

The miraculous drying of clothes at Fatima?

At the last apparition of the Mother of Jesus at Fatima, it was reported that a crowd saw the miracle of the sun spin and their clothes through drenched suddenly dried.

It had been wet. The rain has been exaggerated. It was drizzle. "I arrived at noon. The rain which had been falling since the morning, fine and persistent, propelled by a fierce wind, continued to fall" writes Dr Almeida Garret.

The people allegedly thought their clothes dried miraculously. They must not have realised that they had not been wet or not noticed that they had dried out which shows what kind of mental state many of them were in. Even today, people claim that Lourdes water dries on their bare skin instantly when they emerge from the baths at Lourdes. That is not true! It dries quickly but you do not come out as dry as you went in. Skin is waterproof and can dry and drip dry fast anyway. Its only places like Lourdes where they do not reach for the towel as they normally do that they have any experience of being nude and wet. The clothes can absorb a lot of the moisture as well.

The evidence is that the autumn sun was enough to dry their clothes. Pereira Gens declared, "It continues to rain so strongly that in spite of our umbrellas, nobody has a stitch of dry clothing left. The rain suddenly stops, the clouds split open, and the sun is visible in all its splendour. Our clothes are wet and our bodies cold; I still remember the delicious sensation that this warm caress of the sun gave me...Although it is true that the luminosity of the sun was diminished, its warmth lost none of its power. I feel my clothes almost dry now, although they were all wet only a few moments ago."

The majority of testimonies about the Solar Miracle of 1917 never mention the drying of clothes. This is inexplicable. Many of them would have thought that what happened the sun was an illusion especially after hearing that the sun only seemed to move where they were at. So they would have dwelt more on the instant drying had it really happened. There is one eyewitness testimony that says the drying never took place. Please read the testimonies compiled by Jaki.

The photos show no evidence of anybody getting wet or being wet at all. And that includes the photos from minutes before the Miracle.

Joe Nickell wrote in 2019 in the *Skeptical Inquirer*: "We can examine photographs of the event and just before, which do not show heavy rain—or any rain at all in fact. The clothing in those visible does not appear to be soaked, and fabric does not cling to skin or hang as though saturated. The lack of open umbrellas in the photographs taken at the time of the miracle is notable; the few that can be seen appear to be shielding their users from bright sunlight, not torrential rain. There are also few if any visible puddles or streams that might be expected after eighteen or so hours of rainfall."

And, "Most of those present did not report the drying miracle, and what sporadic stories there are seem to have arisen afterward in classic folkloric fashion."

BENJAMIN RADFORD ON THIS SUBJECT

In his 2019 article *Fatima Miracle Claims All Wet*, Benjamin Radford states that:

"Some present claimed they saw the sun dance around the heavens; others said the sun zoomed toward Earth in a zigzag motion. Some people reported seeing brilliant colors spin out of the sun in a psychedelic, pinwheel pattern; still thousands of others saw nothing unusual at all. The whole event took about ten minutes, and this Miracle of the Sun, as it became known, is one of the best-known events at Fatima."

My comment on that is the people don't sound too reliable if they say their clothes dried rapidly. They had no straight story about the vision. Also we do not know if it was really ten minutes long. Only a few accounts say that. Human nature is notoriously unreliable at estimating time when something out of the ordinary is being experienced. Visionaries report time distortion and it may have happened here too. We do not know if it seemed to be ten minutes for most of those who said they saw something. The ten minutes thing is important. It is even more important than what was supposedly seen. Why? Simply because it is harder to sustain the hallucination or illusion hypothesis - though not impossible - if it we are talking about ten minutes as opposed to one or two.

Radford writes,

"I never claimed that the Fatima sighting was mass hysteria per se; instead, some aspects of it, such as the sun being said to

move about the sky, were suggestive. Mass hysteria often manifests in mild but verifiable physical symptoms, such as headaches, fainting, and nausea. While there were certainly strong elements of mass suggestion at the event, it's not quite accurate to call it a "mass delusion."

My comment is that there is no proof that we are talking ten minutes. Brief visions would explain why the crowd did not see anything long enough to stampede.

He probably thinks it was not mass delusion for it went on for ten minutes! The wild array of different visions suggests delusion and hysteria. The objection to this explanation is that it went on too long. This objection is wrong.

Even enough of the witnesses having mass delusion not all would be enough. Naturally any compilation of recollections about the event were going to come from such people for they had the best stories.

Radford writes,

If the skies had opened up and it "had been raining all night and into the day" resulting in soaked crowds and soil, then how was it possible that everything was dry when the solar display ended?

Evaporation is an obvious explanation—and depends on many factors, including ambient humidity, temperature, and even the color of wet cloth—but surely so much water could not have simply vanished in so short a time.

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There is clear evidence that it had been raining before the miracle, though not necessarily "all night and into the day." A more relevant question is what the conditions were shortly before the event; accounts conflict, and it's not clear precisely what the weather was at the time of the miracle itself. In his book *Entities*, Joe Nickell refers variously to "a stormy and rainy October 13" and the sun being "seen through thin clouds" (Nickell 1995). Of course, whatever cloud cover there was could not have been heavy since the famed Miracle of the Sun would not have been seen at all.

In Portugal, most of the rain falls in winter, from November to March. This does not preclude the possibility of a continuous rainfall in mid-October, of course, but it does demonstrate that the rainy season typically begins later in the year.

Though accounts differ, for corroboration we can examine photographs of the event and just before, which do not show heavy rain—or any rain at all in fact. The clothing in those visible does not appear to be soaked, and fabric does not cling to skin or hang as though saturated. The lack of open umbrellas in the photographs taken at the time of the miracle is notable; the few that can be seen appear to be shielding their users from bright sunlight, not torrential rain. There are also few if any visible puddles or streams that might be expected after eighteen or so hours of rainfall.

A few photographs exist from the morning before the miracle when it was in fact raining, and a sea of dark umbrellas can be seen. This would of course suggest that those present, at least those under umbrellas, were largely spared from whatever rains or drizzle there was (if those with umbrellas were somehow just as wet as those without, that would be an especially curious "miracle").

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No one is suggesting that the area was bone dry, of course. The photographs (such as they are for being a century old and poorly exposed) do seem to show overcast skies, and it's perfectly plausible that there had been a light rain that morning. But that's a far cry from the claim that the pilgrims and land were "soaked," and this discrepancy could easily account for why people's clothes were—or seemed to be—drier than they might have expected.

Comment: The drying clothes is not well supported either from witness reports or other evidence.