



The Holy See

PILGRIMAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

TO THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA

on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Apparitions
of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Cova da Iria
(12-13 May 2017)

***GREETING OF THE HOLY FATHER TO THE SICK
AT THE CONCLUSION OF HOLY MASS***

*Square in front of the Shrine, Fátima
Saturday, 13 May 2017*

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters who are sick,

As I said in the homily, the Lord always goes before us. Whenever we experience a cross, he has already been there ahead of us. In his passion, he took upon himself all our suffering. Jesus knows the meaning of sorrow and pain. He understands us, he comforts us and he gives us strength, as he did to Saint Francisco Marto and Saint Jacinta, and to the saints of every time and place. I think of the Apostle Peter, in chains in the prison of Jerusalem, as the whole Church prayed for him. The Lord comforted Peter. That is the Church's ministry: the Church asks the Lord to comfort the afflicted like yourselves, and he comforts you, even in ways you cannot see. He comforts you in the depths of your hearts and he comforts you with the gift of strength.

Dear pilgrims, we have before us Jesus hidden yet present in the Eucharist, just as we have Jesus hidden yet present in the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are sick and suffering. On the altar, we worship the flesh of Jesus; in these our brothers and sisters, we encounter the wounds of Jesus. The Christian adores Jesus, the Christian seeks Jesus, the Christian can recognize the wounds of Jesus. Today the Virgin Mary asks all of us the same question that, a hundred years ago, she asked the shepherd children: "Do you want to offer yourselves to God?" Their answer -

“Yes, we do!” – makes us able to understand and imitate their lives. They lived life, with its share of joy and suffering, as an offering to the Lord.

I invite those of you who are sick to live your lives as a gift. Like the shepherd children, tell Our Lady that you want to offer yourselves to God with all your heart. Don't think of yourselves simply as the recipients of charitable solidarity, but feel that you share fully in the Church's life and mission. Your silent presence, which is more eloquent than a flood of words, your prayers, the daily offering of your sufferings in union with those of Jesus crucified for the salvation of the world, the patient and even joyful acceptance of your condition – all these are a spiritual resource, an asset to every Christian community. Do not be ashamed of being a precious treasure of the Church.

Jesus will pass close to you in the Blessed Sacrament as a sign of his closeness and love for you. Entrust to him your sorrows, your sufferings, all your weariness. Count on the prayer of the Church, which from every corner of the world rises up to heaven for you and with you. God is our Father, and he will never forget you.