

On August 9 a group of Assumption College students and administrators left to attend the national pilgrimage in Lourdes sponsored annually by the Assumption by way of preparation for World Youth Day. The following is an update by Brother Ronnie Sibugan, AA, a seminarian studying at Boston College.

August 16th, 2011

After an 11 hour bus trip from Lourdes, we arrived today in Madrid at 7 PM. Some of the Assumptionist religious were assigned to stay in host families, parishioners of one of the Assumptionist parishes here in Madrid. I am staying right now in a house which is very near to our parish, with Internet connection :) . Dr. Cesareo and his family as well as Fr. Dinh are staying with other families while the larger Assumption student group is staying in the parish hall and other buildings.

Our week in France went really fast. We arrived in Paris at 1pm on August 10th. We stayed one night in the Assumptionist Youth Hostel in Paris where John Guinan, a volunteer who just graduated from Assumption, received us. Dinh gave us a little bit of tour of Paris. First we walked to the Eiffel Tower and then took the bus all the way to Notre Dame Church. Our time was very limited and everybody seemed so tired from the long trip that we decided this was enough to see the first day.

On our second day in France, we started our journey to Lourdes by taking the train from Paris. The people in the train were mostly pilgrims who were part of our Assumption group --- from the USA, France, Chile, South Korea, Vietnam, England, and the Ivory Coast. There were also

many handicapped people with us.. It was a long trip but I took the opportunity to meet the members of other Assumption group. Some of us were also able to help and entertain the handicapped, especially Brian who sang to some of them. The trip to Lourdes took 12 hours.

On our third day, we followed a schedule prepared for us: prayer with other members of our WYD group and then Mass at 10am with the thousands of other pilgrims gathered for the national pilgrimage. Because everything was in French (and we had no translator), we were a bit at a loss. The Mass was held in the huge underground basilica. Our new superior general and the new provincial of France concelebrated together with many Assumptionists. We were all very impressed with all the people who helped the sick, confined to their wheelchairs. I sensed the joy of those assisting the sick. Also, we were impressed with the little kids who were giving water to the sick. After the mass, we were asked to lend a hand in bringing the handicapped back to their lodgings. During our free time, some of us took the opportunity to visit the grotto, to pray and walk around. I was also able to reflect on the example of Bernadette´s unshakable faith and trust in God, this young woman who came to drink from the unique spring: Jesus Christ!

At night we held a vigil at the Youth Village for all the WYD Assumption group from different parts of the world. Each international group had to present something. So, our US group decided to sing *Amazing Grace* and *Sweet Caroline*. The Bulgarians sang some of their traditional songs, while Chilean entertained us by singing a lively song in Spanish. The London group sang the *Here I am Lord* song. The South Korean group sang a song in their language and the same with the Vietnamese Those from France sang a song that was easy to follow. The day was long but everybody seemed very happy --- it was a great day.

Stay tuned for more to come --- hopefully.

Brother Ron, AA