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On May 13, 2017 Pope Francis canonised Blessed Francisco and Jacinta Marto. The moment is remembered today on the social networks of the Shrine.

During this International Anniversary Pilgrimage in May 2022, the 5th anniversary of the canonisation of Francisco and Jacinta Marto, who, on May 13, 2017, became the youngest non-martyr saints of the Church, will be celebrated.

The canonisation took place in Cova da Iria, during the celebrations of the Centenary of the Apparitions, presided over by Pope Francis, after a miracle attributed to Francisco and Jacinta was approved, validated by the Vatican on March 23, 2017 and announced on April 20, at the final Ordinary Public Consistory for the vote on some Causes of Canonisation, in what would be the last stage of a process that has lasted 65 years.

At 10:26 am on May 13, 2017, the holiness of Francisco and Jacinta Marto was declared by the Holy Father at the altar of the Prayer Area, in a rite of canonization that took place right at the beginning of the Mass and after the formal request of the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima at the time, D. António Marto, accompanied by the Postulator of the Cause of Canonization of Francisco and Jacinta, a moment recalled the day before by the Shrine of Fatima, in a video published on social media.

Lucas, the Brazilian child who was healed by miracle, also went up to the altar with his family, having the opportunity to embrace the Pope on this historic day.

The relics of the new saints were exhibited during the celebrations, having taken part in the initial and final procession of the Mass.

During the day of the canonization, the tombs of the Little Shepherds, in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima, were visited by thousands of people, who did not want to leave the Shrine without praying before the youngest saints of the Church.

Along with the canonization, February 20, the day of the death of Saint Jacinta, was established as the Feast Day of Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto.

### **Francisco and Jacinta Marto: a story of holiness**

Francisco Marto was born on June 11, 1908 and was baptised on June 20. Jacinta, his younger sister, was born on March 5, 1910 and was baptized on March 19. Both were

born in Aljustrel and were baptised in the parish of Fatima. They were the youngest of the seven children of Manuel Pedro Marto and Olímpia de Jesus, and cousins of Lucia de Jesus (1907-2005).

From an early age they received a simple Christian education. They soon became shepherds of the family flock. They accompanied their cousin Lucia, a little older, who was also a little shepherdess. The three little shepherds saw an Angel three times, in the spring, summer and autumn of 1916, in Lapa do Cabeço and at the well of Lucia's house; the Angel invited them to the adoration of God. On May 13, 1917 they were visited in Cova da Iria by the Virgin Mary, who asked them to return there every 13th day until October. In the course of the six meetings, the Lady of the Rosary showed the little shepherds the hope that God offers to a world touched by suffering and evil, and invited them to commit themselves to the conversion of human hearts, by praying the Rosary, by making reparatory sacrifices and by consecrating their hearts and the world to the Immaculate Heart. The lives of Francisco and Jacinta were definitively transformed in the light of the Message of Mercy.

Francisco embraced a life of contemplation, committed to the consolation of God who seemed to him to be "so sad". The Lady had recommended him to pray many Rosaries. And Francisco prayed a lot, searching for the solitude of the mountain or the company of Jesus hidden in the tabernacle of the parish church in order to "think of God".

Jacinta was moved by the suffering of sinners and prayed and sacrificed for their conversion, for peace in the world, and for the Holy Father: "I suffer a lot, but I offer everything for the conversion of sinners and to make reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and also for the Holy Father", Lucia confided during her illness. Shortly before she died, she said: "In Heaven I will love Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary very much."

Francisco died on April 4, 1919 at 10 p.m., only 10 years old. He had fallen ill in October 1918 with the bronchopneumonia epidemic, like his sister Jacinta, who fell ill at the end of 1918. She was admitted to Ourém Hospital and later in Lisbon, at D. Estefânia Hospital. She died alone, at 10:30 p.m. on February 20, 1920. She was 9 years old.

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