

IN 1917,
IN THE MIDST OF A WORLD WAR,
PEOPLE NEEDED **HOPE**.
THEY RECEIVED A **MIRACLE**.



FATIMA

INSPIRED BY THE
TRUE STORY

IN CINEMAS AND ON DEMAND JUNE 25

ORIGIN



  /FatimaMovieUK

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ABOUT THE FILM

In 1917, outside the parish of Fátima, Portugal, a 10-year-old girl and her two younger cousins witness multiple visitations of the Virgin Mary, who tells them that only prayer and suffering will bring an end to World War I. As secularist government officials and Church leaders try to force the children to recant their story, word of the sighting spreads across the country, inspiring religious pilgrims to flock to the site in hopes of witnessing a miracle. What they experience will transform their quiet lives and bring the attention of a world yearning for peace. Based on real-life events and starring Joaquim de Almeida ("Queen of the South"), Goran Višnjić (Beginners), Stephanie Gil (Terminator: Dark Fate) and Lúcia Moniz

(Love, Actually), with Sônia Braga (Aquarius) and Harvey Keitel (The Piano, The Irishman), **Fatima** is an uplifting story about the power of faith.

In this powerful and uplifting drama based on historical events, a 10-year-old shepherd and her two younger cousins inspire thousands of believers and anger officials of both the Catholic Church and the secularist government, who try to force them to recant their story.

Fatima poses profound questions to all viewers, regardless of their faith, and invites us to consider how childlike hope can help us through the darkest of times.

Fatima will be released in cinemas and on demand June 25.
To book tickets visit www.fatimafilm.co.uk

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource can be used in church discussion groups, and is suitable for a broad range of traditions and denominations. It has been designed with online use in mind, reflecting social distancing rules in place at the time of writing.

Section 1 places the film in historical context. This can be read within the group, or summarised by the leader.

Section 2 asks viewers to reflect directly on the film – its characters, storytelling devices, and portrayal of faith.

Section 3 looks at some of the key themes explored in the film, inviting participants to see how they apply to the present day.

Section 4 helps to lead your group into prayer and reflection, both on the personal invitation to closeness with God, and the invitation for churches to be carriers of hope to the world.



1. Visions of Hope in a Time of War: *Fatima* in Context

Seek volunteers to read the paragraphs below aloud. You may wish to follow up with open discussion.

Fatima shows clearly that even the most intimate spiritual experiences of religious believers are deeply connected to the forces and events shaping the world that they are living in. For the families and wider community of Lúcia, Francisco and Jacinta, the children's visions came at a time of war and great hardship. This background helps to explain both the eagerness with which many welcomed their words of hope, and the vehemence with which others opposed them.

Portugal had entered the First World War the previous year on the side of Britain and France, and although there was no fighting on its own territory, the country was suffering greatly. Thousands of young men were being killed and wounded on the Western Front, while severe food shortages and disease were also claiming huge numbers of lives at home. Tens of thousands of soldiers from Angola and Mozambique (then Portuguese colonies) also perished fighting against German troops in Africa.

Meanwhile Portugal was going through a period of intense cultural and political change. The monarchy that had ruled the country for almost 800 years was overthrown in 1910 with the foundation of the Portuguese Republic, a revolution which also drastically altered the place of Catholicism in Portugal. The Church had been closely aligned with the monarchy, and the country's new rulers saw it as backward and superstitious. The new secular constitution removed the Church's privileged position in national life, ending its role in education and forcing many churches, monasteries and convents to close.

In the film we see that these tensions were felt not just on a national scale, but within families too. Lúcia's mother joins other parents in the town square, desperately hoping and praying that

their sons' names will not be among those read from the daily list of military casualties, while the mayor's wife is pulled between her own faith and the noble liberal principles that her husband is devoted to. Most of the central adult characters are unable to fully accept the visions – though this appears to be as much due to the disruption they cause as a lack of faith. For the church hierarchy the children's claims are inconvenient, inflaming their already-difficult relationship with the government; for the mayor they are embarrassing, bringing unwanted attention from his masters in the capital Lisbon.

Years later, views about the events shown in the film still differ widely. It was not until 1930 that the Catholic Church officially endorsed the children's visions, declaring them "worthy of belief", but by then Fátima had already attracted millions of pilgrims from around the world, as it continues to do today. Francisco and Jacinta died within a few years of the visions, victims of the flu pandemic that swept Europe as the First World War ended, but Lúcia lived to be 97 years old and spent most of her life in the convent where we see her meet Professor Nichols as an older woman. Their conversations, laced throughout the film, show the way that the Fátima visions continue to intrigue and perplex over a century later, inviting all viewers, doubters or believers, to reflect for themselves on the messages of peace and hope that the children carried to the world.





2. Thinking About the Film

- Many Christians feel that the reality of their faith is rarely portrayed on screen, with Hollywood offering stereotyped characters or simply choosing to ignore spiritual themes altogether. However there are also films that seek to explore faith in a more nuanced way (some examples are given below). What has been your experience of seeing Christian faith portrayed in film?
 - *Of Gods and Men* (2010), the true story of how monks in Algeria faced terrorist threats
 - *Silence* (2015), Jesuit missionaries facing persecution and doubt in Japan
 - *First Reformed* (2017), a minister's struggle to respond to environmental destruction
- Visions can be shown in many different ways on film – as glowing, ghostly presences or disembodied voices – but ***Fatima*** chooses to show Mary as fully present and 'real' to the children. How did you respond to this? How would it have changed the impact of the film if we had not seen her in this way?
- None of the adult characters are shown as straightforwardly 'good' or 'bad'. Even when we disagree with them we can see why they act as they do. Discuss in the group which characters you were most intrigued by, or found yourself drawn to against your expectations.
- Some of the strongest drama in the film comes from the relationships between key characters – between Lúcia and her mother; the Mayor and his wife; the Monsenhor (senior churchman) and the local priest. Which relationship did you find the most intriguing, and what details brought it alive for you?

3. Thinking About the Themes

- Jesus famously told His disciples not to turn away children who were brought to Him, and taught that “anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it”. You may wish to have someone read this passage aloud in your group (Mark 10:13-16). How do you understand what this language means? Think about how Lúcia, Francisco and Jacinta are shown in the film. What words would you use to describe them? How does this illuminate Jesus’ teaching?
- The film shows a great range of reactions to the children’s visions, but in general the poor, suffering and destitute are shown as far more open to belief than those with position and power. How would a sceptic explain this phenomenon? What about someone who believed in the visions? Which position do you tend towards? Do you think that the message of the church today speaks effectively to people in this position in our own society?
- Though the children take great joy in their visions, they also cause them disruption, putting them under great pressure and letting tension into their families’ home lives, even damaging their livelihoods when the flocking crowds trample their crops. Have you experienced a time when a particular sense of purpose or closeness to God went along with (or even directly caused) suffering in your life? Why would God be willing to disrupt His followers’ lives in this way? What could His purpose be, and how can thinking about this challenge our sense of priorities in life?



4. Reflection and Prayer

PERSONAL MEDITATION AND REFLECTION

The story of the film can speak to all believers – whether we accept the visions or not. Lúcia and her cousins took great delight in the intimacy and beauty of their experience, eagerly awaiting each new vision and finding the strength to withstand huge pressure to deny what they had seen. The Bible speaks of the confidence and delight that all believers can take in God's presence with them.

Have someone read each of the four verses below, and leave a minute of silence after each one. After the final minute of silence, read the closing prayer aloud together. Use this time to hear His invitation afresh to be close to Him, as He is already close to you.

How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Psalms 84:1-2

Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near in full assurance of faith.

Hebrews 10:19, 22

Surely I am with you always... Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.

Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5

Even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

1 Peter 1:8

Closing prayer

Thank you that, in Christ, you came to the world in love, inviting all to draw near to you in faith. Amid our busy lives, renew the awareness of your joyful and life-giving presence with us. Amen.



CORPORATE DISCUSSION & REFLECTION

The Portuguese Catholic Church in 1917 was experiencing hostility and opposition from the new Republican government, which we see glimpses of in the film. However, the message of the visions at Fátima still resonated strongly with many ordinary people.

Over the last century the church's place in British society has been affected by cultural shifts much more than by laws or political campaigns. Nonetheless many British Christians feel pessimistic about the voice the church has today (though they often disagree about the exact problem).

Discuss in your group:

What is the hopeful, relevant message that the church can bring to today's society?

- How can this be faithful to scripture and also speak to the felt needs that people are experiencing after all the suffering that the coronavirus pandemic has brought?
- In the film, the children's vision is an effective means of getting widespread attention. What is likely to be the most effective way to carry such a message today?
- What makes something a distinctly Christian message? Most people recognise the need for more kindness and compassion in society. How does believing in Jesus make the church's voice stand out?
- How can your church or Christian community, in your own local area, bring this message of hope in practical ways, through both word and deed?





MORE INFORMATION ON THE WORLD APOSTOLATE OF FÁTIMA, (WAF)

THE MESSAGE OF FÁTIMA

The **Message of Fátima** was given by the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fátima in Portugal between May and October 1917. She appeared to three shepherd children - **Jacinta**, **Lúcia** and **Francisco** (as shown from left to right) on six occasions, saying, amongst other things, that mankind should cease to offend God who is already so much offended. She also asked for personal conversion, for **the Rosary** to be said daily for world peace, for **devotion to her Immaculate Heart**, and for prayers and sacrifices as a form of reparation to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.



She likewise indicated that if her message was heeded there would be global peace, but if not, Russia would spread its errors throughout the world. In the end, though, she said her Immaculate Heart will triumph and a period of peace will be granted to the world. During her last apparition on 13 October 1917, the magnificent **miracle of the sun** took place before at least 70,000 astonished spectators, many of whom thought it was the end of the world.

Fátima has received support from all the **Popes** since Pius XII and this was particularly the case with Pope St John Paul II, who made the collegial consecration requested by Our Lady in 1984 which led to the **collapse of Communism** in Russia and Eastern Europe.

Two of the **seers** have been canonised by Pope Francis as Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto in May 2017, and the third, Lúcia dos Santos, has been declared Venerable.

FIVE FIRST SATURDAYS DEVOTION OF REPARATION

Our Lady spoke of the Communion of Reparation devotion, also known as the **Five First Saturdays devotion**, initially on 13 July 1917. After showing Jacinta, Francisco and Lúcia a vision of hell, she said she would come to ask for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays.

By 1925 Lúcia had become a postulant with the Sisters of St Dorothy at Pontevedra in Spain, and on Thursday 10 December, the Blessed Virgin appeared to her with the Child Jesus. Lúcia recounted that Mary rested her hand on her shoulder, while showing her a heart encircled by thorns which she was holding in her other hand.

She said: "My daughter, look at My Heart surrounded with thorns with which ungrateful men pierce me at every moment

by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You, at least, try to console me, and say that I promise to assist at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months go to confession and receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary and keep me company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me.”

The five-year preparation for the Centenary of this devotion was launched at Westminster Cathedral in February 2020 with Canon Jason Jones, the current National Spiritual Director, as main celebrant, and homilist. If you want a copy of the themes, please email national.president@worldfatima-englandwales.org.uk or join us for a monthly online devotion via the WAF E&W Zoom at 8-9pm.

FUNDRAISING FOR THE WAF AND FÁTIMA CENTRE.

WAF England and Wales rely on donations to further the message of Fátima, as well as funds for a planned Fátima Centre.

Donations can be made by visiting the **home page** of our website and **donating via the PayPal link**.

THE WAF AND ITS MISSION

The **World Apostolate of Fátima** is an association present in many countries throughout the world which is open to all

the baptized, and which is directed primarily, although not exclusively, to the laity. It seeks to make known and live the **message of peace and salvation** for all mankind.

The general purpose of the World Apostolate of Fátima is to promote the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church, in line with a strict adherence to the tenets of the Gospel.

WAF England and Wales promotes the Fátima message through **Visitations** of parishes, **National Pilgrim Virgin Statue**, the Centenary Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart and relics of Saints Jacinta and Francisco; through **Home Visitations** with smaller statues, through the promotion of the Rosary and Five First Saturdays devotion, through Fátima **Prayer groups**, through an annual **National Pilgrimage** to Fátima, and via a monthly **newsletter**.



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