

BRONX "MIRACLE" JOSEPH VITOLO

For a few weeks in 1945, a boy aged 9 called Joseph Vitolo claimed daily visions of the Virgin Mary in the Bronx. The story got a lot of media interest and became known as simply the Bronx Miracle. Many claimed to experience miracle healings. Public interest was huge and overwhelmed the site of the alleged visions. The Archdiocese of New York did not consider the story credible and refused to dignify it with an investigation. It was virtually forgotten about until Professor J.T. McGreevy of the University of Notre Dame resurrected the memory in the 1990s.

The boy's father did not believe him. The mother said, "My Joseph has always been a good boy and goes to church. He never lies to me". Elements that wreck credibility include how Mary broke her rosary beads. The witness claimed, "They were blue beads... and the beads broke. I couldn't... I couldn't move. I must of... stopped me for some reason... and, ah, Our Lady stooped down, picked up all her beads, and she says to me: "One bead", she says, "Joseph, we can't find".

Attempts have been made to turn this into some kind of parable as if Mary was an actress trying to make a point. Did she lose her tongue?

A spring was found but the boy to his credit denied that Mary had anything to do with it. It shows that the spring of Lourdes cannot be considered evidence that Mary was appearing. He said that on the night of the last vision "something wonderful would happen." He reported merely seeing the sky open up and there were some random predictable claims that some saw Mary rising up into Heaven. It was nothing compared to Fatima. He saw nothing like that himself!

Even if there had been anything strange in the sky, the fact remains that science has been recording odd things in the atmosphere since 1887. It has to happen that something will take place when a miracle monger is at work. Many Catholics hold that the miracle of the sun at Fatima was a miracle only in the sense that God arranged for nature to do strange things and was not supernatural outright or obviously so.

Here are some relevant notes on atmospheric observations:

J.R. Kinney, "Hole-in-Cloud", *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, vol. 49, 1968, p. 990; H.M. Johnson and R.L. Holle, "Observations and Comments on Two Cloud Holes over Miami", *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, vol. 50, 1969, pp. 157-161; P.V. Hobbes, "Holes in Clouds: A Case Study in Scientific Amnesia", *Weatherwise*, vol. 38, 1985, p. 254-258

S.L. Jaki, *God and the Sun at Fatima* (Pickney, MI: Real-View Books, 1999).

S. Alexander, "Remarkable Optical Phenomenon", *American Meteorological Journal*, vol. III, no. 10, 1887, p. 486. Compare also J. Mintern, "A Kaleidoscopic Sun", *Meteorological Magazine*, vol. 58, no. 685, 1923, pp. 10-11. Moreover, the account of the stationary sun in the Old Testament (Joshua 10: 10-13) can plausibly be explained by a meteorological phenomenon. See D. Camuffo, "A Meteorological Anomaly in Palestine 33 Centuries Ago: How did the sun stop?", *Theoretical and Applied Climatology*, vol. 41, 1990, pp. 81-85.