



## Our Lady of Fatima a Century Later

A hundred years have passed since the beautiful Lady dressed in white first appeared to three unschooled shepherd children in Portugal on 13 May 1917. For the next five months she came to meet them, and word of her visitations spread throughout the land. The children repeatedly said the Lady's visits would conclude with a convincing public miracle for all to see on 13 October. From far and wide 70,000 people came to witness it.

Among them was seventeen-year-old Dominic Reis. After an all-night, 100-mile train ride he and his parents reached the village of Leiria, sixteen miles from their destination, early in the morning of the 13th. They then had to walk another six hours in cold rain over steep terrain to reach the Cova outside Fatima where an immense multitude was gathering.

Soaking wet from rain coming down "just like you open a faucet in your house," Dominic stood about a hundred feet away from the children and the tree where the Lady would appear to them. Around noon light began to break through the clouds. Suddenly the rain stopped, and the people looked directly at the sun as if it were the moon, with no harm to their eyes, though

the light grew brighter and brighter. Then began the spectacular solar "dance." Mary Allen saw "the sun . . . spinning and shooting streams of light, which changed it to all colors of the rainbow. . . . At the same time, it started getting bigger and bigger in the sky as though it were headed directly for us, as though it were falling on the earth." In Dominic's words, "The sun started to roll from one place to another place, and changed blue, yellow, all colors! Then we see the sun come toward the children, toward the tree." Dominic heard a "tremendous noise" erupt from the massive crowd, as people around him cried out that it was the end of the world. They saw "the sun come right into the trees. . . . And then the children walk to the tree and we see the children bend down . . . and move their lips to talk to someone." When they finished speaking, "the sun rolled back again the way it came in."

At that point, Dominic said, "the wind started to blow real hard, but the trees didn't move at all. The wind was blow, blow, and in few minutes the ground was as dry as this floor here. . . . Even our clothes had dried. . . and looked as though they had just come from the laundry." Dominic thought: "Either I'm out of my mind or this was a miracle, a real miracle."

The brilliant light of the dancing sun made itself seen as far as thirty miles away; at half that distance, in Leiria, onlookers saw a great red flash. Photos taken at Fatima show the immense crowd looking intently

up to heaven, clearly experiencing together a powerful celestial phenomenon which no camera could capture and no observatory could register. The miracle of the sun paying homage to the Queen of heaven continues to defy scientific explanation.

So too does another miracle that accompanied the miracle of the sun: the sanctification of Francisco and Jacinta, the child visionaries canonized by Pope Francis May 13th. To that miracle of grace we will turn our gaze earthward in a future column.