

The Associates World

Index

Beauty and Simplicity and Holiness	page 1	Paulist Associate in the Diaspora	page 4
Contacts	page 4	Pilgrimage in the Year of Mercy	page 1
Food for the Soul	page 2	Proposed Program for May	page 3
Isaac Says	page 3	RIP – Paulette Cadmus	page 2

Pilgrimage in the Year of Mercy

Early in March, Fr. Tom Kane, CSP led a group on an eight day pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi. The word “pilgrim” comes from the Latin *peregrinus*, meaning a traveler who has come from afar and is on journey to a sacred place. Among the pilgrims were three Paulist Associates from Boston. In this edition of *The Associates World*, they reflect on their experiences of being pilgrims in two holy cities. Their deep thanks go to Fr. “Tomaso” for organizing such a week of blessing and richness.

Beauty and Simplicity and Holiness

by Margaret Ris

As the bus filled with the 18 Paulist pilgrims gathered from across the states and as varied as the amazing buildings of Rome itself, our sense of excitement built. It remained high all day despite the cold rain, warmed by the rich history contained in the stone and plaster of the lovely Umbrian hill town of Assisi.

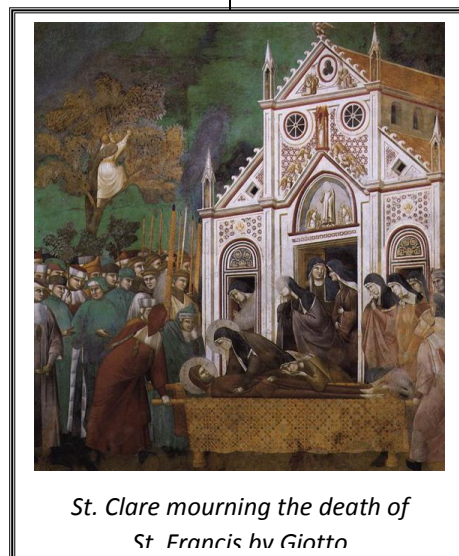
We began with a wonderful private liturgy with Fr. Tom Kane and Prof. Francine Cardman in a small stone chapel within the basilica complex. It set the stage for our encounter with Francesco Bernadone, (St. Francis) the beloved saint of Italy in his own hometown.

Our guide, aptly named Francesco, walked and talked us through the upper and lower basilicas of St. Francis and into the medieval streets still much as they were in St Francis’ day. We ended our tour at the Church of Santa Chiara, St. Francis’ fellow saint who committed her to the life of simple Franciscan poverty and devotion, establishing the order of nuns known as the Poor Clares.

Revisiting the basilica’s frescos by Giotto, I rediscovered the thrill of artistic genius I had first seen when I visited Assisi as a student. Returning 45 years later, I found these 800-year-

old plaster paintings still conveyed so much with their simple, lovely compositions, still vibrant colors and the faces and gestures so full human expression. To retrace the life of St. Francis is to experience the drama of an opera: youthful visions, talking crucifixes, renunciations of family wealth, papal dreams, a don Quixote-like visit to the sultan during the crusades, periods of ecstasy and periods of agony receiving the stigmata and ultimately, his death surrounded by the loyal brothers. In nearly all of these, St Francis is shown accompanied by some of his fellow “friars minor”, dressed in their simple brown robes. Giotto included them as a message to the disciples who remained: as they accompanied Francis in life, he accompanies them in the wider world as they carry on his message of praise and devotion to Christ.

What a blessing to include this visit to humble Assisi, the birthplace of Pope Francis’ namesake, with the glories of Rome: the basilicas of St. Peter’s, St. Mary Maggiore, St. John Lateran (featured in one of the Giotto frescos) and St. Paul outside the Walls and so many other churches and monuments!



St. Clare mourning the death of St. Francis by Giotto

RIP

Columbus Paulist Associate Paulette Cadmus recently passed to eternal life. Please keep her in prayer.

Food for the Soul

by Mary Lesko

Reflecting on the pilgrimage experience before leaving, I shared my appreciation of seeing with a new lens. During previous visits to some of the same sites, I felt an embarrassment of riches especially at the Vatican museum. My response this time could not have been more different.

What I saw now were God's gifts on display — in the generosity of the donors who provided the funds; the creativity of the artists and artisans of the paintings, sculptures and building; the toil of the builders; and the efforts of those who have maintained these works for the ages. Not to mention all the prayers that have been offered in these sacred spaces and the peace the prayers have provided!

This time at the Vatican museum I learned that some of the collection included ancient non-religious artifacts rescued from rubble and preserved for history. Yes, these spaces looked different to me this time. A quote in the book I was reading on the plane home, Donna Woolfork Cross's *Pope Joan*, summed it up best, "the beauty of a holy shrine provides the faithful with a different form of nourishment – food for the soul not the body."



Through the Eyes of a Pilgrim

by Carol Geyer

My mother was Italian, and I found myself carrying her with me on this pilgrimage. Her presence evoked memories of her prayer life. Each day she would talk to God and trusted that He would get her through any difficulties, of which she had many. Her faith was strong and unwavering, and she passed this gift on to my sisters, my brother, and me.

During these eight days, there were many churches to admire, and each church we entered was more beautiful than the last. Previously as a tourist I appreciated these artists but was critical of the opulence of the benefactors who through their vanity and desire for power funded these magnificent buildings. As a pilgrim, I am grateful that these works of art are preserved so the splendor of the architecture could be appreciated by pilgrims and tourists alike. I recognize that beauty is a reflection of God and gives comfort, joy, and awe to all who stand in the presence of works of the great masters like Michelangelo, Bernini, and Caravaggio. I now pray for the benefactors and rejoice that they now stand as places of prayer and worship in remembrance of the saints for whom they are named.

Confession released me from "A Dark Night of the Soul" that I could not shake. My confessor instructed me to reflect on the lives of the saints as I visited each of the churches on this pilgrimage and to contemplate on their faith and martyrdom.

I had two favorite churches on this pilgrimage. One is the little chapel outside of the walls of Rome where St. Paul was beheaded. It is a quiet place with a monastery on the grounds, a lovely gift shop and gardens. Walking the cobble stones that St. Paul walked to his martyrdom was deeply moving; entering into the church off the beaten path where a sculpture of his head marks his grave is a magnificent painting of St. Peter by Caravaggio. The spirit of both of these saints echoes in the silence.

Assisi is the next church that I loved. The town is hilly with shops and a village restaurant where we had a delightful meal after visiting the beautiful pink stone Basilica with its mosaics and frescos depicting the life of St. Francis. The peace that surrounded the plaza and the whole area permeated into the soul, and I was struck with gratitude for this chance to fulfill my dream of seeing Assisi.

The gift of this pilgrimage has been to lift darkness and to replace it with the joy and light that comes through walking along with my fellow pilgrims in the steps of the saints and martyrs whose lives changed an empire and whose faith lives in each of us. The final step for a pilgrimage is after one returns to do a corporal work of mercy. In this year of Mercy, may we extend mercy and forgiveness to ourselves and all those we have offended, misjudged or ignored. Our faith lives in our past, present and future by the example set before us and by the example we set for others. In the words of St. Francis, "Preach, if necessary use words."

Proposed Program for May

(This is a suggested format; each group may select another outline or topic.)

Theme: The Holy Spirit Active in the World

OPENING PRAYER

The Paulist Prayer Book, Pentecost, p. 336ff

READING (IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING)

From Isaac Hecker's Diary, begun in Egypt, 1873

The Holy Spirit is at work among Chinese, Moslems, and all nations, peoples and tribes, in every rational soul. The love of God, so to speak, compels this. We may not see or understand its secret operations, but the truth of this is none the less true for that. We may be nearer to the conversion of these races, & the unity of the race, & the triumph of Christianity, than any one of us is aware of ...

"The Holy Spirit fills the whole earth," acts everywhere & in all things, more directly on the minds & hearts of rational creatures, dwells substantially in the souls of the faithful, and is the light, life, soul of the Church. This all-wise, all-powerful action now guides, as He ever has & ever will, all men & events to His complete manifestation and glory. Pentecostal days! Were the promise of His universal triumph [p.6]



CONVERSATION CATALYSTS

- The gifts of the Holy Spirit are: Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, Counsel, Fortitude, Piety, and Fear & Awe of the Lord. Where do you see people in your life embrace and generously share the gifts of the Spirit?
- Discuss a time that you were surprised by the Holy Spirit.

NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

CLOSING PRAYER

O Breath of God, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of Your love. O Sanctifier, guide us with Your grace and inspire us to be evermore converted to God's will. O Comforter Divine, help us to bring peace in the world. Amen.



Isaac says ...



From Notes on the Holy Spirit

Through the Holy Spirit the world was called out of chaos.
 Through Him the patriarchs and prophets were inspired.
 Through him the way to the Incarnation was prepared.
 Through Him the Church was established
 Through Him every Christian soul is regenerated.
 Through Him all things receive their perfection and are glorified.
 Through the Holy Spirit the martyrs received the strength to sustain triumphantly their sufferings.
 Through Him the apostles of nations were filled with zeal and power to convert nations.
 Through Him the innumerable litany of the Saints were sanctified.
 Through the Holy Spirit we receive all that is Holy, Good, True and Beautiful.

Contacts

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Find us on facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/paulistassociates/>

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Paulist Associate in the Diaspora Finds Divine Providence in Rome

by Brian Flanagan

From 1999 until 2009, I was a member at the Paulist Center Community in Boston. I had heard about the Paulist Fathers before, and in Boston found a community of fellow disciples that I still miss seven years later. In that community I began to realize how strongly my own sense of vocation as a Christian, as a teacher, as a theologian, and as an ecumenist resonated with the Paulists and with the vision of Servant of God Isaac Hecker. It was bittersweet to leave that community to take up my current job, but even as I moved cities and changed parishes, I haven't stopped being a member of the Paulist family.

First, formally – as a Paulist Associate since 2007, albeit one currently without a regular community, I had even more formation in the spirituality of Isaac Hecker and in the charisms of the Paulists. Facebook and email have been providential in allowing me to remain connected to my fellow Associates in Boston and around the country, and the more recent greater use of the website holds a great deal of promise for those of us “in the diaspora.” I renew my promises each year in absentia, and the spiritual connection of knowing that I am praying with, and being prayed for by Paulists and Associates, has been a great comfort to me.

As importantly, I'm still Paulist in my prayer and in my work. Hecker emphasized the grace found in the individuality of each of his brothers, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the particular gifts of each of the members of his community. This makes it more “portable” so to speak, in a variety of places and ministries. I'm also lucky enough that my job is directly related to the Paulists' charisms of evangelization, ecumenism, and dialogue. But being a Paulist Associate helps me to remember who I am and with whom I'm working to give the Gospel a voice – to know that whether working in RCIA in my parish, teaching a class on the church, or praying in the evening after work, I'm part of the Paulist family within the wider Catholic clan.

[This past March, I brought students from Marymount University to Rome over spring break as part of an ecclesiology course. We went to Mass on Sunday with the Santa Susanna community and Fr. Greg Apparcel, CSP and Fr. Steve Bossi, CSP. As I came back from communion, I was elated to find friends from Boston there on pilgrimage with Fr. Tom Kane, CSP sitting in the pews – further proof that while the world is a big place, the Paulist family makes it smaller.]

Brian Flanagan is Associate Professor of Theology at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia. He blogs at www.dailytheology.org and is on twitter @BrianPFlanagan.

Paulist Associate Promise:

I believe that I am drawn by the Holy Spirit to the spirituality and qualities of the Paulist Community. I have discerned both by prayer and study that God calls me to become associated with the Paulists. I promise that I will pray for the works of the Paulist Society, meet with others, who are also members of the Paulist Associates, for spiritual sharing and formation; and I seek to embody the apostolic qualities of the Paulists in my daily life.

Attentive to the Holy Spirit and faithful to the example of St. Paul and the charism of Father Isaac Hecker, I commit myself for one year of membership in the Paulist Associates.