

## My Pilgrimage to Fatima

If I could sum up my trip in a few words they would be awesome & life changing.

When I left for the pilgrimage, I knew only Fr. Owen, Seminarian Alex, & the Politis. I returned with a group of new friends that I bonded with in Spain/Portugal.

Santiago de Compostela was our first stop. Such a beautiful town & Amazing cathedral. Seeing the Botafumeiro, swinging was a highlight of the trip. On our way into Portugal we were in Braga & Porto where we visited a winery and sampled the delicious wine. And then we arrived in Fatima which of course was the pinnacle of our pilgrimage

When I entered the "square" in Fatima, I cant explain the feeling I had. You could feel that you were in a holy space. There was an energy there & a faith that was shared by the thousands of pilgrims who were present. Seeing people praying the Rosary while walking on their knees and the thousands of people in precession with our Lady of Fatima while carrying candles is a sight I will never forget. Another highlight in Fatima was when Alex led us in the Stations of the Cross which were beautifully depicted on the outside of the church. He will be a great priest!

Fr. Owen ministering to the needs of the pilgrims whether from our parish or not was inspiring. I was so proud when people from other churches told me how lucky I was to be in our parish.

At the end of the pilgrimage I could reflect on the towns visited, the many churches, prayer experiences, meals shared, friendships made but most of all I am so happy that when God was calling me, I was listening.. I know I was supposed to make this pilgrimage.

Grace Ann Belfiore