

The apparitions of Mary at Fatima, on the 13th of every month from May to October, 1917, very much influenced Catholic life. Pope Francis' recent visit (May 12-13) attracted a great deal of attention. Many non-Catholics witnessed the Miracle of the Sun, on Oct. 13, 1917. The Wikipedia article on the Miracle of the Sun has a notice that "the neutrality of this article is disputed."

The very slick magazine "The Fatima Crusader" is especially misleading, and fundamentalistic. Its Winter, 2016 issue especially so. But most Catholic dioceses have a main stream Fatima director who guides mission and ecumenical minded groups of Fatima devotees.

One of the results of the apparitions at Fatima was an increased devotion to praying the rosary. The US Catholic bishops commissioned a study on Mary, and it was published in 1973: "Behold Your Mother, Woman of Faith." They asked a noted Mariologist, Father Eamon Carroll, O.Carm., to draft it for them, and he obtained permission to first travel all over the USA, speaking at Sunday Masses on the role of Mary.

Father Carroll gave a retreat at our Oblate seminary in Washington, DC, in the mid-1970's, and I will never forget his story. He related that after his homily, he would greet the people when they left church, and many times he heard how a priest had entered the pulpit, pulled out his rosary beads, and tore them apart, to indicate his dislike of this prayer form. Fr. Carroll would gently ask if the person had actually seen this happen. And the reply always was "No, but my brother in law" or someone else did. He never found an eyewitness. So he concluded to us that we should continue to spread devotion to Mary as an essential part of our Christian faith.