

# Letter No 13 to the Knights of the Immaculata - Asia

The first apparition of Our Lady in Fatima 13 May 1917  
(TOWARDS FATIMA 2017 – part 5)

Dear Knights of the Immaculata!

Approaching the great mysteries of the Passion and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, allow me to send you the events of the first apparition of Our Lady in Fatima on 13 May 1917 and a commentary, which may help you to meditate about the words and requests of the Immaculata. May I ask you also to have in mind to become more and more APOSTLES of FATIMA. Therefore you should know both the events and the deeper meaning very well, so that you can attract other souls to HER.

With my priestly blessings for this holy Passion tide.

Fr. Karl Stehlin

## **13 MAY 1917**

### **FIRST APPARITION OF OUR LADY IN FATIMA**

Before we enter into the very presence of Our Lady and reflect on Her admirable interventions to save us, Her beloved children, we must first of all be aware, that we enter in a spiritual world, which is inexpressibly holy, pure and delicate. Saint Maximilian Kolbe expressed this in his deepest words: “When you get ready to read about the Immaculata, do not forget that you are then entering into contact with a pure living being who is without any stain whatsoever. Consider, too, that the words that you read are incapable of expressing who She is, for they are human words, drawn from human concepts, which present everything only in an earthly way, whereas the Immaculata is a being belonging entirely to God and therefore is to an infinite degree higher than everything around you ... Recognize honestly, too, that alone, without Her help, you are incapable of knowing anything about Her, and consequently you cannot truly love Her, and that She Herself must enlighten you more and more, in order to draw your heart to Herself in love”. If this is true about anything we read about Her, how much more it is, when we start to face Herself and grasp Her own words and gestures.

A second preliminary reflection: we should not read the events of the apparitions just to recall a historical fact, as if Fatima would be just a meeting between the Mother of God and the three children. The visionaries are always only

instruments chosen by Her to be Her channels and transmit Her message. They are also the representatives of all men, to whom Our Lady speaks indirectly, whilst speaking directly to Lucy, Francis and Jacinta. The words of Our Lady should go straight down into our heart, as if we would have been personally present in the Cova da Iria in 1917.

### **Here is the history of the first apparition written by Sr. Lucy :**

<High up on the slope of the Cova da Iria, I was playing with Jacinta and Francisco.

Suddenly we saw what seemed to be a flash of lightning. “We'd better go home”, I said to my cousins, “that's lightning; we may have a thunderstorm”.

“Yes indeed” they answered.

We began to go down the slope, hurrying the sheep along towards the road. We were more or less half-way down the slope, and almost level with a large holm oak tree that stood there, when we saw another flash of lightning. We had only gone a few steps further when, there before us on a small holm oak, we beheld a Lady all dressed in white. She was more brilliant than the sun, and radiated a light more clear and intense than a crystal glass filled with sparkling water, when the rays of the burning sun shine through it.

We stopped, astounded, before the apparition. We were so close, just a few feet from Her, that we were bathed in the light that surrounded Her, or rather, which radiated from Her. Then Our Lady spoke to us:

***-Do not be afraid, I will do you no harm.***

Where does Your Grace come from?

***-I am from heaven.***

What does Your Grace want of me?

***-I have come to ask you to come here for six months in succession, on the 13<sup>th</sup> day, at this same hour. Later on, I will tell you who I am and what I want.***

***Afterwards I will return here yet a seventh time.***

Shall I go to heaven, too?

***-Yes, you will.***

And Jacinta?

***-She will go also.***

And Francisco?

***-He will go there too, but he will have to say many Rosaries.***

Then I remembered to ask about two girls who had died recently. They were friends of mine and used to come to my home to learn weaving with my eldest sister.

Is Maria das Neves in heaven?

***-Yes, she is.***

And Amelia?

*-She will be in Purgatory until the end of the world.*

*-Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?*

Yes, we are willing.

*-Then you are going to have much to suffer, but the grace of God will be your comfort.*

As She pronounced these last words “the grace of God will be your comfort”, **Our Lady opened Her hands for the first time, communicating to us a light so intense that as it streamed from Her hands, its rays penetrated our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see ourselves in God, Who was that light, more clearly than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors.**

Then moved by an inner impulse that was also communicated to us, we fell on our knees, repeating in our hearts: “O most Holy Trinity, I adore you! My God, my God, I love You in the most Blessed Sacrament”.

After a few moments, Our Lady spoke again:

*-Pray the Rosary every day, in order to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war.*

Can you tell me if the war will go on a long time, or will it end soon.

*-I cannot tell you that yet, because I have not yet said what I want.*

Then She began to rise serenely, going up towards the east, until She disappeared in the immensity of space. The light that surrounded Her seemed to open up a path before Her in the firmament, and for this reason we sometimes said that we saw Heaven opening.>

**Let us now reflect on the words of Our Lady:**

**1/ “DO NOT FEAR, I WILL DO YOU NO HARM”:**

The first words of Our Lady, just because they are the first one, are very important.

-“Do not fear. I will do you no harm!”

Lucy explains: “the fear which we felt was not really fear of Our Lady, but rather fear of the thunderstorm which we thought was coming. The apparitions of Our Lady inspired neither fear nor fright, but only surprise”.

100 years after Her apparitions in Fatima we can find the deeper interpretation of these words: world of fear. So many powers of darkness to do us harm. Against that the first and principal declaration: “I, your mother, will do you no harm”, with me you have nothing to fear, no real harm can touch you if you hear me, follow me, accept me.

## 2/ “I AM FROM HEAVEN”:

Certainly inspired by the Holy Ghost, Lucy found courage to speak and to ask the vision,

-“Where does Your Grace come from?”

Then Our Lady gave Her first reply, and She did not answer the question precisely:

“I come from heaven” would be certainly true.

No, She said literally:

-“I am of Heaven” (in her first written account in 1922 Lucy herself writes : I myself am of Heaven!)

In these words we already find Her whole mystery.

When we ask with the angels and saints: Who are you, O Immaculata?

She will answer: I am – of heaven!

/ Of Heaven: It is an echo of the Lord's prayer: “Our Father, who art in heaven”, and of this heaven She IS with all Her being and personality.

Now all human beings are first of all “of the earth”, children of human parents.

On the contrary, Mary is the only one in our human lineage to be an exception from the common rule, being first and principally 'of heaven', before being 'of the earth'.

Why?

Because “God possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he had made anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived ... I was with HIM forming all things” (Prov. 8, 23 – 30). The reason of ‘being’ of Mary is submerged in the mystery of God: Her life on earth will be only the visible expression of Her “myself of heaven”. Her essence, Her foundations, Her inmost intimacy is not creation but the Creator, is not time but eternity, is simply heaven. She never will live for anything else but for God: in all Her being She will be only the daughter of the Father, the mother of the Son and the temple and Spouse of the Holy Ghost.

/ I AM:

She did not say “I come from ...”, but “I am...”.

It is somehow the auto-definition of Herself: My being, my identity, my 'self' is “being of heaven”.

Now heaven is eternal life, is holiness, is light without darkness, eternal peace, fullness of perfection: everything undefiled, immaculate!

Therefore this self-presentation is a faithful echo of Her answer to Bernadette’s request:

- “Who are you?”

- “I AM the Immaculate Conception”.

There is yet another important detail to consider:

Properly spoken only God can say “I am!” Because only He really IS. If creatures say “I am”, they mean “I have”. Nobody would reasonably say: I am Life, only I have life, nor I am truth, but – I speak the truth. “I am” means full possession, “I am” means that I am the principle of what I have.

Therefore only Our Lord, because he is God, can say: I am the resurrection and the life. Before Abraham was, I AM.

Is it then not exaggerated and even not convenient, when Mary said in Lourdes “I am the Immaculate Conception” and in Fatima “I am of heaven”? It would be so, if She would speak of Her own created being, which is strictly 'nothing'. If God allows Her to present herself in that way, that means, that in Her is really something essentially DIVINE.

What?

Thanks to Her fullness of grace and Her being free from all stains of sin, Mary received fully and totally the “gift of the Father and Son”, the Holy Spirit sent by God into our hearts. So totally does the Holy Ghost dwell in Her, penetrates her, that nothing remains in Her 'on her own', but all full of God: all Her thoughts, words, actions, everything are more the thoughts, words and actions of the Holy Ghost than Her own. Therefore

She can say: I AM.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe explains this admirable mystery: “She is joined in an ineffable manner to the Holy Spirit because she is His spouse; but this is true of Her in an incomparably more perfect sense than anything this term can be expressed among creatures. What kind of union is this? It is above all interior; it is the union of Her very being with the being of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in Her, lives in Her, from the first instant of Her existence, and He will do so always, throughout eternity. In what does this life of the Holy Spirit in Her consist? He Himself is love in Her, the love of the Father and the Son, the love by which God loves Himself, the love of the entire most Holy Trinity, a fruitful love, a conception. Among created resemblances the union of love is the closest. Holy Scripture affirms that ‘the two of them become one body’ [Genesis 2:24], and Jesus insists, ‘Thus they are no longer two but one flesh’ [Matthew 19:6]. In an incomparably more rigorous, more interior, more essential manner the Holy Spirit lives in the soul of the Immaculate, in Her very being, and makes Her fruitful from the first instant of Her existence and throughout Her life, that is, forever.”

### **3/ THE ONE UNIQUE NECESSITY: EVERLASTING THINGS**

What are the great themes of Fatima from the very beginning?

The angel's apparition showed the absolute primacy of God, the honor of the Most Holy Trinity, the conversion to God and the reparation for the offenses against God. Our Lady will put the same themes into the hearts of children, when

she later communicates to the children God's light' to submerge them in the depths of God's majesty and infinite Love. Also the first words spoken by Our Lady revolve exclusively around the after-death realities, first and foremost heaven and purgatory. During the third apparition she will conjoin in a striking manner the reality of hell.

Again inspired by the Holy Ghost Lucy asks THE question:

-“And I, shall I go to heaven?”

What a lesson for our materialistic and atheistic times, where almost everybody is turned completely towards the world and his short life therein. How often the question arises in the minds of people nowadays, even believers, even zealous Catholics? This little question of Lucy is somehow the summary of the life of all saints, but also the goal of the work of redemption: that all in our life should revolve around the *UNUM NECESSARIUM*, the only necessary: “Shall I go to heaven”? What did I do today to go to heaven? O Mother Mary, you came to answer this question, and it will be 'yes', if I answer your request, as the children of Fatima answered you.

- “And Jacinta? And Francisco? And Maria des Neves? And Amelia?”

These following questions show, what is really important for us next. They contain the whole new commandment of Our Lord-the true love of the neighbor. And again, what a lesson for us, who are constantly occupied only with the material welfare of the world around us, and our 'love of our next' is mostly limited in procuring them material goods or earthly joys!

We should learn to look into the world with these questions: “What about my children, what about my friends, my neighbors, my relatives, my enemies, my fellow citizens, the other members of the mystical body etc.? What will be the issue of their life? Will they go to heaven?” And again the answer is in Mary's hand, and Her answer will be again 'yes', if the people use the necessary means to save their souls, especially that they “will have to pray many rosaries”.

- “Yes, they will!”

We should let ourselves get deeply impressed by this consoling promise of Our Heavenly Mother. This promise is for all those who will follow Her and want to walk in the footsteps of the three small children. It is also remarkable the Our Lady reveals to Lucy, that her friend Maria de Neves is already in heaven, as normally such a knowledge is almost never given with the exception of the canonized Saints. In this way SHE confirms that Her coming from heaven to us has but one great purpose: to remind us about this unique necessity and to help us on the way to heaven.

/ Purgatory:

- “And Amelia? - She will be in purgatory till the end of the world!”

Our Lady's catechism goes on with the important precision that “going to heaven” is not such an easy thing. The way to holiness is an ardent labor and requires heroic generosity. If “going to heaven” - salvation of the soul – holiness – overwhelming happiness in the “Light, that is God himself” is certainly the main purpose of Our Lady's apparition, it is also important to know, that only the “totally pure will see God”, and as long as man is infected by darkness (sin), he cannot unite himself with HIM, who is pure light.

But as almost nobody finds himself totally pure at the moment of death, almost nobody could go to heaven, if God's mercy had not created the 'possibility of purification after death' – Purgatory. But this place of purification is a spiritual fire which purifies the souls through enormous sufferings. Our Lady uses the example of Lucy's friend Amelia to show how intense these sufferings might be: “... till the end of the world!” Which translated into our language means: full sufferings up to the end of all possibilities. If according to the fathers of the Church one minute in purgatory is more than 100 years of worst sufferings here on earth, we can have an idea, what it means “... till the end of the world”.

What again a lesson for us, who are fully occupied with our earthly problems and sufferings, shut up into our little years on earth and our little group of people surrounding us. Life on earth could be compared to a small hill, beyond which we can see an immense valley where every burning fire is filled with innumerable souls. And amongst them we can recognize our ancestors, relatives, friends... And all of them have fixed their eyes towards heaven AND towards this small hill – earth – from where they could get immense relief and often full deliverance of their pains, if only the people would not be occupied only with themselves, but have a small love of the neighbor to help them in their pains. Our Lady reminds us from the very beginning of her apparition about this gigantic world of purgatory filled with billions of souls, first to excite us to help them (because they all are her beloved children) and secondly to remind us, that for many many years this could be our place after the short while on earth, if we do not care about “going to heaven”. The thought of purgatory helps us to detach ourselves from our ridiculous little world and have a glimpse into the 'other world', the essential and true one, and so to live in truth.

/ Finally Our Lady gives us an important lesson about the Church: She appears here on earth to be with Her children of the militant Church. But the reason of existence of the militant church is only to prepare for the triumphant One “in heaven”. In between is the suffering church to give the poor sinners the chance to prepare themselves for eternal bliss after death. And all three are one Church, and what they unite is the grace of God and the instrument of God's graces, Our Lady.

#### **4/ THE WAY TO HEAVEN: PRAYER AND SUFFERINGS**

Once the goal is fixed, Our Lady speaks about the means to be used.  
- “I do not promise to make you happy in this world, only in the next”, the Immaculata had said to Bernadette in Lourdes.

Similarly in Fatima, after promising Heaven to the three children she immediately announces to them 'suffering'. It is the royal road of the Cross which leads to the Light. In 1916, the Angel had already invited them to offer to God their sacrifices unceasingly: “And especially accept and bear with submission the sufferings which the Lord will send you”.

Today Our Lady asks them to do much more: “Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for all the sins by which He is offended and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?” Again Our Lady emphasizes the immense value of sacrifices, crosses and sufferings for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. One could imagine, that after having shown the children the eternal things to come, Our Lady would have given them the advice to tell this to the others, to go to the priests to say Masses, to organize prayers, or other apostolic deeds. No, the first means is not even prayer but sufferings voluntarily offered with the intention of reparation and conversion!

It is also of highest importance, that these sufferings must be willingly accepted to bring their supernatural fruits. They must be an act of love towards God and towards the neighbor and in this way they are the perfect fulfillment of the greatest commandments. And the more voluntarily they are accepted, the more they are acts of love and the more they bring fruits.

Therefore Our Lady asks the children for their free agreement. And after obtaining it, she pronounces: --“Then you will have much to suffer”.

This shows us, that the words of Our Lady are never “small talk”, frivolous conversations. But they engage fully. If you say “yes”, it will be “yes” with all following consequences.

/ Besides sacrifices and sufferings our Lady will speak at each apparition about the other means to use: Prayer! And first and foremost the daily rosary. The Angel had already prepared the children for a life of prayer, insisting on small ejaculatory prayers, to which one could add the “prayer of the Angel”. We will see that each apparition in Fatima is also a way of educating us to have a regular and deep spiritual life. If we use these means, as the children of Fatima had used them, we will see the same effects in our heart as in their hearts.

/ Most important in such a life of prayer and sacrifice is the highest means given by God himself:

-“The grace of God will be your comfort”.

On our way to heaven we have certainly to make constant efforts. But it would be a deep error to think, that from them depends our holiness. Our efforts, important as they are, can only dispose us to the intervention of God himself in

our lives, when he gives us his light and his life – his grace, which transforms our souls to become holy. The proof of this truth follows immediately:

## **5/ THE VISION IN GOD:**

“As She pronounced these last words “the grace of God will be your comfort”, **Our Lady opened Her hands for the first time, communicating to us a light so intense that as it streamed from Her hands, its rays penetrated our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see ourselves in God, Who was that light, more clearly than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors.**”

A mysterious, astonishing vision, for it manifests in a striking fashion the universal Mediation of Mary to whom it is given, by an unfathomable grace, to introduce souls into the Light of God. Three times the children will contemplate this astonishing spectacle, which reminds us of the apparition of the “Virgin with the rays” (Miraculous Medal at the Rue de Bac in 1830).

And Lucy gives the important statement:

“We fell on our knees. It inspired us with **so great a knowledge of God** that it is not easy to speak about it”. According to the greatest specialists of Fatima, the very core of all the apparitions is in these three communications of “God's light” through the Immaculata.

Everything is of utmost importance here, and

/ First, the very gesture of Our Lady, who “**opened Her hands for the first time, communicating to us a light so intense that as it streamed from Her hands ...**”. We should fall on our knees as the children did and look at these her hands, these hands which held the Child Jesus, which worked hard during Her whole life. But these hands are much more a symbol: we need our hands to communicate to the others what we have. Opening my hands means I open my heart, I open myself, I open the gates of my intimacy. As Mary is 'fullness of grace', opening Her hands, the ocean of graces overflows into the souls of all who stand by her. Lucy insists, saying, that the graces (the light) streamed from her hands, which means, that the doors of the paradise is not only opened by her, but **SHE IS THE GATE OF HEAVEN HERSELF.**

/ What does she give? “A light so intense... **GOD**, who was that light ... ourselves in that light more clearly than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors”. This 'light' is reality, the only true reality, the rest is only shadow and nothingness. Here the children received one of the highest possible mystical graces, the 'vision of God' himself. What the children really saw and received at that moment, we can only define it by the effects. The first reaction were the ejaculatory prayers: “O Most Holy Trinity, I adore you!” In this light they saw the only true God in three persons, the ineffable mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. “My God, my God, I love you in the most Blessed Sacrament!” In this light they must have seen the presence of God in the world, a summary of the

mystery of salvation, which culminates in the presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist.

Francisco would say later- “I loved seeing the Angel. I loved still more seeing Our Lady. What I loved most of all was to see Our Lord in that light form Our Lady which penetrated our hearts. I love God so much!”

/ The effects of this vision: all three were filled with a fullness of love and self-surrender. Not only at the moment of the vision, as they declared themselves, but in their physical lives till their death. One can say, that the whole lives of the three were nothing but uninterrupted outbursts of love towards God, a living in His presence, a seeking of His will and good pleasure. These visions brought so many graces, that what God normally does during long years amongst His best friends (the saints), He accomplished here in a few minutes. Having experienced God's light, they did not want anything else other than HIM. And this grace is exactly what God wants to bestow to everybody, who approaches the mystery of Fatima!

/ The sorrow of God: Francisco in this vision of light was specially impressed by one reality:

-“God is very sad because of so many sins! We must never commit any sins again”. In fact, he will spend his short life in particular contemplation of this mystery: “I am thinking of God, who is so sad because of so many sins! If only I could console Him!” - Exactly the answer to the request of the Angel when giving them the mystical Holy Communion in 1916: “Console your God!”

/ Fr. Alonso explains that we have to distinguish between the exterior and the interior aspect of the message of Fatima. The exterior and visible one is more apologetic, that is to prove before the world the authenticity of Fatima, to engage the faithful to accomplish the wishes of Our Lady. But the essential message, the “constitutive reality” of Fatima is only given by his interior aspect: it is a “particular experience of the divine world, of God and His will, the very communications of God by Our Lady to the world”. We will come back to this essential aspect of Fatima after having meditated about all three 'communications of the light of God' through Mary.

## **SUMMARY OF THIS FIRST APPARITION:**

If you meditate often about this event on 13 May 1917, you will realize more and more, how far Fatima is from the secular and even religious atmosphere of our times, in which we focus on man and his life on earth as the most important and often only valuable. And even if we believe in God, He is not an important factor, just somewhat an agency of security, a being far away from us which has nothing to do with our concrete lives. If Saint Pius X exclaims that we are in the time of the Antichrist because the people live and behave, as if God didn't exist, then we understand better the importance of this first message of Fatima, where

GOD is ALL. He is light and besides Him is only darkness. In this way Fatima wakes us up from our illusions and makes us resist the lies of the rulers of the world: what matters is eternity: heaven or hell, and the way to eternity which is prayer, sacrifices, fight against sin, salvation of souls, and above all the incredible happiness of GOD'S LIGHT: HIS LOVE!