



SANTUÁRIO DE FÁTIMA  
SHRINE OF FATIMA

## **INNER PILGRIMAGE, A RENEWING AND HOPEFUL OUTLOOK**

Hail, Mother of mercy!

On this day and time of uncertainty and pain we invoke Our Lady as Mother of mercy.

For the first time in history, since 1917, on this great day of 13 May, your beloved people, Lady, coming from the different parts of the world cannot be here, as a crowd, prevented by the public health risks. Suddenly, something that we could not even imagine confine us to our homes and deprive us from the most desired and loving moments of life, as this that we live every year close to you, Oh loving mother.

### **Inner pilgrimage**

It is possible that many think that this pilgrimage is sad because it is being held in an enclosed space and because we are missing the large crowds and the colourful environment of the previous years. Without denying a coefficient of sadness and pain, we know that “all things work together for good to those who love God” (Rom 8, 28). In this sense, maybe we are all learning how a pilgrimage in its pure sense is like, to do the pilgrimage with the heart, the inner pilgrimage in the most intimate journey of our life, with the spiritual company of our heavenly mother, who takes each of us to meet the holy and merciful God.

It is true that the usual crowd of devotees is not here in the enclosure to greet Our Lady with the “Hail” chant of Fátima. But before we decided to come to the shrine, She had already been in our heart, our home and attracted us. Today she is the one opening the doors of this shrine and leaves it spiritually, as a pilgrim to come close to our lives, our homes and to bring us the consolation of her maternal heart as she did when she visited her cousin Isobel.

Lady, we believe that You were sent by the merciful God to this blessed place to be close to us and to accompany us in all life situations. From our homes and our hearts, with the simplicity of children, we dare manifesting our concerns and fears, our wounds and tears, our trust in you. Patiently, dear mother, you will listen our laments, you will cry with us, you will suffer with our suffering and you shall find in heaven, that is your heart, the timely consolation for those feeling frail now and in danger and for those departing without the comfort of their loved ones and without being able to say goodbye.



SANTUÁRIO DE FÁTIMA  
SHRINE OF FATIMA

Those who ever felt truly pilgrims in this blessed place, know very well that after meeting you, they leave here feeling empty. You always help us to look forward, you always give us the spiritual medicine that heals and pacifies us, you always offer us the scent of God's love, you always invites to renew our faith in Christ, our path, truth and life. We know that You are our company in these difficult days.

### **Message of Fátima: read the signs of time with hope**

Like on 13 May 1917, today also “the so beautiful Lady” is introduced to us, in the first reading, like an image of “a woman clothed with the sun” irradiating the light of God, who invites us to see our life and the history of the world at the light of the faith and invites us to trust in the triumph of good and life over evil and death. In turn, the gospel of today introduces Her as a humble woman in the middle of the people, example of faith to hear and comply with the Word of God, seed of new life in Christ. The Word of God urges us to update the message of Fátima about hope and peace and the appeal to conversion: it is possible to restart!

*In fact, the light of the faith helps us to see the positive side of crisis, of the dark nights, because it also tells us that on those nights there are also reference stars. Or, like someone wrote, “there are things you learn best in calm, some in storm” (Willa Cather). Faith help us to read and to understand the signs of times in the present hour, with a renewing and hopeful outlook.*

### **Summons to deep conversion**

A short time ago we were living with enormous trust in the technical-scientific power, in the economical-financial power, thinking that we were perhaps immune to any epidemic or, if it came, a quick solution would be found. But, unexpectedly, an unpredictable, invisible, silent virus, able to contaminate everything and all, staggering the world. We felt the ground falter under our feet. All our agendas and programs fell down like a house of cards. Contingency and emergency plans were immediately done to face this global calamity.

It is an unprecedented dramatic and tragical situation which *invites us to reflect about life and, in the first place, to focus on the essential, which many times we forget when life is good. It brings to light and reveals our human condition vulnerability and frailty. Sometimes, we seem so strong and we are so frail, vulnerable. It makes us think about the sense of life (what do I live for? who do I live for?), about the*



SANTUÁRIO DE FÁTIMA  
SHRINE OF FATIMA

possibility and reality of death, about our own death and that of our loved ones. *Forces us to rethink our habits, our lifestyle, the scale of values guiding our life. We cannot live just to consume. It places us before the great ultimate mystery of life and of humankind, which us, believers, call God, the God of Jesus.* All this requires an inner reflection, spiritual and also the opening of our heart to God, so forgotten, ignored, ostracized.

*A pandemic is a call to a deep spiritual conversion. A call to the Christians worshippers, but also to all men, who remain creatures of God. A better life in our common house, in peace with the creatures, with others and with God, a life full of sense requires conversion! Let us wonder if we have time for God, if we give Him the place He deserves in our heart and in our life.*

Our vulnerability and frailty makes us all feel United in humankind, because the virus overcomes all geographical barriers and all social, economic, hierarchic conditions: rich, poor, big and small, educated and illiterate, no one is immune. We feel united and belonging to a common humankind, in the frailty, but also more United in brotherhood and solidarity. And we realize that our freedom can only be exercised with responsibility and solidarity, that we are interdependent and solidary among us and therefore we save ourselves all together or we go down all together. And we also discover how important the family is as a human and spiritual support, as a small domestic church in time of confinement.

The pandemic, with the long interruption of normal life, brings terrible economic, social and labour consequences. *It is already generating a more painful pandemic, that of the increase of poverty, hunger and social exclusion, exacerbated by the culture of indifference.* The virus of indifference is only defeated with the compassion and solidarity antibodies. As Christians we cannot remain indifferent, look away. On this subject we have the vision of the young Saint Jacinta telling Lúcia: *Don't you see so many roads, paths and fields full of people, crying with hunger and they don't have anything to eat? And the Holy Father in a church before the Immaculate Heart of Mary praying? And so many people praying with him?* It is a situation already knocking at the dioceses Caritas' door as well as several parishes and it sounds like a cry of alarm!

But, as Pope Francis reminds us, it is also *necessary a push in solidarity guiding a world response* in light of the announced break of our economic and social system. Let us hear the challenging questions of the Pope.

*"Will we be able to act with responsibility in face of hunger that many feel, knowing that we have food for all? Will we continue looking away with a complicit silence*



SANTUÁRIO DE FÁTIMA  
SHRINE OF FATIMA

before those wars promoted by the desire of control and power? Are we willing to change our lifestyle that forces so many into poverty, promoting and encouraging us to lead a more human and restrained life enabling an equitable share of the resources? Will we adopt as an international community the required measures to stop the devastation of the environment or will we keep on denying the evidence? The globalization of the indifference shall continue to threaten and tempt our way... Let us hope that it finds us with the required justice, charity and solidarity antibodies”.

### **We shall be back**

Dear mother, we wish to thank you for this inner pilgrimage, the light, the hope, the consolation and the peace of Christ that you bring to our homes. Today you are walking one way; we shall do the return way when we overcome this threat which prevent us now. We shall be back: that is our confidence and our commitment. We shall be back here together, giving grace, to sing to you: “ we are coming here, dear mother, to dedicate our love to you”!

Shrine of Fátima, 13 May 2020.

† António Marto, Bishop of Leiria-Fátima