

# The Story of Fatima

In 1917, WWI weighed heavily on countries and peoples. Pope Benedict XV made repeated but forlorn pleas for peace, and finally in May 1917, made a direct appeal to the Blessed Mother Mary to intercede for peace in the world. The response was Mary's first appearance at Fatima just over a week later. At this time Fatima was just a small village about seventy miles north of Lisbon. The three children to whom she appeared were Lucia dos Santos, age 10, and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto, ages eight and seven.

## The Angel of Portugal

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 encounter with Mary. 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.

Later on in the summer, the Angel again appeared to the children and encouraged them to pray and make sacrifices as a way of drawing down peace on their country.

In the autumn the children again saw the Angel as they were out looking after the sheep. He appeared before them holding a chalice in his hands above which was suspended a host from which drops of blood were falling into the chalice. The Angel left the chalice suspended in the air and prostrated himself before it in prayer.

He then gave the host to Lucia to eat, and let Francisco and Jacinta drink from the chalice while saying: "Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Repair their crimes and console your God." Then he prostrated himself again in prayer before disappearing. The children did not tell anyone about these visits of the Angel, feeling an interior necessity to keep quiet about these events.

## May 13, 1917

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 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. And I shall return here yet a seventh time."

Lucia then asked if they would go to heaven and was told yes, she and Jacinta would go to heaven, but Francisco would need to say many rosaries first. The Lady then said: "Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you as an act of reparation for the conversion of sinners?" Lucia, speaking for all three, readily agreed. "Then you are going to have much to suffer, but the grace of God will be your comfort."

Lucia recounted that at the same moment as she said these words the Lady opened her hands and streamed a "light" on the children which allowed them to see themselves in God. The Lady finished with a request: "Say

the Rosary every day to bring peace to the world and the end of the war.” With that she began to rise into the air, moving towards the east until she disappeared.

The children got together and tried to think of ways they could make sacrifices as the Lady had asked, resolving to go without lunch and to pray the full rosary. Francisco and Jacinta received more support from their parents than Lucia, but the attitudes of the local inhabitants ranged from skepticism to utter contempt, and the children thereby suffered many insults. They would have much to suffer, just as the Lady had told them.

### **June 13, 1917**

About fifty people came to the Cova da Iria on June 13 as the three children assembled near the Holm oak tree where the Lady had appeared. The children saw a flash of light followed immediately by the apparition of Mary as she spoke to Lucia: “I want you to come on the 13th of next month, to pray the Rosary every day, and to learn to read. Later, I will tell you what I want.”

Lucia asked Mary to take them to heaven and was reassured in this way: “I will take Jacinta and Francisco shortly, but you will stay here for some time to come. Jesus wants to use you to make me known and loved. He wishes to establish devotion to my Immaculate Heart throughout the world. I promise salvation to whoever embraces it. These souls will be dear to God, like flowers put by me to adorn his throne.” This last sentence is found in a letter written in 1927 by Sr. Lucia to her confessor.

Lucia was sad at the first part of this reply and asked: “Am I to stay here alone?” Mary replied: “No, my daughter. Are you suffering a great deal? Don’t lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.”

One of the witnesses to this apparition, Maria Carreira, described how Lucia then cried out and pointed as Mary departed. She herself heard a noise like “a rocket a long way off,” and looked to see a small cloud a few inches over the tree rise and move slowly towards the east until it disappeared. The crowd of pilgrims then returned to Fatima where they reported the amazing things they had seen, thus ensuring that there were between two and three thousand people present for the July apparition.

### **July 13, 1917**

On July 13 the three children assembled at the Cova and again saw the indescribably beautiful Lady over the Holm oak tree. Lucia asked what she wanted, and Mary replied: “I want you to come here on the 13th of next month and to continue to pray the Rosary every day in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary in order to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war, because only she can help you.”

Lucia then asked her who she was and for a miracle so everyone would believe: “Continue to come here every month. In October, I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe.”

Lucia made some requests for sick people, to which Mary replied that she would cure some but not others, and that all must say the rosary to obtain such graces. And she continued: “Sacrifice yourselves for sinners and say many times, especially when you make some sacrifice: O Jesus, it is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

### **The vision of hell**

As she spoke these words, Mary opened her hands and rays of light from them seemed to penetrate the earth revealing to the children a terrifying vision of hell full of demons and lost souls amid indescribable horrors.

This vision of hell was the first part of the 3-part secret of Fatima which was unknown until the writing of Sister Lucia's [Third Memoir](#) dated August 31, 1941.

The children looked up to the sad face of the Blessed Virgin, who spoke to them kindly:

“You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end; but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the pontificate of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.

“To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.”

This concludes the second part of the secret. The third part was not made public until the year 2000 at the beatification ceremonies of Jacinta and Francisco Marto.

Mary specifically told Lucia not to tell anyone about the secret at this stage, apart from Francisco, before continuing: “When you pray the Rosary, say after each mystery: O my Jesus! Forgive us, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those who are most in need.” After assuring Lucia that there was nothing more, Mary disappeared off into the distance.

## **August 1917**

As August 13th approached, the story of the apparitions had reached the anti-religious secular press, and while this ensured that the whole country knew about Fatima, it also meant that many biased and negative reports were circulating. The children were kidnapped on the morning of the 13th by the Mayor of Vila Nova de Ourem, Arturo Santos. They were interrogated about the secret; but despite his threats and promises of money, they refused to divulge it. In the afternoon they were moved to the local prison and threatened with death but determined that they would die rather than reveal the secret.

On August 19, Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta were together at a place called Valinhos, near Fatima, late in the afternoon, when they again saw Mary, who spoke to Lucia: “Go again to the Cova da Iria on the 13th and continue to say the Rosary every day.” Mary also said she would perform a miracle, so all would believe, and that if they had not been kidnapped it would have been even greater.

Looking very sad, Mary then said: “Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to hell, because there are none to sacrifice themselves and pray for them.” With that she rose into the air and moved towards the east before disappearing.

By now the children had thoroughly absorbed Mary's plea for prayer and penance, and did everything they could to answer it. They prayed for hours while lying prostrate on the ground and went as long as they could without drinking in the burning heat of the Portuguese summer. They also went without food as a sacrifice for sinners to save them from hell, the vision of which had so profoundly effected them. They even knotted some pieces of old rope around their waists as a form of mortification, not removing them day or night.

## September 13, 1917

On September 13 very large crowds began to converge on Fatima from all directions. Around noon the children arrived. After the customary flash of light they saw Mary on the Holm oak tree. She spoke to Lucia: “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.”

Lucia then began to put forward the petitions for cures, to be told: “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.

## October 13, 1917

The prediction of a public miracle caused intense speculation throughout Portugal, and the journalist, Avelino de Almeida, published a satirical article on the whole business in the anti-religious newspaper O Seculo. People from other parts of the country descended by the tens of thousands on the Cova despite the terrible storm that lashed the mountain country around Fatima on the eve of the 13<sup>th</sup>. Many pilgrims walked barefooted, reciting the rosary as they went, all crowding into the area around the Cova. By mid-morning the weather again turned bad and heavy rain began to fall.

The children reached the Holm oak around noon and then saw the flash of light as Mary appeared before them. For the last time, Lucia asked what she wanted: “I want to tell you that a chapel is to be built here in my honor. 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.”

Again Lucia made requests for cures, conversions and other things. Our Lady’s response was: “Some yes, but not others. They must amend their lives and ask forgiveness for their sins.”

At this point Mary grew very sad and 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. After she disappeared, as the people witnessed the great miracle which had been predicted, the children saw the visions foretold during the September apparition.

## The Great Miracle Our Lady Had Predicted

The greatest miracle to occur since the Resurrection is also the only miracle ever precisely predicted as to date, time of day and location. Although it is popularly known as “[The Miracle of the Sun](#)” and October 13, 1917 has come to be known as “[The Day the Sun Danced](#),” a great deal more took place. The solar phenomena included the dancing of the sun, its fluctuations in color, its swirling and its descending toward the earth. There were also the stillness in the leaves of the trees in spite of howling winds, the complete drying of the rain soaked ground, and the restoration of clothes all wet and covered with mud so that, as eye-witness Dominic Reis put it, “they looked as though they had just come back from the cleaners.” Physical cures of the blind and the lame were reported. The countless unreserved public confessions of sin and commitments to conversion of life attest to the authenticity of what they saw.

The miracle is reported to have been seen from as far as 15-25 miles away, thus ruling out the possibility of any type of collective hallucination or mass hypnotism. Doubters and skeptics had become believers. Even O Seculo’s chief editor, Avelino de Almeida, who had written satirically before, now reported affirmatively, and stood by his story later on in spite of harsh criticism.

## **The deaths of Francisco and Jacinta**

An influenza epidemic swept Europe in autumn of 1918 just as the war was finishing, and both Jacinta and Francisco fell ill. Francisco recovered somewhat, but his condition worsened again. He offered up all his sufferings as a way of consoling God for the sinfulness and ingratitude of mankind and in supplication for the conversion of sinners. He became so weak that eventually he could not even pray. He received his first Holy Communion and on the next day, April 4, 1919, he died.

Jacinta too was confined to her bed during the long winter months, and although she recovered was struck down with bronchial pneumonia, while also developing a painful abscess in her chest. She was moved to the hospital in Ourem in July 1919 where she underwent the painful treatment prescribed for her but without much effect. She returned home in August with an open wound in her side. It was decided that another attempt should be made to treat her, and so in January 1920 she was taken to Lisbon, where she was diagnosed as having purulent pleurisy and diseased ribs.

Eventually in February she was admitted into the hospital, where she underwent another painful operation to remove two ribs. This left her with a large wound in her side that had to be dressed daily causing her great agony. On the evening of February 20, 1920 the local priest was called and heard her Confession, but he insisted on waiting till the next day to bring her Holy Communion despite her protests that she felt worse. As Mary had foretold she died that night alone and far from her family. Her body was returned to Fatima and buried with that of Francisco until both were later moved to the Basilica built at the Cova da Iria.

## **Later apparitions to Sr. Lucia**

The Bishop of Leiria-Fatima decided that it was best if Lucia was removed from Fatima, both to spare her from the continual questionings she had to endure, and to see what effect her absence would have on the numbers coming as pilgrims. Her mother agreed that she be sent away to school, and she left in May 1921 in great secrecy for Porto, where a school run by the sisters of St. Dorothy was situated. Later she became a sister in this congregation before joining the Carmelites.

On December 10, 1925, while at the Dorothean Convent in Pontevedra, Spain, Lucia had another apparition of the Blessed Mother, this time with the Child Jesus. She had returned to ask for the [Communions of Reparation](#) we now call [1<sup>st</sup> Saturday Devotion](#), as she said she would during her July 13 apparition at Fatima. Mary told Lucia to announce that she promised to provide, at the hour of death, the graces necessary for salvation to those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, confessed, received Holy Communion, recited five decades of the rosary, and kept her company while meditating on the mysteries of the rosary for fifteen minutes, all with the intention of making reparation to her Immaculate Heart.

On June 13, 1929, Our Lady returned again as Sr. Lucia was at prayer in the convent chapel at Tuy, Spain. This time she appeared alongside a representation of the Holy Trinity. Mary spoke to her saying: “The moment has come in which God asks the Holy Father, in union with all the bishops of the world, to make the consecration of Russia, promising to save it by this means...”

On January 25, 1938, a strange light filled the skies of northern Europe. It was described as a particularly brilliant display of the Aurora Borealis, but Sr. Lucia realized it was the “unknown light,” spoken of by Mary during the July 13, 1917 apparition. It meant punishment for the world was close, principally through the Second World War, because it had not turned back to God.

Pope John Paul II kneels in prayer at the foot of the statue of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal May 13, 1982, a year to the day after an assailant shot and seriously wounded him. The pope consecrated the world to Mary at the Fatima shrine in 1982. (CNS file photo)

Pope Pius XII consecrated the whole world to Mary's Immaculate Heart in 1942 and carried out a similar consecration of Russia in 1952, but neither of these fulfilled Mary's request at Fatima. This collegial consecration, in union with a "moral totality" of the world's bishops, was finally carried out by Saint Pope John Paul II in 1984. Fatima received further Papal support when on May 13, 1979, the Pope declared Jacinta and Francisco "venerable," the first stage in the process of their possible canonization.

Saint Pope John Paul II further emphasized the importance of Fatima by beatifying Jacinta and Francisco on May 13, 2000 during the Jubilee Year. It was during these beatification ceremonies that all the details of the third part of the Fatima secret were revealed, the third millennium was entrusted to Our Lady of Fatima.

### **The Bishop approves of Fatima**

The Church, meanwhile, had maintained silence about the apparitions during the years from 1917. It wasn't until May 1922 that Bishop Correia issued a pastoral letter on the subject indicating that he would set up a commission of inquiry. In 1930 he issued another pastoral letter on the apparitions, which after recounting the events at Fatima, contained the following brief but important statement:

"In virtue of considerations made known, and others which for reasons of brevity we omit; humbly invoking the Divine Spirit and placing ourselves under the protection of the most Holy Virgin, and after hearing the opinions of our Rev. Advisers in this diocese, we hereby: 1. Declare worthy of belief, the visions of the shepherd children in the Cova da Iria, parish of Fatima, in this diocese, from the 13<sup>th</sup> May to 13<sup>th</sup> October, 1917. 2. Permit officially the cult of Our Lady of Fatima."

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### **Jesus & His Mother Made a Special Request for the First Saturdays**

The First Saturdays Devotion, also known as the "Five First Saturdays" is a special request by Our Lord and Our Lady to make reparation for all the sins against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Our Lady promised personal salvation if we fulfill the five consecutive First Saturdays. However, we should continue to fulfill them every month to console the Hearts of Jesus and Mary and make reparation for the sins of others. The continued practice of the First Saturdays will help bring about a period of peace and the salvation of many souls as Our Lady promised (Fatima, July 13, 1917).

On December 10th, 1925, The Child Jesus and Mary came to Sister Lucia.

The Child Jesus spoke first saying: *"Have compassion on the Heart of your Most Holy Mother covered with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to remove them with an act of reparation"*. What does the Child Jesus mean by "compassion"? Compassion is another word for "mercy". In fact, the practice of mercy begins with having mercy on the Sacred Heart of Jesus who beheld our every act during His Passion and is in need of being consoled too.

Then, Our Lady said: *"My daughter, look at My Heart surrounded with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You at least try to console me, and say that I promise to assist at the hour of death with all the graces necessary for salvation all those who on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, go to Confession and receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary and keep me company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me"*.

### **Four Practices in Reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

We now know that in order to make reparation for these sins, we are asked to receive the [Holy Communion of Reparation](#), but we should not forget that Our Lady ALSO asked for other practices to be done to fulfill her request. The four practices that have to be fulfilled on the First Saturday, each with the intention of making reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as Our Lady asked in 1925, are the following:

1. Confession\*
2. Receive Holy Communion\*
3. Pray the Rosary\*
4. Keep her company for 15 minutes while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary\*
  - \* Each of these practices need to be done with the intention of making reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

What are the two promises made by Our Lady?

1. If the requests for the collegial consecration and the First Saturdays Devotion are fulfilled, Our Lady promises a period of peace and salvation of many souls (July 13, 1917). (A sufficient amount of reparation through the First Saturdays Devotion is needed to bring this about.)
1. For those who fulfill five consecutive First Saturdays, Our Lady promises personal salvation (December 10, 1925).

### **Why are there five First Saturdays?**

The message from Our Lady promises personal salvation to those who console her on five consecutive First Saturdays. To obtain her promise of a period of peace and the salvation of many souls, further reparation is needed by the First Saturdays Devotion. However, to obtain the promise of personal salvation, why does Our Lady ask for five consecutive First Saturdays?

On May 29, 1930, Jesus said to Sr. Lucia:

*“There are 5 ways in which people offend and blaspheme against the Immaculate Heart of Mary:*

1. *The blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception.*
2. *Against her Virginity.*
3. *Against the Divine Maternity, refusing at the same time to accept her as the Mother of all mankind.*
4. *Those who publicly seek to instill in the children’s hearts, indifference, contempt, and even hatred against the Immaculate Mother.*
5. *Those who offend her directly in her Sacred Images.”*

### **The Origins of the First Saturdays Devotion at Fatima**

Our Lady appeared six times to the children at Fatima, yet her appearance on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1917 was particularly important. It was also the first time that Our Lady mentioned the First Saturdays. See [Story of Fatima](#) to learn more.

At Fatima, during the third appearance of Our Lady to the children—on July 13<sup>th</sup> 1917— she said: *“You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. In order to save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If you do what I tell you, many souls will be saved, there will be peace...”*

We know we honor Mary because she is the Mother of God and our Mother. But, why this particular devotion, namely, devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary? God wishes that we have a [devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary](#) because she is one of the 3 greatest gifts of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to us. Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary more fully completes our devotion to and leads us to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, especially in the Holy Eucharist. God now wants this devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in order to save souls from perdition. This fulfills the commandment to love our neighbor. The greatest way we can love our neighbors in need is to help save their souls.

How does God want us to practice devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary? Our Lady introduced 2 special requests: *“...I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia and the Communion of Reparation on the first Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace...”*

Our Lady did come back to ask for and explain these requests during later [apparitions to Sister Lucia](#) (Lucia was one of the three children of Fatima).

So, the two requests that Our Lady asked for and explained are:

1. The Consecration of Russia
2. The First Saturdays Devotion

St. John Paul II said he completed the first request in 1984. However, the second request still remains to be fulfilled: The First Saturdays Devotion that makes sufficient reparation.

## **Our Lady of Fatima (Catholic News Agency)**

May 13 is the anniversary of the apparition of Our Lady to three shepherd children in the small village of Fatima in Portugal in 1917. She appeared six times to Lucia, 9, and her cousins Francisco, 8, and his sister Jacinta, 6, between May 13, 1917 and October 13, 1917.

On the 13th of May 1917, an apparition of ‘a woman all in white, more brilliant than the sun’ presented itself to the three children saying “Please don’t be afraid of me, I’m not going to harm you.” Lucia asked her where she came from and she responded, “I come from Heaven.” The woman wore a white mantle edged with gold and held a rosary in her hand. The woman asked them to pray and devote themselves to the Holy Trinity and to “say the Rosary every day, to bring peace to the world and an end to the war.”

She also revealed that the children would suffer, especially from the unbelief of their friends and families, and that the two younger children, Francisco and Jacinta would be taken to Heaven very soon but Lucia would live longer in order to spread her message and devotion to the Immaculate Heart.

In the last apparition the woman revealed her name in response to Lucia’s question: “I am the Lady of the Rosary.” That same day, 70,000 people had turned out to witness the apparition, following a promise by the woman that she would show the people that the apparitions were true. They saw the sun make three circles and move around the sky in an incredible zigzag movement in a manner which left no doubt in their minds about the veracity of the apparitions. By 1930 the Bishop had approved of the apparitions and they have been approved by the Church as authentic.

Our Lady of Fatima revealed three prophetic “secrets,” the first two of which were revealed earlier and refer to the vision of hell and the souls languishing there, the request for an ardent devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the prediction of the Second World War, and finally the prediction of the immense damage that Russia would do to humanity by abandoning the Christian faith and embracing Communist totalitarianism. The third “secret” was not revealed until the year 2000, and referred to the persecutions that humanity would undergo in the last century: “The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated”. The suffering of the popes of the 20th century has been interpreted to include the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II in 1981, which took place on May 13, the 64th anniversary of the apparitions. The Holy Father attributed his escape from certain death to the intervention of Our Lady: “... it was a mother's hand that guided the bullet's path and in his throes the Pope halted at the threshold of death.”

What is the central meaning of the message of Fatima? Nothing different from what the Church has always taught: it is, as Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict the XVI, has put it, “the exhortation to prayer as the path of “salvation for souls” and, likewise, the summons to penance and conversion.”

Perhaps the most well known utterance of the apparition of Our Lady at Fatima was her confident declaration that “My Immaculate Heart will triumph”. Cardinal Ratzinger has interpreted this utterance as follows: “The Heart open to God, purified by contemplation of God, is stronger than guns and weapons of every kind. The fiat of Mary, the word of her heart, has changed the history of the world, because it brought the Savior into the world—because, thanks to her Yes, God could become man in our world and remains so for all time. The Evil One has power in this world, as we see and experience continually; he has power because our freedom continually lets itself be led away from God. But since God himself took a human heart and has thus steered human freedom towards what is good, the freedom to choose evil no longer has the last word. From that time forth, the word that prevails is this: “In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart; I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33). The message of Fatima invites us to trust in this promise.

## The Key to Fatima: Understanding its message 100 years later

1. Mary appeared in Fatima on the 13<sup>th</sup> of every month from May to Oct. 1917. She delivered a series of messages to three young children, Lúcia dos Santos and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto. While Mary discussed many things with the children, the simple, practical and life-changing message of Our Lady of Fatima can be summarized with three invitations:
  - Learn to pray the rosary, the prayer that can change the world.
  - Get spiritually healthy with penance and reparation.
  - Let Mary guide you to lasting happiness.
2. **Mary's Invitation to Pray the Rosary:** Every time Mary appeared to the children, she asked them to pray the rosary. Why? The rosary is incredibly powerful to bring peace, to heal, to make a difference in your life, the lives of your loved ones, and in the world.
  - When prayed with devotion and meditating on each of the Mysteries:
    - The rosary settles our hearts and minds. We live hectic lives in a chaotic world troubled by war, violence, and brokenness. Amidst all this chaos, our souls yearn for peace and clarity.
    - The rosary puts things in perspective and allows us to see things as they really are.
    - It reaches into our souls and puts us at ease, providing a felt sense of peace.
    - It teaches us to slow down, calm down, let go, to offer our struggles to God, and to listen.
    - The rosary has the power to impact the lives of our loved ones, our communities, and our nation. When we pray the rosary, we can bring our needs and struggles, and the needs of others, to Mary. She cares for us like a loving mother, and she wants to bring our troubles to her son, Jesus.
    - Praying the rosary can bring peace to a troubled world, healing to broken hearts, and clarity to those in chaos. Mary even promised that the rosary could bring an end to war!
3. **Mary's Invitation to Get Spiritually Healthy via Penance and Reparation:** God has an incredible dream for us that can fulfill our deepest desires. But we often get distracted. Mary invites us back by encouraged us to turn away from things that hold us back from finding the happiness God wants for us.
  - But how do we get there? Even if we want to follow God's dream for us, actually doing that can seem intimidating. Remember it's a journey. And God is with us each step of the way. Simply take one small step forward, especially when it is difficult. Here are a few ideas to get you started:
    - Identify the things in your life that need to change. Pick one bad habit, then focus on the positive habits that can crowd out that bad habit.
    - Make fasting part of your spirituality. God wants to liberate you from your struggles. But some things in our life can only be overcome by prayer and fasting. Whether you fast from food or something else like noise or complaining, offer your struggle to God, and practice fasting.
    - Even if it has been a long time, make an effort to go to Reconciliation. Be gentle with yourself, but embrace the opportunity to find forgiveness and healing.
    - Ask God for advice. Invite God into your decisions, both big and small. Ask W.W.J.D?
    - Establish a daily habit of prayer. It doesn't have to be long (10 minutes a day).
    - You will find incredible happiness if you embrace God's dream for you. You will be blessed with spiritual vitality. You will become all that you can be: the-very-best-version-of-yourself.
4. **Mary's Invitation to Guide You to Jesus:** Mary is the most famous woman in history, and her impact on the life of Jesus, history, art, the Church, and people of all faiths is significant. And at Fatima, Mary offered to guide us as we strive to live the life God has called us to live.
  - Mary is an incredible example of someone who embraced and lived God's dream for her. Her yes changed the world. Mary can give us the courage and hope to say yes to God's dream for our own lives.
  - Mary can help us know Jesus in a way that nobody else can. She offers a unique perspective as his mother. Nobody sees the life of a child the way the child's mother does—not even the father. This is Mary's perspective of Jesus' life. Imagine what we can learn from her!
  - Just as Mary was incredibly close to Jesus on earth, she remains close to him now in heaven. Mary's greatest desire is to bring us to her son. All we must do is ask, and she will bring us, along with all our desires, needs, and struggles, directly to her son.