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Fatima's message is that following Gospel is path to peace, pope says

By **Catholic News Service**

FATIMA, Portugal (CNS) -- The heart of the message of Fatima is that following the Gospel is the path to authentic peace, Pope Benedict XVI said in a message broadcast Oct. 14 at the Marian shrine.

Marking the 90th anniversary of the last apparition of Our Lady of Fatima to three young children, Pope Benedict said the shrine continues to echo Mary's call to "her children to live their baptismal consecration in every moment of their existence."

"She is the refuge and the path that leads to God," he told thousands of pilgrims at the shrine for an anniversary Mass and the dedication of a new shrine church.

During his midday Angelus prayer at the Vatican, the pope asked Mary to give "all Christians the gift of true conversion so that the perennial Gospel message, which shows humanity the path to authentic peace, would be proclaimed and witnessed to with coherence and fidelity."

Cardinal Bertone marked the 90th anniversary of the last Fatima apparition with a Mass Oct. 13, then dedicated the new church Oct. 14.

In his homily Oct. 13, Cardinal Bertone told an estimated 300,000 people gathered at the shrine that while the Fatima apparitions marked a "supernatural" sign from God "it would be foolish to continue to ask indefinitely" for more outward signs of God's presence when the most effective signs of God's love "are interior signs: the change of hearts touched by the grace of God."

"Our Lady did not ask to be admired, invoked or venerated," he said. "She asked people to entrust themselves to her. She asked that the hearts of individuals, nations and all humanity would be consecrated to her."

Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, he said, is a vow to follow her example in doing God's will, in following Jesus and in remaining faithful to him even in times of trial.

Cardinal Bertone said each individual Christian has a role to play in bringing faith to the world and in defending the Gospel values that the world needs for peace and true progress.

"Unfortunately, many people think that victory depends essentially on the talent, ability or value of those who write in newspapers, those who speak at meetings, those who have a more visible role and that it is enough to encourage and applaud these leaders like one encourages and applauds players in a stadium," Cardinal Bertone said.

But, he said, that would be like a soldier thinking that victory in war depended only on the general.

As Mary's choice of appearing at Fatima to three illiterate children demonstrates, "heaven requires the effort, even seemingly insignificant, of the most humble servants," he said.

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