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In the Celebration of the Word on September 12, Most Rev. José Imbamba, Archbishop of Saurimo and President of the Episcopal Conference of Angola and São Tomé, challenged pilgrims to listen, trust, and serve, following the example of Mary.

“Let us not be afraid to say yes to love, life, mission, solidarity, and social friendship; let us not be afraid or ashamed to live, celebrate, and witness to the beauty of our faith.” This appeal was made in Fátima by Most Rev. José Manuel Imbamba, Archbishop of Saurimo and President of the Episcopal Conference of Angola and São Tomé, during the Celebration of the Word for the September International Anniversary Pilgrimage.

Drawing from the account of the Annunciation, proclaimed on this day when the Church celebrates the Holy Name of Mary, the pilgrimage leader presented the Mother of Fair Love as a model of a life entirely open to God. Her “yes,” he stated, “was not a momentary consent, but a lifelong commitment, held firm from the manger in

Bethlehem to the foot of the Cross.”

Following Mary's example, Most Rev. José Imbamba recalled three attitudes highlighted in the Gospel that “we are called to imitate”: listening, trusting, and serving. Listening to the Word of God by placing it at the center of life; trusting by overcoming fears and uncertainties because “nothing is impossible with God”; and serving by translating faith into concrete acts of love, especially toward “the most vulnerable, the abandoned, and the forgotten.”

At the Cova da Iria, the Archbishop of Saurimo also identified the severe global challenges of our time, including “spiritual indifference and dryness, ethical relativism, a lack of commitment to faith, the breakdown of families, and the social and ethical implications of artificial intelligence.” To these, he added the absence of peace, evident in wars, social divisions, as well as in the loneliness and barrenness of human hearts.

Faced with this reality, Most Rev. José Imbamba highlighted prayer and inner silence as urgent and necessary paths. “In a noisy and disoriented world, the liturgy invites us into the silence of Nazareth,” he stated, noting that peace begins “in the heart that welcomes grace and reconciles with God.”

This evening's celebration, attended by approximately 70,000 pilgrims at the Prayer Grounds, was also an occasion to recall the visits of various Popes to the Cova da Iria. Bringing to mind Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, the pilgrimage leader emphasized the ongoing call for peace, hope, and trust in Mary.

Most Rev. José Imbamba concluded his homily by revisiting the Angel's words at the Annunciation—“do not be afraid”—and Mary's response—“may it be done to me

according to your word”—to issue this plea: “may we know how to embrace our daily calling and respond with the same generosity as the Virgin Mary.”

For this September International Anniversary Pilgrimage, the Shrine of Fátima services registered 95 pilgrim groups coming from 26 countries across five continents. Poland, Italy, Spain, and the United States were the nations with the highest number of registered pilgrims, excluding local Portuguese groups. Concelebrating were one cardinal (Most Rev. António Marto), four bishops (Most Rev. José Ornelas, Bishop of Leiria-Fátima; Most Rev. Jorge Bejarano, Bishop of Granada, Colombia; Most Rev. Giancarlo Petrini, Bishop Emeritus of Camaçari, Brazil; along with the pilgrimage leader), 85 priests, and two deacons.

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