



BLESSED FRANCISCO AND JACINTA MARTO

BULLETIN OF THE LITTLE SHEPHERDS – JULY-SEPTEMBER 2007 (45th YEAR)

THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY IS THE LIGHT OF THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA

The Immaculate Heart of Mary is the light which illuminates the entire Message of Fatima. And this «light» was a long time coming. To begin with, all that was known was the basic message of prayer and penance which the Blessed Virgin was bringing to the world once again. Eventually, however, Sister Lucia at last discovered the more intimate, the more spiritual aspects, all of which were centred on, and animated by, the «soul» of the Message, namely the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It was not simply a question of that which constituted a distinguishing feature of Fatima as being the principal prophetic message of the Church, but rather, and principally, of that which gave unity and an inner spirit to all the other associated themes.

According to the best theology of our day, the Immaculate Hearts of both Jesus and Mary represent the formal aspect of the Person, each displaying their love under the natural symbol of the heart. Thus the Virgin of Fatima brought us the message of her Heart. Sister Lucia accounts for the mystical life of Francisco and Jacinta by the light which they received from the celebrated «ray of light»:

‘After pronouncing the words “the grace of God will be your comfort”, Our Lady opened her hands for the first time, communicating to us a light so intense, as it were a reflection streaming from her hands, that its rays penetrated our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see ourselves in God, who was that light, more clearly than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors.’

‘...I will take Jacinta and Francisco soon. But you are to stay here some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart... I promise salvation to those who embrace it, and those souls will be loved by God like flowers placed by me to adorn his Throne... I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.’

‘As Our Lady spoke these last words, She opened her hands and for the second time, She communicated to us the rays of that same immense light. We saw ourselves in this light, immersed, as it were, in God. Jacinta and Francisco seemed to be in that part of the light which rose towards Heaven, and I in that which was poured out on the earth.’

It is worthwhile quoting other authoritative opinions

concerning the illuminating and central part played by the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the Message of Fatima.

Cardinal Cerejeira declared: ‘For me, the mission of Fatima in the world is like that of Paray-le-Monial. What Paray-le-Monial was for devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Fatima will be for devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary’. He also said: ‘The Fatima apparitions open a new period: that of the Immaculate Heart of Mary’.

For the first apostle of Fatima, the Servant of God, Dr Formigão, Fatima ‘was the gift of the Immaculate Heart of Mary’. (Voz de Fatima, November, 1931).

One of the first investigators, Fr Fonseca, expressed his view as follows:

‘Today, forty years later, the more one reflects on the Miracle of Fatima whether in general or in detail, in its immediate fruits or in its world-wide extension, the more we see it as an unlooked-for and astonishing revelation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, on fire with the love of God and filled with compassion, affection and maternal concern for poor human beings’.

But the real «witnesses» who live the «centre» of this Message are the three little visionaries, Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta.

‘At the time, Francisco did not seem to grasp the significance of what was happening, perhaps because it was not given to him to hear the accompanying words. For this reason, he asked later:

“Why did Our Lady have a heart in her hand, spreading out over the world that great light which is God? You were with Our Lady in the light which went down towards the earth, and Jacinta was with me in the light which rose towards heaven!”

“That is because you and Jacinta will soon go to Heaven, I replied, while I, with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, will remain for some time longer on earth.”

“How many years longer will you stay here?” he asked.

“I don’t know. Quite a few.”

“Was it Our Lady who said so?”

“Yes, and I saw it in the light that she shone into our hearts.”

Jacinta confirmed the very same thing, saying:

“It is just like that! That’s exactly how I saw it too!”

From time to time, Francisco used to say:

“These people are so happy just because you told

them that Our Lady wants the Rosary said, and that you are to learn to read! How would they feel if they only knew what she showed to us in God, in her Immaculate Heart, in that great light?’

On December 10th 1925, the Blessed Virgin appeared to Lucia in Pontevedra with a Child by her side, elevated on a luminous cloud. ‘The most holy Virgin rested her hand on Lucia’s shoulder, and as She did so, She showed her a heart encircled by thorns, which She was holding in her other hand. At the same time, the Child said:

– Have compassion on the Heart of your most holy Mother covered with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no-one to make an act of reparation to remove them.

Then the most holy Virgin said:

– Look, my daughter, at my Heart, encircled with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce me every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You, at least, try to console me and say that I promise to assist at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, shall go to Confession, receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary and keep me company for fifteen minutes while meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me.’

Before leaving for Lisbon, where she was to die alone, Jacinta made her last recommendations to Lucia: ‘Love Jesus a lot and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and make many sacrifices for sinners... It will not be long now before I go to Heaven. You will remain here to make known that God wishes to establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. When you are to say this, don’t go and hide. Tell everybody that God grants us graces through the Immaculate Heart of Mary; that people are to ask Her for them; and that the Heart of Jesus wants the

Immaculate Heart of Mary to be venerated at His side. Tell them also to pray to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for peace since God has entrusted it to Her. If I could only put into the hearts of all the fire that is burning within my own heart, and makes me love the Hearts of Jesus and Mary so very much!’

The theme of the Immaculate Heart of Mary penetrates the entire eschatology of Fatima, constituting its centre and its definitive explanation.

In order to save souls, God wishes to establish in the world the devotion to my Immaculate Heart.

As we have seen, all the elements of the Message of Fatima are vibrantly alive, thanks to this formal element, which constitutes the soul of them all. It is not simply a question of a constant call to prayer, but also, and in particular, a call to the prayer of intercession which must pass — in Fatima necessarily — through the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin. And it is not a question of a generalised reparation, but, very concretely, of a reparation called for specifically for the offences committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary, that is, against her love as Mother and Co-Redemptrix.

The Rosary is not the simple recommendation of this devotion but, above all, the interiorisation to be obtained through and in the practice of the Five First Saturdays.

To sum up, the eschatology of Fatima is illuminated, from within, by this light which shines forth from the breast of the Virgin: the vision of hell..., Russia and its mystery of iniquity..., the prevention of the terrible punishments that had been threatened. Finally, even the ultimate eschatological triumph was offered as a triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. There can be no doubt about it. Fatima is what it is today thanks to this extraordinary revelation which the Heart of the Blessed Virgin brought to the world.

HOW I SEE THE MESSAGE IN THE COURSE OF TIME AND IN THE LIGHT OF EVENTS

On 19th May 2007, a Museum in memory of Sister Lucia was opened in an annex of the Carmel in Coimbra.

Even as a child, Sister Lucia had felt herself attracted to Carmel, thanks to Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus who, at that time, was the model for children who wanted to be good. She could not then fulfil her desire due to factors beyond her control. Only later did she achieve her wish, not without difficulty, aware by this time of the ideal of this Order and of the connection between Fatima and Carmel. Carmel was an Order totally dedicated to the Blessed Virgin who, during the last apparition, had shown herself under her title as Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

As Sister Lucia became more and more acquainted with the spirituality of Carmel, she found ever more points of contact between the Message and its spirituality: the devotion to Our Lady, listening to the Word of God, prayer, conversion of heart, the importance of love... Anyone who had the good fortune to come close to her and see her Bible could not but be edified by seeing it full of notes. She was punctilious in meditating day and night on the Law of the Lord, as stipulated in the Carmelite Rule and by Our Lady herself. Her spiritual director, Fr. Jeremias Vechina, declares that Sister Lucia, as a Carmelite, lived totally dedicated to the Message. There was no contradiction between it and the spirituality of Saint Teresa of Avila, quite the opposite, in fact. For Sister Lucia, the living

out of the Message of Fatima was, as it were, the crowning of her charism as a Carmelite.

This Bulletin wishes to acquaint our readers with this last book by Sister Lucia. It is only a little book. By using the adjective ‘little’, we do not wish to suggest that it is of little value, for it is in fact a synthesis of her mature spiritual experience.

Popular religiosity tends to be moralistic, to get stuck in ritualism, in the outer appearances of the liturgy, to dwell more on doing than on being, in a word, to look at things superficially.

In this little book, Sister Lucia dwells on the essential: the living of the theological virtues. She appears totally centred on God, with an unshakeable faith which keeps her always open to hope, even from the humanly impossible point of view. ‘Out of these stones He can raise up children to Abraham’ as she herself reminds us. An ever-increasing faith in God ‘who chooses those rejected by men’ to be his instruments, enables her to be ever ready for the fulfilment of the promises: the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the fall of atheistic communism.

As Sister Lucia matured, her spiritual life became increasingly simple, centred entirely on Love. ‘Because it is love which purifies us, gives us dignity and unites us with God,’ she tells us. She sees her way clearly: ‘This is my

way, to renounce myself, embrace the Cross which the Lord gave me, for love of Him and of others for his sake'. This happens to all spiritual people. In the end they find their synthesis. And this synthesis frequently turns into prayer. This happens to the Master himself. The disciples ask him to teach them to pray as John the Baptist had taught his disciples; and Jesus teaches them to pray the Our Father which is a synthesis of his Gospel, of the spirituality which animated his life. The same thing happened to all the masters in Israel.

Sister Lucia, too, has her prayer, taught to her by the Angel. This prayer animated her life to such an extent that her whole life became a prayer. The prayer to the Blessed Trinity 'was for me a great link in my union with God, a link which grasps me, takes hold of me, indissolubly engraved in my heart: Holy Trinity, one true God, in whom I believe, in Thee I hope; I adore Thee and I love Thee; accept my love and my humble adoration.'

This little book of Sister Lucia's, the mature fruit of a life which has become prayer, is a gift given by God to his Church.

In the Introduction to the book, Fr Jeremias describes how he ordered her to write and how, subsequently, Sister Lucia obediently took up her pen and began to write this book, which she left unfinished.

«In the year 1972, a story began which came to an end in the year 2000. It was in the year 1972 that the community of Carmelite Sisters in Coimbra chose me as their confessor. Here I met Sr Lucia for the first time. I had already met the other Sisters, including Sister Lucia, in the parlour several times. Nevertheless, this meeting was different. This was a meeting in faith.

At the time I was still a novice in these things. To approach a Carmelite was, for me, to approach our Holy Mother Saint Teresa. But this Sister had a special aura attached to her – she was one of the Fatima seers. However, since, for her, everything was very simple and completely natural, – she was simplicity itself – the task was made much easier. We understood each other perfectly. Trust was mutual. Whenever Sr Lucia met a Carmelite who was devoted to Our Lady and interested in Fatima, I won't say that she lost her head, but she was delighted, and she never stopped until she had involved him, too, in her task, which was to communicate the Message of Our Lady. And this is what happened.

As a Carmelite and master of novices, which was my mission in the Order at the time, I was captivated by all things Carmelite and I had a special interest in all those who displayed an affection for Carmel. As Sr Lucia had come from the Sisters of St Dorothy, and had entered Carmel at a mature age, I did not expect to find her so centred on Carmelite spirituality and such a friend of the Order. This for me was a cause of admiration and made it easy for us to understand each other. As we spoke frankly to each other – indeed frankness was one of her qualities – we spoke of what had happened and of the content of the Message.

Thanks to my own formation and to what I was able to observe, I saw that God intervenes at times in the lives of people in ways that they themselves do not understand and, in consequence, do not know how to communicate what they have experienced. Others, however, understand what is happening, but they do not know how to "express" it, while yet others both understand and are able to communicate what they have understood. At times, such understanding is somewhat "confused" and slow. With time,

and the spiritual development of the person, the message becomes clearer.

We are faced in this case with three children who were strongly "touched" by the supernatural. Image follows image, which is normal. With children, this is how God works. Shortly afterwards, two of the children, Francisco and Jacinta, were taken to heaven. Only Lucia remained. It is only to be expected that the one who remained should gradually acquire an understanding of the message which she did not have before, and that she should gradually learn to decodify the images. If God's revelation is dynamic and progressive, we can say the same of the understanding of it.

Years earlier, Sr Lucia had already written a text, at the request of the Father Master of the Order, later Cardinal Ballestrero, when he visited Coimbra in 1955. This text was sent to Rome by order of Pope Paul VI, but remained forgotten in the Vatican archives. In view of this situation, I suggested to Sister Lucia that, since she had not written all the details concerning the Message since the beginning, she should write: 'How I now see the Message in the course of time and in the light of events.'

As I knew, more or less, both what was written in the book which was lying in the Vatican archives and the style in which it had been written, I suggested to her that she should write another in a different style. I felt it needed to be less doctrinal and more biographical. Since she was the first to have received the Message, she was also the first to have lived it. I therefore asked her to undertake this task illustrating it with her own experience. She displayed a certain reluctance to do this.

As, during our conversation, there were other more important matters that we felt we needed to discuss, such as Sister's Memoirs of her father and mother, and also her reply to a long questionnaire, this particular task was left for 'later'. This 'later' turned out to be much later. She then set to work with a will, as she delighted in everything that could contribute to the knowledge of the Message, but by this time she had little energy. She complained of being tired, and although her desire to see the task finished was great, her human limitations intervened. That's fine, Sister Lucia, it's best to stop. And the text ended at that point.

Fatima, 13th February 2006.

P. Jeremias Carlos Vechina, Discalced Carmelite

Under Obedience

On 15th May, 1982, I was in the Carmel in Fatima, waiting to return to our Carmel in Coimbra on the 19th, after taking part in the great pilgrimage on the 13th of that month, and having had the privilege of speaking personally and in private with the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. That same afternoon, our Rev Fr Provincial, Fr Jeremias Carlos Vechina, came to the Carmel to speak to me about various matters, including the significance of the Message, its spirituality and the way it has spread throughout the world.

At the end of our conversation Father Provincial asked me: "Have you written down all the details concerning the Message since the beginning?" I replied that I had not, because, when I wrote the Memoirs, I did so in a great hurry, and did not have time to go into great detail.

Father Provincial then said: "Then you will have to do it now, explaining how you see the Message now over time and in the light of events."

I explained the difficulties facing me, particularly the lack of time. His Reverence replied: "You will have to do it now in whatever way you can manage, in order to com-

plete the history of the Message and offer to God this further sacrifice, done for love of Him and of Our Lady, for they both well deserve it.”

I thought about what Father Provincial had said and a doubt arose in my mind. In view of the rules laid down by the Holy See concerning me, could I do this work without its authorisation? I had been told not to speak about the Apparitions. Would not writing about them be even worse?

As, for the moment, I could not dedicate myself to this task in view of the numerous correspondence which had accumulated during my stay in Fatima, I put it aside until such time as I would be in a position to undertake it, and in the meantime have time to think, pray, and ask God’s light, and the advice of others, concerning the doubt that had come into my mind as regards the rules laid down for me by the Holy See, and so on.

On 11th February, 1983, Father Provincial visited our Carmel in Coimbra. He spoke to me and asked me how I was getting on with the task that he had entrusted to me. I told him that I had done nothing about it yet, both through lack of time and also because of the doubt in my mind, which was as follows: in view of the rules laid down by the Holy See in my regard – namely that I should not speak about the Apparitions – should I undertake to write without their authorisation?

Father Provincial explained that I could do so, because to speak about something was one thing, to write about it was another. He also explained to me that the prohibition did not apply to my confessor or to my spiritual director, adding that the rules were not to be seen as an imposition but rather as a protection and a help.

On 13th March, 1983, our confessor, Fr Pedro Lourenço Ferreira, when I had finished my confession and was speaking to him of some matters connected with the Message, surprised me by giving me the same order, saying that it was necessary to write down in detail everything connected with the Message and how I see it now, in the light of the passage of time and events.

Although I took this order from my confessor and our Provincial Superior as an expression of the will of God, I still wanted to be certain that I could do it. And having learned that His Eminence, Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, would be coming to give the annual community retreat, I waited to consult His Eminence about what I was being asked to do, and about what the Holy See’s rules were, and what our Provincial Superior had told me. His Eminence replied saying that what the Provincial had said was correct, that it was true that “to speak was one thing, and to write was another, therefore, not only was I free to write but I was under an obligation to do so. So go ahead and do it” he said. “I, too, order you to do so as director of these spiritual exercises and also as Major Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious.” And he repeated: “What the Provincial told you is correct: the rules say that you must not speak but they do not forbid you to write, for it is one thing to speak and another to write.” (9th September, 1983).

In view of this reply, I must no longer hesitate, but obey with faith, hope and love, certain that this is God’s will. Hence, Lord, I will go to the foot of your altar to offer

this flower, too, gathered in the garden of your Love, but gathered from a rose tree full of thorns, in order to scatter it in your ways and mine, even if the petals are despised, caught up and blown along the ground by the wind, trodden underfoot by the passer-by, like my own last remains.

I shall have to do this work little by little, according as I have a few minutes to spare to devote to it, trusting always in the help of the Divine Holy Spirit and in the maternal protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary: “My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.”

St Irenaeus says that the life of man is the glory of God, and the life of man is the vision of God. If the manifestation of God gives life to all the beings on earth, all the more does the manifestation of the Father, through the Word, give life to all those who see God.

It is on this vision of God, through faith, that I am going to fix my gaze, because it is in God that I find the beginning that has no beginning, for in God there is neither past nor future, everything is present in the light of his immense Being, as if it were taking place that very moment.

Thus I see the Message ever present in the immense Being of God, to be sent to earth on the day and hour predestined by Him in the designs and plans of his infinite Mercy, in the form of yet another appeal for faith, hope and love. This reminds me of a passage from the Song of Songs: “Love is strong as death, and jealousy is as cruel as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a divine flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.” (Cant. 8, 6b-7).

It was the power of this love that once again drew God’s gaze towards us, in order to attract us and raise us up to Him. To drink from this spring of crystal-clear water, well-spring of life, grace, strength and light, which gushes down from Heaven to earth, calling on us to drink of this water and to eat of this bread, so that we shall no longer hunger and thirst. “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst” (Jn 4, 13) “anyone who eats of this Bread will never be hungry.”

“Whoever believes in me has eternal life. I am the Bread of life... This is the Bread which comes down from heaven that whoever eats it may not die. I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven. Anyone who eats of this bread will live for ever; and the Bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (cf. Jn 6, 47-52).

Thus I beseech You, my Lord and my God, that this work may be for You yet another hymn of eternal gratitude and praise of your love for me.

It is difficult to write, today, about how I see the Message in the light of all the events that have taken place and the time that has passed. But I will try to do so out of obedience, trusting in the Divine Holy Spirit and in the maternal protection of the Mother of Heaven who, as if I were a little child, will take hold of my hand and guide my pen so that I write only what is in accordance with God’s will, for the praise of his glory.

If I follow the divine Master who said: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”, He will guide my steps and will not allow me to wander away from the path of Truth and Life which He is.

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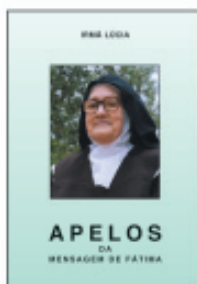
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In addition to the Portuguese version, the Bulletin is published in English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian and Spanish. It is sent free, every quarter, to all who request it. Please give full postal address.

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Members of the League undertake to:

1. Practise the virtues of the Shepherds.
2. Make sacrifices and pray for their canonization.
3. Seek their intercession in spiritual and temporal difficulties and to ask for the grace necessary for their canonization, i.e. the unexplainable miracle of the cure of a serious illness supported by medical evidence.

To become a member of the League all that is required is to send your name and full address to the Secretariat. You will then receive this Bulletin and the benefit of the Masses celebrated daily in the Basilica in Fatima for the intentions of the members of the League.