
Pope in Portugal: Prayer for peace in Fatima and vigil with young people

“To you we consecrate the Church and the world, especially the countries at war”, reads the prayer of **Pope Francis** tweeted on the account @Pontifex right after the recitation of the Rosary with sick and incarcerated young people in Fatima's Chapel of Apparitions. These words echo those of the Act of Consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, pronounced on March 25, 2022, shortly after the outbreak of the war. On the fourth day of his visit to Portugal, the Pope chose to return as a pilgrim to Fatima, which he had visited for the first time in 2017 on the occasion of the centenary of the apparitions. Two hundred thousand people were waiting for him on the large esplanade in front of the shrine. He first stopped to pray before the statue of Our Lady in the small chapel dedicated to her. It was a “long moment of silence” during which Pope Francis

“Prayed, with sorrow, for peace”,

Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press Office, told journalists. The Church “is the Mother Church where everyone may enter, to facilitate the encounter with God. There is room for everyone, because everyone is important in the eyes of the Lord and of Our Lady.” This is the image chosen for the address following the recitation of the Rosary with sick and incarcerated young people. “This Chapel of the Apparitions is a beautiful image of the Church – Francis said – beautiful and without doors.”

“The Church has no doors in order that everyone may enter.

Here, in this place, we must insist that everyone can enter, because this is the Mother's house, and a mother's heart is always open to all her children, everyone, everyone, everyone, excluding no one.” Then, as he did on several occasions during this visit to Portugal, Francis departed from the written text and continued extemporaneously, creating a new name for the Blessed Virgin:

“Our Lady of Haste”,

who “hastens to be near to us; she hastens because she is our Mother. Mary accompanies Jesus and she does not draw back after the Resurrection, but accompanies the disciples, waiting for the Holy Spirit. She also accompanies the Church that begins to grow after Pentecost. Our Lady of haste and Our Lady who accompanies. She always accompanies, never taking pride of place! She first welcomes and then points to Jesus.” “Mary does nothing in her life except point to Jesus”, the Pope told the youths: “Do whatever he tells you; follow Jesus.” Francis thus recalled Mary's gestures: “She welcomes all of us and she points to Jesus, and she does this in something of a hurry, with haste. Every time we come to Fatima, we remember this.” For the Pope, Mary wishes that “so many unbelieving hearts be opened to Jesus. She welcomes us all and directs us to Jesus. This is Mary: Our Lady who hastens to be close to us.” **Mary, Missionary of Joy:** at the heart of the Pope's meditation, completely unscripted, offered to the one and a half million young people who flocked to the Parque Tejo for the Vigil, the crowning event of each World Youth Day, along with Holy Mass the following day.

“Joy is missionary, joy is not just for one person, it is for sharing something with others”,

Francis said in the opening lines, departing from the written text from time to time in dialogue directly with the young people. “Let me ask you: those of you here, who have come to find life's beautiful

meaning, will you keep all this for yourselves or will you share it with others? Joy is missionary! And so we share this joy with others.” “Each of us, if we cast our minds back, can recall those who have been rays of light in our lives: parents, grandparents, friends, priests, religious men and women, catechists, youth leaders, teachers, and so on”, The Pope remarked: “They are the ‘roots’ of our joy. Let each of us now spend a few moments in silence to think of who are like the roots of our joy. We have roots of joy. We too can be roots of joy for others. It is not about bringing a fleeting joy, the joy of the moment; it is about bringing a joy that generates roots.” “Let us ask, how can we become roots of joy?”, the Pope said: “Joy is not to be found in a locked library, even though study is necessary! Joy must be sought, must be discovered. It has to be found in dialogue with others, where we share these roots of joy that we have received. And this, at times, is tiring.” Francis asked the youths: “do you sometimes get tired? Think about what happens when we become tired: we have no wish to do anything. We have no desire to carry on and we give up, stop walking and fall. Do you believe that those who fall in life, who have experienced failure, who even commit serious or grave mistakes, that their lives are over? No! So what are they to do? They are to get back up! Those who come from the Alps, who like to climb mountains, have a very beautiful song that goes like this: ‘In the art of climbing the mountain, what matters isn’t not to fall, but not to remain fallen’. Those who remain fallen have already withdrawn from life, have shut down. And when we see any friends of ours who have fallen, what are we to do? Lift them up. When we need to lift someone up, that is the only time that we are allowed to look down upon others, when we are offering to help them up. Yet, we often see people looking down on us, from above! How sad.” Francis continued with a football metaphor: “Think of how much training is needed in order to score a goal; how much effort is required to achieve a certain result. Let us not remain fallen; and let us train ourselves, train in order keep moving forward. We learn from our parents, our grandparents, we learn from friends, giving each other a helping hand. If you fall, get back up; walk with a goal in mind, and train each day of your lives.

Nothing is free in life, everything has to be paid for.

Only one thing is free: the love of Jesus! So, with this free gift that we have – the love of Jesus –let us walk in hope, let us be mindful of our roots, and move forward, without fear!”. And then, in the park overlooking the River Tagus, a million and a half young people stood in prayerful silence, their eyes fixed on the illuminated crucifix on the stage, the old Pope becoming young again with them. Then came the sweet, melancholy fado music. And now night can fall. Tomorrow will come.

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