



The Pilgrim Virgin icon of Fatima

Apparition of Our Lady Visits Ukraine – May 12th

Within the Catholic Church, the month of May is celebrated as “Mary’s Month,” a time of year when special devotions are performed in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is especially true for Ukrainians as apparitions and interventions of the Mother of God have occurred throughout Ukrainian history.

The **first apparition** in modern times occurred two weeks before World War I, on May 12, 1914. Mary told the people that war was imminent, Russia would become godless, and they would suffer terribly for eighty years. The people would live through these wars but will be free afterwards.

The Ukrainians honor their dead the first week after Easter. It was exactly one year after Chernobyl Nuclear Reactor disaster 73 years later on April 26, 1987 when a light appeared over the Holy Trinity Church. Though people noticed they did not heed the happening. A thirteen-year-old girl, Marina Kizyr was on her way to school (Ukrainian child go to school on Sundays.) when she met an old woman who asked her if she prayed. She replied, “Yes, but not too often.” A few days later, Marina noticed a light and as she approached it, she encountered a lady holding a baby. Scared, she ran back home but her mother, thinking the girl merely wanted to miss school, decided to investigate her claim. The neighbors accompanied them. She saw that it was the Blessed Virgin, and she told Marina to kneel.

On the second Sunday after Easter 100,000 people came to the church only to find that the Communist authorities had locked the doors.

The 1914 apparition at Hrushiv also proved to be a prelude to the much-better known apparitions at Fatima, Portugal, when the Holy Mother appeared to three children in 1917. There too she warned of upcoming wars and a godless Russia.

In order to highlight the link between the apparitions at Hrushiv and Fatima and to emphasize the message of the Holy Mother to Eastern Christians, the Pilgrim Virgin Icon of Our Lady of Fatima was commissioned by the World Apostolate of Fatima’s Byzantine Division. The Icon was consecrated and blessed by Bishop Bohdan Danylo of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of St. Josaphat in Parma, Ohio on March 4, 2018 – the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

According to an article by Mark Moran in Faith & Culture; The Journal of the Augustine Institute:

“The image of our Lady, as an icon, is the best way to connect Fatima and Eastern traditions. Icons have always in the East been the expression of choice among sacramentals. Unlike statues, icons are special paintings upon wood. They express ideas through a rich symbolic theology that does not adhere to the realism found in Western paintings but instead adheres more to symbolism. The icon itself is a prayer offered by the iconologist that is written and offered through fasting.

“The Pilgrim Virgin Icon of Our Lady of Fatima shares the same deep spirituality and common iconic themes. Written by Vivian Imbrulia, the icon captures many spiritual themes of Fatima, as well as

being inspired and based off the International Pilgrim Virgin Statue. In this way, Imbrulia captured many of the expressions found in the famous and miraculous statue and transferred them into the face of the Icon itself.”

Seventy-three years after the 1914 apparition, the Mother of God once again appeared at Hrushiv. On April 26, 1987 – exactly one year after the Chornobyl disaster — a bright light covered the church of the Holy Trinity in Hrushiv, and the Virgin Mary appeared over the cupola. A television program even recorded part of this light phenomenon.

Soon hundreds, then thousands came from all over the USSR to view these apparitions which continued every day until August 15. It is estimated that over 500,000 witnessed these apparitions until they ended. The Soviet militia and KGB could not even begin to control the crowds. The message was a sequel to the earlier one:

“I have come on purpose to thank the Ukrainian people because you have suffered most for the Church of Christ in the last 70 years. I have come to comfort you and to tell you that your suffering will soon come to an end. Ukraine will become an independent state.”

And once again, the Holy Mother warned of the dangers coming from Russia and asked people to pray for that country.

“Oppression and wars continue to occupy the minds and hearts of many people. Russia, despite everything, continues to deny my Son. Russia rejects real life and continues to live in darkness. If there is not a return to Christianity in Russia, there will be a Third World War; the whole world will face ruin.”

While Christianity has returned to Russia in theory, in practice it is through a Church which follows the dictates of a brutal regime, rather than the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is also a country that continues to oppress its own people and invade its neighbors.

So, during the month of May, venerate our Holy Mother and pray that Russia may yet become a civilized country that respects the independence and sovereignty of its neighbors and respects the word of God.