



20-20 Vision

By William A. Borst, Ph.D.

Newspaper headlines have been filled with the gruesome accounts of wars, murders, natural disasters that have killed hundreds of thousands of people. In Florida the courts battled the parents of a brain-damaged woman over her presumed *right to die*. In Rome the Holy Father served as a *suffering servant* for the emulation of a billion Catholics in his long and painful battle against the ravages of disease and age. It is as if the Book of Revelation has become front-page news.

SISTER LUCIA OF FATIMA

On February 13, 2005, Sister Lucia De Jesus Dos Santos died at her Carmelite convent at Coimbra in central Portugal, in contrasting quietude and serenity, just weeks before her 98th birthday. The New York Times recognized the death of this saintly woman with an obituary that totaled a minimal of 590 words. Feminist author Susan Sontag, who died last December, warranted 3,200 words of summary farewell. Meditation, prayer, and isolation ruled Sister Lucia's long life, while Sontag spent her time in the secular pursuit of her egotistical self-definition.

In the Weekly Standard, Joseph Bottum discovered a profound significance in Sister Lucia's life, far beyond any historian or New York Times writer. Bottum regarded Sister Lucia as quite possibly the most important person in the 20th century's historic struggle against world Communism. This made her more important than Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Lech Walesa, and even Pope John Paul II. Bottum based his claim on Sister Lucia's lifelong contention that the visions of Fatima concerned *above all the struggle of atheistic Communism against the Church and against Christians*.

INTO THE FRYING PAN

At nine years of age, Lucia Abobora was the oldest of three uneducated shepherd children to whom in 1917, the same year as the Russian Revolution, the Virgin Mary appeared. The events at Fatima unfolded amidst a backdrop of religious persecution that had plagued Portugal since 1910. On six occasions from May 13th through October 13th the Virgin Mary appeared to Lucia and her two younger cousins, Jacinta and Francisco Marto while they tended their sheep near the town of Fatima.

According to Lucia the visions had actually begun the previous spring when they were visited three times by an angel, who told them he was the guardian of Portugal and urged them to use

prayer to prepare themselves for what would follow.

The children regularly took their sheep to a small hollow known as a *Cova da Iria*, or the *Cove of Irene*. Around noon on May 13th a *beautiful lady* appeared near an oak tree. She was clothed in garments of purest white, which fell gracefully in soft folds to her feet. She appeared to be about 16 years old and was adorned with a star near the hem of her long flowing robe.

During the Blessed Virgin's appearances, she called for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart. She urged the children to say the Rosary daily to bring peace to the world and an end to war. She cautioned them that they were to bear their daily hardships as a sacrifice to ensure that sinners reached Heaven. Lucia made the younger children promise they would not tell anyone what they had seen. Jacinta could not keep the secret. She told her parents about *the beautiful lady* in the Cova.

Against the wishes of their mothers, the children continued to wait for the Virgin on the 13th of each succeeding month. They had readily offered to suffer in reparation for the sins of others. The apparition became as a hot poker that tore the town in two. The children did suffer greatly, especially the younger ones for their role in the visions. They were almost overcome by fear and doubt. Their parish priest was as skeptical as were most of their families in the town. He thought it might be a *trick of the devil*. Their only emotional support came from Ti Marto, the father of Lucia's cousins.

Portugal's Communist influence assailed everything that Catholicism stood for. Rumors of the apparitions were spreading like wildfire. On August 13th the police arrested the children before Our Lady's awaited appearance. They carted away the children to district headquarters in Vila Nova de Ourem where they were locked in a cell with common criminals. The local Communist administrator threatened them with *Either you tell me the truth or I will have you fried alive in a red-hot frying pan*. The frightened children refused to cooperate. After six days, the crowd had grown to 18,000 believers. On the 19th the administrator released them because he feared an outbreak of violence.

A DANCING SUN

On October 12th, the day before the October vision, Europe was swept by a storm of great intensity. In his book *Our Lady of Fatima* William T. Walsh described the scene, *as if the devil, somewhere in the ice and snow that could never slake the burning of his pain, had resolved to destroy with one blow all*

that remained of Europe which had so long been the battleground against the Thing he hated so much.

The next day, behind the Blessed Mother, the sun danced across the sky to a silent beat that sent shock waves of mystery through the mixed throng of 70,000 believers and curiosity seekers, who had crowded the Cova. The sun rotated on a giant axis of fire that blinded the on-lookers. The people shuddered before a 15-minute panorama of radiant color that burst forth in every direction. While the crowd fell to its knees, the heavens appeared to be in revolt against its own nature.

While the people covered in fear of the end of time, Lucia begged the Lady to take her and her cousins *all to Heaven*. As the Blessed Mother had foretold, her cousins both died before their eleventh birthdays in 1919-20, during the *Plague of the Spanish Lady*, the influenza pandemic that would kill millions worldwide.

SHOCK WAVES

The Virgin revealed three *secrets* to the children, though only Lucia could hear and understand her. They addressed the great historical events of the 20th century with special emphasis on Russia and what would become an event that shook the entire world for the rest of the century: the rise of world Communism.

The first and second secrets provided an especially terrifying vision of Hell, devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, World War II, and finally the predictions surrounding the rise of Communism in Russia. The Virgin warned of the immense harm that the abandonment of the Christian faith would do to humanity. The embrace of godless Communism in Europe would invariably lead to the persecution and death of millions of Christians. The Virgin made it perfectly clear that good would triumph and Russia would eventually be converted.

The third secret sent shock waves throughout the Church. In 1944 during one of her few public statements about Fatima, Sister Lucia refused to reveal the final secret because she *had the intuition that before 1960, it would not be understood*. After Pope John XXIII read the secret, he decided that 1960 was still not the right time. He had the message sealed in an envelope which was shown to each one of his successors.

Pope John's reluctance sparked wild rumors that the infamous *third secret* contained an apocalyptic vision of great natural and man-made disasters, including a nuclear termination of the Cold War. Such untamed rumors led a former Trappist monk to hijack an *Aer Lingus* plane in 1981. He threatened to blow it up unless the Pope revealed the secret.

Pope John Paul II followed suit from his papal installation in October of 1978 until May 13, 2000. On the 83rd anniversary of the first Fatima apparition, the Vatican revealed before an audience of 600,000 that the third secret foretold the assassination attempt on the Pope's life in 1981. The secret was cloaked in a surrealistic vision of stark intensity with the Pope as the *bishop in white*. The pontiff had always interpreted the vision as presaging the near-fatal attempt on his life.

The Pope has publicly stated that he believes the Madonna of Fatima saved his life on May 13, 1981. When Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca shot him in St. Peter's Square, it was on the 64th anniversary of Our Lady's first appearance to the shepherd

children. The Pope later visited Fatima and personally placed one of the 9mm bullets, which Agca fired into him, in Our Lady's crown. The Pope had always held that Our Lady was present in the square that afternoon. He firmly believed that *One hand fired the bullet and another guided it*.

SYMBOLIC PROPHECY

Pope John Paul II also saw Fatima in terms of the Book of Revelation, Chapter 12:1, 3-4. These prophetic verses refer to *a woman clothed in the sun with the moon under her feet doing battle with the dragon, the devil who sweeps one third of the stars from the heavens with his tail*. Catholic Bible commentaries consistently hold that the stars swept from the heavens in the fourth verse represent the Catholic clergy who have fallen from the grace of God into apostasy.

While the Vatican officially calls Fatima a *symbolic prophecy*, many of Our Lady's statements have come to fruition. She accurately predicted the events that took place in Russia and the outbreak of the Second World War, which caused more devastation than the first war. In the war's aftermath, the rise of Communism caused many independent countries to lose their freedom, especially in Eastern Europe. Millions suffered and many died as martyrs for the faith. In his book *The Catholic Martyrs of the Twentieth Centuries* (2000) Robert Royal detailed the heroic death of St. Maximilian Kolbe at the hands of the Nazis and the many martyrs under the Communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe.

Several conspiracy theories emanated before the Pope's revelations of the *third secret*. While the Vatican believes that the secret has already been fulfilled, others believed that there is still more to come. In 1963 a German Magazine *Neues Europa* predicted that the real secret contained apocalyptic descriptions of great punishments coming in the second half of the 20th century. It would involve another big war and fire and smoke that would fall from the sky and the waters of the oceans would turn to steam. Millions would lose their lives and the living would come to envy the dead. It is obvious that nothing has happened since then to even approximate this wild interpretation.

MYSTIC VISIONS

With no formal education until 1921, Lucia did not take her vows as a Religious of St. Dorothy until 1928. She made her perpetual vows six years later. Sister Lucia transferred to the Coimbra Carmel in 1948. The Church waited until 1930 before it cautiously approved Fatima as a valid apparition that bore no contradiction to the Faith. While no Catholic is morally bound to believe any private revelation, the scrutiny and tests put to Fatima make a strong case that everything that happened there is consistent with Catholic teachings.

For the rest of her life, Sister Lucia kept a low profile at Coimbra, though would be visitors constantly besieged her. She saw her role as nothing more than a conduit. It was up to the Church to interpret within the light of faith what she had seen and what she had been told. Her mission was *to indicate to everyone the imminent danger we are in of losing our souls for all eternity if we remain obstinate in sin*. Cardinal Ratzinger echoed these sentiments in his commentary on Fatima, which he described as *a journey through a*

time of violence, destruction, and persecution. Cardinal Ratzinger contends that language of the vision is symbolic and like biblical prophecy it does not predict the future but warns what the future may hold if people do not convert and pray.

Sister Lucia's full disclosure of the heavenly appearances at Fatima have sparked the devotion of millions of Catholics, including director/actor Mel Gibson. It even has drawn the interest of the world intelligence agencies, including the CIA and the old KGB. According to Fatima-based reporter, Richard Salbato, the Sisters were very much interested in Gibson's 2004 film, *The Passion of the Christ*. They wanted to see the film as a devotional aid in preparation for Good Friday and Easter. However they did not have a DVD player for a private showing of the movie.

When Gibson heard of their plight, he not only arranged for a private showing but also secretly flew to Coimbra, Portugal with his wife Robyn Moore, and Father Luis Condor to bring his film to Sister Lucia and her Sisters in the cloister.

THE MARIAN AGE

Devotions, such as Fatima, have played an integral part in the history of the Church. Through the centuries Our Blessed Mother has appeared frequently with messages of warning, hope and consolation for mankind. Among her most spectacular victories have been against the Albigensians in the 13th century and the destruction of the *invincible* Turkish fleet at the battle of Lepanto in the late 16th century, which had thwarted the Muslim invasion of Europe. The frequency of her visits intensified after the Age of Enlightenment's deep moral threat to Western Civilization in the late 18th century.

Our Lady's Fatima appearance was in answer to the fervent prayers of the grief-stricken Pope Benedict XV, who lamented his failure to thwart the *suicide of Europe* in 1914. He wrote a Pastoral Letter in May 1917 that begged for the Blessed Mother's *most tender and benign solicitude* and a new era of peace for our *agitated world*.

In his book, *A Woman Clothed with the Sun*, editor John J. Delaney says that Mary's apparitions, including Fatima, seem to be a *portent of how faith will eventually conquer the 'rationalistic' philosophies which have held sway over men's minds for so long*. This quote underscores Fatima's central message that prayer and faith are forces that can influence history and that prayer is more powerful than bullets and faith more powerful than armies. With perfect 20-20 hindsight, Fatima provided a deeper clarity of faith that intensified the need for devotional prayer in a world rent asunder by the sordid and violent layers of human nature. *Fatima is undoubtedly the most prophetic of modern apparitions*, wrote Cardinal Tarcisco Bertone in an official Vatican statement in 2000. We can only hope and pray that author Delaney and Cardinal Bertone are right and the Age of Enlightenment is about to succumb to the Age of Mary.

William A. Borst is a weekly talk show host on WGNU radio.

He is the author of Liberalism: Fatal Consequences and The Scorpion and the Frog: A Natural Conspiracy, which are available from him at PO Box 16271, St. Louis, MO 63105, for \$17.50 ppd. (Consequences) and (Scorpion) for \$19.95 soft and \$35 hard ppd.

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The Mindszenty Report is published monthly by the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, 7800 Bonhomme Ave., P. O. Box 11321, St. Louis, MO 63105 314-727-6279, Fax 314-727-5897.

Subscription rate: \$20.00/year, \$36.00/two years. Outside the U.S.A. \$28.00

The Mindszenty Report is not copyrighted, and subscribers are invited to have it printed in their local newspapers.

Contributions to the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation are tax deductible as allowed by law.

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News and Notes

CHICAGO/OAKBROOK, IL—The 26th annual CMF Conference featured four of the finest speakers and topics ever achieved! Their talks are available to you on cassette or CD @ \$8 or a set at \$32 from ACTS, 11139 S. Towne Square, St. Louis, MO 63123. Or call 1-800-642-2287. Chairman Kevin Haney and a score of Committee priests, introducers, ushers, volunteers, including the masterful M.C. John O. Shields, and plentiful exhibitors, kept the full Program going smoothly from opening Mass to concluding Rosary.

Patrick Reilly spoke on how to restore Catholic campuses to their spiritual and moral purposes: follow Pope John Paul's brilliant Ex Corde Ecclesiae, the apostolic constitution on Catholic higher education issued in 1990. **Richard Thompson** presented the Catholic answer to the American Civil Liberties Union which regularly strives and often succeeds in removing God from our daily lives. Beware! It is a systematic persecution of Catholics/Christians. **Reverend Don Woznicki** reported on his organization ACT ONE that has taken on Hollywood's "culture of death" by training Catholic/Christian professional producers, writers, and development executives to foster in viewers an encounter with God. As they are committed to excellence, artistry and personal holiness, there is hope in Hollywood. **Reverend Dr. Tadeusz Pacholczyk's** Power Point presentation on "Embryos, Stem Cells, Cloning" is valuable for all ages with its clarity, thoroughness and fascination. Embryo stem cells NO! Adult stem cells YES!

The Cardinal Mindszenty Motherhood Award was given to Mrs. Maureen Dolehide Bland, married to Bob Bland and parents of three children, yet their home had room for more. So they adopted four children from Cambodia who now have also filled their hearts!

The 2005 Freedom Award was presented to Richard Guzior, an outstanding man of service and dedication who has followed Cardinal Mindszenty's principles in his own life. We honored him for his ongoing legacy of service filled with faith, hope, and charity to all. At the time of the Conference, Richard was in Rome for the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Accepting the Award for Richard was his lovely daughter Charisa Guzior.

May God bless everyone who participated and who was present!



*Fr. Charles Fanelli
and Speaker
Fr. Don Woznicki*



*Speaker
Richard Thompson
and CMF Board Chrm.
John O. Shields*



*Usher Joe Amorella, Pres. Eleanor Schlafly, Chrm. Kevin Haney
and Chrm. Em. Dorie Gruss*



Fr. Charles Fanelli, Pres. Eleanor Schlafly and Fr. Dudley Day, O.S.A.



Motherhood Awardee Maureen Bland and Family



*Pres. Eleanor Schlafly presents
the Freedom Award to Charisa
who accepted on behalf of her
father Richard Guzior.*



Registrar Brigid Tinning