



Maria Lúcia de Jesus e do Coração Imaculado
1907-2005

“Shall I go to Heaven too?” Lucia asked the Lady of the Apparition on 13 May 1917.

“Yes, you will”, responded Our Lady.

Lucia was born on the 28 March 1907 in Ajustrel and was baptized on the 30 March in the Parish Church of Fatima. Her parents were Antonio dos Santos and Maria Rosa.

Being the last of seven children, six girls and one boy, she had a childhood of caresses and favours. At six years of age she made her First Holy Communion and began her life as a shepherdess, in which, as from 1917, her cousins Francisco and Jacinta also accompanied her. It was also the year of the Apparitions of the Virgin. In them, Lucia occupied a special place, she being the only one who spoke with Our Lady and from Her she received a special message to make known in the future.

The Apparition had already announced on the 13 June that she was going to take Francisco and Jacinta to Heaven soon. “But you are to stay here sometime 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.” The Apparitions having concluded, the situation for Lucia was subject to many risks. Concerned, the first bishop of the restored Diocese of Leiria ordered, on 17 June 1921 that, without revealing her identity, she should enter as a pupil, the college of the Dorothean Sisters in Vilar. There she would receive an excellent moral and religious education. Feeling in her heart a religious vocation and influenced by the example and gratitude towards her instructors, she decided to choose the Institute of St. Dorothy, where she was professed. She remained in Spain until returning to Portugal in 1946. In that year she came to Fatima, to identify the places of the Apparitions. Faithful to her constant desires for retreat and solitude, on 25 March 1948 she obtained permission from Pope Pius XII to enter the Carmel of Santa Teresa in Coimbra where she intensified her life of prayer and penance until her death, on 13 February 2005, reaching almost ninety-eight years of age.

From the writings that we know are authored by her, her *Memoirs* are of special importance. She did not write according to her own will but only by order of D. Jose Alves Correia da Silva, first Bishop of the restored Diocese of Leiria and her only spiritual Director. The principal object of these writings was to reveal the heroic life of the two deceased Little Shepherds, the Apparitions of the Angel and of Our Lady and finally the life of her parents. Therefore it needed no more than looking to the past and recording it, because everything was contemplated as a presence sealed by fire upon her soul. She herself tells us that “those things were so intimately engraved in my soul, that it is not easy to forget them.” More than recording them it seems she was living them.

The other work written by Sr. Lucia is the book entitled “*Calls from the Message of Fatima*” which kept her whole soul on the mission of which she had been made the recipient. During 87 years, she lived with deepest devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, this revelation of which she was the witness and guardian, in a profound sense of the mission, which she had received. Submerged by interesting and repeated questions about the Message and not being able to respond individually to everyone, she asked authorization of the Holy See – which was granted – to compose a writing where she might respond, in a global way, to the multiple questions received. She treats it, therefore, as a long letter, of her own authorship and entire responsibility, directed to all those who sent her their doubts, questions, disturbances, anxieties for greater fidelity to that which Heaven requested in the Cova da Iria. This book, before being published, was approved by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

On the 13 February 2005, at 5:25 pm, in the Carmel of Santa Teresa, in Coimbra, those eyes that, on our earth, beheld the eyes of the Most Holy Virgin, gently and sweetly closed. Cardinal Bertone, Archbishop of Genoa and Special Envoy of the Holy Father, the Portuguese Episcopate and an uninterrupted pilgrimage of the faithful encircled, with love and prayer, her body exposed in the Chapel of the Carmel. All events and all levels of society in the country stood still in order to render homage to the grand figure of this Little Shepherd who, with the hidden strength of prayer and faith knew how to touch hearts. Everyone sought to live this meaningful experience of proposed conversion with silent simplicity, through the prayer of the Rosary and participating in the Eucharist, as much in the Cathedral of Coimbra, where the funeral was held, as in the Cloister of the Carmel, where the last witness of the events of Fatima was buried.

Sister Lucia was a luminous person, full of joy for the events of which she was the recipient and the intermediary and, in her turn, full of dedication to Jesus, dedication to Mary, dedication to all of us. She, who faithfully fulfilled the Message of Fatima, left the promise of not forgetting us near God. The inheritance that she has left us, through her books, offers us an extraordinary intimacy with God and with Mary. Her life and the life of her cousins that she revealed in the first letters to Bishop D. Jose, serve as a model for all those who wish to hear and respond to the requests of the Virgin of the Cova da Iria.

Her last words, during the night of 7-8 February, were: “For the Holy Father!... Our Lady!... Our Lady!... dearest Angels... Heart of Jesus!... Heart of Jesus!... We are going, we are going... to Heaven with Our Lord... Our Lady ...and the Little Shepherds!”