

# Rome – The Modern Day Center for Roman Catholicism

## 8 days / 6 nights

“Roma, Roma, non basta una vita!” (Rome, Rome, one lifetime is not enough! Far more than just experiencing a new land or seeing new sights, our Pilgrimage to Italy takes us to the modern center of Roman Catholicism. Here we will reflect, become closer to God, and gratefully consider the sacrifices and dedication of those who have gone before. As we behold many sacred shrines and the holiest of places – Vatican City, the major basilicas of Rome and timeless works of art regarded as the most awe-inspiring and important of the world – we will renew our commitment to the roots of our Catholic faith. The masses and meditations we celebrate along the way will draw us together as a community. They will remind us of our blessings and the call to stewardship as followers of Jesus Christ.

### **Day 1: Departure from the USA**

*O Rome! My country! City of the soul! (Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, IV, st. 78)*

Our pilgrimage begins with an overnight flight to Rome, Italy.

### **Day 2: Arrival to Rome**

*When you are at Rome live in the Roman style; when you are elsewhere live as they live elsewhere. (Advice to Saint Augustine)*

Welcome to Rome! After arriving at our hotel, a little rest and relaxation might be in order. Or, for the more adventurous and energetic, suggested sights and walking trails can be provided upon request. This evening we celebrate mass in the community of our fellow pilgrims.

### **Day 3: Papal Audience, Vatican Museums and St. Peter's Basilica**

*Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee (Peter in Acts 3: 6).*

We greet the new day in a city nicknamed Caput Mundi (Capital of the World) and The Eternal City, not only because Rome has always been the hub of art, education, high culture and politics in the western world, but because it is also a spiritual capital and a powerful center of pilgrimage. We will first visit Vatican City to attend an Audience/Blessing with our Holy Father (if available), then we will tour the Vatican Museums which house what can be described as the most important collections of art in the world. The history and awe surrounding the galleries and all the treasures they contain will truly transfix us. Highlights include The Tapestry Gallery, The Raphael Rooms, and The Sistine Chapel where we will gaze on Michelangelo's incredible masterpiece. We will also enter St. Peter's Basilica which has the largest interior of any Christian church in the world and which has been described as the reason Rome is still the center of the civilized world. Tradition and historical evidence hold that St. Peter's tomb is directly below the altar of this basilica, which American Ralph Waldo Emerson described as an ornament of the earth... the sublime of the beautiful. Next we will have the chance to marvel at Bernini's beautiful bronze canopy and Michelangelo's Blessed Mother holding her crucified son, known as the Pieta. We will also see St. John Paul II's grave at the San Sebastiano chapel. Up until April 29th, 2011 the tomb of St. John Paul II was in the Vatican's crypt. With his beatification, his remains were transferred from the crypt to the basilica, as is tradition with popes, saints and the blessed and taken to the San Sebastiano chapel, next to Michaelangelo's Pietá. The remains of St. John Paul II are under this altar, covered with a gravestone and just four words: "Beatus Ioannes Paulus II." We will also have opportunity before dinner for individual exploration. Some might want to sit quietly at an outside café to take it all in while others will want to shop and savor the flavor of the "Eternal City."



#### **Day 4: The Major Basilicas**

*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Paul in Romans 1:17).*

Our day starts with Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major. The ceiling of this basilica is said to be decorated with gold that Columbus brought back from the new world. Santa Maria Maggiore, the largest in Rome dedicated to the Blessed Mother, is part of the day's "Christian Rome" tour, and has beautiful Biblical mosaics, a marble floor, bell tower and one of the oldest shrines (containing a relic from the manger of the infant Jesus) dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. We will also visit the Basilica of St. John Lateran which is the oldest of the major basilicas and ranks first as the actual "parish church" of the Pope (Bishop of Rome). There we will learn about the Scala Sancta (Holy Stairs). Tradition has it that these steps, said to be the staircase leading once to the praetorium of Pilate at Jerusalem, are sanctified by the footsteps of Jesus Christ during his Passion. Next, we'll see the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls which was founded by the Roman Emperor Constantine I over the burial place of Saint Paul. Other sites on today's itinerary include the oldest road from Roman times (the Appian Way), the Baths of Caracalla, the Arch of Drusus, and the ancient catacombs of Rome located on the outskirts of the city where early Christians hid themselves to avoid persecution. We will once again enjoy dinner and an overnight stay in Rome.



#### **Day 5: Journey to Montecassino and Pompeii**

*We are therefore about to establish a school of the Lord's service in which we hope to introduce nothing harsh or burdensome (Rule of Saint Benedict, prologue).*

Today we will travel about 80 miles southeast of Rome to the Abbey of Monte Cassino where St. Benedict established his first monastery, the source of the Benedictine Order, around 529. Upon arrival at the abbey we celebrate mass. During the battle of Monte Cassino (January-May 1944), the Abbey was almost completely destroyed when it was mistaken for a German stronghold (it was in fact a refuge for women and children). After the war, Montecassino was rebuilt and re-consecrated in 1964. Fortunately some 1,400 irreplaceable manuscripts were transferred to the Vatican at the beginning of this siege and thus were saved from destruction. We will continue by bus, enjoying a brief panoramic tour of Naples, before going on to Pompeii to witness the ruins of one of the most devastating volcanic eruptions in the history of the region. The eruption of Vesuvius in the year 79 A.D. covered the city of Pompeii with ashes. What is left of this ancient city, including some beautiful frescoes and mosaic floors, will give us a glimpse into that era and an idea of what was going on in the lives of Pompeii's inhabitants just moments before that catastrophic eruption. As the day draws to a close, St. Benedict's Rule "Let all be received as Christ" lingers in our hearts. We return to Rome for dinner and another overnight stay.



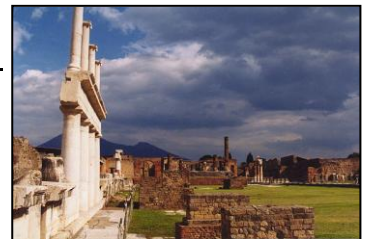
#### **Day 6: Rome at Leisure**

Today is at leisure in Rome. Perhaps this would be a good day to stroll around the city, do some shopping, or visit your own personal favorite Roman sites. If you would like to travel outside the city, you may select from a variety of optional tours. For those not opting for the sightseeing tours, our local escort will advise you of the possibilities of Mass at nearby churches. Dinner is on our own this evening, and our tour escort will have some suggestions on where to dine in the area.

#### **Day 7: St. Francis of Assisi**

*Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace (attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi).*

Assisi, the site of many a pilgrimage, lies in the Umbria region of Italy on the eastern flank of Monte Subasio. It is a very special spot on earth linked in legend with its native son, St. Francis, a gentle saint who founded the Franciscan order and is remembered as a great lover of nature (his sermon to an audience of birds is one of the best-loved sermons of his



life). While in Assisi, we celebrate mass and explore the huge 13-century basilica which contains many of the possessions of St. Francis and a series of frescoes depicting his life. We will also visit the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, the earliest extant church in Assisi, as well as the Basilica of Santa Chiara (St. Clare), where St. Clare who founded the Order of Poor Clares, followed in the humble ways of St. Francis. We end our tour of Assisi by visiting the tombs of St. Francis and St. Clare before heading back to Rome for our evening meal and our last night's stay.



### **Day 8: Depart for Home**

We will let the power of the holy places and priceless relics settle over us; then like other pilgrims of other times, go back to our lives with renewed faith and readiness.

We leave our hotel and head for the airport to return to the US.

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