

Wednesday 17 |  
April  
2024

# DAY 1

## LOVE'S TRANSFORMING FIRE

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*To love is to be transformed into what we love. To love God therefore is to be transformed into God.*

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Today marked the beginning of our retreat pilgrimage with St. John of the Cross - "To Love is to be transformed into what we love",

### What an eventful day...

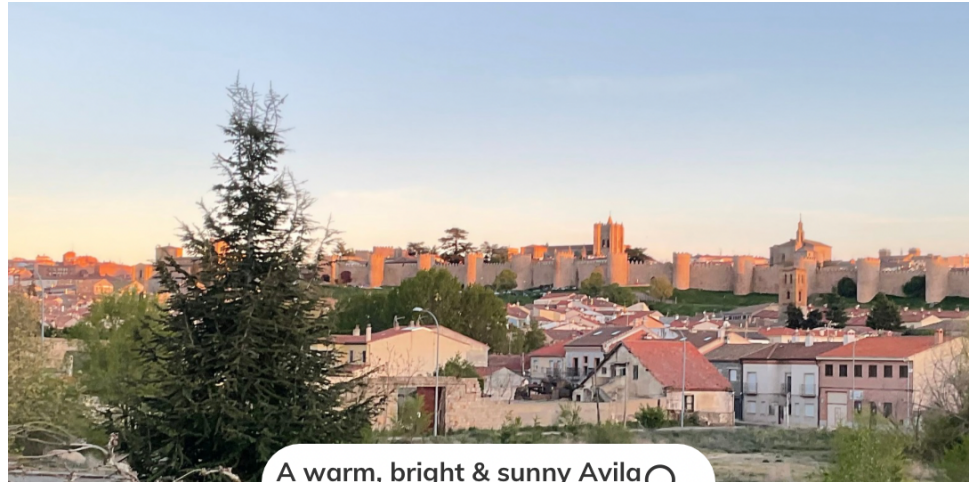
Our group of 19 pilgrims, including Fr Kelvin and Fr Matt and the esteemed Dr. Susan Muto embarked on this spiritual adventure together. About half of us came across the pond from America, in order to participate in this retreat and delve into the depths of St. John of the Cross' teachings.

Our journey kicked off in London, where most of us traveled together into Madrid, while others joined the group directly at the airport. From there, we boarded a spacious coach for a comfortable two-hour ride to Avila, soaking in the picturesque views of the countryside along the way. The atmosphere on the bus was peaceful and quiet, with many of us taking the opportunity to catch up on rest, and mentally prepare for the experiences awaiting us.

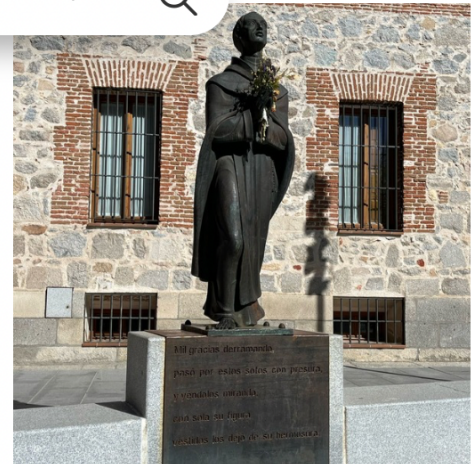
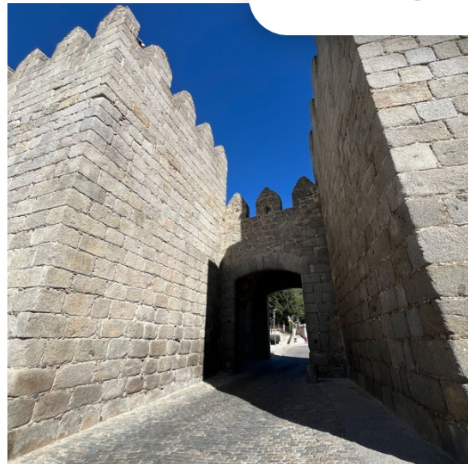


Upon arriving in Avila at the Carmelite University of Mysticism (Centro Internacional Teresiano et Sanjuanista (CITeS), we received our welcome package and itineraries, and checking into our rooms, signaled the official start of our retreat pilgrimage.

With a two-hour window before our next activity, some of us were adventurous and ventured into the city, where we unexpectedly ran into Fr Matt Blake, a serendipitous encounter!



A warm, bright & sunny Avila 🔍




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*I am the Bread of  
Life. He who comes to  
me will never be  
hungry.*

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### Behold a new formed “community of Friends in Christ.”

In founding her monasteries, St. Teresa adopted a principle that signals a “new formed community of friends of Christ” the celebration of the Eucharist. True to the Teresian Spirit, the pilgrimage officially began with the contemplative Eucharist in the **Chapel of the Dwelling Places (The Chapel of the Interior Castle)**.



### **Meditation on the Sayings of Light and Love**

The contemplative Eucharist followed a period of silence and a gentle meditation on selected Sayings of Light and Love by Dr. Susan. Her insights prompted deep introspection and contemplation.

Fr Matt Blake's introductory reflection on the experience of John as a man always on a journey – an interior journey towards God – drawing from John's experience of the "dark night of the soul," weaving together history, theology, and personal reflection in a way that left us spellbound.

Following a short rest, we enjoyed our dinner and fellowship at the center's dining room sharing our bond of friendship.

As the day came to a close, many of us are looking forward to the spiritual transformation that would take root within us as a result of these few days. We eagerly await what tomorrow has in store for us!



A BEAUTY TO BEHOLD