

*“There is nothing better to display the truth in an excellent light, than a clear and simple statement of the facts.” — St. Benedict*

Most Catholics around the world have heard about the new *Fatima* movie,<sup>[1]</sup> 13 years in the making “from the concept stage to the film’s completion”<sup>[2]</sup> and first slated for release in 2017, the Centennial of the apparitions of Our Lady of the Rosary in Fatima, Portugal. Due to a series of delays, including those due to the COVID-19 “pandemic” which induced upon the populace social distancing regulations (including cinema closures), the movie was finally released on August 28, 2020. As the author of *Fatima: The Signs and Secrets* and an ardent promoter of the Fatima Message, I was frequently asked, after the release of the film’s various trailers and press releases, what was my opinion. My interest grew when I read that one of the producers touted the film as receiving approval from the Fatima Shrine in Portugal, which considered it “historically and theologically accurate.”<sup>[3]</sup> It is upon that premise on which my objective, Catholic review is based—because if the premise is true, then so is the conclusion.

First, let’s begin by demonstrating the assertion of historical and theological accuracy:

- According to a *Catholic News Service* press release distributed to and published by mainstream Catholic media,<sup>[4]</sup> one of the producers, Dick Lyles, “said the Shrine of Fatima had declared the film to be *both historically and theologically accurate* and had praised its cinematic depiction of the Marian apparitions reported in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917.”<sup>[5]</sup>

In fact, the first paragraph of the same press release begins: “The producers of the movie ‘Fatima,’ which will be released in theaters and premium video-on-demand Aug. 28, *could not have asked for a better endorsement than the standing ovation the film received earlier this year at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in Portugal.*”<sup>[6]</sup>

Another producer, Natasha Howes “who has worked on several Fatima-related projects, including the 2009 feature documentary ‘The 13th Day,’ said the makers of ‘Fatima’ wanted ‘to breathe new life into a very well-known story’ and to share it with ‘mainstream audiences’—a goal that *the Shrine of Fatima recognized and was willing to assist by providing an advisory team and access to historical documents.*”<sup>[7]</sup>

- In another example of the premise that *Fatima* is “historically and theologically accurate,” Jim Graves of *Catholic World Report* (CWR) inquired of Dick Lyles, described as “a producer of the film and a practicing Catholic”: **“Is the movie true to the original events that happened in Fatima?”**

Lyles responded: **“Yes, and the Shrine of Fatima acknowledged as much.** The shrine

declared, "Through his artistic choices, director Marco Pontecorvo conveys with dignity and integrity the actions of those who experienced the Fatima event. The film leads us to reflect that 100 years later, the light of God that the Virgin Mary shined upon Francisco, Jacinta, and Lúcia still lights the way for those who commit to a life of faith in the Gospel." He added further, "When we screened the finished film for them, **they said it was the best movie about Fatima ever made.**"

Earlier, Lyles was asked: "There are many books and a 1952 movie about the story of Fatima. Why did you want to make this movie, and why at this time?" Said Lyles: "The 1952 movie, *The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima*, was great, but was rather 'Disney-esque.' *Its characters were caricatures, and it makes light of the story and what happened at Fatima in 1917.* We wanted to tell a more realistic story through the eyes of the shepherd children, particularly Lúcia. We wanted to demonstrate how these children had courage, heroism, and faith."

Near the interview's end, CWR put forth this question: "Who should see this film?" Lyles answered, "We made it as a 'crossover' film, so it could be enjoyed by people of all backgrounds. It is a compelling story, exciting, with courage and heroism. Anyone can enjoy the film, even those who are not devotees of Fatima. During our test screenings, the film was enjoyed by people of all ages and every faith background."[\[8\]](#)

- In yet another article, published nine days before the movie's August 28 release, it was stated: "Developing the script was an 'intricate and sensitive' process that involved working with an advisory committee from Portugal's Shrine of Fatima; consulting Sister Angela Coelho, postulator for the canonisation [*sic*] cause of Francisco and Jacinta; and reading eyewitness accounts and Lucia's memoirs."

Yet, according to the same source in referring to another producer, "Fatima is not meant to be a documentary, said [Natasha] Howes. *Although inspired by true events*, it does not follow them exactly. For example, only four of the six apparitions reported by the children are depicted."

"Fictional elements were inserted to add historical context. In the film, Lucia's brother is sent off to fight in the war, when in reality he was never conscripted. As a narrative device, it 'heightens the emotional dynamic' within Lucia's family and helps place them firmly in that era, said Ms. Howes."[\[9\]](#)

- On an August 24 podcast from Catholic Review Radio, the listener hears from host Christopher Gunty that his guest, Dick Lyles, is a partner of Origins Entertainment, "which intends to make transformative and creative entertainment" and that "he is one of the

producers of the new movie, *Fatima*, which remakes the 1952 film, *Our Lady of Fatima*, and updates the story as told by the eyes of 10-year-old Lucia, one of the three young shepherd children who saw visions of Our Blessed Mother in Portugal in 1917.”[\[10\]](#)

When asked why he decided to present the movie through the eyes of Lucia, Lyles answered: “Well, we thought it was important that the world see what the shepherds really went through, **in the context of what really happened**. So, not many stories of Fatima have ever put it in the context that the world was at war. It was the tail-end of WWI; Portugal was having a civil war and was really being torn apart with the civil war; so there was tremendous tension going on in the world, and as a result of that, when the children saw the apparitions and began to talk about them, it really put a tremendous amount of pressure on them—more pressure than they would have had otherwise. And we wanted to show their heroism; ***we really didn't feel that any other prior movies that had ever been produced showed the true heroism of the shepherds from their point of view***. So we told it from ***Lucia's point of view***, so that people could appreciate the courage, as well as the faith and love that these shepherds experienced.”[\[11\]](#)

- There is also the email I personally received from Picturehouse, dated August 28, which described the movie in the following way: “In 1917, outside the parish of Fátima, Portugal, a 10-year-old girl and her two younger cousins witness multiple visitations of the Virgin Mary, who tells them that only prayer and suffering will bring an end to WWI. Word of the sighting spreads across the country, inspiring religious pilgrims to flock to the site in hopes of witnessing a miracle. *Inspired by real-life events...*”

At this point, the objective person is inclined to ask the obvious questions: *Which is it?* Although “not meant to be a documentary,” is this movie “historically and theologically accurate” because it is “true to the original events that happened in Fatima,” or is it merely a “crossover” film “inspired by real-life events”? Why did one producer repeatedly emphasize that the movie is true to the original Fatima events, while another said, “Although inspired by true events, it does not follow them exactly,” and admitted, “Fictional elements were inserted to add historical context”?

## **Examining the Film's Portrayal of the Fatima Apparitions**

For the purpose of an objective, Catholic critique, I twice viewed the movie, transcribing the entire script. Despite the “red flags” previously viewed in the film's trailers (like the Virgin trodding on the ground, instead of regally standing on a small holmoak tree), one could never fully anticipate how far this movie would push the limits of “artistic license” at the expense of truth. Therefore, I make the following statement because the veracity of the Fatima Message must be defended—for the glory of God, in filial honor of the merciful

Virgin, in respectful admiration of the heroic virtue of the three child visionaries, and for the salvation of souls: As a Fatima historian and author, I can objectively and unequivocally state that the new *Fatima* movie delivers a distorted, truncated, Modernist revision of the true Fatima apparitions and the Fatima Message.[\[12\]](#)

Although I could also write an objective examination on each film segment's plethora of fictions and inaccuracies, doing so would take a substantial amount of time, resulting in a hefty booklet rather than an article. Instead, this review will begin with the initial, entirely fictional and/or falsely revised scenes, including the first apparition of the Angel of Peace (Spring 1916) and Our Lady's first apparition (May 13, 1917). It will then succinctly demonstrate via a syllabus the film's encompassing breadth of fabrications, omissions, and revisionist history which permeates the portrayals of the 1917 apparitions of the Virgin Mary (i.e., June 13, July 13, and October 13 - the film does not include the August and September 1917 apparitions).

## The Angelic Apparitions

***Fatima* movie's depiction:** A young girl (Lucia) is seen alone, scribbling with a stick on a cave wall. A light wind suddenly courses into the cave, and in flies a white bird, both of which attract her attention. She follows the swooping bird deeper into the cave. Suddenly, she hears a whispering voice: "Don't be scared. Do not worry." The child peers into the dark and asks, "Who are you?" Lucia inevitably spies someone apparently hiding within the cave—a somewhat disheveled, slightly grimy-looking peasant **woman**.

"I am the Angel of Peace. Look." Suddenly, Lucia sees a vision of a battlefield with the noise of airplanes, bombs, and sirens. A young soldier is seen. She twice calls out "Manuel!" The Angel half-whispers, "And they don't seem to want to stop!" The Angel then says, "We should pray."

Then is heard a scandalously *abbreviated, revised* version of the true prayer (more on this to come), as Lucia repeats each short sentence after the Angel: "I believe. I have hope. And I love God." The Angel's last words? "Pray for peace."

**Historically (What Really Happened):** In 1916, *all three children* (Lucia dos Santos and her two younger cousins, Francisco and Jacinta Marto), *thrice* saw an angel. These apparitions always took place outside, never in a cave. The Angel did not appear as an earthly woman but rather, in her 1936-1941 [Memoirs](#), Sister Lucia described him as a bright figure, approaching them from the sky. As he grew closer, they could see "**a young man**, about fourteen or fifteen years old, whiter than snow, transparent as crystal when the sun shines through it, and of great beauty."[\[13\]](#)

At the Angel's first appearance, his real words were as follows: "Do not be afraid! I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me."[\[14\]](#) He then knelt and bowed down until his forehead touched the ground, having the children repeat these words three times: "**My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love thee! I beg pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love Thee.**" He then arose and said, "Pray thus. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications."[\[15\]](#)

As must be noted, in contrast to the film's fabricated prayer, the true prayer taught by the Angel is directly addressed to God and professes the humble adoration of the Lord as well as the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. "**Faith** is the foundation of all virtue, for by it God makes Himself known to men. As St. Paul says, 'Now faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that are not seen. ... And without faith it is impossible to please God' (Heb. 11:1, 6)," explains the traditional catechism *My Catholic Faith*. "**Hope** is the virtue by which we firmly trust that God, Who is all-powerful and faithful to His promises, will in His mercy give us eternal happiness and the means to obtain it. ... Hope is *necessary* for salvation. Our hope must be firmly founded in God, Who Promised to give us the means for salvation. ... **Charity** is the virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves, for the love of God."[\[16\]](#)

As I wrote in the February 2020 issue of *CFN*, "In three visits, the Angel greatly advanced the children's spiritual lives, leading them to further prayer and sacrifice, assisting them to grow in charity toward God and neighbor."[\[17\]](#) He taught them how and why to make sacrifices to God in reparation for sins and for the conversion of sinners. He also taught them what is known as "The Most Holy Trinity Prayer" or "The Eucharistic Prayer," which he instructed the children to pray three times in succession: "O Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore Thee profoundly, and I offer Thee the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles throughout the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference by which He Himself is offended. And by the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of all poor sinners."[\[18\]](#)

At the last 1916 apparition, the Angel instructed the children about Eucharistic Reparation when he gave all three Holy Communion, with Lucia receiving only the Host and the two younger children receiving only the Precious Blood. Before doing so, he said, "Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men! Make reparations for their crimes and console your God."[\[19\]](#)

## The Scene Which Sets the Film's True Theme

The film's next fable sets the whole tone of the film's subtle, underlying and slowly developing theme: The child Lucia (and, as implied by this scene's conclusion, the elderly nun Lucia) has "issues" with her mother, Maria Rosa, which psychologically resulted in the child's Angelic and Marian apparitions.

The segment begins with an elderly gentleman (the fictional, agnostic Professor Nichols) arriving at a convent. Invited to sit and told that an unnamed "she" will soon be with him, he peers into a convent grille, looking inside the room beyond. He sees a statue of Our Lady of Fatima and, as the movie progresses, the viewer discovers that **the statue is the film's one and only accurate representation of the Virgin** (as she was described by the children and again in Sister Lucia's [Memoirs](#), written under obedience to her bishop in the years 1936-1941 and published in 1976).[\[20\]](#)

The Professor then takes a seat. An elderly nun wordlessly arrives, sits behind the grille and looks straightforwardly and dispassionately at the Professor.

Professor: "Good morning, Sister Lucia." Without returning the greeting, she simply corrects him about her full name in religion: "*Of Jesus* and of the Immaculate Heart."

Professor: "Yes. Thank you for taking the time to meet me today. I really appreciate it. I couldn't imagine my book completed without you."

Lucia: "I just read and very much appreciated your last work..."

Professor: "Thank you."

Lucia brashly continues: "... although I don't share most of your views."

Professor, quietly: "No, I suppose you do not."

Lucia: "In your last paper, you wrote, 'All seers are *de facto* unstable.'"

Professor quickly answers: "I didn't mean to offend you."

Lucia: "On the contrary, I've always been fascinated by opinions opposed to my own."

Professor: "Well, then, we do have something in common."

Lucia remains silent, and the Professor decides to proceed with the interview.



Professor: "I have so many questions, Sister Lucia. But let me start with the most obvious one. If someone were to say to you now, why what happened all those years ago had to have happened to you, of all people, how would you respond?"

Lucia: "Because it was necessary."

Professor: "Necessary?"

Lucia: "To spread her message. At the time, naturally, I could not have imagined its importance nor the consequences." (Silence for a few seconds.) "I was a child."

More seconds pass and then...

Professor: "And do you have any regrets?"

Lucia: "Does it look like the world has heard the message of heavenly peace? (Pause) This is my only regret." (Emotionally, Lucia then speaks again). "I haven't done enough to please my mother."

Professor: "**Which mother?** (Pause.) **The Holy Mother?**"

The startled Sister Lucia gives no answer.

After this fabricated scene, it abruptly switches to a third one, set in the past, which picks up and fortifies the same untruthful thread to erroneously show the source of the mother-daughter clash: the mother's strong concern for Manuel, whom the viewer will later learn is Lucia's elder brother, a soldier in the war. This wholly unnecessary, concocted conflict over Manuel not only escalates after the Virgin's appearance, it becomes an impetus for accusations made against Lucia: She "must" be feeling motherly neglect. Therefore, to get her mother's attention, she "must" be making up stories about the Angel and the Virgin.

To continue that thread, a secularist "pop psychology" is another device employed by the film, especially in Maria Rosa's words and behavior upon Lucia's pre-teen psyche. For example, the third fictitious scene demonstrates Lucia's awareness of the anguish of neighbors who watch and listen to a man (the Administrator) announcing the names of their male relatives, each following with either "deceased" or "missing in battle." The earthly-looking "Angel" suddenly makes a silent appearance to Lucia, walking beside a weeping woman. The "Angel" and Lucia stare at each other as the former passes by.

Carefully observing everyone, Lucia cannot help but notice her mother's tearless anguish or her resulting prayer to the Holy Virgin for Manuel (including the following sentences: "Our

home will be an example for the Church. We will do this for God.”<sup>[21]</sup>). In the fourth scene, that psychological thread is again brought to the surface when—upon her mother’s insistence of *publicly* forcing Lucia into an act of self-denial for Manuel’s safe return (i.e., pulling her out of a children’s folk dance among a small circle of children, which included Jacinta)—even Lucia’s father cannot convince his wife to let the child be.

Clear are the implications: Maria Rosa is a force with which to be reckoned and her young daughter’s sensitive, impressionable mind accepts the message: *She* must sacrifice for Manuel and *she*, along with her family, “will be an example for the Church.” For the viewer, the unconscious set-up is complete. The nuances of these segments inevitably provide both the fictionalized reason for the mother-daughter struggle and the delicate insinuation that Lucia’s upcoming visions of the Virgin and her future religious life are her deep-seated responses to her mother’s earlier prayerful promise to the “Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of mothers.” What also subtly underscores the implication that Lucia alone was compelled to submit to her mother’s demands? Curiously, for the sake of Manuel’s safe return, there are never any scenes (before or after) of anyone else in Lucia’s family making acts of mortification.

Of these first four fictional scenes alone, the historical truths are as follows:

1. None of the three children ever told anyone, including their parents, about the three 1916 Angelic apparitions. It was not until 1937 that the adult Lucia (by then a Dorothean nun), did so, in writing, under obedience to her bishop.
2. Manuel dos Santos was neither “drafted” into the revolution (which took place in 1910, seven years *before* the Fatima events), nor was he a soldier in World War I.
3. Between Lucia and her mother, the true and sole conflict arose entirely due to the apparitions, because the strongly Catholic Maria Rosa, who detested even the hint of a “fib,” believed that Lucia—her loving, trustworthy, youngest child—had suddenly and inexplicably become a liar.
4. *Before* the apparitions, and only due to the new parish priest’s admonitions from the pulpit, Maria Rosa forbade her daughters to publicly engage in folk-dance.<sup>[22]</sup> As for Lucia’s sacrifices, it was the Angel who taught both her and her cousins to do so in reparation for sins and for the conversions of sinners. With one exception—Lucia alone, crying aloud to heaven, lifting up her blouse to expose her naked waist with a rope tied around it, an atonement secretly offered by the three cousins and which is never in the film explained—*Fatima* features none of the other two children’s real sacrifices.



## First Apparition of the Virgin (May 13, 1917)

**Fatima movie's depiction:** Lucia is alone, in a field of long grass; she looks up at the sun. Along come Jacinta and Francisco. Jacinta complains to Lucia about Maria Rosa's forcing Lucia to leave them as they began a folk-dance. Lucia states, "Mama says I must atone to make him come home." (That is another subtle reference to the underlying theme.)

The children offer some food to Lucia, who admits she is starving. Soon after, all three run to a higher place, calling out, "Ave! Maria!" Thunder is heard and the children begin to gather the sheep. Lightning is seen and mentioned by the girls. Francisco declares, "I don't see any lightning." The girls giggle. "Come on, we have to go home." Thunder is again heard and followed by a second lightning flash. "Another one!" cries one of the girls. The camera pans in on the invisible wind moving through the grass and trees. The children laugh and run but the wind attracts their attention. They suddenly stop near a tall, thin tree and, for an unknown reason, Jacinta falls backwards to the ground. She quietly says, "Look."

A barefoot woman, with dark hair and clad in a veil and robe with pink patterns throughout both, walks up to them.[\[23\]](#)

Lucia: "Who are you? Where do you come from?"

Francisco: "Who are you talking to?"

Jacinta: "Can't you see her?"

Francisco (angrily): "No! Enough of this joke!"

The Lady: "I come from heaven."

Lucia: "Are you *seriously* from heaven? Will I go to heaven?"

The Lady smiles in the affirmative.

Francisco: "I can see her now."

Lucia to the Lady: "What about Jacinta?"

The Lady: "Also."

Lucia: "And Francisco?"

Francisco: "What?"

The Lady: "Same, but..."

Silence falls as the boy looks at the Lady, watching her lips move.

Francisco (sounding a bit annoyed): "What did she say?"

Jacinta: "I'll tell you later."

Lucia to the Lady: "Our friend, Maria das Neves?"

The Lady: "She's in heaven."

Lucia: "Why did you come? What do you want from us?"

The Lady: "You must come back here every month at this time for the next six months. (N.B. Script Error: Not only is this another sentence not as the Blessed Mother said it, the script should have stated *five* months.) After a pause, the Lady says: "Pray the Rosary every day to bring peace to the world and to end the war." Another pause. "The world needs peace."

The camera pans backward into the sky, indicating the Virgin's departure.

Francisco demands, "I want to know what she said about me."

As all three walk with the sheep, neither girl answers him.

Lucia: "Did you tell him about the Rosary?"

Jacinta: "No."

Francisco: "So she said I need to pray the Rosary more. She knows everything, even our most personal things." He asks if the Lady is angry with him.

Jacinta sternly turns toward him: "I told you not to throw stones at the boys from Boleiros!"

Francisco, with an undertone of anger: "Do you think *that's* the reason why I couldn't hear her?"

Jacinta, loftily: "Sure, it is."

Francisco, loudly objecting: "But they beat me up! I tried to run away!"

Lucia, yelling: "Stop it!"

Francisco, quietly: "So what do we do now?"

Jacinta, morosely: "She says we have to suffer."

Francisco: "Why?"

Jacinta: "I didn't quite understand."

Francisco: "What are we doing wrong?"

The two girls don't answer.

Jacinta, as if a thought just occurred to her: "I can't *wait* to tell Mama and Papa!"

Both Lucia and Francisco turn on her and simultaneously shout: "We can't tell anyone!"

Jacinta: "But she said that we're her messengers."

Francisco: "She came to *us*. It's *our* secret!"

For many reasons, the entire scene is inaccurate and confusing. The Virgin's mode of dress was wholly altered. Her hair, seen in the movie, was covered by her long white veil. Furthermore, she always appeared standing atop a small holmoak tree; not once did she appear on the ground. Most of Our Lady's true words are greatly changed. The Virgin never smiled, as the movie depicted; she was always serious. It is a falsehood that Francisco did not hear the thunder or see the lightning. It is also untrue that he could not at first see the Virgin.[\[24\]](#) He could see her from the start, but never could he hear her.

Due to the artistic device of making the movie-goers also experience Francisco's inability to hear the Virgin, the children's after-exchange leaves the viewer to discern what they can. The sequence also falsely portrays the children as expressing modern-day lexicon and attitudes (i.e., Lucia saying to the Virgin: "Are you *seriously* from heaven?"), characterizing Jacinta as a bossy know-it-all and Francisco, by turns, as a bewildered, angry, and curious child. Finally, the exchange between the Virgin and Lucia completely omits the reference to Purgatory, Our Lady's question to Lucia on behalf of all three children, and a vision of themselves in the light of God—a vision which caused the children to spontaneously fall to their knees and pray interiorly, "O most Holy Trinity, I adore Thee! My God, my God, I love Thee in the most Blessed Sacrament!"[\[25\]](#) To further illustrate these omissions and truncations, the next section provides what truly, historically happened—according to Lucia

herself.

**Historically (from Lucia's original [Memoirs](#)):** High up on the slope in the Cova da Iria, I [Lucia] was playing with Jacinta and Francisco at building a little stone wall around a clump of furze. 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, halfway down the slope, and almost level with a large holmoak 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 holmoak, 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 which 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 are you from?"

**"I am from heaven."**

"What do you want from me?"

**"I have come to ask you to come here for six months in succession, on the 13th 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 must 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."** (I think she was about 16 years old).

"And Amelia?"

**"She will be in Purgatory until the end of the world."** (It seems to me that she was between 18 and 20 years of age).

**"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 in 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 interior impulse that was also communicated to us, we fell on our knees, repeating in our hearts: "O most Holy Trinity, I adore Thee! My God, my God, I love Thee 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."** Then she began to rise serenely, going upwards towards the east, until she disappeared in the immensity of space. The light that surrounded her seemed to open up a path for her in the firmament, and for this reason we sometimes said that we saw Heaven opening. [\[26\]](#)

## **A Syllabus of Historical and Theological Revisionism**

Finally, in addition to restating a few of the previously examined "inaccuracies," the following list (mainly regarding that which transpired during the Virgin's 1917 apparitions) highlights the main points of the film's legion of "historical and theological" errors:

- **May 13:** In this and successive apparitions, the Virgin **never** walked on the ground. Specifically, Lucia wrote that Our Lady “stood lightly atop a carrasqueira, a young holmoak sapling that stood about three feet high and bore glossy, green leaves”.[27] Sometimes the children could, by a bright light, see her approach; other times she appeared suddenly on the tree. Additionally, the tree itself testified to the Virgin’s invisible but physical presence—as well as to the Church’s doctrine which was in 1950 dogmatically defined by Pope Pius XII who infallibly taught that “the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory”[28]—when, for example, one witness affirmed that during the visions “the branches of the tree were bent down all around” as if someone was stepping upon them. Yet another witness remarked that “when Lucia announced that Our Lady was leaving in the direction of the east, all the branches of the tree picked up and leaned in the same direction, as if Our Lady, as she left, had let her dress rest upon the boughs”...[while] others also noticed that the little holmoak tree’s shoots, which had formerly been standing upright, were bent and inclined toward the east.[29]
- The Virgin did **not** appear as an earthly woman. Neither was she clad in a woven, pink-patterned robe nor a matching veil that crossed her chest. She did not hold an ordinary-looking Rosary. Rather, she shone brighter than the sun, veiled and gowned in pure white, adorned with a yellow Star of Esther (between knee and hem). Hanging from her right hand was a brilliantly-shining Rosary “with white beads, brilliant as pearls, ending in a little cross of silver, which also sparkles.”[30] From neck to waist, she wore a long, luminous yellow cord, from which hung a little ball of light. Lucia affirmed, “The light of Our Lady was white...The light had various tones, yellow and white and various other colors. It was more intense and less intense. It was by the different tones and by the differences of intensity that one saw what was hand and what was mantle and what was face and what was tunic.”[31]
- In each of the four of six apparitions depicted, the film either deletes, severely truncates, or in an odd manner replaces that which either the Virgin or Lucia said.
- **June 13:** For example, at the second apparition, the Virgin did *not* say, “Thank you for praying *for me*.” (The Mother of God does not need us to prayer “for her.” Neither can we defend this badly-phrased sentence to mean the Virgin thanked the children for praying the Rosary.) Nor did she tell Lucia: “Jesus has chosen you. You are going to be the messenger of faith in Mary’s Immaculate Heart.”
  - Regarding the latter, her true words (after saying, “I will take Jacinta and Francisco soon”) were as follows: “But you are to stay here some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you to make me known and loved. He wants to



establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. I promise salvation to those who embrace it, and those souls will be loved by God like flowers placed by me to adorn His throne.”[\[32\]](#)

- Lucia did **not** petulantly cry out, “Why does it have to be *them* and not me?” Rather, Lucia sadly asked, “Am I to stay here all alone?” The Virgin answered, “No, my daughter. Are you suffering a great deal? Don’t lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the path that will lead you to God.”[\[33\]](#) (Again, “the path that will lead you to God” calls to mind *True Devotion to Mary*.)
- The Virgin did *not* show her Immaculate Heart as four nails embedded in her chest, with blood dripping into the dirt. Rather, when Lucia described the Virgin’s June 1917 appearance, she wrote: “In front of the palm of Our Lady’s right hand was a heart encircled by thorns which pierced it. We understood that this was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity, and seeking reparation.”[\[34\]](#)
- During the apparitions, Jacinta *never* conveyed to the crowd the Virgin’s words. In fact, neither she nor her brother spoke.
- None of the many signs witnessed by onlookers are demonstrated. Examples: the delicate white cloud on the holmoak tree, the luminous globe of light, the stars seen at high noon on a clear summer day, the mystical flowers of different shapes (after flowering time), the atmospheric changes of light, temperature, and color (from the rainbow spectrum to pure gold), the shower of small white objects (described as petals, snowflakes, tiny doves, stars, or rose) which gently fell from the sky and disappeared before touching the ground.[\[35\]](#)
- Unlike the film’s portrayal, the Virgin never physically touched Lucia or, for that matter, either of her cousins.
- The prayers given by both the Angel and Virgin are **not** as those recorded by Lucia in her *Memoirs*. In the film, they are either omitted or rewritten, much to the detriment of their rich theological significance (as noted above).
- **July 13:** The Virgin’s prophetic words, contained in the Great Secret of Fatima—including the introductory sentence of the Third Secret—is almost wholly deleted. The scanty bit remaining is, again, reshaped. Yet, this day remains “the central apparition, which the two previous ones prepared for and the three subsequent ones were to confirm in a striking manner by their great miracles”[\[36\]](#) (including the other signs, already mentioned, which are not by this film featured).
  - Therefore, the viewer will **not** hear of **1)** the necessary worldwide devotion to the

Immaculate Heart, **2)** all of the other known prophecies, **3)** the Virgin's "request" (in reality, a gentle but firm command) for the collegial consecration of Russia to the same Immaculate Heart, **4)** the Communion of Reparation on the (Five) First Saturdays, **5)** what will occur if her request is unheeded, or **6)** Our Lady's wonderful promise, "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and an era of peace will be granted to the world."

- **One of the film's worst revisions** places these blasphemous words into the Virgin's mouth, "If **we** do not stop insulting God, there will be a war worse than this one." The Immaculate Virgin, Queen of All Saints, never sinned. Further, it is impossible for the Saints in Heaven to insult God in any way.
  - The three children did **not** find themselves surrounded by hell, and Lucia did **not** ask the Lady, "What was that?" The children knew what they had seen. The Third Secret Vision, as portrayed in the film, completely passes over the "angel with a flaming sword as if to set the world on fire."[\[37\]](#) What is shown not only provides no true context, but the film—continuing with its dishonesty of totally eradicating the Virgin's prophecies and commands—instead has Our Lady stating, "This is what will happen if sinners do not convert." In reality, she told the children plainly, "You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace..."[\[38\]](#)
  - Only one of two prayers which on this day the Virgin gave the children are featured but, merely by changing a few words, it turns the prayer into a "bartering deal" with the Lord, rather than offering a sacrifice for the love of God and neighbor (in other words, *charity*): "O Jesus, I'm offering You this in exchange for Your love, for the conversion of sinners, and to amend for sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary." How contrary this "prayer" is to the divinely revealed truth that God's love is a free gift: "In this is charity: not as though we had loved God, but because He hath first loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Instead, this is the true **Prayer of Reparatory Offering**, as Our Lady gave it: "O Jesus, it is for love of Thee, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary."
  - The other prayer (again, not included in the film) is now known as the **Fatima Decade Prayer**, which the Virgin instructed to be said after each Rosary Mystery: "O my Jesus, forgive us, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need."[\[39\]](#)
- **August 13:** The movie failed to demonstrate the Administrator's kidnapping of the

three children or the signs seen by the people, waiting at the Cova da Iria. Nor does it feature the three-day time frame in which all of the children were interrogated, threatened with death (by being boiled in hot oil), and imprisoned with adult malefactors. Rather, the film merely shows the cousins sitting in front of the Administrator's desk, as he focuses solely on Lucia. Later, the Administrator silently escorts Lucia to a stone-walled pantry with a window. The door shuts and she is kept there until night. There is no reference to the whereabouts of Francisco and Jacinta.

- **August 19:** The film does **not** include the Virgin's unexpected appearance, four days after the children were released from prison. It was on this day that the Virgin said, "If you had not been taken away to the City [*sic*], the Miracle would be even greater."[\[40\]](#) That sentence alone is a stark reminder that every sin wounds the Mystical Body of Christ.
- **September 13:** This apparition, wherein were witnessed many stunning signs, is also wholly omitted.
- **October 13:** The Virgin did **not** say, "Hello, my children. Thank you for coming to see me." After May, when the Virgin initially spoke to allay the children's surprise, Lucia would then be the first to greet Our Lady with the pious question, "What do you want of me?"
  - Although the Virgin did say, "I am the Lady of the Rosary," she neither said of the people, "I am going to lead them to my Son through peace and love" nor did she say, "Some people are never going to believe, even when standing before the face of God. Look!" (She points to the Miracle's commencement.) Rather, it was Our Lady's own ray of light, cast upon the sun, which began the Miracle.
  - After the Miracle of the Sun, the people were not still drenched from the hours of rainfall. They were "suddenly and completely dry—their shoes and stockings, their skin and clothing."[\[41\]](#)
  - The three children did not run to their parents for protection. Rather, during the Miracle, they saw three visions: St. Joseph with the Child Jesus blessing the world; Our Lord and Our Lady (the Virgin dressed in black, as the Sorrowful Mother) standing side-by-side as Our Lord again blessed the world; and finally, the Virgin alone, attired as Our Lady of Mount Carmel. [\[42\]](#)
  - The Virgin's words, as in other scenes, are either deleted or mutilated. For example, her final on-screen word ("Go") is fiction. Lucia wrote that the Virgin's last words on October 13, 1917 were as follows: "Do not offend the Lord our God any longer. He is already deeply offended."[\[43\]](#)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, then, and objectively speaking—what with both the great amount of Fatima resources now available and the many special effects possible in today's movies—this film could have been a spectacular, “theologically and historically accurate” triumph. While reactions among Catholics on the internet range from wildly enthusiastic to those who had anticipated for a more precise production, it should be hoped that no faithful Catholic will deny that the time for wholly living the true Fatima Message is already most late.

That said, “with God, all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). Some claim that this highly fictitious movie has led them to praying the Rosary, proof the Lord is able to draw good from that which is objectively bad: “And we know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints” (Rom. 8:28). May we hope that they daily continue this holy practice, thus drawing them into both learning the true and beautiful Fatima Message and a deeper devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary—the path that leads us to God.

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[1] *Fatima* (2020). Producers are James T. Volk (*The Code*), Dick Lyles (*Little One*), Stefano Bueno, Maribel Lopera Sierra, Marco Pontecorvo, Rose Ganguzza (*Kill Your Darlings*) and Natasha Howes (*The 13th Day*). Director of photography is Vincenzo Carpineta (*Letters to Juliet*). Editor is Alessio Doglione (*20 Cigarettes*). Production design is by Cristina Onori (*All the Money in the World*). Costume design is by Daniela Ciancio (*The Great Beauty*). Original music is by Paolo Buonvino (*Fathers & Daughters*, *Quiet Chaos*). Original song performed by Andrea Bocelli. Source: Anthony D'Alessandro. “[Picturehouse's 'Fatima' Going Into Theaters & PVID At End Of August](#)”. *Deadline*. July 23, 2020.

[2] Grasska, Denis. Press release from *Catholic News Service*. “[For some viewers, 'Fatima' film has sparked devotion, faith](#)”. *Detroit Catholic*. Aug 25, 2020.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] For example, one will find the press release (“For some viewers, ‘Fatima’ film has sparked devotion, faith”) published by [Catholic Standard](#), Aug 26, 2020; [Catholic Philly](#), Aug. 27, 2020; [New Outlook Diocese of Tuscon \(AZ\) Online News](#), Aug. 26, 2020. See also “[The Pilot](#)”. *The Boston Pilot*. Aug 25, 2020.

[5] Ibid. (Emphasis added.)

[6] Ibid. (Emphasis added.)

[7] Ibid. (Emphasis added.)

[8] Graves, Jim. “[Delayed because of pandemic, new Fatima movie to open on August 28th](#)”. *Catholic World Report*. Aug. 18, 2020.

[9] “[Fatima story led filmmaker to Christ](#)”. *Catholic Weekly*. Aug 19, 2020 (emphasis added).

[10] “Aug 23, 2020/Fatima Movie” by [Catholic Review radio podcast](#) for the “Guadalupe Radio Network”. Archdiocese of Baltimore, MD. Time marker (00:49-00:54—1:13).

[11] Ibid. Time marker 1:38—2:41.

[12] It is beyond the scope of this review to point out every Modernist principle woven throughout the film, including but not limited to “vital immanence”. Thus, I will simply urge fellow Catholics to review Pope St. Pius X’s landmark encyclical on the doctrines of the Modernists, [Pascendi Dominici Gregis](#) (Sept. 8, 1907).

[13] Incidentally, my current and ongoing series for CFN, “Our Lady of Fatima: Mother and Teacher” (Part I appeared in the February 2020 issue), quoted Lucia’s descriptions of these apparitions. As in my own Fatima book, I also explained why we can believe with moral certainty that the Angel is St. Michael the Archangel, Prince of the heavenly host.

[14] Sister Maria Lucia. [Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words: The Memoirs of Sister Lucia, the Last Fatima Visionary](#). Lapeer, MI: 2015. Kindle version of the 1976 edition. Second Memoir, Loc. 1342.

[15] Ibid., Loc. 1343.

[16] *My Catholic Faith*. Chapter XLI: The Theological Virtues (<https://catholic-restoration.com/2017/07/01/my-catholic-faith-the-theological-virtues>).

[17] Bartold, Marianna. “Our Lady of Fatima, Mother and Teacher: Angelic Lessons (Part

I)." *Catholic Family News*, Vol. 27, Issue 2 (Feb. 2020).

[18] Sister Mary Lucia, *op. cit.*, Loc. 2877.

[19] *Ibid.*, Loc. 1372.

[20] My digital publishing company, KIC (Keeping It Catholic) has republished the four original [Memoirs](#) as a Kindle edition.

[21] Maria's Rosa's fabricated prayer, in full, was rendered: "Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of mothers, please don't let him says his name. I promise I will work much harder for the Church and to spread the faith. As a family, we are to carry out many penances. Our home will be an example for the Church. We will do this for God. But please, let Manuel come home safe."

[22] Sister Maria Lucia, *op. cit.*, Loc. 1392.

[23] The impression of the bare feet with a gown trailing behind is similar to that of *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* movie in which Lady Galadriel walks over the moss in Lothlorien.

[24] De Marchi, I.M.C., John. [The True Story of Fatima](#). Lapeer, MI: KIC, 2015. Kindle format of the original 1947 edition, with appendix through 1952. "A Popular but Erroneous Version of the First Apparition (Regarding Francisco)," Loc. 4858-4868.

[25] Sister Maria Lucia, *op. cit.*, Loc. 162.

[26] *Ibid.*, Loc. 2842-2880.

[27] Bartold, Marianna. [Fatima: The Signs and Secrets](#). Lapeer, MI: KIC, 2014. (Available in both paperback and Kindle editions.) Kindle Loc. 694.

[28] Pope Pius XII. [Munificentissimus Deus](#) (Defining the Dogma of the Assumption). Nov. 1, 1950. Para. 44.

[29] Bartold, *op. cit.* Loc. 805-806.

[30] Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. *The Whole Truth about Fatima (TWTF), Science and the Facts*, Vol. I. Buffalo, NY: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1989: p. 143.

[31] McGlynn, O.P., Thomas. *Vision of Fatima*. Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1949: p. 64.



[32] Sister Mary Lucia, *op. cit.*, Loc. 2900.

[33] *Ibid.*, Loc. 1450-1451.

[34] *Ibid.*, Loc. 2906.

[35] Bartold, *op. cit.* A great portion of the book is dedicated to explaining the symbolism of these signs, based on Tradition and Scripture.

[36] Frère Michel, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-186.

[37] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), [The Message of Fatima](#). June 26, 2000.

[38] Sister Maria Lucia, *op. cit.*, Loc. 114.

[39] *Ibid.*, Loc. 152.

[40] De Marchi, *op. cit.*, Loc. 1769.

[41] *Ibid.*, Loc. 2616.

[42] *Ibid.*, Loc. 2999-3000.

[43] Sister Maria Lucia, *op. cit.*, Loc. 1679. See also Loc. 2998.