



## Fatima and Our Lady of the Holy Rosary



Finally we are coming to the third leg of our Pilgrimage, a visit to the *Santuário Nossa Senhora do Rosário de Fátima* in Portugal. This has never loomed more important than in today's current events as we are beleaguered by news of ethnic and religious wars and worldwide terrorism that we ourselves had narrowly missed when we were in France just a couple of weeks early before the Paris terror attack that necessitated the closing of the borders.

**That I am writing about the "shortest day of our journey" on the longest day of the year is somewhat a contradiction.**

About a century ago, the world was in a similar turmoil when the rulers of Russia were into ethnic cleansing and a new caliphate was being formed in Turkey. World War I was just around the corner. This was when the angels appeared to three peasant children, Lucia dos Santos and her cousins, Jacinta and Francisco Marto. Then on May 13, 1917 the Blessed Virgin holding a rosary appeared to Lucia and her cousins on several occasions revealing three secrets that have since been revealed. While Jacinta and Francisco perished shortly thereafter, Lucia lived on to old age and just recently died.

The Cruise of a Lifetime XI was reaching its culmination. Although Lourdes and Santiago de Compostela and the Camino Santiago were the initial preoccupation

of the pilgrims, we had been building up to the day that we visited Our Lady of Fatima, praying the rosary on almost a daily basis as we moved from one destination to another. We were finally visiting Our Lady of the Holy Rosary but regrettably spending the shortest day of our tour due to time constraints. And to think that I am writing this on the longest day of the year is perhaps an attempt at compensating for this "indiscretion".

After spending most of the evening packing our clothes we were ready to bring them out in the corridor early the following morning for the MS Gil Eanes crew to load in our buses. Breakfast went uneventfully and there was time to say goodbye to the ship's crew that had been our gracious host for the past eight days. Generous tips were given. As a parting gift, we left the keyboard on board for them to enjoy.

The bus ride to the City of Fatima did not take very long. We decided to go straight to a restaurant with a shop before heading to the holy site. Last minute shopping was done including for new luggages to accommodate the extra items that we had accumulated in the past two weeks.

Everything in the city was centered around the Lady of the Holy Rosary.



**It is amazing how simple the fairly open space was with just the figure of Our Lady encased within a glass enclosure in front of a small cabin**

First stop was the large ground where the Chapel of the Apparitions was located on one side and the museum was behind it. The Basilica of the Rosary was on one end and the Basilica of the Holy Trinity was on the other end. With only limited time



*The Chapel of Apparitions*



allotted we had to decide which way to go first. Our small group went to the Chapel of Apparitions and prayed the rosary with a Spanish group. It is amazing how simple the fairly open space was with just the figure of Our Lady encased within a glass enclosure in front of a small cabin and several benches arranged in a U-shape around it, but it felt very inviting and welcoming as if to say this was where we belonged. There was no time to go inside the museum, but a number of the group did go in and appreciated the variety of religious items on display. Everyone remembers the bullet that was taken from the jeep that carried Pope John Paul II when an attempt was made on his life in 1981 that now sits like a perfect fit inside the peak of the bejeweled crown of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Fatima as if it was meant to be. The Basilica of the Rosary looked huge from the outside being atop a hill behind a large and wide grandstand and a tall obelisk with Jesus on top. It appeared quite simple inside however, with the main features being the tombs of Jacinta and Francisco Marto on each side. There were constructions all over so that we could not fully appreciate the awesome beauty of the whole ground that we had learned to anticipate from pictures that we had seen prior to the journey. One can just imagine what a spectacle it must be when there is a procession or a grand celebration during one of the main festivals of Fatima.

**The Basilica of the Rosary looked huge from the outside being atop a hill behind a large and wide grandstand and a tall obelisk with Jesus on top**

A walk towards the end of the huge plaza



*Basilica of the Rosary*



*Tombs of Jacinta & Francisco Marto*

brought us to the *Igreja da Santíssima Trindade*. It was a huge modern rounded building with sloping floors that led to a modern altar. The seats were simple benches with back rest. There were no supporting columns that would obstruct the view of the devotees. The facade was

decorated with bas reliefs of the mysteries. In front of the church was a tall cross and the statues of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II. The whole church was some what in stark contrast to the more conservative Basilica of the Rosary.



*Church of the Holy Trinity*

Next stop was the hills where the apparitions were thought to have taken place. The walk on cobblestone paths was nostalgic and the slow climb up the gentle hill felt like we were retracing the



*The site of the Apparitions*





*The three Seers with the Angel*

the place where the three Seers first saw the angels, then the site where the Blessed Mother first appeared to Lucia. Along the walk was also the Station of the Cross that was built by the Polish.



*Polish Station of the Cross*

We then divided the group in two with one bus load going to the house of Lucia dos Santos not very far from where the angel first appeared to all three of them,



*House of Lucia dos Santos*

**This gave us an appreciation of how simple life must have been in those days, yet how lucky they were to have been chosen to be the bearers of messages from the Blessed Mother**



*House of Jacinta & Francisco Marto where the now famous picture of the three Seers was taken*

and the other group going to the house of Jacinta and Francisco Marto further up the hill. They were made of stones and finished with stucco inside. The rooms were not very large but appeared comfortable. They had small courtyards and pens where they kept their sheep.

This gave us an appreciation of how simple life must have been in those days, yet how lucky they were to have been chosen to be the bearers of messages from the Blessed Mother. And it is not without small sacrifice as they were doubted and, to a degree, persecuted for their beliefs.



*Inside the house of Jacinta & Francisco Marto*

The lesson we came home with is the need to pray the rosary to help end the misery, especially the wars and wide spread terrorism, that the world is suffering from. Yes, Fatima was an eye opener and it was indeed a fitting last stop for our pilgrimage during the Cruise of a Lifetime XI. #



*Let us all pray the Rosary for World Peace*

*Not exactly the Miracle of the Sun but more like the blessing of the Beauty of the Fatima Sunset*



