

# WHY I LOVE YOU, O MARY

## Day 1



### RETREAT PILGRIMAGE WITH ST THERESE

#### WHY I LOVE YOU, O MARY LIVING MARY'S YES WITH ST THERESE

Gathering at London's St. Pancras International Train station – some by 9:00 a.m. and others as best they could – our group of ten pilgrims (not counting one pilgrim who will join tomorrow, and our most reverend Fr.

Kelvin Ekhoegbe, OCD. departed at approximately 11:30 a.m. enroute to Paris, France.

At St. Pancras, Fr. Kelvin greeted each of us and presented us with a Carmelite backpack to include a beautifully designed and complete pilgrimage itinerary and daily morning and evening prayers.



## JOURNEY TO LOVE

After a brief boarding delay, we boarded #8 and sat comfortably in sections of 2+2 (4) facing seat arrangements which made getting to know one another easy and comfortable. Our group – though small in number – are largely endowed with rich pilgrimage experience, charity, and good cheer. We enjoyed several hours of coffee chats about people, travel, work, and of course...Carmel. Arriving Paris we began our coach ride to Lisieux.

The traffic from Paris train station was slow-going at first due to a long weekend holiday where Parisians were either just returning or just leaving to or from. Our grade-A motor coach was expertly driven and was really comfy. We got a bird's eye view of that area of Paris where we saw streets after streets lined with used items being sold. We learned about a French concept of travellers leaving behind unwanted things which were then resold on the streets. Not the Eifel Tower part of town but interesting all the same.

Not long after we turned on to the main highway it was smooth sailing through Paris's long tunnels and then out of the city to gaze on softly rolling, lush and oh-so-green pasturelands dotted with countryside hamlets and communities.

## LIVING MARY'S YES TODAY

Our pilgrimage theme is centered around Mary's "Yes" and 'Why Do I love You Mary'. Fr. Kelvin gave us an uplifting talk directed towards ways to sustain ourselves in our relationship with the Lord – to engage in ways (especially prayer life) that integrate both heart and mind.

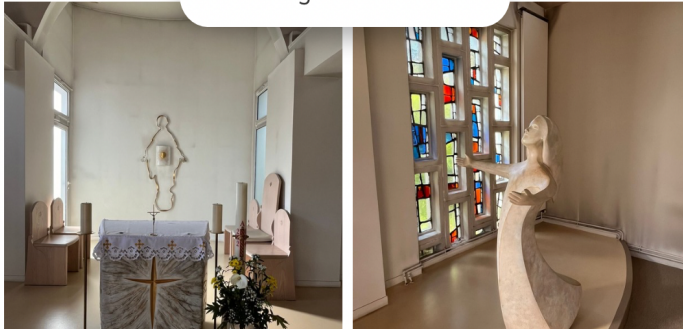
He further explained in depth Mary's "yes," and how Mary went most willingly into the unknowns with complete trust and abandonment to the Father's Will. Her fullness of "yes" was completely received within her.

Therese lived her life, as Fr Kelvin expounded, in imitation of Mary. She learned early on, after numerous, painful, abandonments; first with her mother not being able to nurse her and being replaced by a wet-nurse, then her mother's death, then Pauline's departure, followed by Marie's departure, which prompted her to turn with complete abandonment towards Our Mother who does not leave us.





Hermitage of St Therese



We arrived Lisieux just after 6:00 p.m. at the Hermitage of St Therese bringing forth a desert experience. We were warmly welcomed by the head of Reception who had already prepared for us with our keys most efficiently awaiting our arrival. Their friendly smiles and help made our settling down smooth and efficient.

The accommodation is lovely and just as one would expect Therese’s surroundings to be like. It is shaped much like a monastery and is beautifully adorned with big white-, yellow- and rose-coloured roses, of course!

After checking into our individual rooms, without a hitch, we proceeded to the main dining hall which handily accommodated our small group plus several other pilgrimage groups. It was lovely to pray before and after dinner (in French) with these other groups and our hosts. We enjoyed a laid-back French meal of a kind of nicely spiced cabbage, spinach and cheese quiche, salad, bread and wine.

After a leisurely dinner we went outside where we gazed at the garden area with a large statue of Therese and got quick and easy directions for internet if needed, gate and door lock numbers and then walked down to the chapel and monastery before retiring for the night and pondering, ‘how am I drawn?’

Therese truly modelled through her act of faith; to willingly go into the darkness of faith, trusting in God’s guidance. She was also willing to be in the darkness. This is captured in one of her poems: “A Gloss on the Divine”.

“...without support yet with support  
Living without Light, in darkness,  
I am wholly being consumed by love  
have no other support than my God

And now I proclaim:  
What I value near Him  
Is to see and feel my soul  
Supported without any support.

(Poetry of St Therese)

Our Retreat pilgrimage will not be chalked full of things to see but instead encourages each of us to meditate on ways to sustain our relationship with God especially in prayer, devotions and/or that which we are called to and to support one another in this vein as we travel along.

Like Mary and Therese, we are being called to respond with our “yes” and lots of unknowns, and to willingly abandon ourselves as we respond to God’s love each and every day. How are we drawn?

