

Window into Saintly Souls

I began to write a book review about *The True Story of Fatima*, but no poet, no scholar, no author, could describe the beauty and simplicity of the souls of the three children to whom Our Lady appeared at Fatima. This book was written by Father John de Marchi, I.M.C., a priest who spent three and a half years interviewing the family, friends and witnesses to the events at Fatima. He lived amongst them all that time.

His book is not really a story, it is not even the most beautiful fairy tale or love story, that could ever be written. It is unique and one of a kind — a simple window into the souls of the three seers, where we can share their thoughts, their gentle natures and their childlike desire to put God first in their lives. Their obedience to God and to the requests of Our Lady are supreme — yet still childlike and not out of reach for ourselves.

You will particularly note their spirit of sacrifice and penance, not just to save their own souls but for other souls as well, including ours.

And so, my own review of this treasure, this book, ends here and I have chosen excerpts from *The True Story of Fatima*, because, as I said, no one could ever portray in writing the beauty, the grace, the devotion to Our Lord and Our Lady, better than what the children have said in their own words.

by Coralie Graham, Editor of The Fatima Crusader

Following are excerpts from *The True Story of Fatima*

The Angel Precursor

In 1916 (prior to the apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Fatima), an Angel Precursor appeared to the children.

"As he approached, we began to distinguish his features. We were so surprised and half absorbed, and we could not utter one word. He came near us and said:

"Fear not! I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me!"

The Angel knelt on the

ground and bowed very low. By some inspiration, they imitated him and repeated the words they heard him pronounce:

"My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love Thee. I ask pardon for all those who do not believe in Thee, do not adore Thee, do not hope in Thee, do not love Thee."

He repeated this prayer three times. Then he arose and said:

"Pray this way. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive

THE TRUE STORY OF FATIMA



A complete account of the Fatima Apparitions

to the voice of your supplications."

The Angel disappeared and the awareness of the supernatural was so intense that for a long space of time they remained there in the

same position in which he left them, unaware of their very existence, repeating that same prayer over and over again.

"We felt the presence of God so intensely, so intimately, that we dared not speak even to each other.

The Words of the Angel Were Like a Light

In later years, Lúcia revealed: "The words of the Angel were like a light that made us realize who God was, how He loved us and wanted to be loved; the value of sacrifice, to what degree it pleased Him, and how it was rewarded with the conversion of sinners. From that moment, we began to offer to the Lord everything that mortified us, without trying to find any other ways of mortification or penance than passing hour after hour, bowed to the ground, repeating the prayer that the Angel had taught us."

Our Lady Appeared

"It was a Lady dressed all in white," Lúcia records, "more brilliant than the sun, shedding rays of light, clear and stronger than a crystal glass filled with the most sparkling water, pierced by the burning rays of the sun."

"Fear not!" the Lady said, "I will not harm you."

"I am from Heaven," the beautiful Lady replied, gently.

"Do you want to offer yourselves to God to endure all the sufferings that He may choose to

send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended and as a supplication for the conversion of sinners?"

Promptly Lúcia responded for all three, "Yes, we want to."

"Then you are going to suffer a great deal," the Lady promised, "but the grace of God will be your comfort."

Sacrifices in Obedience to Our Lady

"I don't want to play today!"

"Why?"

"Because I am thinking that the Lady told us to say the Rosary and make sacrifices for the conversion of sinners.

"Yes," Lúcia agreed, "but how are we going to make sacrifices?"

"We can give our lunch to the sheep," Francisco suggested.

When noon came, they did give their lunches to the sheep. As the days went by, they thought it would be more pleasing to the Lady to give their lunches to some poor children instead of the sheep. When they themselves got hungry, Francisco climbed the holm oaks and picked acorns, even though they were still green. But this

wasn't enough of a sacrifice for Jacinta. She suggested that they should prefer the acorns from the oak trees, for they were more bitter.

To Save Souls from Hell

"What are you thinking about, Jacinta," Lúcia asked one morning, noticing a cloud of sadness veiling her face.

"I am thinking of Hell, and poor sinners. How sorry I am for the souls that go to Hell ... the people there, alive, burning as wood in the fire ... Lúcia, why is it that Our Lady does not show Hell to sinners? If they saw it, they would not commit any more sins, so they would not go there."

..."Why did you not tell Our Lady to show Hell to all those people?"

Jacinta then knelt on the ground, while she raised her folded hands towards Heaven, sighing out the prayer that the Lady taught them to say. Lúcia and Francisco both followed suit, kneeling as they said the Lady's prayer with Jacinta. "Lúcia, Francisco, are you praying with me? We must pray a great deal to save souls from Hell. So many go there!"

The thought of Hell and the souls suffering in its fire

so filled the child's mind, she could not fathom the reasons for it. "Lúcia, what have these people done to go to Hell?"

"I don't know! Maybe they sinned by missing Mass on Sunday. Maybe they said ugly words, stole, swore ..."

"And do they go to Hell just for one word?"

"If it is a big sin ..."

"How easy it was for them to have held their tongues or go to Mass! How sorry I am for them! If I could only show them Hell..."

Sacrifices for Conversion

The children prayed much, but they sacrificed themselves even more. They trained their minds to discover new ways of suffering for the conversion of sinners. Lest others misunderstand the motives of their mortifications and prevent them from saving souls from Hell, they kept this a secret between themselves and Our Lady. Only under orders from her superiors many years later, did Lúcia relate the extent of their youthful prayers and sacrifices.

Watching the sheep on the hot barrenness of the hills, they offered up to God and Our Lady their burning thirst. The children went for days

without drinking anything while they were alone in the fields. This was one of their biggest and most difficult sacrifices. Indeed, that summer they went the whole month of August without water.

Francisco's Last Hours

As she sat next to Francisco's bed, Lúcia gently whispered to him, "Francisco, are you suffering a great deal?"

"Yes, I am. I suffer it all for the love of Our Lord and Our Lady. I want to suffer more and I can't." He lifted himself up a little to see if the door was closed tight. He fumbled under the pillow for his rope of penance and handed it to Lúcia. "You keep it for me. I'm afraid mother will see it. If I get up again, I want it back." Our Lady had told them that God did not want them wearing the rope in bed but he kept it nearby just in case he ever got well again.

"Jacinta seemed to be interested only in the conversion of sinners; she wanted to save people from Hell," Lúcia said later, "but Francisco's only desire was to console Our Lord and Our Lady Who seemed to him so sorrowful."

"I feel very sick," he confided to Lúcia, "but I'll be in

Heaven soon."

"Then make sure you pray very much for sinners and for the Holy Father, Jacinta and me."

"Yes, I'll pray. But you should rather ask Jacinta for that. I'm afraid I'll forget everything when I see Our Lord. After all, I would rather console Jesus and Mary."

When Francisco felt he was dying he sent for Sister Lucia. "Lúcia, I'm going to make my Confession now and die. I want you to tell me if you ever saw me commit any sins."

"Sometimes you disobeyed your mother when she wanted you to stay home. You sneaked away to be with me or to hide yourself."

"It's true. I committed that sin. Now go and ask Jacinta if she remembers any."

Lúcia went to ask her. After some thought Jacinta answered, "Yes, look. Tell him that before Our Lady appeared to us, he stole ten cents. And when the boys threw stones at the boys from Boleiros, he helped them."

Lúcia told this to Francisco and he said, "I have confessed those already, but I'll confess them again. Maybe they are the reason why Our Lord is so sad. As for me, even if I

were not to die, I wouldn't do it again. I'm sorry. My Jesus, forgive us," he began to pray, joining his hands, "forgive us; save us from the fire of Hell."

Jacinta's Last Hours

Although Our Lady told Jacinta she would die soon, the doctors insisted on an operation. When she was finally taken to the operating room she was found too weak to take gas. Anaesthesia not being then what it is today, the local injection given her by no means took away her pain.

They removed two ribs and the doctors appeared hopeful of success, even though the open wound on her chest was the size of a fist. The wound had to be bathed and cleansed often and it was most painful. Jacinta allowed only one moan to escape her lips, "Oh, Our Lady! Oh! Our Lady! Patience. We must suffer to go



Jacinta Francisco Lucia

to Heaven."

Though she suffered so much, she never complained, accepting it with happiness, for she realized it would help many souls to escape the terrible fire of Hell. "Now You can convert many sinners," she spoke to Our Lord, "for I suffer a great deal, my Jesus."

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Editor's Note: Now you have experienced for yourself, the grace of which I could never adequately describe in words. And now, we can understand better why Our Lord said in Sacred Scripture: "Amen I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. "Who-soever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of Heaven." (Matt. 18:3-4)

If you do not already have a copy of *The True Story of Fatima*, please contact the Fatima Center immediately (see page 63). You must read this book with your heart and let the purity and innocence of a child open up your heart and mind to receive Jesus and Mary more intimately. This is a grace-filled book that your soul cannot afford to miss.