

Steering brief

Scene setter

You will visit the Taizé community for two days at the end of August. You will have the opportunity to join the community for worship, prayer and meals and to share in their life for the time you are there, as well as to take time for personal meditation and reflection. The programme prepared by the Community is attached.

Your visit takes place during the community's annual week of reflection for young people aged 18-35, during which around 1000 young people of different nationalities will be staying in Taizé. They will have workshops on contemporary issues from a spiritual and theological perspective, including a "biodiversity parcours".

On Saturday afternoon, you will take part in **two discussions with the young people** gathered in Taizé. A preparatory meeting with a few young people is scheduled for Saturday morning.

The first is an exchange with the young people taking part in the "biodiversity parcours", focusing on climate change. This will be a group of around 100 young people. You will give an introduction to the topic (around 15 minutes), followed by a Q&A (around 45 minutes). This session will be in EN.

Secondly, you will have a general exchange with all the young people present. This will be a large group of up to 1000 people. You will make a speech (+/- 15 minutes) on topical issues (*l'actualité européenne*). It will be in EN, with possible interpretation to FR and ES.

You will have a lectern for both speeches.

During your stay in Taizé, you will also have informal exchanges with the brothers of the Community and with local elected representatives (both in FR). Several regional religious representatives will be taking part in Saturday's lunch. The list of participants for each of these events, together with the CVs of the participants, is attached.

Together with the brothers, a number of other people work closely with the Community on a long-term basis: 18 nuns from different congregations, 84 young volunteers and a number of refugees from Syria, Sudan and Ukraine.

A number of personalities from different countries will take part in exchanges during the youth week, including Commissioner Breton, who will be there on Wednesday 24 August.

The Taizé community

Taizé is located in the Burgundy region of France. The monastic community was founded in 1940 by Frère Roger (Roger Schütz), a reformed Protestant from Switzerland. He bought a small house at Taizé, close to the demarcation line between free-France and German-occupied France and helped refugees there during the 1940's. After the war, the community grew and flourished, becoming known all over the world. Brother Roger died in 2005. Brother Aloïs, a German-born Catholic appointed by Brother Roger before his death, now leads the community. The Community is made up of around 100 brothers from Catholic and Reformed traditions, from about 30 nationalities. 76 live in Taizé and the others in small communities in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The community is known for its focus on young people, peace and reconciliation, and for its ecumenical approach, bringing together Christians of different denominations for worship, prayer and dialogue. It is also known for its meditative music based on the psalms and other verses of scripture, popular with churches and groups all over the world. It has a ministry of hospitality, offering accommodation to pilgrims and to those wishing to volunteer with the community. One of their hopes is that the people who come to stay with them for programmes or retreats return to their churches, or places of study and work, and bless the communities they serve with what they have learned or received in Taizé. The Community lives from the proceeds of their work, selling books and artifacts they have made.

Brother Alois

Brother Alois (born in Bavaria in 1954), the leader of the Taizé community, has taken a strong stance against Russia's war in Ukraine. In an interview for the Catholic newspaper La Vie, he said: *"This tragic news takes us into the mystery of evil;"* and *"in Ukraine, evil won't have the last word ... how is that possible that the fire of weapons and bombs tear apart people that are so close on so many topics?"*

His community is continually praying for peace, especially for the most vulnerable, children and young people that are the first to suffer in conflict. They are also praying for leaders, and everyone able to influence events, that the violence will stop as soon as possible. Brother Alois sees the role of the Church as helping anyone affected by this crisis, saying: *"Let's think about the fighters from every country, and their families, for a war they have not either chosen or wanted."*

In March 2022, Pope Francis received Brother Alois and they discussed the war. The community also organised a fundraiser. Three brothers visited Eastern Europe in May.

The Taizé community has also welcomed Ukrainian refugees.

Brother Alois also is interested in Islamo-Christian relations and has organised friendship events in Taizé, where he especially welcomed young Muslims. He is also committed to the environment, setting up an "eco-game" in 2019 in Taizé, and joining a network of "green churches" that are trying to integrate sustainability into their approach and daily life.

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