

Zeitoun, Egypt. In the case of “unofficial” appearances, the local bishop can authorize the faithful in his area to honor the apparition with pilgrimages and prayer, but the vision is not given universal recognition except after rigorous Vatican examination. In 2010, the local bishop gave local approval to Our Lady of Good Help in Green Bay, Wisconsin, the first such Marian apparition in the United States.

Impact of Fatima

Fatima has become one of the major pilgrimage sites in the world, with up to four million people a year visiting the Basilica of Our Lady of Fátima, built on the site of the apparitions. Perhaps the greatest effect, however, has been the ever-increasing devotion to the Rosary and prayer for the conversion of Russia that Our Lady emphasized. Her message that prayer and sacrifice can achieve world peace is one that Catholics around the world can take to heart. As Sister Lucia said, the “Rosary is the prayer which sustains and increases our faith.”



Jim Olivera

Living Fatima in the Family

- Pray the Rosary.
- Make the First Saturday Devotion.
- Emulate the Blessed Children of Fatima by offering up illness, inconvenience, and distress for the sake of peace in the world.
- Go to confession.
- Place a statue of Our Lady of Fatima in a prominent place in your home.
- Pray the Fatima Sacrifice Prayer at bedtime: “Oh my Jesus, I offer this for love of Thee, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

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Inventory No. P1836

Nihil Obstat: Rev. Michael Heintz, *Censor Librorum*

Imprimatur: ✠ Kevin C. Rhoades

Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend

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Excerpts taken from *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*, Ed. Fr. Louis Kondor, SVD. 18th edition published 2011.



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Our Lady of Fatima



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“Following the example of St. John Paul II, a great devotee of Our Lady of Fatima, let us listen attentively to the Mother of God and ask for peace for the world.”

— POPE FRANCIS

The Miracle of the Sun

On October 13, 1917, 70,000 people gathered in a small village in Portugal to watch for a miracle that the Virgin Mary had promised to three young shepherds. The day had been rainy and overcast, but suddenly the sun broke through, and the crowd witnessed what has become known as the "Miracle of the Sun." The sun appeared to change colors and rotate in the sky, but no one who looked directly at it was harmed. The phenomenon was witnessed up to nearly 25 miles away and widely reported even in the anti-Catholic press of the time. It was the culmination of six visits Mary made to the children.

The Story of Fatima

The story of Fatima began a year earlier, in the spring of 1916, when Lucia dos Santos, age nine, and her cousins Francisco Marto, age eight, and Jacinta Marto, age six, were guarding their sheep outside their small village of Fátima, in central Portugal. As they were eating their lunch and praying the Rosary, a bright light flashed and the image of a young man appeared, saying: "Do not be afraid! I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me." The children did as they



were told and the angel explained that "the hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications." The angel appeared to them two more times, in the summer and in the autumn, each time asking them to make a sacrifice for the sins of the world and the conversion of sinners.

On Sunday, May 13, 1917, the three children were in the fields with their sheep when they saw a flash of lightning and the image of a lady all dressed in white. She was more brilliant than the sun and radiated a light more clear and intense than crystal glass filled with sparkling water when the rays of the burning sun shine through it." Our Lady told the children to pray the Rosary every day to achieve peace in the world and promised to visit again the next month.

Photos: Newscom, Shutterstock

*"O my Jesus, pardon us, save us from the fires of hell.
Lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need."*



Mary returned each month for the next five months, referring to herself as the Immaculate Heart. She showed the children a vision of hell and told them that if Russia converted, there would be peace throughout the world. She also explained that the pope would have to suffer and many nations would be destroyed, always emphasizing the need to pray the Rosary. She also told them that Francisco and Jacinta would soon go to heaven, but Lucia would live longer to spread the message of the Immaculate Heart. In her final visit, on October 13, Mary identified herself as the Lady of the Rosary and appeared with St. Joseph and the child Jesus, again asking that the Rosary be recited daily for peace in the world.

After Fatima

As Our Lady had predicted, Jacinta and Francisco died soon after in the flu epidemic of 1918. Lucia attended the Convent of the Sisters of St. Dorothy to learn to read and write and entered the Dorothean convent, although she eventually became a Carmelite. She reported private visions of Mary throughout her life, including one in which Mary asked her to help promote First Saturday Devotions. After a long life, Lucia died on February 13, 2005, at the age of 97. On May 13, 2000, Jacinta and Francisco were declared "blessed," the final step before canonization. Nine years old at her death, Jacinta is the

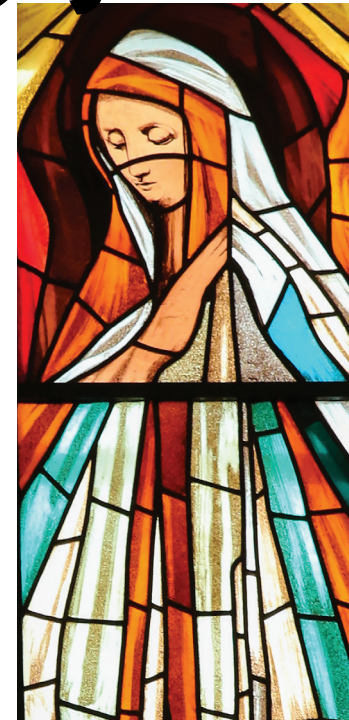
youngest non-martyr to be beatified. It is speculated the two children will be canonized in October 2017, the 100th anniversary of Mary's final appearance. Sister Lucia's cause is under examination by the Vatican.

The Three Secrets

On her visits, Our Lady gave the children three secrets. Lucia revealed two to the bishop of Leiria in 1941, but she did not feel God wanted the third revealed until a later date, so she wrote it down and sealed it in an envelope, not to be opened until 1960. Pope St. John Paul II officially released its contents in 2000.

The first secret was a vision of hell, which Lucia described as "a great sea of fire" with souls in agonizing pain and despair. The second secret asserted that World War I would end but that if Russia did not convert, there would be another war during the reign of Pope Pius XI, a prediction that came to pass with World War II.

The third secret, which was revealed after the death and persecution of the Church and the Holy Father would be killed by a group of soldiers. The Vatican said the final part of the secret referred to the failed assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II's life on May 13, 1981. While many had hoped (or feared) the last secret would be of a more apocalyptic nature, Pope Benedict XVI wrote that it "will probably prove disappointing or surprising after all the speculation it has stirred," and he added that the purpose of the vision "is meant



to mobilize the forces of change in the right direction.... The vision speaks of dangers and how we might be saved from them."

The Prayers of Fatima

The prayers that the Angel of Peace and Our Lady revealed to the children of Fatima have become a part of Catholic devotional life. The most famous are the addition to the Rosary of the words: "O my Jesus, pardon us, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need."

Another well-known Fatima prayer, which Lucia set to music and recorded, is: "My God, I believe! I adore! I hope, and I love you! I ask pardon of you for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love you."

The Five First Saturday Devotions

Our Lady asked that on the first Saturday of every month, communions of reparation be made in atonement for the sins of the world. She added that she would "assist at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five successive months, shall confess, receive holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for fifteen minutes while meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me."

Marian Apparitions

Appearances or apparitions of Mary are known as "private revelations" by the Church. Belief in any apparition is never required of the faithful, and, as Pope St. John Paul II wrote, "These manifestations can never contradict the content of faith, and must therefore have their focus in the core of Christ's proclamation: the Father's love which leads men and women to conversion and bestows the grace required to abandon oneself to him with filial devotion" ("The Message of Fatima," 2000).

Fatima is one of the handful of major apparitions of Mary approved by the universal Church, which includes Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico; Rue du Bac in Paris (Miraculous Medal); La Salette, France; Lourdes, France; Knock, Ireland; Beauraing, Belgium; and Banneux, Belgium. Mary is also said to have appeared at numerous other sites, including to a primarily Muslim crowd at