

My Pilgrimage to Fatima, Portugal
By Anabela Rossi

I had the privilege of joining the pilgrims of St. Rose in Fatima, Portugal, which was my first pilgrimage with Fr. Owen. I am Portuguese and had been to Fatima many times as a child when I would visit my grandmother in the summers, but I knew this time would be different. I still remember the same images as my childhood visits there...the people walking on their knees in sacrifice, the magnificent Sanctuary of the basilica and the “capelinha” where Our Lady appeared to the three shepherd children. There, the rosary is prayed in five different languages every night, followed by a beautiful candlelight procession. What was different, however, was experiencing all of these things with Fr. Owen, Seminarian Alex and the people of my community.

From the moment the bus pulled up to the hotel, I was greeted so warmly by one and all. There was an immediate spirit of love and connection between all of the pilgrims, despite our age differences, and in my case, not knowing most of them. This should not have come as a surprise as we were all there to learn about and experience the message of Fatima, but to witness it, was extraordinary. The days were balanced with time for prayer, time for sightseeing and time for the sharing of faith and fellowship, which usually included a lot of laughter!

One of the things that stood out most for me was Fr. Owen celebrating Mass daily in the different churches on our itinerary. There was truly something special to be in these historical churches celebrating the gift of the Mass together. Another highlight was when Alex led us in the Stations of the Cross in front of the sanctuary. It was so moving and emotional because he made it so relatable to our own daily lives. Alex truly has a gift and I know he will make an amazing priest.

This pilgrimage was unforgettable and I feel like I gained not only spiritual graces, but also a new group of friends. Thank you to Fr. Owen and Alex for the blessing of their spiritual leadership. Thank you also to Stephanie for her time and dedication in planning and executing these spiritual journeys, which are amazing opportunities to share our Catholic faith.