



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: Miracles and Faith
Part VIII: Our Lady of Fatima



*Our Lady of Fatima Statue
Public Domain*

Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Helen is a lay-Dominican, which is also known as the Order of Preachers, and she, along with her husband Dan, are engaged in youth catechesis and music ministry at Saint Philip Benizi Catholic Mission in Cedaredge, Colorado. Sharon is our token cradle Catholic, and, as everyone by now knows, I am simply here to ask questions. I am blessed to have our panelists here who carry the burden of providing the answers, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

Discussion:

Last time, as we discussed the accounts of the apparitions of Our Lady at Lourdes and the experiences of Saint Bernadette, I mentioned that I recognized a similarity to our discussion of the Man Born Blind. If you remember from the story of the Man Born Blind, that we discussed the response of the person who experienced the miracle, the response of the disciples, the response of the family, the response of the community, and the response of those in authority.

Perhaps the most common thread of such an event is the examination of “what just happened,” or for those who did not witness, “what should I believe?” We are often placed in the situation where we must ask the question, upon what evidence do I base my belief?

I also mentioned that as we reflect upon these accounts we might be tempted to judge the skeptics, but we must also remember that scripture tells us to “test the spirits.” As we are told in 1 John 4:1-3:

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1 Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God, 3 and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus does not belong to God. This is the spirit of the antichrist that, as you heard, is to come, but in fact is already in the world.

As I mentioned, it is the responsibility, then, for both the Church and the faithful to assess and evaluate reported events which are interpreted as miracles. We should also remember that there is a difference between questioning and obstinance. In the former case, we need to discern as we seek answers, but in the latter, there is no discernment; the conclusion is determined regardless of what we learn.

While there is significant discussion and examination as to whether a given event was truly a miracle of God, we must remember our work is not finished with the determination. If we believe the event was truly an intervention by God, we must also remember to ask the question, what is God seeking to communicate to us?

Today, we are going to skip ahead in time to 1917 and examine the story of Fatima. Some might note that my questions today are similar to those I asked in previous programs. You might also note that as we unfold the story, there are similarities to the roles which we encountered during our discussion concerning the Man Born Blind.

The story of Fatima begins with four young girls of which one was Lucia de Jesús dos Santos who was eight at the time. The accounting of this moment does not have an exact date, but it was the year 1915 on a day when the girls were tending their sheep. They had just finished their lunch and began to pray the Rosary, which was their custom. As they were saying the prayers, they noticed what appeared to be a figure of a man positioned above the trees. According to Sister Lucia, “it looked like a statue made of snow, rendered almost transparent by the rays of the sun.” The children did not know what to make of it. (Kondor, 76)

(Question 1: You may have noticed, by now, that I seem to have established a pattern in my questioning. You are probably thinking I am going to ask you to place yourself in the position of these children, but actually, I have a different question from which to start. We should note these are children at the tender age of 8 who held the responsibility of tending the sheep. At this age, they said the prayers of the Rosary after lunch as a custom. **How does this differ from the customary activities of the pre-teens of our day?)**

Sister Lucia tells us that she resolved to say nothing of the incident, but her friends immediately told their families when they got home.

(Question 2: So now, let's place ourselves in the shoes of these children. How might we respond to such an observation? Would we tell anyone?)

Lucia would experience this twice more with her friends during 1916, but as her cousins Jacinta and Francisco Marto were given the responsibility as shepherds, Lucia began to join them rather than her friends. The three children took their respective flocks to an area different than Lucia had been before with her friends. It was an area on her uncle's property known as Casa Velha. Once more, the figure appeared, but this time, the figure revealed himself, saying, “Do not be afraid! I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me.”

Sister Lucia relates, “Kneeling on the ground, he bowed down until his forehead touched the ground, and made us repeat these words three times: 'My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love You! I ask pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love You.'” Then, rising, the angel said: 'Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications.'” (Kondor, 78)

Later in the summer, the children would once more experience the angel. Sister Lucia writes that as the angel appeared to them again, he instructed them, “Pray, pray very much! The most holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy on you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High.”

Lucia asked, “How are we to make sacrifices?” to which the angel responded, “Make of everything you can a sacrifice, and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners. You will thus draw down peace upon your country. I am its Angel Guardian, the Angel of Portugal. Above all, accept and bear with submission, the suffering which the Lord will send you.” (Kondor, 78)

As Autumn drew near, the children were to experience the angel once more. Sister Lucia relates, “He was holding a chalice in his left hand, with the Host suspended above it, from which some drops of blood fell into the chalice. Leaving the chalice suspended in the air, the Angel knelt down beside us and made us repeat three times: 'Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly, and I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference with which He Himself is offended. And, through the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of You the conversion of poor sinners.'” Then, rising, he took the chalice and the Host in his hands. He gave the Sacred Host to me, and shared the Blood from the chalice between Jacinta and Francisco, saying as he did so: “Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men! Make reparation for their crimes and console your God.” (Kondor, 79)

(Question 3: Once more, we must try to look through the eyes of children. What might we think of the instructions of the angel?)

The following Spring, on 13 May 1917, the children took their sheep to an area called the Cova da Iria. After lunch and after they had said their Rosary, the three children began to play. Suddenly, they saw a flash of light. They thought it was like lightening, but there were no clouds in the sky which would be expected of a coming storm. They gathered the sheep and departed down the hill. As they approached a tall oak tree, they experienced another flash of light which caused them to turn towards a small holm oak where they saw a beautiful lady standing over the foliage of the tree.

“It was a Lady dressed all in white,” Lucia records, “more brilliant than the sun, shedding rays of light, clear and stronger than a crystal glass filled with the most sparkling water, pierced by the burning rays of the sun.” “*Fear not!*” the Lady said, “*I will not harm you.*”

“Where are You from?” Lucia asked, to which the woman responded. “*I am from Heaven.*”

“What do You want of me?” Lucia asked.

The woman replied, “*I come to ask you to come here for six consecutive months, on the thirteenth day, at this same hour. I will tell you later who I am and what I want. And I shall return here again a seventh time.*” (Marchi, 14)

After answering some questions from Lucia, the woman asked, “*Do you want to offer yourselves to God to endure all the sufferings that He may choose to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended and as a supplication for the conversion of sinners?*”

Lucia replied on behalf of the children, “Yes, we want to.”

The woman replied, “*Then you are going to suffer a great deal, but the grace of God will be your comfort.*” The woman then instructed them, “*Say the Rosary every day to bring peace to the world and the end of the war.*” (Marchi, 14)

The children were excited by the apparition, but Lucia did not want to make any mention of what they saw. The children agreed they would not say anything, but Jacinta could not contain herself when she saw her mother. Excitedly, she shared the story.

(Question 4: You can probably guess my next question. We are now in the shoes of the parents. How might we respond if we are told by our 7 year old girl that she saw Our Lady while she was out tending the sheep?)

Jacinta's mother shared the story with some neighbors and like a wild fire the news spread. Some laughed and joked about what they heard, but there were also those who were not amused. As the gossip reached the ears of Lucia's family, Lucia was called on the carpet by her mother for lying. Endless threats were heaped upon Lucia to get here to admit the story was a fabrication.

The response of the people was mixed. Some came to Lucia, curious and with many questions. Others had significant and sometimes severe advice as to how they would gain a confession

from the children that the accounts were lies. There was also significant criticism levied against the parents for what was perceived as their inability to properly raise their children.

(Question 5: The parents faced a two fold issue. One was from those who sought to speak to the children and follow them. The other was from those who believed the children lied and should be severely punished. Why do we think some of the people were willing to believe while others concluded it was all a fabrication? Why might some respond with threats against the children?)

The 13th of June 1917, the day Our Lady asked the children to return to the holm oak, fell on the feast day of Saint Anthony. The tradition of the parish was to hold almost a festival like celebration, however, there were many who were curious about what might happen with the children at the Cova da Iria. A small crowd went to the Cova da Iria to observe the children.

As Our Lady appeared to Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco, those who assembled heard Lucia say, “You told me to come here today. What do You want me to do?”

Our Lady responded, *“I want you to come here on the thirteenth of the next month. Say the Rosary, inserting between the mysteries the following ejaculation — ‘O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need.’ I want you to learn to read and write and later I will tell you what else I want.”*

After inquiring about others, Lucia said to Our Lady, “I would like to ask You also to take us to Heaven!”

Our Lady responded, “Yes, I will take Jacinta and Francisco soon. You, however, are to stay here a longer time. Jesus wants to use you to make Me known and loved. He wants to establish the Devotion to My Immaculate Heart in the world. I promise salvation to those who embrace it and their souls will be loved by God as flowers placed by Myself to adorn His throne.”

Realizing what was said, Lucia asked with great sadness, “Am I going to stay here alone?”

“No, My daughter.” Our Lady, then asked, *“Does this cause you to suffer a great deal? I will never leave you, My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.”* (Marchi, 22-23)

While no one but the children saw Our Lady or heard what she said, those who observed related they had seen what appeared to be a cloud over the holm oak. They also related that they heard what they described as a gentle voice, but they could not understand what it was saying. After Our Lady left, some noticed that the top of the holm oak appeared to bend to the east as if it had been walked upon.

(Question 6: So, let's consider what was observed by those who came to observe the children. We know they did not see or hear what the children saw, but do we believe they felt they received confirmation that the children experienced the presence of Our Lady?)

After the second apparition, the children were brought to the parish Pastor. After questioning Lucia, the Pastor remarked, "It is not possible that Our Lady would come down from Heaven just to tell us that the Rosary should be said every day. This practice is followed almost by the whole parish. As a rule, when things of this sort happen, **Our Lord directs the souls that He speaks with to give a full account to their pastors or confessors. This child holds back as much as she can. This could be a trick of the devil. Time will tell us what attitude we must take.**" (Marchi, 25)

After the questioning by the Pastor, Lucia was very concerned about the comment that this could be a trick of the devil. She became so worried that she considered confessing all the events as a fabrication, but, she was reminded by Jacinta that such a confession would be a lie and that lying was a sin. Lucia also considered not returning to the Cova da Iria, for she feared that the Pastor could be right. (Marchi, 25-26)

(Question 7: The Pastor was unable to reach a conclusion and expressed a concern that the matter might be a trick of Satan. **Why do we believe the Pastor proceeded with such caution? Was this prudent?)**

On 13 July 1917, the children went to the Cova da Iria as Our Lady asked of them. This time, the crowd which followed them was larger. The crowd encircled and pressed upon the children until Jacinta's father and a couple of other men asked the crowd to give the children some room.

As Our Lady appeared to the children, Lucia asked, "What do You want of me?"

Our Lady responded, "***I want you to return here on the thirteenth of next month. Continue to say the Rosary every day in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war; for She alone can save it.***"

Still with the fear of what the Pastor had said in the back of her mind, Lucia asked, "**Will You please tell us who You are and perform a miracle so that everyone will believe that You really appear to us?**"

Our Lady replied, "***Continue to come here every month. In October, I will say who I am and what I desire and I will perform a miracle all shall see, so that they believe.***" (Marchi, 27-28)

(Question 8: The children had suffered a great deal of ridicule and threats over the past couple of months for sticking to their accounts of the apparitions by Our Lady. The people did not see, so why should they believe? **Why do we think Our Lady replied to Lucia that she would perform a miracle, but it would not be done for several more months? Why would she allow the children to continue to suffer?)**

Lucia also inquired as to what might happen with some who were ill, and in one particular case, of a sick person who wished to be taken soon to Heaven. Our Lady responded, "***He should not try to hurry things. I know well when I shall come for him.***"

(Question 9: The desire of the ill person to be taken soon to heaven could have been partially driven by a desire to end the suffering caused by their illness. The account does not give us

enough information to know for sure. Why do we think Our Lady responded that the person should not try to hurry things? Why might this be the case, especially for someone who might be suffering?)

Quotes:

Sacrifice yourselves for sinners; and say often, especially when you make some sacrifice: "O my Jesus, it is for love of Thee, for the conversion of sinners and in reparation for sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary I offer this sacrifice to Thee."
– *Our Lady to Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco at the Third Apparition at Fatima*

“Since we all need to pray, God asks of us, as a kind of daily installment, a prayer which is within our reach: the Rosary, which can be recited either in common or in private, either in church in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament or at home, either with the rest of the family or alone, either when traveling or while walking quietly in the fields. A mother of a family can say the Rosary while she rocks her baby’s cradle or does the housework. Our day has 24 hours in it. It is not asking a great deal to set aside a quarter of an hour for the spiritual life, for our intimate and familiar converse with God.”

– *Sister Lucia of Fatima*

When lovers are together, they spend hours and hours repeating the same thing: ‘I love you!’ What is missing in the people who think the rosary monotonous is Love; and everything that is not done for love is worthless.”

– *Sister Lucia of Fatima*

Final Thoughts:

During our discussion today, we addressed several questions similar to those I asked in relation to the Man Born Blind, The Miraculous Medal, and Our Lady of Lourdes. Perhaps we can see a pattern as to how people react to those who profess the experience of a miracle. Even as we take the time to discuss and listen to those who discuss, we become part of the ripple which is caused by such an event, for we must discern for ourselves what we are to believe.

We also discussed the concern of the Pastor that what was happening might be a trick of the devil. This is a very real concern for the Church as well as each of us individually because of the damage a fabrication or hoax can cause. We can also see the challenges we might face when we hear of accounts, but do not have physical evidence to examine.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. As we continue our discussion next week, we shall review some of the visions the children saw and messages Our Lady imparted to them. We hope you will be able to join us.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: Miracles and Faith – Part IX: Fatima Visions and Messages

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