

The recent film, *Fatima*, depicts the events associated with Our Lady's apparition to three children in Portugal in 1917. Produced for 2020, rather than relying on heavy CGI to overwhelm the viewer, the film relies on the acting of its protagonists to re-present the miraculous events to a modern audience. The movie does not intend to convince anyone of the veracity of the events but instead challenge viewers to reflect on the miracles, breaking through of God's grace, in the ordinary events of daily life.

The film opens with the older Sr. Lucia (Sonia Braga) interviewed by a skeptical professor (Harvey Keitel) about the events of her childhood that changed her life. Sr. Lucia says to the professor, "Faith begins at the edges of understanding." We flashback to Lucia's childhood (where she's played by Stephanie Gil). Lucia, with her cousins Jacinta (Alejandra Howard) and Francisco (Jorge Lamelas), are standing in the hills of Portugal. Running and playing, the trio stop to shout into the mountains, "Ave Maria!" Their calls echo through the hills, and Mary, in answer to their calls, appears. This begins a series of apparitions over the next six months culminating in the Miracle of the Sun on October 13, 1917.

The scene of the children calling to Mary before her appearance reminded me of a similar scene, also involving a Lucy, from C.S. Lewis's *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, from the Chronicles of Narnia. Lucy recites a spell to make invisible things visible. To her surprise, the great lion Aslan appears,

"'Oh, Aslan,' she said, 'it was kind of you to come.' 'I have been here all the time,' said he, 'but you have just made me visible.' 'Aslan!' said Lucy almost a little reproachfully. 'Don't make fun of me. As if anything I could do would make *you* visible!' 'It did,' said Aslan. 'Do you think I wouldn't obey my own rules?'"

Aslan identifies himself as author of the book Lucy uses to read the spell, and affirms Lucy's role as mediator, making him visible to her and the other characters. Through Aslan, Lewis explains the wisdom in God's desire to invite us creatures to mediate his message. This *rule* reverberates throughout the Psalms, "Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples," (Psalm 105:1). In our world in 1917, Lucia Santos, has been calling upon the Lord on behalf of her brother fighting in the war and the consolation of families who have lost sons. Jesus sends his mother to invite Lucia and her cousins to mediate his message: know His love, pray the Rosary, pray for peace.

Prayer makes the invisible things visible. We know that prayer does not change God but rather the pray-er. Miracles such as the apparition of Mary at Fatima present for us in a particular way what God is always doing in the world. Grace actually, literally increases the power of a man's soul to see, to hear, to know, etc. We believe this to be true of the Sacraments as well: confession actually cleanses a soul of sin and strengthens its will to avoid sin; matrimony equips the souls of the couple so that they can be mediators of grace for each other; ordination gives a man the faculty to transubstantiate bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood. In this way I call Sacraments miracles, too.

Extending this to the level of the individual saying his prayers, God, too, I would say is working a miracle in that man's soul. Rather than reducing the solemnity of the events at Fatima, I think this raises the events of ordinary life to the level of the miraculous. I think for each believer, belief begins as local as possible, "How has grace entered my life and changed it in ways I could not have imagined?" Only when a person believes his life is a miracle can he believe in those events commonly called miracles. Or, as the movie quotes Einstein at the end, "There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." When a believer sees miracles all around him, he is naturally drawn to try to share that vision with the people around him. In other words, he's inspired to act as Lucia, or Lucy, making known to others the effect of God's grace in his own life and to bring awareness to the work He's constantly doing in the lives of people throughout the world. But, we shouldn't wait until the Blessed Mother appears to him to start making her Son known—that work begins today!