

## Francisco

### From Lucia's Fourth Memoir, pp. 119-145.

The affection which bound me to Francisco was just one of kinship, and one which had its origin in the graces which Heaven deigned to grant us.

Apart from his features and his practice of virtue, Francisco did not seem at all to be Jacinta's brother. Unlike her, he was neither capricious nor vivacious. On the contrary, he was quiet and submissive by nature.

When we were at play and he won the game, if anyone made a point of denying him his rights as winner, he yielded without more ado and merely said: 'You think you won? That's alright! I don't mind!'

He showed no love for dancing, as Jacinta did; he much preferred playing the flute while the others danced.

In our games he was quite lively; but few of us liked to play with him as he nearly always lost. I must confess that I myself did not always feel too kindly disposed towards him, as his naturally calm temperament exasperated my own excessive vivacity. Sometimes, I caught him by the arm, made him sit down on the ground or on a stone, and told him to keep still; he obeyed me as if I had real authority over him. Afterwards, I felt sorry, and went and took him by the hand, and he would come along with me as good-humoredly as though nothing had happened. If one of the other children insisted on taking away something belonging to him, he said: 'Let them have it! What do I care!'

I recall how, one day, he came to my house and was delighted to show me a handkerchief with a picture of Our Lady of Nazare on it, which someone had brought him from the seaside. All the children gathered round him to admire it. The handkerchief was passed from hand to hand, and in a few minutes it disappeared. We looked for it, but it was nowhere to be found. A little later, I found it myself in another small boy's pocket. I wanted to take it away from him, but he insisted that it was his own, and that someone had brought him one from the beach as well. To put an end to the quarrel, Francisco then went up to him and said: 'Let him have it! What does a handkerchief matter to me!' My own opinion is that, if he had lived to manhood, his greatest defect would have been his attitude of 'never mind!'

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When I was seven and began to take our sheep out to pasture, he seemed to be quite indifferent. In the evenings, he waited for me in my parents' yard, with his little sister, but this was not out of affection for me, but rather to please her. As soon as Jacinta heard the tinkling of the sheep bells, she ran out to meet me; whereas Francisco waited for me, sitting on the stone steps leading up to our front door. Afterwards, he came with us to play on the old threshing floor, while we watched for Our Lady and the Angels to light their lamps. He eagerly counted the stars with us, but nothing enchanted him as much as the beauty of sunrise or sunset. As long as he could still glimpse one last ray of the setting sun, he made no attempt to watch for the first lamp to be lit in the sky.

'No lamp is as beautiful as Our Lord's,' he used to remark to Jacinta, who much preferred Our Lady's lamp because, as she explained, 'it doesn't hurt our eyes.' Enraptured, he watched the sun's rays glinting on the window panes of the homes in the neighboring villages, or glistening in the drops of water which spangled the trees and furze bushes of the serra, making them shine like so many stars; in his eyes these were a thousand times more beautiful than the Angels' lamps.

When he persisted in pleading with his mother to let him take care of the flock and therefore come along with me, it was more to please Jacinta than anything else, for she much preferred Francisco's company to that of her brother John. One day his mother, already quite annoyed, refused this permission, and he answered with his usual tranquility: 'Mother, it doesn't matter to me. It's Jacinta who wants me to go.' He confirmed this on another occasion. One of my companions came to my house to invite me to go with her, as she had a particularly good pasturage in view for that day. As the sky was overcast, I went to my aunt's house to enquire who was going out that day, Francisco and Jacinta, or their brother John; in case of the latter, I preferred the company of my former companion. My aunt had already decided that, as it looked like rain, John should go. But Francisco went to his mother again, and insisted on going himself. He received a curt and decided 'No', whereupon he exclaimed: 'It's all the same with me. It is Jacinta who feels badly about it.'

### **Natural Inclinations**

What Francisco enjoyed most, when we were out on the mountains together, was to perch on the top of the highest rock and sing or play his flute. If his little sister came down to run

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races with me, he stayed up there entertaining himself with his music and song. The song he sang most often went like this:

*I love God in Heaven,  
I love Him, too, on earth,  
I love the flowers of the fields,  
I love the sheep on the mountains.*

*I am a poor shepherd girl,  
I always pray to Mary,  
In the midst of my flock  
I am like the sun at noon.*

*Together with my lambkins  
I learn to skip and jump.  
I am the joy of the serra  
And the lily of the vale.*

He always took part in our games when we invited him, but he seldom waxed enthusiastic, remarking: 'I'll go, but I know I'll be the loser.' These were the games we knew and found most entertaining: pebbles, forfeits, pass the ring, buttons, hit the mark, quoits, and card games such as the bisca game, turning up the kings, queens and knaves, and so on. We had two packs of cards; I had one and they had the other. Francisco liked best to play cards, and the bisca was his favorite game.

**Francisco, the Little Moralist**

Several of the girls came to ask me to help them organize our festa. At first, I refused. But finally, I gave in like a coward, especially after hearing the pleading of Jose Carreira's sons and daughter, for it was he who had placed his home in Casea Velha at our disposal. He and his wife insistently asked me to go there. I yielded then, and went with a crowd of youngsters to see the place. There was a fine large room, almost as big as a hall, which was well suited for the amusements, and a spacious yard for the supper! Everything was arranged, and I came home, outwardly in a most festive mood, but inwardly with my conscience protesting loudly. As soon as I met Jacinta and Francisco, I told them what had happened.

'Are you going back again to those parties and games?' Francisco asked me sternly. 'Have you already forgotten that we promised never to do that any more?'

...How could I so suddenly let down all those girls, who

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seemed not to know how to enjoy themselves without my company, and make them understand that I had to stop going to these gatherings once and for all? God inspired Francisco with the answer:

'Do you know how you could do it? Everybody knows that Our Lady has appeared to you. Therefore, you can say that you have promised Her not to dance any more, and for this reason you are not going! Then, on such days, we can run away and hide in the cave on the Cabeco. Up there nobody will find us!'

I accepted his proposal, and once I had made my decision, nobody else thought of organizing any such gathering. God's blessing was with us. Those friends of mine, who until then sought me out to have me join in their amusements, now followed my example, and came to my home on Sunday afternoons to ask me to go with them to pray the Rosary in the Cova da Iria.

### **Francisco, Lover of Solitude and Prayer**

Francisco was a boy of few words. Whenever he prayed or offered sacrifices, he preferred to go apart and hide, even from Jacinta and myself. Quite often, we surprised him hidden behind a wall or a clump of blackberry bushes, whither he had ingeniously slipped away to kneel and pray, or 'think', as he said, 'of Our Lord, Who is sad on account of so many sins.'

If I asked him, 'Francisco, why don't you tell me to pray with you, and Jacinta too?' 'I prefer praying by myself,' he answered, 'so that I can think and console Our Lord, Who is so sad!'

I asked him one day, 'Francisco, which do you like better — to console Our Lord, or to convert sinners, so that no more souls will go to hell?'

'I would rather console Our Lord. Didn't you notice how sad Our Lady was that last month, when She said that people must not offend Our Lord any more, for He is already much offended? I would like to console Our Lord, and after that, convert sinners so that they won't offend Him any more.'

Sometimes, on our way to school, as soon as we reached Fatima, he would say to me: 'Listen! You go to school, and I'll stay here in the church, close to the Hidden Jesus. It's not worth my while learning to read, as I'll be going to Heaven very soon.'

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On your way home, come here and call me.'

The Blessed Sacrament was kept at that time near the entrance of the church, on the left side, as the church was undergoing repairs. Francisco went over there, between the baptismal font and the altar, and that was where I found him on my return.

Later, when he fell ill, he often told me, when I called in to see him on my way to school: 'Look! Go to the church and give my love to the Hidden Jesus. What hurts me most is that I cannot go there myself and stay awhile with the Hidden Jesus.'

When I arrived at his house one day, I said goodbye to a group of school children who had come with me, and I went in to pay a visit to him and his sister. As he had heard all the noise, he asked me: 'Did you come with all that crowd?'

'Yes, I did.'

'Don't go with them, because you might learn to commit sins. When you come out of school, go and stay for a little while near the Hidden Jesus, and afterwards come home by yourself.'

On one occasion, I asked him: 'Francisco, do you feel very sick?'

'I do, but I'm suffering to console Our Lord.'

When Jacinta and I went into his room one day, he said to us: 'Don't talk much today, as my head aches so badly.'

'Don't forget to make the offering for sinners,' Jacinta reminded him.

'Yes, but first I make it to console Our Lord and Our Lady, and then, afterwards, for sinners and for the Holy Father.'

On another occasion, I found him very happy when I arrived. 'Are you better?'

'No, I feel worse. It won't be long now till I go to Heaven. When I'm there, I'm going to console Our Lord and Our Lady very much. Jacinta is going to pray a lot for sinners, for the Holy Father and for you. You will stay here, because Our Lady wants it that way. Listen, you must do everything that She tells you.'

While Jacinta seemed to be solely concerned with the one thought of converting sinners and saving souls from going to hell, Francisco appeared to think only of consoling Our Lady,

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Who had seemed to him to be so sad.

### **Francisco's Illness**

While he was ill, Francisco always appeared joyful and content. I asked him sometimes: 'Are you suffering a lot, Francisco?'

'Quite a lot, but never mind. I am suffering to console Our Lord, and afterwards, within a short time, I am going to Heaven!'

'Once you get there, don't forget to ask Our Lady to take me there soon as well.'

'That, I won't ask! You know very well that She doesn't want you there yet.'

The day before he died, he said to me: 'Look! I am very ill; it won't be long now before I go to Heaven.'

'Then Listen to this. When you're there, don't forget to pray a great deal for sinners, for the Holy Father, for me and for Jacinta.'

'Yes, I'll pray. But look, you'd better ask Jacinta to pray for these things instead, because I'm afraid I'll forget when I see Our Lord. And then, more than anything else I want to console Him.'

One day, early in the morning, his sister Teresa came looking for me. 'Come quickly to our house! Francisco is very bad, and says he wants to tell you something.'

I dressed as fast as I could and went over there. He asked his mother and brothers and sisters to leave the room, saying that he wanted to ask me a secret. They went out, and he said to me:

'I am going to confession so that I can receive Holy Communion, and then die. I want you to tell me if you have seen me commit any sin, and then go and ask Jacinta if she has seen me commit any.'

'You disobeyed your mother a few times,' I answered, 'when she told you to stay at home, and you ran off to be with me or to go and hide.'

'That's true. I remember that ... Now listen, you must also ask Our Lord to forgive me my sins.'

'I'll ask that, don't worry: if Our Lord had not forgiven them already, Our Lady would not have told Jacinta the other day

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that She was coming soon to take you to Heaven. Now, I'm going to Mass, and there I'll pray to the Hidden Jesus for you.'

'Then please ask Him to let the parish priest give me Holy Communion.'

'I certainly will.'

When I returned from the church, Jacinta had already gotten up and was sitting on his bed. As soon as Francisco saw me, he asked:

'Did you ask the Hidden Jesus that the parish priest would give me Holy Communion?'

'I did.'

'Then in Heaven, I'll pray for you.'

'You will? The other day you said you wouldn't.'

'That was about taking you there very soon. But if you want me to pray for that, I will, and then let Our Lady do as She wishes.'

'Yes, do. You pray.'

'Alright. Don't worry, I'll pray.'

Then I left them, and went off to my usual daily tasks of lessons and work. When I came home at night, I found him radiant with joy. He had made his confession, and the parish priest had promised to bring him Holy Communion the next day.

On the following day, after receiving Holy Communion, he said to his sister: 'I am happier than you are, because I have the Hidden Jesus within my heart. I'm going to Heaven, but I'm going to pray very much to Our Lord and Our Lady for Them to take you both there soon.'

Jacinta and I spent almost the whole of that day at his bedside. As he was already unable to pray, he asked us to pray the Rosary for him. Then he said to me: 'I am sure I shall miss you terribly in Heaven. If only Our Lady would bring you there soon, also!'

'You won't miss me! Just imagine! And you right there with Our Lord and Our Lady! They are so good!'

'That's true! Perhaps I won't remember!'

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Then I added: 'Perhaps you'll forget. But never mind!'

### **Francisco's Holy Death**

That night I said goodbye to him.

'Goodbye, Francisco! If you go to Heaven tonight, don't forget me when you get there, do you hear me?'

'No, I won't forget. Be sure of that.' Then, seizing my right hand, he held it tightly for a long time, looking at me with tears in his eyes.

'Do you want anything more?' I asked him, with tears running down my cheeks too.

'No!' he answered in a low voice, quite overcome.

As the scene was becoming so moving, my aunt told me to leave the room.

'Goodbye then, Francisco! Till we meet in Heaven, goodbye!...'

Heaven was drawing near. He took his flight to Heaven the following day in the arms of his heavenly Mother. I could never describe how much I missed him. This grief was a thorn that pierced my heart for years to come. It is a memory of the past that echoes forever unto eternity.