

What did the Apparition Say to the Children?

Each year Ludlow, Massachusetts has a large festival called FESTA, which is a cultural event with Portuguese food, rockin' music, local vendors, children carnivals, law enforcement, and dignitaries. Among these great things, the Catholic church hosting the event promotes an apparition speaking to two of three young children in Fátima, Portugal in 1917. Thousands attend, but who asks about the children?

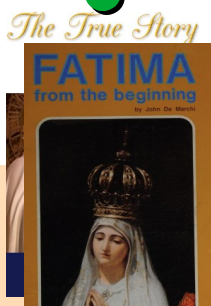


A Catholic press article [1] on FESTA summarizes two-fold: "The Blessed Mother told the children to pray the rosary daily for peace and to offer up their suffering for the conversion of souls." That's precise but requires unpacking.



source: ID 31755295 Rogerio Bernardo | Dreamstime.com

A more comprehensive account by John de Marchi on EWTN [2] and reviewed by the sole surviving child elaborates on the suffering aspect (as does his *FATIMA from the Beginning* featured at the 2024 fair):



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 tips 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.

— The True Story of FATIMA

If you sense discomfort & apology in the author, the account *Fatima in Lucia's own Words* [3] by the sole surviving child 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."**



Two of the children did soon die of illness warned by the mother, though said to be influenza [2] and water not proven to be a factor (complicated), but the apparition did predict their deaths and would "fetch" the remaining child later to allow her to "establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart" [2], i.e. the apparition's sinless (immaculate) heart.

Is Beauty the Test of Goodness?

Childhood is filled with stories about the big bad wolf, and here the children processed their situation this way, repeated uncritically by these adults: **"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]



Dorothy: Oh, but I've already told you, I'm not a witch at all! Witches are old and ugly. *[Munchkins giggle]* What was that?

Glinda: The Munchkins. They're laughing because I am a witch. I'm Glinda, the Witch of the North.

Dorothy: You are?! Oh, I beg your pardon! But I've never heard of a beautiful witch before.

Glinda: Only bad witches are ugly.

— The Wizard of Oz

Granted, even Lúcia had been tormented by dreams of the "devil laughing at having deceived me" [3] — i.e. whether Mary and the apparition are separate — and the Catholic church describes Fátima in strong but not strongest terms ("worthy of belief") while more doubtful on other apparitions like in Yugoslavia. These discerning spiritual teachers would surely discuss angels of light (2 Cor 11:14) and the appearance of Christ (Isa 53:2) and wolves (Mat 7:15)?

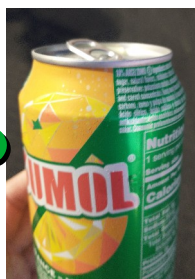


Wolf in sheep's clothing
(source: 301939675 © Robsnowdream | Dreamstime.com)

How about food? A Fátima cookbook (I advise buying a copy), page 4, recommends using the freshest ingredients and cleaning away any dirt and insects. That's a bold statement because the apparition **"does have a way of scoffing at the hygienic fears of the meticulous,"** approving rather that "They dug up the earth near the tree and rubbed the sick with it. Some people ate it and were better afterwards" [2], and Dr. Alves who pushed for and obtained improvements to the water "full of dirt and microbes" [2] was not thanked. However, Sumol's food safety efforts, worthy of sainthood, I thank, 'cuz I drank it.

ingredients are simple and readily available to almost everyone.

The quality of ingredients is reflected in the taste of the dish. Use the freshest ingredients possible. When preparing fresh vegetables and herbs, be sure to rinse them well in cold running water, removing any particles of soil and tiny insects. Trim the off the bruises, potato eyes, garlic germ sprouts, celery threads, and mottled leaves of greens.



Sumol Compal: Single Integrated Report 2023 (pg. 72 of 93): "we follow the evolution of standards and invest in the certification (> Chap. 9.3) of the food safety system of our plants, choosing the BRCGS – Global Standard for Food Safety standard....For the second consecutive year, at Sumol Compal, we marked World Food Safety Day, ...

Hail Mary! (and not us)

The children's interaction is conveyed as follows to the common press:

"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,"

— priest conveying to a Springfield newspaper, Aug 29, 2024.[5]



Dozens of Ludlow businesses sponsor, numerous bands, even a community organization dealing with youth mental health cheered, the ambassador of Portugal attended [7], and police rightly have a large presence for the large fair, attached to the apparition. Some may call that a **system**.



The grandmother of the sergeant "bought the statues in 1953 as an offering for her husband who was suffering from cancer." (MASS Live Apr. 26, 2011)

There are **moral lessons**, and de Marchi's account likens itself to a "story-book" addressed to children in charming writing style. How does the Springfield, MA diocese view children hiding bloody things from parents? Discerning apparitions aside, they have had difficulty discerning good and bad clergy towards children [4], even twice the bishop at the top.

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Thomas Ludger Dupré

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Thomas Ludger Dupré (November 10, 1933 – December 30, 2016) was an American prelate of the Catholic Church. He served as Bishop of Springfield in Massachusetts from 1995 to 2004. He previously served as an auxiliary bishop of the same diocese from 1990 to 1995.

In 2004, Dupré was indicted (but not prosecuted) on two counts of **child molestation**. He was the first American Catholic bishop to be indicted in the church sexual abuse scandal of the 20th century.

Christopher Joseph Weldon

Article Talk

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Christopher Joseph Weldon (September 6, 1905 – March 19, 1982) was an American prelate of the Roman Catholic Church. He served as bishop of the Diocese of Springfield in Massachusetts from 1950 to 1977.

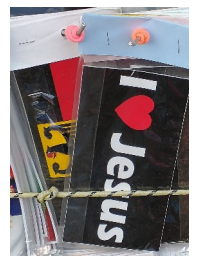
In 2020, an investigation by the diocese determined that an accusation of sexual abuse of a minor against Weldon was highly credible.^[1]



These were real kids.

(source: Ilustração Portuguesa no. 610, 29 October 1917.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ChildrensofFatima.jpg>)

This author's interest stemmed from attending the festival in 2022 and reading the story. Also notable was a vendor there selling flags and I love Jesus signs next to signs of a particular politician peeing on another and conveying that sexual organs are weapons, as children, priests, and surely thousands of people walked by, not far from the big apparition statue. Surely you all saw that. Finding this peculiar for a church festival *on various levels*, and did I mention police sometimes are called against children toward the statue, I picked up the two signs and asked why people do this on each other if they love Jesus. Not able to buy a sign, I bought child statues and holy water to build a holy shrine, a testimony, that children should drink clean water. The children shown had been **wrapped in plastic** as protection from the rain that day, evidence we know what God knows.



Now, Mary, the mother of Jesus of the Bible, who this is claimed to be, **protected her child and fled to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15) – hail Mary!**



Flight to Egypt (source: clipart-library.com/clipart/1768570.htm)

Palavras Finais

The apparition also **made demands on the Church** concerning her heart and promises toward personal salvation and world peace:

“My daughter, look at my Heart encircled with the thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. Do you at least try to console me and announce in my name that I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, go to Confession and receive Holy Communion, recite the Rosary and keep me company for 15 minutes while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary with the intention of making reparation to me.” — Conveyed by Lúcia, December 10, 1925 [10]



Heart with thorns (source: ID 379724602 | Fatima © Atlantismedia | Dreamstime.com)

There are **other dimensions** to this: There's an article on its interaction with the political history of Portugal [6], the “consecration of Russia,” the “bullet” John Paul II mentioned at the FESTA worship service, and the “third secret.” We can dwell much in those intrigues, but that's not the most important thing.



Pope consecrates Ukraine, Russia to Mary – Arlington Catholic Herald, Mar 2022
(what would she think of the masks?)

In a sea of doubt and unanswerable questions, I find it helpful to **ask the knowns**: What do you know, can stand firmly on? Is it the motherly instinct concerning children drinking dirty water and bloody things? What the Catholic church does not doubt, nor other churches for that matter, is that God conquered sin and death for his children when he came down to Earth, was executed on a cross at the hands of mankind but defeated that death. For many, this cross is foundational, Paul's “but we preach Christ crucified.” It is the grace of God toward you. It is the character of the Christian life. It conveys the sense of a prisoner on his side pardoned and rope burned, despite those who would retie it on us less a seven year old, meant for better than eating dirt like the snake in the garden [8]. The child whose mother Mary fled [9] later gave his first recorded sermon (Matthew 5-7), on a foundation for a house, to stand against the coming rain and wind “huffing and puffing to blow that house down,” e.g. the forgive us and the hunger and **thirst rather for righteousness**.



Barre, Massachusetts. Among many inscriptions, including “honor mother with Love,” is a well with faded scripture (John 4).

[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/Memoriasl_en.pdf

[4] “Report of Findings of Credibility of Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor.” <https://diospringfield.org/report-of-findings-of-credibility-of-allegations-of-sexual-abuse-of-a-minor>

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

[6] 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

[7] OLOF Festival, Ludlow MA. <https://www.facebook.com/OLOFFesta/>

[8] Gen 3:14,19; Micah 7:17-19 – The serpent (Satan) was debased on his belly toward the ground to “eat” or lick dust, as the expression goes, and man too returned to dust in the ground, both due to sin, until the serpent's head was crushed underfoot.

[9] To her credit, my mother removed me from my childhood church due to what a few men were doing to their wives, the body of Christ.

[10] “The Message of Fatima.” <https://rosary-center.org/fatimams.htm>