



The Holy See

LETTER FROM POPE JOHN PAUL II TO THE BISHOP OF FATIMA

*To my Venerable Brother
Bishop Serafim de Sousa
Ferreira e Silva
of Leiria-Fatima, Portugal*

“And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rv 12:1).

These words of Revelation turn my thoughts to the 80th anniversary of the first apparition of the Virgin Mary to the three young shepherds in Cova da Iria. The message which the Blessed Virgin addressed to humanity on that occasion still resounds with all its prophetic force, inviting everyone to pray insistently, and to commit himself generously to making reparation for his own sins and those of the whole world.

In thinking of all the pilgrims who will be gathering at the Shrine of Fatima on this occasion to express their devotion to Mary and their firm decision to respond to her motherly concern, I would like to join in everyone's prayer to implore the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, who gave the world the Incarnate Word and thus was so closely involved in his redemptive work. May she who “advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the Cross ... enduring with her only-begotten Son the intensity of his suffering and associating herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart” (*Lumen gentium*, n. 58), remain at her children's side at the end of this millennium, to sustain them on their journey to the historic goal of the Great Jubilee.

In the difficulties of the present moment we turn to her with trust, asking her to guard our way as we follow in Christ's footsteps. May Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, continue to show herself a Mother to all. “May the unassuming Young Woman of Nazareth, who 2,000 years ago offered to the world the Incarnate Word, lead the men and women of the new millennium towards the One

who is 'the true light that enlightens every man' (Jn 1:19)" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 59).

With these wishes, I send my affectionate greeting to you, Venerable Brother, asking you to convey it to all who go on devout pilgrimage to the Shrine of Fatima, with a special thought for those who are suffering in body and spirit. As I entrust the Church's needs in this blessed land and in every part of the world to the Blessed Virgin, I impart to all my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of abundant heavenly gifts.

From the Vatican, 12 May 1997.

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