



OUR LADY OF FATIMA, a statue made according to the description of the children who saw her, stands in a shed-like structure on the site of the apparition. The towering Basilica of Our Lady of Fatima, also erected at the location, is viewed in the center picture from the Blue Army house. The Ba-

silica's outline is distorted by the glass of the picturesque window through which photo was taken. At right is the Angel of Portugal, who appeared at Cabeco and gave Communion to Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta, to whom the Virgin appeared.

FATIMA Is interest waning in famous shrine?

"The accent should be on sanctity and not on the secret." With these words, Msgr. Harold V. Colgan, founder of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, described devotion to Our Lady of Fatima.

The tall, ascetic priest from Plainfield, New Jersey, was plainly distressed because American pilgrimages to Fatima have declined rather than increased since 1960. This was the year when many thought the third part of the Fatima message would be made public.

Msgr. Colgan traced the decline to misguided enthusiasts who looked to a sensational secret rather than to a worthy and fruitful devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. This view, expressed in an interview in October, 1964, at the Blue Army house in Fatima, was repeated in an official directive to all Blue Army centers in the U.S. (Jan. 25, 1965): "Since the Pope has decided not to make the secret generally known, fine! That's the end of it. Let us believe in Fatima and spend ourselves doing what Our Lady of Fatima asked."

IT IS WITHIN this perspective that the pilgrim now visits Fatima. By rights, he should resist the usual urge to go immediately to the Cova da Iria, place of the apparitions.

Rather the pilgrim should journey first to the parish church of Fatima, two miles east of the Cova. There he can see the font where the children were baptized. Across the street is the parish cemetery where the remains of Francisco and Jacinta were interred prior to their final transfer to the Basilica atop the Cova.

Next the pilgrim goes to Aljustrel, the hamlet where the children lived. Here he sees the Mario house where Francisco and Jacinta were born and in which Francisco died. Their brother Juan now lives there. Jacinta died in a Lisbon hospital. A short distance away is the Dos Santos home, occupied by Lucia's elder sister Maria, who was present at some of the apparitions.

The pilgrimage continues to the rocky ridge of Cabeco where in 1916 Lucia and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta watched their sheep grazing in the valley below. The children were nine, eight, and six years old, respectively, when amid the rocks of Cabeco they heard and saw an angel who invited them to pray with him. The angel next appeared to them near the well in the garden behind the Dos Santos house and identified himself as the Angel of Portugal.

LATER THAT YEAR the Angel of Portugal appeared once more at Cabeco and gave the children Holy Communion. Lucia and her cousins never forgot the angel's message at this visit: "Above all, accept and endure with submission the suffering which the Lord will send you."

A short distance from Cabeco is Valinhos, where the Lady appeared when policemen prevented the children from going to the Cova to see the Lady on August 17. Jacinta was not with Lucia and Francisco at Valinhos at the time

Here is the story of Fatima, the decline in U.S. pilgrimages, and the appeal of a priest who directs the Blue Army devotion to Our Lady. Photos and text by the Rev. Elmo Romagosa, executive editor of the CLARION Herald. Copyright, 1965, CLARION Herald, New Orleans, La.

of the apparition. So Lucia sent Jacinta's brother, Juan then aged 11, to fetch her.

The pilgrim is now prepared to wend his way to the Cova, the great square in front of the towering Basilica of Our Lady of Fatima. Here in a saucer-like hollow between low rolling hills Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta often came with their sheep.

On May 13, 1917, the children beheld a Lady in a vision. The Lady said she was from heaven and that she would return on the 13th of every month until Oct. 13. On that day, she would tell them who she was. Meanwhile they were to pray the Rosary every day in reparation for sin and for the conversion of sinners. The Lady also said they would have much suffering to bear but that God's grace would be with them.

SUFFERING WAS NOT long in coming. Their families at first were unbelieving. Church authorities subjected them to endless questioning. They were even imprisoned by police officials who sought thereby to frighten them and thus put an end to what was considered childish nonsense.

Despite mounting opposition, Lucia and her cousins kept their monthly appointment with the Lady. On June 13, the Lady foretold the early death of Francisco and Jacinta—they died less than three years later—and told the children to continue their prayers and penance.

Almost 5,000 persons came for the famous July apparition when the Lady entrusted the children with a secret message which she forbade them to reveal to anyone. The first two parts of the secret message have since been made public. The Lady gave the children a vision of the horrible torments of hell. She asked for Communions of reparation on the first Saturday of the month, and requested the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart.

During the July apparition, the Lady told the children to say this prayer after each decade of the Rosary: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, lead all souls to heaven, and help especially those who most need Your mercy."

The children were in the Ourense jail on Aug. 13. But a week later the Lady kept her appointment with them at Valinhos as they tended their sheep. She told them: "Pray, pray very much, make sacrifice for sinners. Remember

that many souls are lost because there is nobody to pray and make sacrifice for them."

Though 30,000 were on hand for the Sept. 13 apparition, the Lady's visit was brief. She told Lucia and her cousins what they would see in the final October visit. Again she begged them to continue to pray the Rosary.

OCT. 13 WAS DULL and rainy as 70,000 curious and devout jammed the Cova. The Lady kept her promise. She told the children she was the Lady of the Rosary and asked that a chapel be built on the spot. Lucia then saw the Lady vested in the habit of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, holding the scapular. Simultaneously the crowd witnessed the sun break through the clouds and literally dance in the sky. When the prodigy ended people noticed their rain-drenched clothing was completely dry.

Thus the apparitions ended. For the next quarter century these miraculous events remained generally unknown outside of Portugal.

Meanwhile the cornerstone for the great Basilica was laid in 1928. Two years later final approval was given to the Fatima apparitions by the Bishop of Leiria in whose diocese is the Fatima parish.

Fatima's message received worldwide importance in 1942 when Pope Pius XII on the 25th anniversary of the apparitions consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Fatima anniversary was personally meaningful to Pius XII because he was consecrated a Bishop on the very day of the first apparition. Ten years later the same Pope consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart.

Further interest developed when Lucia was authorized to reveal to her ecclesiastical superiors portions of the message entrusted to her at the July apparition. Accordingly in 1942 she gave to the Bishop of Leiria her manuscript containing the complete message. At this time Lucia was a Religious of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Dorothy. In 1948 she entered the Carmelite cloister at Coimbra, Portugal.

In her manuscript, Lucia wrote: "The secret consisted of three distinct parts. . . I shall reveal the first two parts, the vision of hell and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. She gave instructions that the third part of the message was not to be opened until after her death or until 1960, whichever came first."

IT IS A FACT that the third part of the message was made known to Pope John by the Bishop of Leiria. That the Pope chose not to make it public detracts not a bit from the main burden of Our Lady's message—penance and prayer.

Cardinal Tedeschini, papal representative in the Holy Year at Fatima, said: "The message of the Gospel and the Message of Fatima are penance and prayer."

This is why Msgr. Colgan looks to a resurgence of fervor. His advice to all who are disappointed by non-publication of the final part of the message is direct and simple: "Let us believe in Fatima and spend ourselves doing what Our Lady of Fatima asked!"



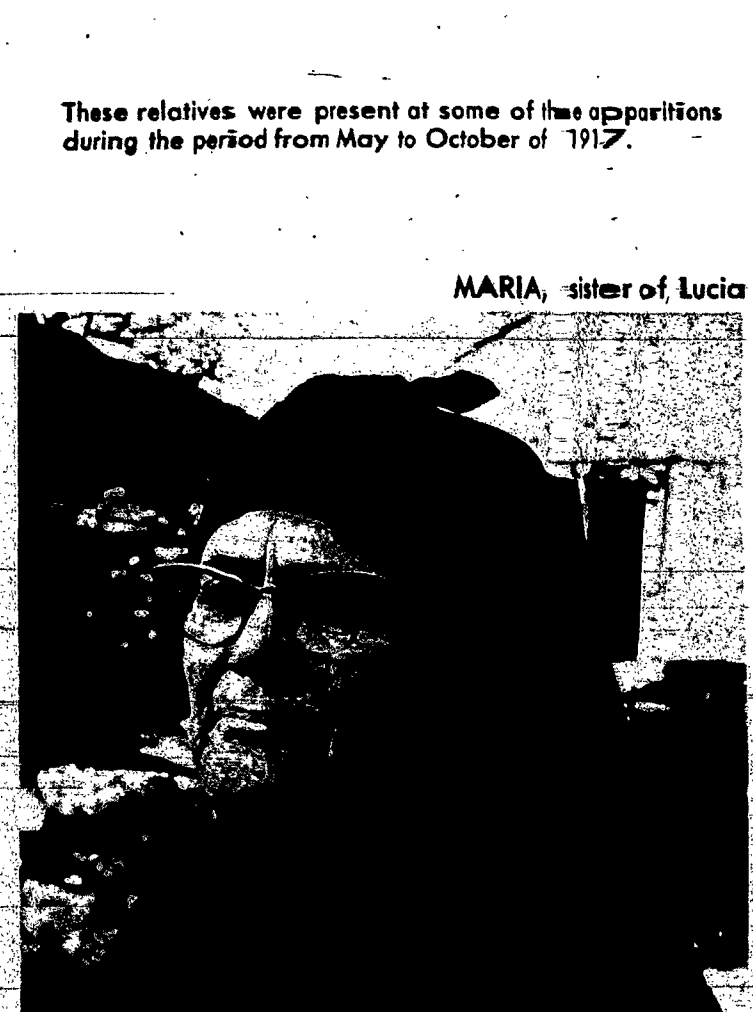
FROM AROUND THE WORLD pilgrims flock to the shrine, but the majority of the visitors are the people of Portugal, whose faith and devotion to Mary are reflected in their faces.



JUAN, brother of Francisco and Jacinta



JACINTA, FRANCISCO and LUCIA have given the new children of Fatima a rich heritage of devotion. The children at right are at the baptismal font where the children who saw the Virgin were baptized. Lucia is still living, in a Carmelite convent but Jacinta and Francisco died according to the prophecy, within 3 years of the apparitions.



MARIA, sister of Lucia

These relatives were present at some of the apparitions during the period from May to October of 1917.

New children of Fatima have rich heritage