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At the Mass of the July International Anniversary Pilgrimage, Bishop Pedro Fernandes invited pilgrims to be builders of justice and peace.

In the homily delivered this morning at the Prayer Area, the Bishop of Portalegre-Castelo Branco, Bishop Pedro Fernandes, drew upon the biblical metaphor of light versus darkness to reflect on the challenges of contemporary society, ranging from wars and hate speech to the divisions threatening communion within the Church.

"Today, we are going through a period of insecurity and disorientation," he noted. "Nations invading nations, people victimizing people, and hate speech and division proliferating and trying to impose themselves on the human community," underlined the celebrant.

Drawing from the account of the Annunciation, Bishop Pedro Fernandes presented Mary as an example of humility and openness to God's action. "Mary's attitude is not one of conquering heroism; rather, it is one of humble availability, of someone listening to what God wants, recognizing in Him, who is the source of all life, the only authority capable of

turning our darkness into light and our violence into meekness,” he stated.

In this context, the Bishop of Portalegre-Castelo Branco evoked Pope Leo XIV's recent encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* to warn about the ambiguity of technological progress. “While technological resources and artificial intelligence can open doors to almost immediate access to information and complex solutions, they can also draw us into a dangerous game where truth and falsehood become indistinguishable,” he reminded.



According to Bishop Pedro Fernandes, this confusion feeds manipulative rhetoric and populist strategies that exploit fear and insecurity to divide people and nations. “The dark populist strategy of 'divide and conquer' stands in contrast to the luminous proposal of the Word of God, which speaks to us of 'an endless Peace' achieved through 'right and justice,' not through force and arrogance,” he declared.

The bishop also recalled the conflicts devastating the Middle East, Ukraine, and other regions of the world, emphasizing that the roots of war and violence can also manifest “subtly” in hearts and in the way people build personal, social, political, and economic relationships.

Regarding the Church, Bishop Pedro Fernandes warned against the dangers of sectarian attitudes and spiritual arrogance. Recalling a recent incident involving a community that found itself in a state of excommunication, the bishop stated that a group claiming to be closer to God “creates division that cannot come from God.” In this spirit, the priest invited the faithful to return to Mary's humility and to prepare the Kingdom of Christ through concrete choices of peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

The bishop further reminded that “only that which unites us comes from God, never that

which divides us,” asserting that the unity of the Church and the construction of a society based on Gospel values are the responsibility of all Christians.

Finally, Bishop Pedro Fernandes asked for Mary’s intercession so that pilgrims may renew their determination to combat all forms of violence, prejudice, and exclusion through prayer, discernment, solidarity, and a commitment to building justice and peace.



Frailty as witness and a call to global solidarity

In his address to the sick, André Pereira, director of the Department of Reception and Pastoral Care at the Sanctuary of Fátima, stated that the Eucharist gathers the faithful as members of a single body, transforming every suffering person into a “living tabernacle” of Jesus’ presence.

“In your frailty, you are appointed His privileged witness and a sacrament of His love: Jesus gives you — and, through you, all of us — the most effective healing, the only one that truly restores our strength even if the body remains weak: the offering of everything out of love — the love that saves,” he illustrated.

In the final greeting, Bishop José Ornelas, Bishop of the Diocese of Leiria-Fátima, appealed for global solidarity, recalling suffering populations—with special emphasis on Venezuela, devastated by a recent earthquake, as well as the victims of heat waves in Europe and wars spreading terror and death.

In closing, Bishop José Ornelas urged pilgrims not to let the “winds of war” extinguish

the flame of hope and peace, challenging each pilgrim to return home as a “messenger and agent” of justice, fraternity, and solidarity in the world.

Seven thousand pilgrims attended the Mass of the July International Anniversary Pilgrimage. In addition to Bishop José Ornelas, Cardinal António Marto (Bishop Emeritus of Leiria-Fátima), Bishop Augusto César (Bishop Emeritus of Portalegre-Castelo Branco), 89 priests, and 8 deacons concelebrated.



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