

The last days of Jacinta's life



The story of Jacinta Marto is a story of a little girl who saw with her own eyes the Mother of God, but also a vision of Hell. As a consequence of what she saw and in response to the graces she received, Jacinta went from being a simple little shepherd girl in the fields of Portugal to a great Saint. She understood what really matters in this life as well as the immense importance and reality of eternity. She was called to be what the Church calls a "victim soul" and she accepted this calling with great love and generosity. Her life and example are a sharp contrast with the 21st century and that is precisely why her story is so relevant for us today.

How is it that Jacinta, small as she was, let herself be possessed by such a spirit of mortification and penance, and understood it so well?

I think the reason is this: firstly, God willed to bestow on her a special grace, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary; and secondly, it was because she had looked upon hell, and had seen the ruin of souls who fall therein. (Taken from Lucia's memoirs)

In October 1918, Jacinta and Francisco fell ill with the Spanish flu which was ravaging Europe after the war. Near the time of Francisco's death, Our Lady appeared and asked Jacinta if she wanted to come to heaven as well or to stay on earth longer to suffer for the conversion of sinners. Jacinta said she wanted to stay and suffer. Our Lady then told her that she would die alone in the hospital in Lisbon, but not to worry because she would come and take her to heaven. Just before leaving for the hospital, she told Lucia:

"It will not be long now before I go to heaven. You will remain here to make known that God wishes to establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Tell everybody that God grants us graces through the Immaculate Heart of Mary; that people are to ask her for them; and that the Heart of Jesus wants the Immaculate Heart of Mary to be venerated at his side. Tell them also to pray to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for peace, since God has entrusted it to her."

Jacinta suffered greatly while at the hospital from fevers, from an abscess on her side, pneumonia, and tuberculosis. But the hardest thing was that she suffered alone, without family or friends. During her stay there, she confided in Mother Godinho, who cared for her, several things of great importance that Our Lady had told her:

“My dear Mother, the sins that bring most souls to Hell are the sins of the flesh. Certain fashions are going to be introduced which will offend Our Lord very much. Those who serve God should not follow these fashions. The Church has no fashions; Our Lord is always the same. The sins of the world are too great. If only people knew what eternity is, they would do everything in their power to change their lives. People lose their souls because they do not think about the death of Our Lord and do not do penance”

“Many marriages are not good; they do not please Our Lord and are not of God”.

“Pray a great deal for governments. Pity those governments which persecute the religion of Our Lord. If governments left the Church in peace and gave liberty to the Holy Religion, they would be blessed by God.”

“My good Mother, do not give yourself to immodest clothes. Run away from riches. Love holy poverty and silence very much. Be very charitable even with those who are unkind. Never criticize others and avoid those who do. Be very patient, for patience leads us to Heaven. Mortifications and sacrifices please Our Lord a great deal.”

“Confession is a sacrament of mercy. That is why people should approach the confessional with confidence and joy. Without confession, there is no salvation.”

“The Mother of God wants a larger number of virgin souls to bind themselves to Her by the vow of chastity. I would enter a convent with great joy but my joy is greater because I am going to Heaven. To be a religious, one has to be very pure in soul and in body.”

“And do you know what it means to be pure?” the Superior asked. “I do, yes, I do. To be pure in body means to preserve chastity. To be pure in soul means to avoid sin, not to look at what would be sinful, not to steal, never to lie and always to tell the truth, even when it is hard. Whoever does not fulfil promises made to Our Lady will not be blessed in life.”

On February 10th, 1920, Jacinta endured an operation to remove two diseased ribs - an operation which was carried out under local anaesthetic due to her weakened condition. The operation although a success, left a large wound in her side that required daily dressing and proved to be an agonizing procedure for the young Jacinta. She died on the night of February 20th in the Estefania hospital in Lisbon.

“If I could only put into the hearts of all the fire that is burning within my own heart, and that makes me love the Hearts of Jesus and Mary so very much!” (St Jacinta)