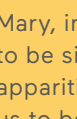
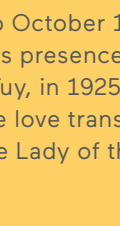


# Young Pilgrim Itinerary

Shrine



ISANTUÁRIO DE FÁTIMA  
SHRINE OF FATIMA



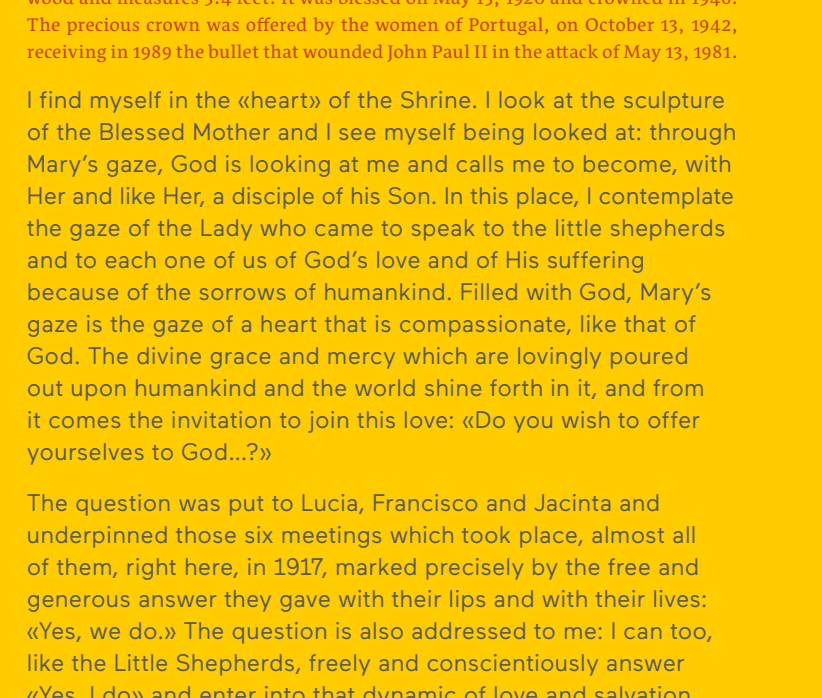
JMJ  
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2023

## Fatima Event

We are living in times of war, the first on a world scale. Bloodied humankind is facing the consequences of the desire for power, of the selfishness that kills, of the lack of love. This is how the world finds itself when the apparitions of Fatima take place. In the shadows of despair a glimmer of hope bursts forth: God shows himself present to human history. This is what Fatima is fundamentally: the happening of an encounter lived and witnessed by three children, Jacinta, Francisco and Lucia, who accept to offer themselves voluntarily out of love, loving God and others with a burning desire that all may welcome salvation. First the Angel, in the spring, summer and autumn of 1916, then Mary, in the months from May to October 1917, show themselves to be signs and advocates of this presence of God, whom the apparitions of the Pontevedra and Tuy, in 1925 and 1929, will remind us to be the merciful God whose love transforms hearts, bathing them in light like the heart of the Lady of the Immaculate Heart.

## The Message of Fatima

The message of Fatima is essentially a reflection of the Gospel. It is the Gospel recalled and said again and again, in every age, as a proclamation of salvation and an invitation to configure one's life to Jesus. It is a reminder for me, for you, for our days, of how much Jesus taught by means of his life and his words. «Repent and believe the good news»: here is the core of Jesus' preaching, of the proclamation of the Kingdom. At Fatima, the renewed call to welcome salvation comes about through the invitation to turn our hearts to God (this is the meaning of *adoration and conversion*), to live in generous self-offering, out of love, like Jesus (this is what *sacrifice* means), and to pray hard, for others and for the world (specifically through the prayer of the Rosary for peace). Here, as at the wedding feast at Cana, Mary points to her Son, whose mysteries fill her *immaculate heart*, without stain and full of light, and asks: «Do whatever He tells you».



## 1 | Little Chapel of the Apparitions

On October 13, 1917, Our Lady told the little seers: «build a chapel here in My honour, for I am the Lady of the Rosary». The Little Chapel of the Apparitions was built between April 28 and June 15, 1919, in reply to this request. Mass was celebrated there for the first time on October 13, 1921. In the early hours of March 6, 1922, a dynamite bombing partially destroyed the small chapel, which was restored and re-inaugurated on January 13, 1923. The Little Chapel of the Apparitions maintains its overall structure and original features, characteristic of a popular hermitage. The base on which the statue of Our Lady stands marks the spot where the small holm oak tree of the apparitions used to stand. The present porch was inaugurated in May 1982, on the occasion of the first visit of Pope John Paul II to the Shrine. The Statue of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima venerated in the Chapel is made of wood and measures 3.4 feet. It was blessed on May 13, 1920 and crowned in 1946. The precious crown was offered by the women of Portugal, on October 13, 1942, receiving in 1989 the bullet that wounded John Paul II in the attack of May 13, 1981.

I find myself in the «heart» of the Shrine. I look at the sculpture of the Blessed Mother and I see myself being looked at: through Mary's gaze, God is looking at me and calls me to become, with Her and like Her, a disciple of his Son. In this place, I contemplate the gaze of the Lady who came to speak to the little shepherds and to each one of us of God's love and of His suffering because of the sorrows of humankind. Filled with God, Mary's gaze is the gaze of a heart that is compassionate, like that of God. The divine grace and mercy which are lovingly poured out upon humankind and the world shine forth in it, and from it comes the invitation to join this love: «Do you wish to offer yourselves to God...?»

The question was put to Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta and underpinned those six meetings which took place, almost all of them, right here, in 1917, marked precisely by the free and generous answer they gave with their lips and with their lives: «Yes, we do.» The question is also addressed to me: I can too, like the Little Shepherds, freely and conscientiously answer «Yes, I do» and enter into that dynamic of love and salvation.

## 2 | Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima

The Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima was built between 1928 and 1953, according to a project designed by Gerardus van Krieken and completed by João Antunes. With characteristic features of the architectural aesthetics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, of neo-baroque style, it has a large nave flanked by side chapels that support the wide upper gallery from which the vaulting rises. These features are reinforced by the pseudotranssept that precedes the presbytery, as well as the very deep chancel, with an altarpiece of great dimensions. Of the sculpture and painting elements, the stained glass windows (main chapel and body of the church) and the painting on canvas, the statuary and the elements of the presbytery, restructured in 2016, date in which the great pipe organ (existing since 1952) was also restored, stand out.

Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto are buried in this Basilica, respectively since 1952 and 1951, and the Servant of God Lucia de Jesus, since 2006. Over the tomb of Saint Jacinta there is a sculpture representing the little shepherdess whose desire was to imitate Jesus in caring for his sheep; above the tomb of Saint Francisco, there is a sculpture alluding to the shepherd boy with a free and contemplative heart. Both date from 2000, the year of the beatification of the two of them.

Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta made the experience of encountering God, to which the Angel and Our Lady of the Rosary had initiated them, radically bear fruit in their lives. They grew so much in friendship and intimacy with God that they fully achieved what they were called to do: to open the centre of their lives to God and to place themselves at the service of His mercy and salvation for all, taking Jesus himself as the focus of his grace and giving expression to the desire that God «may be all in all» (1 Cor 15:28).

I am invited to pause before the tomb of the Little Shepherds. Called by their witness of faith, I feel called, just like them, to welcome the gift of God and of others in my life, making myself also a gift. Through the intercession of St. Francisco and St. Jacinta, I ask the Lord for the strength to grow in this inner readiness.

## 3 | Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity

The Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity was designed by the Greek architect Alexandros Tombazis, and its first stone was blessed on 6 June 2004, the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity, and it was dedicated on 12 October 2007. It is circular in shape, 410 feet in diameter, with no intermediate supports; it is supported by two 598 feet beams, with a free span of 262 feet and a maximum internal height of 69 feet; the external height of the building is 59 feet. It has more than 8500 seats, thus allowing a more dignified and comfortable welcome to the pilgrims. In front of the altar is a small stone from the tomb of the apostle Peter, a visible sign of communion with the universal Church and expressive of the connection of Fatima and its message to the Holy Father. The presbytery panel is a mosaic with about 5381 square feet, made of gilded and hand-moulded terracotta, in which the Celestial Jerusalem is represented. The sculpture of Our Lady of Fatima depicts a young Mary with open arms, letting us see her immaculate heart and the rosary, and was sculpted in white Carrara marble. The large crucifix on the altar is made of bronze.

Surrounded by the grandeur of this temple, I contemplate the luminous representation of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God in which those who have allowed themselves to be clothed by Him in baptismal whiteness dwell. It is this whiteness which also pervades the beautiful image of Mary, whose heart transpires the clarity of God's light and grace. The Little Shepherds, too, let their hearts and their lives be immersed in this rebuilding light.

From the space size to the interiority of my inmost being, I recognize myself as called to let myself be transformed by the same light that comes from on high, by the same transfiguring grace, so as to be able to say with St Paul: «It is Christ who lives in me» (Gal 2:20).

The Sacrament of Reconciliation nourishes my friendship with God, helps me to live in Him and enables me to let Him live in me. If I feel called to do so, I go to a priest for confession; I can do this in the Reconciliation Chapels in the underground floor of this Basilica. Eucharistic adoration also deepens this friendship; I can meet the «hidden Jesus» in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, on the same underground floor.

## 4 | High Cross

The High Cross was designed by Robert Schad, is made of steel and is 111 feet high and 55 feet wide. It was installed in 2007, replacing a previous one, 88 feet high, erected to mark the closing of the Holy Year of 1950-1951, which is now in the Shrine of Christ the King in Almada (Diocese of Setúbal). Standing at the top of the Prayer Area of the Shrine, it stands out as one of the most iconic landmarks of Cova da Iria.

«Then Jesus, seeing His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing there, said to the mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!"» (Jn 19:26-27). The High Cross presides over the place where the mother of Jesus came to speak to humankind of God's love and of his desire for salvation for all, that salvation which the Son offered with the total gift of His life, out of love, to the extreme, even to the cross.

At Fatima, sacrifice speaks to us of this adhesion to Jesus' way of living: in fact, it is an expression of love for God and for one's neighbour, lived in total self-giving. Love is the sole reason for the sacrifice, just as it was the sole reason for the salvation accomplished by Christ and in Christ. We are thus attuned to His self-giving, participating in the same redemptive mission. At the foot of this Cross, I recognize myself as the disciple to whom Jesus entrusts His mother, to whom He entrusted me as son. I am called to assume and live this commitment as disciple and son, likening my heart and my love to theirs.

## 5 | Little Chapel of the Apparitions

I return to this place where the encounter between Mary and the Little Shepherds took place. The mother of Jesus, who appeared here, invites me to look at her Son, whose mysteries dwell in Her immaculate heart filling it with Easter light. It is this light of Christ, represented in the candle which I contemplate here, which each night is diffused into the hands of every pilgrim who takes part in the prayer of the Rosary and the procession of candles, illuminating him or her from within, right down to the heart.

I too am called to let this light descend into my heart, making it like that of Christ. In this way I will become, as His disciple, «salt of the earth» and «light of the world» (Mt 5:13-14).

Living Fatima at WYD



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