

2017 Marks the Centennial of Our Lady's Apparitions to three Shepherd Children in Portugal

By Robert Fastiggi



The year 2017 marks the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady to the three shepherd children at Fatima, Portugal, where the Blessed Mother appeared once each month from May 13 until October 13, 1917. The message of Fatima highlights many central truths and devotions of the Catholic faith: the Trinity, the Eucharist, penance, the Rosary and sacrifices for the conversion of sinners. There is special emphasis on the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which is a refuge of maternal love for us all and a sure path that leads us to God. In the end, Mary's Immaculate Heart will triumph because Mary is full of God's grace and is all pure. She has the heart of a mother who cares for her children and wishes them to be saved by her Divine Son, Jesus.

Although 2017 marks the centenary year, the Fatima apparitions began with the three apparitions of the Angel of Peace (also called the Angel of Portugal) in 1916 and extended beyond 1917 with subsequent apparitions given to Sister Lucia dos Santos in Pontevedra, Spain (1925-1927) and Tuy, Spain (1929).

Fatima is one of the most significant of all Marian apparitions. Along with Guadalupe (December 12) and Lourdes (February 11), it is one of three Marian apparitions honored with a feast day. In 2002, Pope St. John Paul 2 added the May 13 feast of Our Lady of Fatima to the general Roman calendar. May 13 was the day of the first Fatima apparition of 1917, and May 13, 1981, was the day when St. John Paul 2 survived an attempt on his life in St. Peter's Square.

John Paul 2 credited his survival to the intervention of Our Lady of Fatima. The assassin's bullet that narrowly missed killing the pope now is inserted in a crown of Our Lady housed at the Fatima shrine. Fatima is also linked with



the collapse of Russian communism more than 25 years ago. It is estimated that some 4-5 million people visit Fatima each year, and more are expected for the centennial year, including a visit by Pope Francis, who plans to travel to Portugal to celebrate the 100-year anniversary.

Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us!