

Liz Lian
13 September 2013

Mt. Menoikeion Journal Entry

June 30, 2013

This experience is special because it's showing me how small the world is—how much we all have in common despite where we come from. Since I only know “thank you,” “hello,” “excuse me,” “do you speak English?” and now, “good night,” “nice to meet you,” and “my name is...” in Greek, I've had to become much more aware of my body language as a way of communicating. Not to mention I'm in a monastery, where one isn't supposed to cross one's legs. So I've actually made a conscious effort to stand up straighter. My jaw hurts from smiling so much since I can't express my happiness to be here in Greek, and because a big, toothy smile seems to be a universal “Hello!” It's actually pretty easy to tell when someone is making a joke, even if you can't understand what they're saying, and when to laugh, just by following their cadence, body language, and expression. It sort of reminds me of the season finale of the show “Louie” if you've seen it. I don't want to spoil anything because it really is such a special episode, but Louie finds himself in the company of a group of people with whom he has no common language, yet he still manages to make them all crack up. I haven't gotten comfortable enough with the nuns yet to crack jokes, but they all seem to have great senses of humor and love to laugh. I mean, who doesn't?

Tonight as Dmitri and I brushed our teeth side by side, he asked me, just as I was spitting, how I liked the monastery so far. “Good?” he asked. “Better than good,” I told him, trying not to froth too much toothpaste. I admitted that at first I was a little unsure, a little anxious, because I didn't know what was appropriate and what wasn't. He nodded his understanding, saying how, like any other community, this ascetic community has its own codes and structure. Then I said how after a day or two, though, I felt more comfortable because beneath all that, we're all pretty much the same. “Yes,” he said, “we are all human beings, and this is a community that values acceptance of all different kinds of people of all origins above all.”



The monastery



Brittany and Ben at breakfast



Inside the church at a baptism



South wing of the monastery.