

FINDING FATIMA

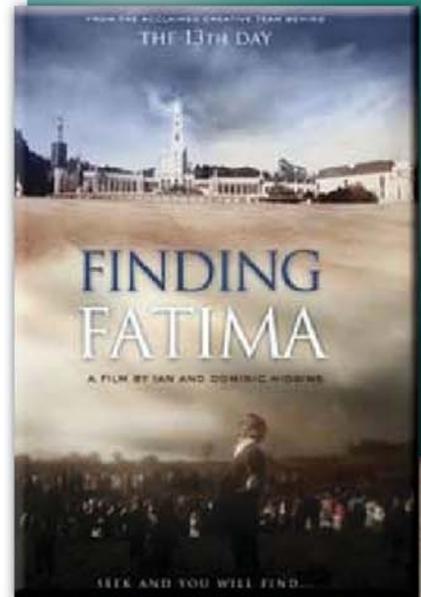
study guide

Introduction to Finding Fatima

While *The 13th Day* is a dramatization, it is in *Finding Fatima* that we penetrate more deeply into the story of Fatima. *Finding Fatima* is a fascinating documentary-style film that shows how Fatima was a response to a prayer from the heart of the Church, a warning of the monstrous evils the 20th Century would unleash and the promise that, despite all, Mary's Immaculate Heart will triumph.

Finding Fatima reminds us that beneath the beautiful story of Fatima there lies a bedrock of hard historic fact that places this incredible story, not in the world of myth or “once upon a time,” but in a real time not so long ago and place not so far away – with eyewitnesses, friends and family of the visionaries who reported the apparitions, and the 70,000 witnesses to the Miracle of the Sun.

In this study guide, we will look at the testimony of these witnesses; the meaning of the apparitions and the signs given at Fatima; and at the way in which the message of Fatima is spreading and can be lived today.



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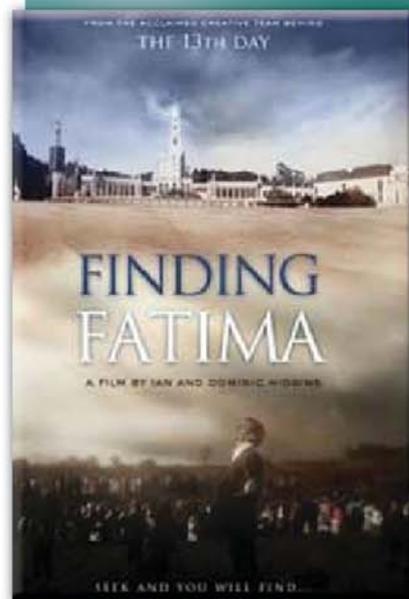
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1. *Finding Fatima* opens with a shocking and dramatic event: the bombing of Hiroshima. To what did the Jesuits who survived the blast attribute their survival? What is the historical and cultural background of the Fatima apparition? What is happening in the world, in Portugal and in the Church in the time leading up to the apparitions?
2. How were the children prepared for the visions of Mary? What happened? Why was this preparation so important? How did the children respond to the preparations?
3. What were the children like? What effect did the apparitions of the angel and Mary have on them?
4. What happened on May 13, 1917? What did Mary show the children? What did she tell them about their destinies? How did they respond? How did Lucia's mother respond to their story? How did her priest respond? Why was Lucia upset by the priest's response? What did Jacinta say to Lucia about her fears? How did others respond, especially outside the village?
5. What did the Lady reveal to the children on July 13? What were the first two secrets? What did the Lady ask of the children and of the Church? What was the promised sign that the next world war would begin? Why was the third secret not revealed?
6. What happened on August 13? When Mary appeared on August 19, what happened? What began to change the heart of Lucia's mother?
7. Who does the film cite as witnesses? Summarize the testimony of the witnesses to the Miracle of the Sun. Why is the explanation of mass hallucination or natural phenomena inadequate to account for the miracle? What were some of the fruits of the Miracle?
8. How was Portugal transformed by Fatima? What became of the children? What prompted Lucia's bishop to ask her to write her account of Jacinta and Fatima? What happened on January 25, 1938? How did Pope John Paul II regard the Fatima prophecies? What is the third secret of Fatima and what does it mean? How does Pope Benedict XVI understand the visions of Fatima? What is the core message of Fatima?



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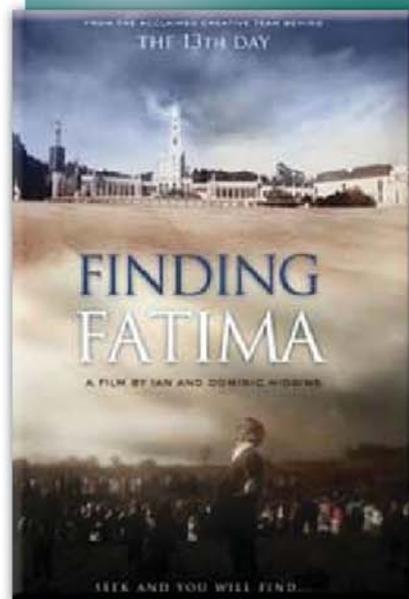
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1. What parallels can you see between the situation in the world at the time of the apparitions at Fatima and the situation in the world today? Does that leave you unmoved? Make you feel afraid? Inspire you to pray more? Inspire some other feeling or resolution? The children were living in a sort of oasis far from the many catastrophes in the world. Do you have something in your life that is an oasis? What is it? Has God ever invaded your life and placed a call upon it? What was that like? How did you respond?
2. The children were prepared for their mission by angelic visitations. Has God ever taken you through a time of preparation for something he was calling you to do? What happened? How did you discern your mission? Are you struggling with frustration over not knowing, or not being able to accomplish, your mission? What are some concrete steps you might take to discern and live out your mission?
3. Have you ever found yourself faced with hostility from family and friends, or self-doubt as you have attempted to obey God? What was that like? What did you do to overcome these things? Have you ever tried to support somebody else in their mission when they are struggling? What did you do? How did they respond?
4. The children were entrusted with enormous and burdensome secrets by Our Lady yet they bore them by the power of grace and the love of God in their hearts. Have you ever had a powerful experience of love and grace that changed your life? Have you ever had the experience of having to endure bearing a heavy weight of sorrow and suffering? What was that like? What happened?
5. The children not only had to endure the hostility of friends and family, but of powerful government figures as well. Have you ever had to stand up against powerful enemies who could harm you, in order to bear witness to the truth? What happened?
6. In hearing the testimony of the many eyewitnesses to the Miracle of the Sun, we become secondary witnesses ourselves. Have you, either through an encounter with eyewitnesses to an event like this, or through some divine intervention in your own life, ever experienced having your life transformed by grace? What happened? What did you do as a result? How do you bear witness to it now?
7. The events of Fatima were not simply intended for the children or even for the crowd on October 13. Although Fatima is a private revelation, the children and eyewitnesses felt bound to declare what they saw to the world. Has God placed a burden on your heart that you feel morally bound to share with the world? The children at Fatima submitted their revelation to the judgment of the Church. Have you ever struggled to be submissive to the teaching of the Church? What happened?



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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

“Private Revelation” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13005a.htm>

Fatima for Today: The Urgent Marian Message of Hope

by Fr. Andrew Apostoli (Ignatius Press) 2010.

Fatima in Lucia's Own Words

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

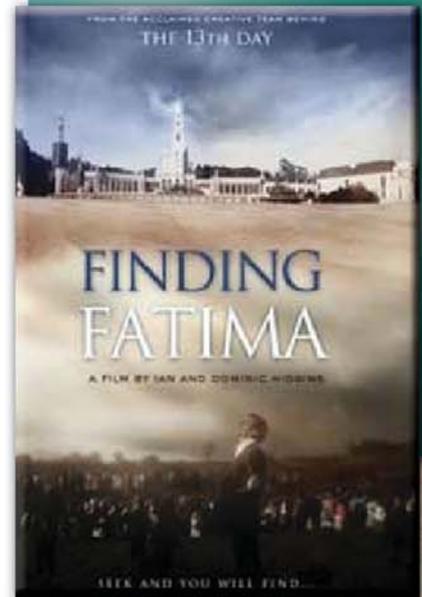
A Still, Small Voice: A Practical Guide on Reported Revelations

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

Video:

The 13th Day (Ignatius Press) 2009.

Apparitions at Fatima (EWTN) 1992.



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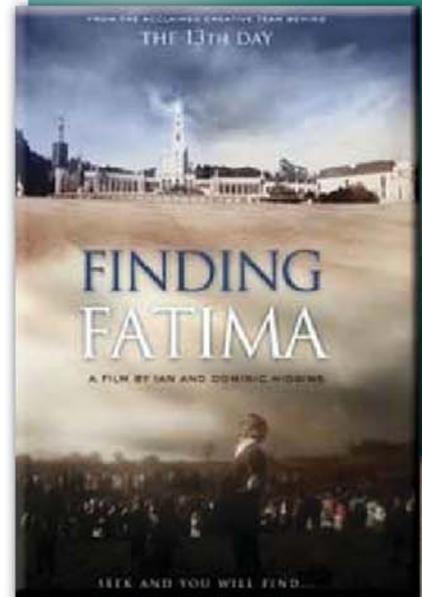
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1. The Jesuits attributed their survival to the fact that they were faithful to the message of Fatima. Portugal's first Christian king consecrated Portugal to Mary, so that Portugal was also known as the Land of Holy Mary. So, in a certain sense, Mary came to visit her own country. With the assassination of the King of Portugal in 1910, a Republican government of the Army and Navy took over. It was deeply anti-clerical, exiled many priests and bishops, and instituted severe persecutions – though Fatima remained an oasis of faith. In addition, World War I broke out in June 1914 and Pope Benedict XV, desperate to end the war, issued a message to the world in which he appealed to Mary for peace. Eight days later, the apparitions at Fatima began.
2. The preparation of the children for the apparition of Our Lady began in the spring of 1916 with an angelic visitation. They were frightened, but the angel told them not to be afraid and declared that he was the angel of peace. The children understood from this encounter that they were chosen to be messengers. The angel taught them prayers and told them to offer sacrifice. He appeared three times and gave them communion on his third visit. This, in particular, was important because it brought Jesus in the Eucharist to the center of their spiritual lives, and connected all they did in prayer and sacrifice to Christ in the Eucharist. They were chosen in their purity and said “Yes” – an answer that led to profound suffering, as for example in Jacinta's death, but which issued in their never straying from their call. The children were not school-educated, but were well instructed in the faith by their parents. Francisco Marto was quiet but grasped the spiritual life completely. His sister Jacinta was more complex and passionate. Lucia Santos was intelligent, with a fine memory. She could recall events even into her 80s. Jacinta and Francisco loved Lucia. They were close to nature and loved singing and dancing. Jacinta could pout and sulk sometimes. They began to change with the angelic apparitions, feeling the weight of the supernatural. That weight began to lift with Mary's first apparition.
3. At first the children thought a storm was coming. Then, after flashes of light, they saw a Lady appear above a holm oak, looking “more beautiful than the sun.” She told them she was from Heaven and said “Don't be afraid.” She also told them to come for five months on the 13th day and said that she would tell them who she was and what she wanted. Lucia could see and hear her. Jacinta could see and hear her but did not talk. Francisco could see but not hear. She told them not to be afraid and showed them her Immaculate Heart wreathed in thorns (representing



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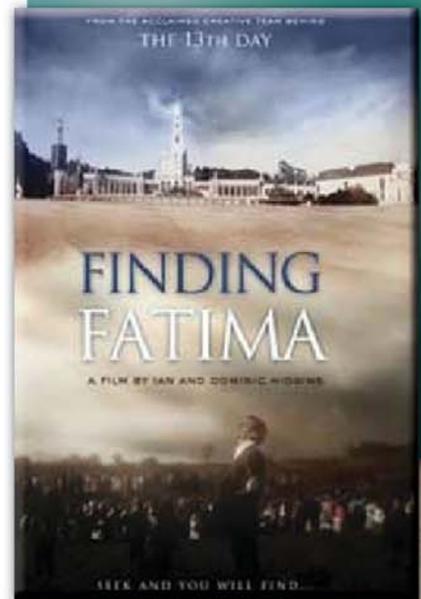
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the sins of the world). She told them Jacinta and Francisco would come to Heaven soon. She also said Lucia would need to learn to read and write, and that she would stay on earth a little longer to spread devotion to her Immaculate Heart. She also promised that Lucia would not be left alone, that she would never leave her, and that “My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God.” They became more serious and prayerful as a result. The woman who was a cousin of the seers who was interviewed in *Finding Fatima* reports that Francisco and her father started giving their food to the poor. Lucia’s mother did not believe and gave her a very hard time. The priest was also very hesitant, and Lucia became filled with fear that the apparitions were demonic. Jacinta told Lucia the devil is ugly and Our Lady is beautiful, so it couldn’t be the devil. The villagers in Fatima didn’t believe the children, but outsiders did. So did Jacinta and Francisco’s father.

4. On July 13, the Lady promised that there would be a miracle on October 13. She then revealed three secrets to the children: First, the Vision of Hell, a vision so terrifying that Lucia said they would have died of fright had they not known they were going to Heaven. She told them that to save people from this horrible end, God wanted them to establish devotion to her Immaculate Heart, which she again showed them. She emphasized praying the Rosary for peace, as well as for conversion and repentance. She asked that the Pope consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart, lest Russia spread her errors through the world. She warned that if these things were not done, a second world war would start during the reign of Pius XI. She said that this would be heralded by an unknown light in the sky. The third secret was not revealed because Lucia felt the world was not ready.
5. On August 13, the children were kidnapped by Artur dos Santos, a staunch Republican, who wanted to impress his bosses. The children were kept in prison, interrogated and threatened with boiling oil. Throughout the ordeal, the children kept praying the Rosary and were willing to die rather than reveal the secrets. At length, Santos let them go. But because of the imprisonment, there was no apparition on August 13. Mary did, however, appear on August 19 and asked them to pray. Jacinta brought a branch from the tree and gave it to her aunt. It gave off a lovely smell and this began to prompt Lucia’s Mother to gain faith that something supernatural was indeed happening.



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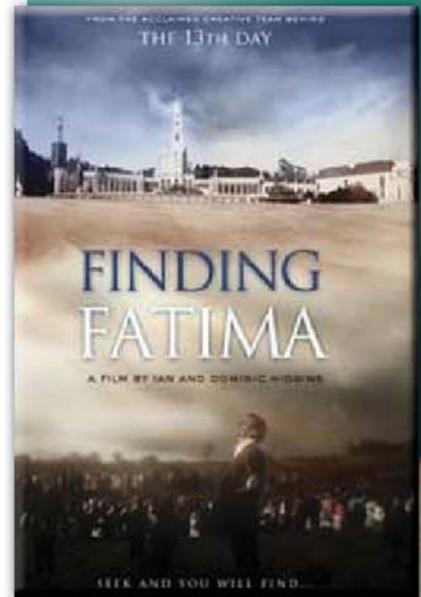
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6. The film focuses on the testimony of three people – Avelino de Almeida, chief editor for *O Seculo*; Dr. Jose Maria de Almeida Garrett, Professor at the Faculty of Sciences of Coimbra, Portugal; and Maria do Carmo – and supplements these with testimony of others whose relatives or friends were also eyewitnesses.

On October 13, rain turned the roads to mud, but a huge crowd of roughly 70,000 people gathered anyway. They were from all walks of life and quite a number of skeptics had come too. The atmosphere changed, and a thin column of blue smoke was visible three times. The visionaries reported seeing Mary, who identified herself as Our Lady of the Rosary. They also reported seeing her as Our Lady of Sorrows and as Our Lady of Mount Carmel, as well as seeing St. Joseph and the Child Jesus, who blessed the world. Lucia told the crowd to look up in the sky.

As the children had the vision of Mary and the Holy family, the crowd saw the sun spinning, moving, and dancing in the sky. It was clear and hot, yet it did not harm the eye. It made strange, abrupt movements inexplicable by the laws of nature. It threw out rays of light of all colors of the rainbow. It appeared to detach itself from its normal place in the sky and move toward the crowd. A great shout went up from the crowd and many knelt, or begged for mercy, because they thought it was the end of the world. Others felt at peace because they were now convinced the sign was from God.

7. Portugal remained neutral during World War II. After the war, women of Portugal offered jewelry in thanksgiving to Our Lady of Fatima and made a crown for her image. Within 25 years of the apparitions, bishops and priests who had been exiled returned and diplomatic ties with the Church were restored. Francisco died in April 1919 and Jacinta in February 1920. Lucia became a nun and received an education. When Jacinta's body was exhumed in 1935, she was found to be incorrupt, which prompted Lucia's bishop to ask her to write her memoirs of the events of Fatima. On January, 25, 1938, a huge display of the *aurora borealis* persuaded Lucia that the warning of the coming Second World War had been given. Lucia eventually became a Carmelite and died in February 2005. Initially Pope John Paul II had relatively little interest in the Fatima prophecies. But when he was shot on May 13 (the anniversary of the first apparition) he realized he was intimately and personally connected to them.



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Subsequently, he visited Fatima three times, brought the image of Our Lady of Fatima to Rome twice, consecrated the world to her Immaculate Heart, beatified Jacinta and Francisco, and credited Our Lady of Fatima with saving his life. He wrote the Bishop of Fatima that Fatima was one of the great signs of the times and believed the history of the 20th century was bound up with Fatima. He also put the bullet that nearly killed him in Mary's crown on his first visit and declared on May 13, 2000 that he would reveal the third secret of Fatima.

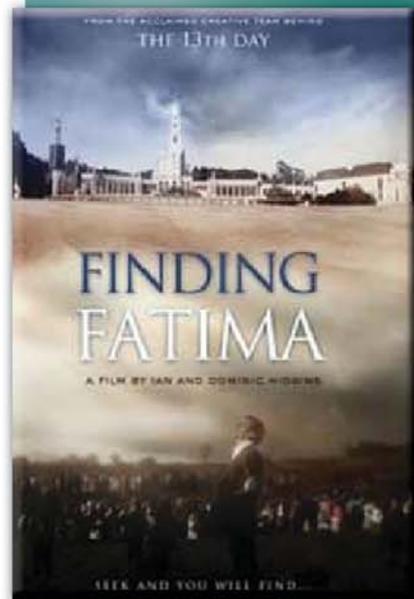
The Third Secret consists of two parts:

First, the children saw an angel with flaming sword pointed at the earth. The flames (representing the justice of God) could not reach the earth because Our Lady interposed her hand (representing the mercy of God). The angel cried "Penance! Penance! Penance!"

Then they saw a bishop dressed in white (which they took to be the Pope) painfully making his way through a ruined city, followed by a multitude. All the Church was coming to a mountain with a rough hewn cross at the top – bishops, priests, religious, laypeople men and women. The Pope knelt to pray and was shot with guns and arrows and many in the Church were martyred. Angels collected the blood of martyrs, and that blood purified those who wanted to approach God.

The third secret is a sign of both the 20th Century – in which more martyrs died than in all previous history – and a sign of our world today: a half-destroyed city over which the grace of God still reigns and in which, despite all, the Immaculate Heart of Mary will triumph. Benedict XVI looks at Fatima from the perspective of a theologian who reflects, thinks, and interprets the meaning of the events. He wrote the Church's interpretation of the Third Secret when John Paul II published the secret to the world.

The core message of Fatima is prayer and sacrifice in union with Jesus and Mary in the confidence that good will have the last word, that "in the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph."



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