

The Third Secret of Fátima Has Not Been Published? A Response to Recent Doubts

Kevin J. Symonds*

On 21 April, 2020, the Portuguese Internet publication *Dies Irae* published an interview with H.E. Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò¹. Over the course of five sections, Mons. Viganò made some remarks about Fátima and the third part of the secret. Some of Viganò's comments were imprecise and frequently incorrect. This essay is a response to Viganò's remarks.

1. Mons. Viganò: A Background

Born on 16 January, 1941 in Varese, Italy, Archbishop Viganò was ordained to the priesthood on 24 March, 1968 for the Diocese of Pavia². He was ordained to the episcopate on 26 April, 1992³. On 19 October, 2011, he was appointed as the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States of America and retired from this position on 12 April, 2016⁴. Two years later, Mons. Viganò published a *Testimony* dated 22 August⁵. This

* Kevin Symonds, 38, lives in Warren, Michigan (United States of America). He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio and is a member of the Mariological Society of America. He writes on the theology of private revelation and is the author of *Refractions of Light* (2015), *Pope Leo XIII and the Prayer to St. Michael* (2018), and *On the Third Part of the Secret of Fátima* (2017). His E-mail address is: desiderium.kevin@gmail.com.

¹ In <http://www.diesirae.pt/2020/04/sois-um-povo-com-uma-grande.html>.

² In <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2009/07/16/0478/01128.html>.

³ In <https://insidethevatican.com/magazine/people/carlo-maria-vigano-archbishop-nuncio-holy-see-united-states-italian/>.

⁴ In *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 103 (2011) 780.

⁵ In <https://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/ex-nuncio-accuses-pope-francis-of-failing-to-act-on-mccarricks-abuse>.

document made serious claims about alleged knowledge of Popes Benedict XVI and Francis regarding clerical sex abuse.

2. Contextualizing Mons. Viganò's Remarks: A Hermeneutical Question

Should we interpret Viganò's remarks about Fátima given to *Dies Irae* according to his credentials or as his personal opinions? Viganò provides some direction for us when he names Antonio Socci as an authority on the third part of the secret of Fátima⁶. Viganò does so after heaping opprobrium upon Cardinals Sodano and Bertone in *Dies Irae*.

In his 2018 *Testimony*, Mons. Viganò named these two cardinals as being involved in the cover-up of sexual abuse by clergy members. If his allegation is true, then one must ask whether Mons. Viganò's prior work for the Holy See might have inclined him to accept *uncritically* Socci's remarks on Cardinals Sodano and Bertone⁷. It is imperative to separate any negative disposition that Viganò might have from any claims about Fátima that he presents to the public as true.

Do we have reason to accept Mons. Viganò's claim that Socci truly has «thoroughly researched» (*investigou exaustivamente*) the third part of the secret of Fátima? Socci sought to address various arguments on Fátima and noted some demonstrably erroneous claims⁸. While undoubtedly sincere in his intentions, Socci failed to be more critical towards various arguments, for example speculation on the number of the lines of text comprising the third part⁹. Socci is, for that reason, not as reliable, thereby creating doubt as to Viganò's characterization of him.

3. Mons. Viganò: Separating Fact from Fiction

Mons. Viganò opens his remarks on Fátima by speaking of Portugal as the land «which the Blessed Virgin has promised to preserve in the Faith even in these times of

⁶ A. SOCCI, *Il quarto segreto di Fatima*, Milano 2010².

⁷ Cfr. *ibid.*, 46-57.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-14; 103-104; K. J. SYMONDS, *On the Third Part of the Secret of Fatima*, St. Louis 2017, 76.

⁹ SOCCI, *Il quarto segreto di Fatima*, 153-163; see also SYMONDS, *On the Third Part*, 59-84.

great trial»¹⁰. Here, Viganò is referring to the words of Our Lady during her July 13, 1917 apparition, «In Portugal, the dogma of the faith shall always be preserved...»¹¹.

The second section of Mons. Viganò's response to the interviewer contains numerous misstatements of fact or outright errors. First, Viganò states that the third part of the secret was given to the children «to deliver to the Holy Father» (*para que eles a entregassem ao Santo Padre*). This claim is unsupported in the historical documentation¹². Mons. Viganò then concludes his sentence with the phrase that the third part «remains secret to this day» (*permanece em segredo até hoje*).

For what reason would Mons. Viganò make this claim? If he has agreed with the conclusions of Antonio Socci, then it seems that Viganò is here referring to the «fourth secret» hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, Sr. Lúcia had written a second text, one that contains explanatory words of the Virgin that interpret the images in the third part of the secret¹³.

The hypothesis of a «second text» had arisen immediately after the publication of the third part of the secret¹⁴. This hypothesis was claimed despite the double assertion of Cardinal Ratzinger in his *Theological Commentary* that the text was being «published in its entirety»¹⁵. The hypothesis was subsequently developed over the next several years, but was notably encouraged in 2006 with the publication of Antonio Socci's book *Il quarto segreto di Fatima*.

The Holy See has consistently denied the existence of the now so-called «fourth secret» hypothesis. In 2007, Cardinal Bertone denied it in his book *L'ultima veggente di Fatima*¹⁶. In 2016, the hypothesis was again denied, *twice*. First, and most notably, in the form of a letter in 2016 from Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI to Yves Chiron that was made in a moment of calm and no pressure¹⁷. Second, in a communiqué from the Holy See's press office dated 21 May, 2016¹⁸. It makes no sense, therefore, that Benedict would consistently deny that which would discredit him later.

Moreover, the hypothesis received a decisive refutation in October, 2013. At that time, it was revealed that there *was* a meaning (*significado*) given to Sr. Lúcia at some

¹⁰ «... que a Santíssima Virgem prometeu preservar na Fé também nestes tempos de grande provação».

¹¹ Cfr. SYMONDS, *On the Third Part*, 25-27, 181-216 for a more extensive examination of the sentence.

¹² Cfr. *ibid.*, 93-102; C. SOBRAL (ed.), *Lúcia de Jesus: Memórias*, Fátima 2016, 451, question 161.

¹³ SOCCI, *Il quarto segreto di Fatima*, 73-178..

¹⁴ A. STANLEY, *Vatican Issues Text of Third Secret of Fatima*, in *The New York Times* (27 June 2000) Section A, 10, in <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/27/world/vatican-issues-text-of-third-secret-of-fatima.html>.

¹⁵ CONGREGAZIONE PER LA DOTTRINA DELLA FEDE, *Il messaggio di Fatima*, Città del Vaticano 2000, 32, 39.

¹⁶ T. BERTONE, *L'ultima veggente di Fatima*, Milano 2007, 75-79.

¹⁷ Y. CHIRON, *Fatima: Vérités et légendes*, Paris 2017, 235-236.

¹⁸ In <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2016/05/21/0366/00855.html>.

point in time. She had received, however, a direct mandate from the Virgin herself *not* to reveal it in January, 1944¹⁹. How, then, can there be a second text with an explanation if the Blessed Virgin herself had mandated that no such text be written? From his experience with the Holy See, can Viganò verify that such a document exists?

Mons. Viganò claims that keeping the text unpublished was the result of a conspiracy. He explains that «Our Lady asked to reveal [the third part] in 1960, but John XXIII had a communiqué published on February 8th of that year... With this distance from the message of the Queen of Heaven, a cover-up operation was started...»²⁰. Mons. Viganò here mischaracterizes the document in question. The 8 February, 1960 document was a news article from an unnamed reporter who cited anonymous sources at the Vatican²¹.

There is a more likely reason why the text was not published in 1960 than Mons. Viganò's characterization of a «cover-up operation». The text was not published until 2000 because the text was unintelligible in 1960 without the meaning that the Virgin had mandated not to be written. Without an interpretation, publishing the text would have created certain problems that the Church was unwilling to create for herself²².

Mons. Viganò's claim, then, that St. John XXIII attempted a «cover-up operation» is a scandalous and unfounded accusation, one based upon false information and characterizations. Likewise, Viganò is incorrect when he states that the Virgin was «gagged» (*amordaçar*) as the Virgin herself never ordered the publication of the text. She expressly ordered that it «could only be opened [*aberto*] in 1960» and read by the Cardinal of Lisbon or the Bishop of Leiria²³.

Mons. Viganò begins the third section of the interview with another factual error: «In the year 2000... Cardinal Sodano, presented his version as the Third Secret that from some elements appeared clearly incomplete»²⁴. The claim that the interpretation given to the third part of the secret by the Holy See is actually Cardinal Sodano's interpretation is false. The basic hermeneutic applied to the text was made *in conjunc-*

¹⁹ Cfr. CARMELO DE COIMBRA, *Um caminho sob o olhar de Maria: Biografia da Irmã Lúcia de Jesus e do Coração Imaculado*, O.C.D., Coimbra 2013, 266.

²⁰ «Nossa Senhora pediu para ser revelada em 1960, mas João XXIII publicou, a 8 de Fevereiro daquele ano, um comunicado... Com este afastamento da mensagem da Rainha do Céu, deu-se início a uma operação de encobrimento...».

²¹ Cfr. SYMONDS, *On the Third Part*, 164-172.

²² Cfr. Cardinal Ratzinger's remarks during the 26 June, 2000 press conference, in *ibid.*, 378-381, 387.

²³ Cfr. CARMELO DE COIMBRA, *Um caminho sob o olhar de Maria*, 266; SOBRAL (ed.), *Lúcia de Jesus*, 451 (question 161).

²⁴ «Em 2000... o Secretário de Estado, Cardeal Sodano, apresentou como Terceiro Segredo uma versão sua que, em relação a alguns elementos, apareceu claramente incompleta».

tion with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, not separate from or despite it²⁵. Cardinal Sodano was the one who announced the interpretation instead of Pope John Paul II because the Holy Father was «personally involved»²⁶.

Mons. Viganò then states that Cardinal Bertone, as the Vatican Secretary of State under Pope Benedict XVI, «tried to divert attention to an event of the past»²⁷. Viganò is referring to the Holy See's interpretation wherein the events foretold in the third part now «seem part of the past»²⁸. It is Viganò's prerogative to question this interpretation. This prerogative was explicitly stated by Cardinal Ratzinger at the presentation of the third part of the secret on 26 June, 2000²⁹. Unfortunately, however, Viganò's reason for disagreeing is faulty.

Viganò stated that the two cardinals intended «to let the people of God believe that the words of the Virgin had nothing to do with the crisis of the Church and the combination of modernists and Freemasonry contracted behind the scenes of Vatican II»³⁰. Here, Viganò is referring to a belief that there were evil schemes by these people in order to influence Vatican II. In the present instance of this cover-up alleged by Viganò, Cardinals Sodano and Bertone advance the interpretation currently under discussion in order to deceive the faithful.

Mons. Viganò attributes malicious intent to Cardinals Sodano and Bertone without sufficient proof, and what he *does* offer as evidence is erroneous. Moreover, his statement creates a serious question concerning the Second Vatican Council. If the aforementioned groups were doing evil at the Council, what then are we to think of the Council and its documents and the Virgin's alleged words? Did she «condemn» the Council or just some evil machinations surrounding it³¹?

On this matter, Viganò is not clear, but he does create confusion towards the message of Fátima and distrust of the Magisterium of the Church viz-a-viz the Council. It should be noted that Sr. Lúcia herself *twice* referred to this Council as a «holy Council»³². If, as Viganò maintains, Sr. Lúcia was commissioned by Our Lady to give a message to the Holy Father that includes a «warning» concerning Vatican II, why

²⁵ BERTONE, *L'ultima veggente di Fatima*, 85; SYMONDS, *On the Third Part*, 329-333.

²⁶ A. STANLEY, *Vatican Discloses the "Third Secret" of Fatima*, in *The New York Times* (14 May 2000) Section 1, 1, in <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/14/world/vatican-discloses-the-third-secret-of-fatima.html>.

²⁷ «... tenha procurado desviar a atenção sobre um evento do passado».

²⁸ CONGREGAZIONE PER LA DOTTRINA DELLA FEDE, *Il messaggio di Fatima*, 31, 43.

²⁹ Cfr. SYMONDS, *On the Third Part*, 379.

³⁰ «... a fim de fazer crer ao povo de Deus que as palavras da Virgem não tivessem nada que ver com a crise da Igreja e com o conluio entre modernistas e maçonaria realizado nos bastidores do Vaticano II».

³¹ Cfr. SYMONDS, *On the Third Part*, 293-311.

³² Cfr. A. M. MARTINS, *Memórias e cartas da Irmã Lúcia*, Porto 1973, 454.

would Sr. Lúcia speak of the Council as she did? Clearly, Mons. Viganò is adopting a controversial and ultimately unsupportable position.

Mons. Viganò begins the fifth section with the words, «Benedict XVI himself confirmed the actuality of the Virgin's message, even though – according to the interpretation spread by the Vatican – it should be considered complete»³³. Viganò here appears to be referring to a remark made by Benedict XVI in his 13 May, 2010 homily in Fátima, «We would be mistaken to think that Fátima's prophetic mission is complete»³⁴.

Mons. Viganò's remark is disassociated from the historical record. First, he neglects to mention that Pope Benedict, as Cardinal Ratzinger, was a part of the «Vatican's interpretation» in the year 2000. Second, Viganò contrasts Pope Benedict's remark with the interpretation given by the Holy See as if there is a contradiction or a change. It appears as though Mons. Viganò has interpreted Benedict's 13 May, 2010 homily as a "repudiation" from that of June, 2000.

This interpretation is false, as there is no discord between the two statements. Pope Benedict, in 2010, was simply making more apparent a distinction, the roots of which were already in the year 2000³⁵. Simply stated, Benedict distinguished between the individual prophecies of Fátima from its overall prophetic mission of revealing the Will of God in the present. In his homily, Benedict was developing this biblical understanding of prophecy using the example of the three shepherd children of Fátima as witnesses, i.e. prophets³⁶. He was, in short, reminding the faithful of their participation, through baptism, in Christ's mission of priest, *prophet* and king.

Benedict's distinction is entirely concordant with the Holy See's interpretation from 2000 that the Virgin's message of conversion and penance remains relevant today³⁷. What *is* fair to note here is that the distinction made by Benedict in 2010 was not *as apparent* in the year 2000. Viganò, however, does not see the texts in this way. He advances interpretations of the facts that are not the result of serene and balanced studies but of discord and rupture.

Mons. Viganò then states: «Those who read the Third Secret clearly said that its content concerns the apostasy of the Church, [which] began precisely in the beginning of the 1960s and which, today, has reached a stage so evident that it can be recognized by secular observers»³⁸. Addressing Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, Sr. Lúcia

³³ «O próprio Bento XVI confirmou a actualidade da mensagem da Virgem, apesar de – segundo a interpretação difundida pelo Vaticano – se dever considerar cumprida».

³⁴ AAS 102 (2010) 327 («Iludir-se-ia quem pensasse que a missão profética de Fátima esteja concluída»).

³⁵ Cfr. SYMONDS, *On the Third Part*, 256-292.

³⁶ Cfr. CONGREGAZIONE PER LA DOTTRINA DELLA FEDE, *Il messaggio di Fatima*, 36.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁸ «Quem leu o Terceiro Segredo disse claramente que o seu conteúdo diz respeito à apostasia da Igreja,

stated that the reason for the date was that it would be «more clear» (*mais claro*)³⁹. In June, 1958, she wrote to Pope Pius XII and told him that «in the 60s, Communism will attain its high point»⁴⁰.

From these pieces of evidence from Sr. Lúcia, we can see that historical events in the 1960s had a role to play in the fulfillment of the third part of the secret. We can also infer that if the text would be «more clear» in 1960 at the time of its reading, then it is fair to observe that events *prior* to 1960 might also have had a bearing upon the interpretation of the third part of the secret. The picture painted by these two observations remains to be worked out by competent scholars.

4. Conclusion

Archbishop Viganò's remarks on Fátima in his interview with *Dies Irae* indicate a lack of knowledge and critical study regarding the history of the third part of the secret of Fátima. There are two reasons for this: 1) Mons. Viganò's personal and widely known antipathy for Cardinals Sodano and Bertone, and conversely 2) his belief that Antonio Socci is a reliable source on Fátima.

In regards to the first reason, to characterize Sodano and Bertone as having malicious intent with the interpretation of Fátima is contrary to the historical record. While acknowledging that Mons. Viganò's public accusation of their malfeasance in handling sex-abuse cases is serious (if true), it does not necessarily follow that their actions with Fátima are malicious. In order to discern their actions towards Fátima, one must look to the historical and theological facts. These facts support, as well as question, various assertions that they have made, but do not indicate malice.

Regarding the second reason, Socci failed to do extensive research. He adopted many of the arguments that he sought to refute. Socci's failure was not as apparent in the immediate years following the publication of his book in 2006. As more documentation becomes available, it becomes highly unlikely that there was a second text as advocated by adherents to the "fourth secret" hypothesis. Our efforts, therefore, are better spent on understanding the third part of the secret of Fátima more deeply through calm and serene study and reflection, especially with the new documenta-

iniciada precisamente no princípio dos anos sessenta e que, hoje, chegou a uma fase tão evidente que pode ser reconhecida por observadores seculares».

³⁹ In *Acta Pontificiae Academiae Marianae Internationalis vel ad Academiae quoquo modo pertinentia*, vol. 4, Romae 1967, 45.

⁴⁰ CARMELO DE COIMBRA, *Um caminho sob o olhar de Maria*, 275 («... na era 60, o comunismo atingirá o ponto máximo...»).

tion.

For his part, Mons. Viganò evidently is not in possession of all of the facts and depends upon erroneous research to inform his opinions. Those opinions are being favorably received by many people who accept his words at face value, due to his public prestige and credentials. As a result, they are also receiving false information and impressions about the authentic message of Our Lady of Fátima, thereby harming that message.

Mons. Viganò therefore faces a grave personal danger. He is making scandalous statements. In doing so, he is, in effect, undermining his credibility by allowing his personal antipathy to influence unduly his perspective of Our Lady's message at Fátima. I encourage him to engage in a deeper study of the *authentic* message of Our Lady at Fátima and its sources and would respectfully welcome a dialogue with him.

Abstract

This essay responds to some claims and characterizations made by Mons. Carlo Maria Viganò about the third part of the secret of Fátima during an interview with the publication *Dies Irae* on 21 April, 2020. This essay contends that Mons. Viganò's understanding of the history of the third part of the secret, as presented in the interview, is flawed. The basis for this understanding can be traced to a personal antipathy toward Cardinals Angelo Sodano and Tarcisio Bertone. Consequently, this antipathy has predisposed Viganò to accept uncritically certain characterizations on Fátima that have been advanced by writers such as Antonio Socci and others who have proposed that there is a "fourth secret" of Fátima. Contrary evidence to Viganò's assertions is presented and concludes with a warning and encouragement to Mons. Viganò to continue to seek the truth of the matter in question.

Riassunto

Questo contributo risponde ad alcune interpretazioni e affermazioni fatte da mons. Carlo Maria Viganò sulla terza parte del segreto di Fatima in occasione di un'intervista sul sito portoghese *Dies Irae* del 21 aprile 2020. L'intento di queste pagine è di dimostrare che la comprensione di Mons. Viganò riguardo alla storia della terza parte del segreto, così come viene presentata nell'intervista, è errata. L'origine di tale comprensione può essere fatta risalire a un'antipatia personale nei confronti dei cardinali Angelo Sodano e Tarcisio Bertone. Di conseguenza, questa antipatia ha portato Viganò ad accettare acriticamente alcune interpretazioni su Fatima avanzate da scrittori come Antonio Socci e altri che hanno sostenuto l'esistenza di un "quarto segreto" di Fatima. Dopo aver addotto alcune prove contrarie alle affermazioni di Viganò, il contributo si conclude con un incoraggiante invito a Mons. Viganò a continuare a cercare la verità sulla questione qui sollevata.