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Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Francis in Portugal on the occasion of the 37th World Youth Day (2 to 6 August 2023) – Prayer of the Holy Rosary with sick young people

Prayer of the Holy Rosary with sick young people at the Chapel of the Apparitions in Fátima

This morning, after celebrating Holy Mass in private, the Holy Father Francis left the Apostolic Nunciature and transferred by car to the Figo Maduro Air Base in Lisbon, from where he departed for Fátima on board a military helicopter.

On his private arrival at the heliport of Fátima, the Pope was received by Bishop José Ornelas Carvalho of Leiria-Fátima and president of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference. The Holy Father then transferred by car to the Shrine of Our Lady of Fátima, where, after touring among the faithful by popemobile, he led the prayer of the Holy Rosary with young people suffering from health problems in the Chapel of the Apparitions.

After entering the Chapel of the Apparitions, Pope Francis venerated the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Fátima, and paused in silent prayer. Two children offered flowers to the Holy Father, which he placed at the feet of the Virgin, and he left the gift of a gold rosary.

At the end of the recitation of the Holy Rosary, and after the greeting from the bishop of Leiria-Fátima, the Holy Father delivered his address.

Following the final blessing and the hymn, Pope Francis greeted some young people with health problems. He then transferred to the Fátima heliport, and departed on board a military helicopter bound for Figo Maduro Air Base in Lisbon, to return to the Apostolic Nunciature.

According to the authorities, around 200,000 people were present at the Shrine of Fátima for the prayer of the Holy Rosary.

The following is the address delivered by the Holy Father at the end of the recitation of the Rosary with young sick people at the Chapel of the Apparitions in Fátima:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I thank Bishop Ornelas for his greeting, and I thank all of you for your presence and your prayer. We have recited the Rosary, a very beautiful and vital prayer; vital because it connects us with the lives of Jesus and Mary. We meditated on the Joyful Mysteries, which remind us that the Church can only be *a house of joy*. This Chapel of the Apparitions is a beautiful image of the Church: welcoming and without doors. Indeed, 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.

We are here [as pilgrims], under Mary's maternal gaze; we are here as the Church, Mother Church. Pilgrimage is a particularly Marian trait, because the first one to go on pilgrimage after the annunciation of Jesus, was Mary. As soon as she heard that her elderly relative – although already advanced in years – was pregnant, Mary ran out. That is a somewhat free translation, for the Gospel says she "went with haste"; yet we could say she ran out, ran eagerly to help, to be present.

Mary has many titles, but we can think of another that we could add to them: "Our Lady who runs", every time there is a problem; whenever we seek her aid, she does not delay, she comes to us, she hastens. She is "Our Lady of haste". Do you like that? Let us say it all together: Our Lady of haste. She hastens to be near to us; she hastens because she is our Mother. Bishop Ornelas told me that the Portuguese word [for haste] is *apressada*. That is how Mary accompanies Jesus throughout his life; 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! Mary's gesture of welcoming is twofold: she first welcomes and then points to Jesus. Mary does nothing in her life except point to Jesus: "Do whatever he tells you"; follow Jesus.

These are the two gestures of Mary, let us reflect on them well. She welcomes all of us and she points to Jesus, and she does this in something of a hurry, with haste, *apressada*. Our Lady of haste, who welcomes us all and directs us to Jesus. Every time we come to Fatima, we remember that Mary appeared here in a special way, in order that so many unbelieving hearts would be opened to Jesus. By her presence, she directs us to Jesus; always to Jesus. She is here among us also today. Even though she is always among us, today we sense that Our Lady of haste is even closer to us.

Dear friends, Jesus loves us so such that he identifies with us, and he asks us to work together with him. Mary shows us what Jesus is asking of us: that we journey through life and share in his work. Today, I would like us to look at the image of Mary, and ask ourselves, "What is Mary saying to me as Mother? What is she showing me?". She is directing us to Jesus; yet, sometimes, she also shows us aspects of our lives that are not going so well, but she always directs us to Jesus. "Mother, what is it that you wish to show me?". Let us spend a few moments in silence, each one of us asking in our hearts: "Mother, what is it that you wish to show me? What is it in my life that you are concerned about? What is there in my life that stirs your heart? What is there in my life that interests you? Please, show me". And her heart directs us thus, so that Jesus will come. And just as she points us to Jesus, she points out to Jesus each of our hearts.

Dear brothers and sisters, today let us sense the presence of Mary our Mother, the Mother who will always say, "do whatever Jesus tells you". She shows Jesus to us. Yet, she is also the Mother who says to Jesus: "do what these are asking of you". This is Mary. That is our Mother, Our Lady who hastens to be close to us. May she intercede for us all. Amen!

