



Newsletter

21250 Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 500, Torrance, CA 90503 ♥ Tel. #: 310-832-FIAT or 310-328-FIAT ♥ Fax #: 310-781-9022 ♥ website: www.fiatholidays.com

NEW !!!

PHONE FEATURE on OUR LAND LINE:

In its Experimental Stage: it's a 2-way street,
so help us by trying it out!

You can now "TEXT" us 24/7 using the same
telephone number that you call into our office:

310-832-FIAT (that's 3428)

So if you have a really quick inquiry (*before you forget*),
just simply text us and we'll answer you within seconds too
. . . unless we're praying.

Or you can still email us at fiatpilgrims@aol.com

Did you know . . .

That indulgences can be obtained by making pilgrimages to holy sites, such as basilicas and shrines? Allow us to assist you from inception to completion. What's NEW ???

GO AS YOU PLEASE -

Just say when, where & we'll take care of everything!

5 day GLORIOUS GETAWAY pilgrimages

9 day NOVENA pilgrimages

Bring three* . . . GO FREE !!! (only on selected itineraries and selected dates) *new pilgrims to expand our FIAT FAMILY

ARE YOU A WANDERLUST?



The word originally comes from a German word meaning to hike and to lust, commonly used as strolling, roaming about or wandering.

In modern day German, it means a desire to travel.

Psychologist describe it as the desire to escape and leave behind depressive feelings of guilt.

Or it may reflect an intense urge for self-development by experiencing the unknown, confronting unforeseen challenges, getting to know unfamiliar cultures, ways of life and behaviors.

THE WILL of GOD

The will of God will never take you,
Where the grace of God cannot keep you,
Where the arms of God cannot support you,
Where the richest of God cannot supply your needs,
Where the power of God cannot endow you.

The will of God will never take you,
Where the Spirit of God cannot work through you,
Where the wisdom of God cannot teach you,
Where the army of God cannot protect you,
Where the hands of God cannot mold you.

The will of God will never take you,
Where the love of God cannot enfold you,
Where the mercies of God cannot sustain you,
Where the peace of God cannot calm your fears,
Where the authority of God cannot overrule for you.

The will of God will never take you,
Where the comfort of God cannot dry your tears,
Where the word of God cannot feed you,
Where the miracles of God cannot be done for you,
Where the omnipresence of God cannot find you.

Everything happens for a purpose.

We may not see the wisdom of it all now,
But trust and believe in the Lord
That everything is for the best.

"and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

Romans 8:28

God has no PROBLEMS, only PLANS.

God's plan is always the best.

Sometimes the process is painful and hard.

But don't forget that when God is silent,
He's doing something for you.

He's quiet, because He's busy working out the details!

Where did 2014 go?

Your 2015 and 2016 Magnet Calendars are enclosed for your perusal. We hope that your year will be better than last year.

Herewith I share with you the highlights of some of the pilgrimages I escorted throughout last year. By now, you should have gotten my Christmas Card that featured our Medical/Dental Mission for the year in the Philippines. Join us next year!



My travels started in the month of February when a small group decided to go to India led by Fr. Efren from Philadelphia. It began with a pre-tour to Calcutta which I think was the highlight of the whole trip. All of us who went had a common dream: to visit the tomb of Mother Teresa. It was truly awesome to find ourselves praying and celebrating Mass with the nuns of Mother's congregation, known as the Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity . . . thanks for the arrangement of Fr. Owen (aka the dancing priest). We then continued with a tour of the Golden Triangle (that's what first timers to India see): Jaipur, called the pink city because of its colored buildings & where we had a chance to ride an elephant on the way to Amber Fort (16th century fortress), continuing to Agra, home of the Taj Mahal, built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife. All for love . . . wow! Then to the city of Delhi. There isn't a non-stop flight from India to Manila! So we decided to sleep in HongKong and do some sightseeing visiting some of the Catholic Churches, and from there we exited from Macau. Upon arrival in Manila, our

Medical/Dental Mission Group started in the squatter area of Malabon, with a celebration of Mass led by Fr. Efren and Fr. Amang, distribution of food, and entertainment by the children and the moms. It is through this adopted small village outside Manila that Fr. Efren and his parishioners in Philadelphia have been helping the kids with their financial needs for their studies from elementary to college. A week later, I invited the group to meet at one of the orphanages run by nuns, one that I sponsor through the help of pilgrims who go on our pilgrimages. It was the first medical/dental mission for the kids, so the kids fell in line, one to get their check-up, and the second line is to get their teeth analyzed and pulled. Ouch!



March rolled and I accompanied a group from Riverside to Israel and Jordan led by Fr. Soney (an SVD priest). After having the pleasure of coming back to Israel and Jordan a few times, the highlight of this trip was visiting a Catholic Church in Jordan where the Blessed Mother wept tears of blood witnessed by nuns and school children on May 6, 2010. It was only recently that I found out that one of our pilgrims went back to volunteer at the school. Way to go Jennifer!

April came and I escorted a small group with Fr. Efren to Lisieux, Paris, and Italy focusing on Rome for the Canonization of Pope John Paul II and Pope John 23rd. Was it a zoo????? Yes! The most crowded event that I have ever witnessed, and I think will be my last. If I remember correctly, we woke up at 4AM, left the hotel around 5AM and arrived at the Vatican area around 6AM. By this time the streets were already crowded. The first thing we looked for is the bathroom. It was a sea of people gathered to commemorate the lives of these 2 great popes. Too much pushing, no more elbow room, until Fr. Efren and I got separated from the rest of the group. Everyone was standing! Only the smart ones who brought itty-bitty chairs were sitting down. Or those who found space in the edge of the sidewalk or on the columns that lined the main street. The event started at 9AM, and by 10AM I got a text message that the group gave up and had gone back to the hotel. I thought "Awwwww, I want to go back to the hotel too! Which means that I would have to shove my way out. But what about this poor priest?" By this time, we had already been standing for 5 hours! And by divine intervention, one of the guys



next to me offered his itty bitty chair, and so I stayed . . . until 1PM when it finished. (Can you imagine Fr. Efren has been on his feet for almost 9 hours!) From there, we continued to Lourdes. Amazingly, everything that was damaged by the flood in June 2013 was nowhere to be found.



May came and a small group and I decided to go to South Africa by way of Emirates Airlines since it included a free stop in Dubai due to the very long lay-over enroute. The airlines offered a free room for the night along with dinner. But you're so excited to sightsee in Dubai even in the dark that you don't even get to sleep in the room. So we saw the highlight of what one can see on a night city tour, the Burj Al Arab and Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world. I was in Dubai in 2011 and one must really see the country in daylight.

We arrived Johannesburg around noon the following day, and were welcomed by our driver/guide Lawrence. We travelled and travelled and travelled for hours to our next stop which is the Kruger Park area. South Africa is SO big! I think it took us 7 hours to get from the airport to our hotel. And here I share with you the scenery from our hotel. It's the wilderness . . . where you can see some animals running around. The following day, we went to God's window. What's that, and what did you see? Well, you'll just have to come with me next time. The following day was our safari inside Kruger National Park, the largest game reserve in South Africa and one of the world's

Pictures & Words are powerful, but reality is better:



biggest wildlife sanctuary. The park alone is approximately the same size as Israel. You transfer to a jeep type vehicle where we were so lucky, that we were able to see the Big 5: the elephant, rhinoceros, leopard, lion and buffalo. Not everyone are lucky to see all 5 on your first visit, that's why most people go back again the second day, and the third day and again and again until they complete the Big 5. Africa is truly God's zoo! If you say, I dont need to go to Africa, I can just go to the zoo here. No, it's totally different. The wildlife experience in these safaris are amazing. The animals are so much like us humans especially the mothers. We saw how they protect their young. Too bad, we didn't witness a kill. That's when the leopard or the lion devour another animal like a baby elephant or another creature . . . to the bare bones.



Next we crossed borders to the Kingdom of Swaziland, where the local artisans showed us in their factory their expertise in glass blowing and candle-making. Then we found out about a special event that happens once a year. The current King is Mswati III, who last year August spotted his 15th wife at the annual Reed Dance, where thousands of Swazi maidens dance bare-breasted before him. According to articles, the polygamous king is said to use as much as L31.7 million of Swaziland's annual budget to sustain an estimated 24 children and 14 wives in 13 lavish palaces. 3 wives have fled in recent years, citing emotional and physical abuse. 69 percent of Swaziland's population of 1.2 million live below the poverty line.



Then we continued to one of the highlights of our visit: the Ngome Marian Shrine dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the remote area of Ngome, KwaZulu-Natal, where Sister Reinolda May, member of the Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing, experienced ten visions between 22 August 1955 and 2 May 1971. In these apparitions, the Virgin Mary appeared to her and identified herself as "the Tabernacle of the Most High." It is probably what Lourdes looked like 100 years ago.

The first of September rolled in and I flew to Lourdes with my friend Nancy (who volunteers at the shrine every year) to check out "THE WAY", the route that thousands of pilgrims have been walking to and through Spain as in Martin Sheen's movie. But of course, instead of walking we drove (actually the second time we've done it). This time I really followed most of the walking route to see if we can physically do it in the future. The big question was "where does one go to the bathroom when you have to go?" We even asked some of the backpackers we met along the way. And so we shall see. The highlight of the trip this time was being asked to try eating barnicles (who could have imagined . . . but they taste yummy!) and sandal shopping in Santiago. At the end of the week, I left Nancy in Lourdes and flew back home. A week later, we met again in Salzburg, this time we were joined by the Willkoms (her brother & sis-in-law), the Mascarinas from Seattle and Fr. Alvin Villaruel. We travelled through Austria, Prague, Poland and Hungary. Our married couples were able to renew their vows at the Wedding Church in Mondsee, the site of the wedding ceremony in the Sound of Music movie, starring Julie Andrews. Next, we headed to Prague to visit the Infant Jesus. Here, we were saddened when we met a group without a priest, yet they called their journey a pilgrimage. Personally a pilgrimage is not a pilgrimage unless you have a priest. A lot of travel companies allow groups to materialize without a priest, because it would be a loss for them, most specially when they don't meet the numbers needed to justify the free place of a priest. So you encounter a bunch of pilgrims who are bickering and/or long-faced on the trip. That's not the way to be holy! Well, we continued to Krakow, Lagiewniki (shrine of the Divine Mercy), Czestochowa (shrine of the Black Madonna) then to Budapest, haven't been back there since 2005.



October came and I found myself back in Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan with the happily retired Sr. Stephen Daly (the nun who never left her classroom for 50 years!), and pilgrims from Philadelphia led by Fr. Efren. Do you know what happens when you travel the same day that AirForce One is also flying? You get stuck at the tarmac! No one knew what was happening at the time, so the minds of my first timers travelling to the Middle East were twirling with the usual fear of unrest in the country. This of course is a natural feeling of anyone flying to Israel. That's why I always tell anyone planning to go there that if you plan to go, do NOT watch tv till you get home from your trip. Believe all that you hear on tv and you will never see Israel! Priests who have a very strong faith are such a big help in times when your pilgrims are doubting when you say "it's safe". You can be blue in the face and you'll still see that fear in their eyes. Are you aware that it is only tourists from America that you do not find in Israel when the subject of terrorism is in the news! Fear: false education appearing real.



A week after my arrival, I escorted another group from Spokane led by the Franciscan priest Fr. Michael to Italy from Venice to Rome with an optional extension to Medugorje. The highlight was being showered by snowflakes in La Verna! We arrived Medugorje the first week of November and we had expected the weather to be SUPER COLD. On the contrary, it was so VERY perfect!

The following month, Dec. 6, I got the news that Fr. Jose Arong, OMI was identified as the victim in a fatal crash on the I-580 in the Castro Valley area enroute as a speaker to a Cursillo Group about "going home". I attended his funeral in San Fernando Valley where most of the Oblate priests are buried. Let us continue to pray for him and mostly for all the souls in purgatory.

Just for fun:

IMPORTANT WORDS

(from the spiritual community of the Christophers)

The six most important words . . .

“I admit I made a mistake.”

The five most important words . . .

“You did a good job.”

The four most important words . . .

“What is your opinion?”

The three most important words . . .

“If you please.”

The two most important words . . .

“Thank you.”

The one most important word . . .

“We.”

Words Make a Difference

God gave us speech to communicate for the good of all. Here are some phrases that are music to ear and spirit:

Good work! Let me help you.

I forgive you. Congratulations!

I'm sorry. You can do it!

We're proud of you!

Thank you. I love you.

The Words You Choose



Words stem from the heart, are processed by the mind and are transmitted by the lips. Although they often are a commentary on others, they also reveal much about you as an individual. Do your words say you are . . .

An optimist or a pessimist?

A doer or a procrastinator?

An encourager or a discourager?

Content or dissatisfied?

Joyful or sorrowful?

A giver or a taker?

The list of those who need kind words is endless. Whatever you say, say it with love.

Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Matthew 12:34

SAY IT WITH LOVE

Words, our primary source of communication, are more than letters pierced together to form a concept. They are powerful tools to be used with care and with the awareness that words make a difference.

Words spoken with love offer a constructive and fulfilling meal of praise, encouragement, gratitude, apology, or forgiveness to a hungry listener. They can bring positive change into another person's life.

Our words can cut or comfort, hinder or help, harass or heal, injure or inspire . . . Each time we speak we deliver our own state of the heart address.

William Arthur Ward

Love is the foundation of PRAISE. To praise is: “To express approbation, to commend the worth of; to glorify, especially God, by homage.” It comes from the Latin pretium (worth) and pretiare, “to prize, to have an appreciation for.” The sweetest of all sounds is praise.” *To love someone is to reveal to them their value . . . that they are precious.*

Jean Vanier

Love is the foundation of ENCOURAGEMENT.

Derived from the Latin cor for “heart,” encouragement means “to give heart” by offering courage, confidence, support or help.”

Encourage one another, and build one another. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Love is the foundation of GRATITUDE.

2000 years ago, it was said that gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all. Thankful appreciation says, “I acknowledge your kindness. My life is improved by your efforts, and I treasure them.” How often we fail to express thanks to family, friends, co-workers and even God, who “gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.” (Acts 17:25)

Gratitude (gives) an angelic loveliness to the character. Theodore Parker

Love is the foundation of APOLOGY.

The Greek word apologia means to express regret for a fault or insult; to attempt to undo a wrong committed. It's an admission to another, “I made mistakes. Please forgive me.”

An apology lets others know you care about their feelings and value the relationship. This requires humility, indicates tremendous trust, and generally merits forgiveness.

Humility is that low, sweet roof from which all heavenly virtues shoot.

Thomas Moore

Love is the foundation of FORGIVENESS.

Derived from the Old English forgiefan, to forgive is “to give up resentment; to cease to feel resentment” for “wrong committed.”

To say “I forgive you” frees mind and soul from the burdens of a grudge. Forgiveness neither condones the wrong nor shows weakness. One must be strong to forgive. Look to Jesus for the necessary strength and patience, remembering, “As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (Colossians 3:13)

Forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Mark 11:25

