

## **Hospitality and Spirituality at Fatima 2018**

We believe that hospitality and spirituality are the very essence of Teams. This was evident in abundance at the 12th International Gathering of Teams in Fatima. We could write at length about the daily prayer, presentations, reflections, personal witness, masses prepared in the native tongue of the participants and the soaring voices of the incredible choir. Every moment of all of these events were filled with love, hope, joy and forgiveness.

However we are going to single out for praise the hospitality of the animating Team with 8,500 people arriving from 80 countries this was a mammoth task but from the moment we touched down in Lisbon airport we were met and greeted and immediately felt part of our worldwide family. We were taken by coach to our hotels where we were met and greeted by our designated hotel couple. The hospitality pack we were given included everything we might possibly need for the week including fold up stools to sit on and umbrellas to shelter from the sun or rain. A team of enthusiastic young volunteers assisted us throughout the week and the hospitality continued right to the departure moment when we were handed water whilst boarding our coaches back to the airport.

The Holy Spirit was definitely moving in this place and of all the many special moments we experienced during the week three have made a lasting impression in our hearts and minds. Firstly on the Tuesday evening, Teams led the Rosary and the procession from the Chapel of Apparitions around the grounds of the Sanctuary. Over 8,500 people from around the world processing with lit candles in peaceful prayer and unity with each other, was an experience of an outward sign of an inner grace. Into our minds came the words from the Acts of Apostles verse 44 “All the believers were together and they had everything in common.”

Secondly on the Thursday morning all the couples took part in a Sit- Down, we sat on our stools in the open air, as couples under our umbrellas, a different colour for each zone, and together under the loving “umbrella” of Our Lady of Fatima. This was a remarkable witness of faith to the Sacrament of Marriage and there were many onlookers who were touched by this very special event. It even reached the national Television news channel.

Thirdly the final mass and closing ceremony took place outside in the Sanctuary. The procession of so many priests accompanying the statue of Our Lady of Fatima from the Chapel of the Apparitions to the altar on the Esplanade in front of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary was a wonderful expression of the love and universality of our catholic faith. The mass in memory of Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto brought us close to tears to see so many people holding hands and reciting the Our Father in so many different languages. During the mass we opened a little package we had been given it contained two rings which we exchanged with each other as a sign of our fidelity and as a reminder of our commitment to love and of the grace of our sacrament of marriage. The mass ended with the Commissioning of the New Responsible Couple of the ERI. Four doves were released at this point after fluttering around for a little while they flew from view and almost immediately a

flock of birds appeared. In our minds we thought what was this telling us? That we should evangelise. We were reminded of Jeremiah Chapter 30:19 “ From them will come songs of thanksgiving and the sound of rejoicing. I will increase their numbers and they will not be decreased.” We left spiritually renewed and so thankful to be part of such a great movement.

Bernard & Susan Kelly  
Southern Regional Couple

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