

# Chapter 1

## The Message and the Miracle

God does not waste miracles. Throughout salvation history—from Joshua, to Moses, to the twelve Apostles, to the saints of the Catholic Church down through the centuries—God has granted miracles for one overriding purpose: to serve as a divine credential for a witness who invokes the miracle in His name. When God chooses a witness, and then associates an authentic miracle with the testimony of that witness, we can know for certain that the witness is worthy of belief. God does not grant miracles to vouch for unreliable witnesses; God does not *choose* unreliable witnesses.

No, God does not waste miracles. Much less does God waste a public miracle witnessed by 70,000 people, believers and unbelievers alike, which occurred at precisely the moment predicted three months earlier by three witnesses whose testimony had been doubted: Lucia dos Santos (known to the world as Lucy) and her cousins, Francisco and Jacinta Marto.<sup>3</sup>

It is October 13, 1917. In a humble field known as the Cova da Iria in Fatima some 70,000 people have assembled to await the happening of a miracle. This in itself is astounding. For never before in salvation history has a visionary predicted months in advance that a public miracle would occur at a precise time and place. Never before has a vast crowd assembled to witness a predicted public miracle. Yet that is exactly what was happening on this day.

Why this day? Because Lucia dos Santos and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta had been receiving apparitions from “the Lady” on the thirteenth of each month since the previous May. The Lady had been appearing to them above a holm-oak tree in the Cova, and with each apparition the crowds had grown. But doubts about the veracity of the seers had also grown, as well as mockery and persecution of the seers and their families at a time when Portugal was under the control of an atheistic and Masonic political regime.

And then, on July 13, 1917, the Lady had shown them something which would terrify them and change them forever, making them into saints who would spend their lives (in the case of Francisco and Jacinta, very brief lives) praying and making sacrifices for sinners. As Lucy

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<sup>3</sup> This chapter is largely taken from Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* - Vol. I, *Science and the Facts*, (English edition, Immaculate Heart Publications, Buffalo, New York, U.S.A., 1989) Chapter 10, pp. 323-380; and from Vol. II, *The Secret and the Church*, (English edition, Immaculate Heart Publications, Buffalo, New York, U.S.A., 1990) Introduction, pp. 5-10. See also Frère François de Marie des Anges, *Fatima: Intimate Joy World Event*; Frère François is largely dependent on Frère Michel.

recounts in testimony the Catholic Church has deemed worthy of belief, the Lady showed them hell:

She opened Her hands once more, as She had done during the two previous months. The rays of light seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw as it were a sea of fire. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls [of the damned] in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. (It must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me.) The demons could be distinguished [from the souls of the damned] by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals.<sup>4</sup> This vision lasted but an instant. How can we ever be grateful enough to our kind heavenly Mother, Who had already prepared us by promising, in the first apparition, to take us to Heaven. Otherwise, I think we would have died of fear and terror.<sup>5</sup>

Having shown the children the fate of the damned, which is the first part of the Great Secret of Fatima, the Lady then confided to the children the second part. Everyone, including those members of the Vatican apparatus who are the focus of this presentation, agrees that the second part of the Secret, as recorded in Sister Lucy's diaries, is as follows:

You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to My Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end; but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the reign of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that He is about to punish the world for its sins, by means of war, famine, and persecutions against the Church and of the Holy Father.

To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the Consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If My requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her

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<sup>4</sup> English translation of text in Sister Lucy, "Fourth Memoir", *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words*, (Postulation Centre, Fatima, Portugal, 1976) p. 162. See also Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* - Vol. I: *Science and the Facts*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>5</sup> English translation of text in Sister Lucy, "Third Memoir", *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words*, p. 104. See also *The Whole Truth About Fatima* - Vol. I, p. 182.

errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated.

In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and she will be converted, and some period of peace will be granted to the world. In Portugal the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc. Do not tell this to anybody. Francisco, yes, you may tell him.<sup>6</sup>

The basic elements of this astonishing Message are these:

- Many souls go to hell because of the sins they commit.
- To save them, God wishes to establish throughout the world the uniquely Catholic devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.
- This is to be accomplished by consecrating the nation of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (in conjunction with the Communion of Reparation on the first Saturdays of each month), whereupon Russia will be converted to the Catholic Faith.
- If this is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace.
- If it is *not* done, Russia will spread its errors throughout the world. There will be wars, famine, persecutions of the Church, and martyrdom of the good. The Holy Father will have much to suffer. And if Our Lady's requests are still not obeyed, then various nations will be annihilated.
- Nevertheless, "In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

To these things, the Lady added an urgent request that Catholics include in their daily recitation of the Rosary at the end of each decade, the following prayer: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need." In obedience to the Lady's request, and as a testament to the authenticity of Her apparitions at Fatima, the Church included this prayer in the Rosary, and Catholics recite it to this day.

The Church has also adopted the First Saturday devotion of the Communion of Reparation, which the Lady explained thusly:

I promise to help at the hour of death, with all the graces needed for salvation, whoever on the First Saturday of five consecutive months shall: confess and receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Holy Rosary, and keep Me company for

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<sup>6</sup> English translation of text in Sister Lucy, "Fourth Memoir", *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words*, (Postulation Centre, Fatima, Portugal, 1976) p. 162. See also Sister Lucy, *Memorias e Cartas da Irma Lucia*, (Porto, Portugal, 1973, edited by Father Antonio Maria Martins) pp. 340-341; in Sister Lucy's own handwriting there is no ellipsis after the "etc.". See also Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima - Vol. I: Science and the Facts*, pp. 182-183.

fifteen minutes while meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to Me.

We pause here to note in passing (for further discussion later) the curious phrase at the end of the first two parts of the Secret: "In Portugal the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc." The incomplete phrase, ending with "etc.", appears in Sister Lucy's fourth memoir of the apparitions. It clearly introduces a heavenly prediction, containing further words of Our Lady not recorded, about the state of adherence to Catholic dogma in the Church at large, distinguished from Portugal in particular, where the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved.

Standing alone, the observation about adherence to Catholic dogma in Portugal appears gratuitous and quite senseless, for the phrase does not at all follow logically from the first two parts of the Secret. Every recognized Fatima scholar concluded from this that the phrase represents the beginning of a third part of the Secret—what came to be known simply as the Third Secret of Fatima. As we shall see, Lucy was so terrified by its contents that even after she was ordered to write it down in October of 1943, she was unable to do so until the subsequent apparition on January 2, 1944 in which Our Lady assured her that she ought to write it down. And yet, to this day, the Vatican has never revealed the words of the Virgin which clearly follow "In Portugal the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc." The "etc." remains a secret. This ongoing concealment is a key element of the injustice that is the subject of this book.

Having received from Heaven itself a message with obviously profound importance for the Church and all humanity, Lucy knew that she and her cousins needed a divine credential if they were to be believed. During the apparition on July 13, Sister Lucy asked the Lady "to tell us who You are, and to work a miracle, so that everybody will believe that You are appearing to us." And the Lady replied: "Continue to come here every month. In October I will tell you who I am and what I want, and I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe."<sup>7</sup> The Lady repeated this promise in further apparitions to Lucy and the other seers on August 19 and again, at the Cova, on September 13.

And so the people assemble in a great crowd at the Cova on October 13, 1917. And at precisely the hour predicted in July—12 noon solar time, and 1:30 p.m. by the clock in Portugal—it begins. Lucy suddenly instructs the crowd of witnesses to shut their umbrellas in the midst of a drenching rain which has turned the Cova into a field of mud. Some people were standing in mud up to their ankles. She enters a state of spiritual ecstasy as the Lady, appearing again, addresses her. The Lady begins by telling Lucy who She is and what She wants, just as She had promised: "I want a chapel to be built here in My honor. I am the Lady of the Rosary." The Lady is the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, who will

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<sup>7</sup> Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* - Vol. I, pp. 180-181.

henceforth also be known under the title Our Lady of Fatima, one of many bestowed upon the Blessed Virgin by the Church. The chapel, of course, would be built, and then rebuilt after being blown up on March 6, 1922 by a bomb planted by the friends of the Tinsmith, a nickname for the Masonic Mayor of Ourem.<sup>8</sup>

And then the Miracle occurs. We recount here the testimony of a reporter who cannot possibly be accused of partiality in this matter and for a good reason! We refer to Avelino de Almeida, the chief editor of *O Seculo*, the large “liberal” anticlerical and Masonic daily newspaper of Lisbon. He writes:

From the road, where the carriages were crowded together and where hundreds of persons had stayed for want of sufficient courage to advance across the muddy ground, we saw the huge crowd turn towards the sun which appeared at its zenith, clear of the clouds. It resembled a disc of silver, and it was possible to stare at it without the least discomfort. It did not burn the eyes. It did not blind. We would say that it produced an eclipse. Then a tremendous cry rang out, and the crowd nearest us were heard to shout: “Miracle! Miracle! ... Marvel! ... Marvel!” Before the dazzled eyes of the people, whose attitude transported us to biblical times, and who, dumbfounded, heads uncovered, contemplated the blue of the sky, the sun trembled, it made strange and abrupt movements, outside of all cosmic laws—“the sun danced”, according to the typical expression of the peasants ...<sup>9</sup>

Attacked violently by all the anticlerical press, Avelino de Almeida renews his testimony, fifteen days later, in his review, *Ilustração Portuguesa*. This time he illustrates his account with a dozen photographs of the huge ecstatic crowd, and repeated as a refrain throughout his article: “I saw ... I saw ... I saw.” And he concludes: “Miracle, as the people shouted? Natural phenomenon, as the experts say? For the moment, that does not concern me, I am only saying what I saw... The rest is a matter for Science and the Church.”<sup>10</sup>

Saturday, October 13 begins for the pilgrims as a walk of penance because it had rained the whole preceding night. Now, this “almost sudden change of weather, with the dusty roads transformed into muddy quagmires by a pelting rain, causing to replace abruptly, for a day, the sweetness of autumn with the biting rigors of winter, did not succeed in moving them, to make them give up or despair.”<sup>11</sup>

In comparing the numerous accounts of witnesses, we can distinguish the diverse aspects and the result of the astounding

<sup>8</sup> Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* - Vol. II: *The Secret and the Church*, pp. 357-358.

<sup>9</sup> *O Seculo* of October 15, 1917.

<sup>10</sup> Article of October 29, 1917. See also Frère François de Marie des Anges, *Fatima: Intimate Joy World Event*, Book One, *The Astonishing Truth*, (English edition, Immaculate Heart Publications, Buffalo, New York, U.S.A., 1993) p. 164.

<sup>11</sup> *Ilustração Portuguesa*, October 29, 1917.

phenomena seen by all. For each one of the phenomena, it would be possible to line up many witnesses, whose testimony would constitute in itself an impressive book.

Here is the first marvelous fact described by Dr. Almeida Garrett:

It must have been 1:30 p.m. when there arose at the exact spot where the children were, a column of smoke, thin, fine and bluish, which extended up to perhaps two meters above their heads, and evaporated at that height. This phenomenon, perfectly visible to the naked eye, lasted for a few seconds. Not having noted how long it had lasted, I cannot say whether it was more or less than a minute. The smoke dissipated abruptly, and after some time, it came back to occur a second time, then a third time ...<sup>12</sup>

Whereas “the low and heavy sky had a very dark color, laden with moisture, [which] released an abundant and long lasting rain,” during the time of the apparition, the rain stopped totally. Abruptly the sky cleared: “The sun triumphantly pierced the thick bed of clouds hiding it until then, and shone intensely.” (Dr. Almeida Garrett) This abrupt change of weather took all the eyewitnesses by surprise: “It was a day of heavy and continuous rain. But a few minutes before the miracle, it stopped raining.” (Alfredo da Silva Santos)

And this testimony from a physician, a man of science, concerning the inexplicable silvering of the sun, allowing it to be viewed directly without harm to the eyes:

“Suddenly I heard the uproar of thousands of voices, and I saw the whole multitude spread out in that vast space at my feet ... turn their backs to that spot where, until then, all their expectations focused, and look at the sun on the other side ... I turned around, too, toward the point commanding their gazes, and I could see the sun, like a very clear disc, with its sharp edge, which gleamed without hurting the sight ... It could not be confused with the sun seen through a fog (there was no fog at that moment), for it was neither veiled, nor dim. At Fatima, it kept its light and heat, and stood out clearly in the sky, with a sharp edge, like a large gaming table. The most astonishing thing was to be able to stare at the solar disc for a long time, brilliant with light and heat, without hurting the eyes, or damaging the retina.” (Dr. Almeida Garrett)<sup>13</sup>

In the same vein this testimony by the editor-in-chief of *O Seculo*:

“And then we witnessed a unique spectacle, an incredible spectacle, unbelievable if you did not witness it. From above the road ... We see the immense crowd turn towards the sun, which appeared at its zenith, clear of the clouds. It looked like a plate of dull silver, and it was possible to stare at it without the least discomfort. It did not burn the eyes. It did not blind. One might say

<sup>12</sup> Frère François de Marie des Anges, *Fatima: The Astonishing Truth*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.

that an eclipse had occurred.” (Article of October 15, 1917)

And likewise: “The people could look at the sun as we look at the moon.” (Maria do Carmo)<sup>14</sup>

One could multiply endlessly the testimonies about the ensuing solar phenomena, witnessed even by the secular editor-in-chief of an anticlerical newspaper. Consider these:

“It shook and trembled; it seemed like a wheel of fire.” (Maria da Capelinha)<sup>15</sup>

“The sun turned like a fire wheel, taking on all the colors of the rainbow.” (Maria do Carmo)<sup>16</sup>

“It appeared like a globe of snow turning on itself.” (Father Lourenço)<sup>17</sup>

“The pearl-like disc had a giddy motion. This was not the twinkling of a star in all its brilliance. It turned on itself with impetuous speed.” (Dr. Almeida Garrett)<sup>18</sup>

“At a certain moment, the sun stopped and then began again to dance, to spin; it stopped again, and began again to dance.” (Ti Marto)<sup>19</sup>

“The sun took on all the colors of the rainbow. Everything assumed those same colors: our faces, our clothes, the earth itself.” (Maria do Carmo)<sup>20</sup>

“A light, whose colors changed from one moment to the next, was reflected on the people and on things.” (Dr. Pereira Gens)<sup>21</sup>

What happens next constitutes the most terrifying aspect of the Miracle, and one with profound implications for our era, in which man has perfected the ability to destroy the whole world with fire from the sky: the sun appears to detach itself from the sky and plunge toward the earth.

“We suddenly heard a clamor, like a cry of anguish of that entire crowd. The sun, in fact, keeping its rapid movement of rotation, seemed to free itself from the firmament and blood-red, to plunge towards the earth, threatening to crush us with its fiery mass. Those were some terrifying seconds.” (Dr. Almeida Garrett)<sup>22</sup>

“I saw the sun turn and it seemed to descend. It was like a

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>15</sup> Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* - Vol. I, p. 337.

<sup>16</sup> Frère François de Marie des Anges, *Fatima: The Astonishing Truth*, p. 178.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

bicycle wheel.” (John Carreira)<sup>23</sup>

“The sun began to dance and, at a certain moment, it appeared to detach itself from the firmament and to rush forward on us, like a fire wheel.” (Alfredo da Silva Santos)<sup>24</sup>

“I saw it perfectly descending as if it came to crash on the earth. It seemed to detach itself from the sky and rush toward us. It maintained itself at a short distance above our heads; but that sort of attack was of very short duration... It seemed very near the people and it continued to turn in the opposite direction.” (Maria do Carmo)<sup>25</sup>

“Suddenly, the sun appeared with its circumference well-defined. It came down as if to the height of the clouds and began to whirl giddily upon itself like a captive ball of fire. With some interruptions, this lasted about eight minutes.” (Father Pereira da Silva)<sup>26</sup>

“It suddenly seemed to come down in a zig-zag, menacing the earth.” (Father Lourenço)<sup>27</sup>

“Seeing the sun falling on us ...” (Father John Gomes)<sup>28</sup>

“Finally, the sun stopped and everybody breathed a sigh of relief ...” (Maria da Capelinha)<sup>29</sup>

“From those thousands of mouths I heard shouts of joy and love to the Most Holy Virgin. And then I believed. I had the certainty of not having been the victim of a suggestion. I had seen the sun as I would never see it again.” (Mario Godinho, an engineer)<sup>30</sup>

Another astonishing fact: all those people, who are for the most part soaked to the bone, verify with joy and amazement that they are dry. The fact is attested to in the canonical process for Jacinta and Francisco, who were ultimately beatified on May 13, 2000.

“The moment one would least expect it, our clothes were totally dry.” (Maria do Carmo)<sup>31</sup>

“My suit dried in an instant.” (John Carreira)<sup>32</sup>

The academician Marques da Cruz testified as follows:

This enormous multitude was drenched, for it had rained

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 178-179.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>26</sup> Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* - Vol. I, p. 337.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 340.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Frère François de Marie des Anges, *Fatima: The Astonishing Truth*, p. 179.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

unceasingly since dawn. But—though this may appear incredible—after the great miracle everyone felt comfortable, and found his garments quite dry, a subject of general wonder ... The truth of this fact has been guaranteed with the greatest sincerity by dozens and dozens of persons of absolute trustworthiness, whom I have known intimately from childhood, and who are still alive (1937), as well as by persons from various districts of the country who were present.<sup>33</sup>

In one aspect, this is a most astonishing effect of the solar miracle and one of its best proofs: The amount of energy needed to accomplish this process of instantaneous drying, would have incinerated everyone present had it taken place in the natural order of things. As this aspect of the miracle contradicts the laws of nature radically, no demon could ever have achieved it.

And finally, there are also moral miracles of the conversions of many people. In his book, *Meet the Witnesses*, John Haffert writes:

The captain of the regiment of soldiers on the mountain that day—with orders to prevent the gathering of the crowd—was converted instantly. Apparently so were hundreds of other unbelievers, as their testimony will show.<sup>34</sup>

“There was an unbeliever there who had spent the morning mocking the ‘simpletons’ who had gone off to Fatima just to see an ordinary girl. He now seemed paralyzed, his eyes fixed on the sun. He began to tremble from head to foot, and lifting up his arms, fell on his knees in the mud, crying out to God.” (Father Lourenço)<sup>35</sup>

“I live eighteen miles from Fatima. And in May of 1917 we were told about the extraordinary apparitions, but the news came to us mixed up with the fantasy of the people. Naturally I did not believe. I sincerely supposed it was only [the] imagination of someone. ... At my mother’s request, I went once more to the Cova da Iria in August at the time of the apparitions. Once more I came back discouraged and disappointed. But that time, something extraordinary happened. My mother, who had had a large tumor in one of her eyes for many years, was cured. The doctors who had attended her said they could not explain such a cure. Still I did not believe in the apparitions. Finally, and again at my mother’s request, I went to the Cova da Iria once more on the thirteenth of October. ... In spite of what had happened to my mother, I was

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<sup>33</sup> Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* - Vol. I, p. 340. See also Father John de Marchi, I.M.C., *Fatima from the Beginning*, (Missoes Consolata, Fatima, Portugal, 1981, third edition, first published in 1950) p. 141; and Joseph A. Pelletier, A.A., *The Sun Danced at Fatima*, (Doubleday, New York, 1983) pp. 129-130.

<sup>34</sup> John M. Haffert, *Meet the Witnesses*, (AMI International Press, Fatima, Portugal, 1961) p. 62. This book was published with an Imprimatur from the Bishop of Leiria, Portugal and provides us with credible direct testimonies of numerous witnesses to the Miracle of the Sun.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

disappointed and did not believe in the apparitions. So I sat inside my car. Then all at once I noticed that everybody looked at the sky. Natural curiosity attracted my attention, and I got out of the car and looked at the sky, too. ... From those hundreds of mouths I heard words of belief and of love to the Blessed Virgin. And then I believed.” (Mario Godinho, an engineer)<sup>36</sup>

Numerous other cures and conversions are documented in, among other places, the following books: *Documentação Crítica de Fátima* and *Fatima from the Beginning*.<sup>37</sup>

To those who would say the miracle was a product of “mass hysteria” at the scene, God Himself arranged a ready rebuttal: the phenomenon could be admired from beyond Fatima. Perfectly credible witnesses, who were very far from the Cova da Iria, related having seen the unprecedented spectacle of the dance of the sun, exactly like the 70,000 pilgrims gathered around the holm-oak where the Virgin had appeared.<sup>38</sup>

In the small village of Alburitel, situated about ten miles from Fatima, the whole town was able to enjoy the vision of the solar prodigy. The testimony frequently quoted is that of Father Inacio Lourenço, because it is the most detailed. But what he relates having seen, all the villagers, questioned by the investigators, confirmed seeing it exactly the same way.

The witnesses of the event were indeed innumerable, their testimonies agree and we are flooded with the documents they have left us.<sup>39</sup>

In the first place, numerous accounts appeared at once in the Portuguese press. It is noteworthy that the first to provide testimony were the anticlerical reporters. The three articles of Avelino de Almeida—the one of October 13, immediately before the event; the other of October 15, edited at Vila Nova de Ourem on the evening of the 13th; and a third article of October 29—merit a special mention. In spite of the jeering tone and Voltarian irony which inspire in part the first article, in spite of the expected anticlerical tones which still appear in the article of the 15th, these texts from a talented reporter, one who besides, is honest and conscientious, are historical documents of prime importance.<sup>40</sup> But he was not the only one to relate the facts, for other reporters were present at the Cova da Iria.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 86-89.

<sup>37</sup> *Documentação Crítica de Fátima*, Vol. II, (Santuário de Fátima, 1999) 17 cases documented on pp. 277-372; and Father John de Marchi, I.M.C., *Fatima from the Beginning*.

<sup>38</sup> Father John de Marchi, I.M.C., *Fatima from the Beginning*, p. 136. See also *Documentação Crítica de Fátima*, Vol. I, (Santuário de Fátima, 1992) p. 408. See also Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* - Vol. I, pp. 330-331.

<sup>39</sup> Among the many reference works, see: Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* - Vol. I: *Science and the Facts*; John M. Haffert, *Meet the Witnesses*; Father John de Marchi, I.M.C., *Fatima from the Beginning*, pp. 135-142.

<sup>40</sup> We find the photographic reproduction of those three articles in *Fatima 50* of October 13, 1967, pp. 6-10 and 14-15.

Next there were the official investigations. In November 1917, at the request of Bishop de Lima Vidal, who was then administering the diocese of Lisbon, the parish priest of Fatima led his investigation and questioned several witnesses of the parish. Unfortunately, he transcribed only four depositions!

The investigations of the historians fortunately compensated for the negligence of the official investigators. The report of Father Formigao, who obtained from Dr. José Maria de Almeida Garrett, professor at the Faculty of Sciences of Coimbra, a very thorough account, is the most scientific report in our possession.<sup>41</sup> In addition, we have the reports of Father da Fonseca (whose work was done in order to verify the points disputed by Father Dhanis,<sup>42</sup> who refused to examine the evidence), Father de Marchi, Canon Barthas, Father Dias Coelho and Father Richard.

In 1977, to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the last apparition, it was still possible to assemble in Fatima more than thirty persons who had been present at the solar prodigy and could recount their witness. Thanks to those numerous testimonies, it is possible to reconstruct a precise running commentary, allowing us to relive, hour-by-hour and minute-by-minute, this decisive day, assuredly one of the most important in the history of the world. Indeed, the evidence of the solar miracle on October 13, 1917 is so overwhelming that in 1952 even Hollywood vouched for the authenticity of the miracle by releasing a classic film (starring Gilbert Roland) entitled “The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima”, which is marketed on video to this day.

Why was this day so important? Because it was the day on which a heavenly Message from the Mother of God was authenticated beyond any reasonable doubt; a message which, more than 90 years later, stands at the heart of the perilous situation of the Church and the world at this very moment in human history, offering us a way out.

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<sup>41</sup> *Novos Documentos de Fatima*, Loyola editions, Sao Paulo, 1984, pp. 60-63.

<sup>42</sup> The modernist Jesuit priest, Father Dhanis, as early as the 1940s, would attempt to “debunk” the vision of hell and the prophetic elements of the Message, including the consecration and ultimate conversion of Russia. After World War II, Fatima scholars urged Dhanis to travel to Fatima to study the primary documentation and to interview Sister Lucy in order to correct his flawed thesis. Dhanis refused to go to Portugal and adhered to his erroneous opinions. (See Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* - Vol. I, pp. 499-511.) Father Dhanis will eventually be cited by key members of the Vatican apparatus in their attempt to revise the Message of Fatima according to a “commentary” published on June 26, 2000.