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The beatification process of Fatima visionaries Jacinta and Francisco Marto, shown with their cousin Lucia dos Santos (right), is proceeding with a miracle now credited to them.

Miracle linked to Fatima visionaries

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II has approved the last document needed for the beatification of two Portuguese children who saw the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima in 1917.

The June 28 decree marked the Vatican's acceptance of a miracle attributed to the intercession of Francisco and Jacinta Marto, two shepherd children who were with their cousin, Lucia dos Santos — a Carmelite nun still living — when Mary appeared at Fatima, Portugal.

In the beatification cause of the Fatima children, the Vatican said there was no natural explanation for the healing of a Portuguese woman who had been paral-

alyzed for 22 years.

The Vatican did not announce a date for the children's beatification. Supporters of the cause had hoped the pope would celebrate the beatification Mass at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima on Oct. 13, the anniversary of Mary's last appearance to the children.

However, a Vatican official said the pope would not leave Rome during the Oct. 1-23 Synod of Bishops for Europe.

Francisco and Jacinta died of influenza; Francisco was 10 years old and Jacinta was 9.

The two children will become the youngest people beatified since the modern beatification and canonization process began in 1592.

Archbishop Jose Saraiva Martins, pre-

fect of the Congregation for Sainthood Causes, described the children as two of "the visionaries of Fatima" through whom "the Mother of Christ recommended to the whole church persevering prayer, the conversion of hearts and penance as irreplaceable means of holiness and instruments of perfection even for civil society and nations."

Sister Lucia dos Santos, a cloistered Carmelite in Portugal, was informed by Divine Word Father Luis Kondor that the decree would be signed.

Father Kondor, vice postulator of the children's cause, told the Portuguese Catholic Radio Renascenca that the nun was pleased her cousins would be beatified and that she wrote a letter of thanks to Pope John Paul.



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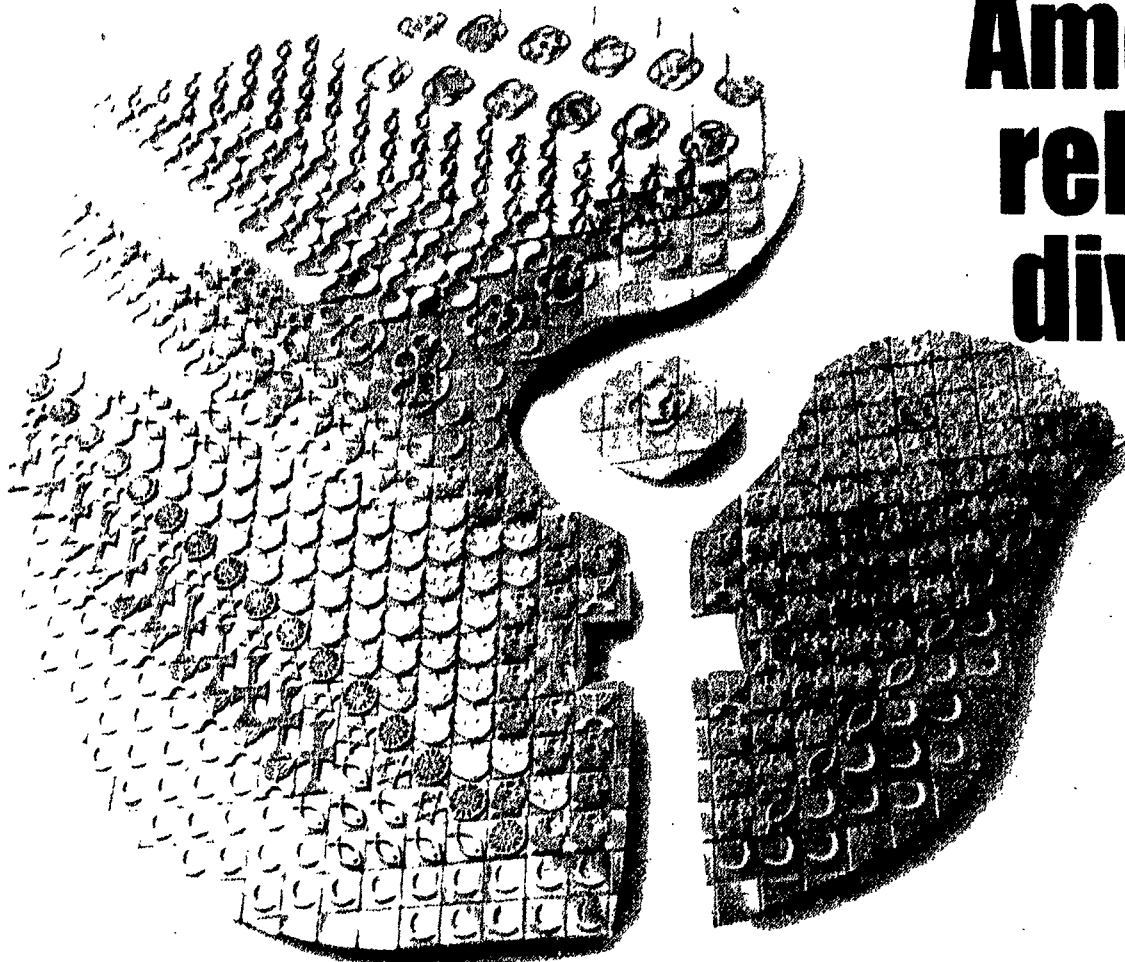


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American religious diversity



'If you are a good person, you are good for me. It doesn't matter what religion you are.'

— Denial Hadziosmanovic

This sculpture at Rochester Institute of Technology's Interfaith Center bears symbols of many religions.

Interreligious encounters don't happen only when the world's religious leaders meet to talk.

They also can take place over a photograph on a co-worker's desk.

Jeannette Gordon, a secretary for the Catholic Family Center's Refugee & Immigration Department, was happy to answer questions from co-workers of other faiths about a photograph of her son Joey's first Communion this year.

She also enjoys asking questions about the faiths of others.

"I like to hear about religions and what people believe in," said Gordon, a parishioner at St. Helen's Church in Gates. "Generally we all have the Holy Spirit with us."

One of her co-workers is Denial Hadziosmanovic, a Muslim from Bosnia. When his father died last fall, Hadziosmanovic's co-workers did not hesitate to support him by attending the Muslim funeral. "I asked him many questions later," Gordon recalled.

"If you are a good person, you are good for me," Hadziosmanovic observed. "It doesn't matter what religion you are."

Such encounters — arising in workplaces as well as schools and neighborhoods — are bringing Americans of different faiths into ever-closer contact with each other.

Although still predominantly Christian, the United States today is home to many religious groups. Scholars estimate that 6 million Jews, 4-6 million Muslims, 2 million Buddhists, 1-2 million Hindus and 200,000 Sikhs practice their faith in this country. Members of numerous smaller groups also reside in the United States.

Interreligious encounters today are "an almost inescapable reality," Bishop Michael Fitzgerald, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, commented last January at a seminar in the Philippines.

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STORY BY KATHY SCHWAR