



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO THE BISHOP OF COIMBRA ON THE DEATH OF SISTER LUCIA

To my Venerable Brother Bishop Albino Mamede Cleto of Coimbra,

I learned with deep emotion that Sr Maria Lucia de Jesús of the Immaculate Heart, at the age of 97, has been called by the Heavenly Father to the eternal dwelling place in Heaven. Thus, she has reached the goal to which she always aspired in prayer and in the silence of her convent.

The liturgy of these days has reminded us that death is the common legacy of the sons and daughters of Adam but at the same time assures us that Jesus, with the sacrifice of the Cross, has opened the doors of immortal life to us. Let us remember these certainties of faith at the moment when we say our last farewell to this humble and devout Carmelite who consecrated her life to Christ, Saviour of the world.

The visit of the Virgin Mary which Lucia, as a little girl, received at Fatima in 1917 together with her cousins Francisco and Jacinta, was the beginning of a unique mission to which she remained faithful to the end of her days. Sr Lucia bequeaths to us an example of great fidelity to the Lord and joyous attachment to his divine will.

I recall with emotion my several meetings with her and the bonds of our spiritual friendship that grew stronger with time. I have always felt supported by the daily gift of her prayers, especially during the most difficult moments of trial and suffering. May the Lord reward her abundantly for her great and hidden service to the Church.

I like to think that it was the Blessed Virgin, the same one whom Sr Lucia saw at Fatima so many years ago, who welcomed her on her pious departure from earth to Heaven. May the Blessed Virgin now accompany the soul of her devout daughter to the beatific encounter with the divine Bridegroom.

I entrust to you, Venerable Brother, the task of conveying the assurance of my spiritual closeness to the Carmelite nuns of Coimbra. For their inner consolation at the time of parting from Sr Lucia, I impart an affectionate Blessing to them, which I extend to her relatives, to you, to Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, my special Envoy, and to all those who are taking part in the sacred funeral rite.

From the Vatican, 14 February 2005

JOHN PAUL II

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