SANTUÁRIO DE FÁTIMA
SHRINE OF FATIMA

30 november, 2019

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The Bishop of Leiria-Fatima presided over the Presentation Day of the Pastoral Year Theme and challenged Christians to be “more enthusiastic” when talking about God

Cardinal António Marto stated this afternoon, in the Presentation Day of the New Pastoral Year Theme of the Shrine – Giving thanks for living in God, that it is necessary to give “importance to the invisible life, to life that is out of the limelight”, such as the life of the seers of Fatima.

“The invisible life, the life that is out of the limelight, is one of the major gifts of holiness”, the prelate stated, reminding that neither Francisco nor Jacinta “have known the social networks reality or fame”, but they were “saints of the small gestures, of the small details springing from the heart”.

“As many others nowadays, they didn’t show off and still don’t show off for the cameras but their gestures are still sustaining the world”, he explained, reminding that this path

should be travelled together, in a family-based communal life.

The Bishop of Leiria-Fatima underlined that talking about holiness “is not popular and does not guarantee an audience these days, nor deserves the best press headlines”, because it is an issue wrapped up in “stereotypes and prejudices”, which mistake holiness for “great deeds or extraordinary things”. However, he stressed, Holiness “is a significant theme nowadays”, “it can be reached by everyone and not only by a few chosen ones” and it is expressed on the daily life.

“The community that keeps the smallest details of love to share them together is a place of holiness: a gesture of tenderness, a generous help, a kind word, a smile, a sign of affection, sharing material or spiritual gifts are all small and insignificant gestures perhaps, but eternal and holy in the eyes of God”, Cardinal António Marto said.

“Being a saint doesn’t mean to roll up the eyes in a supposed ecstasy, but to configure life to the Lord’s mercy, recognizing Jesus Christ as the One who comes to the encounter with the poor and suffering”, stressed the prelate, concluding that “a saint is the one who lives in God and not the one who approaches and only stands dazzled with the consumption or the spotlights.

The prelate, who didn’t conceal his esteem for the theme of holiness, above all the holiness that Pope Francis talks about, which has the “saints next door” as model, challenged the attendants to become inspired by the school of Mary, just like the Little Shepherds did.

“Do not think that the mystic is only for the chosen ones and that it can be reducible to extraordinary mystical phenomena; it is a sign of Christian life, and although it has several intensity grades, it is fundamental to talk about the beauty of living in God and with God, of the joy it brings us, and to do it enthusiastically”.

“The holiness of the Little Shepherds is the major legacy of the Message of Fatima”, Cardinal António Marto said, and They knew, as no one else, how to walk this path of holiness, “emboldening each other”, “praying together”, “making sacrifices together”. So, “let us rejoice by this example and do just like they did” placing ourselves “as instruments of God together with our brothers”.

Holiness “has a humanizing force”, “raises us from our bondages and raises up our dignity”, he stated.

The theme of holiness, and, in particular, the way we can live this holiness these days, is the central invitation of the Shrine for the pastoral year which begins this First Sunday of Advent.

“The current pastoral year aims at helping pilgrims gain awareness of their vocation to holiness while life in God; of the need of conversion as recentering life in God; of experiencing God’s mercy as an invitation to live in God” Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas said during the same session, underlining that pilgrims are invited to discover Fatima as ‘school of holiness’, both in the Christian spirituality offered by the message of Fatima and in the life of the Saints Little Shepherds, who exemplarily embodied this spirituality.

“With Saints Francisco and Jacinta, when we celebrate one hundred years of their death, pilgrims are challenged to discover the exhortation to live the holiness in their lives. This exhortation to holiness results of the Christening condition: all those who are baptised are called to be saints”.

The Rector of the Shrine recalled, on the other hand, that the year’s pastoral dynamics has as reference, in addition to the event of the centenary of Saint Jacinta’s death, the centenaries of the first sculpture of Our Lady of Fatima and of the episcopal ordination of Bishop José Alves Correia da Silva – the first Bishop, of the newly restored (at that time) Diocese of Leiria –, also designated the first great Bishop of Fatima.

The theme of the year was introduced by Fr. João Aguiar Campos, former Director of the National Secretariat for Church Media. The priest, who also directed Rádio Renascença, underlined that “Fatima is inwardness” and “a school in which Mary is a teacher of the centrality of God”.

The Pastoral Year Presentation Day, preceded by the opening of the exhibition celebrating the centenary of the first sculpture of Our Lady of Fatima, entitled Dressed in White, had something new this year: the volunteers of the Shrine of Fatima were invited to assume or renew the Volunteer Compromise, maximum expression of this life in God, in the willingness to help others.

The moment of compromise began with a moment of Worship by the tombs of Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto, at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, followed by the Mass, presided over by the Rector of the Shrine, and along which the volunteers were invited to express their commitment. 350 volunteers are now collaborating with the Shrine, from the Liturgy to the welcoming and communications, among other services.

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