

Thousands of Young People Celebrate in Fatima, One Day Before The Start Of WYD

This morning, thousands of young people of different nationalities gathered in assembly at Cova da Iria to celebrate Mass, on their way to WYD Lisbon 2023. José Ornelas presided and asked them to serve the Church and the world, following the example of Our Lady's earthly pilgrimage.

This morning, in the Prayer Area of the Shrine of Fatima, in the homily of the Mass that gathered thousands of young people on their way to the World Youth Day (WYD Lisbon 2023) – which begins tomorrow – the Bishop of Leiria Fatima presented to the "pilgrims of the youth festival of the world and of the Church" the pilgrim nature of the Blessed Mother, model for the Church, and challenged the youth to service, assuming the mission of a renewed Church, for the good of the world.

Beginning with the story of the Annunciation, the president of the celebration presented Mary as a "a pilgrim of proclamation and mission".

"This is a beautiful image for WYD: celebrating the feast of faith, celebrating the Church, with young people from all over the world," he began, presenting Mary as a "sign of hope" in the persecution she herself experienced during her flight to Egypt to save her Son.

“The same is true today for so many millions of people, many of them children and young people, who are pursuing a future and dignity. She is a sign of hope for these refugees, but also a sign of challenge for the whole Church,” the prelate said, stressing the essential dimension of welcome as an experience that “changes the meaning of life”.

Monsignor José Ornelas also presented Mary as a “pilgrim of faith”, for the exemplary understanding that the Mother of Jesus had of faith and tradition, in the light of the footsteps of her Son.

“Many young people find it difficult to find an answer for today's world. Some get discouraged and leave the Church, others close themselves in the immobility of the past, as if the faith were a refrigerator or a museum. We believe that each generation renews the message of the Gospel,” said the president of the celebration, referring to the pilgrimage of the Mother of God in her journey with the Church and in her divine motherhood.

“Mary becomes the Mother and model of the Church in welcoming all the disinherited sons and daughters of the earth and challenges all those who come to WYD to take on the mission of caring for the fragility of those who are forgotten, victims of hunger and misery, of abuse, of war, to take care for the home of the whole human family which is our planet,” the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima urged the young people.



“Listen in the sanctuary of your heart: (...) do not stop asking: Lord,

what do you want me to do?”

In conclusion, Mgr. José Ornelas presented Mary as a “pilgrim on mission”, because of the journey she took in life, “accompanying the mission of the Church in the diversity of the peoples of the earth”.

“The mobility of the modern world and the communication network that reaches every corner of the earth must be a path of solidarity, dialogue, hope and proclamation of the Gospel, so that no one is excluded from knowing the Good News,” said the President of the celebration, inviting young people, like Mary, to service and mission for the Church and for a better world.

“Today, Mary whispers to your hearts: be attentive, listen in the sanctuary of your heart: (...) do not stop asking: Lord, what do you want me to do with my youth and my life, in the Church, in society and in the world? And with all these questions, do not cease to repeat, like Mary, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, may your word be fulfilled in me’.”

At the end of the Eucharist, Mgr. José Ornelas addressed the thousands of young people in the assembly, in English, wishing them a “day of encounter and celebration” and an “experience of the universality of a Church that cares for young people throughout the world and prays for peace”.

At the beginning of the celebration, the screens in the prayer area showed “Fatima, a Breath of the Spirit”, a five-minute animated film that tells the story of Fatima and the message left by Our Lady at Cova da Iria during the apparitions in 1917.

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