

Saint
FRANCISCO MARTO
of FATIMA

*“Thou hast taught me, O God,
from my youth.”*

—Psalm 70:17

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FRANCISCO MARTO
of FATIMA

Compiled by

Msgr. Joseph A. Cirrincione
(From Fatima, In Lucia's Own Words)

*“And I looked for one that would grieve
together with me, but there was none: and for one
that would comfort me, and I found none.”*

—Psalm 68:21

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“At that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Who thinkest thou is the greater in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus calling unto him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said: Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.”

—*Matthew* 18:1-4

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INTRODUCTION

Earlier this year (1994) as the 60th Anniversary of my priestly Ordination began to draw near (June 9), I began to feel a desire to observe it at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, if it was God's will. "If it was God's will" meant if everything fell into place that had to fall into place for me to go. At 84, one does not contemplate so strenuous a journey without qualms. First, I would take it as a favorable sign if plane space were available on the days I had in mind. Also, a room in my favorite hotel in Fatima had to be available.

But, most of all, my doctor had to assure me that I could stand the strain of a transatlantic flight with its normal attendant problems.

When I received my doctor's consent and approval for the trip, I took it as a sign that it was God's will that I should go to Fatima to observe there my 60th ordination anniversary.

I had another reason for wanting to go to Fatima. I wanted to correct in print a wrong impression I had unintentionally given of Venerable Francisco in a pamphlet I had written about Venerable Jacinta Marto two years previously. In

consulting books on Fatima written before the publication of *Fatima, In Lucia's Own Words* I copied a version of the dialogue between Our Lady and Lucia that went as follows:

"Fear not," the Lady said, "I will not harm-you."

"Where are you from?" Lucia asked.

"I am from Heaven," the beautiful Lady replied.

"What do you want of me?" Lucia asked.

"I come to ask you to come here for six consecutive months, on the thirteenth day, at this same hour. I will tell you later who I am and what I want."

"Am I going to Heaven?" Lucia asked.

"Yes, you shall," the Lady assured her.

"And Jacinta?"

"Yes."

"And Francisco?"

"He too shall go, but he must say many Rosaries."

In quoting the dialogue in the pamphlet on Jacinta, I wrote that Our Lady said regarding Francisco, "He will go also, but *first* he must recite many Rosaries." In her fourth memoir, Lucia quotes Our Lady as saying: "Yes, he shall go, but he must say many Rosaries." She did not say "But *FIRST* he must say many Rosaries."

This puts an entirely different complexion on

the matter. Our Lady did not add a condition to Francisco's going to Heaven. She was not implying the existence of a defect in Francisco that would keep him from going to Heaven. My interpretation of the dialogue now is: Our Lady was simply declaring Francisco's mission. It would be the frequent recitation of the Rosary.

Incidentally, during the apparition, Francisco did not see the Lady nor hear her speak, though he could hear Lucia talking. When Lucia brought this to Our Lady's attention, she replied: "Let him say the Rosary and he too will see me."

Happy at Our Lady's promise that he would go to Heaven, Francisco exclaimed: "Oh, my dear Lady! I'll say as many Rosaries as you want." Later we will see how faithful the little boy was to that promise.

Thus I had two reasons for going to Fatima: in thanksgiving for my 60 years of priesthood and to obtain permission to use Sister Lucia's Memoirs in writing a booklet on Venerable Francisco.

Fatima, In Lucia's Own Words was published by Father Louis Kondor, SVD, Vice-Postulator of the cause for the beatifications of Venerable Francisco and Venerable Jacinta Marto. The Postulation Centre in Fatima which he heads has the rights to *Fatima, In Lucia's Own Words*.

Thus I needed not only Sister Lucia's permission, but Father Kondor's as well.

Before I left for Fatima, I wrote to Mother Pri-

oress of the Coimbra Carmelite Community, of which Sister Lucia is a member, to tell her of my pilgrimage to Fatima and of my intention to pay her a visit while there. She replied by extending an invitation to visit the Convent and promised prayers for a safe trip.

While in Fatima, I paid a visit first to the Monastery Pius XII, a community of English-speaking cloistered Dominican nuns where I had been a guest many times before in their chaplain's quarters. They offered to keep in touch with Mother Prioress in Coimbra and let me know what day would be best for a visit to Coimbra.

Divine Providence, which had smiled so graciously on my pilgrimage thus far, continued to do so, for the day settled on for my trip to Coimbra was June 16, the very day the Dominican Sisters were to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of their foundation in Fatima. Father Kondor and the retired Bishop of Fatima-Leiria were both to be present for the occasion. I was invited as well, but had to pass it up because a flare-up of a chronic bronchial condition made it imprudent to attend the anniversary celebration and to travel to Coimbra on the same day.

I hired a car and driver for the hour's ride to Coimbra and reached there at the appointed time.

The visit with the Carmelite Community went very well, and I was more than repaid for my pains by receiving the permission I desired from

both the Coimbra Carmel and Father Kondor, who was contacted while still at Fatima.

Which finally brings us to the story of *Ven. Francisco Marto Of Fatima*, as told by Sister Lucia in *Fatima, In Lucia's Own Words*.

Msgr. Joseph A. Cirrincione
Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel
July 16, 1994

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Since this book's first printing, Francisco Marto was canonized by Pope Francis. On May 13, 2017, Francisco Marto joined the great cloud of witnesses whom we rely on for intercessory strength. His sister Jacinta was canonized on the same day, and they became the first child saints who are not martyrs in our Church's history. The final miracle attributed to Saints Francisco and Jacinta occurred when a ten-year-old boy was miraculously healed of major brain damage. His father and loved ones prayed for Francisco and Jacinta's intercession. Only a few days later, the boy was totally and miraculously healed. Saints Francisco and Jacinta, pray for us!

Saint

FRANCISCO MARTO
of FATIMA

FRANCISCO'S CHARACTER

(From *Fatima, In Lucia's Own Words*)

FRANCISCO'S SPIRITUALITY

I am going to begin then, Your Excellency, by writing what God wills to bring to my mind about Francisco. I hope that Our Lord will make him know in Heaven what I am writing about him on earth, so that he may intercede for me with Jesus and Mary, especially during these coming days.

The affection which bound me to Francisco was just one of kinship, and one which had its origin in the graces which Heaven deigned to grant us.

Apart from his features and his practice of virtue, Francisco did not seem at all to be Jacinta's brother. Unlike her, he was neither capricious nor vivacious. On the contrary, he was quiet and submissive by nature.

When we were at play and he won the game, if anyone made a point of denying him his rights as winner, he yielded without more ado and merely said: "You think you won? That's all right! I don't mind!"

He showed no love for dancing, as Jacinta

did; he much preferred playing the flute while the others danced.

In our games he was quite lively; but few of us liked to play with him, as he nearly always lost. I must confess that I myself did not always feel too kindly disposed towards him, as his naturally calm temperament exasperated my own excessive vivacity. Sometimes I caught him by the arm, made him sit down on the ground or on a stone, and told him to keep still; he obeyed me as if I had real authority over him. Afterwards, I felt sorry and went and took him by the hand, and he would come along with me as good-humoredly as though nothing had happened. If one of the other children insisted on taking away something belonging to him, he said: "Let them have it! What do I care?"

I recall how, one day, he came to my house and was delighted to show me a handkerchief with a picture of Our Lady of Nazaré on it, which someone had brought him from the seaside. All the children gathered round him to admire it. The handkerchief was passed from hand to hand, and in a few minutes it disappeared. We looked for it, but it was nowhere to be found. A little later, I found it myself in another small boy's pocket. I wanted to take it away from him, but he insisted that it was his own and that someone had brought him one from the beach as well. To put an end to the quarrel, Francisco then went up to him and

said: "Let him have it! What does a handkerchief matter to me?" My own opinion is that, if he had lived to manhood, his greatest defect would have been his attitude of "never mind!"

When I was seven and began to take our sheep out to pasture, he seemed to be quite indifferent. In the evenings, he waited for me in my parents' yard with his little sister, but this was not out of affection for me, but rather to please her. As soon as Jacinta heard the tinkling of the sheep bells, she ran out to meet me; whereas, Francisco waited for me, sitting on the stone steps leading up to our front door. Afterwards, he came with us to play on the old threshing floor, while we watched for Our Lady and the Angels to light their lamps [the stars]. He eagerly counted the stars with us, but nothing enchanted him as much as the beauty of sunrise or sunset. As long as he could still glimpse one last ray of the setting sun, he made no attempt to watch for the first lamp to be lit in the sky.

"No lamp is as beautiful as Our Lord's," he used to remark to Jacinta, who much preferred Our Lady's lamp because, as she explained, "It doesn't hurt our eyes." Enraptured, he watched the sunrays glinting on the window panes of the homes in the neighboring villages, or glistening in the drops of water which spangled the trees and furze bushes of the serra, making them

shine like so many stars; in his eyes these were a thousand times more beautiful than the Angels' lamps.

When he persisted in pleading with his mother to let him take care of the flock and therefore come along with me, it was more to please Jacinta than anything else, for she much preferred Francisco's company to that of her brother John. One day his mother, already quite annoyed, refused this permission, and he answered with his usual tranquility: "Mother, it doesn't matter to me. It's Jacinta who wants me to go." He confirmed this on yet another occasion. One of my companions came to my house to invite me to go with her, as she had a particularly good pasturage in view for that day. As the sky was overcast, I went to my aunt's house to inquire who was going out that day, Francisco and Jacinta, or their brother John; in case of the latter, I preferred the company of my former companion. My aunt had already decided that, as it looked like rain, John should go. But Francisco went to his mother again, and insisted on going himself. He received a curt and decided "No," whereupon he exclaimed:

"It's all the same with me. It is Jacinta who feels badly about it."

NATURAL INCLINATIONS

What Francisco enjoyed most, when we were out on the mountains together, was to perch on

the top of the highest rock, and sing or play his flute. If his little sister came down to run races with me, he stayed up there entertaining himself with his music and song.

He always took part in our games when we invited him, but he seldom waxed enthusiastic, remarking: "I'll go, but I know I'll be the loser." These were the games we knew and found most entertaining: pebbles, forfeits, pass the ring, buttons, hit the mark, quoits, and card games such as the bisca game, turning up the kings, queens and knaves, and so on. We had two packs of cards; I had one and they had the other. Francisco liked best to play cards, and the bisca was his favorite game.

FRANCISCO SEES THE ANGEL

During the Apparition of the Angel, he prostrated like his sister and myself, carried away by the same supernatural force that moved us to do so; but he learned the prayer by hearing us repeat it, since, he told us, he heard nothing of what the Angel said.

Afterwards, when we prostrated to say that prayer, he was the first to feel the strain of such a posture; but he remained kneeling or sitting, and still praying until we had finished. Later he said: "I am not able to stay like that for a long time, like you. My back aches so much that I can't do it."

At the second Apparition of the Angel, down

by the well, Francisco waited a few moments after it was over, then asked:

“You spoke to the Angel. What did he say to you?”

“Didn’t you hear?”

“No. I could see that he was talking to you. I heard what you said to him; but what he said to you, I don’t know.”

As the supernatural atmosphere in which the Angel left us, had not yet entirely disappeared, I told him to ask Jacinta or myself next day.

“Jacinta, you tell me what the Angel said.”

“I’ll tell you tomorrow. Today I can’t talk about it.”

Next day, as soon as he came up to me, he asked me:

“Did you sleep last night? I kept thinking about the Angel, and what he could have said.”

I then told him all that the Angel had said at the first and second Apparitions. But it seemed that he had not received an understanding of all that the words meant, for he asked:

“Who is the Most High? What is the meaning of ‘The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications?’ . . .”

Having received an answer, he remained deep in thought for a while and then broke in with another question. But my mind was not yet free, so I told him to wait until the next day because at that moment I was unable to speak. He waited quite contentedly, but he did not let

slip the very next opportunity of putting more questions. This made Jacinta say to him:

“Listen! We shouldn’t talk much about these things.”

When we spoke about the Angel, I don’t know what it was that we felt.

“I don’t know how I feel,” Jacinta said. “I can no longer talk or sing or play. I haven’t strength enough for anything.”

“Neither have I,” replied Francisco, “but what of it? The Angel is more beautiful than all this. Let’s think about him.”

In the third Apparition, the presence of the supernatural made itself felt more intensely still. For several days even Francisco did not venture to speak. Later he said:

“I love to see the Angel, but the worst of it is that, afterwards, we are unable to do anything. I couldn’t even walk. I don’t know what was the matter with me.”

In spite of that, after the third Apparition of the Angel, it was he who noticed that it was getting dark and who drew our attention to the fact and thought we should take our flocks back home.

Once the first few days were over and we had returned to normal, Francisco asked:

“The Angel gave you Holy Communion, but what was it that he gave to Jacinta and me?”

“It was Holy Communion, too,” replied Jacinta, with inexpressible joy. “Didn’t you see

that it was the Blood that fell from the Host?"

"I felt that God was within me, but I did not know how!"

Then, prostrating on the ground, he and his sister remained for a long time, saying over and over again the prayer of the Angel, "Most Holy Trinity. . ."

Little by little, the atmosphere of the supernatural faded away, and by the 13th of May, we were playing with almost as much enjoyment and freedom of spirit as we had done before.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE FIRST APPARITION

The Apparition of Our Lady plunged us once more into the atmosphere of the supernatural, but this time more gently. Instead of that annihilation in the Divine Presence, which exhausted us even physically, it left us filled with peace and expansive joy, which did not prevent us from speaking afterwards of what had happened. However, with regard to the light communicated to us when Our Lady opened her hands and everything connected with this light, we experienced a kind of interior impulse that compelled us to keep silent.

Afterwards, we told Francisco all that Our Lady had said. He was overjoyed and expressed the happiness he felt when he heard of the promise that he would go to Heaven. Crossing his hands on his breast, he exclaimed, "Oh, my dear Our Lady! I'll say as many rosaries as you

want!” And from then on, he made a habit of moving away from us, as though going for a walk. When we called him and asked him what he was doing, he raised his hand and showed me his rosary. If we told him to come and play, and say the Rosary with us afterwards, he replied:

“I’ll pray then as well. Don’t you remember that Our Lady said I must pray many Rosaries?”

He said to me on one occasion: “I loved seeing the Angel, but I loved still more seeing Our Lady. What I loved most of all was to see Our Lord in that light from Our Lady which penetrated our hearts. I love God so much! But He is very sad because of so many sins! We must never commit any sins again.”

I have already said, in the second account about Jacinta, how he was the one who gave me the news that she had broken our agreement not to say anything. As he shared my opinion that the matter should be kept secret, he added sadly: “As for me, when my mother asked me if it were true, I had to say that it was, so as not to tell a lie.”

From time to time, he said: “Our Lady told us that we would have much to suffer, but I don’t mind. I’ll suffer all that she wishes! What I want is to go to Heaven!”

One day, when I showed how unhappy I was over the persecution now beginning both in my family and outside, Francisco tried to encourage me with these words:

“Never mind! Didn’t Our Lady say that we would have much to suffer, to make reparation to Our Lord and to her own Immaculate Heart for all the sins by which They are offended? They are so sad! If we can console Them with these sufferings, how happy we shall be!”

When we arrived at our pasturage a few days after Our Lady’s first Apparition, he climbed up to the top of a steep rock, and called out to us:

“Don’t come up here; let me stay here alone.”

“All right.” And off I went, chasing butterflies with Jacinta. We no sooner caught them than we made the sacrifice of letting them fly away, and we never gave another thought to Francisco. When lunch time came, we missed him and went to call him:

“Francisco, don’t you want to come for your lunch?”

“No, you eat.”

“And to pray the Rosary?”

“That, yes, later on. Call me again.”

When I went to call him again, he said to me:

“You come up here and pray with me.”

We climbed up to the peak, where the three of us could scarcely find room to kneel down, and I asked him:

“But what have you been doing all this time?”

“I am thinking about God, Who is so sad because of so many sins! If only I could give Him joy!”