

Our Lady of Fatima: The visionaries

The year 2017 marked the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady to the three shepherd children at Fatima, Portugal, where the Blessed Mother appeared once each month from May 13 until Oct. 13, 1917.

The message of Fatima highlights many central truths and devotions of the Catholic faith: the Trinity, the Eucharist, penance, the Rosary and sacrifices for the conversion of sinners. There is special emphasis on the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which is a refuge of maternal love for us all and a sure path that leads us to God. In the end, Mary's Immaculate Heart will triumph because Mary is full of God's grace and is all pure. She has the heart of a mother who cares for her children and wishes them to be saved by her divine Son, Jesus.

Although 2017 marked the centenary year, the Fatima apparitions began with the three apparitions of the Angel of Peace (also called the Angel of Portugal) in 1916 and extended beyond 1917 with subsequent apparitions given to Sister Lucia dos Santos in Pontevedra, Spain (1925-1927) and Tuy, Spain (1929).

Fatima is one of the most significant of all Marian apparitions. Along with Guadalupe (Dec. 12) and Lourdes (Feb. 11), it is one of three Marian apparitions honored with a feast day. In 2002, Pope St. John Paul II added the May 13 feast of Our Lady of Fatima to the general Roman calendar. May 13 was the day of the first Fatima apparition of 1917, and May 13, 1981, was the day when St. John Paul II survived an attempt on his life in St. Peter's Square. John Paul II credited his survival to the intervention of Our Lady of Fatima. The assassin's bullet that narrowly missed killing the pope now is inserted in a crown of Our Lady housed at the

Fatima shrine. Fatima is also linked with the collapse of Russian communism more than 25 years ago.

It is estimated that some 4-5 million people visit Fatima each year, and more were expected for the centennial year, which included a visit by Pope Francis, who traveled to Portugal to celebrate the 100-year anniversary.

Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us!

The Visionaries

Lucia dos Santos



Born: March 28, 1907

Died: Feb. 13, 2005

Bio: The oldest of the three visionaries of Fatima, Lucia was the youngest of seven brothers and sisters. She received harsh criticism after telling family and friends about the visitations, so much so that she was reluctant to return to the Cova da Iria on July 13, 1917. The other seers convinced her to go back. Following the deaths of her cousins, at 14 years old, she was sent to the Dorothean Sisters of Villar and in 1928 became a sister of St. Dorothy. In 1946, she entered the convent of the Carmelite Sisters of Coimbra and was known as Sister Maria Lucia of the Immaculate Heart. She was visited by Mary on several more occasions. Following her death in 2005 at the age of 97, Pope Benedict XVI in 2008 waived the normal five-year waiting period before the start of a canonization cause.

Blessed Francisco Marto



Born: June 11, 1908

Died: April 4, 1919

Bio: Francisco was 9 years old at the time of the apparitions, during which he saw the Blessed Mother but could not hear what she was saying. Described in Lucia's memoirs as a musically

gifted boy, pensive and easygoing, Francisco chose to “console Jesus for the sins of the world” in private prayer following the apparitions. He fell ill during an influenza outbreak just one year after the apparitions at Fatima, and he embraced his suffering, reciting the Rosary daily as instructed by Our Lady. He received his first holy Communion on his deathbed. In her memoirs, Sister Lucia wrote, “He flew away to heaven in the arms of our Heavenly Mother.” He was beatified by Pope St. John Paul II in Fatima on May 13, 2000.

Blessed Jacinta Marto



Born: March 11, 1910

Died: Feb. 20, 1920

Bio: Jacinta was just 7 at the time of the apparitions. After seeing the vision of hell, the young girl dedicated herself to praying for the salvation of souls. She refused water during the hot summer. Like her brother, Francisco, Jacinta fell ill with influenza, but her suffering was even greater than his. She underwent surgery and several other minor procedures in order to try to save her life. Her pain was offered for the conversion of sinners. She suffered from pneumonia and tuberculosis, which forced her hospitalization, during which she was visited by the Blessed Mother three more times. The hospital chaplain refused to give her Communion, saying he would return the following day, but she died shortly after. She was beatified on the same day as her brother, May 13, 2000, by Pope St. John Paul II.

This is an excerpt from an In Focus from OSV Newsweekly marking the 100th anniversary of the apparitions at Fatima. Read the entire article, which includes a description of the six apparitions, the consecration of Russia, the location, historical context, the secrets, an explanation of First Saturdays, and the pope and Fatima on osvnews.com.