

Reflections on World Youth Day 2023

REFLECTIONS FROM ISAAC

The highlight of the trip for me was the visit to Fatima. It is a very beautiful place filled with old religious statues and artifacts. We went on the Tuesday, and although the weather wasn't the greatest, there was lots to see and do such as the underground chapel. The museum was also amazing, where we saw the crown of our Lady of Fatima. My best memory of the trip was the evening vigil. We slept under the stars in a rocky field one night - everyone was there - 1.5 million people! During the late evening, after the Pope had arrived, there was adoration of the Blessed Sacrament during the sunset, which was beautiful and peaceful. It benefited my faith because at many points of the trip I felt at peace with my faith and more connected - especially during the night vigil. I would like to thank all the parishioners for keeping us all in their thoughts and prayers.

REFLECTIONS FROM LEWIS

The highlight of the pilgrimage was hard to choose but the day trip to Fatima was one of them because the holy grounds were quite special and the history was fascinating with the museum and tour guide showing us very interesting facts and pieces like the crown which is on Our lady's statue that was made in the 1940s. Many years later, the bullet that miraculously did not kill pope John Paul II was fitted perfectly on the top of the crown - which is just incredible that it did.

My best memory is hard to choose with many memories being made that will likely be with me for many years to come, but seeing the pope in the opening ceremony was something I will not forget because it was an experience so different, so unique that it is hard to describe. It's so normal to see someone like the pope so many times on the TV, but then when you see him 6 feet in front of you it's so strange and amazing even though it was only for 10 seconds!

Well, I did try my best to learn Portuguese and I didn't know 'hello' when I first landed so I did start from rock bottom, but did learn many phrases like 'bom dia' which is good day or good morning. But I also learnt that even though there were people from all over the world with different cultures and languages, our faith brought us together, and with some determination to break differences down, you can make great relationships and experiences together.

My faith has become much stronger this past week - but not in EasyJet! It has strengthened, but not because of big things like seeing the pope, but for the small things like the things we never notice. But on this pilgrimage I tried to focus on the small things and to be grateful for those small things, as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and to be thankful for even a thank you or smile off a random stranger, as this is God's little way of showing his love for us.

REFLECTIONS FROM MATIAS

I would like to thank the SVP as well as everybody from Our Lady & St Edmund of Abingdon Parish that allowed me to go to World Youth Day in Lisbon. WYD was an incredible eye opener experience that allowed me to learn more about my faith and get closer to God. I really hope that in the future similar experiences like this can happen to more young and keen individuals that wish to learn more about their faith.