

Miracles I SAW HERE

by John M. Haffert



With my own eyes, I saw two miracles at Fátima . . . one on August 13, 1946, and the other on October 13, 1947.

I arrived at Fátima saddened by the threat of Communism in Italy, Hungary, Roumania, and all the rest of the continent. I had talked privately with the Holy Father; I had interviewed hundreds of people. Finally, in Portugal, I had even talked with the only living visionary of the Fatima apparition. I believed in Fátima .

I was privileged to kneel beside the Bishop of Fátima during the great pilgrimage Mass on August 13, 1946, and then I walked next to the monstrance during the famous "Blessing of the Sick," the event during which most of the Fátima miracles occur.

The girl who was first to be blessed, in the front row, had been brought from the clinic of the University of Coimbra. She was on the verge of death. The doctors had protested her removal from the clinic and had predicted that she would never live through even the short journey from Coimbra to Fátima. She was in the final stage of a malignant tumor of the brain which had already paralyzed her body from the waist down and had rendered her blind and delirious with pain.

Her case was famous because the clinic from which she had come was famous. The doctors had predicted her

blindness and paralysis before it occurred, so accurately had they measured the nature and extent of the tumor. During the twenty-four hours prior to the moment that I first saw her lying on the litter, wracked with pain, she had been unconscious most of the time.

Noting the intense expression of faith and deep emotion on the faces of all around her litter, I instinctively raised my camera and photographed her without thinking for a moment that I was photographing, at that moment, one of the most spectacular cures.

After the benediction, in one single moment, the girl suddenly felt the pain sweep from her body. She moved her legs incredulously. Then, looking up at her father, in words scarcely audible, she said: "*It is gone!*"

She was cured. Just like that.

She Stood In Wonder,

Less than ten minutes later, when they had been able to remove her litter from the row of the sick, she got up . . . unassisted . . . and waved her scarf towards the Basilica, with great tears of joy standing in the corners of her eyes.

I was excited and so awed that I did not think to take pictures of her walking but I did take a picture immediately after her cure. Indeed, I think that her pose for her picture, just after the cure, was perhaps the first thing she did after announcing her cure to her father.

That night when I arrived back in Lisbon, I was surprised to see the story of this cure under great headlines in the Lisbon evening papers. Apparently the girl's case had been well known and the complete evidence of the malignant tumor, which had vanished in a single moment, was beyond any question. However, it was only a year later that I fully realized what a truly extraordinary thing it was.

When I went to Fátima in October, of 1947, for the blessing of America's Pilgrim Virgin, I was very fatigued and in poor health. It was only because I felt the mission very important that I did not at the last minute cancel the trip, and when I arrived at Fátima on October 11th, I stopped briefly at the Chapel of the Apparitions and then went to bed in a room provided for me by the Bishop in the hospital.

As I lay there, watching the two nurses move about the room, it occurred to me that I had never thought to ask the nurses of Fátima about the sick . . . about the cures they saw. "Certainly," I thought, "these volunteer nurses must know more about the wonders of Fátima today than anyone." Aloud, I said:

"Pardon me for asking, but have either of you nurses seen many miracles while ministering to the sick here at the Cova?"

Instantly there was a flood of conversation. One nurse talked more rapidly than the other so that I could hardly understand them. They had seen so many cures! So many blind who suddenly saw, crippled who walked, deaf who heard. And when they saw me smiling at the unintelligibility of their mingled excitement, I said:

"Of all the wonders you've seen, which one stands out as most extraordinary?"

One of the nurses . . . the elder one . . . could not think for a moment which one she would single out. But the younger nurse said, after very slight hesitation:

Most Wonderful Cure

"I think the most wonderful cure I saw took place in August, a year ago, when a dying girl was cured of a brain tumor. She had been given up by the doctors of the University of Coimbra. . . ." *And she went on to describe, detail for detail, the very miracle I myself had seen and photographed over a year before!*

"Why were you so impressed?" I asked, not betraying my sudden special interest.

"Well," she answered, "I think it is because she was suffering so much through the night. Most of us did not think she would live until morning, and in her rare moments of consciousness we had to restrain her to the litter because of her agony."

Then I told her that I had not only seen that very cure but had taken pictures. Indeed, I said, "Your own picture . . . as I now recognize you . . . has been viewed in America

by hundreds of thousands of people who have seen those pictures in my lectures!"

Immediately, of course, we thus had something very sacred in common and I hastened to ask:

"If there is a miracle tomorrow, after the blessing of the Pilgrim Virgin, I shall be standing on the steps of the Basilica and will you signal to me?"

"All right," she said brightly, "and you have your camera ready. Some very sick ones have been coming in tonight."

The next day, when I was finally out on the steps, more than a quarter of a million people were in the Cova. It was the greatest crowd I have ever seen. There were several Bishops about the altar, and the Archbishop of Evora carried the monstrance in the blessing of the sick. I was standing alone on a roped off section of the Basilica steps (which are so vast that they will hold 8,000 people) and just below me . . . with nothing in the way . . . was the first row of sick persons.

"Oh, Nossa Senbora!"

Slowly, as the little litany used at Fátima during the blessing swelled from tens of thousands of throats, the Archbishop moved down the line making the sign of the Cross with the Blessed Sacrament over first one invalid, then another.

Suddenly I heard a great, piercing cry.

There, just in front of me . . . only a matter of a few steps down . . . a young woman had suddenly sat up upon her litter, the cry just dying from her lips. I began to run down the steps to her side. The Archbishop and his entourage had passed on. Out of the corner of my eye I saw my friend, the nurse, wildly waving her arm.

The affliction of this particular young woman was later described in detail by the official newspaper of the Bishop

This picture was taken by a cameraman from Lisboa Films at the very moment that I was running down the steps. The cured girl seems unable to realize her good fortune.



of Fátima. She was paralyzed from the waist down, and had two external tumors on her thigh which exuded quantities of purulent matter. As I watched her, she was sitting up with extended hands, looking straight in front of her as though she were seeing a vision. Her face was intense. Her lips trembled the words: "*Oh, Nossa Senhora! Nossa Senhora!*"

Then, without change of expression and without moving her eyes as she stared constantly forward, she put a trembling hand beneath her blanket. *She had begun to move her legs.* A nurse quickly ran forward and arranged the blanket. Suddenly, beneath the blanket, the girl seemed to find what she had been trying to touch . . . and instantly she drew forth her hand and raised trembling arms to Heaven crying more loudly and with tears starting in her eyes: "*Oh, Nossa Senhora! Nossa Senhora!*"

Besides being able to move her legs, the bandages had fallen away from the place where the fistulas had been . . . and *the wounds were gone!*

The Scars

I cannot describe the feeling that gripped me, nor can I try to describe the aspect of the fortunate girl. She did not smile. She seemed awed, overwhelmed with gratitude towards God.

This miracle occurred just before the final solemn benediction and the blessing of the American "Pilgrim Virgin." This latter blessing was the big occasion of the day and because of it Mrs. John Wiley, wife of the United

A photographer from FILMES PORTUGUESES took the picture below of the author shortly before Arminda's cure. Because he was standing in a reserved area on the steps, the author was immediately in front and above the cured girl and was able to be at the side of her litter almost before the great cry had died from her lips.



States Ambassador to Portugal, was at the Cova da Iria for the first time since she had arrived in Portugal. She was very tired and after the cure I turned to her and said:

"Don't you feel fortunate that you were here today?"

"Oh yes," she said, and her emotion was evident even through her great fatigue.

Following the blessing of the sick and the blessing of the Pilgrim Virgin, I was scheduled to meet the Bishop of Fátima in the parlor of the hospital, where I had placed some personal statues for blessing.

Then followed the most dramatic moment of all.

As I stood on the side of the table opposite the Bishop, the cured girl was introduced from the end of the table by one of the nurses. The saintly Bishop of Fátima listened patiently to the story. In his twenty-six years as Bishop he had heard many, many similar stories. In the early days when he had been appointed to investigate Fátima after being made the first Bishop of the diocese, he had gone into sheaves of endless details about cures.

Then I heard the nurse saying:

"*Show the Bishop the scars where the fistulas were.*"

There, on the upper part of the thigh, at a spot revealed with careful modesty, were two clear, dry scars. They were not red, as a fresh-healed wound usually is. They were clear (like a little scar on my own hand . . . more than thirty years old). One of them was so deep that it would have been possible to insert the tip of one's little finger where the tumor had been.

The Pilgrim Virgin

As I stared at the healed tissue, wondering if it could have been possible that there were really awful sores there just a few hours before, I saw the face of the nurse. Tears were streaming down her cheeks, and with an open-arm gesture and trembling hands, she exclaimed: "*And Your Excellency, to think that this morning I put bandages there on large running fistulas!*"

It would seem that no more drama, no more tearing emotion could be crowded into one day. But suddenly, even as the nurse was talking, the girl cried out just as I had heard her cry in the Cova at the moment of her cure: "*Oh, Nossa Senhora!*" And she had raised her hands and was staring with wide eyes across the table towards the end of the room. My heart leaped. As I looked into her face, I was certain she was seeing a vision. I slowly turned my head, as had all the others, to follow the direction of her stare.

There, at the end of the room, in all its simple and majestic beauty, was America's Pilgrim Virgin.

Did you read

notice on page 2 ?



Several hundred invalids received the blessing of Our Lord on May 13th, 1965, at Fatima. Above: The litters are taken to a reserved place in front of the Basilica. Below: His Eminence Cardinal Cerejeira, Patriarch of Portugal, gives the Eucharistic blessing.

