

Webinar Two (June 13, 2021)

In the first webinar, we asserted that it was time for the Church to re-visit her interpretation of the third part of the Secret of Fátima. Evidence was cited in support of this assertion. In this webinar, I would like to begin going more deeply into the Church's semi-official interpretation. We shall continue doing so throughout the remaining five webinars, beginning with a reflection upon the information provided in The Message of Fatima booklet.

In our first webinar, we noted that the Holy See released the text of the third part of the Secret of Fátima in *The Message of Fatima* booklet (TMF). This booklet also contained supporting documents intended to facilitate a better understanding of Sr. Lúcia's text of the third part. Have the faithful, however, taken these documents and the "tools" that they provide us in a meaningful way? I would like to make an attempt at such an effort through the remainder of our webinar series.

Let us begin with a short explanation. This matter is important for our consideration because of how the material in TMF has been treated by Fr. Nicholas Gruner and his associates. Over the years, they heaped much opprobrium upon the various interpretations and tools published in TMF. To be fair to Gruner *et al.*, some questions are warranted, as we'll see. Unfortunately, Gruner and his associates chose to advance their position through heated polemics, which negatively had an impact on their argument.⁵⁴ What I hope to do, then, is to approach the information in TMF not from a "hermeneutic of suspicion and conspiracy," but from an objective review of the material available to us.

Having said that, let me start this review with a distinction. TMF presents two perspectives: those of Sr. Lúcia and those of the Holy See. The latter appear to be largely an interpretation of Sr. Lúcia's perspective. We shall here employ both perspectives, with emphasis upon what Sr. Lúcia said as her perspective as the visionary is valuable.⁵⁵ The most striking evidence offered in TMF from Sr. Lúcia is in a letter that she wrote to Pope John Paul II, a partial reproduction of which was printed in TMF and dated May 12, 1982.⁵⁶

In this letter, Lúcia clarified for the Holy Father that the third part of the Secret is a "symbolic revelation" (*revelação simbólica*). The symbolism, she wrote, "refers to Our Lady's words" concerning how Russia "will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated."

⁵⁴ Morality, as it relates to the means of social communication, pertains not only to *content*, but also to the *manner* of presentation (cf. Vatican Council II, *Inter Mirifica* 4-5).

⁵⁵ As further historical documentation becomes available on Sr. Lúcia, I strongly suspect that we will see more in-depth interpretive work. This is, in part, why I wrote in the *Epilogue* to my book that we are entering into a new period in Fátima's history—one that will be marked by further studies on Sr. Lúcia.

⁵⁶ Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, 8-9. In fact, this letter is one such area where Fr. Gruner and his associates issued many questions. They had questioned the letter's veracity by arguing that there was no signature from Sr. Lúcia and only partially reproduced. They also used it to undermine the Vatican's own interpretation of the third part of the Secret. On October 13, 2017, one of Gruner's associates, Christopher Ferrara, [debated](#) with me during the annual Angelus Press Conference. He [raised](#) these doubts about the letter at that time, not realizing that his arguments were partially outdated. The letter had not only been *authenticated* by the Carmel of Coimbra, but also [published](#) in its entirety (cf. Carmelo de Santa Teresa – Coimbra, 203-204).

Revisiting the Vision: Alternate Perspectives on the Third Part of the Secret of Fátima

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As we discussed in the first webinar, recent evidence revealed that Our Lady had commanded Sr. Lúcia in 1944 *not* to reveal the understanding (*significado*) of the vision.⁵⁷ Also in that webinar, we made some important observations about this command:

1. We do not know, at least at this time, the reason for Our Lady's command;
2. We do not possess clarity as to what exactly was this "understanding" given to Sr. Lúcia;
3. It is not proven that she was later given permission by Our Lady to reveal the understanding.

These matters admit of some debate, yet I would like to raise a question: Based on her various writings, would Sr. Lúcia have *contradicted* that understanding?

Admittedly, there is much subjectivity that factors into this question. Having studied Fátima, however, for some time, the image of Sr. Lúcia which impresses itself upon my mind is that of a humble and obedient servant of Jesus and Mary. One could propose numerous proofs for this, but in keeping with our theme of the third part of the Secret, I shall propose one proof: her confusion over whom to obey in the writing down of the third part.

Sr. Lúcia struggled to write down the third part of the Secret. This struggle has been characterized—wrongfully—in previous years by many Traditionalist writers, suggesting, for instance, that Sr. Lúcia was "terrified" of the third part.⁵⁸ But in actual fact, her struggle was over religious obedience. Our Lady had commanded her on July 13, 1917, "Do not tell this to anyone. Yes, you may tell Francisco."⁵⁹ In 1943, however, the Bishop of Leiria (Fátima) had ordered her to write down the third part. Sr. Lúcia was now in turmoil because she was, understandably, accustomed to the Will of God being manifested in orders from her superiors.

Our Lady's appearance in early January of 1944 to Sr. Lúcia *removed* this confusion and *explained* the reason for it: God wished to test (*provar*) Sr. Lúcia's virtue, specifically her faith, humility and obedience.⁶⁰ If she experienced such a trial that demonstrated these virtues, it becomes harder to believe that she would have contradicted the understanding of the third part that she received.⁶¹ For another example of how seriously Sr. Lúcia took obedience, I strongly encourage the reading of her own account of how she was able to affix the green wax seals on the envelopes containing the third part of the Secret.⁶²

Based above these considerations, I think that if we are to study the third part of the Secret, we should take seriously various statements from Sr. Lúcia. Oftentimes, however, she was very subtle when speaking of her mystical experiences. I discussed this fact of Sr. Lúcia's life and character in chapter four of my book in terms of her being "truthful, yet evasive." Because of Sr. Lúcia's subtlety, I like to use the term "indications" when speaking about her various statements that directly or indirectly pertain to the third part of the Secret.

Sr. Lúcia's statements take the form of verbal and written communications. They are certainly found within TMF, but also in her other writings, some of which are only now becoming available to us. For this reason, they do not yet have a wide circulation and have not had a lot of time to

⁵⁷ Carmelo de Santa Teresa – Coimbra, 266.

⁵⁸ For a more complete examination of this matter, see Symonds, chapter 6.

⁵⁹ Dr. António Maria Martins, S.J., *Memórias e cartas de Irmã Lúcia* (Porto, Portugal: Simão Guimarães, Filhos, LDA, 1973), 341.

⁶⁰ Carmelo de Santa Teresa – Coimbra, 266.

⁶¹ Note that I do not say it is *impossible*, only that it becomes *harder* to believe that she would do such.

⁶² Carmelo de Santa Teresa – Coimbra, 273-274.

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enter into the “public awareness” on Fátima. In order, then, to factor these new documents with what we know about Sr. Lúcia, a careful hand is required. I shall attempt to perform this task throughout this webinar series.

Before continuing onto the next section, I would like to recap what we have discussed thus far. TMF contains two perspectives on the third part of the Secret: Sr. Lúcia’s and the Holy See’s. The latter seems to depend upon various indications from Sr. Lúcia as to the interpretation of the text. While we now know that Sr. Lúcia was given the meaning of the vision, she was also commanded by Our Lady not to reveal it. Without heaven’s permission, then, whatever Sr. Lúcia said about the third part would necessarily be circumspect, but likely quite faithful to what she was given to understand of the vision’s meaning.

Let us now go deeper into examining the meaning of the vision, but limiting our focus *only* to Sr. Lúcia’s perspective and not that of the Holy See’s. We begin our present discussion with a look at the text of the vision and the scene depicted therein. Here is the text from 1944:

J.M.J.

The third part of the secret revealed at the Cova da Iria-Fatima, on 13 July 1917.

I write in obedience to you, my God, who command me to do so through his Excellency the Bishop of Leiria and through your Most Holy Mother and mine.

After the two parts which I have already explained, at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendour that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: ‘Penance, Penance, Penance!’. And we saw in an immense light that is God: ‘something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it’ a Bishop dressed in White ‘we had the impression that it was the Holy Father’. Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God. Tuy-3-1-1944.⁶³

The vision shows people from all walks of life and vocation journeying toward a great cross upon a mountain. While journeying toward this cross, people are martyred. Where there is martyrdom, there is persecution or at least some difficulty that requires the witness (*martyr*) of those who are faithful to Jesus Christ and His Gospel. Tertullian once famously stated in his *Apologeticus* (50) that “the blood of Christians is [their] seed” (*semen est sanguis Christianorum*).⁶⁴

⁶³ Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, 21.

⁶⁴ Henry Annesley Woodham (edit.), *Tertulliani Liber Apologeticus*. 2nd (Cambridge, England: J. Deighton, 1850), 170.

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Sr. Lúcia's description says nothing about the reason for the martyrdom.⁶⁵ Her letter of May 12, 1982 to John Paul II, however, offers an indication. She said that the vision refers to Our Lady's words in the *second* part of the secret about persecution, suffering, and the spreading of Russia's errors. Those errors were intimately bound to atheism and all that such a belief system entails, including the error of materialism which denied the existence of the spiritual, immaterial world.

In the second part of the secret, Our Lady specified in 1917 that there would be another war beginning in the pontificate of Pope Pius XI, who, we should note, was elected pope five years later in 1922. This war is understood to mean World War II, as this war came after the prediction of Our Lady of the "night illumined by an unknown light" which would be a "great sign that God gives that He is going to punish the world for its crimes."⁶⁶ This war, it seems, would be somehow connected not only to the spreading of Russia's errors of atheism and materialism but strongly suggests a moral decay in the West in general. Historians will be in a better position to demonstrate this connection as more documentation becomes available. For now, we shall take at face value Sr. Lúcia's insight that the errors of Russia were behind World War II (and others).⁶⁷

Finally, let us consider that there is an organic unity to the overall Secret of Fátima.⁶⁸ Sr. Lúcia said in her 1982 letter that the third part "refers to Our Lady's words" in the second part of the Secret. Based upon Sr. Lúcia's interpretation, we can reasonably conclude there is some convergence between the second and third parts (to say nothing of their relationship with the first part). The vision can refer to events around the time of World War II, though not necessarily exclusively.

It is here that I would like to end the presentation for this particular webinar. When next we meet, we shall consider more deeply the errors of Russia in Communism. Thank you all for joining us today here at *Reason & Theology*. Unless there is something that Mr. Lofton would like to add or present, I will happily take any questions from the chat room that you may have.

⁶⁵ She did, however, speak of "martyrs," which provides a key clue as to what is happening in the vision.

⁶⁶ Let us not forget, however, that prior to this war was the Spanish Civil War in the mid-1930s that was, Sr. Lúcia once wrote, a scourging of this country by God (cf. *Memórias e cartas de Irmã Lúcia*, 447).

⁶⁷ For further considerations, the reader is referred to Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen on Communism and the concept of protracted war (cf. *On the Third Part of the Secret of Fátima*, 214, footnote 77).

⁶⁸ Cf. Joaquín María Alonso, C.M.F., *The Secret of Fatima: Fact and Legend* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Ravengate Press, 1979), 98.