

LETTER FROM FATIMA

by

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The terrifying statements attributed to Sister Lucia, the only survivor of the three children who saw Our Blessed Mother at Fatima, which have appeared recently in several papers and magazines in the United States and other countries, were promptly denied by Sister Lucia through the Diocesan Curia of Coimbra, where she is a Carmelite nun.

For some years now it has been almost impossible to have an interview with Lucia, as so many wild sayings were being attributed to her. But apparently about two years ago, a ^{Mexican} priest who has something to do with the introduction of the causes of beatification of Lucia's cousins, Francisco and Jacinta, was allowed to see her and then went home and wrote this alarmist article.

In the denial Sister Lucia says that she only spoke to this priest about matters relating to the cause, and that she did not say that God was going to chastise the world in a tremendous way if we do not offer prayer and penance. We all know that the "Message of Fatima" is a call to prayer and penance as was Our Blessed Lady's desire at Lourdes a hundred years ago, but that is very different from the threats which were ^{wrongly} attributed to Lucia.

Next year is already 1960, when the "secret" which Lucia wrote out and placed in a sealed envelope, is supposed to be opened and revealed. The envelope is in the possession of the Bishop of Leiria, but he refuses to say when the contents will be made public.

The last Papal Nuncio to Portugal, who is now His Eminence Cardinal





Fernando Cento, frequently visited Fatima, so it nice that one of the first things his successor, Archbishop Giovanni Panico, did when he arrived in the country was to come up to the shrine.

Archbishop Panico was Apostolic Delegate in Australia and in Canada before coming here, so he knows English well. He drove up ~~here~~ from Lisbon, with the Counsellor of the Nunciature and his private secretary, Fr Carmelo Cassati, who was with him in Canada. They were met by the Bishop of Leiria, his Cathedral Chapter, the Rector of the Sanctuary, Dr Joaquim Lourenço and representatives of the religious orders with houses in Fatima

The Nuncio then went straight to the Chapel of the Apparitions where he celebrated Mass and afterwards visited the basilica with the Bishop of Leiria, who later entertained him to lunch at the Hospice.

The 13th this month was marked by the presence of 1,500 fishermen from Peniche and their families. The altar at Mass was decorated with oars and floats and at the Offertory, a group of the men took up cases of tinned fish, which were afterwards sold for the benefit of the sanctuary and some was used in the hospices and retreat houses.

Several foreign groups were present including a hundred German workmen from Dortmund who were praying for the unification of Germany, and members of a French organisation who visit ^{old} European pilgrimage centers, taking the same routes which were taken by the pilgrims of the Middle Ages.

One of the most remarkable personalities present was Mr La Pira, the former Mayor of Florence in Italy, who became so well known



for his ardent faithfulness to his Catholic principles when he was in office.

Several American pilgrims have been here lately in addition to the tourists who come up every day in the regular buses from Lisbon. Mr John Leon Fergie of the Kodak Co. and his wife paid a visit as did Mr Virgil M. Graham of the Industrial Electronic Association of New York and his wife.

A group of Benedictine Oblates from Wisconsin with their director Dom Jerome Palmer O.S.B. came on their way to Rome and other shrines and an American missionary from Pakistan, Fr Louis A. Scheerer, told us interesting facts about that country. Apparently Catholicism is spreading in Pakistan and the government is assisting Catholic schools there. Previously Fr Scheerer had been for three years in China and had visited the seminary in Macau which trains priests for *China, that persecuted country.*

Regulations for those wanting to enter the sanctuary are being enforced more and more strictly. Large notices have been erected saying that this ground is holy as the Virgin Mother of God appeared here, that men must not wear shorts or enter in shirtsleeves, they must uncover their heads and not smoke. Women are told they must cover their heads, not wear trousers, ^{and} that the sleeves of their dresses must come at least to the elbow. ~~Christians must not wear their~~ Their clothes should be marked by Christian modesty and children should not be allowed to run about. It is also said that it is permitted to take photographs quietly and calmly.

Fortunately for foreign pilgrims who come to Fatima in the summer months, dressed in a way that would be perfectly ^{ordinary} ~~proper~~ in their own countries, the shops near the sanctuary do sell cheap



scarves to cover up heads and shoulders.

One of the official Portuguese guides who accompanies parties up to the shrine from Lisbon declared that several of her clients had been robbed of their pocket books in the crowds at the sanctuary, and she asked rhetorically, "What offends God More, robbery or arms and heads uncovered!" . It is, unfortunately, a well-known fact that thieves do haunt pilgrimage centers or churches with large congregations and it certainly seems up to the authorities to warn people to look after their pocket books or handbags.

The first stone of the new Stations of the Cross which Hungarian refugees are giving to the sanctuary, was blessed by the Bishop of Leiria. Fourteen chapels will be built from just outside the sanctuary along the way the three little shepherds took from Aljustrel on those summer days in 1917, culminating ~~in~~ at Laca do Cabeco. The intention of the Hungarians who have contributed to this project is to beg Our Lady of Fatima to intercede for the liberation of their country and as an act of homage to Cardinal Mindszenty.

The bishop led those present to the ^{site of the} first chapel, making the Stations of the Cross as they went. He then sealed into the foundation stone, a parchment with an account of the ceremony and coins from Hungary and other countries, and ~~then~~ recited a prayer for the liberation of Hungary and ~~the~~ other countries behind the Iron Curtain.

There are now so many different religious houses in Fatima, that it is interesting to hear of a new congregation which is hoping to make a foundation here. The Institute of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus was founded over a hundred years ago for its members to pray for the salvation of the dying before the Blessed Sacrament perpet-



ually exposed. The nuns are strictly cloistered. The Mother House ~~is~~ is in Brussels and there is a foundation in the New World in Montreal, and several in Europe. It does seem particularly suitable that these nuns should make a foundation in Fatima as so many of Our Blessed Mother's words were devoted to her desire for the conversion of sinners and what better way can we fulfil that wish than by praying for the dying. The Bishop of Leiria is ~~inter~~ most encouraging and was the first person to send a substantial donation

I was interested to see that a statue of Our Lady of Fatima was recently blessed by His Holiness Pope John XXIII. This was the work of the American sculptor, Lumen Winter and is destined for the Knights of St Columba in White Plains. The bronze statue is over 33 feet high, too tall to get into the Vatican, so it remained just outside in St Peter's Square, where the Holy Father blessed it.

Apparently the Pope vividly remembers his visit to Fatima for a Luso-American family from New Bedford, who recently had an audience after coming to the shrine on the way to Rome, said that he was most interested in the developments at Fatima and did not deny that he would like to return here one day.

The Pilgrim Virgin continues to be the means of bringing countless graces on to the towns in Italy which it is visiting. Father Angiolo Ferretti, a parish priest in Pisa stated that when the image was in that famous town, he was in the confessional for ten hours at a stretch and that people came to confession who had been away from the Sacraments for more than forty years. During its 2-day stay in the cathedral, over 25,000 Communion were distributed there.

When the statue was in the parish church of Bergamo, near where



the present Pope comes from, there was an extraordinary cure of a local nun. Sister Rosidia, who is now 38 years old, had suffered from a kidney disease since 1947. In 1956 she was sent to Milan where one of her kidneys was removed, but she did not improve as much as was hoped and last April she was so ill that the doctors gave up hope.

However Sister Rosidia continued between life and death, but on the occasion of the visit of the Pilgrim Virgin to Bergamo, one of the nurses ~~was~~ at the hospital where she is a patient, went to the church, prayed for her charge before the statue and touched the image with her handkerchief.

On returning to the hospital, the nurse placed the handkerchief on Sister Rosidia's forehead. At once she felt such intense pain that the handkerchief was removed. Then suddenly the nun felt much better, all pain left her and later on that same day, when she heard the sound of the helicopter taking the statue on to its next port of call, she got out of bed, for the first time for over a year, went to the window to see the aircraft fly away and to thank Our Blessed Mother whose image seems to have done so much for her.

The doctors say that Sister Rosidia is very much better and they are sending her back to the hospital in Milan so that the surgeons who operated on her three years ago, can examine her again.

So we see that although Our Lady came to Fatima primarily to bring sinners back to her Divine Son, either at the shrine itself or through these travels of the Pilgrim Virgin, she also at times takes pity on the sick, and thus we have sometimes these seemingly inexplicable cures.
