

- This week we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 4th apparition of Our Lady of Fátima.
- While the other 5 apparitions occurred on the 13th of the month, the August apparition didn't occur until August 19th because the local civil Administrator interfered on the morning of the apparition.
- This was the only serious effort by civil authorities to interfere with the apparitions.
- Keep in mind that Portugal suffered a political coup in 1910 that overthrew their monarchy, and the new government was atheistic and seriously persecuted the Church.
- In those early years of the 20th century, many Portuguese bishops were driven from their dioceses, and some religious orders were expelled from the country. Seminaries were closed, and priests weren't even allowed to wear the cassock.
- This persecution of the Church was part of the reason why the local priest in Fátima was reluctant to support the apparitions. He didn't want to attract the attention of civil authorities lest he, the children, or their families get into trouble.
- Yet that's precisely what happened. Although the Administrator, Artur Santos, had already interrogated the families and failed to get the children to recant their story two days earlier, on the morning of August 13, 1917, he arrived in Fátima with a plan to thwart the apparition.
- Under the pretext of giving the children a ride in his car to the Cova, the place of the apparitions, he essentially kidnapped the children. Santos took the kids to the district headquarters some 9 miles away and once again interrogated the 3 children.
- Santos was a fallen away Catholic; he had also become a Mason. This was a man who had abandoned his faith as well his belief in God. He was a pawn in the hands of the evil one, and he showed his true colors in his treatment of the 3 shepherd children.
- Once he had them where he wanted them, he tried bribes, death threats, and even locked up the kids with criminals in order to scare them into recanting their story and abandoning their belief in the apparitions.
- But it was all to no avail. Though young and probably very scared, the children held fast to their story and to their faith in Our Lady of Fátima.
- Not knowing that the children were detained, crowds still gathered at the Cova as they had in previous months. The characteristic phenomena that accompanied the other apparitions still occurred for the benefit of those there on the 13th, but after they ended the crowd dispersed.
- As for the children, they were locked up for two days, after which the Administrator had them returned to their parish rectory, no doubt frustrated that his plan had failed.
- You can image the children's sadness at missing the apparition, yet being the good mother she is, Our Lady didn't disappoint the children, and she appeared to them on the following Sunday, August 19th, at a place called Valinhos where the children also grazed their sheep.
- Around 4 p.m. Lucia and Francisco had the sense that Our Lady was going to appear, so Lucia sent her brother John to fetch Jacinta. As they waited, the characteristic light appeared, but Our Lady didn't appear until Jacinta showed up.
- Our Lady's message that day was very similar to her other messages in that she asked the children to return to the Cova on the 13th of the next month and to pray the Rosary daily.
- Once again she promised the children that she would perform a miracle during her October apparition in order that all might believe in the apparitions.

- She also gave instructions that the children should use the money people were leaving at the Cova to have two litters made to carry statues of her for the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.
- In departing Our Lady said to the children sadly, “Pray, pray very much. Make sacrifices for sinners. Many souls go to hell because no one is willing to help them with sacrifice.”
- When we began this commemoration of Our Lady’s apparitions in Fátima last May, I invited all of you to heed the pleas Our Lady made to Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta.
- While it’s interesting to know all the facts about these apparitions, it’s more important that we heed Mary’s requests by praying the Rosary daily, making reparation for sin with daily penances, and begging God for the conversion of sinners while trying to convert ourselves.
- I sincerely hope you’re all striving to do these things because we need to do them, most especially so that souls will be saved from the fires of hell. Just think what a joy it will be in Heaven to meet the souls who were aided by our prayers and penances here on earth!
- This 4th apparition shows us so clearly the war between Our Lady and the forces of satan, a war that we find described by our Lord in Genesis 3:15 and played out in Revelations 12. In his bid to lead souls to hell, the devil often uses worldly powers to persecute the Faith.
- Yet in this 4th apparition we see how Our Lady has the power to trump evil. While at times it seems evil has the upper hand, Mary always comes through in the end. While the devil may win some battles, we know he won’t win the war.
- We need only to hold fast to our faith and believe in Our Lady and in her Son.
- By kidnapping the children and incarcerating them, Artur Santos thought he could bring an end to the apparitions, and even though he threatened to kill them by boiling them in oil, the children were sustained by graces from Our Lady’s hands to resist him.
- When we give ourselves to Mary, entrusting our entire selves to her, she never lets us down. Mary protects us, she sustains us with graces from her Son, and ultimately she leads us to Jesus and His promise of salvation. And if we do our part well, she makes saints out of us!
- This whole scene between Santos and the children reminds me of the *Magnificat*, Mary’s great hymn of praise that she proclaimed to her cousin Elizabeth when Elizabeth realized Mary was pregnant with the Messiah.
- Realizing how God had favored her, Mary proclaimed that God *has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation. He has shown the strength of His arm, He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.*
- The point here is that God desires our humble trust; He desires our faith in His power to save us. Unlike those with worldly power and influence who trust in themselves, He wants us to put all our trust in Him – most especially when it seems evil has the upper hand.
- And as today’s Gospel of St. Peter walking on the water shows us, even when we waver in faith, God will save us from the turbulent waters that often surround us in life if we call upon Him. We just have to be courageous enough to humbly trust in God’s grace.
- My brothers and sisters, it is true that there is much evil in the world – a menacing, almost apocalyptic evil that can seem overwhelming at times. But in the face of this evil our Lord says to us today, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”
- And in the midst of the storms of life, Jesus invites us to get out of our boats and walk to Him, heedless of the waves of evil that surround us.
- And to aid us in this, He has given us His mother: a humble virgin, yes, but a woman nonetheless clothed with the sun who is as awesome as an army in battle array!

- As we each make our own way to Jesus, may we allow Mary to take us by the hand and conquer all the evils that beset us. May we pray as well for the conversion of all sinners.
- Our Lady of Fátima, pray for us!