



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOP OF LEIRIA
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS PILGRIMAGE
TO THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA**

To my Venerable Brother

Alberto Cosme do Amaral, Bishop of Leiria (Portugal)

On 13 May, next, another great pilgrimage will be made to the sanctuary of Fatima, the programme of which I was glad to know. For I am complying in this simple way with the desire you thought right to express to me that the new Successor of St Peter, in the first year of his pontificate, should be present spiritually among the many pilgrims from Portugal and from all over the world who will gather in that blessed place.

In harmony, therefore, with this prayerful assembly, I cordially desire to wish pastors, priests, men and women religious, and beloved faithful, pilgrims to Fatima, that grace and peace may be abundant in all for deep knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ Our Lord (cf. 2 Pet 1:2). They will come to venerate the Mother of the Church and, in the light of her luminous example and through her merits and intercession, they will go there to worship God, to offer him expiation, to attract his mercy, and implore help and graces for the Church and mankind. I would like to share in some way and stimulate this aspiration that leads you to unite with Blessed Mary, the Mother of the true God and our Mother, and to trust in the motherly love she put in the mystery of redemption and in the life of the Church; the deep necessity of faith, hope and charity in the hour in which we are living, drives us to that.

For we actually find ourselves in an hour of radiant hope, in which the Church perceives that she is very close to man, really and deeply tied to mankind and to its history (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 1). But it is also an hour full of responsibility in which the Church herself feels with greater force that a

deep bond with Christ the redeemer of man is indispensable for her.

And then, "Brethren, what shall we do?" To this question, once asked of St Peter, his humble successor replies with the same word: "Repent..." (Acts 2:38). And conversion—as we are well aware, it is at the centre of the message of Fatima—is a continual commitment to seek and bear witness to "deep knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ Our Lord", the way of eternal life (cf. Jn 13:3), which necessarily passes through penitence (cf. Lk 13: 3) and through prayer (cf. Jn 15:5), which is for the Church in our days more than a need, a categorical imperative.

For this reason, a "pilgrim" with pilgrims to Fatima, I exhort you to pray to Mary, through Mary and with Mary, Holy Mother of God and Mother of the Church and Our Lady Help of Christians, trusting in her fullness of grace, manifesting to her, filial love and sincere devotion based on a resolution of faithfulness to Christ, faithfulness to the Church, and faithfulness to men our brothers. And may it be Our Lady, our protectress, who presents to God the supplications I call on you to make in union with Christ "mediator between God and men" (1 Tim 2:5);

— for harmony within our Holy Catholic Church, so that we may live and bear witness to the mystery of redemption before all those whom Christ embraced and embraces with inexhaustible love;

— for the sanctification of the whole People of God—sacred ministers, consecrated persons, families, youth, children—that there may be vocations for consecration to service of the Kingdom and to the evangelical witness of charity;

— for peace, justice, and brotherhood among men and among peoples; for those who are homeless, or live without peace, without religious freedom, without love and without hope; above all, for the little ones in this "International Year of the Child";

— for one and all of the pilgrims gathered in this sanctuary, for their loved ones, for their land and their country; that the Lord may comfort, protect and bless all.

With these wishes and with my heart in prayer, in token of abundant grace and peace, I bless everyone in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Vatican, 28 April 1979

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