

Day 3: More a Mother than a Queen

Ordinary life...Extraordinary Grace

Today, we began our day in the meeting room at the Hermitage of St Therese where we gathered for a short meditation and Lauds followed by breakfast.

Afterwards, we took a short walk down to the Carmel monastery, museum, and chapel with a wee bit of retail therapy for some.

For many of us seeing Therese for the first time or for some seeing her again was the highlight as she was meticulously and beautifully enshrined behind a gated wall but fully visible. Many of us sat and prayed and/or meditated there. The monastery was built in 1835 but the chapel took longer before completion. Fr. Kelvin stressed the importance of the ordinary life in the Martin family and how this was in no way detrimental to the holiness of their spiritual lives as is abundantly evident. And this is so helpful to all those who strive towards holiness to know that it is very often in the ordinariness and even 'mundane' lives that saints are grown.

"My mission is about to begin..."

After Therese's death, as devotion to her began to gain attention, her body was exhumed first time on December 6, 1910 and placed in well-built coffin and again in 1917 and then in 1920. Therese was beatified and canonized in 1923 and 1925 respectively. Therese was made a Doctor of the Church by John Paul II in 1997 - the youngest ever.

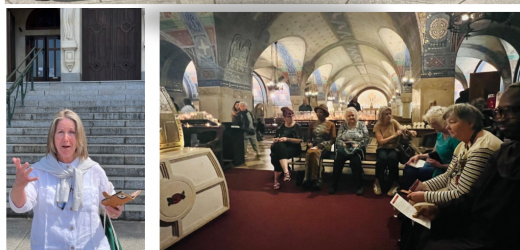


Praying with St. Therese

Fr. Kelvin concelebrated Mass with one of the French priests and we were all impressed with his good French. A short while after Mass we took another walk up towards the Basilica of St. Therese which was très magnifique!!! Both the Crypt and the Upper part of the Basilica was adorned with mosaic tiles at the main altar and also displayed mosaic images and pictures depicting many of her life stories at the main altar and numerous side altars as well.



The remains of Louis and Zelig in the Crypt were especially impressive and offered deep reflections on the meaning of family today learning much from Sts. Louis and Zelig of how important a priority family is to the spiritual life. After exploring the Basilica, we split up into groups and found unique places to have lunch, relax, reflect, and enjoy the gloriously sunny and bright day given us this day.



The dolls, the pens, the clothes, and all the rest of it was so familiar even though it was the first time for many of us to see the home and decorations and belongings. We toured not only the home but also the garden pondering her childhood up until her fifteenth year when she left Les Buissonnets to enter the religious life in Carmel. Though our walks were not far we journeyed far and wide with Therese today through her short journey of twenty-four years and pondering how she was drawn in and how we too are drawn daily.

Evening song of Praise

At the place in the garden where Therese requested her Father's permission to enter Carmel, the group celebrated the Evening praise with the Ragina Caeli beautifully sung.

Our day ended with dinner at the Hermitage and to our surprise it was the new groups of adult pilgrims from Poland that shared the dining with us, though they were quite noisy at dinner but joyful. It was a day Therese herself seemed to have prepared.

We all retired to prepare our Journey to Fatima in the exploration of Mary's yes to God.

Les Buissonnets...

At about 4:00 p.m. we again departed the Hermitage for a walk; this time, up the road to "Les Buissonnets," the Martin home shortly after Zelig's death. This would be Therese's home for eleven years before departing for the Carmel monastery in Lisieux.

This home was exactly as we would have imagined after reading the 'Story of A Soul' and other books and study on the saint. It was beautifully adorned, but not pretentious, warm, and inviting and filled with items she herself described to us (well, to her Sisters). It brought smiles to some of us remembering the story of "I'll take all of it!" when asked to choose from a basket of items.

