
Shrine of Fatima. Father Cabecinhas (Rector): “It will remain in the hearts of these young people and they will return”

(from Fatima) "The wounds of Europe are a challenge for us today to rediscover God's place in our lives. We must build peace from within, from the heart, from the place we give to God. This is perhaps the message that Europe needs most today: to restore God to the place that He alone can have in our lives. And young people perceive this." This is how Father **Carlos Manuel Pedrosa Cabecinhas**, Rector of the Shrine of Fatima, responds to those who seek an explanation for the hundreds of thousands of young people who have flocked from all over the world to pray in the Chapel of the Apparitions. **What is the relationship between Fatima and young people?** Their presence is a sign of the contemporary relevance of the message of Fatima. Our Lady came to speak to our hearts and become part of our history. Young people are aware of the challenge that Our Lady

entrusted to the three shepherd children: to make sure that God occupies a central place in our lives. It is often said that Fatima is a beautiful place only for older people. But that is not true. We see many young people visiting the shrine throughout the year. These days we see more of them. They arrive in groups and with all the joy and colour that accompanies World Youth Day. These days are an expression of the youthful face of the Church and the youthful face of Fatima.



First of all, Fatima tells us that peace is a gift from God and that we must implore God for this gift. Our Lady has said clearly here in Fatima: Pray and recite the Rosary for peace. The first message that Fatima gives to our wounded Europe is that we must entrust ourselves to God. But Our Lady has also said that we have to keep a watchful eye on the absence of God in Europe. Because war is the most tragic result of man's alienation from God. **Why has Pope Francis decided to return to Fatima?** I think the first meaning is to return to Fatima, a place of prayer, to pray. The Pontiff said that if he returned to Portugal, he would also return to Fatima. But there is another meaning, which is linked to the dimension of peace that is present in Fatima. On March 25 last year, the Pope consecrated Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He also sent Card. Konrad Krajewski to repeat this act of consecration here in Fatima. This means that Pope Francis associates Fatima with peace and prayer for peace.



This World Youth Day offers a unique opportunity for the whole of Portugal to revitalise the Church. An extraordinary number of young people have come to Fatima for this WYD. I am sure that Fatima will remain in their hearts and that they will return. So this present moment will also be the future of Fatima. It is a great challenge for us. It means that we must continue to welcome young people, now and in the future, and continue to speak of God and touch their hearts with the message of Our Lady of Fatima. **Why does the world need Fatima?** Because Fatima is a call to recover the fundamental values of life. The contemporary relevance of Fatima is the contemporary relevance of the Gospel. There is no other message than the Gospel. That is the mission of Fatima: to make people aware of the Gospel's contemporary relevance.

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