

Pilgrimage to the Taizé community in France



A Worth trip to Taizé in France in the summer of 2016 was an enlightening experience for all who went.

A group of 14, comprising ten pupils, Br David Jarmy and three staff members, visited the unique Christian community at Taizé, in Burgundy, eastern France, at the start of July.

The ecumenical community of Taizé was founded in 1940 by Brother Roger, who left his native Switzerland with a conviction to help people going through the ordeal of the Second World War. The small village of Taizé, where he settled, was close to the demarcation line dividing France in two and ideal for refugees fleeing the war. Soon the address at Taizé became known as a place of safety.

These days Taizé is known as one of the great pilgrimage centres of Europe. Pilgrims of all ages from around the world are welcomed but priority is given to youth and during the height of summer up to 6,000 can be in Taizé at one time.

During their week-long stay, the Worth School group – which included eight Year 11 pupils and two Year 12 students – spent the mornings listening to introductions to scripture by one of the brothers and sharing their reflections in small international groups. Then the afternoons were a choice between workshops with visiting speakers or carrying out voluntary work, such as cleaning or washing up. There are also three prayer sessions a day at Taizé and silence is key to their way of life too.

Those who went were enriched by the experience. Br David said: "It's not all silence, prayer and work. After evening prayer everyone gravitates to OYAK, a café area where drinks and supplementary food can be bought at ridiculously cheap prices – deliberate so no one from developing countries are at a disadvantage. An amazing cosmopolitan gathering emerges and behind the café there is a barn area where music and dancing is the flavour of the evening – multi-lingual.

"Friendship develops, deepening with those you have come with, but new friendships with people who only ever ask, "What is your name and where do you come from?" From that, friendships begin and grow."

