."»

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE BIG DAY. «My decision made, I was firmly resolved to act on it. By the evening of the 12th, the people were already gathering, in anticipation of the events of the following day. I therefore called Jacinta and Francisco, and told them of my resolution. "We're going", they answered. "The Lady said we were to go."

«Jacinta volunteered to speak to the Lady, but she was so upset over my not going, that she started to cry. I asked the reason for her tears. "Because you don't want to go!" "No, I'm not going. Listen! If the Lady asks for me, tell Her I'm not going, because I'm afraid it might be the devil."»

Francisco also wept. He did not understand his cousin's doubts and tried

to convince her:

«How can you think it's the devil?» he asked. "Didn't you see Our Lady and God in that great light? How can we leave without you, if it is you that must speak?"»

Lucy, however, would hear nothing of it:

«I left them, then, to go and hide, and so avoid having to speak to all the people who came looking for me to ask questions. My mother thought I was playing with the children of the village... As soon as I got home that night, my mother scolded me: "A fine little plaster saint you are, to be sure! All the time you have left from minding the sheep, you do nothing but play, and what's more you have to do it in such a way that nobody can find you!"»

A WHOLE NIGHT IN PRAYER. «That night after supper, Francisco came back, called me out to the old threshing floor, and said: "Look! Aren't you going tomorrow?" "I'm not going. I've already told you I'm not going back there any more." "But what a shame! Why is it that you now think that way? Don't you see that it can't be the devil? God is already sad enough on account of so many sins, and now if you don't go, He'll be sadder still! Come on, say you'll go!" "I've already told you I'm not going. It's no use asking me." And I returned abruptly to the house.

«A few days later he said to me: "You know, I never slept at all that night. I spent the whole time crying and praying, begging Our Lady to make you go!"»

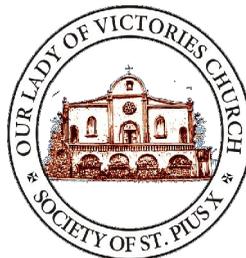


OUR LADY OF VICTORIES CHURCH,
consecrated on March 1, 1997
by H.E. Bishop Fellay,
is a mission church of the
Society of St. Pius X
* * *

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.

- end -



Our Lady of Victories Church

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