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The WYD day of the Diocese of Leiria-Fatima gathered more than 10,000 young people in Leiria today, in a programme that celebrated the faith, joy and the diversity of the Church.

More than 10,000 Portuguese and foreign young people, who will take part in the World Youth Day (WYD Lisbon 2023), gathered this morning in a garden in the city of Leiria, to celebrate a votive Mass for Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto, a celebration where the relics of the holy Little Shepherds, diocesan patrons of WYD, and the Pilgrim Image of Our Lady of Fatima were present.

In the homily of the Mass, which opened the “Leiria Faith n'Fun” – the WYD day of the Diocese of Leiria-Fatima –, Bishop José Ornelas pointed out three “fundamental attitudes” for young people to better live the international meeting: openness to the God’s will, universal fraternity and care and service to others, especially the weakest.

“Listening to the voice of God is the first and most important attitude to live this WYD: in the celebration, in the singing, in the dancing, in the new knowledge and friendships,

but above all in the silence of the heart that opens to listen and says: ‘Speak, Lord, that your servant may listen’”, said the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, citing the example of God's call to Samuel, which is recounted in the first reading.

“The second word is: brothers and sisters, to build the Church and the world. Today, in this park, there are no foreigners. Here, we are all brothers and sisters, beyond nationality, culture or language. WYD is Pentecost for the new world and an expression of our willingness and commitment to reject all forms of racism, exclusion, exploitation and abuse. WYD is the experience of being one family in Jesus, a laboratory for the future, the dream of a new world, more fraternal, in solidarity and capable of caring for the planet,” said the president of the celebration, referring to the words of St Paul to the Ephesians in the second reading.

“The third word is care and service. (…) The Church, as Pope Francis says, must be a field hospital, specialised in caring for the fragility of the planet on which we live: for children who are victims of hunger, war, abuse; for those seeking a way out of poverty, hunger, injustice; for the elderly in their loneliness. Let us not remain on the couch of our selfishness and comfort (…) Let us arise, like Mary, to assume our role, to serve, to care for and renew the Church, society and the world,” exhorted Mgr. José Ornelas, with references to the Gospel proclaimed.

In one of the prayers of the faithful at the celebration, the young people prayed for the health and well-being of Pope Francis, especially during his visit to Portugal and to Fatima, and in another prayer, they invoked the example of the holy Shepherds in their dedication to the will of God.

Several priests and bishops concelebrated the Mass, namely the emeritus bishops of Leiria-Fatima, Cardinal António Marto and Cardinal Serafim Ferreira e Silva; the Panamanian Cardinal José Lacunza Maestrojuán and the Metropolitan Archbishop of Panama, José Domingo Ulloa Mendieta.



An Opportunity to Get to Know Fatima and to Pray Next to the Pilgrim Virgin of Fatima

In the afternoon, the programme of World Youth Day in the Diocese of Leiria-Fatima continued with various artistic, recreational, cultural and spiritual events, including a conference on the Little Shepherds of Fatima, at the Miguel Franco Theatre, by Sister Angela Coelho, Postulator of the Cause for the Canonisation of Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto.

“The theme that I share with the young pilgrims is a synthesis of what happened in Fatima: the history, the biography of the three seers – I focus mainly on Francisco and Jacinta, who have already been canonised – and, finally, the challenges that we set for life: what does Fatima offer to pilgrims? So, starting from the spirituality of Francisco and Jacinta, we see that Fatima offers a point of reference, which is God; a Mother, the Heart of Mary; a family, the Church; and a project for life, which is to be able to collaborate in the history of salvation and for the peace of the world,” summarised Sister Angela Coelho in the Press Room of the Shrine of Fatima.

Another spiritual point of the programme took place in the Church of Our Lady of the Incarnation, where the young people were able to pray at the feet of the Pilgrim Virgin of Fatima, who, after attending the morning Mass, took up residence in this church, located on one of the hills of the city of Leiria, from where, in the evening, it was possible to see and hear the atmosphere of animation that kept the city buzzing until the end of “Leiria Faith n'Fun”, in the same garden where the day had begun.

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