

Taizé Reflections by Senior Cycle Students St. Flannan's College Ennis, Co. Clare.

Reflecting on Taizé. By Alex Furey.

When I left Taizé, I promised myself that I would go back. The opportunity to visit Taizé is one that I think should be taken by every young person if they have the chance. It is hard to reflect in the modern world, especially for a young person. But Taizé presents an unmatched experience, where you can finally stop and think.

In the world today, we identify people not as Christian, but as Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, separating them, the opposite of what we are meant to do. But Taizé sees beyond the differences. There, denominations do not exist. Taizé pilgrims do not say "I'm Catholic," or "I'm Protestant." They say, "I'm Christian." And whenever denominations do happen to be discussed, and we share our experiences and our practices, it is always to learn about others, never to divide. We learn about how unity is important outside of religion, how damaging war and conflict are.

Not only does Taizé help you to unite and share your experiences of God, but you realise all the materialism of the modern world. For example, the food. Its basic, but it reminds you of how fortunate you are to have lots of food back home. It reminds you of how some people show off and spend hundreds on the best food just to say that they have had it. The accommodation is not luxury, but it does its job. We do not need to have the best of the best; we just need what we need. We do not need to go around showing off that we have luxury items, but rather we should be content with what we have.

But it is not easy to reflect and think about these things on your own. The discussion groups bringing together young people from all over the world are vital for reflection. Talking with others from all over the world helps us learn more about ourselves. I was fortunate to have some of the best people in my group, who were from Germany and the Netherlands. To have others of diverse backgrounds is essential for discussion.

Later this year, brothers from the Taizé Community will go to Tallinn, the capital city of Estonia for the European Youth Meeting. This is a perfect example of what Taizé pilgrims should do. We should tell others about the importance of Taizé. We do not need to experience Taizé in France, but we can experience it at home with others. Taizé does not have to be with other countries but can be with others from your area. Taizé can be anywhere, and we should strive to bring Taizé everywhere.

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Taizé: A Sanctuary of Peace and Reflection in Rural France. By Brendan O'Halloran.

The feelings of tranquillity and community of the Taizé experience are difficult to put into words. It is an experience that I will surely never forget and a feeling of peacefulness that I will always long for. I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of my time there, whether it was bonding with the group that travelled, meeting new people from around the world or simply exploring my inner-self. One of the most appealing aspects of Taizé is being able to explore your faith with like-minded young people, which is so rare to find elsewhere. Being in a church full of one-thousand teenagers and young adults is not something you would normally see here in Ireland. Hearing the bells three times a day and seeing everyone descend on the church for the prayer service only adds to this sense of togetherness. I particularly enjoyed the daily workshops in which we met in small groups for deep, thoughtful discussions. During this time, we were able to explore our own thoughts and feelings, and reconnect not just with our faith, but with ourselves.

The atmosphere in Taizé is one of non-judgement and so there is an overwhelming feeling of relaxation and serenity, in which we are free to express ourselves. The comradery each night in the Oyak was great fun, as we danced and sang together into the night. Out of everything, one of the largest take-aways for me personally is the connection with nature that I found. I spent some time in the silent garden, and it is something I will always hold with me. Enjoying the sounds and sights of the beautiful lake and garden, without any talking, just enjoying the silent company of others was really something unique and special. It is truly a sanctuary in rural France!

With all these aspects combined, throughout the week I felt a deep sense of inner-contentment, relaxation, and peace. It is a feeling I have rarely ever felt to such a degree, and it is something I will always long to experience again. I am eager to return!

Taizé allows a complete break from reality and facilitates one to reflect on their faith, their life, and any problems they may face. It allows one to build up, restore or maintain connections, whether that be with others, their faith, or like me, with nature. In many cases I would say with all three. With this in mind, I am very grateful for the time I spent there, and I would not hesitate to recommend the Taizé experience. I greatly look forward to my return there.

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Taizé: Self-Reflection and Exploring Faith.

By Zuzanna Lacka.

I believe that my pilgrimage to Taizé has been one of the best and most fundamental experiences in my life so far. What I found about myself, my faith and my friends is something completely special and hard to describe as it is personally so different to everyone who went, but at the same time woven together by the common thread of inner peace, community, and openness. We got to spend time amongst each other as a group and getting to know one another much better as well as meeting strangers from every corner of the world whom you find out throughout the week you have so much in common with. Besides from being full of activities and meeting other people, silence was an important part of our time spent there and allowed us all a time for personal reflection and bringing ourselves closer to God. The beautiful prayer services we had in the church conducted through song were also incredible and were a different but equally profound way to explore our faith, both alone and with others. I took so much of Taizé away with me in my heart, remembering the beauty of the pure kindness, open arms, and self-reflection I found there. I would recommend Taizé to everyone of any age and any faith. It is a truly special place.