

Hell

From Lucia's First Memoir, pp. 30-31:

Jacinta remained sitting on her rock, looking very thoughtful, and asked:

"That Lady also said that many souls go to hell! What is hell, then?"

"It's like a big deep pit of wild beasts (Lucia said), with an enormous fire in it – that's how my mother used to explain it to me – and that's where people go who commit sins and don't confess them. They stay there and burn for ever!"

"And they never get out of there again?"

"No!"

"Not even after many, many years?"

"No. Hell never ends."

"And Heaven never ends either?"

"Whoever goes to Heaven, never leaves it again."

"And whoever goes to hell, never leaves it either?"

"They're eternal, don't you see? They never end."

That was how, for the first time, we made a meditation on hell and eternity. What made the biggest impression on Jacinta was the idea of eternity. Even in the middle of a game, she would stop and ask:

"But listen. Doesn't hell end after many, many years then?"

Or again:

"Those people burning in hell, don't they ever die? And don't they turn into ashes? And if people pray very much for sinners, won't Our Lord get them out of there? And if they make sacrifices as well? Poor sinners! We have to pray and make many sacrifices for them!"

Then she went on: "How good that Lady is! She has already promised to take us to Heaven!"

From Lucia's Fourth Memoir, p. 162:

"As Our Lady spoke these last words (Lucia said), She

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opened Her hands once more, as She had done during the two previous months. The rays of light seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw as it were a sea of fire. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals."

"Terrified and as if to plead for succour, we looked up at Our Lady, who said to us, so kindly and so sadly: 'You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart.'"

Lucia's Third Memoir, pp. 105-106

How is it that Jacinta, small as she was, let herself be possessed by such a spirit of mortification and penance, and understood it so well?

I think the reason is this: firstly, God willed to bestow on her a special grace, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary; and secondly, it was because she had looked upon hell, and had seen the ruin of souls who fall therein.

Some people, even the most devout, refuse to speak to children about hell, in case it would frighten them. Yet God did not hesitate to show hell to three children, one of whom was only six years old [Lucia was wrong, Jacinta was actually seven years old; she was born on March 11, 1910], knowing well that they would be horrified to the point of, I would almost dare to say, withering away with fear.