

The 100th Anniversary of Fatima



St. Mary
of the
Assumption
Catholic Church
"Founded 1824"

This year marks the 100th year since our Blessed Mother appeared to three young shepherd children, Lucia dos Santos and Blessed Jacinta and Francisco Marto, on the 13th day of the months of May to October, 1917 in a place called the Cova da Iria in Fatima, Portugal. Her message to these three children, imparted through specific requests, has become known as the Peace Plan from Heaven. These Marian apparitions occurred during the heart of the "Great War," World War I, and at a time when secularism and anti-clericalism were on the rise. Our Lady came to Fatima to warn her children that God was about to punish the world for its sins through war, famine, persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father if people did not cease offending Him. She asked the following of the three young shepherds: "are you willing to sacrifice yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?"

The Marian apparitions at Fatima over those six months foretold the horrors of World War II, the spread of atheistic communism by Russia, the challenges to be faced by the church due to communism and secularism, and the assassination of a "Bishop dressed in White," generally interpreted as the assassination attempt that nearly killed Pope John Paul II on May 13, 1981. Our Lady of Fatima exhorted all her children to become fervent in working for the salvation of souls. Our penances and prayers for others are central to our Lady's message, because she identified the conversion of sinners as the key to peace in the world. Despite the horrors foretold by Our Lady, Fatima is also a message of hope, as she promised at Fatima that "in the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph."

Over the next six months at Saint Mary of the Assumption we will provide a brief synopsis of the apparition that occurred during that month. As noted above, the first Marian apparition at Fatima occurred on May 13th, 1917; however, it is important to note that these three shepherd children had previously received messages on three separate occasions from an angel who identified himself as the Angel of Peace and also as the Angel of Portugal. During the first apparition in the spring or early summer of 1916, the Angel taught the children the Pardon Prayer:

My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love You! I beg pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love You.

The second angel apparition occurred during the late summer of 1916 and encouraged the children to “pray very much! The Hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High.” The third apparition in the fall of 1916 would instill in the children a very ardent devotion to Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Another link between the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Fatima is the fact that our Lady’s first appearance occurred on May 13, which at that time was the liturgical celebration of Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament. During this third visit by the Angel of Peace, he taught the children another prayer:

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.

These visits of the Angel of Peace taught the children the importance of prayer, and after putting into practice all that the angel had taught them over the course of the next six months, the children were then ready to receive the first visit of their Blessed Mother.

May 13 was a Sunday that year, a beautiful sunny day with blue skies. While the children were playing their games at the Cova da Iria during the middle of the day, they saw what seemed to be a flash of lightning, and thinking that a thunderstorm was brewing, they decided to head home with their flocks. They then saw another flash and, on a small holmoak tree, they saw a lady dressed in white, later described by Lucia as a “woman more brilliant than the sun, and radiated light more clear and intense than a crystal glass filled with sparkling water, when the rays of the burning sun shine through it.” All three children saw our Lady, but only Lucia and Jacinta could hear her; Lucia was the only one who actually spoke to our Lady. Upon the questioning of Lucia, our Lady stated that she was from heaven. Lucia then asked a second question: “What do you want of me?” Our Lady answered that she wanted the children to return there on the thirteenth of the month for the next six months, and at the very same hour. “Later on I will tell you who I am and what I want. Afterwards I will return here yet a seventh time.” She later asked the children the key question during this apparition: “Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and of supplications for the conversion of sinners.” The children readily agreed, but our Lady warned them that “you are going to have much to suffer, but the grace of God will be your comfort.” After accepting this generous consent of the children, a light from our Lady enveloped the children and consoled them greatly. Lucia described this as “rays penetrating our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see ourselves in God.” Immediately after this the children dropped to their

knees and prayed: "O most Holy Trinity, I adore You! My God, my God, I love You in the most Blessed Sacrament." Then our Lady requested that the children "pray the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world, and the end of the war." The request to pray the rosary every day for peace would be the only request that our Lady repeated in all six of her apparitions. After this request Lucia said that our Lady then began to rise very serenely in the direction of the east until she disappeared in the immense distance: "it was like heaven opened for her."

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