



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO FÁTIMA (MAY, 12-13, 2000)

***SPEECH OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
AT THE WELCOME CEREMONY IN PORTUGAL***

Friday, 12 May 2000

*Mr President,
Mr Prime Minister,
Venerable Patriarch of Lisbon,
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,
Distinguished Authorities,
Ladies and Gentlemen!*

God has allowed me to return to Portugal, for which I thank and bless him. I extend my cordial greetings of solidarity and peace to you who have gathered here to meet me and to all the sons and daughters of this noble nation. My first respectful greeting is to you, Mr President, who have honoured my arrival with your presence: many thanks!

I would first like to express my gratitude for all the understanding and cooperation of the State authorities in making this brief visit possible, which is actually the liturgical ceremony at the Shrine of Fátima. In answer to the insistant request of the Bishops of Portugal, I decided to come to the Cova da Iria to celebrate, together with the Catholic community, the beatification of the little shepherds, Francisco and Jacinta Marto, in the very place which was their cradle and is now their altar. I know that their homeland praises its heroes and glorifies its saints; the Pope gladly joins in Portugal's rejoicing.

At the beginning of my visit, I express my deep esteem and affection for all the Portuguese, to whom I wish a future of peace, well-being and prosperity, as they continue on the path of their country's most genuine traditions and values, which are rooted in Christianity. May God watch

over all the sons and daughters of this land of the Blessed Virgin. God bless Portugal!

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