

(The Assumption Family in France sponsors some 10 youth residences, known in French as *foy ers*
, for men and women throughout the country. These houses offer youth people the opportunity to live in community, take their faith seriously, and nurture a serious prayer life. Every year the members of all the residences get together for an annual retreat. One of the participants describes this year's experience, which took place at the Assumptionist spiritual center outside Paris, St. Lambert-des-Bois).

Although I don't live in one of the foyers, I was given a warm welcome at the annual retreat intended to be a source of spiritual refreshment and community-building. Meteorologists were predicting a beautiful weekend and in fact there was lots of sun outside and plenty of spiritual light inside.

We arrived Friday night from the four corners of the country: thirsty, hungry, and tired. The first order of affairs afforded us an opportunity to get to know each other, have a bite to eat, and get settled in. Slowly I met the residents from each community. I discovered that there was one in Toulouse, where my sister lives. There's another one located at the Assumptionist youth hostel, Adveniat, in Paris; what a great ministry --- welcoming other young people from around the

world.

I discovered that various branches of the Assumption Family sponsor foyers: the Assumptionists, the Oblates of the Assumption, and the Little Sisters of the Assumption.

The heart of the weekend began the following morning with a moment of prayer and then three get-togethers, each with three parts: (1) the reading of a Scripture passage and a presentation by Fr. Sébastien Antoni (who was sick the entire weekend and managed to get up just to give his talk --- and an excellent introduction to Lent his talks were); (2) a period of quiet meditation on the passage, on Fr. Sébastien's presentation, and on the questions provided to deepen our Lenten reflection and preparation; (3)sharing in small groups of ten --- our insights, our questions, our personal witness.

On both Saturday and Sunday there was also ample time for common prayer, which benefited from the considerable individual gifts of the participants. There was also private time set aside if any of the participants wanted to pursue a particular topic with the religious who were present.

And, as usual, the meals were a high point ---- I was able to meet a huge variety of people, from all over France, but also from Mexico, India, Vietnam... We talked about studies, culture, and France's "marriage pour tous" debate ("marriage for everyone"). There was also time to walk the grounds of the monastery and the magnificent Regional Park of Chevreuse next door, to breathe in the fresh air of the countryside, and to hear the first birds of spring singing away.

All in all the weekend was revivifying, flexible, free --- a beautiful experience of the extended Assumption Family.

Delphine