

Homily – Feast of Our Lady of Fatima

May 13, 2017

On hundred years ago today, Our Lady first appeared to three children shepherding their sheep in Fatima. Her message was the urgent need for repentance, conversion, and prayer. There was a special insistence on the value of praying the rosary while meditating on the most important events in the lives of Jesus and Mary. Today, in Portugal, Pope Francis canonized two of the original recipients of this message: Saints Francisco and Jacinto Marto.

In today's gospel Jesus tells his disciples – and us – “whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater one than these . . .” In effect, the Lord tells his disciples – the Church – to carry on his mission and ministry. As missionary disciples, we are all responsible for this because of our baptism and confirmation. Three shepherd children are held up for our veneration today – not only by honoring them but also by imitating their lives. They themselves grew in holiness because of their faith and prayer. Remember also that the “little one” Juan Diego (although not a child) was the one to whom Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared. Great things can come from people of simple but unwavering faith.

Today, you and I are challenged to listen to the words of Jesus and the message of Our Lady -- not merely to listen but also to **ponder them, integrate them into our lives, and act on them.**

Pope Francis said last week that ‘the encounter with Our Lady was for [the three children] an experience of grace that inspired their love for Jesus. As tender and good teacher, Mary . . . led them to savor God as the most beautiful reality of human existence.’ The Holy Father added that “the relationship with Our Lady helps us to have a good relationship with the Church; both of them are Mothers.”

Today, in light of the very dangerous situations throughout the world, we are urged to pray for peace. War is not the answer to our problems! Diplomacy and dialogue are essential. What can you and I do? Support those who work for peace – and pray the rosary for peace as the Virgin of Fatima asked us to do.

We are all challenged to recognize our personal and communal need for repentance and conversion. We need to open our minds and hearts to the word of God. Mary, our dear Mother and the Mother of the Church, will help us become true missionary disciples of her beloved Son, doing great things in his name through faith.