

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



This Tuesday, October 13th is the Anniversary of the sixth and last Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary to three children in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917.

During World War I, Pope Benedict XV made repeated but forlorn pleas for peace, and finally in May 1917, made a direct appeal to the Blessed Mother to intercede for peace in the world. Just over a week later, Our Lady began to appear at Fatima, Portugal, to three shepherd children, Lucia dos Santos, age ten, and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto (siblings), ages eight and seven. At the time, Fatima was a small village about 70 miles north of Lisbon.

However, it was in the spring of the previous year, 1916, that the children had their first supernatural encounter as a means of preparing them for their meetings with the Queen of Heaven. As they were looking after the sheep one day they saw a dazzlingly beautiful young man, seemingly made of light, who told them he was the Angel of Peace. He invited them to pray with him. This Angel appeared to them on two more occasions, in the Summer and in the Fall of that year. But the children did not tell anyone about these visits of the Angel, feeling an interior necessity to keep quiet about these events.

On May 13, 1917 the three children took their flocks out to pasture in the small area known as the Cova da Iria. After lunch, and praying the rosary, they suddenly saw a bright flash of something like lightning, followed quickly by another flash in the clear blue sky.

They looked up to see, in Lucia's words, "a lady, clothed in white, brighter than the sun, radiating a light more clear and intense than a crystal cup filled with sparkling water lit by burning sunlight." The children stood there amazed, bathed in the light that surrounded the apparition as the Lady smiled and said: "Do not be afraid, I will not harm you." Lucia, as the oldest, asked her where she came from.

The Lady pointed to the sky and said: "I come from heaven." Lucia then asked her what she wanted. "I have come to ask you to come here for six months on the 13th day of the month at this same hour. Later I shall say who I am and what I desire.

The Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Fatima, appeared to the children over the next six months, the last apparition being on October 13th 1917, when 100,000 people were present and witnessed the 'Miracle of the Sun.'

The core of her message can be expressed in three simple sentences:

1. Hell exists and souls are being lost to it because there is no one to make reparation for their sins
2. War is a consequence of sin
3. The salvation of souls and the attainment of world peace require the conversion of sinners. "*People must stop offending God because He is already so much offended.*"

Almost everything else she said, the things she asked us to do, and her prophecies predicated on the nature of our response relate - either directly or indirectly - to these three fundamental elements.

The message of Our Lady of Fatima is as relevant today as it was 100 years ago. May we take it to heart, and make the message of Fatima part of our spiritual life.

Fr. Sean