

THE FATIMA SAINTS AND EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

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Jacinta and Francisco Marto were canonized on May 13th, 2017 in Fatima, Portugal, by Pope Francis, during the celebration of the Centennial Apparition of Our Lady of Fatima in the Cova da Iria. Their beatification was held on May 13th of 2000 in Fatima, Portugal, by Pope Saint John Paul II, as the Third Part of the secret of Fatima was revealed.

I was physically present both times as a pilgrim in the beautiful Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, representing the World Apostolate of Fatima International. The two occasions were historical moments in the life of the Universal Church recognizing the unique place of the Fatima Saints in serving as models and calls to contemplative life, as well as to missionary life, the two major ways to holiness!

1. Francisco de Jesús Marto was born June 11, 1908 in Aljustrel, a small hamlet near Fatima, Portugal. He was the youngest boy of Manuel and Olimpia Marto. Sister Lucia in her Memoirs describes him as a boy with a placid disposition, who loved music and played the flute, and liked to be by himself to think.

Francisco preferred to pray alone “to console Jesus for the sins of the world”. He had a special vocation to adore “Hidden Jesus” in the Blessed Sacrament. As his sister Jacinta and his cousin Lucia dos Santos, he experienced three apparitions of the Angel of Peace in 1916 preparing them for the apparitions of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima.

The Angel of Peace taught them to pray in meditation reflecting on the mystery of God, the Most Holy Trinity; the value of penance and the Eucharistic Adoration, receiving a mystical Holy Communion under two species given to them by the Angel of Fatima, the Guardian Angel of Portugal.

Then, Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima appeared six times in the Cova da Iria in 1917. Lucia and Jacinta could hear her voice and see her. Lucia talked to her. But Francisco could only see her. Our Lady said that he needed to pray first many Rosaries to go to heaven.

Francisco followed our Lady’s advice in a perfect manner. He was able to develop an inner life, a contemplative character made to console the Good Lord for the sins of humanity by praying many

rosaries. Then, this inner life permitted him to adore the Most Holy Trinity in his heart and through the Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta walked to the parish church in Aljustrel to practice Eucharistic Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, complemented by the practice of self-mortifications (penance) “to save sinners from the fires of hell”.

The Angel of Peace taught the children shepherds of Fatima the prayers to initiate them as adorers of the Most Holy Trinity. The Apparitions of the Angel of Peace imposed secrecy on the children. The apparitions of the Angel were so intimate. Kneeling on the ground, the Angel bowed down until his forehead touched the earth. Led by a supernatural impulse, the three children did the same, and repeated the words which they heard the Angel say: “My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love Thee! I beg pardon of Thee for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love Thee!”

The supernatural atmosphere which enveloped the children was so intense, that they were for a long time scarcely aware of their own existence, remaining in the same posture in which the Angel had left them, and continually repeating the same prayer. The presence of God made itself felt so intimately and so intensely that the children did not even venture to speak to one another. Next day, they were still immersed in this spiritual atmosphere, which only began to disappear.

The Angel of Peace was a Seraphim, who serves before the presence of God, who excels in the adoration of the Most Holy Trinity! The angelic nature, so different from human nature, caused these effects upon the children shepherds of Fatima.

Nevertheless, when Our Lady appeared to them, they were immersed in the same spiritual atmosphere of the presence of God, but Our Blessed Mother communicated to them a great joy and energy, an expansive desire to share with the people the Trinitarian love they have experienced through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a great conscience of their reality and the need to attract people to God by vivid efforts of great joy! Our Lady is of human nature. She has a resurrected body as Christ has, as she is glorified in heaven in the presence of God the Almighty.

At the time of the first apparition of Our Lady on 13 May 1917, Lucia was 10 years old, Francisco was 8 and Jacinta was 7. During the first apparition, Our Lady asked the children if they were willing to offer sacrifices to God, offering them for the conversion of poor sinners, to pray the

Rosary daily and to return to that spot the thirteenth of each month for the next six months.

Following their supernatural experiences, their fundamental personalities remained the same. But their friendship with the Good Lord and Mother Mary increased so much as their inner life in the presence of God raised to the sky.

Brother Francisco and sister Jacinta with their cousin Lucia tended to their families' sheep in the fields of Fatima. They were typical Portuguese village children of that time and were illiterate. The siblings were victims of the great 1918 influenza epidemic that swept through Europe that year. Our Lady have promised Francisco and Jacinta to take them to heaven soon, while Lucia will stay on earth for many years to serve as Messenger and Apostle of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to communicate the Message of Fatima to the Church.

Francisco received his First Communion on 3 April 1919 and died at home on the next day, 4 April 1919. He had a great spiritual development as he lived his consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The consecration to Our Lady is the soul of the Message of Fatima, which consists of entrusting our past, present and future existence to the Lord through Mother Mary. This is the true realization of our baptismal promises, in which we renounce Satan and all his works, the corrupt world, and our egocentric weaknesses, in order to become the "new man", the "new being" raised up to the dignity of an adopted son of God, a true "Alter Christus", with all that it implies. With our consecration to God through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we become true spiritual children of Mother Mary, conceived in her own heart, beating in union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in an ineffable harmony of loving. The authentic consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in which we find various levels of perfection, constitutes a real school of sanctity, a marvelous spirituality that even today is not an exhausted subject, but on the contrary, continues bringing forth new works dedicated to Mother Mary that diffuse throughout the Church and the world "the marvels" contained in the heart of such a unique Mother.

Focusing on Saint Francisco of Fatima, we can point to several levels of consecration suggested by the story of Fatima, which are as follows:

- a.** A rejection of sin, timidity and indifference in favor of an imitation of Christ, his virtues and teachings, through a Marian spirit of joyous acceptance of God's will, with all the repercussions for the human soul.

b. Francisco had a deepening in the inner life of prayer, through the discovery of a personal God who beats within his heart, having a desire to please “the Good Lord” even in the smallest details so that “the fire of Our Lord burns our hearts”. This fire being of a spiritual nature in two respects, to “console” Our Lord for all the ingratitude and indifference with which we offend Him as much as to convey and communicate the wave of burning love which consumes everything in grace and apostolic dedication. As Saint Jacinta said: “to whomever I may communicate this burning fire within my breast”. In the first respect, we find that Francisco distinguished himself, the prophet enamored of the spiritual consolation of Our Lord, frequently forgotten and despised by humanity. In the second respect, we find that Jacinta distinguished herself as an untiring apostle in the conversion of poor sinners.

c. The highest mystical peaks can be reached as the priceless gift of the Heart of such a Holy Mother who gives sublime gifts to her favorite children revealing her most unimaginable treasures. Sister Lucia, Apostle of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, contemplates in Tuy, Spain, the ineffable mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, through the Heart of Mary, receiving illuminations concerning this mystery which she was not allowed to reveal. The total spiritual marriage comes, the entrusting of total existence in reciprocity with Christ, making the human soul “another beloved disciple of His”, with a love so special that it elevates us to the category of intimate friends with Christ as “flowers placed by Mary to adorn the throne of God”. Blessed are those who reach such a state of spiritual perfection that persevere and triumph, for they truly become other Mary’s, other Christ’s, adorning the Creation of the Heavenly Father with their loving presence and saintly scent. They are the ones, more than anyone else, that will make possible the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a definitive triumph that is imminent in our times, the first third part of the twenty-first century.

2. Jacinta de Jesús Marto was born 11 March 1910 in Aljustrel. She was affectionate with a sweet singing voice and a gift for dancing the folkloric music of Portugal. Jacinta was deeply affected by the terrible vision of hell shown to them by Our Lady of Fatima in the third apparition (First Part of the Secret of Fatima). She therefore was deeply convinced of the need to save poor sinners through penance and sacrifice, as Our Lady had told the children to do. All three children practiced penance, but Jacinta had a special call, as the Congregation for the Causes of Saints reported about Jacinta Marto in her beatification decree, “an insatiable hunger for immolation”.

Jacinta was a missionary who evangelized people by preaching to them the Good news of salvation, the echo of the Gospel, the Message of Fatima, a need to convert and do penance, to save many souls from going to hell. Jacinta became a “victim of reparation”, a pure sacrifice united with Christ’s Passion, Death and Resurrection, a pure oblation to the Heavenly Father, for the reconciliation of humanity.

Reparation which becomes life-giving penance, whose principal manifestation is the joyous acceptance of God’s will, offering Our Lord through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, our prayers, good deeds, sufferings, joys and happiness, in other words, all our being and existence, in order for us to become like Christ -a pure sacrifice to God the Father- so that we truly become His disciples, carrying our crosses every day, until we can say along with St. Paul: “I am no longer the one who lives, it is Christ who lives in me.” This is the principal mission of Mother Mary in our lives, to mold our souls in the image and likeness of her Divine Son. It is the essence of Mother Mary, her “FIAT” of the joyous acceptance of God’s will: “I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to unto me according to thy Word.” In the submission of Mother Mary to God, correctly understood as a voluntary, free and spontaneous giving up of her own freedom, which is transformed into a loving promise with the self-revealing Truth; resides the greatness of Mother Mary.

There is no greater honor than that to be the servant of the servant of the Lord, because there we give up our free will which bestows human dignity upon us, for LOVE, which will surpass all our possibilities in an infinite and ineffable ocean of affection. As a corollary to such an attitude towards life, mortifying acts are undertaken and sufferings offered out of love become possible to the extent of being willing to give up even permissible pleasures, in order to discipline ourselves spiritually and morally. Sacrifice will root our essence in Christ, which will be the true directing center of our lives. Rooted in Christ, our true essence, we will truly belong to Our Lord, as effective instruments in the pursuit of his plans of salvation for modern man. The result will not be long in waiting: “Numerous souls will convert, because many are lost for lack of someone to pray

and SACRIFICE for them” as Our Lady of Fatima said to the three children shepherds. And after the conversion of many, others will forsake their indifference for an authentic fervor, while those already blessed with fervor will attain high levels of perfection.

In Fatima, Reparation is offered to us through three paths, where Saint Jacinta excelled herself:

a. Penance, in its dual acceptance of our submission to the will of God, which implies that we carry on our daily cross, accepting the sufferings that God sends us, as well as the mortifications we inflict on ourselves by voluntary privation and sacrifice, as defined by the Angel of Peace in his second apparition to the children;

b. Reparatory Prayer, signifying a profound adoration of the Majesty of God which we offend with our lack of love and which is superbly contained in the prayer by the Angel of Fatima and addressed to the Most Holy Trinity with the purpose of “consoling Our Good Lord, who is greatly offended”.

c. Reparatory Holy Communion, through the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, transformed into a spiritual banquet through the Eucharist, Our Lady of Fatima offers the Great Promise of her Immaculate Heart, a promise of salvation made to Sister Lucia in Pontevedra, Spain, for those she most especially loves, being Pontevedra, in the unity of the Message of Fatima, the nerve center of such great opportunity for men hungering for God. Through the reparatory devotion of the Five First Saturdays of the Month, Our Lady emphasizes the major importance of the Eucharist as the unbending pillar of Christian life, promising the grace of final perseverance for those practicing it; peace of the world, the conversion of poor sinners and unity and strength of the Universal Church against inner dissention opposing the Magisterium of the Successor of Peter, a topic of the utmost importance today in the Catholic Church.

The siblings, Francisco and Jacinta Marto, were victims of the great 1918 influenza epidemic that swept through Europe that year. In October 1918, Jacinta told Lucia that Our Lady had appeared to her and promised to take them to heaven soon.

Jacinta was moved from one hospital to another in an attempt to save her life, which she insisted was futile. She developed purulent pleurisy and endured an operation in which two of her ribs were removed. She could not be fully anesthetized, and suffered terrible pain, which she offered to convert many sinners.

Thus, Jacinta became “a reparatory victim”. On 19 February 1920, she asked the hospital chaplain who heard her confession to bring her Holy Communion and administer Extreme Unction because she was going to die “the next night”. He told her that her condition was not that serious and that he would return the next day. The next day Jacinta was dead; she had died, as Our Lady told her, “alone” in order to convert more sinners. Our Lady offered her to die at a particular moment and our Blessed Mother will take Jacinta to heaven, or if the child preferred, she would stay alive more days and suffer more, to save more souls by offering her sacrifice for their conversion and salvation. Jacinta decided to suffer more and stay alive some more time to contribute to the Savior’s efforts for the salvation of souls.

Jacinta, before her death at age nine, told Lucia, then a twelve- year-old girl: “When you are to say this, don’t hide. Tell everybody that God grants us graces through the Immaculate heart of Mary, that people are to ask her for them; and that the Heart of Jesus wants the Immaculate Heart of Mary to be venerated at his side. Tell them also to pray to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for peace, since God entrusted it to her”.

Sister Lucia wrote in her Memoirs that Jacinta had personal visions outside of the Marian visitations, one of them involving the Pope who prayed alone in a room while people outside shouted ugly things and threw rocks through the window.

At another time, Jacinta saw the Pope who had gathered a huge number of people together to pray to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. When questioned about the Third part of the Secret of Fatima, Sister Lucia said that the three of them had been very sad about the sufferings of the Pope, and that Jacinta kept saying: “Poor Holy Father, I feel a lot of pity for the sinners!”

In 1937 Pope Pius XI decided that causes of canonization for minors should not be accepted as they could not fully understand heroic virtue or practice it repeatedly, both of which are essential for canonization. For the next four decades, no sainthood processes for children were pursued. In 1979, the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, Don Alberto Cosme do Amaral, asked all the world Bishops to write to the Pope, petitioning him to make an exception for Francisco, who had died at age 10, and Jacinta, who had died at age 9. More than 300 bishops sent letters to the Pope, writing

that “the children were known, admired and attracted people to the way of sanctity. Favors were received through their intercession.” The bishops also said that the canonization of Francisco and Jacinta was a pastoral necessity for the children and teenagers of the day.”

In 1979 the Congregation for the Causes of Saints convened a General Assembly. Cardinals, bishops, theologians and other experts debated whether it was possible for children to display heroic virtue. They decided that, like the very few children who have a genius for music or mathematics, “in some supernatural way, some children could be spiritual prodigies.”

Francisco and Jacinta were declared venerable by Pope John Paul II in 1989. On 13 May 2000, the siblings were declared “blessed” in a decree from the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Jacinta and Francisco are the youngest non-martyred children ever to be beatified. When Pope John Paul II arrived in Fatima for the first time, in 1982, he said that he had come “because on this exact date last year in St. Peter’s Square, in Rome, there was an attempt on the life of your Pope, which mysteriously coincided with the anniversary of the first apparition of Fatima, that of 13 May 1917. The coincidence of these dates was so great that it seemed to be a special invitation for me to come here.”

Another miracle was found to have been attributed to their intercession and the process that investigated the miracle was validated on 8 February 2013. On 23 March 2017, it was announced that Pope Francis would canonize them while visiting Portugal on 12 and 13 May. Pope Francis solemnly canonized Francisco and Jacinta on 13 May 2017 during the centennial of the first apparition of Our Lady in Fatima. They are the Catholic Church’s youngest saints who did not die as martyrs, with Jacinta the youngest.

Lucia de Jesus Rosa dos Santos was born 28 March 1907 in Aljustrel and died 13 February 2005 in the Carmelite Monastery of Coimbra in Portugal at the age of 97 years. She is in the process of beatification. Sister Lucia was the perfect synthesis of the contemplative and missionary schools of holiness serving as Apostle of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and Messenger of the Message of Fatima. Her authoritative, prolific and illuminated writings will probably will grant her from the Catholic Church the title of Doctor of the Church when these writings are published and made

known after the scrutiny of the process of canonization.

I had the honor of knowing her and visited her three times while investigating the Message of Fatima. Her correspondence with Saint John Paul II, still not known publicly, was studied by me with the permission of the Church authorities, to enhance the comprehension of the Third Part of the Secret of Fatima, according to the wishes of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger at that time, to welcome more works of investigation about the third part of the secret of Fatima.

Let us put into practice the echo of the Gospel of Jesus, the Message of Fatima, explained to us by the Immaculate Heart of Mary, “while there is still time” as Sister Lucia wrote, before it is too late! Let us transform our hearts with meditative prayer, penance, Eucharistic Adoration and the Communion of Reparation, consecrating ourselves to God, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in this time of grace and mercy that we have been granted from Heaven! Now is the time for our “metanoia” following in the steps of Saint Francisco and Saint Jacinta Marto of Fatima. ORBIS UNUS ORANS!

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PRAYER

O God of goodness and font of holiness,
who gave Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto as lights
to illuminate the world, exalt the humble who in your
light see the light, so that all may contemplate
the ways that lead to your heart.
Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, One God forever and ever. Amen.