

Faith in 5 – Adults
Marian Apparitions / Our Lady of Fatima



1. **What is an apparition?** An apparition is an appearance. In the Catholic Church, it is an appearance of a holy figure to someone who is faithful. Some may report an actual presence of a being, or an image and may involve conversations. A Marian apparition is one where the Blessed Virgin Mary is present; when she appears, she usually offers a message. The theme of her messages centers around deepening our faith and relationship with Jesus. “For an apparition to be worthy of belief and devotion within the Catholic Church, it must be approved by the bishop of the area where the apparition took place. This approval assures the presence of God...and protects the community of the faithful from influences that may be contrary to the Faith” ([Source](#)).

2. **How do apparitions become approved?** The local bishop is authorized to approve an apparition; he may defer this to higher Church authority especially if there is uncertainty. The Vatican outlines investigative criteria. If the bishop approves the apparition, then the site is deemed worthy of pilgrimage and devotion. Vatican approved apparitions may take years to investigate, to gather enough evidence to confirm its distinction. Vatican apparitions tend to be more widely known and celebrated but are no more important than a bishop approved one.
The Church [outlined these steps to ascertain the authenticity of an apparition:](#)
 - a. Determination if the apparition is spiritually positive or negative in nature
 - b. Character assessment of the person who has had the apparition (mental and spiritual).
 - c. Local church authorities qualify the authenticity and divine character of the apparition. Is there moral certainty that something miraculous has occurred?
If the apparition proves to be positive, the Church will allow a devotion to be celebrated.

3. **What are some Marian Apparitions?** Well-known Marian apparitions include Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Knock, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. We celebrate the feast of **Our Lady of Fatima on May 13**.

4. In 1916, while tending their sheep in Valinhos, Portugal, an angel appeared to three children - Lucia dos Santos, and her cousins Jacinta Marto and Francisco Marto. The angel spoke to them about prayer, sacrifice, and penance. On May 13, 1917, Our Lady appeared to the children in Cova de Iria, in Fatima. She was brighter than the sun, in a mantle and holding a rosary. The children were instructed to devote themselves to the Holy Trinity and pray the rosary to bring peace and an end to the war. Our Lady promised to appear to the children on the 13th of every month and would reveal a miracle on October 13th.
Many people were suspicious of the children, claiming their apparitions were a hoax, and their messages politically motivated. At one point, the children were detained and questioned. However, they maintained their deep spiritual devotion and never wavered in their recalling of the events. The children claimed to have been visited by the Blessed Mother six times in 1917.

5. On October 13, 1917, several thousand people (which included believers and non-believers) were gathered at the site where the three children said Mary would appear and perform a miracle. There had been a deluge of rain for at least a day, but at 2 pm, the sun came out for 10 minutes. Eyewitness accounts were published in the newspaper of the sun dancing, spinning or moving wildly in the sky. There were reports of the ground and clothes becoming completely dry. Many expressed seeing distinct colors in the sky. Some witnesses were from 25 miles away. Others did not have the same experiences. It was scientifically proposed that those who fixated their gaze on the sun suffered a retinal distortion due to the prolonged glaring.

An Italian Catholic priest, Father John De Marchi, was in Fátima from 1943 to 1950, to research this event, known as the Miracle of the Sun. He conducted hundreds of eyewitness interviews. In 1940, Pope Pius XII approved the Fatima apparitions.

6. There were three secrets that Lucia believed the Blessed Mother gave. The first secret revealed a vision of Hell; the second secret was a desire through Her Immaculate Heart to bring peace and conversion of souls to God. The second secret also concerned the conversion and consecration of Russia. There was great secrecy regarding the third secret and controversy about its interpretation when it was publicly revealed in 2000.

Both Pope St. John Paul the II and Pope Benedict XVI cautioned against trying to make sense of these secrets to satisfy one's desire to understand or predict the future. The overall message of Fatima revealed through Our Lady is penance and conversion, with a sincere heart to God. At its core is prayer, drawing near to Jesus through the mysteries of the Holy Rosary. Our Lady reminds us to follow Jesus and to do whatever He tells us to do. Despite what is going on in our world today, Jesus says to trust in Him, who has overcome the world (John 16: 31-33).

[The three secrets and the Message of Fatima](#) (Vatican source)

PARDON PRAYER

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. Amen.

*Delivered by the Angel of Peace during the First Apparition of the Angel to the three shepherd children of Fatima in spring of 1916.

DECADE PRAYER

O My Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell.

Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need of Thy mercy. Amen.

*Delivered by Our Lady during the Third Apparition of Our Lady of Fatima to the three shepherd children on July 13, 1917. Traditionally prayed after the 'Glory Be' for each decade of the Rosary.

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