



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

*Saint Peter's Square
Wednesday, 19 May 2010*

Apostolic Journey to Portugal

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today I wish to review with you the various stages of the Apostolic Trip that I took to Portugal in the past days, inspired mainly by a desire to honour the Virgin Mary, who at Fatima passed on to her seers and to pilgrims an intense love for the Successor of Peter. I thank God for having given me the opportunity to pay homage to that People, to its long and glorious history of faith and of Christian witness. Therefore, just as I asked you to accompany in prayer this Pastoral Visit, so I now invite you to join with me in giving thanks to the Lord for its happy outcome and its conclusion. I entrust to him the fruits that the Visit has brought about and will bring about for the community of the Portuguese Church and for the entire population. I renew my heartfelt gratitude to the President of the Republic, Mr Aníbal Cavaco Silva, along with the other State Authorities, who welcomed me so cordially and did their utmost to ensure that everything might progress in the best possible way. With intense affection I recall my Brother Bishops of the Portuguese dioceses, whom I had the joy of embracing in their own homeland. I thank them fraternally for the work they carried out in the spiritual and organizational preparation of my Visit, and also for the considerable effort involved in its realization. I extend a special thought to the Patriarch of Lisbon, Cardinal José da Cruz Policarpo, to the Bishops António Augusto dos Santos Marto of Leiria-Fatima and Manuel Macário do Nascimento Clemente of Oporto and to their respective collaborators, and likewise to the various bodies of the Bishops' Conference led by Bishop Jorge Ortiga.

Throughout the Visit, which coincided with the 10th anniversary of the Beatification of the shepherd children Jacinta and Francisco, I felt spiritually sustained by my beloved Predecessor, the Venerable [John Paul II, who travelled to Fatima three times](#), in thanksgiving for that "invisible hand" which saved him from death in the attempt of 13 May, here in St Peter's Square. On the evening of my arrival I celebrated [Holy Mass in Lisbon in the charming setting of Terreiro do Paço](#), facing the River Tagus. It was a festive liturgical gathering, full of hope and animated by the joyous participation of a great many faithful. At the Capital from where, over the course of centuries, many missionaries departed in order to take the Gospel to various continents I encouraged the several members of the local Church to pursue a vigorous evangelizing action within society's diverse milieux, in order to be sowers of hope in a world often marked by distrust. In particular, I appealed to believers to proclaim the death and Resurrection of Christ, the heart of Christianity, fulcrum and support of our faith and reason for our joy. I also expressed these sentiments during the [meeting with representatives of the world of culture](#), which took place in the Cultural Centre of Belém. On that occasion, I highlighted the patrimony of values with which Christianity has enriched the culture, art and heritage of the Portuguese People. In this noble Land it is possible as it is in every other country deeply influenced by Christianity to build a future of fraternal good will and collaboration with other cultural initiatives, by being open to sincere, reciprocal and respectful dialogue.

I then went to Fatima, a small city characterized by an atmosphere of real mysticism, in which one senses the almost palpable presence of Our Lady. There, in that admirable Shrine, the spiritual heart of Portugal and the destination of a multitude of people from greatly diverse places on earth, I became a pilgrim among pilgrims. After having paused in [prayerful and moving contemplation in the Chapel of the Apparitions](#) in the *Cova da Iria* where I entrusted to the Immaculate Heart of Mary the joys and expectations, as well as the problems and sufferings, of the entire world I had the joy of presiding at a Vespers Celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Church of the Most Holy Trinity. Inside this large modern temple, I expressed my deep appreciation to the priests, men and women religious, deacons, and to the seminarians who came from every part of Portugal, as I thanked them for their often silent and not always easy witness, and for their fidelity to the Gospel and to the Church. In this Year for Priests, which is nearing its end, I encouraged the priests to give priority to devout listening to the Word of God, to the intimate knowledge of Christ, to the intense celebration of the Eucharist, while emulating the luminous example of the Holy Curé d'Ars. I did not omit to [entrust and consecrate the priests of all the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary](#), true model of a disciple of the Lord.

In the evening, I participated in an evocative candlelit procession with the thousands of people who had chosen to join in the event in this huge square in front of the Shrine. It was a stupendous manifestation of faith in God and of devotion to his and our Mother, expressed in the recitation of the Holy Rosary. This prayer, so dear to the Christian people, has found in Fatima a central driving force for the whole Church and the world. The "*White Lady*", in the Apparition of 13 June, told the three shepherd children: "*I want you to recite the Rosary every day*". We could say that Fatima

and the Rosary are practically synonymous.

My Visit to this truly special place reached its climax in the [Eucharistic Celebration of 13 May](#), the anniversary of the first Apparition of the Virgin Mary to Francisco, Jacinta and Lúcia. In echoing the words of the Prophet Isaiah, I invited that immense prayerful gathering, united in such great love and devotion at the feet of the Virgin, to rejoice fully in the Lord (cf. Is 61: 10), so that her merciful love, which accompanies us on our pilgrimage on this earth, may be the spring of our great hope. And hope is precisely what fills the demanding yet at the same time comforting Message that Our Lady left to us at Fatima. It is a Message centred on prayer, on penance and on conversion that reaches beyond the threats, dangers and horrors of history to invite mankind to have faith in God's action: to cultivate the great Hope, to experience the Lord's grace and thus to fall in love with him, who is the source of love and peace.

In this perspective, my [meeting with the social assistance and pastoral organizations](#) was especially meaningful and engrossing. To these I emphasized the Good Samaritan's way of meeting the needs of our poorest brothers and sisters and of serving Christ, by promoting the common good. Indeed, it is at Fatima a school of faith and of hope, since it is also a school of charity and service to others that many young people learn the importance of selfless giving. In this context of faith and prayer, the important, fraternal [meeting with the Portuguese Episcopate](#) took place, at the conclusion of my Visit to Fatima. It was a moment of intense spiritual communion, in which together we thanked the Lord for the faithfulness of the Church that is alive in Portugal and also entrusted to the Virgin the community's hopes and our pastoral concerns. I also spoke of these hopes and pastoral prospects during the [Holy Mass celebrated in the historic and symbolic city of Oporto](#), the "City of the Virgin", which was the last stage of my pilgrimage through the land of Lusitania. [Addressing the large crowd of the faithful gathered in the Avenida dos Aliados](#), I recalled the commitment to witness to the Gospel in every context, offering the Risen Christ to the world so that every difficult, painful and frightening situation might be transformed through the Holy Spirit into an opportunity for growth and life.

Dear brothers and sisters, [my pilgrimage to Portugal](#) has been a moving experience, rich with many spiritual gifts. While the memory of this unforgettable Journey the warm, spontaneous welcome, the enthusiasm of the people remain fixed in my mind and heart, I give praise to the Lord for having opened to the world, through Mary's Apparitions to the three shepherd children, a privileged space in which to encounter the divine mercy that heals and saves. At Fatima, the Blessed Virgin invites everyone to consider the earth as the place where we make our pilgrimage towards the definitive homeland, which is Heaven. In reality we are all pilgrims, and we need our Mother to guide us. The theme of my Apostolic Journey to Portugal was, "With You We Walk in Hope: Wisdom and Mission". And at Fatima the Blessed Virgin Mary invites us to walk with great hope, letting ourselves be guided by the "wisdom from on high" manifest in Jesus, the wisdom of love so that we might carry Christ's light and joy to the world. I therefore invite you to join with me in prayer, asking the Lord to bless the efforts of those in that beloved Nation who dedicate

themselves to the service of the Gospel and to the search for the true good of man, of every human being. Furthermore we pray that, through the intercession of Mary Most Holy, the Holy Spirit may make this Apostolic Trip fruitful, and may give life to the mission of the Church worldwide, instituted by Christ, to proclaim to all peoples the Gospel of truth, peace and love. To Special Groups Dear Brothers and Sisters, I am pleased to welcome the English-speaking visitors and pilgrims present at today's Audience, including the groups from England, Malaysia and the United States of America. I extend a special greeting to the students who are here and to the American Patrons of the Vatican Museums. Commending all of you to the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima, I ask Almighty God to pour out his Blessings upon you.

My Pastoral Visit to Portugal this past week enabled me to honour Our Lady of Fatima and to pay homage to the distinguished history of Christian faith and evangelizing zeal of the Portuguese people. The visit began with a Mass celebrated in the Terreiro do Paço in Lisbon, where I urged Portugal's Christians to carry on this great work of evangelization in our own day. The heart of my journey was my pilgrimage to Fatima for the tenth anniversary of the Beatification of the shepherd children Francisco and Jacinta. The evening recitation of the Rosary and the solemn Mass on the anniversary of the first apparition were centred on the message of Fatima. Our Lady's exhortation to prayer, penance and conversion is essentially a summons to hope in God's merciful love and trust in his saving plan, which triumphs over the threats and calamities of history. As I give thanks for the blessings of my pilgrimage, I ask you to join me in asking Our Lady of Fatima to continue, by her prayers, to guide us on our journey to heaven, to open the hearts of all to God's infinite mercy, and to confirm the Church in her perennial mission of proclaiming before the world the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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