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Message of Fatima: the way that will lead to God

The present year of 2016, which is coming to the end, is the year of the first centennial of the apparitions of the Angel. It is, therefore, never enough to highlight what it seems to me the most important challenge of these centennial apparitions: the primacy of God, Most Holy Trinity, in our lives.

If at the time of the apparitions, flourished ideologies and political regimes set to move away God definitely from the horizon of mankind, in a militant and combative atheism, today is the religious indifference, that causes to live as if God didn't exist, which, in a more insidious way, challenges the centrality of God, to which the Angel apparitions point. Today, in a more or less discrete manner, it is pretended to "erase" any sign of God in the public space, submitting Him to clandestinity, making him insignificant. In the current context, the clear and unmistakable statement of the primacy of God, Most Holy Trinity, in the believer's life keeps all its topicality and urgency. By means of the Angel of Peace, the message of Fatima tells us of God, Most Holy Trinity, and to Him it leads, not by the theological concepts, but by the path of the intense spiritual experience and by the adoration attitude.

In the reports of these apparitions, it is always the adoration attitude that stands out as an answer from the Little Shepherds to the revelation that the Angel brought them. In all these reports, the adoration sprouts spontaneously from the intense experience of the meeting with God. The adoration to God indelibly marks the life of the seers, not only as a prayer gesture, but also as an existential attitude of giving God a central place in their lives. That existential dimension is a permanent challenge in the message of Fatima.

We could keep standing out the importance of these apparitions, highlighting other aspects as the centrality of the Eucharistic in the Christian experience, the reparation attitude, the importance of the prayer, the reference to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary... The most important is that the passage of this centennial leaves marks in our lives, helping us to always have more present the message of the Angel of Peace.

Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas

Pilgrim Statue that travelled to Slovenia returns home

"With the visit of the Statue of Our Lady, many people felt a strong need to go to church, even the ones who don't usually go" said the Archbishop of Maribor

The Metropolitan Archbishop of Maribor, Alojz Cvikl, L led a Slovenian delegation of 50 people who guided the Pilgrim Virgin Statue number 5 back to the Shrine of Fatima, on the 18th of October.

The Pilgrim Virgin stayed 5 months in Slovenia, from the 13th of May to the 13th of October 2016.

"With the visit of the Statue of Our Lady, many people felt a strong need to go to church, even the ones who don't usually go" said Alojz Cvikl, L. speaking to the Press Department of the Shrine of Fatima.

There were some meaningful moments during the visit of the Pilgrim Statue, with special highlight to the 25th of June, day on which Slovenia commemorates 25 years of the country's independence and day on which the bishops made the consecration of the Slovenian people to the Heart of Mary and Jesus.

The moment was also an opportunity to raise awareness of the history and of the message of Fatima, through many initiatives such as a book collection on the events of Cova da Iria.

Besides the reawakening of the Marian faith on people, the visit of the Pilgrim Statue to Slovenia, gave "a new impulse to the Holy Year of Mercy" Stated Alojz Cvikl, L.

The overall assessment of the Pilgrim Virgin's visit was very positive. The people in charge were extremely happy to welcome the Statue in Slovenia and they mentioned the changes in lives that occurred during these months, even in those who at first were more sceptic.

The group symbolically offered to the Shrine an icon of the martyr Alojz Grozde, whose life was linked to the history of Fatima.

The celebration in the Chapel of Apparitions, where the Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Fatima and the icon were handed over, was presided by the Chaplain of the Shrine of Fatima, Fr. Francisco Pereira.

This was the third time that the Pilgrim Statue travelled to Slovenia. The first happened in 1997 and the second in 2008.

Sandra Dantas



The return of the Pilgrim Virgin to the Shrine of Fatima, October 18th

Mission Conference in Fatima presented “stories of mercy”

Testimonies revealed men and women who “seek to help the Church “to come out” of itself”

The Pontifical Mission Societies of Portugal (OMP) have promoted, on

September 17th and 18th, at the Paul VI Pastoral Centre, in Fatima, their National Mission Conference under the theme “The Mission with stories of mercy”, gathering 250 persons.

The Mission Conference is an opportunity to “listen, see and confront” the stories of mercy from men and women who “seek to help the Church “to come out” of itself” and, from the Gospel, to meet the needs of “a plural world in search of much love and mercy”, refers the organization.

Father Antonio Lopes, president of the OMP, underlines that it is from the Gospels that the missionary “finds out how to act in the way of Jesus”, and knows that faith “is a gift that we can’t keep” not even in places where “to express it would put him in danger” such as in the countries of the Middle East.

In this context, the program of these Mission Conference 2016 highlighted the sharing of Sister Myri, a Portuguese contemplative nun who lives in the Monastery of Saint James the Mutilated, in Qara, Syria, and the testimonies of Mgr. José Aguirre, bishop of Bangassou, in Central African Republic, of Fr. José Vieira, from South Sudan, and of Fr. Adelino Ascenso, a priest from the Portuguese Missionary Society - Missionários da Boa Nova, who lived in Japan.

Luis Fernández, a layman from Consolata, shared another testimony of his life and his struggle in defense of the Amazon’s indigenous peoples. He and his wife had three children there.

The president of the Episcopal commission on Missions and

New Evangelization, Mgr. Manuel Linda, opened the conference referring that the Church in Portugal has “high hopes and is concerned about the missions.” “We have difficulties particularly in the number of evangelizers”, both internally and externally, particularly in the missions’ ad gentes, but “we have sought to overcome the issue” said the prelate.

“The indicators show that the theme of the mission is undimmed and this conference, “that has a very suggestive title, though tautological, in the sense that all the mission is a story of mercy, shows us exactly that. “No one leaves his (her) home and comfort if there isn’t a flame in his (her) heart to promote faith and human life”, stressed Mgr. Manuel Linda, stating that “it is in the proximity of the heart that mercy is built”.

Carmo Rodeia



Mission Conference with 260 participants

Bishops of the catholic oriental churches gathered in Fatima from the 20th to the 23rd of October to discuss migrations

«The Church, as Mother, is concerned with the consequences connected to the migrating phenomenon», says the president of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People

«The pastoral care of Eastern Catholic migrants in Western countries» was the theme that followed the Encounter of the bishops of Eastern catholic churches in Europe between the 20th and the 23rd of October in Fatima, in the Retreat House of Our Lady of Sorrows which involved around 70 participants.

In the beginning of the meeting in Fatima, and after a stopover at the Monastery of Jeronimos in Lisbon, a message was read sent by the Cardinal Antonio Maria Vegliò, president of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, in which he refers the church’s concern for the current world situation.

«The church, as Mother, is concerned with the consequences connected to the migration phenomenon: familiar situation, human being traffic, unemployment, children without support. That is why it is necessary to face the causes from its root» refers the message.

The countries separation from the ex-Soviet Union and the «collapse of the Eastern Europe totalitarian regimes», generated a «massive flow of Catholic migrants of the oriental rite», who «started new lives in Western Europe and that deserves accompaniment», the message still refers. Now, he clarifies, there is «a second generation» of the eastern living in the West which «faces new challenges in terms of the preservation of the cultural and ecclesial identity of those migrants», also he highlights the



Bishops of the Catholic Oriental Churches gathered in Fatima for 3 days

message read in the beginning of the works which counted with the presence of 15 Eastern Catholic bishops. Among them was the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri.

The meeting is annually organized by one of the Eastern Catholic Churches, which exist in Europe.

Since 2009, the Concilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae (CEE), accompanies this reality, giving its high sponsorship to the meeting of the bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches in Europe.

In the program there was, still, a conference with the economist João César das Neves and a celebration in the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity presided by the Greek Catholic archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, from Kiev.

Inside the Catholic Church there are specific Churches, called ‘sui iuris’, in full communion with the Church of Rome, but distinguished from the Roman Catholic Church by different forms of liturgical cult and popular piety, by the sacraments disciplines, by the canon law discipline (legal rules), by the terminology and theological tradition.

In Europe, exist the following churches: Greek-Catholic, Maronite, Chaldean and Armenian.

Sandra Dantas

Cardinal Secretary of State at the conclusion of the cycle of the great international anniversary pilgrimages in Fatima before the jubilee year

Cardinal Pietro Parolin presents the example of the Virgin and calls for a return to holiness



Cardinal Pietro Parolin is the responsible for the Vatican diplomacy

In the two homilies he delivered during the international anniversary pilgrimage in October – that closed the cycle of the great pilgrimages on the 99th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady in Cova da Iria –, the responsible for the Vatican diplomacy presented Our Lady as an example to follow in moments of doubt and pain.

«For many of us, these are more than justified moments in which the heart compresses, closes, annihilates itself, breaks any communication with everything and everyone; but not so with Mary», declared Cardinal Pietro Parolin, in the homily of the Mass that closed the International anniversary pilgrimages of October.

Before more than eighty thousand pilgrims in Cova da Iria, the number two of the Holy See presented the Virgin Mary as someone who «knows to be at the feet of the Cross» and, for that same reason, she has a «maternal mission» in the Church.

The Italian cardinal recalled the various situations in which the believers «doubt God's faithfulness» in the presence of the «enemies», the «dark sides of life», contrasting this attitude with the commitment and conviction of Mary's faith.

«At the feet of the Crucified, she is willing to cross one of the most painful contradictions that a woman can experience: the



23 countries registered to the Pilgrims Department

death of her own Son; a death that is even more burdensome because it is the result of the wickedness of the others», he observed.

The Italian cardinal, responsible for the diplomacy of the Vatican, who came to Fatima not only in that condition but «as a son who comes to meet the mother», added that the one who «truly» loves the neighbour rejects the «rules, the ideas and the behaviours of the strong».

«The «strong» and the «powerful» love the «strong» and the «powerful»», he highlighted.

«At the feet of the Crucified, Mary is a courageous woman, because she refuses to submit to the rules of the «strong» and of the «powerful»», he said.

The Secretary of State of the Vatican ended the homily of the closing Mass of October's pilgrimage by asking the pilgrims who were present in Fatima to be «patient constructors of a Church that announces the Gospel, despite the contradictions and the dark sides of life».

«We need to reconcile with the holiness»

The night before, he had already challenged them to «make an option of faith». Cardinal Pietro Parolin established a parallel between the values promoted by the society of information and the values of those who «dedicate themselves to the knowledge of Jesus».

The chief of the Vatican diplomacy pointed the finger to a culture that «encourages us ever more to devour information at every hour», but which simultaneously only «worries about the storing in itself the greatest amount of information, making of this treasure the meter to measure itself, the society and the world».

«We need to reconcile ourselves with holiness» for «without it, we are stones, but not living ones; we are dead stones. We are still at the orbit of the hell's doors», said Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

«Holiness is the door through which we enter in the world of mercy, whose most real and scandalous announcement continues to be the Cross», he stressed.

The leader of the Holy See's diplomacy visited Fatima for the first time.

Carmo Rodeia

Marian Shrine counts on teams of volunteers to help in different tasks

Receiving with a smile and voluntarily whoever arrives at the Shrine of Fatima

Throughout the year the Shrine of Fatima receives volunteers who dedicate part of their free time to help in the welcome given to the pilgrims at the information offices.

Those welcoming the visitors are, in most cases, the first contact of the pilgrim with the Shrine. Filipe Domingues, Brazilian, is a volunteer since 2014, and considers that «welcoming others in the Shrine is a great opportunity. It means placing myself at the service of the other in a simple way, but extremely necessary. For me, waiting for the pilgrim is the spirit of this work: people who come to the Shrine need some basic information, others a more practical one, and still others need information of a religious or spiritual kind. Sometimes they reveal very personal memories and situations regarding their coming to Fatima. They need to know that when they arrive at the Shrine, someone is waiting for them and willing to help in everything possible».

«Pope Benedict XVI says that we have to evangelize popular religiosity so that it doesn't fall too far apart from the Church, but we also must allow ourselves to be evangelized by popular faith, which many times is unconditional and very fervent. Sometimes, we are too rational and we question God in many things, and popular faith often teaches us to make a total commitment. Through the devotion to Mary, here in Fatima, that becomes very clear», the young journalist reiterates.

Through the visit of the image of the Pilgrim Virgin to Slovenia, their country



Dana and Darko wanted to look carefully into the Message of Fatima

of origin, Dana and Darko, a young couple formed from a common passion, the Argentinian tango, were in Fatima to offer voluntary work for the first time, and to experience closely the message that Our Lady left.

Dana and Darko did not even share religion. This teacher of Argentinian tango says that her husband «did not grow in a family with religious tradition, nor had he awoken to faith, and this was a difficulty for me. He tried to calm me, making me understand that love is, in fact, the most important. And I accepted it, though deep down this was a very difficult situation for me».

«We were not yet engaged, but I decided to do the course of preparation for matrimony, and as Darko was not a cath-

olic, I said that I would go alone», recalls Dana. Shortly after they decided to marry «and it had to be in the Church, and that is how our journey of faith started and began to grow».

They belong to the Neocatechumenal Way and since they married they never stopped praying and walking together, says Dana.

Meanwhile, they opened a School of Dance in Slovenia, where they live.

How Fatima appears in their life? «By discovering and walking together in faith our life changed, and being in Fatima is something natural. For, by discovering faith and by also deepening in the message of Fatima, mainly because of the visit of the Pilgrim Virgin to our country, the devotion of the first five Saturdays, the recitation of the Rosary, made us want to come in pilgrimage here».

There are many stories arriving at the Shrine like the one of Dana and Darko or Filipe. Many end up remaining connected here and opt to do voluntary work.

In total the Shrine has around 320 volunteers, who often collaborate in various tasks from the different services: reception in the houses of the little shepherds and information offices, reception of the walking pilgrims who arrive, distribution of posters, Movement of the Message of Fatima, *Ponto de Encontro* Journal, emergency service unit, recitation of the Rosary, Reconciliation Chapel, retreat for the sick, flowers, readers, acolytes, extraordinary ministers of communion, processions, choir and reception at the temporary exhibition.



Filipe is a volunteer with the Shrine since 2014

The first rosary was offered to Pope Benedict XVI on the 12th of May 2010

Shrine of Fatima presented the official rosary



Rector of the Shrine presents the official rosary

On 25th October, the Shrine of Fatima presented the official rosary that can be purchased in the shops of the Shrine in Cova da Iria.

During the presentation, Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas, rector of the Shrine of Fatima, explained that «the official rosary of the Shrine was created in 2010, from a contest launched by the Shrine of Fatima, and it is authored by *Casa Leitão & Irmão, Antigos Joalheiros da Coroa*. The first unit of this official rosary, made in gold, with the beads of the Our-Fathers in the same metal and the Hail-Marys in topaz, was offered to the Pope Benedict XVI, on the

12th of May 2010. Pope Francis was offered another copy, on the 12th of October 2013, in Saint Peter's Square. Since 2013, this is also the rosary on the statue of Our Lady of Fatima venerated in the Chapel of the Apparitions».

«Until now, the official rosary of the Shrine of Fatima was not available for the general pilgrims. Today, it is with joy that we present the rosary of the Shrine of Fatima in an accessible version. We wanted that the rosary, though not made of precious metals, would present great quality», reiterated the priest in the press conference.

This is an exclusive piece, designed by the company *Leitão & Irmão, Antigos Joalheiros da Coroa*, with technical assistance of the Shrine, composed by blue beads, disposed on a gold color thread and interspersed by golden balls; the bead of the Salve Regina is marked with the monogram of the Shrine of Fatima and with the precious crown of the statue of Our Lady of Fatima. The medal shows the sculpture of the Angel, at *Loca do Cabeço*, and the sculpture of the Virgin of Fatima, venerated in the Chapel of the Apparitions. The cross, that completes it, evokes the High Cross of the praying area of the Shrine of Cova da Iria.

Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas still explained that «in 1917, the Virgin Mary appeared



to the three children in Cova da Iria, identifying herself as the Lady of the Rosary and asking that the rosary be prayed every day. Thus the rosary is since the early days of the life of the Shrine, the most expressive attribute of the pilgrim of Our Lady of Fatima. We wished, therefore, that the official rosary of the Shrine be available to the pilgrims on this significant date of the Centennial of the Apparitions»

*Catia Filipe
and Carmo Rodeia*

Shrine of Fatima send a statue of Our Lady of Fatima to Aleppo

The Archbishop of Aleppo underlines the importance of the protection of Our Lady of Fatima to the end of the war in Syria

In order to meet the call of the Maronite Archbishop of Aleppo, Mgr. Joseph Tobji, the Shrine of Fatima has sent a statue of Our Lady to Syria, which was blessed by the bishop of the diocese of Leiria-Fatima, Mgr. Antonio Marto, at the end of the celebration that ended the International Anniversary Pilgrimage of October.

In his statements to the Foundation Aid to the Church in need, the archbishop underlined the importance to the Christian community of Aleppo of receiving the visit of a statue of Our Lady of Fatima.

“It is very important to receive the statue for it means that the Queen of Peace protects, by her intercession, our country, our beloved martyred Syria.”

In a telephone conversation with the Foundation, Mgr. Joseph Tobji told also that “in Aleppo, we need prayers and especially the Blessed Virgin Mary”. And

since next year, in 2017, the Centennial of the Apparitions will be celebrated, “the coming of the statue gets two meanings, for in addition to her intercession, we will ask Our Lady our conversion, the conversion of our Church and of the entire world”.

In 2014, the Shrine of Fatima thought of sending the Pilgrim Statue nº2 to visit Damascus, the capital of Syria, in response to a request made by the Catholic Patriarch of the Middle East to that end. The travel, scheduled for September of that same year, was postponed for security reasons, due to worsening situation in the country.

The statue of Our Lady, that will go to Syria in diplomatic bag, through the Nunciatures, is a replica of the statue that stands in the Chapel of the Apparitions.



Sandra Dantas

The statue was blessed on October 13th

Church in Urais promotes the message of Fatima

Father Erich Maria Fink lives in Russia for 16 years and tries daily to spread the Message of Fatima



German priest is serving the Russian Catholics since 2000

Father Erich Maria Fink, of German origin, has been in Russia for the last 16 years spreading the Message of Fatima, in Benezniki, near Urais.

This is a rural parish, “Mary, Queen of Peace”, that has around 1000 Catholics among the active participants in the life of the community.

The Priest, who dedicates himself to

the studies in Mariology organized by the Marian Academy in Germany, the country where he studied and was ordained, was recently in Fatima, participating in the 24th International Mariological Marian Congress, which took place from the 6th to the 11th of September in Cova da Iria.

In an interview to the bulletin *Fatima Light and Peace*, he affirms that today «the Russians are more available to receive the message of the Gospel than westerners».

«They have a huge faith and those who believe really get involved» Fr. Erich Fink referred.

The church he presides, in Benezniki, has the particularity of having been consecrated by the Archbishop of Moscow, whose name is associated to the Pastoral Centre that the priest also runs and which has a «very significant» social intervention, «either in supporting the homeless or in recovering former drug addicts», said the priest.

«I have been at the service of the Russian Catholics for the last 16 years, but it has been a privilege; people come to us and when they discover us they become very connected», he added.

In this area of Russia there was no church and this has become the first sign of religion in the area.

Fr. Maria Fink underlines that the relationship with the local authorities «is very good» and guided by «a huge cordiality and a big respect!».

«We live a very good atmosphere; many people converted; some were even baptised but they had never professed their faith», said the priest.

«Ours is a work of evangelization and, in a certain way, also of social assistance, for what we have been trying to do is to create an environment of great spirituality and prayer. We have periods of night adoration every day and we take the opportunity with the presence of our visitors to give dynamism to the adoration. But we also have catechism and moments in which the Gospel is very present. The message of Fatima is essential for us », referred also Fr. Maria Fink who, in June next year, will accompany a committee of Russian Catholic Bishops to the Shrine of Fatima for the occasion of the Centennial of the Apparitions.

Carmo Rodeia

Fr. Franco Manzi was one of the speakers in the 24th Mariological Marian International Congress held in Fatima from the 6th to the 11th of September

The apparitions and the message of Fatima can be «a path to conform myself, little by little, to the yes of Mary»



Franco Manzi considers the Message of Fatima is universal

Events like the Mariological Marian International Congress, held in Fatima in September last, are important moments to find the happy medium between an «exacerbated rationalism and meaningless superstition», regarding faith and our relation with it, said theologian Franco Manzi to the *Voz da Fatima* journal.

«Theology, that places itself at the service of the pastoral and spirituality of the people of God, seeks to give evaluation criteria on marian spirituality connected to the Fatima event, and also evaluation criteria on marian visions that abound in the

Christianism interior», avoiding therefore both «exacerbated rationalism and superstition», explains the theology and biblical studies professor of the Milan Seminar.

At a theological level, Franco Manzi considers interesting the binomial prayer-theology existing in the Congress, which he has lived before in other occasions here in Fatima. «A theology, using Von Balthasar expression, which places itself on its knees reflecting over the revealed mystery», states Franco Manzi.

Another interesting aspect that the Congress presented was, in his opinion, the linguistic groups work in the afternoon. «It is interesting that the same prophecy has different echoes and reflexions inside the several church contexts that currently exist. This seems to me an assignment that, normally, isn't possible to do. Here, it is possible and it will help us to confront ourselves to this international, worldwide, universal level. It makes us see exactly what Benedict XVI claimed speaking of Fatima: its universality and its actuality as a message», refers the theologian.

Speaking of the meaning that his par-

ticipation in this Congress had for him, the priest mentions yet a personal angle. Franco Manzi refers that, in a personal level, the apparitions and the message of Fatima can be «a path to let myself conform, little by little, to the yes of Mary». A path that the theologian says to have started these years and that continues now.

At a theological-pastoral level, the Congress meets a pastoral and spiritual people demand. Fr. Franco Manzi is a priest from the Milan diocese, doctorate in biblical studies and theology. He is a New Testament and Hebrew Language professor in the Milan Seminar, section which he is director. He is a guest professor of Old and New Testament in the Theological Faculty of Northern Italy, in the Superior Institute of Religious Sciences of Milan and in the Faculty of Theology of Lugano, Switzerland. He is also the director of the magazine *La Scuola Cattolica* and collaborates with many other magazines of biblical exegesis, of theology, of liturgy and of pastoral.

Sandra Dantas

Linguistic groups translated local experiences and made future perspectives on work paths

Mariological Marian Congress ends with the recognition of the actuality of the Message of Fatima



Mariological Congress was held in Fatima from September 6th to 11th

The 24th Mariological Marian Congress, held in Fatima, in the Pastoral Centre of Paul VI, between the 6th and 11th of September, ended its works with the recognition of the topicality of the message of Fatima, underlining the conversion proposal and the response to social problems.

In the end of the works, the different linguistic groups presented a synthesized reflexion of the various presentations and scientific works produced and made known in this International Congress promoted by the Pontifical International Marian Academy, in cooperation with the Shrine of Fatima and the diverse Marian Academies all over the world.

The Asian and Oceania group, which works in a region where there are 3% of catholic population, concluded that the complexity of theology underlines the transforming effect of the message of Fatima. The German group pointed the fundamental role that the first five Saturdays devotion has in Poland, as well as the testimony of St John Paul II in the devotional future perspective. The Brazilian communities «have a great love and fidelity» to the message of Fatima, «the echoes of the message of Fatima find the deepest welcoming in Latin America», can be read in the conclusions of the Luso-Brazilian group, one of the most numerous present in Cova da Iria.

For the Croatian group the goal of the message of Fatima is «spiritual and illuminates the path of Men through his weaknesses», and it is important «to read the presence of God in history through times».

The Spanish group approached the welcoming of the message to the salvation of humanity and the respective need of God's mercy: «Our Lady is often the response to the social problems».

The French and African groups, which presented their conclusions together, reiterated the importance of the message of Fatima in helping to purify the holy rosary devotion.

In the United States, «the several churches of Our Lady, often dynamized by laypeople, helped to promote the message of Fatima especially in the cold war time», pointed the English group.

The Italian group presented Mary as the ideal figure to the people: «the three parts of the secret always end with a perspective of hope and future, and not of fear».

To the Polish group, Fatima «is a sign of the divine providence that wants to take Man to total peace» and its message «puts in evidence the transcendent character of the human person».

The associations group manifested the opportunity to «encourage the young to solidarity through the maternal face of Mary».

Also the president of the Pontifical International Marian Academy, Monsignor Vincenzo Battaglia, stated at the end of the

works, in a conclusive way, that the mariological study cannot forget the «Fatima and its message» factor.

«The Virgin Mary encourages with Her presence and invites Christians to a testimony commitment, conversion and evangelisation», stated the responsible for the Academy, underlining the character «prophetic, of hope, which contains an invitation to conversion, of solidarity, of prayer, so it is always possible to discover that the Savior is the fountain of life to the world », being so «at the service of the gospel».

The 24th Congress brought to the Shrine of Fatima specialists of all continents, helping to «concretize» contributes that the message gives to the mariological reflexion of the church, underlines Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas.

The Rector of the Shrine of Fatima reminds that Sister Lucia «was careful to say that the message of Fatima doesn't primary speak of Mary. However, there is a contribute to the Mariological reflexion of the Church, namely the manifestation and revelation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary who has, in the message of Fatima, a fundamental place».

In the framework of the Centennial of the Apparitions, that the Shrine of Fatima is preparing to live, the congress has «the merit» of helping to make «the balance» and projecting the future.

To the vice-postulator of the cause of Sister Lucia, responsible for the process of the canonization of the Blessed Francisco and Jacinta Marto and, Sister Angela Coelho, the apparitions are «a response to the current condition of man, who considered himself a superman but is empty». «The contemporary society, with promises to satisfy our wishes, has left us thirstier. We know it is not the ephemeral, the temporary, nor the reason autonomy that fulfils the heart and our thirst of love and transcendent. The presence of God as a reference is more and more a response to fulfil the human heart in its desires». According to Sister Angela, the Shrine has been able to meet contemporarily the quests directed to it, whether by the pilgrim or by the man who arrives by chance, showing a way to welcoming all. «The pilgrim changed because man, in 100 years, had changed economically, culturally, socially and religiously. This context configures in the ways of being in faith», the Sister said.

To the bishop of Leiria-Fatima, Mgr. António Marto, the «prophetic» message here in this place is of comfort and consolation. «We live in a wounded world, fragmented, which lost the purpose of life, of trust in life and in its kindness. This is a message of tenderness, revolutionary, in the words of Francisco. It is a message that transforms people within and makes them discover communion and regain confidence in life».

Carmo Rodeia

The international general assembly takes place every four years in Fatima

General Assembly of the “World Apostolate of Fatima”



General Assembly with 140 participants

The World Apostolate of Fatima held its general assembly from the 24th to the 28th October at Domus Pacis, the international headquarters of the organization, and gathered members and delegates of several countries where the Apostolate is present.

The international general assembly takes place every four years, with the purpose of “taking the pulse of the life of the organizations and defining pastoral guidelines for the next years” explains Nuno Prazeres, headmaster of the International Secretariat.

This year’s meeting was particularly unique since it took place within the context of the Centennial of the Apparitions of the Angel and the Jubilee Year of Mercy, “With the eyes already set on the big celebrations of 2017”.

“People share the preparations of the Centennial of the Apparitions, which has been an joyful experience and this en-

counter is also a sharing of what is taking place in another countries. It’s enriching because there is a common love for the Message of Fatima in every place that is here represented. And even the manifestations of faith are alike because we end up making a replica of the celebrative experience through the chants and processions but adapted to the cultural dimension of each country, says Nuno Prazeres.

The purpose of this gathering in Fatima was also to give the opportunity to the participants to take part in the several celebrations of the Shrine “ including a visit to Valinhos, Aljustrel, since many of them had never visited Fatima and it’s an opportunity to appreciate the magnificence of this place”

The delegates of the Assembly were summoned to elect the new international administration of the organization for the next four years.

From all the entries, there were pre-

sent delegations from 29 countries with a total of 140 people.

The World Apostolate of Fatima (WAF) is an international association of the faithful whose motto is “Orbis Unus Orans” (one world praying), representing a prayerful and at the same time an operating Apostolate.

It counts with several millions of members from all over the world, who try to live and spread the message of Our Lady of Fatima, therefore contributing to their personal sanctification and to the world’s evangelization.

What is asked to each member is to live the Message of Fatima and to give testimony of their faith to the family, at work, in the parishes and communities.

Even though it was born in America, we can say that today the organization is structured from Portugal to the world. The headquarters is located at “Domus Pacis” near the Shrine of Fatima, but its strength can be noticed mainly outside the country, all over the world, where the faith and devotion to Our Lady of Fatima assume a very special place in the heart of people”. And it’s already present in more than 100 countries.

In particular, the WAF organizes and promotes conferences, retreats, seminars and prayer meetings in Fatima and around the world, where is also included programs of Adorations of the Blessed Sacrament, the first Saturdays devotion, vigils, etc. The WAF also organizes visits of the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, coordinates pilgrimages to the Marian Shrines and promotes the visit to the sick and poor. It also maintains a regular publishing activity, publishing several magazines, books and multimedia subsidies for the training of its members.

At the same time, the organization tries to keep a close cooperation with human rights associations, school and university communities and other institutions that develop actions in the same scope of the Message that Our Lady conveyed in the apparitions of Fatima.

Cátia Filipe



The sharing of the devotion to Our Lady was constant



The participants are coming from 29 countries

To celebrate the plenitude of life

Memory of the sixth cycle of the celebrative itinerary of the Centennial of the Apparitions

In the sixth cycle of the celebrative itinerary of the Centennial of the Apparitions of Fatima, the Shrine intended to reflect from the word of the Lady of the Rosary to the three seers, in the apparition of September: «God is pleased with your sacrifices». The God of Mercy's joy from the offering that the children make of their life for the welfare of others, offered, this year, the theme to the pastoral dynamic of the Shrine of Fatima, which found in the evangelic theme *I have come so that they may have life* the formulation of a certainty of faith welcomed in thankfulness and in commitment for the world's transformation. In the Jubilee Year of Mercy, the theme set the tone to the different pastoral and cultural activities of the Shrine and transpired to the life of the Shrine by means of diverse supports of prayer, celebration and catechetical reflection, which were available to the pilgrims aids to prayer, celebration and catechetical reflection made available to the pilgrims.

The prayer area, privileged welcoming place of the pilgrims, was a privileged place to invite the visitor to the celebration of the plenitude of life. That was the subject explicated in the mural catechesis in the prayer area's lanes and the invitation, in a prayer step, of the pilgrim's itinerary, path of prayer evocative of the September's apparition in the several places of the Shrine.

The opening day of the pastoral year, in which was presented the sixth cycle itinerary, paved the way to the theological-pastoral reflection, substantiated throughout the year in several initiatives of reflection: from the start, in the Cycle of Conferences which, in a monthly rhythm between December and April, presented different views over the year's theme and in the Theological-Pastoral Symposium, which deconstructed the annual theme thinking "The life that grows from God throughout History". During the pastoral year, the Shrine co-organized and also welcomed the IV National Eucharistic Congress dedicated to the theme "To live the Eucharistic, fountain of Mercy", an initiative in partnership with the Apostleship of Prayer and promoted by the Portuguese Episcopal Conference, and the 24th Mariological Marian International Congress dedicated to the theme "The Fatima event a hundred years later. History, message and actuality", in association with the Pontifical International Marian Academy.

The Fatima Phenomenon was also object of study in the 1st edition of the Summer Courses, which proposed to Human and Social Sciences investigators a multidisciplinary approach of Fatima, in a first transversal and introductory analysis.

The course on the Message of Fatima «The triumph of love in the dramas of his-



Full session of the musical theatre "Between Heaven and Earth"

tory», has had three other editions, counting already 11 editions of this valuable catechetical instrument to deepen the message.

The Centennial cultural agenda gained predominance along this pastoral year. From the multiple musical concerts that marked the festive rhythm of the pastoral year, it stands out the Inauguration of the Organ of the Basilica of Our Lady of Fatima Concert, on March 20th, interpreted by the organist Olivier Latry, which set the tone to the following cycle of organ. Also, in April 3rd, the world premiere of the cycle for choir, piano and accordion about fragments of Fatima in Lucia's own words, entitled *Troparion to a shepherdess of tame sheep*, one of the thirteen works ordered by the Shrine to the celebration of the Centennial.

Within the approaches to the contents of Fatima in the arts language, it is well deserved to highlight the multidisciplinary show *Fatima. The day the sun danced*, ordered by the Shrine to the Vortice Dance Company, which sold out three sessions, on the 11th, 13th and 15th of May. In June, the Shrine has proposed to mark the centennial of the apparitions of the Angel through a multimedia show *The Light of the Angel*, an immersive course through the events of 1916 and his message. In October, in sold out sessions from the 13th to the 16th, the musical theatre *Between Heaven and Earth. The musical about Fatima*, ordered by the Shrine to Elenco Productions, which in diverse languages approached fundamental contents of Fatima in people's everyday life.

The subject to the temporary exhibition "Hearth and Sky: pilgrims and saints of Fatima", open from the 28th of November 2015 to the 31st of October 2016, at the *convivium* of Saint Augustine was the evocation of the September's apparition of 1917. The expositive path, in six nucleus, reminded that "between Hearth and Heaven, there are many written names which one day experienced Fatima as a place of sanctity".

From the several publications of the Shrine which this year came out, earned focus: the Critical Edition of the Memoirs memoirs of Sister Lucia, which is the result from a thorough study of the sources; the book for the juvenile public *The mis-*

sion of Francisco, written by Maria Teresa Maria Gonzales, which proposes to take the message of Fatima contents to the young through a tale; the script *Blessed are you who believed. Itinerary of prayer with Mary for the month of May*; the Italian edition of the selected documents of the *Critical Documentation of Fatima*, the collection of texts *Sanctified in Christ. The Gift of God. Human Response. Transformation of the world*, coordinated by José Eduardo Borges de Pinho; the annual book *I have come so that they may have life*, with several readings over the theme of the year and diverse celebrative and catechetical aids; two numbers of the cultural magazine of the Shrine *Fatima XXI*, whose thematic journals were dedicated to the Angel figure and to the Rosary; as well as the *Cultural Agenda (2016-2017)* of the *Celebration of the Centennial of the Apparitions of Fatima*.

Several other initiatives to promote the message took place, for example the publication of "The Words of Fatima" in the magazine *Messenger of the Heart of Jesus* or the seven steps of prayer from the message of Fatima integrated in the online platform Passo-a-Rezar proposal, of the Apostolate of Prayer, with texts of Sister Angela de Fatima Coelho read by actors Maria Helena Falé and João Ricardo.

In an effort to involve different languages and publics in the centennial celebration, the Shrine launched the *Photography Prize Centennial of the Apparitions of Fatima Photography Prize Centennial of the Apparitions of Fatima*, the *Online Contest of Photograph "See Fatima in the silence of the heart"*, and the *Journalism Prize Centennial of the Apparitions*.

On May 13th 2016, the pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima which, since 13 of May 2015, crossed all the dioceses of Portugal, was again welcomed in the Shrine of Fatima, in the new altar of the prayer area, meanwhile inaugurated and then again enthroned in the requalified Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima.

The cycle that ends now offered the joyful context which the Shrine of Fatima is set to live the Jubilee of the centennial of the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima in Cova da Iria.

Pedro Valinho Gomes

The tour started in April and finished on the 10th October

Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima visited Italy



Hundreds of pilgrims welcomed the Statue

Oliveto Sabino is a small town in the municipality of Torricella in Sabina. Over the years, this place suffered several changes largely due to the depopulation. However, it kept the historical, artistic and natural splendour and became a holiday and weekend destination also because of the cultural variety, sports and leisure activities. This small town welcomed the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima that travelled to Italy from the 2nd of April until the 10th of October 2016.

Monteleone was another stopover point, where the Statue was carried in procession to the parish church. This small village was built in the nineteenth century on the ruins of the ancient roman city of Trebula Mutuesca and the name Monteleone comes from the presence of numerous lion sculptures. In this village, the Pilgrim Statue was followed by hundreds of faithful and by the local authorities before departing to Abruzzo and Moscufo.

In Tuscany, we pray so that Our Lady can bring to everyone the same message of faith and motherly love. In the History of the Church there are numerous reports of pilgrimages to the places where the Mother of God appeared. In this way, the communities where the Pilgrim Virgin attended accepted the invitation to welcome her visit and the devotion is quite noticeable. Not everyone has the chance

to take part in a pilgrimage; therefore these tours to many villages are great manifestations of faith and devotion.

In the community of Colvecchio, a procession with hundreds of faithful marked the farewell celebration to the Pilgrim Virgin in this place.

Then, the Statue was received in Apparita and Lazeretto, two villages in the

province of Florence and Pistoia and it was welcomed by the parish priest and by the Civil and Military authorities. After the welcoming prayer, Our Lady was carried in procession to a church dedicated to the cult of the "Lady brighter than the Sun" by a brotherhood that came from Campania.

MMF Diocese de Sabina



Pilgrim Statue travelled through towns and cities

The initiative will be held from the 21st to the 24th of June 2017. The deadline for submitting communication proposals ends on the 31th of December

International Congress of the Centennial challenges researchers to Thinking Fatima

The Shrine of Fatima will promote, from the 21st to the 24th of June next year, the International Congress of the Centennial of Fatima which intends to challenge researchers from different areas of knowledge, to think on the phenomenon and the message of Fatima in an interdisciplinary perspective.

Dedicated to the theme “Thinking Fatima – Interdisciplinary Readings”, the Congress counts with the collaboration of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Portugal, in the follow up of the already promoted Symposiums regarding the Centennial of the Apparitions of Fatima, and proposes to study Fatima from different prisms, from History to Theology, from sociology to Psychology, from Art and Patrimony.

The interventions are divided into plenary conferences, thematic conferences and parallel communications proposed by researchers.

The Congress challenges researchers to study the event of Fatima, particularly through a profound reflexion on their sources with adequate instruments from the different field of knowledge. The time for the submission of communication proposals will go up to the 31st of December 2016.

There are seven scientific areas highlight in the Congress: Fatima and social dynamics; Fatima in the perspective of religious phenomenology; the History of Fatima; Mariology in the written sources of Fatima; Fatima and the prophetic and apocalyptic languages; the Spirituality and the Theology of Fatima and the presence of Fatima throughout one hundred years.

The celebration of the centennial of Fatima is an occasion to look upon the history of Fatima and its religious, social, cultural and artistic implications; the religious and social-cultural impact of the apparitions within and outside the Portuguese borders; the influence of this phenomenon in the affirmation of Portuguese Ca-

tholicism; the growing attention that the Popes have been giving to Fatima placing it at a global scale; the reading keys that Fatima offers for a look on the actuality are all subjects that can awaken new researches.

Furthermore, as a place of hospitality of many visitors, believers or non-believers, the Shrine of Fatima is a privileged space of study of several phenomena such as popular religiosity, pilgrimage, devotional practices and other themes particularly relevant for the social and behavioural sciences.

During the congress seven plenary conferences will be offered, namely: “History and Historiography of Fatima”, by Marco Daniel Duarte; “The theological axes of the message of Fatima”, by Eloy Bueno de la Fuente; “From Mariology to Fatima”, by Stella Morra; “Fatima and Rome”, by António Matos Ferreira; “Fatima in the context of the Mariophanies”, by Afonso Soares; “Hermeneutics of the three Seers”, by Franco Manzi; “The place of Fatima in the configuration of the religious”, by Alfredo Teixeira, and “Fatima as promise”, the closing conference by Bishop Gianfranco Ravasi. There will still be time for seven thematic conferences which will head each of the conference panels proposed for the Congress: “Fatima and practices of the territory”, by Graça Poças Santos; “Thaumaturgy in Fatima”, by Tiago Marques; “Fatima and the geography of conflict”, by Luís Salgado Matos; “The apparitions of Fatima in the perspective of Mariologic pneumatology”, by Jose Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes; “Fatima and the political theology”, by João Manuel Duque; “Fatima and the ecumenical question”, by José Eduardo Borges de Pinho and “Fatima and the pastoral dynamics in Portugal”, by Paulo Fontes. The program is completed with the parallel communications proposed for the Congress

Carmo Rodeia

New Fatima Shrine of Porto Alegre, the unique in the world to be inaugurated on the day of the Centennial of the Apparitions

The new Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in Porto Alegre, state of *Rio Grande do Sul*, in Brazil, will be the only shrine in the world inaugurated on the same day of the Centennial of the Apparitions of Our Lady to the Little Shepherds, on May 13, 2017, with the presence of the Pilgrim Statue of Fatima coming from Portugal.

The new home of the Lady of Fatima will have over 1,900 m² of built area; it will accommodate about 500 believers seated and 200 standing; elderly persons, children and the disabled will have special accesses. Besides the main temple, the complex will have a sacristy, a room for classes, auditorium, restrooms, parking for 100 vehicles and a wing for the administration which will assist the pilgrims. This new structure already counts with a large room, which can accommodate up to 2000 people, the Grotto of Our Lady of Fatima and the Chapel of the Shepherds which are visited by thousands of devotees.

Every year, the Shrine welcomes thousands of pilgrims who put their prayer intentions on the feet of the Lady of Fatima. Three priests of the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre serve the Shrine ensuring the daily masses, the blessing of the sick and of the ob-



Pilgrim Statue will be present at the opening

jects, as well as the administration of the sacraments. The pilgrimage of Fatima takes place on the third Sunday of May.

The Shrine is surrounded by schools with different teaching systems. The large number of students, parents, teachers and staff committed make the activity of the Church a rich action, that has contributed to uniting an educational proposal with an evangelizing pedagogy.

Student Parish is dedicated to 27 schools, state, municipal and private, comprising 23,000 students of fundamental and intermediate education (from basic to high school). Student Parish goes to meet thousands of children and

young people, and thousands of children and young people come to meet the Shrine and put their prayers in the hands of Mary!

In 2008, the organization of the Shrine has shown signs of commitment and two years later, the donations' campaign for the construction of the new home for the Lady of Fatima was launched, in collaboration with about a thousand pilgrims. In 2011, works began; the inauguration of the temple will be held on May 13, 2017, the day when we celebrate the Centennial of the Apparitions of Fatima in Portugal.

Patrícia de Oliveira

Pilgrim Statue visited Kidbrooke, in London

Towards the end of 2015, we received a letter from the World Apostolate of Fatima, inviting us to host a visit of the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima and the relics of Blessed Jacinta and Francisco. The invitation surprised us for we are a relatively small parish in the South East London, and the Apostolate offered us the weekend of May 7 and 8. We were thrilled not only was May our Lady's month but it fell within a few days of the anniversary of Our Lady's appearance in Fatima. A real blessing.

There was a real sense of excitement in the parish from the outset and everybody rallied round to organise this festive moment.

We sent invitations to all our neighbouring parishes and five local Councils of the Knights of St Columba had agreed to provide help marshalling and guarding the statue and relics.

We were also lucky to have lots of offers of help from our wonderful parishioners and our parish school, Holy Family School.

On the morning of May 7, the sun shone brightly, our church of St. John Fisher sparkled and smelt beautiful with wonderful flower arrangements. Our parishioners had come together to do everything possible to give Our Lady of Fatima and the relics of Blessed Jacinta and Francisco a wonderful reception. We were now able to concentrate on the most important aspect of the visit, the spiritual side. As we processed through the streets of Kidbrooke, we proudly waved our white tissues. Our young altar servers carried her crown and the relics. We sang 'Ave Maria' at the top of our voices, and even without musicians at that point, it sounded wonderful.



Thousands of believers welcomed the Virgin Pilgrim

When we arrived at the church doors, our choir sounded wonderful and 'Ave Maria' continued to resound as the procession also joined in. Fr Arbo then crowned and consecrated the statue. After the Mass, the veneration of the relics started while the Sacrament of Reconciliation was offered with the help of priests from outside the Parish. The talks, video presentations and the all-night vigil, were all well supported. Prayer, recitation of the rosary and adoration continued throughout the night and day with our usual Sunday masses at 10:00 am and 5:00 pm. The children of our parish acted out the story of Fatima and took home handmade rosary decades to begin their journey with Mary at home. There was a real sense of community as people gathered in Fr Arbo's garden over a cup of tea and a bite to eat in between the various events going on in the church. We finally said a sad farewell to the rel-

ics and the statue at about 8:00 pm on May 8.

While the number of people attending did not reach the figures we had anticipated, the church felt busy and well attended throughout the events.

Over the weekend, we estimate that around 1,000 people visited our parish. A number of us had only had a few hours of sleep that weekend but we felt exhilarated and truly honoured to have had the statue of Our Lady of Fatima and the relics of Blessed Jacinta and Francisco in our church. Our Lady had not only taught us about the history of her apparitions in Fatima but had also created in this small corner of South East London, the true spirit of Fatima and a heartfelt desire within us to carry out her wishes for humanity as she had told the children at Fatima all that time ago.

Geraldine Bakelmun

St John Fisher Parish Administrator

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