

«It is a time of encounter, a time of discovery for the readers of Le Pèlerin ("The Pilgrim"), an Assumptionist magazine, and at the same time an interior journey during which we want to give those who come the greatest opportunity to deepen their lives, their Christian faith, and their love of the Church. For me it is a pastoral ministry since I am the spiritual director. It's my work. I am very conscious of what such a cruise represents in the context of the economic crisis we are in, both for them and for us. As for me, I am not going "on a cruise," but on a pilgrimage, and I insist on that with the 12 members of my team on board. My experience is that pilgrims are extremely grateful for the chance to speak at length with a priest.

These pilgrimage cruises have been organized by Le Pèlerin for its readers for many, many years, dating back to the 19th century and have proven to be quite effective.

On the most recent one that we organized, there were 500 on board, including the team and staff members. We divide this group into sub-groups of 40, the capacity of the tour buses we use at the various ports of call. Each bus has a local guide and a member of the pastoral team. In this way we are able to provide personalized care and an experience of Church by forming small Christian communities (very Augustinian).

We celebrate Mass every day: when on land, in some of the large churches we visit, and when at sea, in a common room on board.

There is real spirit of recollection and prayer on these cruises and nothing at all like the atmosphere that holiday cruises call to mind. Yes, they are relaxing and fun-filled, but the emphasis is on spiritual and human depth. In the evenings we have a variety of events: inspiring talks, musical reflections, uplifting prayer services, etc., whatever we can imagine that will complement the purpose of this experience.

This gives you an idea of what happens on one of our pilgrimage cruises. Thousands have participated and many keep coming back.»

Fr. Jacques Nieuviarts, A.A.
Director of Assumptionist Pilgrimages

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