

Homily of the Vigil Mass of the Pilgrimage Anniversary of May 2018



Homilias e Mensagens

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Pilgrimage Anniversary of May 2018,
by cardinal John Tong.

Prayer Area

May 12, 2018

† Cardinal John Tong

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

The Word of God in the first reading invites us to raise up our eyes: "A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun..." Here, in this very place, the three young witnesses of Fatima, Lucia, Giacinta and Francesco, have contemplated "a beautiful Lady more brilliant than the sun", on May 13, 1917. That 'Lady', as mentioned by today's Gospel, the Lord Jesus entrusts to us and at the same time entrusts us to Her: "Woman, here is your son", and to the disciple "Here is your Mother!"

Mary is our loving and caring Mother: from the banquet at Cana and throughout the whole history of the Church, Mary has always shown a strong anxiety and concern for us, for the Church and for the whole of humanity. Here, at Fatima, She has insistently requested the three children to pray and to do penance for the sinners, for the end of war and for peace in the world, in order to avoid tribulations for the world and persecutions for the Church.

The history of the Church in China registers several interventions of Our Lady. For instance, in 1900, during the Boxer persecution, two apparitions are reported: one in Beijing in which Our Lady was accompanied by St. Michael and surrounded by a multitude of angels. The second apparition occurred in Donglu near Baoding in Hebei: Mary appeared in the skies and, listening to the pleading of the faithful, save their city from destruction. A more recent apparition, some time after the persecution of the Cultural Revolution, happened in the Sheshan basilica, near Shanghai: when in the spring of 1980, the Catholic fishermen returned there and found the church closed, they forced the doors open and knelt in the empty church for long hours: during their prayers and chanting, Our Lady appeared in front of them. The several Marian shrines in China serve as a constant reminder to the people of

Mary's loving and motherly protection.

Mary knows that the cause of all the worst human tragedies is sin, and has always demonstrated a deep concern of sinners in order to prevent them from ending up in hell. The presence of sin, of suffering and of death in the world still continues. St. Paul, in the second reading of today, underlines that "just through one person sin entered the world...". However, he soon adds: "so how much more the abundance of grace and the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ..."

Mary, as soon as she understood that the salvific plan of God included the coming of Jesus to bring to all human beings salvation and reconciliation with the Father, soon agreed with Her Yes: "I am the handmaid of the Lord." Then, She accompanied Jesus through His whole life, sharing discomforts, joys and sorrows, until reaching the foot of the cross, and suffering the passion with Him. Only in this way, She knew that the salvation of the world could be achieved. For this, She requested the three little Fatima witnesses: "Are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and of supplication for the conversion of sinners, as well as for all the offenses to my Immaculate Heart?"

The same request, the Virgin Mary now addresses to each one of us: She invites us to conversion and to commit ourselves to prayer and to make sacrifices in order to attain the salvation of all. The three young witnesses accepted the invitation of our heavenly Mother with their whole being and committed themselves to prayer, sacrifices and fasting. What is our decision?

Mary, as a loving Mother, also feels compassion for all human suffering, and She keeps close to us when we suffer. To the requests for healing received by Lucia from sick people and submitted to Mary during the apparitions, She responded by inviting them to conversion and to pray the Rosary, adding the promise to be healed 'during the year'. But, even if there was not the miracle of a physical healing, the Virgin Mary always remains at the side of the sick person. She supported the three young witnesses during the tests and pains they were subjected to: accusation and calumnies of being impostors, threats, imprisonment, interrogations... Although still children, they succeeded in resisting to everything and maintaining the secrets entrusted to them by the Virgin Mary. They were living within the divine light that irradiated from Her. Mary remains close to all sick people in order to give them encouragement and to invite them to join the Lord in order to share His redeeming passion, as She had done at the foot of the Cross. Our loving Mother is now here with us, She is at the side of each of you, brothers and sisters, who are sick; She supports and console you. Keep united with Her and She will join you to our Saviour. Let us keep under Her mantle of light. Let us renew our

trust in Her intercession and in Her concern for each one of us: She will assure us that we shall be among “those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification and come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ.”

Such a hope should be the spring of life for all of us! A hope that should always sustain us, especially during difficulties and suffering. Let us walk, therefore, under the mantle of Mary, our loving heavenly Mother!