

undoubtedly stopped watching the doves, to which they were not accustomed, to concentrate on the Mass. This was especially true in the solemn moment when the bell sounded, and a great hush fell over the crowd just before the elevation.

"In that moment of hush, there was a sudden fluttering of wings.

"To the utter amazement of all, two of the doves suddenly flew...after two weeks of refusing food or drink and of remaining at the feet of the statue...one sped straight to the gospel side of the altar, and the other to the epistle side! There, as the bishop straightened to raise the Consecrated Host, they alighted and folded their wings...one on each side...as though in adoration!

"As the Mass progressed, the two doves remained there to the bewilderment of the celebrants and servers and the stupefied congregation.

"But this was still not the climax.

"The third dove had not left the statue.

"Suddenly, at the moment of communion, the third dove flew up and perched on top of the statue's golden crown...placed there by the cardinal Legate who personally represented the Holy Father the previous May 13 at Fatima...and as the celebrant turned and held up Our Lord, saying "Ecce Agnus Dei" ("Behold the Lamb of God") it spread its white wings and held them open!

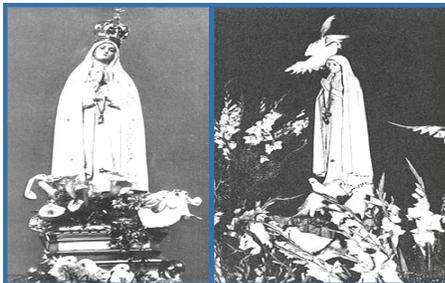
"By the time this letter reaches America, the statue of Our Lady...which I saw leave Lisbon with genuine sorrow, because all of us here felt almost that it was Our Lady Herself who had visited us rather than just a poor image of Her...will be back in the Chapel of the Apparitions in Fatima."

"On arriving in Fatima, first it will have been carried directly into the great Basilica (which, I am told, is much grander than the people of America generally know) and there the Office of the Nativity will be sung by the seminarians of the Diocese of Leiria (in which Fatima is located), and their bishop...Don Jose Alves Correia da Silva, who last August 13th greatly honored Americans by having them kneel beside him during the official pilgrimage of the Leiria diocese...and who will close these centennial celebrations of Portugal by giving the Papal Benediction to a crowd which probably will number at least half a million.

"Here in Portugal, where we have witnessed this extraordinary event and where we have so come to appreciate the blessings of peace which we attribute solely to our newly awakened national devotion to Mary, this miracle of the doves has not only strengthened our confidence, but has renewed our purpose.

"I hope that it may strengthen the confidence of the people of America, to whom so much of battered Europe now looks for leadership, and renew the desire and purpose of all American Catholics to strive for the world-wide fulfillment of Our Lady of Fatima's simple conditions of peace.

"May these doves, which have flown in Lisbon, fly into American hearts, and from there be sent forth as carriers to bear the peace message of Our Lady of Fatima to the world under the protection of the American Eagle." * (excerpted from: eucharisticadoration.com)



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Our Lady of Fatima and the Miracle of the Doves



NOTICE THE DOVES GUARDING OUR LADY

****The Miracle of the Doves***

FIRST MIRACLE OF THE DOVES

1946 was the year of Portugal's third centennial of national consecration to the Immaculate Conception and it was the first centennial of an identical national consecration in the United States. Just one hundred years before...in 1846...the bishops of America in a conclave in Baltimore dedicated our nation to Mary Immaculate.

On that very day...the first centennial of America's dedication to the Immaculate Conception...the day on which we had no fitting celebration of our Marian heritage in this nation discovered by a ship which bore her name and solemnly dedicated to her by the first Episcopal conclave...something else was happening in another part of the world.

IT WAS THE MIRACLE OF THE DOVES.

Father Oliveira wrote: "The coming of the statue of Our Lady of Fatima from the Cova da Iria (where Our Lady appeared in 1917) to Lisbon, for the celebration of the third centenary of the consecration of Portugal to the Immaculate Conception, was too extraordinary to be adequately described.

"The statue was carried to Lisbon and back to Fatima on men's shoulders, the entire way, and in each village or town where it was kept during the night, great crowds spent the entire night in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, culminating in early Mass and general Holy Communion.

"Before I narrate the story of the doves in detail, I would like to describe the general events that centered around the statue upon its arrival in our capital city, Lisbon.

"It is to be remembered that not many years ago the Catholic Church in Portugal was persecuted. That is why this centenary...this commemoration of the third time that Portugal celebrates a hundred year mark in her state of national consecration to Mary Immaculate...was to be so important. During this past century, not only had Our Lady saved Portugal...but it was in Portugal that She made Her predictions of World War II with Her ultimate promise of World Peace!

"After its long journey (which for the people along the way seemed too short) the statue arrived in Lisbon on the evening of December fifth. Straightway it was carried to the beautiful new Church of Our Lady of Fatima of Lisbon, where it was kept until the vigil of December eighth. Crowds filled the beautiful church to the doors, constantly, day and night. All night long, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was conducted by several priests. Celebration of Masses began at midnight and in the morning there was High Mass and general Holy Communion. On December 7th, at 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, thousands of children were consecrated to Our Lady by Cardinal Cerejeira, Primate of Portugal. Finally, at 9:30 in the evening, in a brilliant candlelight procession consisting solely of men that reached almost from one end of central Lisbon to the other, the statue was carried to the cathedral. The passage took three and a half hours, so vast were the crowds.

"After the Te Deum, all the bishops with their mitres and crosiers, regular and secular clergy and great crowds of many thousands of persons, conducted the statue processionally to the square, Terreiro do Paco, where the flag of Blessed Nuno Alvarez Pereira is annually saluted; there it was placed on a beautifully decorated frigate waiting at anchor in the River Tagus. Atop the main mast on the frigate flamed an illuminated cross, visible for miles.

"On the opposite shore, another crowd was waiting. Soon the statue was again being carried processionally, on men's shoulders, back to Fatima.

"The scene of the departure from Lisbon was touching. I am sorry that I cannot adequately describe it. The great square, which is capable of holding many thousands of people, was actually illuminated by the number of candles. But in addition, flaming rockets constantly broke overhead and great searchlights wove back and forth across the sky. The crowd, many with tears in their eyes, waved their handkerchiefs and sang the adieu hymn which pilgrims

always sing when leaving Fatima. Deep, throaty roars and whistle blasts from hundreds of boats echoed their cries.

"Truly the reception of the statue in the city, and all the ceremonies held in honor of the Lady, Queen-Mother, which the statue represents, are beyond description.

"Now, into this background of the greatness of the occasion, let me tell the incident of the doves, about which the newspapers here in Portugal have spoken so much and which is on the lips of every person in the nation.

"It began in a town called Bombazral, a short time after the statue had left Fatima.

"As part of the ceremony in that particular town, with the streets filled, people were singing hymns to Our Lady and pressing to be near the statue, someone freed four white doves. The greater part of the crowd hardly noticed it.

"After flying off into the air, three of the doves...instead of flying from the great crowd to some roof-top...made several evolutions over the statue and then suddenly, to the amazement of all who saw them, plummeted downwards, and alighted at Our Lady's feet!

"This was the beginning.

"During the days that followed, midst ever-changing crowds, moving from one town to another night and day for almost two whole weeks, the doves did not leave the statue. They remained there at the very base of the statue, as though vying one with the other actually to stand on Our Lady's feet. Yet bands played, people shouted, the bier on which the statue was mounted moved and swayed, rockets exploded at night and cascaded fire, while giant searchlights burned at them. They were constantly buffeted by flowers tossed to the statue from the surging crowds.

"But they did not fly. They blinked, shook off flowers that hit them, occasionally stretched their wings to keep balance. But they remained there at her feet during the entire two-week journey. They refused food or drink.

"When the statue was carried into Lisbon, I had the honor of walking at its side as Carmelite Tertiaries bore it triumphantly into the city. I was so close to it, and to the doves, that I could reach out and touch either. Cordons of militia and police were holding back the crowds of many thousands of people who had gone far out of the city to meet this most famous representation of the Virgin, coming for their greatest Marian centennial.

"All during the night of December 5th, in the Church of Our Lady of Fatima of Lisbon, the doves remained standing at the feet of the statue. By now they were more the object of comment than the beautiful statue or the glory in which it was enthroned. The newspapers had been filled with the story of their perseverance, their utter fearlessness, the strangeness of their position. Many must have wondered what would happen...now that they had actually accompanied the statue into the church that had been prepared for its reception, refusing to be brushed off or frightened away.

"The next morning, at Mass, they had their answer.

"The next morning, the doves flew.

"From midnight, Masses were constantly recited at the altar near the statue. As I mentioned in the beginning, the church was crowded to the doors with Lisbonites keeping vigil.

"In the morning, after the many Masses of the night, came the solemn High Mass, which was to be followed by a general Communion.

"During the Solemn Mass, most of the people in the great church had