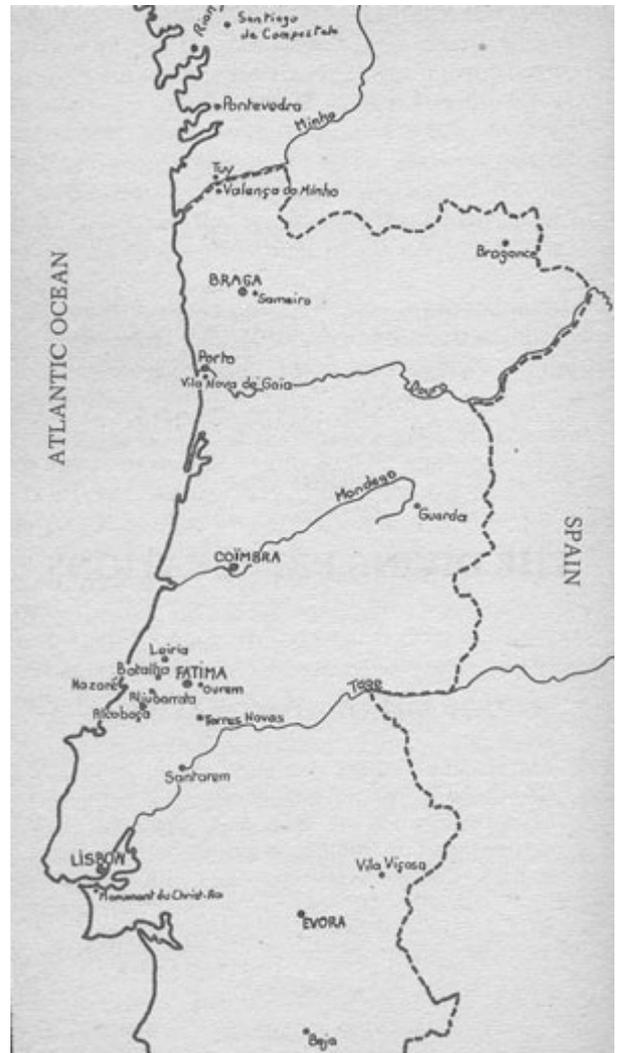


Chapter 1

Portugal, “Land of Holy Mary”

JACINTA, Lucy tells us in her Memoirs, loved to sing. During the long hours of solitude spent watching the sheep, the three shepherds of Aljustrel intoned, one by one, the traditional dancing tunes or the beautiful chants of the Church. One song was a favourite with them, the *Salve Nobre Padroeira*, which was very popular in Portugal. It sings of the protection of the Virgin Mary as the patroness of Her people of predilection, the little nation of Portugal.



«Hail, O noble Patron,
Of the people whom You protect,
Of the people chosen among all others,
As the people of the Lord!

O Thou, glory of our land,
Whom You have saved a thousand times!
As long as the Portuguese people exists
You will always be their love!»¹

This song evokes a marvellous history, the history of a nation completely devoted to the Immaculate Virgin from its beginning, and which, in spite of conquest by foreigners and a more and more suffocating Masonic domination, has remained unshakably faithful to its Heavenly Patroness, until the eve of the great miracle of 1917.

If Our Lady is Queen of France, She is also in all truth the Queen of valiant Portugal, especially since 1646: eight years after the solemn consecration of France to Our Lady by the Holy King Louis XIII, Portugal

in turn officially consecrated itself to the Immaculate Virgin by the mouth of John IV, restorer of national independence.

It is not by chance that the Blessed Virgin reserved for France Her great apparitions of the nineteenth century, rue du Bac, La Salette, Lourdes, Pontmain... Nor is it by chance that little Portugal was chosen for the most spectacular and most important of the Mariophanies. Born so to speak from France, the "little House of Portugal", as Camoens liked to say, imitated France all through the ages in its tender and faithful devotion to the Blessed Virgin. By an admirable grace of predilection, indissolubly linked with its national vocation, Portugal, like France, had long prepared to welcome the Queen of Heaven. Let us review the brightest episodes in this admirable alliance, forged so early on and never broken, which made this happy country, even before Our Lady of the Rosary came to Fatima, the "Land of Holy Mary".

I. THE FOUNDATION OF THE KINGDOM OF MARY

A "DAUGHTER" OF FRANCE. The ancient Roman province of Lusitania was evangelized early on; in the sixth century, St. Martin of Duma was the apostle of its countryside. But in 711, the Moors invaded the country... And almost three centuries went by before the dawn of deliverance came. In 1086, Alfonso VI, King of Castile and Leon, called on the French for help, and these Crusades of the French would play an important role in this glorious "reconquista": In 1095, Henry, son of the Duke of Burgundy, had delivered the whole northern part of the country, between Minho and Douro, from Moslem domination. He then received in marriage the hand of the daughter of the king of Castille, and possession of the whole region he had conquered along with the title of "Count of Portugal". A nephew of the great St. Hugh, the powerful abbot of Cluny, Henry favoured the installation of several daughter-houses of the French abbey. The first Archbishop of Braga after the liberation was St. Gerard de Moissac, and his successor was Maurice Burdin. Both were Frenchmen and monks of Cluny.

Count Henry increased his domains at the expense of the Moors, but it was his son, Alfonso Henriques, who consolidated the independence of Portugal by his victory over the Moors at Ourica in 1139. «His soldiers, who were for the most part French crusaders, proclaimed him king right on the battlefield.»² When his feudal lord, the King of Castille, protested against this usurpation, Henriques requested and obtained the protection of Pope Innocent II as his overlord. «Portugal was born», Barthas comments, «and it was born both French and Roman. The Portuguese people never forgot this twofold origin.»

UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY. Most important of all, the new "conquistador" king immediately chose the Mother of God as Patroness of his country and his new dynasty. «As founder of the kingdom», writes Father Oliveira Dias, «he placed it under the protection of Mary, taking Her as Protectress and Mother of all the Portuguese, decreeing at the same time that an annual tribute should be paid to the Church of St. Mary of Clairveaux, in the name of its abbot, St. Bernard, and his successors. The document recording this vow, made with the consent of his vassals and signed at the Cathedral of Lamego on April 28, 1142, was found in the monastery of Alcobaca, written on parchment and stamped with the royal seal.»

After St. Hugh and his Cluniacs, St. Bernard and his disciples exercised an immense influence on the young kingdom, developing among the people a tender devotion to Our Lady. In 1142 King Alfonso Henriques gave St. Bernard the lands on which would be built, only a few miles from Fatima, the magnificent monastery of Alcobaca. «When he was planning the daring conquest of Santarem, at that time still in the hands of the Moors, the same king made a vow to erect a monastery dedicated to the Virgin, if he was victorious in battle. This is the monastery of Santa Maria de Alcobaca, which was given to the monks of St. Bernard.»³ Enlarged by the successors of Alfonso, it became the majestic royal monastery that we admire nowadays.

From then on, the epic struggles of the Cross versus the Crescent of Islam would take place under the protective standard of Santa Maria of Alcobaca. The crusaders would carry with them a statue of Our Lady which was venerated until the eighteenth century, in the church of Our Lady of the Martyrs, at Lisbon. «All

the conquests of King Alfonso Henriques, who founded the nation, were undertaken and completed under the auspices of Mary», remarks Father Oliveira Dias.

FATIMA AND THE CRUSADES. Here let us point out, that if we can believe the words of an ancient ballad, Fatima owes its clearly Arabic name to an episode in the reconquest of Portugal which took place in this era. Fatima, the daughter of a powerful Moslem prince of Alcaccer do Sal, was captured by a Crusader, Gonçalo Hermingues. When the Christian knight asked the king for her hand in marriage, she converted and was baptized under the name Oureana, from which the village of Ourem took its name. «But the beautiful princess died young, and Don Gonçalo, in his distress, gave his life to God in the Cistercian abbey of Alcobaça.» Not long after, the abbey founded a small priory in the neighbouring mountains; Brother Gonçalo was sent there and took with him the remains of his dear Fatima. The place took and kept her name.⁴

Around the same time was founded the sanctuary that would be so popular for centuries, in honour of Our Lady of Nazare.

Let us recognize the fact: does any other nation exist whose very foundation is so closely linked with the cult and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary?

II. THE VOW TO OUR LADY AND THE TWO PEAK CENTURIES

THE VOW OF AUGUST 13, 1385 AND THE MIRACULOUS VICTORY. As a result of dynastic troubles, in 1383 Castille once again dominated Portugal. The prudent and pious Dom John, master of the military order of Avis, was then acclaimed by the people of Lisbon as «regent and defender of the kingdom». Taken by his peers to lead the national uprising and proclaimed king, he would become the liberator of his country and the founder of a prestigious dynasty, which would lead Portugal to greatness for two centuries (1385-1580). But once again this was thanks to a special and miraculous help from the Queen of Heaven, invoked with a tender fervour by the monarch and all his people.

The instrument of the miraculous rebirth was the Blessed Dom Nuno Alvares Pereira, a great devotee of Our Lady, «an image of both a hero and a saint, like Joan of Arc», venerated as the most popular figure of the Portuguese golden age.⁵ While John of Avis hesitated in front of the more numerous Castilian army, waiting for English reinforcements, Dom Nuno decided on August 7 to march alone into battle. The image of Our Lady was embroidered on his standard, and he gave his troops this war cry: «In the name of God and the Virgin Mary!»

On August 13, 1385, before meeting the most powerful armies of the King of Castille, he drew his troops to the plateau of Fatima where John of Avis finally rejoined him. There they solemnly invoked the protection of the Virgin Mary, and the king, kneeling before Her image, vowed that if victory was given them, he would build a beautiful monastery in Her honour, and make a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Oliveira. «This was the first “thirteenth” of the month celebrated in honour of Our Lady on this little corner of the earth chosen by Her», Barthas comments.

On the next day, August 14, Vigil of the Assumption, the great victory of Aljubarrota assured the independence of the country for two centuries, and consolidated the foundation of the new dynasty. For Portugal, this victory could be compared to the deliverance of Orleans by Joan of Arc. Pope Boniface IX, in his bull of February 1391, did not hesitate to describe the victory as miraculous, given the crushing superiority of the Spanish forces.

The king kept his promise with great magnificence. Let us quote our Portuguese historian:

«The king went on foot (150 miles) with his knights to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Oliveira, while in the capital, continual ceremonies of thanksgiving were organized in honour of Our Lady. In fulfilment of his vow, the king hastened to construct the church and monastery of Batalha, a veritable poem written in stone, a magnificent jewel of various styles and an immortal monument of Portugal's gratitude to the

Virgin Mary. He called it Our Lady of Victory.»⁶

From this Dominican monastery, devotion to the Holy Rosary was destined to spread all over the country. Is it not remarkable that the two monuments of national independence, both built for the glory of the Virgin Mary, were located only a few miles from Fatima?

It is worth adding that Blessed Nuno Pereira was Count of Ourem and feudal lord of the region of Fatima, which is still called “the land of the Holy Count”. «After successive victories, in which he drove the invaders from Portugal’s frontiers, he made his profession as a Carmelite, taking the name of Brother Nuno of Holy Mary, out of devotion to the Virgin. In gratitude for all the victories She had given the Portuguese, he built in Her honour the great convent of the Carmelites at Lisbon, with a church containing six chapels, all dedicated to the Mother of God under different titles. And in the very enclosure of the convent, he built the hermitage of Our Lady of the Assumption, where he spent long hours in prayer.» He also built six other churches in honour of the Virgin, the most famous of which was Our Lady of the Conception at Vila Viçosa. On January 15, 1918, a few months after the apparitions of Fatima, Pope Benedict XV, giving him the title of Blessed, recognized and approved the traditional veneration that the dioceses of Portugal gave him.

One last coincidence, which Gerard de Sede did not fail to notice, and which amazes us: it was on May 13 that at the request of John I, Pope Boniface IX ordered all Cathedrals in Portugal to be dedicated to the Virgin Mary.⁷

To be sure, in 1917, at the height of the trials under the revolutionary and Masonic persecutions, this episode, like all those we have just recalled, was undoubtedly forgotten by most. In any case, the little seers of Aljustrel and those around them knew nothing of them. But today, in hindsight, how can we not see in the apparitions of Fatima, the prolongation and miraculous crowning of this history, so full of the supernatural presence of Mary? Especially since the great requests of Our Lady aim above all, as we shall see, to revive this great tradition of a tender public and official devotion of a whole people, united behind its leaders, towards its Queen, its Protectress and Mediatrix of all spiritual and even temporal goods. And this time, not only for Portugal, but for the whole world, which is called to become the “Land of Holy Mary”.

TWO CENTURIES OF DEVOTION BY THE MONARCHY AND PEOPLE. Delivered from its invaders by a miracle of the Queen of Heaven, the “Land of Holy Mary” would reach a high point of two centuries under the leadership of prestigious monarchs (1385-1580). Crusades, great maritime discoveries, missionary work and formation of colonies, such would be the various aspects of an incomparable success, because it was at once Catholic, royal and communitarian, always under the special protection of Mary, the Heavenly *Padroeira*.

A few names suffice to recall this spectacular apogee, which begins with the “glorious generation”, as Camoens designates the descendants of John I. Right into the fourteenth century they kept alive the crusading ideal, always linked with a tender devotion to Mary. After the capture of Ceuta, in 1415, they multiplied their expeditions to try to reconquer the largest African towns on the shores of the Mediterranean. During the siege of Tangiers, in 1437, where Henry the Navigator would distinguish himself once again, his infant brother Fernando fell into the hands of the Moors. Taken as a hostage, he died like a saint in 1448 in a prison of Fez, after having found in his devotion to Our Lady the power to resign himself, and then the courage to die as a martyr of the Crusade. On all Saturdays and Vigils of Our Lady’s feasts, he fasted in Her honour.

His brother Henry the Navigator was no less devoted to Our Lady. Having conceived the ingenious plan of sailing around Africa to “surround” the Moslems,⁸ he charged his fleet with the discovery of the African perimeter. On the beach of Restelo (near Lisbon), where the majority of exploratory boats left, he built a chapel in honour of Our Lady. «Before the famous statue of Our Lady venerated there, Vasco de Gama, Pedro Alvares Cabral and many other daring navigators who brought the name of Mary along with that of Portugal even to the furthest countries of the pagan world, prayed and assisted at Mass before going off to sea.»⁹

On May 20, 1498, Vasco de Gama embarked for the Indies. Once again, the hazardous adventure had been confided to Our Lady, and She brought it to a happy conclusion. The infant Manuel had made a vow that he fulfilled on the return of Vasco de Gama. To replace the little chapel built by Henry the navigator, in 1500 he began the construction of a church and monastery of hieronymites at Belem, at the gates of Lisbon, on the right bank of the Tagus. The sanctuary of Our Lady of Belem bears witness to the constant protection that the Virgin Mary granted so many heroic enterprises. For the discoverers and conquerors opened the door to an innumerable host of missionaries and martyrs.

We can scarcely imagine the great missionary zeal that animated Portugal at the dawn of the Counter Reform, under the leadership of the great king John III (1521-1557). Filled with enthusiasm by the letters of St. Francis Xavier, which were burning with zeal, hundreds of Jesuits, such as the Blessed Azevedo and his martyred companions, left the seminary of Coimbra to plant the Cross and preach Our Lady in the Indies and in Japan, Africa and Brazil.¹⁰

Through her navigators, her conquerors and her missionaries, “the Land of Holy Mary” caused the Star of the Sea to be venerated in a great part of the world where she was as yet unknown.

III. THREE CENTURIES UNDER THE STANDARD OF THE IMMACULATE ONE

In 1580, with the death of the Cardinal-King, Portugal lost its national monarchy and fell once more under Spanish domination. This new decline would be the occasion for the solemn renewal of its ancient alliance with the Virgin Mary.

THE RESTORATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONSECRATION TO MARY. «On a Saturday, December 1, 1640, Portugal awoke to a new life of independence, and proclaimed the duke of Braga king, under the name John IV.»¹¹ On December 8, in the royal chapel, both the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the restoration of the monarchy and national independence were celebrated at the same time. «Spain did not accept the fait accompli», our Portuguese historian continues, «and war broke out between the two countries; it went on, with one battle after another, for twenty-eight years. The Portuguese saw in this continual series of victories a tangible protection of the Virgin, for a people completely disarmed against a powerful enemy, which militarily occupied the country. The Spanish were forced to recognize the king and the independence of Portugal.»

Here we must point out a moving parallel: in 1638, King Louis XIII had consecrated «his person, his State, his crown and his subjects to the most holy and glorious Virgin», chosen for the «special protection of his kingdom». This act resulted in a great wave of fervour in France, at the very moment when the closest bonds united her to Portugal, which Louis XIII and Richelieu, who were also at war with Spain, actively encouraged. John IV decided to follow the example of the king of France.¹² On October 20, 1646, «as a sign of love and gratitude», he laid his royal crown at the feet of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. With his whole nation gathered together in the Cortes, he proclaimed Her the Patroness of his kingdom, «hoping with great confidence in the infinite mercy of Our Lord, who by the mediation of this Patroness and Protectress of our kingdom and our lands, of which we have the honour to call ourselves vassals and tributaries, shall protect and defend us against our enemies, while considerably increasing our lands, for the glory of Christ our God and the exaltation of the Holy Roman Catholic Faith, the conversion of pagans and the submission of heretics.»¹³

THE DONATION AND VOW TO THE IMMACULATE ONE. By this solemn act, Portugal, faithful to its own tradition, chose to consecrate itself to the Virgin Mary under the title of Her Immaculate Conception. Henceforth the pious monarch, followed by the enthusiasm of his whole people, never ceased to loudly proclaim his faith in the unique privilege of Mary, anticipating by two centuries the infallible definition of Pope Pius IX. «He bound himself by an oath, in which the prince and the Cortes joined him, swearing to propose and defend, even at the cost of his life, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, on condition of the Church’s approval.»¹⁴

The formula of this vow is so admirable that we cannot fail to give part of it: «And if anyone dares to attempt anything against our promise, oath and vassalage, we will consider him from this moment as no longer belonging to the nation and we wish him to be driven from the kingdom; and if he is king (which may God avert), may the divine malediction and ours fall on him and may he no longer be counted among our descendants; we vow that he be cast out and stripped of the throne by the same God who gave us the kingdom and raised us up to the royal dignity.»¹⁵

And to stress and perpetuate the national character of his vow, he ordered that an inscription should be engraved in marble or some other stone above the gates of towns, recalling this oath of the King and the Cortes in honour of the Mother of God, «preserved from original sin»¹⁶. «At Leiria», Canon Barthas notes, «one can still see this inscription on a building on Alcobaça Street.»¹⁷

Can it be said that we have gone into a useless digression, far from Fatima and its message? No, on the contrary we are at the very heart of the mystery, the most hidden part of the secret, of which we know only a fragment: «In Portugal the dogma of faith will always be preserved.» For if the text of the solemn vow always to defend the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was wiped off the gates of the towns by the liberal government of the nineteenth century or the sectarian freemasons of the revolution of 1910, the Virgin Mary did not forget it, and it is Her “most faithful nation” that She chose to manifest to the world the mercy of Her Immaculate Heart. To this nation it was promised, in the midst of the great trial to come, to preserve intact all the dogmas of the faith.

To perpetuate the memory of his vow, the king also ordered medals to be struck in gold and silver, bearing the image of the Immaculate Virgin, «Protectress of the Kingdom». «Finally, a royal decree ordered all municipalities, Cathedral chapters, and the whole clergy to take the Immaculate Virgin as their Patroness, according to the form in the brief of Pope Urban VIII governing the election of patron saints.»¹⁸ What other nation was better prepared to welcome the great message of the Immaculate Heart of Mary?

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS: OUR LADY OF SAMEIRO. In the eighteenth century, with the miserable Marquis of Pombal and his diabolical freemasonry, a dark night passed over the poor “Land of Holy Mary”. The good people, however, remained faithful to their Heavenly *Padroeira*. In their enthusiasm for the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, the faithful raised to the glory of their Immaculate Queen the superb national sanctuary of Sameiro, near Braga. The work was begun in 1863, and a magnificent statue of the Immaculate Virgin was sculpted at Rome and blessed by Pope Pius IX himself. Jacinta told Dr. Lisboa that this was the image which reminded her the most of Our Lady such as she had contemplated Her at Fatima.¹⁹

THE PORTUGUESE, PILGRIMS AT LOURDES. Finally, the moving chapter where Canon Barthas describes the pilgrimages of the Portuguese people to Lourdes²⁰ deserves to be read. Of the foreign pilgrims to come to Lourdes, the Portuguese were undoubtedly the first, the most numerous, and the most fervent to come in groups, accompanied by their priests, their bishops and archbishops. «In 1876, the patriarch of Lisbon went to the grotto», and he returned in 1887. During the pilgrimage of May 1878, two Portuguese people were miraculously cured. The following month King Fernando visited it with some members of his family. Soon the Portuguese were flocking to Lourdes in the thousands, and after the revolution of 1910, many exiles chose to live in the Marian town that was so dear to them. Pilgrimages continued to be organized in spite of the religious persecution raging in their country.²¹

A BASTION OF CATHOLICISM. In this land of Portugal where Catholicism remained solidly implanted in the great majority of the population, but where liberal and masonic ideas had worked a good deal of harm, the region of Fatima remained one of the most faithful bastions of the ancient Catholic and royal traditions. According to Canon Galamba: «The district of Ourem (where Fatima is located), was well known for the generosity of its inhabitants, the number of priests, and the abundance of its vocations; it was considered one of the most precious jewels and one of the best supporting areas for any religious action; one could count on its priests and its faithful in any circumstances... In this troubled period (in 1911, after the law of separation of Church and State), they were never able, either voluntarily or by force, to make an inventory

of the goods of the Church, and to my knowledge this was a unique case in all of Portugal. The clergy and the faithful made a formidable block.»²²

Yes, it was indeed in all truth that the three little shepherds could sing the beautiful traditional refrain, as they looked after their sheep:²³

«Hail, O noble Patron,
Of the people whom You protect,
Of the people chosen among all others,
As the people of the Lord!

O Thou, glory of our land,
Whom You have saved a thousand times!
As long as the Portuguese people exists
You will always be their love!»

(1) De Marchi, *Testimony* p. 66.

(2) Barthas, *Fatima 1917-1968*, p. 25-37. We have relied on this book for many facts in his historical overview. We have also followed the excellent article of the Portuguese Jesuit, Father José de Oliveira Dias: "Our Lady in Portuguese Popular Piety", in *Maria, Etudes sur la Sainte Vierge*, Vol. IV, p. 611-646, Beauchesne 1956.

(3) Dias, p. 614.

(4) Barthas, *Fatima, Prodigy of the XXth Century*, p. 29-30.

(5) Barthas, *Fatima, Unprecedented Miracle*, p. 22-23.

(6) Dias, p. 615-616.

(7) *Ibid.*, p. 616.

(8) De Sede, p. 99. The author refers to Father Martindale, *The Message of Fatima*, p. 13.

(9) Cf. G. Goyau, *Missions and Missionaries*, p. 42-45, Bloud and Gay, 1931.

(10) Dias, p. 616.

(11) Goyau, p. 58-59.

(12) Dias, p. 623.

(13) In Vol. II, while we comment on the request for the consecration of Russia, we will also show what magnificent fruits the consecration of France to Our Lady produced in 1638.

(14) Act of acclamation to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of Portugal, made by the Cortes of Lisbon in 1646. Quoted by Pius XII on May 13, 1946.

(15) Dias, p. 642.

(16) This decree was simply extending to all cities a venerable tradition that several of them had already practiced a long time.

(17) *From the Grotto to the Holm Oak*, p. 181.

(18) Dias, p. 625.

(19) De Marchi, p. 285.

(20) *From the Grotto to the Holm Oak*, p. 37-45.

(21) Finally, Canon Barthas points out a remarkable fact: «Our Lady wanted the principal apostles of devotion to Her at Fatima to be two men who were fervently devoted to Her apparition at Lourdes: Bishop José da Silva and Canon Formigao.» The future Bishop of Leiria had already come to Lourdes twelve times, and after his consecration he returned there five more times. As for Canon Formigao, before finding out about Fatima he had thought about spreading devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes in Portugal.

(22) *Fatima a Prova*, p. 25-27, quoted by De Sede, p. 85.

(23) De Marchi, (Fr. Ed.) p. 66.