

FATIMA.

Our Lady's Urgent Call for the Recitation of The Rosary.

By Reverend Bertrand Larkin, O.P.

CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY of Ireland No. Bh451a (1946).

The object of this booklet is to make more accessible, the pith of the wonderful facts narrated by His Grace, the Most Rev. Finbar Ryan, O.P., Archbishop of Port of Spain, in his charming book '*Our Lady of Fatima*.' While it would be most desirable that the book itself would be read by everybody, there are many who could not afford to procure it. For such as these then, this pamphlet has been written in the hope that through it, Our Lady of Fatima, and the lessons she so graciously came to teach, will be better known and appreciated.

In the year 1917, there lived near Fatima, a village situated some sixty miles north of Lisbon, in Portugal, three children, to whom the Queen of Heaven appeared six different times. The messages they received from Our Lady are the subject of this booklet. Their names were: Lucia de Jesus Santos, aged about ten, and her cousins — Francisco Marto, aged nine, and his sister, Jacinta, aged seven. Their parents were humble folk of the mountains, who gained a decent livelihood by small farming.

The children were engaged every day, in taking care of their parents' sheep, in a field belonging to either family. On their way in the mornings, they usually discussed at the corner of the village, which field they were to choose for the day, and so off they went. We shall now quote from Doctor Ryan's most interesting account of these marvellous visits from Heaven.

On the sunny morning of 13th May, 1917, the three favoured children were starting for the day's work of pasturing their parents' sheep.

"Where shall we go today?" they ask one another.

"To my parents' fields at Cova da Iria," Lucia decides.

The country round is flat; this is a plateau, scarcely 2,000 feet high on the Serra d'Aire. The Santos field is different from the surroundings. It is as though some giant hand had scooped a great hollow to make a stadium or amphitheatre there. That is why it has a special name, the Cova (dell or hollow) da Iria—perhaps after the saint of that name. (Saint Irene of Tomar.)

The morning wears on until it is time for the children to take their meal, and after that, according to the custom of the district, to say the Rosary.

It makes one smile to hear how they said it! Like all children, they wanted as much time for play as possible, and found the Rosary — a little long. So, they contented themselves by saying just Hail Mary! Hail Mary! on the small beads, and Our Father on the large. "In this way," says Lucia, "the Rosary was over in the twinkling of an eye."

We may safely presume that this was the last time the Rosary was said after that fashion by the children, for Our Lady, before leaving them, told Lucia she should "say the Rosary properly," in future.

After the Rosary, a vivid flash of lightning furrows the air. The sky is clear and cloudless. Still a storm must be brewing, and thunderstorms in May are serious sometimes, on the exposed mountainside. Sheep may be killed by the lightning. Better get their little flock together then, and go home.

THE FIRST APPARITION.

They move towards the centre of the field, when a second flash startles them. Something makes them turn, and there a little to the right they see, standing as it seems, upon a small holm oak-tree, a lady of incomparable beauty; and so bright with quivering shafts of light that they cannot keep looking at her. She seems about eighteen years old, and oh! how beautiful! Her vesture is purest white, but the mantle, covering her head and flowing round her body, is richly edged with gold. A golden cord ending in a tassel hangs around her neck. Her face, of heavenly loveliness, is reposeful, though serious, and with a suggestion of sadness. Her hands are joined before her breast, and from the right hangs an exquisite white Rosary of pearly beads with cross attached. Her feet are partly obscured by a shimmering cloud resting lightly upon the tree.

Despite the Lady's loveliness, the children are a little afraid. But she invites them to come nearer, saying:

"Have no fear. I will do you no harm."

The gentleness and sweetness of her voice is reassuring. Lucia is the first to recover herself and asks: "Who are you? Where did you come from? What do you want?"

The Lady replies:

"I come from Heaven. I want you children to come here, at this hour, on the 13th of each month until October. Then I will tell you who I am."

"You come from Heaven! Shall I go there?"

"Yes," replied the Lady, "but you must say the Rosary, and say it properly."

"And Jacinta?"

"She will go too."

"And Francisco?"

"Yes, but he must say many Rosaries."

After this, the Lady asks:

"Are you willing to offer yourselves to God, and to bear all the sufferings He wishes to send you, in reparation for the sins whereby He is offended and as intercession for the conversion of sinners?"

The children having declared themselves willing, she adds: "You will have to suffer, then, but thanks be to God, He Himself will strengthen you."

They were not only to say the Rosary, but to live it.

Lucia then remembers some little friends that are dead, and asks if they are in Heaven. One is in Heaven, one still in Purgatory, she was told.

The Lady having obtained the children's promise to keep trust with her, now moves slowly to the east and heavenwards, and finally disappears through the vault of blue. Thus ended Our Lady's first visit.

The apparition had lasted about ten minutes or a little more; as long as one might take to say a Rosary, Lucia explains afterwards.

The children look at one another. They hardly know whether they have been dreaming or not. But yes, Jacinta has seen the beautiful Lady, and heard every word. Francisco has seen, but heard nothing.

Now they hold another conference. Shall we keep all this a secret? Better do so because if we speak, nobody will believe us and perhaps we shall be beaten!

So it is agreed.

But Jacinta's mind and heart were too full for silence!

Her mother noticing her restlessness, induced her to tell the whole story. On the morrow, Lucia's parents were informed, and in less than no time, as the saying goes, all Fatima knew.

The children's anticipation of disbelief, and lack of sympathy was only too well founded. Least of all did they get encouragement in their own homes.

"You are not going back to the Cova; are you?" said Lucia's mother.

"Oh, yes!"

"But June the 13th is the village feast, the feast of Saint Antony?"

"All the same."

THE SECOND APPARITION.

The 13th of June, feast of Saint Antony of Lisbon (one must never say "of Padua" in Portugal), is a great day in Portugal.

Lucia, it was well known, loved such festivities, and her mother and sisters could hardly believe that she would abandon Saint Antony for the sake of this imaginary Lady at the Cova da Iria. Her mother brought her before the parish priest.

"Confess your lie," said she, "so that the parish priest may tell the people on Sunday, and put an end to the whole affair."

"But, mother mine, how can I say that I did not see what I saw?"

The parish priest was kind to the children, and as might be expected, was not disposed to form any definite judgment without further evidence. It might be a heavenly intervention, but alas, it might be a trick of the devil: time would tell!

The effect of all this brow-beating was that Lucia decided not to go to the Cova in June. On the 12th, she told Jacinta and Francisco that she would not go. They declared that they would go, nevertheless, since they had promised the Lady, and Jacinta began to cry.

On the morning of the 13th, however, Lucia felt an irresistible desire to go to the Cova. She went first to her cousins' house and found them praying and crying.

"Are you going to the Cova?" she asked them.

"We were afraid to go without you," they replied.

"Come then, I am going." All doubt had vanished.

So, for once, our three children forgot Saint Antony, and when twelve o'clock came, there they were at the Cova, waiting for the beautiful Lady. Some sixty or seventy people, led by curiosity, were also there. They knelt down under a tree, and said the Rosary. Then Lucia got up, and, turned towards the east, from which the Lady had come in May. Suddenly she ran towards the little oak-tree, followed by her cousins.

The beautiful Lady had come as promised.

"What do you want me to do?" asked Lucia.

The Apparition, in reply, recommended again the frequent recitation of the Rosary, and taught the children an ejaculation to be said after the Gloria of each mystery:

Oh Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those who most need Your mercy.

She said afterwards to Lucia:

"I wish you to learn to read."

Finally, the Lady confided a secret to the children to be kept sacred by them. They were questioned several times as to the nature of this secret but never could be induced to say more than that it was for the good of all three.

We can hardly help asking ourselves whether Our Lady told Jacinta and Francisco about their early death — of which they were so certain later — and gave Lucia her vocation to the religious life.

However, Jacinta gave this information, that on the 13th of June, the day of the second apparition, Lucia spoke to the Lady in favour of some sick persons who were not good, and that the Lady had said some of them would be converted and cured, others not.

Last of all, the Lady urged upon the children again the practice of mortification, saying:

"Pray, pray much, and make sacrifices for sinners. Many souls go to hell because there are none to make sacrifices and to pray for them."

So ended the second apparition.

THIRD APPARITION.

"Rumour has wings," says the proverb. After the June apparition, the news spread far and wide, and many references were made to the occurrences in the Press, so that when the 13th of July came some five thousand people were at the Cova da Iria.

The Apparition came as on the former occasions, and, for the third time, urged the recitation of the Rosary in honour of Our Lady for the ending of the war, since, "She alone could bring it about."

On this day Lucia again asked the Lady who she was, and reported the general disbelief in the reality of the apparitions. The reply was that the children were to continue as already promised, and that, in October she would tell them her name, and work a great miracle, which would convince all.

The Bishop of Leiria, in his Pastoral Letter on the apparitions writes that: "Hundreds, nay thousands of people whose truthfulness we cannot doubt, saw a column of smoke like incense enveloping the tree during the apparitions. This phenomenon humanly inexplicable was repeated several times."

It was on this day the 13th of July that the Lady confided another secret to the children to be kept sacred by them. They were faithful to Her trust. The cleverest cross-examination, the intervention of civil and ecclesiastical authority, appeals to their self interest — all failed to extract any information from them. Francisco and Jacinta carried the secret to the grave, and only in June, 1938, at the approach of the present war, (the Second World War, 1939-1945,) did Lucia make known part of it to the Bishop of Leiria. Why she did so will be evident from the tenor of her revelation.

"The secret comprises three distinct things, two of which I am going to disclose to you," she said. "The first was a vision of hell. The Blessed Virgin opened her hands once more as on the preceding months, saying the words, 'Sacrifice yourselves for sinners and say often, especially when you make sacrifices: 'Oh! Jesus, it is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners and in reparation for the offences committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.'

"The beam of light projected seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw as it were, a vast sea of fire, in which were plunged, all blackened and burnt, demons and souls in human form like transparent brands. Raised into the air by the flames they fell back in all directions, like sparks in a huge fire, without weight or poise, amidst loud cries and horrible groans of pain and despair, which caused us to shudder and tremble with fear. (It is probably at this scene that I cried, Oh! which those present say they heard.) The demons were distinguished by the horrible and repellent forms of terrible unknown animals, like brands of fire, black, yet transparent.

"This scene lasted an instant, and we must thank our heavenly Mother who had prepared us, beforehand, by promising to take us to heaven with her, otherwise I believe that we should have died of fear and terror."

In our days of refinement, pleasure-seeking and loose morals, to think seriously of the last things — Judgment, Hell and Heaven — seems to be quite out of place. Then, it is said, there is no necessity. People can lead good lives without such considerations. This is the state of mind of thousands at the present moment. Yet a message comes from heaven, from the lips of God's holy Mother, absolutely contradicting this view of things. At Fatima, no less than four times, we are reminded of hell.

At the second Apparition, 13th June, Our Lady taught the children a little prayer to be said after each decade of the Rosary. It runs thus: 'Oh Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those who most need Your mercy'. On the same day, Our Lady, before taking her departure, urged the children:

Pray, pray much, and make sacrifices for sinners. Many souls go to hell because there are none to make sacrifices for them.

Again, at the third Apparition, 13th July, Our Lady opens hell, so to say, to the children, a sight which Lucia said, was enough to cause their death were they not assured by Our Lady's promise.

Lastly, Our Lady points out a way of avoiding hell, namely, by devotion to her Immaculate Heart. 'You see the hell into which the souls of poor sinners go; to save them from it God wishes to establish throughout the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.' And here Our Lady mentions the devotion of the five First Saturdays of the month, explained in a future chapter as "**The Great Promise.**"

Now, who will presume to question the significance of this message from heaven, for is it not an important message to the whole world, especially to Christians? What can the votaries of sinful pleasure, who take the world easy, say to that? Their very easygoing, sinful ways, blind them.

Coming to the fathers of the Church and theologians of the first rank, we learn that the sinners of whom Our Lady speaks (who deserve hell) are not converted ordinarily by appeals to the love and goodness and mercy of God, but rather by the fear of His judgments. A familiar example will illustrate this point. An unruly son will not be brought to love and obey his parents by appeals to the love and great care of his father. But he will yield at once to correction and punishment. He will fear the rod, according to the voice of Scripture: 'You shall beat him with the rod, and save his soul from hell.' (Proverbs 23:14.)

All Christians, therefore, should seriously consider whether they deserve the awful punishment God has in store for His enemies, and not to wait till they find themselves in hell.

As for Jacinta, the thought of hell, or rather of the innumerable persons who by their wicked lives are in danger of going to that abode of misery, became a veritable obsession. In the same spirit which explains the endless succession of saintly souls intent, as Saint Paul expresses it, on "filling up what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ," by voluntary vicarious penance, she lost no opportunity of suffering sacrifices for the conversion of sinners. "She wondered," reports Lucia, "that Our Lady did not show that vision to the thousands that were at the Cova da Iria, on 13th July. She did not reflect on the parable of Lazarus and the rich man in hell."

The second part of the secret was Our Lady's request for the establishment of the devotion to Her Most Pure Heart.

Lucia writes of it thus:

"After (this vision of hell) we lifted our eyes to Our Lady, Who said to us, kindly, yet with sadness: 'You see the hell into which the souls of poor sinners go; to save them from it God wishes to establish throughout the world, devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If people do what I have told you, many souls will be saved and find peace. The war is going to end, but if people do not cease to offend God, a worse one will break out in the next Pontificate. [Japan invaded China in 1937. Germany invaded Austria in 1938.] When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that it is the great sign given you by God that He is about to punish the world for its crimes by war, by famine, and by persecution of the Church, and of the Holy Father. To prevent this, I ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart and Communion of Reparation on the First Saturday (of each month). If people attend to my petition, Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, her errors will be spread throughout the world, causing wars and persecution of the Church, the good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have to suffer much, different nations will be destroyed, but in the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world'."

The scarcely veiled allusion to Russia in the historic address to the world on 31st October, 1942, at the close of the Fatima Jubilee celebrations, and the formal consecration of the world to the Most Pure Heart of Mary seem quite manifestly an official recognition of this celestial intimation made known to the ecclesiastical authorities by Lucia. Her life, too, seems to have been prolonged beyond that of the other children, for this mission.

THE FIVE FIRST SATURDAYS OF THE MONTH.

It seems worthwhile at this stage, to give more particulars of Our Lady's great promise to those who practise the devotion of the Five First Saturdays.

On the 13th May, 1939, in the fifth edition of the *Official Handbook of the Pilgrim to Fatima*, page 131, his Lordship, the Bishop of Fatima, caused the following to be published:

"It is Our Blessed Lady Herself, who in our times (through Sister Lucia of Jesus, who saw the apparitions at Fatima), has deigned to teach us this devotion of the Five First Saturdays, the object of which is to make reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for all offences and outrages committed against her by ungrateful men.

"This devotion consists in:

- "1. Going to Confession and Holy Communion on these days.
- "2. Saying the Rosary, and meditating on the Mysteries of the Rosary for a quarter of an hour.
- "3. Having the intention of making reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

THE GREAT PROMISE.

Our Blessed Lady said to Sister Lucia of Jesus:

"My child, behold my Heart all pierced with thorns which the blasphemies and ingratitude of men drive deeper at every moment. Do you, at least, try to console me, and make known to men that:

"I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who, the first Saturday of five consecutive months, go to Confession, receive Holy Communion, say the Rosary, and spend a quarter of an hour with me in meditating on the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary, with the object of making reparation to me."

N.B. 1 — Confession may take place in the week which precedes or follows, provided that Holy Communion is received in a state of grace. The meditation may be on one or several of the Mysteries of the Rosary. It seems preferable that one Mystery should be taken each month and meditated on in detail, so that after three repetitions of this Devotion, the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary will have been meditated.

N.B. 2 — For those who are unaccustomed to meditate or think seriously on some point of Catholic doctrine, this last suggestion of the writer will present a difficulty. An easier way apparently and more in accordance with the precise message of Our Lady would seem to be this.

(1) Say the Rosary; five mysteries are thought to be sufficient.

(2) "Spend a quarter of an hour with me" (are Our Lady's own words), "in meditating on the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary," that is simply, to spend a quarter of an hour in thinking over the fifteen Mysteries, the Joyful, the Sorrowful, and the Glorious — one minute, say, for each. Whereas, as already suggested, one who is not used to meditate would find it hard to concentrate for a quarter of an hour on one Mystery.

A last word: Does it not seem clear that Our Lady wishes to stress the fact in saying the Rosary, the person should think of the Mysteries. What are these Mysteries but a short life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, from His becoming Man until He crowned His Holy Mother in Heaven? Is it well to spend some time every day in thus thinking of Jesus in the Rosary? It is, certainly He Himself said to Saint Catherine of Sienna, "My daughter, think of Me, and I will think of you."

Devout souls, and members of Religious communities have great facilities for making these first Saturdays. It is sufficient for them to offer their usual Rosary on these days for the intention stated above, and to take one or more Mysteries of the Rosary as the subject of their morning meditation.

Already, on the 13th June, 1912, the Holy See has granted a plenary indulgence, under the usual conditions, to all who, on the first Saturday of any month, perform special exercises of devotion in honour of the Immaculate Virgin Mary in reparation for the blasphemies against her Name and Her prerogatives. (See No. 335 of the *Official Collection: Preces et Pia Opera*, 1938.)

Our Lady's request to Sister Lucia, therefore, only confirms and sanctions a devotion already in existence and approved by the Church. Thus those who practise the devotion of the Five First Saturdays, will thereby fulfil the conditions required to gain the plenary indulgence granted by the Holy See.

Opposition.

Fatima and the events there had, by August, become one of the main topics of conversation throughout Portugal, and the Press of Lisbon and Porto, not content with giving the news — embroidered with exaggeration and inaccuracy it must be said — proposed different explanations of the alleged facts.

In official circles at Lisbon, this news of supernatural apparitions was most unwelcome, and so it was deemed necessary to prevent anything like a religious movement at Fatima. Who could tell how far a revival of active faith might go?

The Civil Administrator of Ourem was a man after the very heart of his Government chiefs.

Animated with hatred of religion, he was ready to go to any length to serve them in the present case. His first move was to summon the children and their fathers to appear before him at Ourem. Lucia and her father obeyed.

The Administrator endeavoured, by promises first, then by threats, to get her to reveal the secret, and undertake not to go again to the Cova da Iria. Not succeeding, he dismissed her, saying (as later some of his emissaries reported), that if the children did not obey, he would kill them. They were quite undismayed, and, when the suggestion was made that they should be taken out of the jurisdiction of Ourem, declared that they did not wish it: If they kill us, they said, so much the better. We shall go to Heaven.

On the morning of the 13th August, the Administrator came to Fatima and saw the children in the Marto home. Failing to induce them to do as he wished, he played the dastardly trick now to be related.

Rather than allow the children to go to the Cova da Iria, he kidnapped them; taking them in his car to his house at Ourem.

Arrived at Ourem, the children were locked in a room and told that they would not be freed until they had revealed the secret. For three days, they were subjected to questioning, followed up by new promises and threats. They were to be boiled in oil! The feint was made of carrying out this threat successively on Jacinta, Francisco and Lucia.

It is easy to imagine how terrifying this treatment must have been to such young children, and to sympathise with Jacinta's tears and loneliness. But compassion quickly gives way to admiration at their constancy, the fruit assuredly not only of mere natural character, but of the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit's Gift of Fortitude. "They will lay hands on you . . . delivering you . . . into prisons, dragging you before . . . governors, for My Names' sake. . . . Lay it up therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before how you shall answer for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay." (Luke 21:12.)

The children were very sad to think that apparently, their parents had betrayed them. Jacinta, especially, was yearning for her mother. "Don't cry," said Francisco to her. "Let us offer all this to Jesus for sinners," and raising his eyes and hands to heaven he made this offering: "O my Jesus, it is for Your love, and for the conversion of sinners."

Jacinta added:

"And also for the Holy Father, and in reparation for sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

That children of seven and nine years of age should act and speak like this, conquering childish fears, is marvellous. It throws much light on the teaching given them by Our Lady about the Pope and the Church, so tried during those dreadful years of war, and the sorrows of her own maternal Heart. The fact is vouched for by Lucia, as quoted in the book entitled '*Jacinta*', page 48.

But we have been anticipating.

THE FOURTH APPARITION.

If the newspaper accounts can be credited, on 13th August, there were anything from fifteen to eighteen thousand people at the Cova da Iria.

At 12 o'clock, a breathless boy brings word that the children have been arrested and taken away to Ourem.

The crowd at the Cova were furious, and many of them stormed back to Fatima and surrounded the parish priest's house. They got the idea that he was behind the kidnapping and such was their temper, as he afterwards said, they might easily have killed him in their indignation. A by-play of Providence, disposing in advance the suggestion that Fatima was an invention of the priest!

The Administrator, seeing that he availed nothing, perforce had to liberate the children. He did so on the 18th of August. The following day Our Lady appeared to the children, not at the Cova, but at a place called Vallinhos, near Fatima, where they were again pasturing their sheep. She complained of the treatment, which had been given to them on the 13th, and declared that, as a penalty, the miracle promised for October would not be on such a grand scale.

THE FIFTH APPARITION.

The happening of August at Fatima received the greatest publicity, as may easily be supposed, and the tide of popular feeling was flowing strongly in favour of their supernatural character. On 13th September, it was calculated that more than twenty-five thousand people had gathered. Lucia, kneeling expectantly near the tree of the apparitions bade them kneel and pray.

In a few moments, she cried:

"She is coming."

What did Our Lady say to the children this time?

She bade them to continue saying the Rosary for the ending of the war. She urged them to come, without fail, on 13th October, and promised that on that day she would appear, accompanied by Saint Joseph and the Child Jesus.

The apparition lasted about ten minutes, or more, as on the previous occasions. At the end, Lucia said aloud:

"She is going away now."

THE SIGNADOU OF FATIMA. (SIGNADOU means 'Sign of God'.)

After the apparition of September, expectation ran high. Fatima was on the lips of everybody in Portugal. What would happen in October? Would anything happen?

And the children? A very remarkable thing about them was that, though they were the cynosure of all eyes, and were subjected to innumerable and tiresome questionings, they exhibited no signs of vanity or self-importance; in fact they seemed to have no thought of the apparitions, save at the time of their occurrence, or when they were being interviewed.

SIXTH AND LAST APPARITION.

On the 12th October, all roads led to Fatima. Before darkness fell an enormous crowd had arrived, and through the night, the number increased.

There had been a great deal of rain, and the ground was soft and muddy. It was still raining, indeed, so that, by morning, everybody was wet through, as well as weary after the long vigil.

About half-past eleven a sudden movement of expectancy stirred the crowd. The children were coming!

They made their way to the accustomed place and began to say the Rosary. Some minutes after twelve Lucia cried out:

"She is coming. Kneel down everybody."

If anything, the Lady was more shining and beautiful than ever.

"Her face was brighter than the sun," said Francisco. He could not keep looking at her. The light dazzled him.

Remembering that Our Lady had said in May: "In October I will tell you who I am and what I want." Lucia asked:

"Who are you and what do you want?"

"I am the Lady of the Rosary," replied Our Lady "and I have come to warn the faithful to amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins. They must not continue to offend Our Lord — already so deeply offended. They must say the Rosary."

How loving a complaint, how tender a request: adds Lucia. "Who will grant me to make it echo through the world everywhere, so that every child of the Heavenly Mother may hear the sound of Her Voice?"

Our Lady also said that she wished a Church to be built in the Cova to the honour of the Lady of the Rosary, and that if people but amended their lives, the war would end soon.

THE HOLY FAMILY.

Our Lady had promised that on this day she would bring with her Saint Joseph and the Divine Child.

She was as good as her word.

For now, the children had a vision of the Holy Family: Our Lady wearing a white tunic with a blue cloak, Saint Joseph, bearing the Infant Jesus in his arms, both being clothed in red garments. A tableau, it may be said, recalling the lessons of the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary which have as central meditation, the sanctified home and the manifold obediences of daily life.

Then Our Lord appeared alone, a grown man, blessing the people, and was joined in a few moments by Our Lady, now garbed as the Mother of Dolours, though without the sword, usually shown, piercing the Heart. Thus, seemingly was typified life progressing, in union with Our Lady towards Calvary, and the burden of the Sorrowful Mysteries suggested.

Finally, Our Lady showed herself alone in a vesture not familiar to Lucia, that of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Carmel, as everybody knows, stands for the ideal of contemplative union with God, imperfect on earth, but consummate in the light of glory, whither Jesus had ascended and Mary has been assumed. These are the things proposed to us in the Glorious Mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

Lucia alone saw Our Lady as Mother of Dolours and as the Beauty of Carmel. Jacinta and Francisco were not to know the arduousness of the Way of the Cross, nor the rigours of the Ascent of Mount Carmel. Theirs the little unclouded way.

If, then, the apparitions — and especially these final ones — were real, if Our Lady had appeared: there could be no doubts as to the message she wished to give the world at Fatima.

If she had really appeared! What of the promised miracle that was to convince the world of this?

As Our Lady was about to go away, she made a movement of her hand towards the sky, and Lucia cried out: "Look at the sun."

Suddenly the rain ceased, and the people looking to the zenith saw the sun, or what they took to be the sun. Indeed, one could look fixedly at it without any strain or inconvenience. But as the crowd gazed, this sun began to revolve, like some gigantic catherine-wheel, throwing out great shafts of coloured light which flashed and fell upon sky and earth. It seemed as if the sun were about to drop out of the firmament. After a few minutes the movement ceased, only to be repeated a second, and a third time, during a space of altogether, about ten minutes.

Fatima, the book already quoted, thus describes this never-to-be-forgotten scene:

"The sun after its magic dance of fire and colour, ceased to turn, and, like a gigantic wheel, which by the very movement of turning had become loosened, detached itself from the firmament, and hurled down towards the crowd crouching, terror-stricken, on the ground, convinced that this was the end of the world foretold in the gospel.

"From all the vast multitude suddenly on its knees in fear of death, arose the most ardent supplications, the most fervent acts of contrition."

In the formal Decree of 1930 — thirteen years later, His Lordship the Bishop writes:

"The solar phenomenon of 13th October, 1917, described in the Press at the time, was most marvellous, and made a very deep impression on those who had the good fortune to be present.

"The children fixed, in advance, the day and the hour when it would take place. Word of this went quickly all over Portugal, and despite the unpleasantness of the day, and the heavy rain, thousands and thousands of people came, and, at the time of the last apparition were present at this manifestation of the monarch of the stars doing homage to the Queen of Heaven and earth — 'She who is brighter than the sun in its rising.'" (Canticles 6:9.)

This phenomenon, which was not registered in any astronomical observatory — a fact which shows that it was not natural — was seen by persons of every class and grade of society, by believers and incredulous, by journalists representing the principal Portuguese papers, and even by persons miles away. This destroys any explanation based on collective illusion.

WHAT DOES OUR LADY ASK FOR?

Our Lady as she had promised has given us in this wonderful miracle of the revolving of the sun, the clear proof, that her visits from heaven, and her instructions, were realities, and not inventions of three children. Moreover, this miracle was the seal of God, on the whole series of apparitions, for God alone through the medium of Our Lady, could be the author of such a marvel. Throughout all these marvellous happenings, what does Our Lady never cease to ask? The recitation of the Rosary. Let us make this clear.

First Apparition.

After asking the children to come to the same place at the same hour, on the 13th of each month until October, to the question of Lucia: "Shall I go to Heaven?" Our Lady answers: "Yes, but you must say the Rosary, and say it properly."

"And Jacinta?"

"She will go too."

"And Francisco?"

"Yes, but he must say many Rosaries."

Second Apparition.

When Our Lady appeared on the 13th June, Lucia asked: "What do you want me to do?" This time Our Lady asks not merely for the Rosary, but for the frequent recitation of the Rosary. And then adds: "After the Glory be to the Father of each decade, say this prayer: 'Oh Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those who most need Your Mercy'."

Third Apparition.

On the 13th July, Our Lady urged the recitation of the Rosary in her honour, for the ending of the war, since, "She alone could bring it about."

At this apparition, Our Lady said to Lucia: "I ask for the consecration of the world to My Immaculate Heart, and Communion in reparation on the first Saturday of each month."

Our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, on the 13th October, 1942, consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

We reserve the Devotion of the five First Saturdays to the end, in order to give it the prominence it deserves, and that it may leave a lasting impression.

Fourth Apparition.

As has already been stated, owing to the kidnapping of the children by the Administrator of Ourem, Our Lady had not appeared at the Cova da Iria, on the 13th August. But five days later, she graciously met the children at a place called Vallinhos, near Fatima.

Fifth Apparition.

On 13th September, 1917, no less than thirty thousand persons were said to have assembled at the Cova da Iria. Every road and path was crowded with pilgrims.

Just at midday Our Lady appeared, and once more urged on the children the recitation of the Rosary in order to obtain the end of the war.

Sixth and Last Apparition.

On the 13th October, 1917, the huge crowd at the Cova da Iria was variously estimated at from sixty thousand to seventy thousand people, all in general saying the Rosary. Lucia, bearing in mind Our Lady's promise, respectfully asks: "Who are you and what do you want?"

"I am the Lady of the Rosary, and I have come to warn the faithful to amend their lives, and ask pardon for their sins. They must not continue to offend Our Lord — already so deeply offended. They must say the Rosary."

While everyone in the vast crowd held his breath, and trembled at the spinning round of the sun, the children and they alone, were privileged, as Our Lady had promised, to see the Holy Family. Our Lady wearing a white tunic with a blue cloak, Saint Joseph bearing the Infant Jesus in his arms, both clothed in red garments.

A little after, Our Lord appeared alone, as a grown man blessing the people, and was soon joined by Our Lady now robed as the Mother of Sorrows.

Finally, Our Lady showed herself alone in the vesture of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

The Rosary again:

- (1) The Holy Family, recalling the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary in the family life at Nazareth.
- (2) Our Lord Himself now a grown man, in company with Our Lady as Mother of Sorrows, typifying the Sorrowful Mysteries.
- (3) Our Lady of Mount Carmel alone. Carmel stands for union with God on earth by His grace, and in Heaven face to face. The Glorious Mysteries tell us of Our Lord's victory over death in His Resurrection, and of Our Lady's triumph in being crowned Queen of Angels and Saints.

What special lesson are we to learn from the varied apparitions of the Holy Family? This lesson at least — that we are to think of the Mysteries of the Rosary when saying it. Otherwise, it would be a collection of Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glory be to the Fathers, but it would not be the Rosary. Hence, for each decade, our Prayer Book ought to be our guide: Let us contemplate (that is consider, think of) in this Mystery, et cetera.

Who will begin to say the little prayer taught to the children by Our Lady, on the 13th June? It is to be said after every Glory be to the Father of the Rosary: 'Oh Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those who most need Your mercy.'

The Great Promise made by Our Lady on the 13th July, is of such extreme importance, we beg to offer some reflections on it, before closing our booklet

At the Apparition of the 13th July, Our Lady said to Lucia "I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who, the first Saturday of five consecutive months, go to Confession, receive Holy Communion, say the Rosary, and spend a quarter of an hour with me in meditating on the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary, with the object of making reparation to me." That is, offering some satisfaction, making amends, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for all the offences and outrages committed against her by ungrateful men.

Behold here, once more, how prominently the Rosary figures — say the Rosary, and spend a quarter of an hour with me in meditating (that is in thinking on) the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary (let us say one minute for each). For how long? The first Saturday for five consecutive months. Can any one say this is hard? Certainly not — and the reward? The graces necessary for salvation at the hour of death. So Our Lady promised. Do you believe her? Yes! Do you who read these lines wish for the graces you need at the hour of death? In other words, do you wish to be saved? Yes, a thousand times, yes! Well, then, begin this saving practice at once. Don't wait to let your resolution cool. Begin the next first Saturday, and continue for four others. The conditions are set down already. These conditions are so easy of fulfilment; perhaps you will follow my advice: continue every first Saturday until your last illness. Probably you have been doing "the Nine First Fridays," as that heaven-sent devotion is called. Join together the two pious Devotions. The same Confession for the First Friday will suffice for Saturday. Oh, with what firm hope in that last illness you will look to the end, leaning on Mary's strong arm! May we add, before your soul takes its flight from earth, you will see with the eyes of faith the very throne, which awaits you in the joys of Paradise.

SUMMING UP.

Need we ask the intelligent reader what is the outstanding message of Fatima? Without doubt, it is the recitation of the Rosary. A short review will make this quite clear.

At the first Apparition, to Lucia's question — "shall I go to Heaven?" Our Lady replied: "Yes, but you must say the Rosary."
And Francisco?

"Yes, but he must say many Rosaries!"

At three of the other apparitions, Our Lady urged the saying of the Rosary.

At the last Apparition, when respectfully asked by Lucia to give her name, Our Lady replied: "I am the Lady of the Rosary."

By the Apparitions of the Holy Family, we are taught to think over the Mysteries of the Rosary when saying it, and, finally when Our Lady makes that wonderful promise connected with the Five First Saturdays, she asks for the Rosary, and to spend a quarter of an hour with her (consider the privilege of it), in thinking over the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary. Surely, it is the Rosary throughout.

And now to come down to practice. Dear reader, what are you going to do? Before the introduction of the cinemas and present-day dances, Ireland was deservedly famous for the recitation of the evening Family Rosary. Now the families separate, come home at different hours, and alas! there is no Rosary. The loss from a religious point of view is tremendous. Shall we return to the pious practice? Will you at least be one?

Finally, dear reader, do you not think there must be some very grave reason for this urgent appeal of the holy Mother of God? Six visits from heaven to three children — the eldest of whom was only ten years! As the Seat of Wisdom, do you not think that Our Blessed Mother is the best judge of our position and needs? And being also the Mother of mercy and Refuge of sinners, when she points out the remedy for the evils of the day, is it not simple common sense to follow her guidance? Without doubt. Will you, dear reader, do your part? Will you try to induce your family to kneel for the Rosary immediately after the evening meal? This is the only safe plan. Become an apostle of Mary in this matter, and await results. If all the Irish Catholic families thus obey this urgent and loving appeal of Our Heavenly Mother, we may confidently hope, that she on her side at the last momentous hour, will remember our cry, repeated fifty times every day — "Pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen."

[Francisco Marto (June 11, 1908 – April 4, 1919) and his sister **Jacinta Marto** (March 11, 1910 – February 20, 1920) were beatified on May 13, 2000. by Blessed Pope John Paul II.]

(Thanks to the Irish Rosary Office.)