

Simplified glossary of religious terms



Living Fatima at WYD

Shrine of Fatima Press Center

ACOLYTE

The acolyte is one who serves the altar and the needs of the ordained ministers (Bishop, Priest and Deacon) in the course of liturgical celebrations.

ALB

Liturgical vestment of white cloth, which covers the whole body down to the feet. It is the vestment common to all those who assume any service in the liturgical celebration (bishops, priests, deacons, altar servers...).

ALJUSTREL

Village where the three seers of Fatima were born and lived (about 3 km from Cova da Iria).

ALTAR

The table at the centre of the Christian celebration space. It is on the altar, lit by candles, that the bread and wine are placed for the celebration of the Mass. It is a symbol of Christ, which is why it is greeted with a kiss at the beginning and end of Mass.

The term altar is sometimes used to refer to the entire presbytery.

AMBO

The place from which the Word of God is proclaimed and sometimes the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful (or the Universal Prayer).

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION

A pontifical document dealing with doctrinal, disciplinary, governmental, or other matters. Normally, after a Synod, the Pope issues an apostolic exhortation to concretise the synodal reflection in the Church.

APOSTOLIC NUNCIO

Designation given to the ambassador, a bishop, of the Apostolic See to a State.

APOSTOLIC SEE (OR HOLY SEE)

This designates the organs of pontifical government and expresses the jurisdiction of the Pope, Bishop of Rome, over the whole Church. As a subject of international law, the Apostolic See has diplomatic representations in numerous countries and has representatives (permanent or occasional) in various international institutions.

Note: do not confuse Apostolic See or Holy See, an expression in the field of international law, with the Vatican, a term designating the city-state of the same name.

APPARITIONS OF FATIMA

The Apparitions of Fatima, which occurred in 1917, are the founding events of the Fatima phenomenon. The term “apparitions” is used to express the experience of three children – the three seers Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta – who testified to having seen the Angel and Our Lady.

ARCHBISHOP

Metropolitan Bishop who is at the head of an Archdiocese (in Portugal there are three: Braga, Évora and Lisbon. Since Lisbon is called a Patriarchate, its archbishop is called Patriarch). Archdioceses oversee an ecclesiastical province composed of several suffragan dioceses.

BASILICA

It is a title granted to some churches that stand out for their historical importance, their special dignity or for being a pilgrimage destination. There are two in Fatima: the oldest, Our Lady of the Rosary (1953), and the newly built Holy Trinity (2007).

BEATIFICATION

Recognition by the Church that the person, whose heroic virtues have been recognised, is in Heaven, in a state of beatitude – happiness with God – and can intercede for those who turn to him or her in prayer. Beatification also affirms that his or her life is exemplary and can be imitated. It is an intermediate step towards canonisation.

BISHOP

In the Catholic Church, the Bishop is the successor of the Apostles, chosen by Jesus Christ as the foundation of his Church. By his ordination, the Bishop receives the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, and thus has the threefold

mission of teaching the Word of God, sanctifying through the celebration of the sacraments of the Church, and governing in the name of Christ “the portion of the People of God entrusted to him”, specifically, a diocese.

BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

Institution that groups together the bishops of a nation or a given territory. The organs of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference are as follows:

Plenary Assembly

composed of all diocesan bishops, auxiliary or coadjutor bishops, as well as bishops emeritus, who have no duty to participate.

Permanent Council

composed of a president (the president of the bishops' conference), a vice-president, four members and a secretary.

Episcopal Commissions

BOOK OF THE GOSPELS

This book contains the Gospels for the three liturgical years (A, B and C), both for ordinary Sundays and for liturgical solemnities and feasts. Before being taken to the ambo, it is placed on the altar.

CANDLE BEARER

The acolyte who carries the candlestick with the lighted candle, opening a procession with his partner, next to the cross and the Book of the Gospels, or who accompanies the deacon when he proclaims the Gospel.

CANONISATION

A term used by the Catholic Church that refers to the act of attributing the status of Saint to someone who was already recognised as Blessed. Canonisation allows the universal cult of the saints in question. Canonisation completes the process after the previous step of beatification.

CHASUBLE

Liturgical vestment that the bishop or priest wears over the alb and stole in the celebration of Mass. On occasions when the cult of Our Lady is celebrated, this liturgical vestment is white, as is the case at Fatima every 12th and 13th of the month.

CHAPEL

The Little Chapel of the Apparitions is the heart of the Shrine. It was erected on the spot where Our Lady spoke to the Little Shepherds. Five apparitions of Our Lady took place there (13 May, June, July, September and October). It was built in 1919.

The current portico was inaugurated during the visit of Pope John Paul II on 12/13 May 1982.

COLONNADE

The architectural complex is the work of António Lino. The colonnade consists of 200 columns and half-columns and 14 altars. On the colonnade, there are 17 images of saints.

COMMUNION

The act of receiving the bread and/or wine – the Body and/or Blood of Christ – consecrated in the celebration of the Mass.

CONCELEBRATION

Celebration of Mass in which several priests, called concelebrants, participate, although only one presides. Concelebration emphasises the communion of the priests with each other and with the people and their participation in the one priesthood of Christ.

CONCLAVE

Assembly of cardinals, who meet, without any contact with the outside world, to elect the Pope.

CONCORDAT

An international treaty between the Holy See and a state, usually for the purpose of securing the rights of the

Catholic Church in that state. Portugal is signatory to the Concordats of 1940 and 2004.

CONSECRATION

It is the moment at Mass when, at the words of Jesus Christ at the Last Supper, spoken in his memory by the priest who presides, the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

The term is used in other religious circumstances to express the total dedication or entrustment/surrender that one makes of oneself to God or, as is common in Fatima, the Consecration to Our Lady.

CONSISTORY

Assembly of cardinals presided over by the Pope.

CREDENCE TABLE

A small table placed within the sanctuary of a church for the purpose of holding the liturgical objects necessary for the celebration of Mass.

CROSIER (STAFF)

The insignia used by bishops is in the shape of a shepherd's staff, symbolising pastoral care and solicitude for the Church. In the case of the Pope, he does not use a crosier but the papal ferula, a pastoral staff topped by the cross.

DEACON

First degree of the sacrament of Holy Orders. Deacons may preside at baptisms, weddings, funerals, and celebrations of the Word, but not at Mass; they also do not confess.

DICASTERY

An organisation of the Roman Curia usually presided over by a Cardinal or Archbishop, and equivalent to a ministry of state governments.

ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

A meeting of the College of Bishops convened and presided over by the Pope or his delegate. It is also up to the Pope

to determine the matters to be dealt with and to establish the order to be followed. Conciliar documents have binding force only when they are approved, together with the Council Fathers, by the Pope, and are confirmed and ordered to be promulgated by him.

The last two Ecumenical Councils were: First Vatican Council (1869-1870, the 20th ecumenical council in the history of the Church);

Second Vatican Council (1962-1965, the 21st ecumenical council in the history of the Church).

ECUMENISM

The term is used to refer to efforts towards unity between Christian churches; in a broader sense, it is used to refer to the search for unity between religions, in which case the more correct expression would be “interreligious dialogue”.

EMINENCE

Honorific title of cardinals, instituted in 1630 by decree of Urban VIII, for the institutional form of addressing cardinals, “Your Eminence” is used.

ENCYCLICAL

It is a letter addressed by the Pope to all bishops and Catholics of the world, or just of a region. It is designated by the first words of the Latin text with which it begins. It is the most important form a papal document can take.

EPISCOPAL RING

The insignia worn by the bishop on the ring finger of his right hand represents the bond of spousal fidelity between the bishop and the Church of which he is pastor. The Pope has the so-called “Ring of the Fisherman”, with which he seals documents, and which is destroyed at his death.

EUCHARIST - EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

It means the same as Mass. It is the most important Christian sacrament because it is par excellence the sacrament of the presence of Jesus Christ. In it, Jesus

Christ becomes truly present in the consecrated bread and wine.

Note: to refer to it, the verb “celebrate” should be used, not “make”, or “realise”, or “give”; when referring to the celebrant presiding over the assembly, the verb “preside” should be used, specifically, “preside at the Eucharist”, or “preside at the Eucharistic Celebration”.

HOMILY

It designates a part of the Mass or Eucharist; it is the form of preaching that has its own specific context of a liturgical celebration. It takes place after the proclamation of the Word of God, usually by the one who presides. As a form of preaching, it is connected to the biblical readings and their actualisation in the present circumstances of each community.

Note: to refer to it, you should use the verbs “to deliver”, not “to say”, or “to give”.

LAYMAN/LAYWOMAN

The word probably derives from the word laos (people) joined to the suffix ikós (which designates a social category). It designates a member of the People of God, the ordinary faithful, not belonging to the hierarchy or to any institute of consecrated life.

Note: it should not be confused with the adjective “secular”, which refers to secularism, not to lay status in the Church.

LITURGICAL UTENSILS

Generic designation for objects that serve divine worship, usually made of noble materials. The most important are:

Pyx or ciborium

container for the preservation and distribution of the consecrated hosts.

Chalice

container in which the wine is consecrated during Mass.

Cruets

containers used to hold the water and

wine used in the celebration of the Mass.

Paten

small dish used to hold the hosts made of bread that are consecrated during Mass.

Corporal

square-shaped cloth on which the chalice with the wine and the paten with the hosts are placed on the altar for consecration at Mass.

Thurible

object suitable for burning incense during liturgical celebrations (and used in incensation).

Boat

container, usually in the shape of a boat, in which incense is presented to be placed on the thurible.

LITURGY

A comprehensive concept to designate all the celebrations that constitute the official worship of the Church.

MAGISTERIUM

Since the 19th century but expressing a reality that has existed since the beginning of the Church, this term designates the exercise of the mission of teaching, as well as the very contents of the Church's doctrine. The magisterium (from the Latin: magister - teacher) is expressed through the authority proper to the Pope and the bishops.

A distinction is generally made between ordinary magisterium and extraordinary magisterium. By the first expression is meant the normal way in which doctrine is proclaimed, received, and lived in the Church, that is, the daily pastoral teaching of the Pope and the Bishops. By the second expression is meant a solemn exercise of the magisterium, in cases of necessity, through a Council or eventually when the Pope declares definitive an affirmation which derives from the faith of the Church, as in the case of dogmas.

MASS

The same as Eucharistic Celebration. It consists of two main parts, closely united:

The Liturgy of the Word

is a common part of many Christian celebrations, consisting essentially of the proclamation of one or more texts of sacred Scripture;

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

a specific part of the sacrament of the Eucharist, is the great moment of thanksgiving during which the Bread and Wine are consecrated and become the Body and Blood of Christ and then distributed to the faithful at Communion.

Note

to refer to it, the verb "celebrate" should be used, not "to do", or "to say", or "to perform", or "to give"; when referring to the celebrant presiding over the assembly, the verb "preside" should be used, specifically, "to preside at Mass".

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Responsible for organising liturgical celebrations. Accompanies the presider of the celebration and coordinates the action of the various participants.

MITRE

A tall, wide cap, slit at the top, with two lappets (flaps) falling over the back; it is worn at liturgical celebrations by the pope, bishops and other prelates. This insignia reminds those who wear it, and all the faithful, that the gift of holiness should shine in them.

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL

An organ of the Roman Curia with advisory and administrative functions for a specific area of ecclesiastical intervention (e.g. "for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts", "for Interreligious Dialogue", "for Culture", etc.).

PONTIFICAL INSIGNIA

Insignia worn by the bishop to indicate his dignity and ministry. The pontifical insignia are: the ring, the crosier, the

mitre and the pectoral cross. In addition, the pallium is received by archbishops directly from the Apostolic See.

PONTIFICAL LEGATE

A person sent in the name and by mandate of the Pope as his representative to States, international organisations, or Catholic communities.

PRAYER AREA

Although not covered, the Prayer Area is like a Church that has welcomed millions and millions of pilgrims from all parts of the world for over a hundred years to praise the Lord and His Mother. As a Church, it has a Cross, an Altar, a Way of the Cross and images of Saints.

PRELATE

It usually designates someone who has power of jurisdiction (Bishops, Abbots...) in the Church. It can also be an honorary title granted by the Pope. It is used to designate a bishop (not a priest).

PRESBYTER

Second degree of the sacrament of orders. A presbyter is the same as a priest.

PROCESSION

Organised community procession carried out in a celebratory context. In Fatima, there are some particularly significant processions:

Candlelight Procession

A nocturnal procession with the image of the Virgin, which leaves the Little Chapel after the praying of the Rosary. The image crosses the Prayer Area accompanied by the faithful, with lighted candles in hand.

Procession of Silence

on the great anniversary pilgrimages, a nocturnal procession in which the Statue of Our Lady, departing from the presbytery of the Prayer Area after the Vigil, returns to the Chapel of the Apparitions, while the assembly remains in complete silence;

Farewell procession

procession with the Statue of our Lady, from the presbytery of the Prayer Area to the Chapel of the Apparitions, characterised by the waving of white handkerchiefs;

Eucharistic procession or procession with the Blessed Sacrament

a form of Eucharistic devotion which consists in carrying in procession, solemnly exposed in a monstrance, the bread consecrated in the Eucharist, the sacramental presence of Jesus Christ.

RECTOR

The name given to the head of some types of educational institutions and may also designate the priest in charge of a seminary or a shrine, basilica or cathedral. The word has its origins in the Latin rector (one who directs, one who governs).

REVEREND

Honorific title or designation given to members of the clergy and religious orders. When addressing a bishop one says, "Your Excellency"; when addressing a cardinal one says, "Your Eminence".

ROMAN DICASTERY

Name given to departments of the Roman Curia that help the Pope govern the universal Church (similar to the "Ministries" of a government).

ROMAN CURIA

The group of dicasteries and organisations that support the Pope in governing the universal Church.

ROSARY

The Rosary is the name given to the prayer composed of 15 Our Fathers and 150 Hail Marys, grouped in mysteries, related to the earthly life of Jesus Christ and his Mother, the Virgin Mary.

A popular form of Marian devotion, the Rosary is divided into three parts, each with five mysteries.

Each mystery or "decade" is composed

of its enunciation (Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and, since 2002, Luminous mysteries), recitation of the Our Father and ten Hail Marys, ending with the Glory Be and other ejaculatory prayers (short prayers of praise and supplication).

At the end of the five decades of each mystery, three Hail Marys are prayed for the Pope's intentions and the Salve Regina.

SACRAMENT HOUSE

Place reserved in churches where consecrated hosts are kept. It is also called the tabernacle.

SECULAR

It designates the member of the People of God, the ordinary faithful, not belonging to the hierarchy or to any institute of consecrated religious life.

Note: this should not be confused with the adjective "lay", which refers to laicism, not to the status in the Church.

FRB

It designates a member of the People of God, one of the ordinary faithful, not belonging to the hierarchy or to any institute of consecrated religious life. More commonly, a secular is referred to as a layman or laywoman or more simply as a layperson.

Note: this should not be confused with the now more common meaning of "secular", which refers to attitudes, activities or other things that have no religious or spiritual basis and not to one's status in the Church.

SECULARISM

A doctrinal component present in several modern ideologies, secularism aims, globally, to relegate the religious phenomenon to the private sphere and the level of individual conscience, not recognising its relevance to society and culture, nor allowing any kind of presence, influence or manifestation in social ethics and public life.

While rejecting secularism, the Catholic Church nevertheless recognises the rightful autonomy of the realities of the world, of development and of social life,

such as science, economics, and politics, as well as the separation of Church and State.

STOLE

Liturgical vestment in the form of a wide strip of cloth worn over the alb, worn by bishops and priests around the neck hanging over the chest and by deacons from the left shoulder to the waist diagonally. Its colour varies according to the liturgical occasion. In the cult of Our Lady, it is white.

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

The Synod of Bishops is the assembly of bishops chosen from different regions of the world, who meet to assist the Roman Pontiff in certain matters.

The Pope convokes the Synod as often as he sees fit, designating the place of meeting, ratifying those elected, determining the subjects to be dealt with. The Pope also presides over the Synod, either personally or through a delegate.

The Catholic Church is undergoing a Synodal Journey, which began in 2021 and will conclude in 2023-2024, convened by Pope Francis to discuss the renewal of the Church under the motto "Communion, Participation and Mission". The first session of the Synod's General Assembly will take place in Rome from 4 to 29 October, with a second session planned for 2024.

Throughout this period of preparation, the Bishops' Conferences around the world are expected to produce summary documents on the situation of the Catholic Church in their areas, based on the meetings and documents of reflection and proposals drawn up in each diocese.

TABERNACLE

Place reserved in churches where consecrated hosts are kept.

TERÇO

Portuguese term referring to one third of the rosary (5 decades), a traditional form of popular Marian devotion that dates back to the Middle Ages and consists of meditating on the mysteries of Christ

and Mary while praying fifty Hail Marys. In 2002, Pope St John Paul II added to this prayer the five luminous mysteries, introduced after the Joyful and before the Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries. At Fatima, Our Lady insistently asked the little shepherds to pray the terço or rosary every day, offering this prayer for peace in the world.

WORLD YOUTH DAY

World Youth Day (WYD) Lisbon 2023, the reason behind Pope Francis' trip to Fatima on 5 August, is an international meeting of young people with the Supreme Pontiff to pray together and discuss a range of topics.

Between 1 and 6 August, WYD Lisbon, initially planned for 2022 and postponed due to the pandemic, will welcome nearly one million young pilgrims from all over the world.

It is tradition for the Pope to visit a Marian shrine at each edition of the WYD and the Pontiff has announced his intention to visit Fatima.

On Friday, immediately before leaving for Fatima, Pope Francis will preside over the Way of the Cross in Lisbon and on Saturday, on his return to Lisbon, he will attend the vigil.

The theme of WYD Lisbon 2023 is "Mary arose and went with haste", a passage from the Gospel according to St Luke (Lk 1:39).

World Youth Day is an initiative created by St John Paul II in 1984, when he gathered 250,000 pilgrims in Rome to celebrate the Jubilee of Youth. The meeting was repeated the following year and at the end of 1985 the Pope announced the establishment of World Youth Day.

WYD Lisbon is the 16th edition of this meeting. At the end, the city that will host the next edition will be announced.

ZUCCHETTO

Small cap in the shape of a skullcap with which the Pope, bishops and other ecclesiastical dignitaries cover the top of their heads.