

## 9. Silence and Sacrifices

Sacred Scripture is replete with angelic interventions in the life of man: *“Behold, I send My angel before thy face, who shall prepare the way before thee.”*<sup>1</sup>

The Angel who appeared three times to Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta was a precursor to the visits to the children by the Blessed Virgin Mary. He taught them prayers which Heaven wanted them to pray in order to prepare themselves for the Fatima apparitions.<sup>2</sup> In his final apparition the Angel even gave them Holy Communion, to sanctify their young souls further, making them worthier to encounter the Blessed Virgin.

It is not an exaggeration to say the children were devastated by the angelic apparitions — devastated in the sense that the presence of the Angel overpowered them mentally, emotionally, and physically. Lucia uses an even stronger term: annihilation.

*“Impelled by the power of the supernatural that enveloped us, we imitated all that the Angel had done, prostrating ourselves on the ground as he did and repeating the prayers that he said. The force of the presence of God was so intense that it absorbed us and almost completely annihilated us.*

*“It seemed to deprive us even of the use of our bodily senses for a considerable length of time. During those days we performed all our exterior actions as though guided by that same supernatural being who was impelling us thereto. The peace and happiness which we felt were great, but wholly interior, for our souls were completely immersed in God. The physical exhaustion that came over us was also great.”*<sup>3</sup>

Equally strong was the reserve the children had about revealing the angelic apparitions. Francisco and Jacinta took the secret of their encounters with the Angel of Peace to their graves. Lucia only revealed the apparitions much later in her

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life. This has given rise to suspicion: why did she not mention them sooner?

"We felt inspired to be silent," Lucia said later, speaking for the three of them. "Whenever I was interrogated, I experienced an interior inspiration which directed me how to answer, without either failing in truth, or revealing what should remain hidden for the time being." This silence extended even to a canonical inquiry, and caused Lucia a case of scruples.<sup>4</sup>

The themes of the angelic apparitions were similar to the themes of the Fatima apparitions. God was demanding sacrifice and reparation for the crimes of mankind. The children were asked if they would suffer. The Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and the adoration of the Holy Eucharist were likewise themes of Fatima.

Peace was also a theme, but the means to achieve peace were wholly supernatural: reparation, suffering, and sacrifice for the conversion of sinners was how the children would "draw down peace upon your country," according to the Angel.

Here we have the uncanny timing common to all the apparitions to Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta. The Angel of Peace appeared to them with a remedy for peace in 1916, the same year Portugal was entering the First World War.

Lucia's brother Manuel enlisted in the Portuguese army, and began preparing to leave home. At least one Fatima historian believes Manuel enlisted because he felt overworked at home. Antonio was apparently not being as responsible or hard working as he had been in the past, and much of the heavy farm labor fell to Manuel, who evidently was not a born farmer.<sup>5</sup>

Manuel was not the only one to leave. Maria Rosa's two eldest daughters, Maria and Teresa, married and left home. Finances were no longer comfortable, due primarily to Antonio, according to Lucia: "My father had fallen into bad company, and let his weakness get the better of him; this meant the loss of some of our property."<sup>6</sup>

The consensus among Fatima historians is that the 'weakness' was a taste for wine, and gambling. Later Lucia vigorously defended her father against charges of drunkenness (at least *before* the Fatima apparitions), and

amended her earlier statement that her father's weakness had resulted in the loss of property.<sup>7</sup>

Be that as it may, Maria Rosa certainly acted as if finances were a concern. With Maria and Teresa gone, and Manuel leaving, she sent away two more of her daughters, Gloria and Carolina, to work as maid servants to bring more money into the home.

Maria Rosa took the separations of her children, and most likely Antonio's behavior, very hard.

"My poor mother seemed just drowned in the depths of distress. When we gathered round the fire at nighttime, waiting for my father to come in to supper, my mother would look at her daughters' empty places and exclaim with profound sadness: 'My God, where has all the joy of our home gone?'

"Then, resting her head on a little table beside her, she would burst into bitter tears. My brother and I wept with her. It was one of the saddest scenes I have ever witnessed. What with longing for my sisters, and seeing my mother so miserable, I felt my heart was just breaking. Although I was only a child, I understood perfectly the situation we were in.

"Then I remembered the Angel's words: 'Above all, accept submissively the sacrifices that the Lord will send you.' At such times, I used to withdraw to a solitary place, so as not to add to my mother's suffering, by letting her see my own. This place, usually, was our well. There, on my knees, leaning over the edge of the stone slabs that covered the well, my tears mingled with the waters below and I offered my suffering to God.

"Sometimes Jacinta and Francisco would come and find me like this, in bitter grief. As my voice was choked with sobs and I couldn't say a word, they shared my suffering to such a degree that they also wept copious tears. Then Jacinta made our offering aloud: 'My God, it is as an act of reparation, and for the conversion of sinners, that we offer You all these sufferings and sacrifices.' The formula of the offering was not always exact, but the meaning was always the same."<sup>8</sup>

The persecution of the Church by the new revolutionary government in Portugal also embittered Maria Rosa. When Lucia was a baby, King Charles and the crown prince of Portugal were assassinated in the streets of Lisbon, an event

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applauded by the liberal and Masonic press. Two years later the Revolution swept into power, and what remained of the royal family fled without a fight. In the name of freedom, the Church in Portugal underwent a severe persecution. Things could have been even worse if the Masons and liberals running the government hadn't been as equally intent on killing each other as they were in persecuting the Church.<sup>9</sup>

Lucia recalls her mother praying "for the eternal repose of the king and the prince." If visitors to the dos Santos home brought up politics, Maria Rosa would sound off:

"My mother used to say that the rich (the rulers of Portugal) are like cocks. They all want to perch on the roost and give orders, and so they went about killing one another, closing the churches and forbidding people to go there to pray; moreover they preach false doctrines which they themselves have invented to deceive the people.

"But we have faith and we know that God exists (Maria Rosa said), we know the commandments of God's law and of Holy Mother Church, that this is what we have to do, and that is where we have to go, whether they like it or not. And the worst of it is that they come here looking for our sons to send them to their deaths in those wars they start, though our sons are perfectly innocent! God help us!"<sup>10</sup>

It was all too much for Lucia's mother, and she fell gravely ill.

"She was no longer able to work (Lucia said). All the surgeons and doctors around were consulted. We had recourse to every kind of remedy, but there was no improvement whatsoever. The good parish priest kindly offered to take my mother to Leiria in his mule cart, to consult the doctors there. Accompanied by my sister Teresa, she went to Leiria. But she arrived home half dead from such a journey, worn out after so many consultations, and having obtained no beneficial results of any kind.

"Finally a surgeon in S. Mamede was consulted. He declared that my mother had a cardiac lesion, a dislocated spinal vertebra, and fallen kidneys. He prescribed for her a rigorous treatment of red hot needles and various kinds of

## *Sister Lucia*

medications, and this brought about some improvement in her condition.

“This is how things were with us,” Lucia concluded, “when the 13<sup>th</sup> of May, 1917, arrived.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Notes**

1. Matthew 11:10. The words are Our Lord’s Who, in describing the role of John the Baptizer, used a passage from Malachi.
2. For some reason, Francisco could not hear the Angel speak, but Lucia and Jacinta taught him the prayers and all else the Angel told them.
3. Fourth Memoir, p. 154.
4. She did reveal the apparitions to Canon Formigao early on, but he recommended she keep silence about them. See TWTAf, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 98, and Fourth Memoir, p. 154.
5. Walsh, op. cit., p. 47. Lucia remembers things differently. In her Second Memoir (pp. 65-66) she does not state that Manuel enlisted. She stated he was in good health and would have difficulty getting an exemption from military service. However, “my brother’s godfather promised to obtain this exemption. He put in a word with the doctor responsible for his medical examination, and thus the good Lord deigned to grant my mother this relief.”
6. Second Memoir, p. 64.
7. Lucia’s Fifth Memoir was dedicated to the memory of her father.
8. Second Memoir, pp. 64-65.
9. Richard Pattee, *Portugal And The Portuguese World*, The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1957, pp. 181-187. “There seems to be little doubt that Freemasonry assumed the direction of much of the plotting against the monarchy... its collaboration was of inestimable importance in furthering the atmosphere of disorder and growing anarchy (p. 181).” There were twenty-one changes in governments between 1910 and 1921, and many other coup attempts, mostly a result of factional infighting by the Republicans.
10. Sixth Memoir, p. 108.
11. Second Memoir, p. 65.