

38. Sister Lucia Remains Unsatisfied

Although Sister Lucia could not speak publicly to refute fabricated interviews and erroneous statements attributed to her, occasionally someone helped her out.

In 1986, Father Rene Laurentin, a Marian theologian with no reputation for being traditional, somehow discovered Lucia's opinion that Pope John Paul II's 1984 consecration of the world had not satisfied Our Lady of Fatima's request. He said publicly that "Sister Lucia has remained unsatisfied...Lucia seems to think that the consecration has not been made as Our Lady wanted it." Afterwards he had a private interview with the Holy Father. Later, Laurentin would write, apparently with some authority, that "dialogue has remained difficult between Lucia, the seer, and the last six popes," and that between John Paul II and Sister Lucia "there remains a strain."¹

Laurentin's statements were verified prior to John Paul's trip to Fatima on May 13, 1991. The Pope, who believed that the *perestroika* of Mikhail Gorbachev were the fruit of his consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart in 1984, invited the Soviet Union's ambassador to come to Fatima. He also invited Sister Lucia, who, according to her Mother Superior, refused to go to Fatima to meet the Pope. A journalist interviewed Mother Maria do Carmo for the Portuguese weekly *O Jornal*:

"Will Sister Lucia meet once again Pope John Paul II at Fatima, on May 13?"

"For the moment we do not know yet, but it is very probably no."

"But that would be an exception during the Popes' visits. Perhaps her health is not sufficient for her to go out of the Convent?"

"It is not a question of health. She has already met this Pope once; on this occasion the cloistered Sisters can also go

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out of the Convent and go to Fatima. This time, I do not yet know what will become of it. It is obvious that if the Holy Father manifests the desire to meet her, she will go. But Sister Lucia will only go to Fatima if she is ordered to go. Otherwise, she will not go."²

Perhaps the Pope got wind of Lucia's reluctance, for the Apostolic Nuncio at Lisbon phoned Coimbra on May 11, the day after John Paul II arrived at Fatima, and transmitted the Pope's command that Lucia come to Fatima. She was there on the morning of May 13, and had a short private conversation with John Paul II. Lucia gave him a Rosary she had made herself, and a book about Our Lady. At Fatima she was seated off to the side of the main platform where the Pope presided.

Lucia listened to John Paul II's sermon, wherein he linked the apparent breakup of Soviet Communism to the fulfillment of Our Lady's request that Russia be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It may have gone unnoticed that the Pope could not further declare that Sister Lucia agreed with him. It may also have gone unnoticed that the importance of May 13 seemed to have changed: it was no longer the date of the first apparition of Our Lady at the Cova da Iria. May 13 was now the date that Pope John Paul II escaped death by an assassin's bullet.

In hindsight, it appears the Pope's 1991 visit to Fatima, and his invitation to the Soviet ambassador to enter the sanctuary, had less to do with honoring the Blessed Virgin than trying to gain admittance to the Soviet Union. This was the angle Pro-Secretary of State Sodano played after the Holy Father returned to Rome. What better proof of Russia's conversion than a photo-opportunity for the charismatic Pope John Paul II at the great country's landmarks?

Man proposes, and God disposes. John Paul II would never be allowed into Russia during his long pontificate, and the Orthodox Church easily remained the dominant religion in Russia. The Catholic Church, despite occasional publicity to the contrary, was suppressed and despised, relegated to a sect among sects. Communism appeared on the wane in Russia, and in fairness, this may have been one of the fruits of John Paul's two consecrations. Yet only a lunatic could claim she had converted to Catholicism.

Sister Lucia

Sister Lucia, now eighty-four years old, found herself in a familiar position: at loggerheads with a Pope. How was she doing? Let us continue with the newspaper interview with Lucia's Superior, Mother Maria do Carmo.

"Is she (Sister Lucia) an exception among the religious (at Coimbra)?"

"She is like one among us, nothing else. Anyone who does not know her, would be unable to distinguish her. She is a Sister like the others."

"Does she have any special task?"

"We almost do not have to take into account her eighty-four years. She does all the domestic jobs: a little less now, because of her own age. What is different for her is the correspondence which she receives in great quantity."

"Among all the works of the monastery, which did she prefer to do?"

"She loved them all. She directed the work of the kitchen-garden; she has done gold embroidery for some years."

"Sister Lucia was recently operated on for cataracts. Is she well?"

"The operation went well. She is very well for her age and does not suffer from any illness."

"Does she continue to live a normal life?"

"Yes, a normal life."

"Outside, they say she is a religious full of good dispositions. Is this true?"

"She is very lively, very simple, like all the Carmelites. In fact, she is a very good religious."

"Does she get angry?"

"She has her nerves, like everyone. She has a strong character, but we force ourselves not to make each other angry. But it is normal to become irritated."

"Does she reply to all the letters she receives?"

"Yes and no, according to her judgment. She only gets help from Sisters for translation. When she does answer, she does so with her own hand."

"Does she receive visitors?"

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"Only from her family, or from very close friends, no one else."

"But does she not receive also official visitors?"

"Cardinals may visit her without authorization of the Holy Father. But even the bishops may not visit her here, as you know, without special permission from the Holy See..."³

Notes

1. As quoted in FIJWE, Book Four, op. cit., p. 189.
2. Ibid., p. 197.
3. Ibid., pp. 198-199.