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In his homily at the Christmas Day Mass, the Rector of the Shrine of Fatima invited the pilgrims to welcome God's great gift and to accept the “demanding consequence” that come with it.

On the basis of the biblical texts proclaimed on Christmas Day, the Rector of the Shrine of Fatima led the pilgrims to reflect on the deeper meaning of the event celebrated that day.

In the homily of the Mass he presided over this morning in the Basilica of the Blessed Trinity, Father Carlos Cabecinhas said that “Christmas is first and foremost the initiative of God” who, through the Child in the manger, came closer to us and revealed a love without measure.

The President of the celebration borrowed the words of a Christian thinker from many centuries ago who, in a reflection on the mystery of Christmas, pointed out two possible ways of showing love to someone.

The first is reflected in the giving of gifts, insofar as they manifest “the good we want for those we esteem, those we are friends with, those we love”.

The second way is much more radical: “instead of offering something, a gift, it is to offer oneself”.

“This is what God does at Christmas: God doesn't offer us presents, he offers himself as the great gift, the great gift that is given to us”, Father Carlos Cabecinhas pointed out.

Using the words of the Gospel proclaimed today, he also drew attention to a fundamental characteristic of all gifts: they can be accepted or refused. “The Evangelist tells us that Jesus came in “the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him’,” he said.

“The great drama of Christmas is this: we can accept God's gift to us or we can refuse it,” he continued, emphasising that “accepting this gift from God, who is the Child of God in the manger, has consequences for our lives and demanding consequences”. In particular, Fr Carlos Cabecinhas mentioned the commitments that this entails in our relationship with God, in the time and attention we give him, and in our relationship with one another, in other words, in our ability to “be a support” and to “be a help for the fragility of those around us, with whom we live or with whom we come into contact”.

In conclusion, the Rector of the Shrine referred to “the images of the violence of war that hit us like a punch in the stomach” and the many “worries that overshadow our daily lives”, to say that this should not prevent us from celebrating Christmas with joy.

And he affirmed that “none of our sufferings is alien to God” and he invited the pilgrims to “welcome the God-child of the manger as the great gift that God gives us, as the great gift of this Christmas”.

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