

24. First Saturdays Request (Dec. 10, 1925)

Lucia left Fatima “with my poor heart plunged in an ocean of loneliness and filled with memories that I could never forget.”¹

Her new life started well with a morning Mass at the Dorothean chapel. Afterwards Lucia was taken to the Mother Superior, who was less than impressed: “What a strange creature from the hills,” she said under her breath to the chaplain.²

She reviewed Bishop da Silva’s instructions with her new pupil. Then the Mother Superior changed Lucia’s name to *Maria das Dores*, Maria of Sorrows. Although the name had a certain aptness to it, the main reason for the change was so that the Mother Superior could tell visitors, “No, we have no one named Lucia here.”

Lucia spent the next four years studying, praying, and blending into the woodwork. Cheerful and agreeable, she obeyed every instruction instantly and efficiently. Fatima was not mentioned once; it was as if it had never happened.³ Of her years at the Vilar boarding school Lucia would say simply, “I lived exactly as one of the others.”

Except that she read the life of Saint Thérèse, and discovered a longing for the Carmelite way of life. Mother Superior said she was not strong enough for the austerities required of Carmelites, and told her to find another Order. In short order Lucia picked the Dorothean Order, but Mother Magalhaes, the new Superior, told Lucia she was too young to join a religious Order (she was seventeen). Lucia did not mention the matter again.

A year later Mother Superior asked Lucia: “*Maria das Dores*, have you abandoned all thought of entering religion?”

“Never, Mother, not for one moment have I forgotten, except...”

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"Except what, my child?"

"That I was told to wait – and have waited."⁴

This example of humility and strict obedience is accentuated by the fact that Lucia still longed to be a Carmelite, a vocation she would eventually realize after years of offering as a sacrifice to Heaven her longing for what turned out to be her true vocation. Her humility shone through in her gratitude to be a Dorothean Sister, which she expressed in a letter to Canon Formigao:

"I hope to enter the Institute of St. Dorothy in Spain at the end of October or early November. Because I am so unworthy of such a great grace, I ask Your Reverence to do me one more act of charity: to thank Jesus for me and ask of Him that I do the Divine Will in all things. May Your Reverence please excuse this humble sinner who will never forget you before Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament and Mary Most Holy..."⁵

Since Portuguese Orders were forbidden by law from receiving candidates to the religious life, Lucia traveled just across the northern border of Portugal to Tuy, and from there to Pontevedra, where she began her novitiate. Because of her evident virtues she was allowed to skip the preliminary step of being an aspirant, and was directly admitted as a postulant – a very rare privilege which Lucia had prayed for in the summer of 1925.⁶

One Thursday evening Lucia returned to her cell after supper. Here is her account of what happened there, narrated in the third person:

"On December 10, 1925, the Most Holy Virgin appeared to her, and by Her side, elevated on a luminous cloud, was the Child Jesus. The Most Holy Virgin rested Her hand on her shoulder, and as She did so, She showed her a Heart encircled by thorns, which She was holding in Her other hand. At the same time, the Child said:

"'Have compassion on the Heart of your Most Holy Mother, covered with thorns, with which ungrateful men pierce It at every moment, and there is no one to make an act of reparation to remove them.'

“Then the Most Holy Virgin said:

“Look My daughter, at My Heart, surrounded with thorns with which ungrateful men pierce Me at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You at least try to console Me and announce in My name that I promise to assist at the moment of death, with all graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the First Saturday of five consecutive 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.”⁷

This episode was the fulfillment of the Blessed Virgin’s words to Lucia at the Cova da Iria on July 13, 1917: “I shall come to ask for...the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays.” Almost as striking is the Blessed Virgin touching Lucia on the shoulder – as a friend. Perhaps this singular grace so confounded Lucia’s humility that she narrated the episode in the third person, to hide her role in the apparition as much as possible.

The Blessed Virgin did more than ask for reparatory Communion and devotions on five First Saturdays: She promised Heaven to those who practiced this devotion sincerely and with a spirit of reparation. Those who wonder whether it is Mary’s place to promise eternal salvation to anyone forget one of Her illustrious titles: Mediatrix of all Graces.

Lucia informed her Mother Superior and her confessor about this apparition immediately. The confessor told Lucia there was already a First Saturday devotion, which was true. Her subsequent confessor at Tuy, Father Jose Bernardo Gonçalves, S.J., wrote Lucia asking her to explain the reason for five First Saturdays of devotion. After completing a holy hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament one Thursday evening, Lucia wrote him back:

“I spoke to Our Lord about questions four and five, I suddenly felt myself more intimately possessed by the Divine Presence and, if I am not mistaken, this is what was revealed to me:

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“My daughter, the reason is simple. There are five types of offenses and blasphemies committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary:

1. Blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception.
2. Blasphemies against Her Perpetual Virginity.
3. Blasphemies against Her Divine Maternity, in refusing at the same time to recognize Her as the Mother of men.
4. The blasphemies of those who publicly seek to sow in the hearts of children indifference or scorn, or even hatred of this Immaculate Mother.
5. The offenses of those who outrage Her directly in Her holy images.

“See, My daughter, the motive for which the Immaculate Heart of Mary inspired Me to ask for this little reparation, and in consideration of it, to move My mercy to pardon souls who have had the misfortune of offending Her. As for you, always seek by your prayers and sacrifices to move My mercy to pity for these poor souls.”⁸

In a few years Bishop da Silva himself began promoting the Reparatory devotion of Five First Saturdays. As the devotion began to be practiced, Lucia wrote Father Aparicio:

“Your Reverence cannot imagine how great is my joy in thinking of the consolation which the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary will receive through this lovable devotion and the great number of souls who will be saved through this lovable devotion.

“I say ‘who will be saved,’ because not long ago, Our Good Lord in His infinite mercy asked me to seek to make reparation through my prayers and sacrifices, and preferably to perform reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and implore pardon and mercy in favor of souls who blaspheme against Her, because the Divine Mercy does not pardon these souls without reparation.”⁹

Eight years had passed since the apparitions at Fatima. Some have questioned the length of time between Fatima and the apparition at Pontevedra, and in doing so cast doubt on the relation between the apparitions. If one takes the

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Blessed Virgin at Her word, however, there is no discrepancy. At Fatima She said She would come again to ask for the Communion of Reparation, and at Pontevedra She did just that. True doubt would have been cast on the apparitions if the Blessed Virgin *hadn't* come again.

Notes

1. Second Memoir, p. 97.
2. De Marchi, op. cit., p. 242.
3. With one exception. The canonical tribune investigating the Fatima apparitions was authorized by Bishop da Silva to visit Lucia, in strictest secrecy, in 1924, to question her about the apparitions. See TWTAf, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 226.
4. De Marchi, op. cit., p. 245.
5. TWTAf, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 230.
6. Barthas, op. cit., p. 145.
7. TWTAf, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 247. See also Appendix II of *Fatima In Lucia's Own Words*, op. cit., for Lucia's narrative, which includes subsequent visits to her by the Child Jesus. See also *The Fatima Crusader*, Issue 49, "The Five First Saturdays". Available from the publisher of this book. It is also online at www.fatimacrusader.com/cr49/toc49.asp
8. TWTAf, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 269.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 819.