

What did the Apparition Say to the Children?



Among great things at FESTA, some promote an *apparition* appearing to three young children in Fátima, Portugal in 1917. **But what did the apparition convey?**

1. **A Catholic press article [1] on FESTA summarizes two-fold:** "The Blessed Mother told the children to pray the rosary daily for peace and to offer up their suffering for the conversion of souls." That requires unpacking.
2. **John de Marchi's book on the EWTN website [2], reviewed by the sole surviving child Lúcia** and geared toward children elaborates, such as this passage on the suffering:

Once, returning from the Cova da Iria, they passed a pond belonging to a family named Carreira. It was a dirty pool of water where some women washed their clothes and others brought their animals to drink. Jacinta was weak from ordeal: her throat and her lips were parched.

"My head aches so, Lucia; I'm terribly thirsty, I think I'll take some of this."

"Not from here, Jacinta, please. **My mother forbids it, anyhow. She says it might make me ill.** We can go and get good drinking water."

"I don't want to drink good water." The little girl was determined. "If I must drink something I will take this water and offer it to our Lady."

The refusal of fresh fruit, with its nourishment and thirst-killing juices, was another means of self-denial. Lucia tells of Jacinta accepting grapes and figs from her mother, concealing, rather than consuming them, then giving them to children they met along the road. And finally, there was the penitential cord that each child wore.

This practice began when Lucia found a length of abandoned rope. Experimenting with it, as a child will, and wrapping it around one arm, she noted the pain its tension brought. She thought about this for a little while, then spoke to the others.

"This is something we could use as a sacrifice," she said.

"We can knot cords like this and wear them around our waists."

It may not seem to many a happy thought, but it is a documented record of Fatima that a tightened cord around each of their waists was a daily chastisement. Even at night they did not spare themselves until our Lady, during the September apparition, told them they must not wear the cords to bed.

3. **The account *FATIMA in Lucia's own Words* [3]** is more explicit: "This cord had three knots, and was somewhat stained with blood. I kept it hidden until I finally left my mother's home. Then, not knowing what to do with it, I burned it, and Francisco's as well," and "As a matter of fact, this water was filthy. People washed their clothes in it, and the animals came there to drink and waded right into it. That was why my mother warned her children not to drink this water."

4. **An influential priest summarized the interaction this way in a Springfield newspaper (Aug 29, 2024) [4]:** “God sent his Blessed Mother to these three poor shepherd children with a message for the world - a message of mercy, love, salvation and peace... a more unified, loving humanity.”
5. **Incidentally, the pictured children indeed died of illness**, said to be influenza [2], not proven to be linked to the water, but in a death the apparition predicted, not that unlike the mother (complicated). One child was spared (the apparition would “fetch her” later) to spread to “establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart” [2], i.e. the apparition’s sinless heart.

This raises questions:

6. **In what cases is it appropriate or legal to encourage a child to drink filthy water or utilize a bloody rope?** E.g. daytime, hidden from parents, but with apparitional consent?
7. **How do you recognize a good vs. bad apparition?**
 - a. One child was tormented by dreams of the “devil laughing at having deceived me” [3] However, the children used this argument: “it couldn’t be the devil! People say that the devil is ugly and lives under the earth in hell, but that Lady was so beautiful, Lucia, and didn’t we see her go up into heaven?” [2] This is the advice presented uncritically.
 - b. The Springfield diocese has had trouble distinguishing good and bad bishops [5], let alone apparitions: former bishops of both Springfield Massachusetts (Christopher J Weldon) and Springfield Illinois (Daniel L Ryan) were implicated in sexual abuse of children (google them).
 - c. The Mary in Matthew 2:13-15 of the Bible fled to Egypt to protect her child – hail Mary!
8. **Should bad apparitions (or their accomplices) be granted mercy, while children pay for their sins?** Many in the church including Catholic ones consider the cross *foundational*, i.e. the idea that God appeared as man to die on a cross as sacrifice for man’s sin so that his “children” (which includes children) need not pay.

The story gets deeper [6], and even the Catholic church has uncertainties about this or Yugoslavia, but my advice in the midst of a sea of doubt is this: **what do you know for certain?** E.g. the mother forbid, a Fátima cookbook, pg. 4, recommends using the freshest ingredients and cleaning away any dirt and insects (nice book, buy a copy), and the statues of children were wrapped in plastic to protect them from the rain.

[1] “Thousands flock to Festa for outdoor Mass, procession.” Catholic Communications News (Sep 5, 2022) <https://iobserve.org/2022/09/05/thousands-flock-to-festa-for-outdoor-mass-procession/>

[2] Fr. John de Marchi, I.M.C. *The True Story of Fatima*.
<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/true-story-of-fatima-5915>

[3] *FATIMA in Lucia's own Words*.
https://www.piercedhearts.org/hearts_jesus_mary/apparitions/fatima/MemoriasI_en.pdf

[4] “Festa 2024: Portuguese celebration returns to Ludlow.” MASSLive / The Republican. Aug 29, 2024.
<https://www.masslive.com/westernmass/2024/08/festa-2024-portuguese-celebration-returns-to-ludlow.html>

[5] “Report of Findings of Credibility of Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor.”
<https://diospringfield.org/osevacrediblyaccused/>

[6] E.g. the political history of Portugal (the ambassador of Portugal attending FESTA), the “consecration of Russia,” or the “third secret” which Pope Benedict surmised could be related to sin within the church. For contextual background, see Paul Christopher Manuel. “The Marian Apparitions in Fátima as Political Reality: Religion and Politics in Twentieth-Century Portugal,” Saint Anselm College
https://ces.fas.harvard.edu/uploads/files/Working-Papers-Archives/CES_WP88.pdf

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