



R . C . P A R I S H

CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR

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Experience attending the World Youth Day 2023

Finally, after a busy summer and after living the experience of attending the World Youth days in Lisbon, we reflect - in the quiet of our homes- on what the experience of pilgrims meant to us. One of the words that we would use to describe it is "refreshing". It was a refreshing experience in the sense that being surrounded by One million and a half Catholics -mainly young people- allowed us to relive, feel, and witness what faith and religion are: service, empathy, joy and community.

Throughout the five days, the so-called "Rise-up meetings" touched upon three essential and currently very important aspects of our faith as Christians: first was integral ecology, then social friendship, and finally there was mercy. Sometimes discussing them among us and on one occasion with other pilgrims showed us that after an individual reflection, each one of us felt something slightly similar and came up with complementary conclusions. To our surprise, now that we are looking back, we had a taste of each one of them during our stay in Lisbon. Integral ecology was present in the way we made sense of everything that surrounded us, in the way we asked ourselves what we do for others and for our 'common home'. It was an opportunity to promise to do good for the world and creation and be reminded of our individual but powerful stake in caring about what surrounded us. Social friendship shined in every unique interaction with another pilgrim, every smile shared with anyone we saw, the joy of singing as a common union during mass or Taizé prayers, every hug we gave to a stranger, every prayer, and each of our intentions. Mercy came as an opportunity to forgive those who might have harmed us by praying for them, forgiving ourselves, and by understanding the Pope's words of relief: God's love is unconditional, and he loves us for who we are.

Along these lines, the Pope's messages together with the magical visits to the holy places of Fátima and the Church of Saint Anthony of Lisbon reminded us of the beauty of our faith and of God's love. Pope Francis was very clear and sensitive, and even if we were four people among a million and a half, we all felt that he was looking at each one of us in the eyes when he said, with a fervorous and peaceful voice: Whoever loves flies, runs and rejoices, that is what love does to us. We listened attentively with our hearts when he told us to love like Jesus. That way, we can be luminous, give our hand to the fallen ones to help them rise again, and use the missionary power of joy. He reminded us of one of the pillars of our faith: our roots, the influences that have shaped our faith. And that immediately made us think of them you, the Church of Our Savior. All the members of COS are people who give joy to others, inspire hope, and allow the faith of others to grow and become stronger. We, and you as part of this community, are missionaries in each other's lives, and being aware of it, of that positive influence and inspiration is an absolute blessing that we cannot forget and for which we should feel grateful for knowing that a piece of heaven is here in The Hague to welcome us as a mother -just as the Pope said- and be 'our savior'.

Each moment planted in our hearts a small promise for greater future fruits: seeds of hope, confidence, gratitude, trust and unconditional love. What else did we take with us, and what do we want to share with you now that we have returned? Precisely, that which the Pope asked us to do, firstly, share our joy because "joy is missionary, Jesus knows our heart and we are all hope and a message of Peace" and secondly, in each of our daily and sometimes busy routines, never forget to shine (to love as Jesus loves), listen (listen to Jesus. Be aware of selfishness disguised as love), and, finally, not to fear (it's time for rise-up).

Antonio, Hannia, Lupe & Iván