

THE 13TH DAY

THE TRUE STORY OF FATIMA

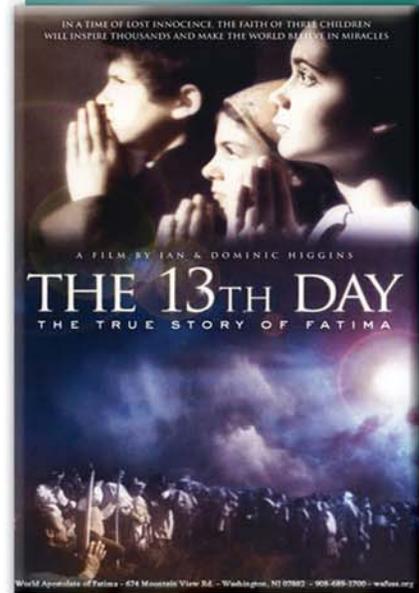
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Introduction to The 13th Day

The apparition of Mary at Fatima is one of the most amazing events of the 20th Century. It is a “private revelation,” which the Church has judged to be authentic. In other words, while the Church does not *require* Catholics to believe in this event as an article of faith, she nonetheless has declared that – upon weighing all the evidence – it is sound to conclude that the Blessed Virgin did in fact appear to the children to deliver her message and that devotion to Our Lady of Fatima and meditation upon her message is salutary and in accord with the Catholic faith.

One key feature of authentic private revelation is that it always points us back to the public revelation of Jesus entrusted to the Church and handed down in her Tradition. The apparitions at Fatima do this in a profound way, and the film *The 13th Day* is likewise aimed at showing not only these astounding visions, but their relationship with the life of Catholic faith lived by the three visionaries Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco. Through this, the film calls us to examine our own call to live that life fully as well. The point of private revelation, then, is to recall us to a fuller faith in the public revelation: the ordinary life, worship and teaching found in the Catholic Church, centered on our participation in the life of the Triune God and his Communion of Saints.

Therefore, in looking at *The 13th Day*, we will focus on how these extraordinary signs reveal to us the truth of the Catholic faith and call us to live that faith as deeply, charitably and truly as possible. So without further ado, let’s take a look at some questions about the film, followed by some questions about how we can apply the events of Fatima to our own lives.



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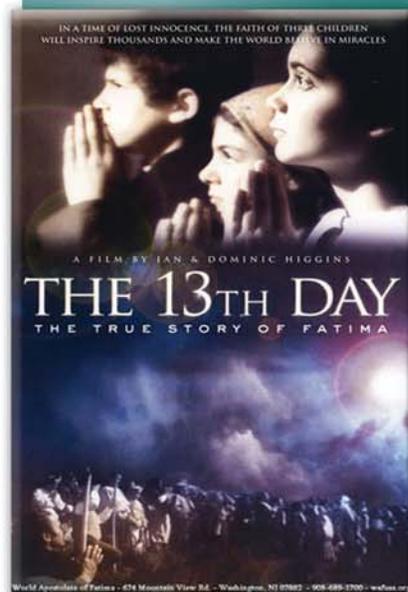
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1. Read Revelation 12. Why does the film open with that quote and why does it use such cosmic imagery before bringing the camera to rest on the convent where Lucia sits writing? What is the situation in the world and in Portugal at the time of the apparitions? What is the situation of the children? Are they dishonest, mentally unstable, or given to making up wild tales? What might be some of the reasons that they are chosen for this revelation? What does the quotation from Matthew 11:25 at the end of the film suggest?
2. What does the Blessed Virgin ask of the children in her first appearance to them and why? Read Colossians 1:24. What does it mean to say that suffering will help save souls? How does the rejection they receive begin to fulfill the request made by the Virgin? How are the initial claims of the children received by the different people in their lives? How does even the acceptance of their message contribute to their sufferings?
3. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (paragraph 67) tells us:

Throughout the ages, there have been so-called “private” revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Guided by the Magisterium of the Church, the sensus fidelium knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church.

Christian faith cannot accept “revelations” that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such “revelations.”

Why is the priest so cautious when an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary is claimed? Does this mean that he is without faith or could it point to something else in his thinking? What else might that be? Is he uncharitable in his skepticism? What effect(s) do the priest’s doubts have on Lucia? Can you think of characters who *are* uncharitable in their skepticism? What reasons do the people who believe the children give for their trust in the story of the apparitions? How do the apparitions help people live the revelation of Christ more fully in this period of history? Do the apparitions add anything new to the revelation of Christ handed down by the Church from Jesus and the apostles?



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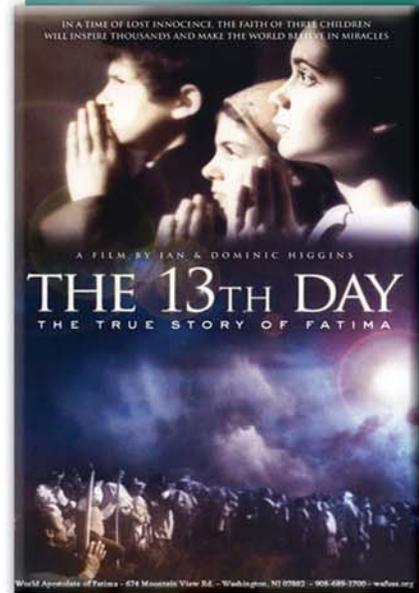
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4. What is the message that Mary gives to the children, which they are to communicate to the world? Detail each aspect of this message. What does Pope John Paul II mean when he says that the message of Fatima is a kind of summary of the 20th Century?
5. Why does Artur Santos kidnap the children? If he does not believe them, why does he care what secrets Mary has told them? How do the children respond to the intimidation used against them? What is the effect of their behavior on their cellmates?
6. What is Lucia's father afraid of as he awaits the sign the children promise? What are the effects of the Miracle of the Sun on the various characters in the crowd?
7. What becomes of the seers afterward? How do they greet their destiny?



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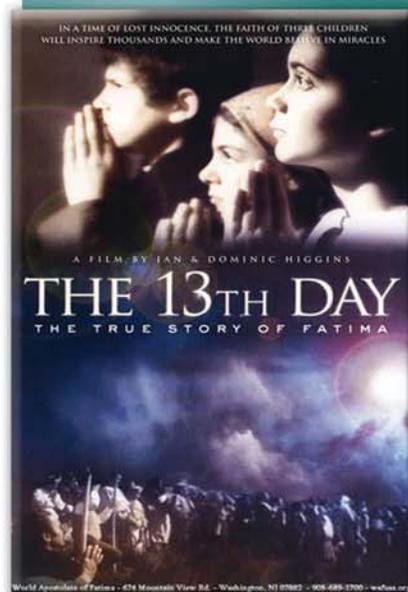
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1. At Fatima, “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are” (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). Can you think of a time in your life when God raised up the humble and brought down the mighty? Have you ever been in a situation where God has asked you to be faithful despite the fact that you felt unworthy and incapable of the task? What happened?
2. The children at Fatima are given a frightening vision of Hell, of a terrible war to come and of the spread of atheistic communism should Mary’s requests go unheeded, but they are also told that “in the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph.” They are also asked to offer sacrifices as well as prayers. Have you ever had an encounter with evil? Have you ever had the experience of encountering evil in yourself? Have you ever experienced God’s grace delivering you or someone you love from evil? Have you ever offered sacrifices on behalf of somebody else? What was that like? What happened?
3. Mary’s conversations with the children are at once overwhelming, but also gentle and motherly. Her appearance in the fullness of heavenly glory is rapturous and terrifying, but also beautiful and comforting. Lucia’s questions to her are frank and honest and to the point. What is your relationship with Mary like? Do you find it hard or easy to talk with her? What do you talk about? Is it more natural for you to think of her as “Mama” or as the awesome Queen of Heaven? Or do you do both? How do you respond to the requests that she made of us through the children at Fatima?
4. One thing that marks the Fatima apparitions is the alternation of terror and deep peace. Have you ever experienced a time when God had to show you hard truths in order to show you the depth of his saving love? What was that like? Has God ever called you to do something that was, humanly speaking, impossible for you to accomplish and then supplied you with the grace to do it? What happened?
5. The children who witnessed Mary’s apparition at Fatima had their faith put to a severe test by the cruelty of Artur Santos. Have you ever experience persecution as a test of your trust in God and your faithfulness in obeying him? What happened?
6. The children were overwhelmingly vindicated by the Miracle of the Sun, witnessed by 70,000 people. Have you ever had an experience where God vindicated your trust in him? Have you ever struggled with having to await your vindication? Are you perhaps still awaiting God’s vindication of your faith? What is that like?
7. Francisco and Jacinta both went to their death with a few years of the visions in the great flu epidemic. Yet both of them died in peace and with the joy of knowing that Heaven awaited them. What is your attitude toward death? Do you fear it? Anticipate it with joy? Lucia is told that she will remain on earth for a while longer (since it will be her task to tell the story of Fatima). Do you feel that God has a mission for you to complete? What is it and how do you draw on the grace of God to do it?



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Books:

The Message of Fatima by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, available on-line at:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html

What Happened at Fatima

by Leo Madigan (Catholic Truth Society/Ignatius Press) 2000.

Fatima for Today: The Urgent Marian Message of Hope

by Fr. Andrew Apostoli (Ignatius Press) 2010.

Our Lady of Fatima

by William T. Walsh (Image Books) 1954.

Fatima in Lucia's Own Words

by Fr. Louis Kondor (Postulation Centre, Fatima, Portugal) 1976.

A Still, Small Voice: A Practical Guide on Reported Revelations

by Fr. Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R. (Ignatius Press) 1993.

Mary, Mother of the Son by Mark P. Shea

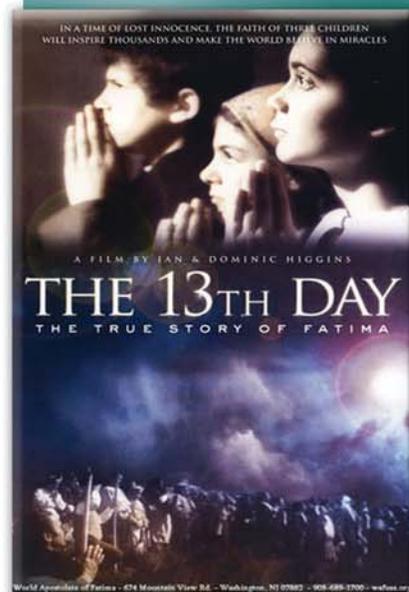
by Mark P. Shea (Catholic Answers) 2009.

Video:

Finding Fatima (Ignatius Press) 2010.

Apparitions at Fatima (EWTN) 1992.

The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima (Warner) 1952.



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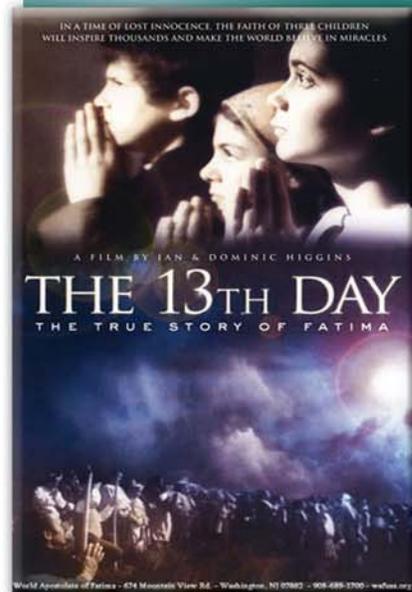
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1. The opening is a visual reminder of the fact that the events of Fatima are to be viewed from the perspective of the heavenly conflict between God and the powers of hell, not merely from an earthly perspective about political events. Revelation 12 gives us this heavenly perspective and reminds us that Mary is not merely the Mother of Jesus, but also of “the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus” (Rev 12). It is in light of this cosmic perspective, where we “stand against the wiles of the devil” and “are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:11-12), that we then turn to Lucia’s account of the situation in the world and in Portugal at the time of the apparitions. That situation is dark. World War I, the Russian Revolution, the rise of Communist and totalitarian systems, and a growing hatred of the Church are all on the rise. However, the children at Fatima are still largely untouched by this, living a quiet life of simplicity. The children are neither dishonest, mentally unstable, nor given to making up wild tales. It is precisely for this reason that they, in their simplicity, are the perfect witnesses to the apparitions. The quotation from Matthew 11:25 sums up the logic of Heaven: “Father,...to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children.”
2. She asks if they would be willing to suffer for God, because their suffering will save many sinners. In Colossians 1:24 Paul says, “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.” Paul’s point is that we must join our sufferings to those of Jesus so that we “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1). Our sufferings, joined with Christ’s, both bring glory to God as Jesus does with the sacrificial offering of himself, but also bring grace to the souls of sinners. The rejection, scorn, and hostility the children receive from the family members and townspeople already begin to fulfill Mary’s request that they be willing to suffer. This is only intensified as their priest suggests that the vision may be from the devil and Lucia’s mother calls her a fraud and a blasphemer. Not all disbelieve them, however, and with each passing month, more and more people come to see the children go to meet the vision on the 13th day. Even the acceptance of their message causes the children suffering because the growing crowds are trampling and destroying their family’s crops and they never get any peace due to the constant stream of supplicants looking for cures and various divine favors.



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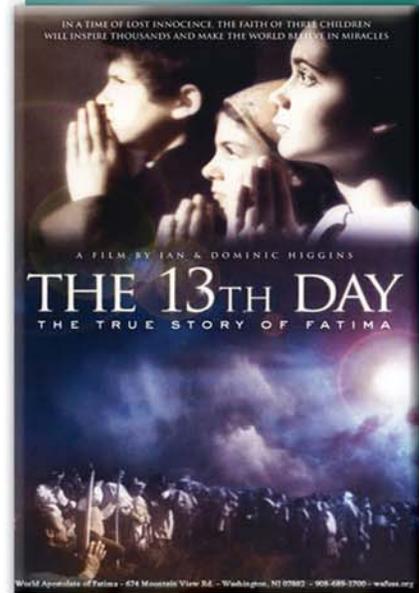
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3. The priest is cautious because it is his duty as pastor of the flock of Jesus Christ to make sure that there is no deception, either human or demonic, involved. Therefore, he is not acting faithlessly, but with proper faith by doing his duty in discerning the nature and origins of the visions. Therefore, he is skeptical, but not without charity to the children. His questions are asked in a genuine desire to know the truth of things and not merely to reject the children with scorn. Lucia is filled with agonizing doubts because of the priest's doubts. She wonders if the vision might be a demonic counterfeit. Some of the characters (notably the scornful village woman) display skepticism without charity, assuming the worst of the children and berating them without pausing to wonder if there might be something to their stories. Those who display trust in the children base their trust on their character, integrity and simplicity. They recognize that these children are simply not the types to lie, nor are they mentally unstable. On the contrary, they see the goodness of the children and therefore trust in their word. The apparitions help people live the revelation of Christ more fully by presenting us again with the urgency of Christ's call to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 4:17). They present us once again with the fact that a real choice between Heaven and Hell is before us, as well as with the reality that our choices to obey or disobey Christ will have real and lasting affects both on earth and in Heaven. In Mary's call for penance, sacrifice, prayer, reparation and consecration to her Immaculate Heart so as to become a more perfect disciple of Jesus like her, we hear no new addition to the Faith, but a repetition of the core teaching of Jesus and the apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).
4. The Lady tells them not to be afraid and asks the children if they are willing to suffer for God because their suffering will save many sinners. They are to pray the Rosary for peace each day and return on the 13th day of the next six months at the same hour. At her final visit, she will perform a miracle so that all can see that she has indeed been there. She tells Lucia to learn to read and write because she will make her message known to the world.



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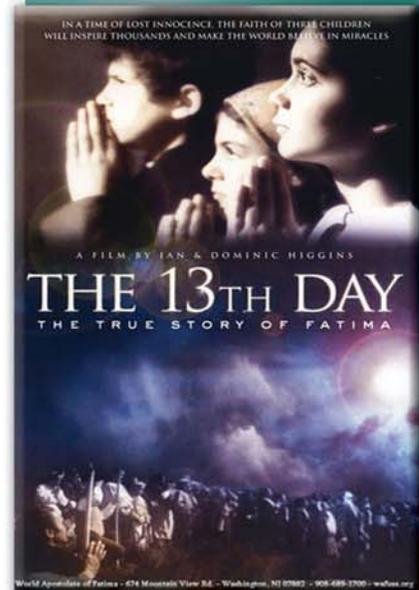
In her July 13th apparition, she gives the children three secrets:

- 1) A vision of Hell.
- 2) A warning that unless people turn to God, he will punish the world with a Second World War within the next generation. To prevent this, she requests that the Pope consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart. If he does not act on this request, godless men will spread their communism throughout the world, causing war, famine and persecutions of the Church, martyring many good people.
- 3) The children are given a vision of the Holy Father making his way through a ruined city and told he will have much to suffer and will be shot. They see an angel shouting, "Penance! Penance! Penance!" He points his sword toward the earth as if to set the world on fire. But the flames were stopped by the splendor of the light Mary radiates toward him. Mary promises that, in the end, her Immaculate Heart will triumph and a period of peace will be granted to the world.

In her final appearance to the children, Mary, filled with pain, says we must turn to God, for he is already so much offended. She promises to take Francisco and Jacinta to Heaven very soon, but that Lucia must remain on earth a while longer. She tells her not to be afraid, because she would be with her always.

Pope John Paul II means that the visions given the children show us both the horrors of the 20th Century, but also the grace of God poured out through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the prayers and sacrifices offered by the people of God in union with Christ Jesus which ultimately triumph over the powers of Hell.

5. Santos kidnaps the children because he is a militant anti-Christian who believes that religion is dangerous superstition that must be suppressed. He wishes to force the children to confess their secrets because he wants to break their spirits and destroy the growing popularity of their following by exposing it as a hoax. The children respond with resolute courage to his intimidation, even to the point of being willing to do to keep the secrets entrusted to them. Their cellmates are moved by the purity of the children's devotion and eventually join them in their prayers.



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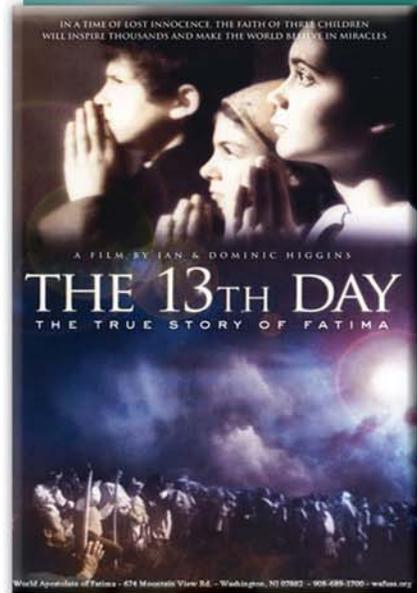
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6. Lucia's father is afraid that the crowd will become a lynch mob should the promised sign fail to occur. When the miracle of the Sun occurs, many thousands come to faith in the sign. Some are healed. Some are filled with shame at their disbelief. Some are terrified. Some are filled with awe at the greatness of God. Some cry out for mercy. Some are converted to the Catholic faith.
7. As Mary promised, Francisco and Jacinta die soon after the apparitions. Francisco suffers greatly with influenza, but dies without complaint. Jacinta dies a year later, alone in a hospital in Lisbon – her final sacrifice to God. Her body was found to be incorrupt when exhumed fifteen years later. Lucia became a Carmelite nun and lived in seclusion until her death on February 13, 2005.



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