

X. Sixth Apparition

(continued)

“Silence, silence, Our Lady is coming,” Lucia cried out as she saw the flash. Our Lady came. Her snow-white feet rested upon the beautiful flowers and ribbons with which Senhora da Capelinha had adorned the tree. The faces of the three children assumed an unworldly expression, their features becoming more delicate, their color mellow, their eyes intent upon the Lady. They did not hear Lucia’s mother warning her to look closely so as not to be deceived. Lucia inquired of the Queen of Heaven:

“What does Your Grace want of me?”

“I want a chapel to be built here in My honor. I am Our Lady of the Rosary. Continue to say the Rosary every day. The war will end soon and the soldiers will return to their homes.”

“I have many things to ask of You: to heal some sick people and to convert some sinners, etc.”

“Some, yes; others, no.

“People must amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins.”

Then growing sadder: *“They must not offend Our Lord any more for He is already too much offended.”*

“Do you want anything more?”

“Nothing more.”

“Then neither will I ask anything more of You.”

As Our Lady took leave of the children, She opened Her hands which emitted a flood of light. While She was rising, She pointed towards the sun and the light gleaming from Her hands brightened the sun itself.

“There She goes; there She goes!” shouted Lucia, without for a moment taking her eyes from the beautiful Queen of Heaven. Lucia did not afterwards remember having said these words, though Francisco and Jacinta and many others distinctly heard her. Lucia said later that she had no recollection of it. “I was not even aware of the presence of the people. My purpose was not to call the attention of the people to it; I did it, carried away by an interior movement which impelled me to it.”

The echo of Lucia’s shout came back in a huge, immense cry of wonder and astonishment from the multitude. It was at this precise moment that the clouds were quickly dispersed and the sky was clear. The sun was now pale as the moon. To the left of the sun, Saint Joseph appeared holding in his left arm the Child Jesus. Saint Joseph emerged from the bright clouds only to his chest, sufficient to allow him to raise his right hand and make, together with the Child Jesus, the Sign of the Cross three times over the world. As Saint Joseph did this, Our Lady stood in all Her brilliancy to the right of the sun, dressed in the blue and white robes of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Meanwhile, Francisco and Jacinta were bathed in the marvelous colors and signs of the sun, and Lucia was privileged to gaze upon Our Lord dressed in red as the Divine Redeemer, blessing the world, as Our Lady had foretold. Like Saint Joseph, He was seen only from His chest up. Beside Him stood Our Lady, dressed now in the purple



Fatima, noon, October 13, 1917. Before (left) and during (right) the great miracle.

robes of Our Lady of Sorrows, but without the sword. Finally, the Blessed Virgin appeared again to Lucia in all Her ethereal brightness, clothed in the simple brown robes of Mount Carmel.¹

As the children stared enraptured by these most beautiful heavenly visions, the countless thousands of people were amazed and overpowered by other miracles in the skies. The sun had taken on an extraordinary color. The words of eyewitnesses best describe these stupendous signs. “We could look at the sun with ease,” Ti Marto testified; “it did not bother at all. It seemed to be continually fading and glowing in one fashion, then another. It threw shafts of light one way and another, painting everything in different colors, the people, the trees, the earth, even the air. But the greatest proof of the miracle was the fact that the sun did not bother the eyes.” A man like Ti Marto who spent all of his days in the open fields with his flocks and tended his garden under the hot sun of the Portuguese hills, marveled at this fact. “Everybody stood still and quiet, gazing at the sun,” he went on. “At a certain point, the sun stopped its play of light and then started dancing. It stopped once more and again started dancing until it seemed to loosen itself from the skies and fall upon the people. It was a moment of terrible suspense.”

Maria da Capelinha gave the author her impressions of this tremendous miracle. “The sun cast different colors, yellow, blue and white. It trembled constantly. It looked like a revolving ball of fire falling upon the people.” As the sun hurled itself towards the earth in a mighty zigzag motion, the multitude cried out in terror, “Ai Jesus, we are all going to die here; Ai Jesus, we are all going to die here.” Some begged for mercy, “Our Lady save us”; many others made acts of contrition. One lady was even confessing her sins aloud.

At last the sun swerved back to its orbit and rested in the sky. “Everyone gave a sigh of relief; we were still alive, and the miracle promised by the children had come to pass.”

Our Lord, already so much offended by the sins of mankind and particularly by the mistreatment of the children by the officials of the county, could easily have destroyed the world on that eventful day. However, Our Lord did not come to destroy, but to save. He saved the world that day through the blessing of good Saint Joseph and the love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for Her children on earth. Our Lord would have stopped the great World War then raging and given peace to the world through Saint Joseph, Jacinta later declared, if the children had not been arrested and taken to Ourém. “What you do to these My least brethren,” warns Our Lord, “you do to Me.”

¹ “I cannot give details of this apparition; it took place on the thirteenth of October, at the height of the sun and in a change of light that gave us the understanding that She showed Herself as such: Our Lady of Carmel.” (Lucia, March, 1941)

The miracle had come to pass at the hour and day designated by Our Lady. No one was disappointed, no one but Our Lady, perhaps, Who said the miracle would have been much greater if the children had not been so mistreated. Many thousands of people in the Cova da Iria and in neighboring villages witnessed the overwhelming signs. Their reports are of intense interest. There are slight variations in their descriptions of the events, though all agreed it was the most tremendous, the most awe-inspiring sight they ever witnessed. Some idea can be had of its effect on the people by reading the newspaper accounts of the day.

“At one o’clock, the hour of the sun, the rain stopped,” *O Dia* reported. “The sky had a certain greyish tint of pearl and a strange clearness filled the gloomy landscape, every moment getting gloomier. The sun seemed to be veiled with transparent gauze to enable us to look at it without difficulty. The greyish tint of mother-of-pearl began changing as if into a shining silver disc, that was growing slowly until it broke through the clouds. And the silvery sun, still shrouded in the same greyish lightness of gauze, was seen to rotate and wander within the circle of the receded clouds! The people cried out with one voice, the thousands of the creatures of God whom faith raised up to Heaven, fell to their knees upon the muddy ground.

“Then as if it were shining through the stained glass windows of a great cathedral, the light became a rare blue, spreading its rays upon the gigantic nave... Slowly the blue faded away and now the light seemed to be filtered through yellow stained glass. Yellow spots were falling now upon the white kerchiefs and the dark poor skirts of coarse wool. They were spots which repeated themselves indefinitely over the lowly holm oaks, the rocks and the hills. All the people were weeping and praying bareheaded, weighed down by the greatness of the miracle expected. These were seconds, moments, that seemed hours; they were so fully lived.”

O Século, another newspaper of Lisbon, carried a more detailed account of the extraordinary events. “From the height of the road where the people parked their carriages and where many hundreds stood, afraid to brave the muddy soil, we saw the immense multitude turn towards the sun at its highest, free of all clouds. The sun called to mind a plate of dull silver. It could be stared at without the least effort. It did not burn or blind. It seemed that an eclipse was taking place. All of a sudden a tremendous shout burst forth, ‘Miracle, miracle! Marvel, marvel!’

“Before the astonished eyes of the people, whose attitude carried us back to biblical times, and who, white with terror, heads uncovered, gazed at the blue sky, the sun trembled and made some brusque unheard-of movements beyond all cosmic laws; the sun danced, is the typical expression of the peasants.

“On the running board of the bus from Torres Novas, an old man whose stature and gentle, manly features recall those of Paul Deroulede, turned toward the sun and recited the *Credo* in a loud voice ... I saw him later addressing those about him who still kept their hats on, begging them vehemently to take their hats off before this overwhelming demonstration of the existence of God. Similar scenes were repeated at other places. A lady, bathed in tears and almost choking with grief, sobbed, ‘How pitiful! There are men who still do not bare their heads before such a stupendous miracle!’

“Immediately afterwards the people asked each other if they saw anything and what they had seen. The greatest number avowed that they saw the sun trembling and dancing; others declared that they saw the smiling face of the Blessed Virgin Herself; they swore that the sun turned around on itself as if it were a wheel of fireworks and had fallen almost to the point of burning the earth with its rays. Some said they saw it change colors successively.”

The testimony of another witness, Dr. Almeida Garrett, professor at the University



The crowd gathered at the Cova da Iria during the prodigy of the sun. The Portuguese paper *O Dia* reported that, “The people cried with one voice. Thousands whom faith seemed to transport fell to their knees upon the muddy ground ... All the people were weeping and praying.”

of Coimbra, is most informative and corroborates the others. “As I waited,” he said, “with cool and serene expectation, looking upon the place of the apparitions and with a curiosity that was fading because the hour was passing away so slowly without anything to arouse my attention, I heard the rustle of thousands of voices. I saw the people stretched out over the large field turn about from the point upon which their desires and anxieties had converged so far to the op-

posite side and they looked up at the sky. It was almost two o’clock wartime or about noon, sun time.

“The sun had broken jubilantly through the thick layer of clouds just a few moments before. It was shining clearly and intensely. I turned to this magnet that was drawing all eyes. It looked to me as a luminous and brilliant disc, with a bright well-defined rim. It did not hurt the eyes. The comparison (which I heard while still at Fatima) with a disc of dull silver, did not seem right to me. The color was brighter, far more active and richer than dull silver, with the tinted luster of the orient of a pearl.

“Nor did it resemble the moon on a clear night. Everyone saw and felt that it was a body with life. It was not spheric like the moon, neither did it have an equal tonality of color. It looked like a small, brightly polished wheel of iridescent mother-of-pearl. It could not be taken for the sun as though seen through fog. There was no fog at that time. (The rain and the fog had stopped.) The sun was not opaque, veiled or diffused. It gave light and heat and was brightly outlined by a beveled rim. The sky was banked with light clouds, patched with blue here and there. Sometimes the sun stood out alone in rifts of clear sky. The clouds scuttled along from west to east without dimming the sun. They gave the impression of passing behind it, while the white puffs gliding sometimes in front of the sun seemed to take on the color of rose or a delicate blue.

“It was a wonder that all this time it was possible for us to look at the sun, a blaze of light and burning heat, without any pain to the eyes or blinding of the retina. This phenomenon must have lasted about ten minutes, except for two interruptions when the sun darted forth its more refulgent, lightning-like rays, that forced us to look away.

“The sun had an eccentricity of movement. It was not the scintillation of a celestial body at its highest power. It was rotating upon itself with exceedingly great speed. Suddenly, the people broke out with a cry of extreme anguish. The sun, still rotating, had unloosened itself from the skies and came hurtling towards the earth. This huge, fiery millstone threatened to crush us with its weight. It was a dreadful sensation.

“During this solar occurrence, the air took on successively different colors. While looking at the sun, I noticed that everything around me darkened. I looked at what was nearby and cast my eyes away towards the horizon. Everything had the color of

an amethyst: the sky, the air, everything and everybody. A little oak nearby was casting a heavy purple shadow on the ground.

“Fearing impairment of the retina, which was improbable, because then I would not have seen everything in purple, I turned about, closed my eyes, cupping my hands over them, to cut off all light. With my back turned, I opened my eyes and realized that the landscape and the air retained the purple hue.



The three children are shown standing under the arch erected on the site of the apparitions in this photo taken shortly after October 13th.

“This did not give the impression of being an eclipse. While still looking at the sun, I noticed that the air had cleared and I heard a peasant nearby say, ‘This lady looks yellow.’ As a matter of fact, everything far and near had changed now. People seemed to have jaundice. I smiled when I saw everybody looking disfigured and ugly. My hand had the same color...”

The testimony of this learned man demonstrates how difficult it is to describe adequately the marvelous signs that occurred in the skies on this day. October the thirteenth, 1917, was a day to remember for all the people who witnessed these events. The reporter for the *Ordem*, a newspaper of Oporto, wrote about it in these words. “The sun was sometimes surrounded by blood-red flames, at other times it was aureoled with yellow and soft purple; again it seemed to be possessor of the swiftest rotation and then seemed to detach itself from the heavens, come near the earth and give forth a tremendous heat.”

Another witness, the Reverend Manuel da Silva, wrote a letter to a friend the evening of the thirteenth in which he tried to describe the events of the day. He spoke about the morning’s rain and then, “immediately the sun came out with a well-defined rim and seemed to come down to the height of the clouds. It started to rotate intermittently around itself like a wheel of fireworks, for about eight minutes. Everything became almost dark and the people’s features became yellow. All were kneeling in the mud.”

Inácio Lourenço was a boy nine years old at the time, living in the village of Alburitel, ten miles away from Fatima. He is now a priest and he remembers this day vividly. He was in school. “About noon,” he said, “we were startled by the cries and exclamations of the people going by the school. The teacher was the first to run outside to the street with all the children following her. The people cried and wept on the street; they were all pointing towards the sun. It was ‘The Miracle’ promised by Our Lady. I feel unable to describe it as I saw it and felt it at the time. I was gazing at the sun; it looked so pale to me, it did not blind. It was like a ball of snow rotating upon itself. All of a sudden, it seemed to be falling, zigzag, threatening the earth. Seized with fear, I hid myself amidst the people. Everyone was crying, waiting for the end of the world.

“Nearby, there was a godless man who had spent the morning making fun of the simpletons who had gone to Fatima just to see a girl. I looked at him and he was numbed, his eyes riveted on the sun. I saw him tremble from head to foot. Then he raised his hands towards Heaven, as he was kneeling there in the mud, and cried out, ‘Our Lady,

Our Lady.’ Everyone was crying and weeping, asking God to forgive them their sins. After this was over, we ran to the chapels, some to one, others to the other one in our village. They were soon filled.

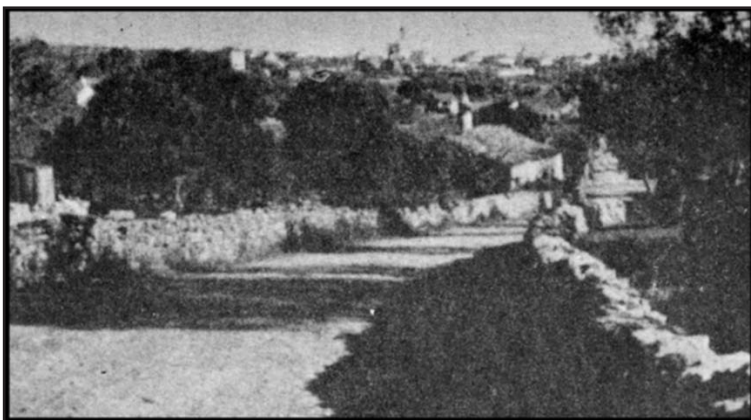
“During the minutes that the miracle lasted, everything around us reflected all the colors of the rainbow. We looked at each other and one seemed blue, another yellow, red and so on. It increased the terror of the people. After ten minutes, the sun resumed its place, as pale, and without splendor. When everyone realized the danger was over, there was an outburst of joy. Everyone broke out in a hymn of praise to Our Lady.”

As the miracle came to its end and the people arose from the muddy ground, another surprise awaited them. A few minutes before, they had been standing in the pouring rain, soaked to the skin. Now they noticed that their clothes were perfectly dry. How kind was Our Lady to Her friends who had braved rain and mud, and put on their very best clothes for Her visit.

The Bishop of Leiria wrote in his Pastoral Letter that those who witnessed the events of this great day were fortunate indeed. He said,

“The children long before set the day and hour at which it was to take place. The news spread quickly over the whole of Portugal and although the day was chilly and pouring rain, many thousands of people gathered... They saw the different manifestations of the sun paying homage to the Queen of Heaven and Earth, who is more radiant than the sun in all its splendor. This phenomenon, which no astronomical observatory registered, was not natural. It was seen by people of all classes, members of the Church and non-Catholics. It was seen by reporters of the principal newspapers and by people many miles away.”

These are his official words, spoken after long study and careful interrogations of many witnesses of the apparition. There is no possibility of error or illusion when close to a hundred thousand people concur in their testimony. God in Heaven had called the people of the world to join with the heavens in paying honor and glory to His Blessed Mother, Mary.



The road between Aljustrel and the parish church.