

*Catholic Travel Centre*  
*Worldwide Tours and Pilgrimages*  
*~ presents ~*

## **To Francis through Francis**

### **A Pilgrimage to Assisi, Florence, Siena & Rome**

**Designed Especially for Holy Ghost Preparatory School in Bensalem, Pennsylvania**

**Under the Spiritual Direction of Rev. James McCloskey, C.S.Sp.**

**Group Coordinator: Mr. Jason Fisher**

**10-Days: June 2 to 11, 2015**

#### **TUE, JUNE 2, DAY 1: DEPART USA**

We depart en route to Rome with complimentary meals and beverages served aloft.

#### **WED, JUNE 3, DAY 2: ARRIVE ROME / TRANSFER ASSISI**

We arrive in Rome and are met by our Catholic Travel Centre representative, who will accompany us throughout our journey. Boarding our waiting motor coach, we transfer to our hotel in Assisi to rest from our journey. Dinner tonight is at our hotel. (D)

#### **THU, JUNE 4, DAY 3: ASSISI: VISIT OF THE TOWN & EREMO DELLE CARCERI (HERMITAGE)**

Today we begin with Mass at the Basilica of St. Francis. After Mass we enjoy a tour of the Basilica. We continue with a walking tour of the city, visiting the major sites associated with St. Francis and St. Clare, including the Chiesa Nuova, built over the home of Francis' family, and the Church of San Rufino, with the baptismal font of the Saint. We then visit the Church of St. Clare, where St. Clare lies in repose. Here we see the original 'San Damiano' crucifix that spoke to Francis, urging him to "rebuild My Church". Francis interpreted the dream literally and went to work on repairing the building at San Damiano.

After lunch on our own, we meet at the Piazza near St. Clare's Church and take taxi's up the winding road (buses cannot make these sharp turns) to the Eremo delle Carceri (Hermitage), secluded some 2 1/2 miles outside the town of Assisi. Or a better option is we might choose to hike up to the Carceri! Here is where St. Francis often retired to pray. Here, in the midst of the lush green forest and the singing birds, one gets a deep sense of the spirit of St. Francis. The balance of the day is at leisure. Tonight we gather for a welcome dinner and orientation at our hotel. (B, D)

#### **FRI, JUNE 5, DAY 4: ASSISI / ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS / SIENA: VISIT**

We begin our day with a visit of the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels, containing the Porziuncola, built by St. Francis and his followers. The Porziuncola is a tiny church constructed within the Basilica, like a ship in a giant bottle. Nearby marks the spot where Francis surrendered to 'Sister Death.'

Boarding our waiting motor coach, we continue on to the ancient walled town of Siena. Set on three hills, the town of Siena is drawn together by winding alleyways and steep steps, with the Piazza del Campo at its center. Siena is popularly known for the festival of Il Palio, a twice-annual barebacked horse race around the town's the Campo.

In the mid-14th century Siena served as home to the Benincasa family, a family of wool-dyers. One of their twenty-five children was named Caterina Benincasa. History remembers her as St. Catherine of Siena. Because of her intervention with Pope Gregory XI, the papacy returned to Rome from Provence, France. She, along with St. Teresa of Avila and St. Therese of Lisieux, is one of the few women granted the title of 'Doctor' in the Roman Catholic Church. Along with St. Francis, she serves as a co-patron saint of Italy.

We'll visit the sanctuary built over the former home of St. Catherine. Mass follows at the austere church of San Domenico, containing the only authentic portrait of Catherine, located in the chapel where she received the Dominican habit.

We will have some time for lunch on our own. After lunch, we'll meet our local guide to \*begin our guided tour. We continue to the Duomo, originally designed and completed between 1215 and 1263. Our visit includes the Duomo Museum to see the masterpiece of Duccio). The main square of this medieval town is absolutely charming, we will have some time to explore on our own before checking-in to our hotel for dinner and the evening. (B, D)

#### **SAT, JUNE 6, DAY 5: SIENA: FULL DAY EXCURSION TO FLORENCE**

Today, after breakfast, we enjoy an excursion to Florence. Florence's recorded history began in 59 BC when Julius Caesar allocated the Arno valley to his veterans. They built an army camp, named Florentia, in a chessboard pattern that can still be found in the city center. Situated on a main trade route the settlement expanded rapidly, and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD, the Emperor Diocletianus made Florentia capital of the province of Tuscia. Florence today is a sublime blend of beauty, culture and history. Florence is also known as the city of the Medici Family and Machiavelli.

We begin our visit at the Galleria dell' Accademia. This gallery houses paintings by Florentine artists spanning 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, but its main draw is Michelangelo's David, carved from a single block of marble when the artist was only 29. After our visit here, we see the Duomo--Santa Maria in Fiore, with its pink, white and green marble façade, and Brunelleschi's famous dome. It is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest Cathedral in the world.

Next to the Duomo is the Baptistery of San Giovanni. It is one of the oldest buildings in Florence and is dedicated to John the Baptist. The octagonal building is famous for its gilded bronze doors, particularly the Gates of Paradise by Lorenzo Ghiberti.

We celebrate Mass at Santa Maria Novella \*or Santo Spirito the famous medieval Augustinian church dedicated to the Holy Spirit where Michelangelo turned for counsel to the local prior who granted him access to cadavers from the hospital so that he could study the human form. The balance of the afternoon is at leisure, to stroll and browse along the Ponte Vecchio, perhaps to do a little shopping (gold, leather, and straw markets). Dinner is on our own. After our visit, we return by motor coach to our hotel in Siena. (B)

#### **SUN, JUNE 7, DAY 6: SIENA / ROME: TRE FONTANE & ST. PAUL'S OUTSIDE THE WALLS**

This morning, after breakfast, we travel to Rome. By the year 114 AD, you could travel from present day Scotland to the Sahara desert and still find yourself within the Roman Empire. We still use the Roman alphabet, numerals and months. The Romans developed concrete, glass windows, central heating, public health, civil service and more. Latin formed the basis for most European languages. Today, Rome – 'The Eternal City' - remains one of the most beautiful and interesting cities of the world.

After some time for lunch on our own, we begin our visit of Rome at the monastery called Tre Fontane, the place where St Paul was beheaded and then move to Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, housing the Tomb of St. Paul the Apostle, affectionately known as the Apostle of the Gentiles. Although heavily restored, the present basilica looks much the same as it did in the 4th century. Here we celebrate Mass.

St. Paul was born in Tarsus between 6 and 10 AD. After his conversion he became the church's foremost evangelizer, especially among the Gentiles. His letters to his followers have greatly influenced church thinking throughout the centuries and continue to do so today. After Mass, we check-in to our hotel for dinner and the evening. (B, D)

#### **MON, JUNE 8, DAY 7: ROME: ST. PETER'S & LEISURE WITH OPTIONAL VATICAN MUSEUMS & SISTINE CHAPEL**

We begin today with Mass at the Basilica of St. Peter. We will also have time to pray at the tomb of Saint John Paul II and of Saint John XXIII. After Mass, \*our guide will take us on a tour of the Basilica. With Michelangelo's dome, it is the most prominent building inside Vatican City. Built over the site of "Old Saint Peter's" constructed by the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century, the new Basilica began construction in 1506. The building absorbed the attention of twenty popes and ten architects before completion in 1626. There are over 100 tombs located within the Basilica. These include 91 popes.

Here we see the Papal Altar covered with the sumptuous bronze baldachin by Bernini, and the apse, aglow with golden mosaic. Here we see the larger than life size letters "TU ES PETRUS" in Latin and Greek – "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In addition to many sculptures and monuments by Bernini and other great artists, we will see Michelangelo's famous statue of The Pieta.

The balance of the day is at leisure, perhaps to visit some of the excellent religious article shops in the area, or to go on your own up to the dome of St. Peter's Basilica, where you can gain a striking panoramic view of the city. This afternoon we have an optional tour of the

Vatican Museums and Sistine Chapel for an additional cost. We will attend Evening Prayer with the Community of San Egidio in Trastevere, a dynamic lay community famous for its social outreach to Rome's poor and marginalized. Dinner tonight is on our own. (B)

### **TUE, JUNE 9, DAY 8: ROME: ST. MARY MAJOR, ST. JOHN LATERAN & ANCIENT ROME**

We begin today with Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major, the largest church in Rome dedicated to our Blessed Mother. It was here that Pope Francis celebrated his first Mass. Next, we visit the Papal Basilica of St. John Lateran. It is here that St. Francis persuaded Pope Innocent III to give permission to begin the Franciscan Order. We will next visit the Church of San Clemente and see in one spot the dramatic conversion of Rome from a pagan city to a thoroughly Christian one: a three tiered complex of buildings – 1) the present basilica built just before 1100 during the height of the Middle Ages; 2) beneath the present basilica is a 4<sup>th</sup> century basilica that had been converted out of the home of a Roman nobleman, part of which had in the 1<sup>st</sup> century served briefly as an early church, the basement of which had served briefly as a pagan mithraeum.

Our visit of ancient Rome continues at Capitoline Hill, (Campidoglio), whose square was redesigned by Michelangelo. The nearby Vittorio Emanuel Monument is home to Italy's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We visit the Church of Cosmas and Damian, one of Rome's most beautiful ancient churches and home to some stunning mosaics.

As we continue, our walk takes us past the Roman Forum, located in a valley between Palatine Hill and Capitoline Hill. It originally was a marsh, but the Romans drained the area and turned it into a center of political and social activity. When the Roman Empire fell, the Forum became forgotten, was buried and used as a cattle pasture during the Middle Ages.

Our final visit of the day is the Coliseum. The real name was the Flavian Amphitheatre, after the emperors who built it in the first century A.D. The name Coliseum refers to the 'colossal' statue of Nero that at one time stood at the entrance. Originally on this spot stood a pool, around which was built Emperor Nero's famous 'Golden House.' The construction was completed with the help of Jewish slaves brought here in 70 A.D. The Coliseum served as the center for violent sports. We return to our hotel for dinner and the evening. (B, D)

### **WED, JUNE 10, DAY 9: ROME: PAPAL AUDIENCE & HISTORIC WALKING TOUR**

This morning, after breakfast, we make our way to Vatican City to attend the General Papal Audience with Pope Francis (subject to the Holy Father's schedule).

After some time for lunch on our own, we meet a local guide who will lead us on a walking tour of historic central Rome, starting with the beautiful Spanish Steps. Here on Via Veneto we will visit the famous "bone church" where the Capuchin friars arranged the bones of some 3,700 friars in an ornate fashion to remind the faithful that death awaits us all so we should live virtuous lives. We continue with a visit to the Trevi Fountain, where we toss our traditional three coins into the fountain to make our three wishes - one for love - one for money - and one to return to Rome.

Our next stop is the Basilica of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, housing the tomb of the St. Catherine of Siena. Here we celebrate Mass. Along with St. Francis, St. Catherine is a co-patron of Italy. We also visit the Pantheon, originally built to honor all the gods of Ancient Rome as well as the church of San Luigi dei Francesi with its three stunning paintings by Carravaggio and the Piazza Navona, with its beautiful fountains. Some may wish to stop in route for a gelato (an Italian ice cream) at the famous Giolitti's. Tonight we gather for a special farewell dinner at a local restaurant. (B, D)

#### **THU, JUNE 11, DAY 10: RETURN TO THE USA**

Early this morning we transfer to the Rome airport with our suitcases overflowing with memories of our Spiritual & Cultural Journey to Italy. (B)

Note: While no changes are anticipated, there may be unforeseen occasions when certain alterations become necessary to this itinerary, either due to changes in airline schedules or for other reasons.