



Day 5

One could immediately sense today, that the delegates felt eager to express themselves – some clad in full national costumes – just enjoying the spotlight during the photo session. They felt pleased to get identified amid the crowd at Notre Dame du Mont and this helped to break the ice and initiate more friendships. The diversity of our world culture was stark to all, especially as group photos were being taken before boarding the buses.

The need to share and exchange views with other delegates was evident throughout the bus ride, filled with laughter and constant chattering. We were greeted by a jubilant Lebanese cohort, to the sound of drums and smiling children. Some of us who are now missing our families, felt touched by their presence and warm hospitality.

Following the EAs pep-talk by Father General, the Jesuits later arrived at the Jesuit School and Daniela's address reminded us that: “God wanted us here, in Lebanon”. This was true, since 66 countries had eventually responded with an enthusiasm that showed itself abundantly in the dancing that followed. And we appreciated the chance to move around, after days of sedentary listening. A tasty yet practical and casual lunch allowed freedom of movement to interact with visitors, chat in small groups, take a swim or lap up the hot scorching sun. Some also got themselves interviewed by the local TV station.

As the Church was filling up in the afternoon, with even more visitors, a procession of national flags and the sound of the Lebanese choir, and an altar adorned with beautiful flowers, reminded us that yes, the people have come and are here at Notre Dame du ‘Jamur’ which translates as ‘of the people’. The offertory emphasised this with four men and four women from Australasia, Africa, Europe, Latin America, North America, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon – another sign and confirmation that we, the people, are here in solidarity with the near East region. This is how we presented ourselves as an offering to God. Fr Nicholas SJ's homily resonated even louder since as we celebrated such abundance, we are also invited to build the necessary bridges with the weakest in our society as people with a jubilee heart! God invites us to help create a new humanity that is in harmony with His design – that is, at peace and economically fair to all.

More exchanges happened on the bus ride back but as we recollected ourselves for a few moments in the Chapel, we were given space to capture the significant highlights and low moments of our day. We saw how we had been blessed (by whom) and what cheered us up or what we learnt. We also saw where we could have initiated the building of bridges or strengthen the community gathered here, even through a simple gesture or welcoming smile. We were then encouraged to shift gear and take it up a notch, to go deeper into the discernment of the days ahead.

But the desire to foster friendships was mostly felt over dinner-time, out on the breezy terrace where once more, the music and dancing broke down those barriers and filled the atmosphere with jubilation. At the same time, people felt free to draw away from the crowd and catch up with their families and other tasks. Yes, ours is a diverse community that respects individual and collective choices, precisely because we have diverse realities.

Malta delegates