



On the way to the Centennial...

The date is set and the initiative is open to all. The beginning of the commemoration of the Centennial of the Apparitions is scheduled for the afternoon of December 1. The Shrine of Fatima is preparing a solemn and festive afternoon to mark the start of the seven year walk towards 2017. This will be the first of a set of initiatives that the Shrine is proposing to mark “an event important for the life and faith of Christians, for Portugal and for the World”, in the words of the Rector of the institution. The declaration that the Centennial is open will take place in the amphitheater of Paul VI Pastoral Center on December 1, between 16h00 and 18h00. Rector Fr. Virgílio Antunes informs: “This event is specially addressed to those who have presided over or otherwise have collaborated in the Shrine’s celebrations, promoters of pilgrimages, priests of the Diocese of Leiria-Fatima, religious communities residing in Fatima, high schools of Fatima, tourist guides, journalists, civilian and military authorities of the region and all those who somehow may collaborate in passing the word on to pilgrims, tourists and visitors of the Shrine of Fatima”. He stresses: “It is our desire to be perfectly in tune with the word to broadcast, in order to involve all pilgrims, even all Portuguese believers, in this great project of the Centennial of the Apparitions of Fatima”. And the Rector explains: “After the end of the theme cycle of the Ten Commandments of the Law of God, which ran from 2001 through 2010, the Shrine of Fatima begins, in the pastoral year 2010-2011, a new stage that has as its goal the celebrations of 2017. It is a seven-year thematic cycle to prepare and follow up the celebration of the Centennial of the Apparitions of Fatima”. On a national holiday in Portugal (December 8, Feast of the Immaculate Conception), chosen on purpose to allow for the participation of all the interested parties, the thematic program for all the seven years, prepared by a theological committee with the help of the Memoirs of Sister Lucia, will be presented. The seven-year walk will begin with the apparitions of the Angel and will continue with those of Our Lady. **Program:**

14h00 – Opening of the exhibition on the apparitions of the Angel, in the hall next to the Adoration Chapel, in the complex of Most Holy Trinity Church.

14h45 – Musical Session in Paul VI Pastoral Center.

Presentation of the Day’s program.

Presentation of the new volume of Documentação Crítica de Fátima (Critical Documentation of Fatima) (Volume V, part 2).

15h00 – Speech by the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima.

15h30 – Presentation of the program of the Centennial of the Apparitions and of the theme for the pastoral year 2010-2011, by the Rector of the Shrine.

16h00 – Intermission.

16h30 – Talk on the theme for the pastoral year, by Mr. João Duque.

17h30 – Final talk by the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon.

Music. ---- **December 1, 2010** The official launching of the seven year period of preparation for the 2017 date is scheduled for December 1, which is a holiday in Portugal. The occasion will be marked by the presentation of the objectives and the itinerary (stages) proposed for this initiative. In the editorial of the official newspaper of the Shrine “Voz da Fátima” (published only in Portuguese) of August 13, the Rector of this institution wrote about the main purpose of the celebration of the 100 years of the apparitions: “The objective of this celebration ought to have an eminently pastoral dimension. As a celebration of a marking event in the life of faith of Christians, it ought to follow a program that may lead them to renew their faith; therefore, it will not be content in only marking a historical date whose repercussions are reduced to a mere past event in history”. In the same editorial, Fr. Virgílio Antunes stressed also the treasure trove Fatima represents to the much expected dynamism of evangelization: “When Pope Benedict XVI, in his speech to the Portuguese people, spoke of Fatima as a school of faith and place where Mary has set her teaching cathedra, he was presenting a very important proposal to the Church in Portugal: take advantage of the enormous treasure trove you have in your own home with all its potential for evangelization”.

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