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In his homily at the Mass for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Bishop José Ornelas looked at the gift of Mary as an example for a life in God.

Around 70,000 pilgrims attended the Mass for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrated on the morning of 8 December in the Prayer Area of the Shrine of Fatima. Presiding was the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, who presented Our Lady as a model and guide for the “new humankind” and an example of embracing God’s plan and of active trust, service and mission.

Msgr. José Ornelas began by distinguishing the differences between “the first and second Eve”, establishing a metaphor between human frailties, which distance us from God, and the Virgin Mary’s example of surrender to God’s plan.

To materialise this contrast, the president of the celebration named some of the human

actions that generate sin: the search for happiness the wrong way, the desire for power and independence through inequality, oppression and war, in an attitude that leads to fear, insecurity, suffering and death.

“This world and humankind are prodigious, but they are not perfect. And the more we ignore God, the more we misrepresent his plan for happiness and life,” said Msgr. José Ornelas, presenting the “path of overcoming sin and limitation” as a solution, through conscious and loving commitment to God’s plan, following Mary’s example.

“Mary’s assent is not a “blind obedience”, but an active trust in the project that She understands from the Father in Heaven. This is the secret of authentic faith, which always seeks, always walks, always discovers and adheres, mind and heart,” the bishop of Leiria-Fatima explained, emphasising the importance of conscious and active freedom in this surrender.

Finally, the president of the celebration presented Mary’s vocation as a model for the mission of evangelisation of every baptised person, in the guarantee of God’s merciful presence.

“We too feel the anguish of the first Eve: our weakness, pain, destruction, illness, death... But we know that our God is greater than all this and that he is a loving Father to us. That’s what Mary experienced and that’s what She teaches us,” he concluded, evoking the message of Fatima as a guarantee of God’s presence in human history.

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