

When an MCR group from the Bordeaux region and a VA group from Barcelona meet

In a previous newsletter we had published an article entitled "Twinning at the service of a missionary communion" where it was reported that an initiative of this type had been born between an MCR team from the Bordeaux region and a VA team in Barcelona. After regular exchanges and a reciprocal discovery of the life of their groups, this initiative was realized last June with an on-site meeting and a reflection to lay the groundwork for a twinning between the two groups.

This experience is full of promise and the LAI website team could help connect LAI groups around the world who would be interested in this type of initiative.

One of the participants in this meeting tells us:

A beautiful and rich spiritual adventure... but not only!

The genesis: Going to visit the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona at the end of our year of reflection on 'Living in the Family', was the idea of Bernard, diocesan leader of the MCR Gironde.

Linking his team (Mérignac, in the Bordeaux Metropolis) with a foreign team to broaden his vision of the world was Robert's idea. Put in relation with Monique Ptak in 2018, a bond was gradually established between Robert, of the MCR team of Mérignac, and Florence, of a LAI team from Barcelona.

This is how the two ideas came together to try to create a twinning between Catalonia and Gironde.

But nothing is simple! It was without counting on the vagaries of life: the obligation for Robert to leave the region, to abandon his aging group, (which later was going to fall apart), but the word given to go to Catalonia for a pilgrimage barely put on, a meeting with this singular group of the French parish of Notre-Dame de Lourdes in Barcelona, and the promised visit to the Sagrada Familia, could not disappoint by not succeeding. The challenge was up, we had to believe it.

The link with Florence and Odile in Barcelona made possible this meeting that our guests predicted us unforgettable.

This Monday morning, June 3, 2019 at 6 a.m. a bus of 48 "pilgrims" left Bordeaux, full of hope and enthusiasm.

Praying, singing, exchanging on the Word of the day (we were accompanied by our diocesan chaplain), discovering the richness of the regions crossed, their history, the historical links between our Southwest and Catalonia (the Roman Empire, the Visigoth kingdom, today's Europe), the tragedies of history (the Cathars in Occitania and the crusade against the Albigensian), men that recent events had highlighted (Michel Serres, recently deceased, passing Agen, his hometown, Viollet le Duc (which we saw recently burn the spire at Notre-Dame de Paris), passing Carcassonne which he renovated, Antoni Gaudi whose sacred and profane works we were going to discover, which allowed his talent and his singular personality, exchanging anecdotes, introducing themselves (15 MCR teams from Gironde

were represented), all this makes a trip too short and allows to weld a group, to identify the most fragile, to form a real 'family'.

The bus trip (9 hours drive) allowed everyone to prepare for the planned meeting with our friends from Barcelona who were waiting for us at their parish Notre-Dame de Lourdes. A first time of prayer, prepared via our internet exchanges, full of emotion, to put our hearts, our minds, our bodies a little tired in good order; a time of welcome of Father Luigi, presentation, our Girondins' MCR, the Catalan LAI group; a second friendly time, prepared by our friends, a 'pica-pica" , Catalan version of the welcome cocktail, which allowed exchanges, contacts, projects and to say see you tomorrow at the Sagrada Familia !...after a good night at the Carmelite convent of the Francesc Palau centre, our accommodation in Barcelona, where the welcome was very warm.

Tomorrow! At 10 a.m. at the foot of the Sagrada Familia, grandiose before our amazed eyes, almost incredulous, they were there to welcome us and lead us to the crypt, a monumental space in itself, for a common celebration presided over by our priests, Father Jean-Michel and father Luigi who pointed out to us the key of the vault of this crypt, representing the Anunciacion, key to the vault, too, of our existences. He insisted on the immense work of Gaudi, for whom all cultures are 'welcome', a lesson for each of us to pursue Creation, to the extent of our means. The visit of the SF that followed was extremely rich, with fabulous guides.

The next day we went to the Monastery of Montserrat and to Poblet Monastery (an extraordinary Cistercian monastery still alive of the 30 monks who occupy it).

The return to Bordeaux by a detour to Cadaquès, home of another famous Catalan (Salvator Dali) was like a decompression chamber after all these emotions, these strong, spiritual moments, of our journey. We will not forget either the visit of the small church of Santa Maria and its amazing altarpiece described by the picturesque sacristan who awaited us there.

Beyond the memories, the discoveries, there were these contacts with our new friends in Barcelona: links to be maintained, to make progress, and this is what we will be working on now through monthly exchanges on our reciprocal actions, on our reflections (we sent booklets of the theme of the year 2019/2020), by the organization of the reception in Bordeaux of this Franco-Catalan group. It's a great way to broaden our vision beyond our daily life as Girondins retirees.

Bernard Dabadie





