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The Bishop of Leiria-Fatima presides the Annual Hotel managers Meeting promoted by the Shrine.

The Bishop of Leiria Fatima said this afternoon at the opening of the XXXVIII Annual Meeting of Hotel Managers, promoted by the Shrine, that "Fatima belongs to everyone" and the pilgrims who arrive have to be welcomed properly.

"The welcome is our presentation card and therefore we have to focus on its quality," said Bishop Antonio Marto asking the hotel managers to make of Fatima "a house of hospitality, warmth and celebration".

The diocesan bishop presided the Annual Meeting of Hotel managers, which brought together more than a hundred managers of the Tourism of Fatima, and where the

Rector of the Shrine presented the theme of the Pastoral Year of the Shrine - I came that they may have life.

Father Carlos Cabecinhas reminded that it is in the Mercy of God that we "find the key of the Fatima Message" and therefore "it is a happy coincidence that Fatima marks this subject," in the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

“Like the little shepherds, we expect this pastoral year to be an invitation to pilgrims to give themselves to God and, with this release, celebrate".

The responsible of the Shrine of Fatima underlined the "wide range" of events that the Shrine is going to have in terms of celebrations throughout this last commemorating year of the Centennial of the Apparitions of Our Lady, which began to be planned six years ago and was inspired by the words that according to the Memoirs of Sister Lucia came out of the lips of the Virgin Mary: "My Immaculate Heart will lead you to God."

"From the beginning, our concern was that the activities plan was grounded in a thematic itinerary that could create a guiding line throughout the whole cycle and could validate the different initiatives, framing them in a guiding horizon," said the Rector.

"We wanted the program to be wide enough in order to include activities that could reach the greatest number of people and groups," said the Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas underlining that “many and different proposals” were planned within “the proper mission of a Christian Shrine taking into account the needs of pilgrims. "

He acknowledged, however, that the program includes "a strong cultural component" because “the Christian faith is always an embodied faith that assumes, transforms and produces culture."

The Fatima phenomenon, with its specifically Christian origin, is no exception to this law of incarnation: it expresses itself, from its beginning and for nearly a century, in the different cultural ways of the environment in which it was born and developed; but at the same time, it marks the surrounding culture and originates new cultural expressions", the Rector added.

For this reason the activities plan "is not simply the fulfillment of a formality itself" but was expected to be an opportunity to "celebrate, evoke, reflect, contemplate and pray," has concluded the Rector of the Shrine.

During the meeting, the commemorative program of the Apparitions Centennial was presented by the executive consultant of the Centennial Commission. There are about 150 cultural and formative events including the performance of 29 concerts in its various expressions, performing arts and conferences.

The statistics on the dynamic of the Shrine in 2015 were also released by the Department of Communication of the Shrine.

The figures indicate an increase of more than 250 thousand pilgrims in the celebratory places of the Shrine last year.

In 2015, there were 6.676.302 participants in the 9.948 celebrations that took place in

the Shrine, including official Masses, private and other celebrations, such as the Way of the Cross or the recitation of the Rosary. In 2014, the figures point to the presence of 6.4 million persons.

In terms of pilgrims in organized groups, the Shrine has registered the presence of 587.129 pilgrims over 4390 pilgrimages, 55.000 more than in 2014.

In terms of visits to the House Museum of Aljustrel and the Houses of the Shepherds, 671.324 visits were registered; both exhibitions – temporary exhibition "Heaven and Earth, pilgrims and saints of Fatima" and the permanent exhibition "Fatima Light and Peace '- registered 389.314 visits.

Pilgrims of Portuguese nationality remain the overwhelming majority of the visitors during the great pilgrimages of May and October.

Of the 125.829 foreign pilgrims who visited Fatima in group, in 2015, the majority continues to be Spanish nationality (30.776 pilgrims), followed by Italian (15.112 pilgrims) and Polish (13.017 pilgrims), who is, along with the Americans (9.450 pilgrims), the group that has increase the most in visits.

Portuguese pilgrimages remain in large numbers and from different dioceses.

In 2015, the diocese which mobilized the largest number of pilgrims was the Porto diocese with 39.686 pilgrims, followed by Lisbon and Braga with 34.362 to 31.846. The Diocese of Leiria-Fatima, the Shrine’s diocese, mobilized 28.624 pilgrims. The diocese of Coimbra mobilized 7.922, of Guarda 5.262, of Portalegre-C. Branco 3.668, of Aveiro 3.511, of Viseu, 3.491 and Setubal 2.964 pilgrims. These were the dioceses that have brought more pilgrims to the Shrine.

The pilgrimages of May - 99.886 pilgrims in organized groups (80.772 Portuguese and foreign 19.114) - and October -111.533 pilgrims, also participating in groups (89.008 Portuguese and foreign 22.575) - are the pilgrimages that had the greatest number of pilgrims.

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