

# Our Lady of Fatima

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

After William Thomas Walsh, famed historian, holder of the Laetare Medal, had interviewed the only living eye-witness of the Mother of God at Fatima, his comment upon returning to America was: "I came home from Portugal profoundly convinced that nothing is so important as making known what the Mother of God asked in those apparitions of 1917—the future of our civilization, our liberty, our very existence may depend upon the acceptance of her commands."

Since 1830, the Mother of God has been appearing at regular intervals to the world. Each apparition has been a mother's plea to a wayward world to take inventory, amend its ways and save itself. Each plea fell on deaf ears. As a consequence, error and terror, evil and revolution chased hot on the heels of each apparition.

**PARIS**— On July 18, 1830, the Mother of God appeared to a Sister of Charity, Catherine Laboure, in Paris—eight days later revolution exploded there, and the throne of Charles X toppled. It was a mild intimation of what would happen if men did not listen to her pleas. Few men did.

**LA SALETTE**— On September 19, 1846, the Mother of God appeared again on earth. This time at La Salette. Again, she warned; again she was spurned; and again catastrophe followed—but this time a debacle infinitely more dreadful than the "July Days" of 1830. Revolutions so rocked and racked every country and capitol of Europe that 1848 has been labeled in history the "Mad Year." In Italy, the Papal Secretary De Rossi was stabbed to death. Pope Pius IX was compelled to flee for his life. Like Brutus and Cassius after Caesar's assassination, Metternich—the prime mover of the Concert of Europe—rode madly from Vienna, his house in flames, his life in jeopardy. Blood again reddened the streets of Paris, and the dictatorship of Louis Napoleon replaced the monarchy. Even in conservative England, the aged Duke of Wellington in the twilight of life had to unsheath his sword to turn back the milling mobs marching on London. At the same time, Karl Marx composed the clear, blasting, vehement, compact creed called "The Communist Manifesto." It opened with a staggering boast: "A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of Communism." And, ten thousand words later, it closed with a roaring challenge: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of all countries unite!"

Had Mary been listened to, this creed would have died a natural death. Instead, her message was flouted. So misery followed misery. The horrible famines of 1848 and 1856 consumed over a million souls; the Crimean and the colonial wars struck at the survivors. Would men connect these catastrophes with their revolt against God? The Mother of God had hoped so. Perhaps now they would listen!

**LOURDES**— So, on February 12, 1858, she appeared to Bernadette Soubirous at the caves of

Masabielle, just outside the village of Lourdes. But men had not learned. Her apparition only goaded them the more to war on God. No glory to God in the highest; no peace on earth. And to see there would be no peace, the times spawned Otto von Bismark, the Iron Chancellor of Germany. Engineering war after war—the Danish War, the Austrian War, the Franco-Prussian War—he fashioned the German Empire, which in 1917 crowned its climactic rise with a wreath of thorns, World War I. Certainly, for a godless world, this was food for thought. Three years of World War should be proof enough of the need for God.

So on May 13, 1917, to this war-torn world, the Mother of God appeared at Fatima—perhaps for the last time. Each rejection of her plea has been followed by a catastrophe; and each subsequent cataclysm has been more appalling than the one preceding. That is why Thomas Walsh said the Fatima message is momentous—on it may hinge the future of civilization itself. History left him no other conclusion. The disasters following each refusal of our Lady's requests, from 1830 to 1917, have so crescendoed in intensity that today the only calamity worse than World War II is global annihilation. Consequently, today, it is not a question of the Democracies and the Iron Curtain; it is a question of God or the last curtain—God or annihilation!

Hence, since the Holy Father has called all men of good will to rally around the banners of their Mother, Mary, we do well to meditate upon the crucial and cosmic message of Our Lady of Fatima to the 20th century world.

**THE STORY**— The story of Fatima is as simple as is God; and it is as beautiful as is the Mother of God. On May 13, 1917, Our Lady appeared to three little shepherds, Lucy, Jacinta and Francesco, watching their sheep on the hillside of the Covia da Iria, two miles south of the village of Fatima in Portugal.

Two of the little children, Jacinta and Francesco, God destined to be victim souls. After a period of intense suffering and penances, offered for the sins of the world, they went to their eternal reward. The third child, Lucy, was destined by God to be the apostle of the message of Our Lady of Fatima. She is still living today as a Carmelite nun in a convent in Portugal. Her name in religion is Sister Mary of the Immaculate Heart.

As is the custom among the Portuguese, the three children, on that memorable May 13th began to recite the rosary right after their frugal meal. However, at the suggestion of the boy, Francesco, it was an abbreviated rosary. When they had finished their beads, they were startled by an unusually bright and vivid flash of lightning. Riveting their eyes upon the spot where the lightning seemed to have touched the ground, they saw a most beautiful Lady As they stared at her, she too looked and made a pact with them to return six times on the 13th of each month. She promised to give them a message of world-wide importance.

When the children, like Moses before the burning bush, questioned who would believe them, she promised on the last apparition (Oct. 13) her son would work a miracle so spectacular and so tremendous that few would disbelieve them. Then she gave them her first good news. World War I was in its third year, and all Europe was sunk in gloom and desolation. "This war," she said, "will soon end." But then, like a mother warning her children against the anger of an offended father, she added a threatening note: "If people do not cease to offend God, during the next pontificate another and a more terrible war will commence." The next pontificate was that of Pius XI. People did not cease to offend God. And another and more terrible war—for it was blitzkrieg, lightning war, total, global war—began as storm-troopers marched into Poland on Sept. 1, 1939.

This war has ended—but the question of the day is: Will there be a third World War?

That was one of the questions William Thomas Walsh asked Sister Mary of the Immaculate Heart.

Her answer was: "I think Russia will be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by the pope and there will be peace."

"You mean when Russia is consecrated, there will be peace?"

"Yes, that's what Our Lady promised."

"But when will this sign come?"

"When a sufficient number of people are fulfilling Our Lady's request."

Therefore, even though modern states are still falling into ruin, yet the world is not lost. There is still hope. But not as the world thinks. Nations cannot fight their way into peace; and the leaders of nations sitting at conference tables can no more talk themselves into peace than they can build battleships out of words or tanks out of thoughts. There is only one peace plan. It was enunciated not at Quebec or Cairo or Teheran or Yalta, but at Fatima by the Mother of God.

**MERE COINCIDENCE?**— The two months dedicated to Mary are May and October; these two months are flanked by April and November. While she was appearing at Fatima from May to October, this is what was going on in Russia from April to November. On April 16, 1917, Alexander Kerensky overthrew the Romanoff dynasty and gave Russia the only democratic government it had ever known. Kerensky, however, made the egregious blunder of trying to continue the war against Germany. Accordingly, General Ludendorff sent Russia a boxcar of Bolsheviks—among them Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. On Nov. 7, 1917, this handful overthrew Russia's democratic government. Kerensky fled to Australia, and Communism won the resources that could implement world-wide aggression.

Within those fateful months, the Mother of God was giving at Fatima the antidote to the world-

poison. To convince those who might doubt her message and to symbolize the might of her power—she, who to the enemies of God is terrible like an army set in battle array and to the friends of God strong like a tower of David, had her Son work the most spectacular and stupendous phenomenon of modern times.

On Oct. 13, 1917, 75,000 people were at Fatima. It was a rainy day; but when Our Lady appeared at noon, the heavy rain stopped, as if by magic, and the sun appeared. But the sun the people saw was a sun they had never seen before. It was a veritable wheel of fire, whirling furiously on its axle, shooting out in all directions shafts of light of various colors—brilliant colors of red and yellow, blue and gold—which were reflected on the clouds, the trees, the rocks, the people. Three times the sun spun stupendously, and three times it hung motionless. Then the ball of beaming fire seemed to tear itself from the heavens and to plummet, meteor-like toward the vast assemblage. Spontaneously, the entire throng felt as if the end of the world had come. They cried out in terror, dropped in the mud on their knees, confessed their sins aloud. And then, as suddenly as it began, the strange phenomenon ended.

It had lasted about ten minutes. Seventy-five thousand people saw it. Every newspaper in Portugal was represented; their reports matched in every detail. Twelve years later, the Church, after her FBI-like investigation, pronounced the apparitions authentic.

In 1946, the power of the sun was unharnessed for destruction, the atom bomb descended on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and all the world shook and trembled.

In 1917 the gentle hand of the Mother of God, at Fatima, detached the sun from the breast of the heavens (as a sign of peace), twirled it about as a giant plaything to show us beforehand her power over the split atom, and that the salvation of the world hinges on the fulfillment of her requests.

## RCs Share In Episcopal Ceremonies

In a ceremony replete with Anglican tradition, Father Anthony C. Thurston, this evening will be instituted and inducted as the eleventh rector of historic Christ Church. The rites are slated to begin at 7:30 p.m., Oct. 12.

The centuries-old rite will be performed by Bishop Robert R. Spears Jr., Episcopal Bishop of Rochester, assisted by Episcopal clergymen, and to add a contemporary note, Lutheran and Roman Catholic clergymen as well.

Major parts will be taken by Rev. Walter B. Freed, pastor of the Church of the Reformation and by Msgr. James McAniff and Father Charles Bennett of Old St. Mary's Church.

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