

Dear Responsible Couple
MARIA BERTA and JOSÉ MOURA SOARES
of TOL's International Leading Team

It is with pleasure that I welcome the request for blessing all the participants of the 12th International Gathering of Teams Our Lady which takes place in Fatima from July 16 to 21, 2018, under the theme "The Prodigal Son". Pope Francis greets you fraternally, reminding everyone that the Church condemns sin, because it must speak the truth, but at the same time embraces the sinner who recognizes himself as such, approaches Him and speaks about God's infinite mercy. What great hope and what joy the parable of the Prodigal Son brings us! It does not only speak to us of welcome or forgiveness, but also of "feast" for the son who returns. (Luke 15:32).

The Holy Father invites us to recognize ourselves in this lost son who returns to the Father. This Father who never tires of hugging him and restoring his greatness as a son. Let us be moved by such great kindness and let our hearts speak: It is true, Lord! I am a sinner. I feel as such and I'm sure of being it. I'm lost. In a thousand ways, I have shunned your love, but here I am to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again Lord! Take me, once more, into your redeeming arms (*Evangelii Gaudium* 3)

These open arms on the cross prove that no one is excluded from the Father's love, from his mercy. He does not want to lose anyone, moreover, He does not resign himself to losing anyone: husband or wife, parents or children ... You are well aware, that in the eyes of Jesus, nobody is definitely lost, there are only people who need to be found, and, He pushes us to go out looking for them. For if we want to find the Lord, we must seek Him where He wants to meet us and not where we want to find Him; the Shepherd can only be found where the sheep is lost. While informing us that He leaves in search of the lost sheep, He encourages the ninety-nine to participate in the reunification of the flock. And if that happens, it's not just the sheep that He carries on the shoulders and takes home that will make a party with friends and neighbors, but also the whole flock. (Luke 15:4-6).

Thus "taken by the hand by the Virgin Mary and under her gaze, we can joyfully sing the Lord's mercies. We can say to Him: My soul is singing for you Lord! The mercy you have used with your saints and with all your faithful people has spread to me. Because of the pride of my heart, I lived focused on my ambitions and my interests, but I did not occupy any throne, Lord! The only possibility of delight that I have is that your Mother takes me in her arms, covers me with her cloak and places me near your Heart".

(Pope Francis' Message: introduction to the Marian Vigil, Fátima 12/5/2017).

Thus, consecrated to the merciful hearts of Jesus and Mary, you can count on their grace, just as, a hundred years ago, through the Virgin Mother of God, grace shone in the eyes of the three little shepherds and shaped their lives with the purpose of "saving sinners". Wishing that this passion of the little shepherds will seize spouses, parents, children, members of Teams of Our Lady spread around the world, Pope Francis grants you, as well as Spiritual, Retreats and Gatherings Counsellors, the implored Apostolic Blessing.

Vatican, June 13, 2018

The substitute of His Holiness' Secretary of State