

MAY 13, 2026 FATHER JOHN BERTAIO

In the early 1990s, as I wasn't much enjoying what I was doing, both travelling and working like everybody else, something inside me was very unsettled. Until one day my pastor called me into the sacristy after Mass and asked me what was wrong, because I appeared to be very distracted, with all kinds of things going on in my head.

After a long chat, he suggested that I go to a place in Portugal, Fatima, Portugal, to just spend some time alone and to listen to God, and to see what he wanted me to do with the rest of my life.

After a week or so, I was so bored that I decided to go for a very, very quick and easy confession. Forty-five minutes later, my questions were all answered. It's as if the priest, who was on the other side of the wall, had a script that had my name on it.

My main issue, that I have no problem in telling you, was a fear to surrender, surrender to God and what he wanted me to do, not what I wanted to do.

So during that time, I also did some studying, and in the events of Fatima as I was there, to learn some interesting points that I'd like to share with you.

First, in 1916, the Angel of Portugal, also called Gabriel, visited the three children, or the seers, to prepare them for what was about to happen to them. At that point I remember the saying that once you have been touched by an angel, all fears disappear from you. This was the case when, May the 13th, 1917, Our Lady appeared to them. No fear, just a beautiful lady that was greeting them.

As the events unfolded, the children were threatened by the civil authorities and even the family. They were even threatened to be boiled

in hot boiling oil, but nothing disturbed them. Why? Because they were telling the truth. The only time that they feared was when Our Lady showed them a vision of hell. Both Francisco and Jacinta were particularly upset with seeing so many souls suffering.

Our Lady taught them this beautiful prayer, that hopefully, if you pray the Rosary, you would know it. And I quote: “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to heaven, especially those in need of your mercy.” End quote.

Both the children went to heaven shortly after that, both Jacinta and Francisco.

Sister Lucia was taken to a place in Spain because they wanted her to get away from everything, where she was not known. It was there that Our Lady revealed the first five Saturdays of the month to Sister Lucia.

According to my research, Sister Lucia was challenged in many ways. Her name was changed so that the sisters would not know who she was, or what she had seen, or who she had seen, and she had to learn how to speak and how to write, both in English and Spanish. She knew no Spanish, and she did not know how to write in Portuguese.

The only person who knew her true identity was the Bishop of Leiria, who later on sent her to Porto, Portugal, again under a different name. This one was “das Dores.”

At the age of 18, she expressed a desire to go into the Discalced Carmelite order, but the Doretnean sisters persuaded her to go to their novitiate, and she became a Carmelite in 1949.

Now I'm sorry, so many dates to remember, just to give you a very quick glimpse as to what happened to Sister Lucia.

By December 15th, 1925, while performing her assigned duties, she encountered a boy whom she wanted to teach the Hail Mary, and urged him to go to a chapel to recite the short prayer.

Several weeks later, in February 1926, Sister Lucia said that she met that boy again, and he asked her if she had revealed to the world what the Heavenly Mother had asked her to do.

At that moment, the boy transformed into a resplendent child, with whom Sister Lucia continued the conversation. The little boy insisted that she spread devotion to the First Saturdays, because many souls would begin it and not end.

And now, I'm not sure if you're able to see it up on the screen or not, the slide of Sister Lucia, who is in deep prayer, deep meditation, in receiving that image and the glory of Our Lady, telling her what to do with the First Saturdays.

As she was praying, her cell was illuminated with supernatural light, Sister Lucia writes, and I quote: “Our Lady, as if waiting to instil courage in me, gently placed her Motherly hand on my right shoulder, showing me that at the same time her immaculate heart, which she held in her other hand, surrounded by thorns.”

And this was, of course, as I read, according to the memories.

In short, the First Saturdays are recommended for at least five months in a row. It involves going to confession, attending the Holy Eucharist, and spending at least 15 minutes reflecting on Mary's love for each one of us and consoling her Son, who suffered so much for the sins of the world.

Sister Lucia died just a few years ago, and, God willing, one day will be declared a saint, as now she has been declared Blessed.

As I have so many times mentioned, Fatima is a very, very big part of my life. So much so that on May 13th, the year 2000, I totally surrendered to the bishop and the priesthood of Jesus Christ, who today I celebrate with great joy in serving you, the congregation, and every person I meet around the world.

Let us pray for one another. Let us pray for more vocations. Let us pray to Our Lady of Fatima for all our needs and give thanks to her in a very special way.

And please, with me, as we conclude, we pray that beautiful prayer that is in Saint Luke's Gospel:

ALL: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us.