



**International Anniversary Pilgrimage of October 12/13.**

**We want to welcome the Holy Father with filial affection**



Due to the fact that the Apostolic Nuncio in Portugal, Most Rev. Rino Passigato, was in Fatima taking part in the celebrations of October 12/13, where he concelebrated, the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, at the end of Mass, decided to send, through this representative of the Pope in Portugal, a message of appreciation to His Holiness Benedict XVI.

“Friends, we have just celebrated the last great anniversary pilgrimage this year in Fatima. The first anniversary pilgrimage next year will be in May, which will be presided over by our beloved Holy Father Benedict XVI. I want to send, on behalf of all of you, a message to the Holy Father, through his Apostolic Nuncio, who is here with us and whose presence I thank him for, to let him know of our great joy and heartfelt gratitude for the gift of his coming visit and also to tell the successor of Peter – who is coming to visit us and confirm the brothers in faith – that we want to welcome him with joy, enthusiasm, our presence and filial affection”, he said.

While he was uttering these short words, the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima was, more than once, interrupted by the applause of the pilgrims, who thus wanted to show their agreement with his message.

It is estimated that about 140,000 pilgrims took part in this Mass presided over by the Patriarch of Lisbon, His Eminence José Cardinal Policarpo, and concelebrated by the Apostolic Nuncio, 11 Bishops and 355 Priests.

According to information from the Department of Pilgrim Service, 113 organized groups from 25 countries signed up for the morning celebrations of October 13, held at the Prayer Area of the Shrine of Fatima. 205 pilgrims received, at the end of Mass, the Blessing of the Sick.

During the whole pilgrimage of October 12/13, 262 people were attended at the First Aid Station and 336 used the Foot-Wash Service.

It is estimated still that 8,000 pilgrims arrived on foot to take part in this pilgrimage.

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