



# BLESSED

## FRANCISCO AND JACINTA MARTO

BULLETIN OF THE LITTLE SHEPHERDS – OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2004 (42<sup>nd</sup> YEAR)

### THE ICON FROM KAZAN WILL SHINE ONCE MORE IN THE RUSSIAN FIRMAMENT

On 28th August, in the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin, Cardinal Walter Kasper, leader of a Delegation sent by his Holiness Pope John Paul II, presented the Icon of the Mother of God of Kazan to Orthodox Patriarch Alexei II, together with all the historic and photographic documentation relating to it.

The Icon will remain in Moscow, in the Patriarch's private chapel, until 2005, the year in which the Tartar city-capital of the autonomous Republic of Tatarstan celebrates its first millennium (1005-2005). Kazan is the city dedicated to Mary, where the miracle of peace between Christians, Jews and Moslems is a compromise achieved in daily deeds and gestures of solidarity.

The return of the Mother of God will usher in an era of new pilgrimages to the «House of Mary» in the city, which is situated on the banks of the River Volga, about 1000 km east of Moscow, a land where East meets West. It will also usher in a new «ecumenical» and «Marian» stage in the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church.

In 1579 a fire destroyed the city of Kazan almost completely. There is a tradition that when a soldier had lost his home in the fire was preparing to build a new one, Our Lady appeared to his nine-year old daughter, asking her to tell everyone that an icon of her was buried under the ruins of the house that had been burnt down. Nobody believed what the little girl said, nor that Our Lady had appeared to her a second time. During the third vision, the little girl glimpsed the Icon, which was radiating a dazzling light, and she heard these words: «If you do not proclaim my words to everyone, I will appear in another place and a great calamity will come upon you».

The message was rejected both by the Governor of the city and by the Archbishop, Jeremias. But the little girl began to dig in the earth and brought to light the blessed Icon, wrapped in an old piece of cloth and perfectly preserved. At first it was installed in the Church of St Nicholas, and later on in the Cathedral of the Annunciation. In 1595, a feast was instituted to commemorate the miraculous event, and was celebrated lo-

cally on 8th July. In 1612, the feast was extended to the whole Russian Church after a victory over the Polish army which was attributed to the protection of the Blessed Mother of God of Kazan.



Devotion to the Mother of God of Kazan was not restricted to the image preserved in that city. In fact, after the finding of the original, other Icons had been painted which were venerated in other parts of the country and came to be deemed miraculous following events which had taken place in the life of the royal family and of the ordinary faithful.

According to a number of witnesses, this particular icon appeared in the West in the 1920's, in the context of the sale of religious objects, works of art and of all that the regime of the day deemed superfluous and unnecessary in post-revolution Russia.

In 1950, what was believed to be the original icon arrived via Poland in England where it was bought for a private collection. Painted on lime wood, measuring 31.3 x 26.1 cm and dating from the first half of the 18th century, it is covered in a silver bas-relief (Rizza), that is adorned with more than a thousand precious stones. In the years that followed, the owners offered to sell it to Archbishop Joann, of the Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco in the United States of America, but he refused the offer.

Between 1962 and 1963, the icon appeared in San Francisco, where it was kept in the vault of a Bank and, in 1964, was exhibited at the Universal Exhibition in New York. A project was set on foot at that time for the purchase of the image, a committee having been set up for the construction of a church to house it, and a start made on collecting funds for this purpose. However, the plan came to nothing. In the end, the Icon was purchased by the Catholic Association known as the «Blue Army» and was taken to the *Domus Pacis* in Fatima which had been opened by Cardinal Tisserant on 28th August, 1963. On 26th July 1970, it was solemnly exposed for the veneration of the faithful in a side chapel of the Byzantine church.

In a letter dated 2nd August 1985, Archbishop Joann recalled: «In the mid-1960's ... I spoke to the president of the

Blue Army Organisation, Mons. Colgan of New Jersey, who expressed his desire to purchase the icon. But he assured me that Catholics would consider the presence of the icon in their midst as only temporary. It is part of the spiritual heritage of the Orthodox Church and of the entire Russian people who have been persecuted on account of their faith.»

In 1993, the icon of Our Lady of Kazan was offered to the Holy Father, who placed it in his private apartment, where it awaited the day when it could be given back to the Russian Church and the Russian people.

During the celebration to mark its departure (25th August, 2004), the Holy Father said: «We are gathered here in prayer around the venerable Icon of the Mother of God of Kazan, which is on the point of setting out on the return journey to Russia which it left one day long ago.

After passing through various countries and staying a long time at the Shrine of Fatima in Portugal, it providentially arrived at the Pope's dwelling more than ten years ago. Since then, it has found a home with me and has accompanied my daily service to the Church with its motherly gaze.

How often since that day have I prayed to the Mother of God of Kazan, asking her to protect and guide the Russian people who venerate her, and to hasten the moment when all the disciples of her Son, recognising one another as brothers and sisters, will be able to fully restore our fractured unity.

From the very first, I wanted this holy Icon to return to its own land of Russia where, according to reliable historical accounts, it was for a great many years the object of profound veneration on the part of entire generations of the faithful. It was around the Icon of the Mother of God of Kazan that the history of that great people evolved.

Russia is a nation which has been Christian for many centuries; it is the *Holy Rus*. Even when hostile forces furiously attacked the Church and endeavoured to blot the Holy Name of God out of human lives, the Russian people remained profoundly Christian, witnessing, in many cases with their blood, to their fidelity to the Gospel and the values it inspires. Therefore, deeply moved, I give thanks with you to divine Providence, which today has granted it to me to send this holy Icon as a gift to the venerable Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia...

... Divine Providence, which has the power to overcome evil and to bring good even out of the evil actions of men, arranged that the Icon, which had disappeared for many years, should reappear in the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, in Portugal. Later still, at the wish of devout people, it was transferred to the home of the Successor of St Peter.

Mother of the Orthodox people, the presence in Rome of your holy image from Kazan speaks to us of a profound unity between East and West, that still persists despite the many historical divisions and the mistakes made by men ...

The Bishop of Rome asks you, Blessed Mother, to intercede to hasten the day when there will be full unity between East and West as well as full communion between all Christians.

O glorious and blessed Virgin, our Lady, our Advocate and our Consolation, reconcile us with your Son, plead for us with your Son, bring us to your Son! Amen.»

## THE APPARITIONS OF OUR LADY

### The Apparition at Valinhos

The fourth Apparition in my opinion, took place on the 15th in the afternoon. As at that time I did not yet know how to reckon the days of the month, it could be that I am mistaken. But I still have an idea that it took place on the very day that we arrived back from Vila Nova de Ourém.

*Lucia is mistaken in thinking that the Apparition happened on the same day on which they returned from the prison at Vila Nova de Ourém. This was not correct. The Apparition took place on the following Sunday, 19th August.*

I was accompanied by Francisco and his brother John. We were with the sheep in a place called Valinhos, when we felt something supernatural approaching and enveloping us. Suspecting that Our Lady was about to appear to us, and feeling sorry lest Jacinta might miss seeing her, we asked her brother to go and call her. As he was unwilling to go, I offered him two small coins, and off he ran.

Meanwhile, Francisco and I saw the flash of light, which we called lightning. Jacinta arrived, and a moment later, we saw Our Lady on a holmoak tree.

“What do you want of me?”

“I want you to continue going to the Cova da Iria on the 13th, and to continue praying the Rosary every day. In the last month, I will perform a miracle so that all may believe.”

“What do you want done with the money that the people leave in the Cova da Iria?”

“Have two litters made. One is to be carried by you and Jacinta and two other girls dressed in white; the other one is to be carried by Francisco and three other boys. The money from the litters is for the “festa” of Our Lady of the Rosary, and what is left over will help towards the construction of a chapel that is to be built here.”

“I would like to ask you to cure some sick persons.”

“Yes, I will cure some of them during the year.”

Then, looking very sad, Our Lady said:

“Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to hell, because there are none to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them.”

And She began to ascend as usual towards the east.

The Apparition at Valinhos was a double joy for Francisco. He had been tormented by the fear that she would never return. He told me later:

“Most likely, she didn't appear on the 13th, so as to avoid going to the Administrator's house, maybe because he is such a bad man.”

After the Apparition, his sister wanted to stay there the whole afternoon, so he said:

“No! You must go home, because Mother didn't let you come out with the sheep.” And to encourage her, he went back to the house with her.

### The fifth Apparition

The 13th of September, 1917. As the hour approached, I set out with Jacinta and Francisco, but owing to the crowds around us we could only advance with difficulty...

At last, we arrived at the Cova da Iria, and on reaching the holmoak we began to say the Rosary with the people. Shortly

afterwards, we saw the flash of light, and then Our Lady appeared on the holmoak.

“Continue to pray the Rosary in order to obtain the end of the war. In October Our Lord will come, as well as Our Lady of Dolours and Our Lady of Carmel. Saint Joseph will appear with the Child Jesus to bless the world. God is pleased with your sacrifices. He does not want you to sleep with the rope on, but only to wear it during the daytime.”

“I was told to ask you many things, the cure of some sick people, of a deaf-mute...”

“Yes, I will cure some, but not others. In October I will perform a miracle so that all may believe.”

Then Our Lady began to rise as usual, and disappeared.

### **The sixth Apparition**

The rumour had spread that the authorities intended to explode a bomb quite close to us, at the very moment of the Apparition. This did not frighten me in the least. I spoke of it to my cousins. “How wonderful!” we exclaimed, “if we were granted the grace of going up to Heaven from there, together with Our Lady!”

My parents, however, were very much afraid, and for the first time they wished to accompany me, saying that if their daughter was going to die, they wanted to die by her side.

My father then took me by the hand to the place of the Apparitions. But from the moment of the Apparition itself, I did not set eyes on him again until I was back home with the family that night.

On the way, the scenes of the previous month, still more numerous and moving, were repeated. Not even the muddy roads could prevent these people from kneeling in the most humble and suppliant of attitudes.

We reached the holmoak in the Cova da Iria. Once there, moved by an interior impulse, I asked the people to shut their umbrellas and say the Rosary.

A little later, we saw the flash of light, and then Our Lady appeared on the holmoak.

“What do you want of me?”

“I want to tell you that a chapel is to be built here in my honour. I am the Lady of the Rosary. Continue always to pray the Rosary every day. The war is going to end, and the soldiers will soon return to their homes.”

“I have many things to ask you: the cure of some sick persons, the conversion of sinners, and other things...”

“Some yes, but not others. They must amend their lives and ask forgiveness for their sins.”

Looking very sad, Our Lady said:

“Do not offend the Lord our God any more, because He is already so much offended.”

Then, opening her hands, she made them reflect on the sun, and as she ascended, the reflection of her own light continued to be projected on the sun itself.

Here is the reason why I cried out to the people to look at the sun. My aim was not to call their attention to the sun, because I was not even aware of their presence. I was moved to do so under the guidance of an interior impulse.

After Our Lady had disappeared into the immense distance of the firmament, we beheld St. Joseph with the Child Jesus and Our Lady robed in white with a blue mantle, beside the

sun. St. Joseph and the Child Jesus appeared to bless the world, for they traced the Sign of the Cross with their hands. When, a little later, this apparition disappeared, I saw Our Lord and Our Lady; it seemed to me that it was Our Lady of Dolours. Our Lord appeared to bless the world in the same manner as St. Joseph had done. This apparition also vanished, and I saw Our Lady once more, this time resembling Our Lady of Carmel.

Here then, you have the story of the Apparitions of Our Lady in the Cova da Iria, in 1917. Whenever and for whatever motive I had to speak of them, I sought to do so in as few words as possible, with the desire of keeping to myself alone those more intimate aspects which were so difficult for me to reveal. But as they belong to God and not to me, and as He now, ... requires them of me, here they are. I return what does not belong to me. To the best of my knowledge, I keep nothing back. I think I have only omitted some minor details referring to the petitions which I made. As these were merely material things, I did not attach such great importance to them, and it is perhaps because of this that they did not make such a vivid impression on my mind; and then there were so many of them, so very many!...

Of all the words spoken at this Apparition, the ones most deeply engraved upon my heart were those of the request made by our heavenly Mother:

“Do not offend Our Lord and God any more, because He is already so much offended!”

How loving a complaint, how tender a request! Who will grant me to make it echo through the whole world, so that all the children of our Mother in Heaven may hear the sound of her voice!

I spent the afternoon of that day with my cousins. We were like some curious creature that the multitudes wanted to see and observe. By night time I was really exhausted after so many questions and interrogations. These did not even end with nightfall. Several people, who had been unable to question me, remained over till the following day, awaiting their turn. Some of them even tried to talk to me that night, but, overcome by weariness, I just dropped down and fell asleep on the floor. Thank God, human respect and self-love were, at that time, still unknown to me. For that reason, I was as much at ease with any person at all, as I was with my parents.

What I do remember well about that particular day is that I arrived home without my plaits, which I wore down to my waist, and that my mother was most upset when she saw that I had even less hair than Francisco. Who stole my plaits? I don't know. Amid the crush of such a multitude, there was no lack of scissors or thieving hands. It was easy enough to lose my kerchief, even if in fact it wasn't stolen. Already, in the two previous months, quite a lot of my plaits had been snipped off! Nothing is my own, so what of it! Everything belongs to God. May He dispose all as best pleases Him.

After October 13th, Francisco said to me:

“I loved seeing Our Lord, but I loved still more seeing Him in that light where we were with Him as well. It's not long now, and Our Lord will take me up close to Him, and then I can look at Him forever.”

## «THE GREATEST REVOLUTION OF ALL TIME»

These were the words used by Cardinal Wetter, Archbishop of Munich, to describe the collapse of Communism and the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. This was also the theme of the «Name of Mary» celebration in honour of Our Lady of Fatima which the *Rosary of Reparation Crusade* organises annually in Vienna on 11th and 12th of September. This year 18,000 people took part in the celebrations.

«If this event was a miracle, as many people, even those who are cautious, declare that it was, then let us accept it as a miracle and not let go of it, not immediately forget all about it.» (P. Gartier, SJ)

Cardinal Cristoph Schönborn and Cardinal Joachim Meisner presided at the two solemn con-celebrations. The speakers, Dr Alois Mock, Vice-Chancellor, and Foreign Minister of Austria between 1989 and 1995, and Dr. Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary between 1988 and 2002, commented as politicians on the historical event of the removal of the Iron Curtain from the Hungarian frontier.

«It was a miracle, a true miracle, a key moment, a spiritual purification .. a great and historical turn-around which transformed the lives of nations, of millions of people.» (Words of Dr Viktor Orban).

The Bishop of Fatima, for his part, referred to the Message of Fatima, quoting the words of Sister Lucy:

«In 1917, the Mother of God said in Fatima: “If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace”.»

What requests ? And on what conditions ? Did she ask too high a price ? Violence ? Did she call for revenge and retaliation ? Nothing of the sort.

Our Lady asked for no more than justice so that there could be peace, the conversion of people to God, and she also indicated the very simple means by which this could be achieved:

- daily recitation of the Rosary;
- consecration to her Immaculate Heart;
- the offering of sacrifices for the conversion of sinners.

Nothing more!

When, a few decades ago, someone asked Sister Lucia when Russia would be converted and whether it would be a long time yet before this happened, she replied: «Russia will be converted as soon as enough people fulfil Our Lady’s requests.»

And this is in fact what happened. Millions of people – including yourselves – took the Fatima Message seriously. Moreover, the Holy Father, John Paul II, in union with all the Bishops, consecrated the world, with special reference to Russia, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Let me tell you once again how, when we returned from Rome with the Image of Our Lady which is venerated in the Chapel of the Apparitions in Fatima, we described to Sister

Lucy what had happened and we asked her: “Will the Holy Father now have fulfilled our Lady’s request?” She replied: “Yes, and this consecration was accepted in Heaven.”

“Sister, how are we to know this ? Will there be a signal ?”

Sister Lucia replied: “Look towards the East. The reply will come from there.”

And the reply came. Hungary opened its frontier and the Berlin wall came down, exactly fifteen years ago.

In reply to the question “And when shall we have peace? When will the Immaculate Heart of Mary triumph in all its splendour?” Sister Lucia replied: “When enough people listen to Our Lady’s requests: pray the Rosary every day and offer sacrifices for the conversion of sinners.”

My brothers and sisters, the key to obtaining peace for the world and the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is in our own hands.»

## The present moment is important

for us to redouble our prayers! The Canonical Process concerning the cure of a child suffering from the incurable type 1 form of *Diabetes Melitus* has begun.

Let us pray that this process may be successful, that the Medical Board will declare itself in favour, and that it can be shown, by means of witnesses and documentary evidence, that the cure was obtained through the intercession of Blessed Francisco and Jacinta (probably in front of the television screen at the moment when Pope John Paul II beatified the two little Shepherds on 13th May 2000).

Formerly, a miracle obtained through the intercession of a saint was regarded as an isolated incident, examined without reference to the life of the saint. However, a miracle is something proper to holiness. As God intervenes in our own lives, so He does in the lives of the Saints, specifically by means of new graces. God wants to operate in the same way as He did with Christ. In the lives of those who, without a shadow of doubt, have corresponded with grace, God now shows Himself at work by means of miracles. This is theologically very important and the Congregation of the Saints thinks likewise. Miracles are therefore possible, because Christ lives in his saints, and miracles are the result of this union with Him.

Anyone who tries to regard miracles merely as being required for canonisations is failing to respect both the eschatological dimension and the love for others which moved the Saints during their earthly lives. If they secure graces from God for us, naturally this is not in order to speed up their process of canonisation but in order to help us live our lives.

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**The Vice-Postulation wishes  
all friends of the little Shepherds  
a Blessed Christmas  
and  
a New Year rich in peace and all God's blessings**

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