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Francis reflected on the message of the apparitions of 1917, appealing for the recitation of the rosary

Today Pope Francis remembered the attack on St. John Paul II on May 13th, 1981, connecting the survival of the Polish saint to the "maternal protection" of Our Lady of Fatima.

"May 13 is the day that recalls her first apparition, which coincides with that of the attempt on the life of Saint John Paul II. Let us remember his affirmation: 'In all that happened, I saw the special maternal protection of Mary', said the Pontiff, in front of thousands of pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square in Rome for the weekly public hearing.

Francis repeated passages of the message left to the seers in Cova da Iria during the apparitions: " I have come to warn the faithful to amend their lives and ask for pardon

for their sins. They must not offend Our Lord any more, for He is already too grievously offended by the sins of men. People must say the Rosary and repent of their sins."

"Let us listen to this recommendation, asking Mary for her maternal protection, the gift of conversion, the spirit of penance and peace for all the world. Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us," said the Holy Father who, two years ago on the occasion of the Centennial of the Apparitions, was in Cova da Iria, to canonize Francisco and Jacinta Marto, two of the seers of Fatima.

The Pope returned to the theme by greeting the Portuguese speaking pilgrims, reminding that May is considered, by Catholics, as the "month of Mary," and challenged them to "multiply the daily gestures of veneration and imitation of the Mother of God."

"Let us try to pray the rosary every day, dedicating to God the minimum time we owe Him. By doing so we will bring men closer to heaven. Be the blessing of God for all," he appealed.

Last Sunday, Pope Francis invoked Fatima in the Regina Coeli's prayer: " Our thoughts also go to our heavenly Mother, whom we will celebrate tomorrow, 13 May, with the name Our Lady of Fatima. Let us entrust ourselves to her in order to continue our journey with joy and generosity," he said.

The attack on Pope John Paul II, shot in St. Peter's Square on May 13, 1981, changed his relationship with Fatima, where he would come three times in 18 years.

One year after the attack, John Paul II came to Cova da Iria to publicly acknowledge his conviction that there was an intercession of Our Lady of Fatima in his recovery.

In Cova de Iria, he would be again, victim of a new attack against his life, perpetrated by the Spanish Juan Fernández Krohn.

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