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Neither the cold nor the threat of rain deterred the 450,000 faithful who took part in the celebrations of the International Pilgrimage Anniversary Pilgrimage in Cova da Iria. On the night of 12 May, the candlelight procession was attended by 250,000 people. On 13 May, the rosary, Mass and farewell procession were attended by 200,000 faithful.

"The pilgrimage to Fatima on 12 and 13 May is the biggest and most significant pilgrimage of the year and this one showed it once again. The crowd of pilgrims present exceeded our expectations," said the rector of the Shrine of Fatima, Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas, in his assessment of the two days of celebrations.

In addition to these physical attendance figures, there were thousands more from all over the world who watched the broadcasts online and on television.

“This was a great pilgrimage, an intensely festive moment, in which some of the great dramas and tragedies that befall humankind were present, as well as the pain and gratitude of each of the pilgrims,” said the rector of the Shrine.

Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas was also impressed “by the number of people who made their pilgrimage to Fatima on foot, especially young people”.

The 12 and 13 May were also marked by a strong appeal for peace. This message was present in the words of Mgr. José Ornelas of the Diocese of Leiria-Fatima, both at the press conference presenting the pilgrimage on Sunday and in his farewell speech to the pilgrims at the end of the great celebration on 13 May.

The call for peace was reiterated by the pilgrimage’s president, Cardinal Juan José Omella, who, leaving aside the text he had prepared, opted to “speak from the heart”, saying he was moved by the people he had seen crying the day before during the candlelight procession.

The large crowd that formed the Cova da Iria assembly was always very participative and involved in the celebration, emphasising with frequent applause the words and greetings that most touched their hearts.

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