

# 41.

## The Immaculate Heart Leads Lucia to God

Early in 2005 Sister Lucia's health began to fail. She was bedridden for several weeks. On February 13, 2005, a priest and several Carmelites gathered at her bedside in the convent where she had lived for fifty-seven years. They were with Lucia as she died, of old age, a month shy of her ninety-eighth birthday.

Shortly after her death, Lucia's cell was sealed so that no one could read (or perhaps disperse) her writings before the Vatican could have them transferred to Rome. Italian journalist Vittorio Messori wrote:

"Whatever is enclosed there will be passed through the sieve of trusted theologians and monsignors sent, one supposes, by the same Cardinal Ratzinger who, as custodian of orthodoxy, must keep at bay visionary temptations which always reemerge."

It is doubtful any of Lucia's writings will be released (unaltered) for a good while, so her final disposition regarding Fatima and other matters will likely remain a mystery.

The day after Lucia's death, the Vatican issued a press release rehashing Cardinal Bertone's 2001 interview with Sister Lucia (discussed in Chapter 40), wherein Lucia allegedly confirmed that the Consecration of Russia had been made, that the entire Third Secret had been released, and that she really liked the CDF's *The Message of Fatima*.

Sister Lucia's coffin, preceded by white robed priests carrying crucifixes, was taken through the cobblestoned streets of Coimbra. Mourners lined the narrow streets, waving white handkerchiefs and singing *Ave Maria*. The procession entered the Coimbra Cathedral, where an overflow crowd spilled into the streets.

Pope John Paul II, who was to die shortly after Sister Lucia, sent a letter which was read at her funeral Mass:

## *Sister Lucia*

“We give our last farewell to this humble and devout Carmelite, who consecrated her life to Christ, Savior of the world...The visit of the Virgin Mary...in 1917, was for her the beginning of a singular mission to which she remained faithful until the end of her days. Sister Lucia leaves us an example of great fidelity to the Lord and of joyful adherence to His divine Will.

“I remember with emotion the various meetings I had with her and the bonds of spiritual friendship that, with the passing of time, were intensified. I have always felt supported by the daily gift of her prayer, especially in the harsh moments of trial and suffering. May the Lord reward her amply for the great and hidden service she has done for the Church...”

Perhaps one day we will know exactly what great and hidden services Sister Lucia gave to the Church. We know from her writings that after she joined Carmel her apostolate consisted mostly of prayer, penance, and sacrifice. Perhaps this hidden life was chosen for Lucia to fulfill her mission: “Jesus wishes to make use of you to make Me known and loved,” the beautiful Lady told Lucia. “He wants to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart.”

One might think this role would involve Lucia being a prophetess, a great orator or writer, kindling fires of devotion by her words and her presence. One would be wrong. Lucia had neither inclination nor opportunity for such a role. Her life was largely hidden even before she entered Carmel. It was only Heaven’s promptings that led her to write her Memoirs, to contact Popes about the Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart and the devotion of the First Five Saturdays, and to write down the Third Secret.

There are indications that Lucia considered her mission accomplished before she entered Carmel. Perhaps it was, for Lucia had transmitted the Message of Fatima in its integrity to the Church, and it was up to the Church to act upon it. What more could Sister Lucia do, especially given her vows of obedience? She never seemed to chafe against her vows, indeed, her vows seemed to support her in her agonies and confusion about how best to fulfill her mission.

That mission, however, to establish devotion in the world

## Apostle of Mary's Immaculate Heart

to the Immaculate Heart, seems at present to have failed. What are the causes of this failure? Without attempting to cast blame, the Church played a part in the failure. The momentum for devotion to the Immaculate Heart in the 1940's and 1950's was slowed by Pope Pius XII's ill health and inertia, and discarded by a series of conciliar Popes who, for ecumenical and other reasons, suppressed, downplayed, and misrepresented the Fatima Message.

None of this is outside the permissive Will of God, of course. But in looking back over the years, it seems Lucia's task was truly an impossible one, a mission no one person — save a Pope — could have accomplished. Yet one day, we are assured, a Pope will in fact accomplish the mission entrusted to Lucia. Perhaps her prayers from Heaven will pave the way for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart.

One day we may discover that the reason Sister Lucia lived such a long life was not so that she could see Russia consecrated, the Third Secret revealed, worldwide devotion to the Immaculate Heart, or world peace. We may discover that she lived to expiate the shortcomings of the men who failed to act upon the Message of Fatima she transmitted to them.

How should Lucia be remembered? As a simple peasant who called the stars the Lamps of the Angels and the moon the Lamp of Our Lady. As a 'child of the mountain' lifted up past those heights to the heights of Heaven. As a humble, obedient religious who sought to please and comfort the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary with every breath she took. As a mature, intelligent woman intimately acquainted with human sufferings and failings, yet cheerful, happy, and full of the joy of life.

As a young girl she would stand on the Serra, shouting "Maria" to hear the echoes. Maria heard her and came. In her heart Lucia called "Maria" for the rest of her life, and we may believe that Maria came to her again, and again, and finally one last time, to take Her daughter to a place without echoes, without tears, a place where Lucia will never need to call for Maria again.