

July 16, 2010

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

Contact Dr. Frantz on the web at www.mlcchurch.com

As part of a four-month Sabbatical leave, Jeffrey Frantz is currently living in Aix-en-Provence, France (140,000 population, thirty miles from Marseilles), along with his wife, Yvette, and their five-year old chitz-a-poo dog, Niko. While in France, *Echoes of the Heart* will be comprised of his reflections and musings on a *Summer en Provence*. If you wish, you can follow his blog at <http://summerinprovence.blogspot.com>.

Ten days in Greece and Turkey. I’ve always wanted to see the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, spend a few days on a Greek island (one of those islands featuring the whitewashed homes looking out onto the azure ocean waters) and walk along the way of the Apostle Paul at the ruins of Ephesus in Turkey. For ten days in late June, Yvette and I were able to do all of this.

The Parthenon—a must see. To capture the fullness of its beauty and aura, you need a sense of the landscape. The Acropolis (where the Parthenon is the major feature) sits high on a hilltop in the center of Athens, visible from just about everywhere. Literally, it looms over the sprawling metropolis that is modern day Athens.

The climb up the hilltop (a combo of steps built into the rock and inclining walk ways) took some time—particularly in the sultry, summer heat. But it was wonderfully worth it. At the top, indeed, is the Parthenon with its 46 majestic columns reaching towards the heavens. Built between 447 and 438 BCE (before the common era), it has been rebuilt multiple times (still not completed); still, some of it is apparently original. The rustic look, with massive pieces of rock and stone, is difficult to fathom without seeing it first hand.

The other edifices of the Acropolis, in varying stages of restoration (although I don’t think the intent is full restoration), are all about. The entire Acropolis area is probably 400 yards by 200; and on all sides, the city of Athens with marvelous views.

The Parthenon really captured our spirit and imagination. It is spectacular and more—the kind of experience that words simply cannot capture. It’s the blending of thousands of years of history and what all of that implies. It’s the contrast of this ancient marvel in the heart of a bubbling, urban world of the 21st century. We were overwhelmed.

The specter of the Greek islands. Our three days in the village of Lindos, on the Greek island of Rhodes, was a much anticipated delight. To begin with, we arrived from Athens on an overnight cruise ship, Blue Star 2 (with our own cabin), our first cruise experience. The fourteen-hour voyage over the expansive sea waters—with beautiful vistas of nearby islands and the sheer vastness of the sea on all sides—was both relaxing and exhilarating.

Lindos, itself (an hour bus ride from Rhodes Town), is a beautiful, historic, seaside village of 800 inhabitants, nestled into the rocky hillside. Strolling up and down its narrow streets (more like path ways—eight to ten feet wide at some points), with restaurants (where you dine on the roof tops) and shops of all kinds lining the walk ways/streets, was a delight to behold.

Although a bit touristy, there was an energy and a spirit that made for good times (the European rage for World Cup soccer certainly fed into this). Lindos, too, has its own Acropolis, high atop a nearby hillside. Along with hundreds of other tourists, we took the mule ride up the hillside for a spectacular view of the beachfront village below.

Along the way of the Apostle Paul at the ruins of Ephesus. A final highlight of our Greece/Turkey experience was our visit to the ruins of Ephesus, about ten miles from Kusadasi, Turkey. It was in this renowned city that the Apostle Paul spent some three years and had, reportedly, been imprisoned on more than one occasion.

The ruins of Ephesus are amazing—amazing in that so much has survived into our modern world. Stretched out some two miles or so, readily, you can catch a sense of what life must have been like two thousand years ago (Ephesus had a population off 200,000 at one point).

A long stretch of the marble-stone roadways still exists. We saw two theatres; one—the Great Theatre—with a capacity of 24,000. There were the remains of bath areas, toilettes, and fountains (the fountain of Roman emperor, Trajan, 98-117 CE, for example). There was the library of Celsus and literally hundreds of monuments to all kinds of emperors, consuls and gods/goddesses. Clearly, these living testaments to the legacies of the powerful dominated the cities' architecture.

We're grateful we were able to incorporate this ten-day Greece/Turkey excursion into our Sabbatical experience here in France. A bientot for now!