



LETTER FROM FATIMA

by

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In a brief five years time, the Fiftieth anniversary of the Apparitions at Fatima will take place and Lucia herself, the only survivor of the three children who were so blessed in that summer of 1917, celebrated her fifty-fifth birthday earlier this year, for she was but just eleven years old on that May morning, which now seems so long ago.

Lucia's
~~Her~~ life since then has been an unusual one. After the deaths of her cousins, Francisco and Jacinta who saw the apparitions with her, staying on in the little village of Aljustrel became very difficult. Her own family hardly knew what to think about it all, more and more people, some as pilgrims, some as scoffers, were ~~going to~~ ^{visiting} the humble home-made shrine which was set up at the site of the apparitions, and they all wanted to see and to talk to Lucia.

She tried to escape all the fuss and to go on with her life as a simple village girl, looking after her father's sheep in the grazing grounds, washing clothes at the communal village stream, weaving coarse cloth for the families garments and taking her part in the endless chores which fall on the women and girls in an agricultural community.

But when the girl was about 15, the newly appointed Bishop of Leiria, in which diocese Fatima is situated, decided that she should get more education than was then available at the



So village school, and with her parents' consent, sent her to ~~school~~
~~at~~ the convent of the Dorothean Sisters ~~at~~ near Oporto, ~~T~~ where she
stayed for some years.

It was the bishop's wish that no one in the convent, with the
exception of the Reverend Mother, should know who Lucia was, so
she was given another name and preserved her secret intact. Which
does show that even at that comparatively early age, she was
unusually discreet and humble.

Soon her thoughts ~~naturally~~ turned to a religious vocation ,
and she told the bishop that she would like to enter Carmel. But
he firmly ~~said~~ said that that life would be too austere for her
and advised her to apply to the Dorothean nuns as a lay-sister.
This, Lucia obediently did and spent many years scrubbing and
cleaning and waiting on the pupils in the convent boarding-school
at Tuy, just over the Portuguese boarder in Spain. ~~For her~~
~~had soon~~ religious superiors/decided that she would be able to lead a far
more normal religious life in Spain than in Portugal, where inter-
est in the only survivor of the three children, was mounting, as
more and more pilgrims went to Fatima each year.

Time passed and Lucia remained in close ~~contact~~ ^{touch} with the
Bishop of Leiria, who ~~had always~~ remained deeply concerned with
her well-being, ~~as with the development and growth of the shrine.~~
~~and before~~
During the Second World War, Lucia received various private
revelations which she communicated to the bishop by letter; ~~and~~
then he asked her to write down an exact account of all that ~~had~~
happened in the course of the six apparitions in the summer months

of 1917, and of the events which led up to them, such as the apparition of the Archangel to the children in the previous year and the strange incident of their receiving a ~~kind of~~ mystical Communion from his hands.

Lucia wrote two of these 'Memoirs' for the Bishop, and they are ^{now} in the Archives of the Bishopric of Leiria. Most of those who have written books on Fatima, have had access to them, and they are extremely interesting in showing Lucia's integrated and balanced character. They are utterly un-hysterical and are written in a plain, straightforward ^{but in an unlettered style} and rather uneducated way, and ^{they} are naturally in Portuguese.

It is in these 'Memoirs' that Lucia mentions that the third part of the communication of Our Blessed Lady to her at Fatima, ~~it~~ was secret, and could only be revealed at her own death or in 1960.

The Bishop, as can now be seen, made an unfortunate decision when he asked her to write down this 'secret', in case she did die before 1960. For this brought the whole matter into the public eye and such was the interest in it in 1960, that had the 'secret' then been published, vast numbers of both Catholics and non-Catholics would have ~~practically~~ considered it to have been an official pronouncement of the Church and not merely a private revelation, which in actual fact, the Church has not pronounced on in any way.

Had the Bishop, who died some years ago, left the matter alone, then it could have been published as the personal revel-



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ation of Sister Lucia, as have many revelations of nuns through the centuries, without bringing the Ecclesiastical Authorities into the matter, apart from the Imprimatur that *the writings* they contain nothing contrary to faith or morals.

After the War, in 1946, the Dorotheans, *Sister* were asked to allow Lucia to visit Fatima, so as to confirm the actual places where the various events connected with the Apparitions *had taken* took place. This she did, and it was then found that certain sites like the Leca de Cabeco where the cousins received the mystical Communion and were taught the Prayer of Adoration by the angel were not exactly as was thought by the local people. *But* now all it is/quite clear and definite.

But through all those years in the Dorothean Congregation, Lucia still longed for the complete obscurity and oblation of the Carmelite life, and in 1948 she attained her desire and with a niece, who was also a Dorothean nun, she entered the Carmel at Coimbra, the old Portuguese University town, some 80 miles north of Fatima.

Since that date her life has been more and more hidden and now she can receive no visitors, apart from her own relations, without the express permission of Rome. But her family ~~do~~ go and see her regularly and her ~~Sister~~ sister, Maria dos ~~Anjos~~ Anjos, who still lives in the cottage at Aljustrel near Fatima, where they were all born, has told me how interested Lucia is in all the family news of her nephews and nieces and great nephews and nieces. *Their* vocations, for many have entered



the religious life, and their marriages, and even what is being planted and harvested in the family fields. ^{by a special intercession to her} For the greatest supernatural graces work through the recipient's character and background and the extraordinary diversity of ^{the} saints in the Church show us how different these can be. ~~And~~ Lucia is fundamentally a sensible, shrewd countrywoman as can be seen from what has been published of her 'Memoirs' in various books on Fatima.

The appeal of the Diocesan Postulator for the Beatification Cause of Francisco and Jacinta for documents and photographs ~~of~~ from the time of the apparitions, which I mentioned in my last LETTER FROM FATIMA, has produced some interesting new material.

Engineer Mario Godinho sent them a contemporary photograph of the three children, taken ~~on July~~ outside the old parish church, on July 13th, 1917, and a Statement in which he says that his family lived some 18 miles from the Cova da Iria, but when they first heard of the Apparition, which was towards the end of May, he and his brother who was an army doctor, thought nothing of it, though his mother believed it might be true and wanted to go there for herself.

^{he} Mario Godinho was doing his military service in Lisbon, but got leave to go home ^{and to his great joy he} and drove his mother in an early Peugeot automobile ~~they possessed~~, to the Cova da Iria on July 13th. They went with difficulty along very bad roads to the Cova where the children were kneeling holding lighted candles, but the Apparition was already over, ^{After a short delay} and they drove the cousins to



the parish church, where the photograph was taken. They asked questions of the children, ^{who} ~~and they~~ gave the same account of the events ~~which had happened~~, as they did to many others later on.

Young Godinho returned to the Cova, but earlier this time, on October 13th, though unwillingly, as he did not believe that the extraordinary sign which was promised, would be given. His sister called him out of the car in which he was sitting, and he saw with his own eyes the 'Miracle of the Sun'.

He says in his deposition that he was able to look straight at the sun with eyes wide open, without blinking, as one could at a frosted glass illuminated from behind. The sun rotated and light came from all around it and it looked as if it was rapidly approaching the earth. He looked around and the strange light made everything seem unreal. This lasted, ^{he says in his own words} as far as he ~~could recollect~~ for about 10 minutes."

^{The family} ~~They~~ all returned home, ^{but not until} and he at last was convinced that something divine had taken place.

For ^{her} ~~Some~~ years ~~later~~, his mother had a growth in the lachrymose gland of the left eye, but no medical care seemed to make it better, and on this particular October 13th, the tremor in her eye was particularly noticable. However on returning home they ~~all~~ noticed that the growth had disappeared and the tremor stopped, ^{and} neither recurred in the remaining 35 years of her life, ~~so at last he was convinced that something divine had taken place at the Cova.~~
