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Celebration presided by Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas urged the pilgrims to pray for the Pope.

One year after the canonization of the Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto, the Shrine of Fatima celebrates today the liturgical feast of the youngest saints non-martyred of the Catholic Church.

The liturgical program started yesterday, on the 19th of February, at 9:30 p.m. with the recitation of the Rosary in the Chapel of the Apparitions with the presence of the icons of the Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto, followed by a Prayer Vigil in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima.

This morning, the Day of the Little Shepherds started with the Rosary in the Chapel of Apparitions by 10:00 a.m. followed by the procession to the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, where was celebrated the votive mass of the Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto at 11:00 a.m.

“Today is a day of joy and celebration” said Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas, rector of the Shrine of Fatima who presided at the mass. The priest, in the beginning of the celebration, spoke to the pilgrims who were present and said that these two children “show how the Message of Fatima is a path to holiness”.

In this festive day, the rector invited the pilgrims to take in consideration some important intentions: the “good fruits” of Pope Francis Lenten retreat and also of the Lenten retreat of the Bishops of Portugal.

Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas recalled the words of the Holy Father on the 13th of May 2017, in Fatima and pointed out that Francisco and Jacinta Marto help the discovery of the “beauty and grace of the christian holiness, as a vocation of all the christians” since they present the holiness as a “close and achievable reality”.

“The Saints Francisco and Jacinta are an example of holiness geographically close because they have lived in this land where we are right now” and invited all the pilgrims who were present to visit their houses, to walk on the same paths as them and to visit their tombs.

The rector left this invitation, so that it can be possible to contemplate closely their example and to understand that the holiness “is a mission of every christian”.

“The exhortation that Our Lady made them, in the first apparition, received from the Little Shepherds a clear and faithful answer, without hesitations or reservations, that transformed their lives”, whose existence became marked by the intense rhythm of prayer “one of the most distinctive features of the message of Fatima”.

“We find in the Saints Francisco and Jacinta the example of someone who cares for the others and their needs. Especially Saint Jacinta stands out for her compassionate atitude with the others. She experiences an ongoing concern for the salvation of the sinners and she is always ready to help everyone, especially the poorer”, explained. He also underlined that “there is no true love to God that doesn’t imply the love to the brothers; and that there is no true relationship with God that doesn’t express itself through a nurtured relation with the others”.

At the moment of the Universal Prayer, it was asked the intercession for Pope Francis so “he can be protected in times of danger and suffering” and for the pilgrims, the patients and the children.

At the end of the celebration, a group of children received the blessing.

In the afternoon, the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity hosted 400 children from several colleges and schools of Fatima for a gathering.

The rosary was presided by the rector of the Shrine of Fatima who meditated on the live of the youngest saints non-martyred of the Catholic Church.

Soon after, there was a visit to the tombs of the Little Shepherds in the Basilica of the Rosary of Fatima.

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