

39. Third Secret “Revealed” (2000)

On May 13, 2000, Pope John Paul II visited Fatima for the last time, to beatify Francisco and Jacinta Marto. Their cousin Lucia was there. It was one of the happiest days of her life.

At the end of the beatification ceremony Secretary of State Sodano told the multitude that the Third Secret of Fatima was a symbolic vision of the 1981 assassination attempt on John Paul II. He promised that The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) would be issuing a document giving more details on the Third Secret. The following month the CDF released *The Message of Fatima*, which declared the Third Secret to be the following vision of Sister Lucia:

“...[A]t the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendor that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand, pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: ‘Penance, Penance, Penance!’. And we saw in an immense light that is God: ‘something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it’ a Bishop dressed in White ‘we had the impression that it was the Holy Father.’ Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women

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Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God."¹

This vision, according to the CDF, Cardinal Sodano, and Pope John Paul II, is the Third Secret of Fatima, and it depicts the 1981 assassination attempt of John Paul II. The obvious question is: how?

What does a lone gunman's assassination attempt of a healthy, heroic Pope in cheering St. Peter's Square have to do with a vision of a frail Pope struggling past corpses, scaling a lonely steep mountain only to be murdered under a Cross along with other bishops, priests, religious, and lay people, all killed by a group of soldiers firing guns and arrows?

It was not only traditional Catholics asking questions. The *London Telegraph* reported that "very senior Vatican officials" were against publishing the vision, since it "would highlight the difference between the document's words and the Pope's interpretation of them."²

One of the 'very senior Vatican officials' was probably Cardinal Ratzinger, who told reporters: "It seems to me that the Pope sees here an account of his own suffering," adding, "the Church does not want to impose an interpretation" on the Fatima vision. Yet the CDF's publishing of *The Message of Fatima (TMF)*, penned by Cardinal Ratzinger himself, did give the appearance of imposing this interpretation of Lucia's vision.

The Vatican's version of the Third Secret was simply not believed. *La Repubblica* reported: "Never before have we seen a Pope organizing in advance the process of his own beatification and — miracles permitting — his own canonization as well."³ Another journalist wrote: "It is only by applying a good dose of imagination that one can conclude with any certainty that the image of the bishop 'fallen to the ground as though dead' in the middle of a multitude of 'martyred corpses' corresponds to that of a Pope wounded in Saint Peter's."⁴

Marco Politi, a biographer of John Paul II, asserted flatly:

Sister Lucia

“the vision of a Pope being killed by soldiers with guns and arrows has nothing to do with the (1981) assassination attempt.”⁵

Incredulity reigned. “Dismayed, cheated, and betrayed, that is how many people feel,” reported the Portuguese newspaper *O Publico*. Portuguese Bishop Januario Torgal remarked: “If the Vatican knew that it was not apocalyptic, why on earth did it make it public only now?”⁶

Even the Pope was not spared:

“One would have to be in complete ignorance of the history of Fatima to believe in the version of the Third Secret that His Holiness Pope John Paul II gave us on 13 May...The Holy Spirit tells us: ‘A lying mouth deals death to the soul’ (Ws. 1:11). And it is because I have the courage to state the truth that I speak. And I affirm, before God who will judge me, that never has any Pope, until our own day, uttered so great a lie as that of H.H. John Paul II concerning the Third Secret of Fatima.”⁷

It is difficult to accept the interpretation that Lucia’s vision is in reality the 1981 assassination attempt. It is also difficult, for a number of reasons, to believe that Lucia’s vision is *the* Third Secret. For instance, the first two parts of the Secret were narrated to the children by the beautiful Lady. Are we to believe She stopped speaking after saying, “In Portugal the dogma of the faith will always be preserved etc.,” and that the Third Secret was a wordless vision? No other part of the Secret was. The vision may well be related to the Third Secret, just as the vision of hell was related to the First Secret — but is the vision the Secret? Textually, it doesn’t fit with the rest of the Secret.

Moreover, Lucia wrote down the Third Secret on a *sheet* of paper. She said this, Cardinal Ottaviani said this, and Father Alonso said this. When Bishop Venancio looked at the Third Secret he saw that the Third Secret was written on a small sheet of paper. The vision released by the Vatican, on the other hand, is four handwritten pages.

It took Lucia months of agony before she was finally able, with the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, to commit the Third Secret to writing. Reading the Vatican’s version of the Third

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Secret, one can only wonder what all the fuss was about. It doesn't make sense: Lucia did not wrestle for months writing down the first part of the Secret, which was related to the horrific vision of hell; she didn't need assistance from Heaven to write down the second part of the Secret, which predicted another world war and the annihilation of nations; how could she have so much trouble writing down a vision the Vatican interprets as a failed assassination attempt? Moreover, why would the Blessed Virgin say that the Third Secret would "seem clearer" in 1960, if that Secret only concerned a 1981 assassination attempt?

Prior to 2000, there was general unanimity regarding the Third Secret, from those who had read it or consulted Lucia concerning its contents. Father Joseph Schweigl, Pius XII's envoy to Lucia, found out about the Third Secret from her. He told a colleague:

"I cannot reveal anything of what I learned at Fatima concerning the Third Secret, but I can say that it has two parts: one concerns the Pope; the other logically (although I must say nothing) would have to be the continuation of the words: 'In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved.'"⁸

Father Alonso, the Church-appointed historian of Fatima, consulted Sister Lucia about the Third Secret. He wrote:

"It is therefore completely probable that the text (of the Third Secret) makes concrete references to the crisis of faith within the Church and to the negligence of the pastors themselves." He spoke further of "internal struggles in the very bosom of the Church and of grave pastoral negligence by the upper hierarchy," and of "deficiencies of the upper hierarchy of the Church."⁹

In 1984, Cardinal Ratzinger, who had read the Third Secret, stated that it concerned "the dangers threatening the faith and life of the Christian, and therefore of the world. And then the importance of the last times...the things contained in this Third Secret correspond to what has been announced in Scripture"¹⁰.

Note that Ratzinger made these remarks in 1984, after the 1981 assassination attempt. Yet there is no reference to the

incident, even obliquely. His comments on the Third Secret (at least in 1984) coincide with the comments by Father Schweigl and Father Alonso quoted above, and with Sister Lucia's interview with Father Fuentes, in which she was talking expressly about the Third Secret, and her letters to her priest nephews and other religious.

PHOTO OF ORIGINAL ITALIAN EXTRACT FROM "JESUS" MAGAZINE



Di-
mo qui, dunque, l'intervista come
è stata approvata da S.E. Ratzinger
ai primi di ottobre.

A una delle quattro sezioni della Congregazione spetta l'occuparsi di apparizioni mariane. «Cardinal Ratzinger, lei ha letto il cosiddetto "terzo segreto di Fatima", quello inviato da suor Lucia a papa Giovanni che non volle rivelarlo e ordinò di depositarlo negli archivi?». «Sì, l'ho letto». «Perché non viene rivelato?». «Perché, stando al giudizio dei pontefici, non aggiunge nulla di diverso a quanto un cristiano deve sapere dalla rivelazione: una chiamata radicale alla conversione, l'assoluta serietà

della storia, i pericoli che incombono sulla fede e la vita del cristiano e dunque del mondo. E poi, l'importanza dei Novissimi. Se non lo si pubblica – almeno per ora – è per evitare di far scambiare la profezia religiosa con il sensazionalismo. Ma i contenuti di quel "terzo segreto" corrispondono all'annuncio della Scrittura e sono ribaditi da molte altre apparizioni mariane, a cominciare da quella stessa di Fatima, nei suoi contenuti noti. Conversione, penitenza, sono condizioni essenziali alla salvezza».

Photo of the key part of Cardinal Ratzinger's interview in the November 11, 1984 issue of *Jesus* magazine, concerning the Third Secret.

[The English translation appearing below was printed in *The Fatima Crusader*, Issue 37, Summer 1991 – it has never been challenged by anyone.]

We give here, therefore, the interview as it has been approved by His Eminence Cardinal Ratzinger in the first days of October.

One of the four sections of the Congregation (for the Doctrine of the Faith) concerns itself with Marian apparitions;

“Cardinal Ratzinger, have you read what is called the Third Secret of Fatima: i.e., the one that Sister Lucia had sent to Pope John XXIII and which the latter did not wish to make known and consigned to the Vatican archives?” (In reply, Cardinal Ratzinger said:)

“Yes, I have read it,” (which frank response provoked a further question:)

“Why has it not been revealed?” (To this the Cardinal gave the following most instructive reply:) “Because, according to the judgement of the Popes, it adds nothing (literally: ‘nothing different’) to what a Christian must know concerning what derives from Revelation: i.e., a radical call for conversion; the absolute importance of history; the dangers threatening the faith and the life of the Christian, and therefore of the world. And then the importance of the ‘novissimi’ (the last events at the end of time). If it is not made public - at least for the time being - it is in order to prevent religious prophecy from being mistaken for a quest for the sensational (literally: ‘for sensationalism’). But the things contained in this ‘Third Secret’ correspond to what has been announced in

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Scripture and has been said again and again in many other Marian apparitions, first of all that of Fatima in what is already known of what its message contains. Conversion and penitence are the essential conditions for 'salvation'."

There are many other 'people in the know' whose remarks on the Third Secret coincide with the quotations above,¹¹ indicating that the Third Secret deals with a spiritual chastisement such as apostasy within the Church. A final quotation is from His Holiness Pope John Paul II, made during his visit to Fatima on May 13, 1982, the first anniversary of the attempt on his life. In his remarks, he brought up the Third Secret. This would have been the perfect time and place to reveal Sister Lucia's vision and the Pope's interpretation of it. But the Pope said instead:

"Do you want me to teach you a Secret? It is simple, and that is already not a secret anymore. Pray a great deal; say the Rosary every day."¹²

Of course, praying the Rosary is not a secret, and it certainly wouldn't have taken Sister Lucia months of agony to write down: Pray the Rosary. The Pope's point, apparently, was that he was not going to reveal the Third Secret. Why he waited until 2000, if the Third Secret only concerns the 1981 attempt on his life, is for readers to decide.

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At the end of 2000, Sister Lucia may have reflected upon a bittersweet year. She had the satisfaction of seeing her two cousins beatified, and she had the knowledge that Pope John Paul II had appropriated for himself not only the date of May 13, but the Third Secret as well. He hadn't really taken them from Lucia, of course; he took them from Someone else.

Notes

1) The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The Message of Fatima*, p. 21. 2) *The London Telegraph*, June 27, 2000. 3) As quoted in CRC online edition, September 18, 2000. 4) Ibid. 5) As quoted in Mark Fellows, "This Present Darkness", *Catholic Family News*, September, 2000. 6) *The Washington Post*, "Third Secret Spurs More Questions; Fatima Interpretation Departs from Vision", July 1, 2000. 7) A letter from Elicher Alesne, published in *Le Figaro*, Wednesday, May 17, as quoted in CRC June 2000 online edition. 8) TWTAf, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 710. 9) Ibid., p. 704. 10) As quoted in the Italian religious journal, *Jesus*, November 11, 1984; as quoted in TWTAf, Vol. III, op. cit., pp. 770-771, 822. See also Father Paul Kramer, *The Devil's Final Battle*, pp. 274-276; see also www.fatima.org/thirdsecret/ratzinger.asp; and www.fatimacruser.com/cr37/cr37pg6.asp 11) See Father Paul Kramer, *The Devil's Final Battle*, Chapter Four. 12) FIJWE, Book Four, op. cit., p. 160.