

The Fatima Story

The story begins in the village of Fatima, Portugal, on May 13, 1917. On that fateful day near that tiny village, The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, appeared to three young peasant children: Francisco, Jacinta, and Lucia; ages 10, 9 and 7. As was the custom, these youngsters were tending their family's sheep when "a Lady all in white, more brilliant than the sun... indescribably beautiful," standing above a bush, appeared to the youngsters.

From May through October 1917, the Lady appeared and spoke to the children on the 13th day of each month.

News of these apparitions began to spread throughout the region. The children recounted that the Virgin told them that God had sent her with a message for every man, woman, and child living in the century. She promised that God would grant peace to the entire world if Her requests for prayer, reparation and consecration were heard and obeyed. While many people believed the children had actually seen the Virgin, many others discounted the children's story, subjecting them to much derision and ridicule. When it became known the Lady would visit the children for the last time on 13th October 1917, and had promised a sign that would convince the world she had appeared, many pilgrims made plans to attend.

Though the region had been subjected to three days of torrential downpour, nearly 70,000 people journeyed through the heavy rain and mud to the place of the previous apparitions to witness the predicted miracle. Many were scornful, unbelievers whose sole intent was to discredit the children's stories.

Suddenly the "clouds separated...and the sun appeared between them in the clear blue, like a disk of white fire." The people could look at the sun without blinking and while they gazed upward, the huge ball began to "dance". The huge fireball whirled rapidly with dizzy and sickening speed, flinging out all sorts of brilliant colours that reflected on the faces of the crowds. The fiery ball continued to gyrate in this manner three times, then seemed to tremble and shudder, and plunge in a mighty zigzag course toward the earth. The crowd was terrified, fearing this was the end of the world.

However, the sun reversed course and, retracing its zigzagging course, returned to its normal place in the heavens. All of this transpired in approximately ten minutes. After realizing they were not doomed, the crowd began ecstatically laughing, crying, shouting and weeping. Many discovered their previously drenched clothing to be perfectly dry.

After what has become to be known as "The Miracle of the Sun," the children were grilled many, many times, about what they had seen and been told. Their story never changed. The heart of Our Lady's message to the world is contained in what has become known as the "Secret," which she confided to the children in July 1917. The "Secret" actually consists of three parts. The first part of the "Secret" was a frightening vision of hell, "where the souls of poor sinners go," and contained an urgent plea from Our Lady for acts of prayer and sacrifice to save souls, with particular emphasis on praying of the rosary and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The second part of the “Secret” specifically prophesied the outbreak of World War II and contained the prediction of the immense damage that Russia would do to humanity by abandoning the Christian faith and embracing Communists’ totalitarianism.

The third part was not revealed until 2000. Its revelation coincided with the beatification of Francisco and Jacinta. It did not contain any striking or cataclysmic prediction, but, instead, the vision supported and affirmed the immense suffering endured by witnesses of the faith in the last century of the second millennium. Sister Lucia, the surviving member of the Fatima trio, confirmed that in the vision “the Bishop clothed in white,” who prays for all the faithful, is the Pope. As he makes his way with great difficulty towards the Cross amid the corpses of those who were martyred (bishops, priests, men and women religious and many lay people), he too falls to the ground, apparently dead, under a hail of gunfire. It is possible that the vision predicted the 1981 attack on Pope John Paul II’s life. The Pope has always credited the Virgin for his survival. Or it may be a portrayal of the Church’s continued struggle against secularism and anti-Christian movements and a continuing call to prayer, sacrifice and devotion to Our Lady of Fatima.