

March 12, 2026

Thank goodness we had the day off: no tours, no lectures, nothing. The first three days we were running on emotion and adrenaline and not a lot of sleep. The long flight and the 8 + hour time change had taken its' toll. The organizers knew we needed a break.



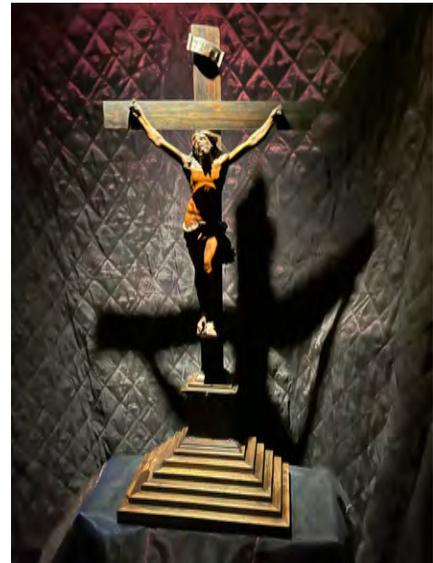
We are staying at the **Founders House** in the heart of Aix. The structure was built over 400 years ago by the Carmelite Nuns. St. Eugene de Mazenod and his founding cohort of priests moved in to the building some 200 years later; it's old, comfortable and it oozes with old world character. The building is littered with historic artifacts.

Exploring the various rooms and passages is an adventure to be sure.

My free day started with a walk about with my fellow pilgrim Fr. Mike Dechant, OMI.



We walked out the back door and on to a long and wide plaza stretching the better part of a 1/2 a mile, the "Cour Milboeau". The plaza was filled with hundreds of vendors. Fruit, vegetables, shoes, clothing, spices, ... if you could place it in a bag and carry it home it was probably available, and English only pilgrims had no trouble communicating with the vendors. Tomorrow these vagabonds will be



gone only to return on Saturday to serve the locals' demands. These markets has been going on for centuries.

After a couple of hours of shopping and people watching we settled down for lunch at Rio Rene a stereotypical French, curb side restaurant on the Plaza. We were



joined by fellow pilgrims Kathy and Greg Seretsky from St Albert, AB. The French food and service was good but when you add 16 degrees, sunny and not a breath of wind - the meal was great.

But that was not the highlight of my day. The highlight was sitting down with Greg and Kathy for two hours, over lunch, getting to know them.

There are friends and then there are OMI friends. I am so blessed to be surrounded by this groups of OMI associates and now I can add Kathy and Greg to my OMI friends.

Matt Sherry