

World Youth Day - Lisbon 2023

29/7/23 - 7/8/23

Mary arose and went with haste" (Luke 1:39).

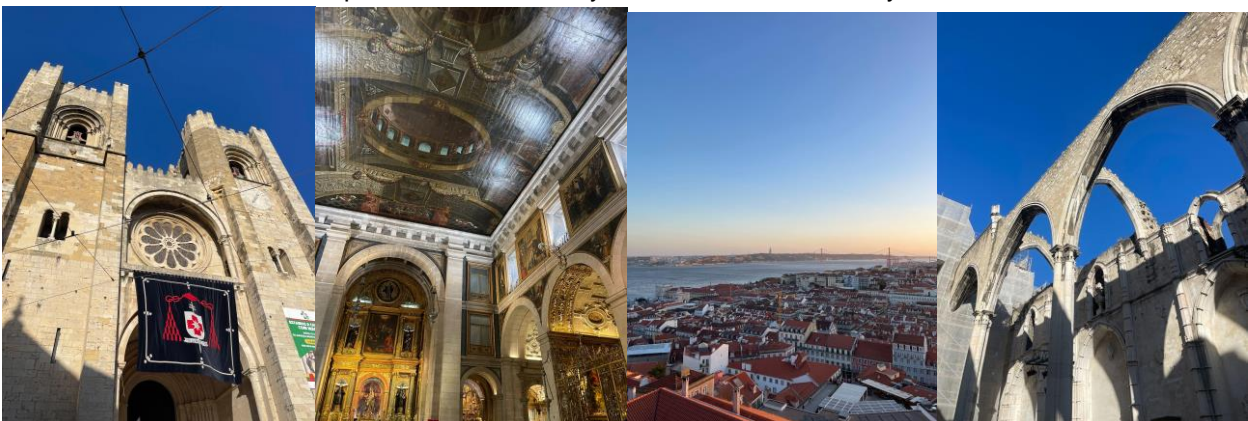
Day 1-3: Fatima

The first part of the Pilgrimage involved a short stay in Fatima, the place where the Miracle of Our Lady appearing to the three shepherd children occurred. I was able to visit the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Fatima which included the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity and the Chapel of Apparitions. Each night at the shrine, a candlelight procession occurs where many people gather with candles and flags, and sing and pray together as they move around the shrine. This was such a peaceful and beautiful experience. We visited the sacred sight of where the angel of light appeared to the children, and we were also able to see the homes of the children. Throughout the whole pilgrimage, I was also put in a small group with other people from Victoria and each day we would meet, pray and reflect on our experiences.



Day 3-8: World Youth Day Week

After Fatima, we made our way to Lisbon to begin the official World Youth Day celebrations. We began with an Australian gathering, where all Australians attending World Youth Day were brought together for prayer and to hear about the pilgrimage experiences people have had so far. To mark the beginning of World Youth Day, there was an opening Mass. Each day of World Youth Day involved Catechesis where we were able to listen to a variety of speakers, including Bishop Barron. Mass was celebrated there everyday also. There were events happening all around Lisbon throughout the day including Masses, concerts, talks, exhibitions of relics and more. The main events leading up to the final Mass included the opening ceremony, Stations of the Cross and the Papal Welcoming. There were many opportunities for faith formation as well as being able to look around Lisbon and explore the beautiful city, its landmarks and many churches.

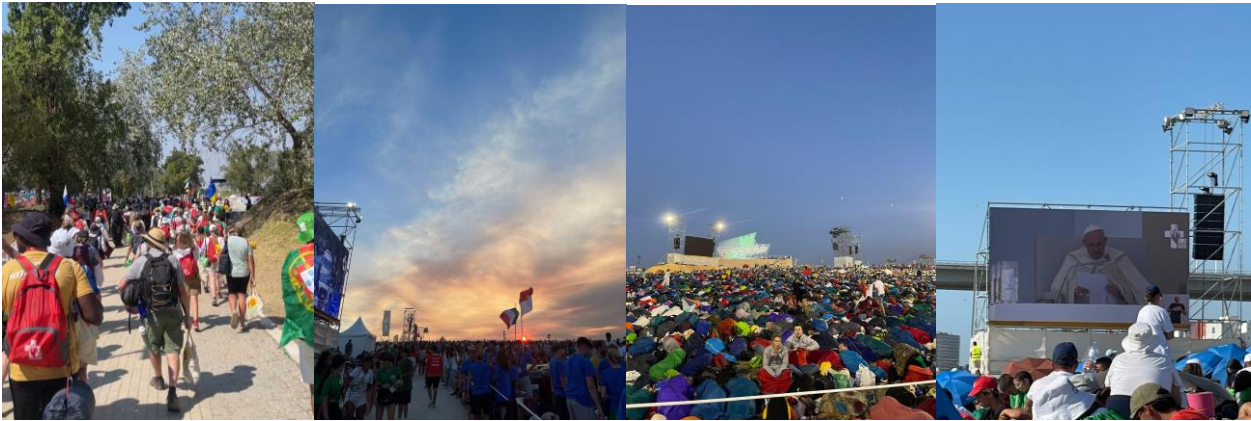


Day 8: Final Mass Pilgrimage

Saturday was the big pilgrim walk to the location of the closing Mass. It was a very hot day but it was incredible as we all journeyed together, listening to music, singing and chants from many different cultures. Once we arrived to our section we set up for the sleep out. Pope Francis arrived and we all participated in a prayer vigil where Pope Francis led us in Adoration and talked with us about what it means to 'set out and go'. The message I took most from his Address was that life is a gift that God has given to us, and we can make ourselves a gift to others by responding to the needs around us. There was also music, performances and even a drone display.

Day 9: World Youth Day Closing Mass

After a night of very little sleep, we were awoken by a DJ priest who got everyone up and ready for the Closing Mass. Pope Francis celebrated the Mass to around 1.5 million of us Pilgrims. To be gathered together with that many people who share the faith and participate in the Mass with them was an experience I will cherish for the rest of my life. In Pope Francis' Homily, he explained that as we go back to our daily lives, we need "to shine, to listen, and to be unafraid". Most importantly, we need to learn to love as Jesus loves, "seeing even what is unlovable as worthy of love".



Day 10: Debrief

The pilgrimage concluded with a debrief day where we met as a group and reflected on our experiences and our key learnings.



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