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The Cardinal sends a message to all the pilgrims announcing that the May Pilgrimage shall be carried out without the usual crowd of pilgrims

The International Anniversary Pilgrimage of May cannot be carried out in the usual way with the crowd of pilgrims in the Prayer enclosure, however, the main celebrations shall be held in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima, which shall be presided by the Cardinal D. Antnio Marto and transmitted by the social and digital media.

Although the Pilgrimage programme is not totally decided, on the night of the 12 May the rosary shall be recited, with the candles ceremony and on 13 May the international mass shall be celebrated.

The decision of the Shrine comes upon within the emergency situation context of the country and the world, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and is communicated in a video mensagem (message)of the Leiria-Fátima bishop, cardinal D. António Marto.

“I tis with great sorrow and sadness in my heart and in my soul, but also with a great sense of responsibility that I am hereby informing that the Shrine of Fatima will celebrate the Great International Anniversary Pilgrimage of May without having any pilgrims physically present, without the usual physical presence of the pilgrims” says the bishop.

“To suspend the realization of this May pilgrimage in its usual patterns is a pastoral responsibility act as well as a deep act of faith, that I am communicating with a heart full of sorrow because I know how important this moment is, especially to those pilgrims who come here looking for nurture, comfort and peace for the whole year” refers cardinal D. António Marto.

“I beg all of you to understand that due to the pandemic and the need to avoid the virus spread, this is the only sensible and responsible decision that we could make. We cannot take any risk! We could not, in any way, allow our Shrine to become a centre or focus of contamination for the country and for the world”, he added.

“This decision is based on the respect for the pilgrims, for all of us, for the common good of public health and reflects our faith of responsible citizens with a sense of solidarity. This situation forces us to stay at home” appeals the bishop of Leiria-Fátima.

The Pilgrimage, that marks the first apparition of Our Lady to the three Little Shepherds of Fátima, however, shall be transmitted live in the social media, in the usual way, thus allowing thousands of persons to follow the celebrations doing the pilgrimage from home.

“Even being at home we shall experience that moment with a pilgrimage spirit. The Shrine Enclosure shall be empty, but not deserted. Although being physically separated we shall all be here spiritually united as a Church with Mary, in an intensive way, with the heart full of faith” refers the cardinal in the video message addressed to all pilgrims.

“Pilgrimages are not just walking and using our feet or with our physical displacement. We also do pilgrimages with the mind and the heart, that is, an inner pilgrimage searching for illumination and truth, regeneration and healing, spiritual comfort and peace, when the pilgrim meets his/her self with the heavenly Mother and with the mystery of God, to go on walking with the strength of hope!” he clarifies.

In the already referred message, which you can see the whole message here, D. António Marto expresses his understanding and solidarity for all who had to cancel their pilgrimage – more than 180 groups enrolled until the beginning of this pandemic – and he points out that the change in the celebration of the first apparition of the Virgin in Cova da Iria also represents for the Shrine “a very difficult moment because it cannot receive pilgrims, who are the reason for the existence of this large field hospital that helps to heal so many wounds…”, and leaves a word to the sick, to the elderly and to

those who during this whole time have been deprived of participating in the Holy Communion.

“Nowadays we all live like Jesus in the Mount of Olives. Our soul is sad and we should be watchful because we are living a difficult time and the near future is also going to be difficult. Now is time to heal and stop the disease; we shall also have time to closely monitor our life with great care. Now is the time for solidarity and hope. We, Christians, must remember that there is no Good Friday without Easter. But Easter comes and brings the assurance that God never abandons us” states D. António Marto in the message.

“We shall not be able to do the pilgrimage in May, but we may do it some other time. We should do it some other time as thanksgiving” he said underlining that in the near future praying shall be our greatest challenge: “for us, for direct and indirect victims of the pandemic, for the caregivers, for the deceased and for the families in mourning, for our politicians so that they can take the best decisions for our lives”.

The International Pilgrimage of May is the first large pilgrimage of this pastoral year in which the Shrine invites the pilgrims to “Thank God for living in God” and marks the primeira (first) apparition of Our Lady to the three Little Shepherds in May 1917.

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