

THE SHEPHERDS OF FATIMA

Mother Adela, SCTJM

Foundress

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Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Last October 13th, during the Anniversary Mass of the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima, the Bishop of Sousa- Ferreira announced that on the following April 9th, 2000, two of the three visionaries would be beatified in St. Peter's Square in Rome - Francisco and Jacinta, who died in 1919 and 1920 respectively. What a great joy for the Church! What a great joy for those who love the Immaculate Heart of Mary!

Francisco and Jacinta will become the first beatified children who are not martyrs. With this beatification, the Church recognizes that they lived a life of heroic virtue and holiness and that they are now enjoying the glory of Heaven. Thus, after the 9th of April we will be able to call them Blessed Francisco and Jacinta.



In 1916, these shepherds, together with their cousin, Lucia who still lives as a Carmelite religious, were witnesses to the apparition of the Angel of Peace, who, in one of the three messages given to them, said, "Pray, pray much! The Hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy upon you." These designs of mercy were manifested one year later, when on the 13th of May, 1917, they received the first apparition of Our Lady. The apparitions lasted until the 13th of October, on which they culminated in the great Miracle of the Sun. These apparitions of Our Lady of the Rosary in Fatima are considered to be one of the greatest spiritual events of our century, whose message has transcendental implications not only for the Church, but also for humanity.

Francisco, then nine years old, and Jacinta, then seven years old, responded with great generosity to the invitation Our Lady gave them during the first apparition: "Do you wish to offer yourselves to God, to endure all the suffering that He may be pleased to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and to ask for the conversion of sinners?" The "yes" that they gave in that moment became the vocation of their lives. The Virgin continued, "You will have much to suffer, but the grace of God will comfort you." They were called by the Lord, through the words of our Lady, to be victim souls, offering their lives and embracing all their sufferings for the conversion of sinners and in reparation to the Two Hearts.

Francisco became a contemplative child and distinguished himself by his love of Jesus in the Eucharist, to whom he desired to offer reparation. He understood the message of Our Lady as a call to console the Lord "who is much offended," by becoming His companion for many hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Francisco once told Lucia, "Jesus is the hidden and humble God; He is the King of Heaven who is hidden in this Sacrament and who is much forgotten by men. It is only just that I no longer live but to love Him and to make up for these offenses until the day I die." It is in this manner that Francisco lived after the apparitions until his death: loving, adoring, consoling and making reparation to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. His only agony during his painful sickness was not having sufficient strength to be able to pray more and to tell Jesus more often how much he loved him.

Jacinta, after the apparition on the 13th of July in which she witnessed hell and the many souls that go there because so few pray and make sacrifices to save them, became an apostle of souls in danger of going to hell. She was consumed by an insatiable desire to save souls, and for this reason, she did not lose even one opportunity to offer sacrifices for poor sinners. She lived in a spirit of penance and died in the midst of great physical sufferings. Even greater was the pain of her heart, for she died alone in the hospital of Lisboa, separated from her family and from Lucia, her cousin and greatest confidant.

To meditate on the lives of Francisco and Jacinta is to enter more deeply into the great impact that the visit of our Mother Mary and Her urgent message had upon them. With total obedience and generosity, they embraced

the words of the Virgin of Fatima. They became for us models of love, reparation and self-offering to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. I pray to Our Lady that through Her Immaculate Heart, we may receive the graces we need to also participate, with the same dispositions, with our lives, prayers, sufferings and sacrifices, in the mission to bring about the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the reign of the Two Hearts.

In the Love of the Pierced Hearts,

Mother Adela, Foundress SCTJM

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