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Third Secret Controversy

Despite the best efforts of the Vatican and a network of allies, the belief that there was more to the Third Secret wouldn't die. Mother Angelica spoke for many when she declared on live television:

“As for the Secret, well I happen to be one of those individuals who thinks we didn't get the whole thing...Because I think it's scary. And I don't think the Holy See is going to say something that does not happen, that might happen. And then what does it do if it doesn't happen? I mean the Holy See cannot afford to make prophecies.”¹

Of course, the release of the Third Secret would not involve the Holy See in prophecy making; they would be revealing Our Lady's words, not their own. Their refusal to do just that left the Vatican in an embarrassing situation. The Holy Father [John Paul II], Cardinal Sodano, Cardinal Ratzinger, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [CDF] had placed their considerable authority behind their version of the Third Secret, and they simply weren't believed, not even by a prominent papal loyalist like Mother Angelica.

Then the Italian daily *La Repubblica* quoted Sister Lucia's longtime friend, Father Luigi Bianchi, who asserted that Lucia agreed with him that “When Cardinals Ratzinger and Sodano revealed the Third Secret of Fatima, they did it in a very watered down fashion,” in order to “avoid creating a panic.”²

On December 20, 2001, the Vatican fired back, issuing an alleged interview of Sister Lucia by (then) Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, secretary of the CDF. The release quotes Bertone's summary of the interview, in pertinent part:

“With reference to the third part of the secret of Fatima, she (Lucia) affirmed that she had attentively read and meditated upon the booklet published by

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the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [CDF] and confirmed everything that was written there. To whoever imagines that some part of the Secret has been hidden, she replied: 'Everything has been published; no secret remains.' To those who speak and write of new revelations she said: 'There is no truth in this. If I had received new revelations I would have told no one, but I would have communicated them directly to the Holy Father.'³

Both assertions attributed to Sister Lucia by Archbishop Bertone are out of character for her. First, Lucia had always confided in her confessors first, and followed their advice on whether or not to speak to anyone — much less the Pope — in matters concerning Fatima. Humble religious that she was, it is very unlikely Sister Lucia would get on the phone to the Holy See every time she had a revelation concerning Fatima; not only would this be presumptuous, it would be completely against Sister Lucia's religious training.

Second, the assertion that Lucia read the CDF's *The Message of Fatima*, (TMF) and "confirmed everything written there" would mean that Sister Lucia no longer believed the Angel and the Blessed Virgin actually appeared to her. For in TMF it was suggested that the Angel and the Blessed Virgin were not objective presences from Heaven, but "projections of the inner world of children," perhaps from "images Lucia may have seen in devotional books."⁴

But Lucia had always testified to the objective reality of the apparitions. In 1946, when she returned to Fatima for the first time since the apparitions, she told a group with her that she could feel the physical Host the Angel placed on her tongue.

What devotional book did Lucia see the Miracle of the Sun in? How could that miracle, the other unique atmospheric phenomena witnessed by thousands at the Cova da Iria, and the bending of the tree branches where Our Lady stood, have been only an inward projection of 10-year-old Lucia? Had someone suggested this to her, what would she have said? Would she have 'meditated' on their words and 'confirmed' them? Or would she have tried to separate herself, as she did from so many other unwelcome guests with irreverent ideas?

Sister Lucia

Bertone's interview with Lucia closed with this statement attributed to her: "Let them read my book, there are the advice and appeals that correspond to Our Lady's wishes. Prayer and penitence, accompanied by an immense faith in God, will save the world."

The book in question was first published in Spanish in 1997. Entitled *"Calls" From the Message of Fatima*, and authored by Sister Lucia, it was intended as her response to "countless letters containing a great many questions and requests."⁵ *"Calls"* is basically a catechism of Catholic doctrine, which Sister Lucia performs ably, and at times, quite well. She presents traditional Church teaching on morality, hell, judgment, and other topics, buttressing her remarks with Scripture citations. *"Calls"* is a worthwhile book in this regard, and somewhat of a novelty in that it was written by the sole surviving Fatima seer.

"Calls" fails only when Lucia mentions Fatima. The whole topic of Fatima is treated in such a confusing and misleading way that a neophyte reading the book would have no idea what Fatima was about. Some of the statements of Sister Lucia are shocking. "Why is it that the (Fatima) Message invokes the merits of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and calls on us, too, to pray, to make sacrifices, to offer reparation?" she asks. Her answer: "I have to say I do not know!"⁶

Out of the 297 pages, there is one three-page chapter on devotion and reparation to the Immaculate Heart being God's ordained means of saving souls from hell. According to Lucia,

"To establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means to bring people to a full consecration through conversion, self-dedication, intimate esteem, veneration and love. Thus, it is in this spirit of consecration and conversion that God wishes to establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

In fact, the methods of establishing in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart were clearly spelled out by Our Lady, and by Sister Lucia: the devotion of reparation of Five First Saturdays, and the Consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart, by the Pope in union with his bishops. It

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would be difficult for the author of "*Calls*" to explain the Message of Fatima in a more confusing, and ultimately false, way.

Well, did Sister Lucia actually write the book? Yes, it seems she did. Her work was subject, however, to authorization by the CDF, and there are several instances in "*Calls*" when, in speaking of Fatima, one hears the familiar neo-modernist meanderings of Cardinal Ratzinger. So it is likely the CDF had a hand in "interpreting" Lucia's words about Fatima, which were brief enough to lead one to wonder why the CDF authorized her to write a book about Fatima without letting her talk about Fatima.

In evaluating "*Calls*" it may be best to recall Father Alonso's 1967 warning that Lucia was no longer reported accurately in publications,⁷ and to simply rely on Lucia's former statements about the Fatima Message, as they are consistent, clear, and unchanging.

As for Lucia herself, she always considered her Superior's commands to be the will of God. Consequently, it is at least conceivable that, after disagreeing with Popes and some Churchmen for over sixty years, Lucia either gave in, or persuaded herself that obedience required she speak about Fatima as high ranking Churchmen and Popes did.

The question then, is: has Sister Lucia been completely misrepresented by the post-conciliar Church and their allies, or did she, after decades of unwavering testimony to Fatima, falter towards the end of her life, and convince herself that she was obliged to defer to her Superiors' interpretation of the Message of Fatima? If she was in fact torn between obediences – one to Our Lady and the other to the Church – one may lament that she was burdened with such a Cross, and hope that this cross contained within it the seeds of her final sanctification, affording her passage beyond the cares of this world; a final purification, perhaps, before Lucia was permitted to see Jacinta, Francisco, and the beautiful Lady, again, at long last, face to face.

Notes

1. As quoted in Father Paul Kramer, *Chronology of a Cover-Up*, published by the Fatima Center. See also Father Paul Kramer, *The Devil's Final Battle*, p. 147.
2. *Catholic Family News*, November, 2001. *CFN* carried a photocopy of the *La Repubblica* article.
3. "Sister Lucy: Secret of Fatima Contains No More Mysteries," Vatican Information

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Service, December 20, 2001.

4. *The Message of Fatima*, pp. 25, 35.

5. Sister Lucia dos Santos, "*Calls*" *From the Message of Fatima*, published by Secretariado dos Pastorinhos, Fatima, 1997, English translation by Sisters of Mosteiro de Santa Maria and Convento de N.S. do Bom Sucesso, Lisbon, p. 35 (hereinafter cited as "*Calls*").

6. "*Calls*", p. 114.

7. FIJWE, Book Four, op. cit., p. 129.