

**Opening Holy Doors**  
**The Papal Foundation's 2016 Pilgrimage to Rome**  
By James Coffey

In 2016, The Papal Foundation traveled to Rome from April 6-April 9. It was again, a wonderful experience for everyone involved.

**A First Evening and a First Communion**

On Wednesday, April 6, Stewards and friends gathered for the opening Mass at the Basilica of St. Peter in Chains. This famous Church serves as the Titular Church of our Chairman, Cardinal Wuerl.

In his homily, Cardinal Wuerl focused the group on the fact that at the Mass, all of the attendees would “experience sacramentally the risen Jesus.”

A very special highlight of the Mass for all was seeing young Henry Truitt, grandson of Stewards Dave and Margie Hunter, receive his First Holy Communion from Cardinal Wuerl. In his closing remarks, the Cardinal suggested that many or all of us can remember our First Communion and encouraged Henry to always remember his.

Said proud grandparents, Dave and Margie Hunter, “To be with all the Stewards of Saint Peter here in Rome is so special. But to have our grandson Henry receive his First Communion here is beyond special!”

On Wednesday evening, the group continued on to a Welcome Reception at the St. Regis Hotel. There, over 60 St. John Paul II and Saeman Scholars were welcomed by Cardinal Wuerl, Bishop Bransfield, and the Stewards of St. Peter.

**Holy Doors Open at Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore**

On Thursday, April 7, Papal Foundation Stewards and guests were able to walk through the Holy Door of Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore. The morning began with a Service of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In his reflection, Cardinal Rigali reflected on the great gift of God's mercy. “The Easter gift of the risen Lord,” said the Cardinal, “is the Sacrament of Reconciliation, of Penance, of God's mercy.”

“Look at the Gospel,” he continued, “Jesus makes his Apostles transmitters of peace. The Apostles become forever the Easter gift of the Risen Christ. We celebrate this in this Year of Mercy.”

At Thursday morning’s Mass, Papal Foundation President, Bishop Michael Bransfield, encouraged the attendees to “view our whole lives as proclaimers of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Bishop Bransfield also drew on the experience of the reception from Wednesday evening. Bishop Bransfield connected the psalm from the Mass, “The Lord hears the cry of the poor” to the fact that the Stewards of The Papal Foundation hear the cry of the poor, responding in one among many ways with the Scholarship Program. Bishop Bransfield said, “Many of the Saeman Scholars come from poor countries, but through their studies and the Foundation’s help, they go back help those who live in even greater poverty.

### **Walking Through the Holy Doors at the Basilica of St. Paul**

On Thursday afternoon, some of the Stewards were able to gather as guests of James Cardinal Harvey at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls. After a short prayer service and an opportunity to walk through the Holy Doors and pray at the tomb of St. Paul, all returned to their hotels for the evening activities.

For many, the evening included a visit to the Pontifical North American College for the Annual Rector’s Dinner. The honorees included Archbishop Carlos Maria Vigano, outgoing Apostolic Nuncio to the United States of America, as well as Papal Foundation Stewards of Saint Peter, Steph and Tim Busch.

### **Opening Holy Doors for a Papal Audience**

On Friday morning, the group gathered in the St. Regis Hotel lobby with great anticipation of the planned Audience with our Holy Father. Upon arriving at the Sala Clementina, the Stewards of Saint Peter were led in the Rosary by members of The Papal Foundation Board of Trustees. Shortly after finishing the Rosary, the moment had arrived. The Papal Attendants opened the grand wooden doors, and our Holy Father, Pope Francis, entered. The applause was as thunderous as it was spontaneous.

Cardinal Wuerl began his remarks that this day marked the day that His Holiness has issued *Amoris Laetitia*, the Holy Father's Apostolic Exhortation. The Cardinal commented the *Joy of Love* written by Pope Francis echoed the joy of love in the hearts of the Stewards of Saint Peter as they accompany our Holy Father in his mission.

The Cardinal also noted that The Papal Foundation's 2016 gift for grants and scholarships equaled \$10 million dollars.

Pope Francis then went on to thank and acknowledge the Stewards of Saint Peter of The Papal Foundation. Connecting our pilgrimage to the Year of Mercy, our Holy Father noted, "The year your pilgrimage takes place within the Jubilee of Mercy, during which we contemplate the mystery of mercy, that wellspring of joy, serenity and peace upon which our salvation depends (cf *Misericordiae Vultus*, 2) ...As Members, Trustees, and Stewards of The Papal Foundation, the works of mercy are at the heart of your mission...your charity reverberates throughout the world, offering new initiatives that help to extend the merciful embrace of the Father."

Pope Francis concluded his remarks by turning to St. Paul who reminds us to "never grow tired of doing good." (cf *Gal 6:9*; *2 Thess 3:13*). "May our heavenly Father sustain you in your good works, but above all, may He lead you to an ever deeper faith and experience of His unending love. Know that my prayers and blessing go with you and please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!"

On Friday evening, our guests gathered for a guided tour of the Basilica St. John Lateran. Good friend to The Papal Foundation, Sr. Emmanuela, gave not just a tour, but what some Stewards called a "mini-mediation."

### **Another Door to Offer Our Service**

Shortly after our tour, Cardinal Wuerl led the group in prayers and in walking through the Holy Door at the Basilica of St. John Lateran. During Mass and his homily, the Cardinal asked for the help of young Taylor, Hunter and Henry Truitt. The young children came to the podium to voice the message of the young lad in

that day's Gospel, i.e. that the Lord doesn't ask us to do miracles, but to offer what we have for the service of others.

Following Mass, the group gathered for a reception and dinner in the Lateran Palace. In toasting our Holy Father, Steward Trustee and newly elected Treasurer Wayne Murdy celebrated the great Pope that we have for our time. Bishop Bransfield's remarks included noting our three new Steward couples who could not be with us in Rome: Joe and Sue Ellen Canizaro of New Orleans, Kathy and Ward Fitzgerald of Haverford, PA and Robin and Jack Hake of Edwardsville, IL.

On Saturday morning, many of the Stewards eagerly gathered back at the St. Regis Hotel to view their photos of the Papal Audience.

Later on, those who could join in made a visit to the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia campus, Villaggio Betania in Bracciano, Italy. There our guests heard about the Sisters' efforts to renovate the main building, the Convent and the Chapel.

### **One Last Holy Door to Send Us Home**

The group returned for a Vigil Mass at St. Peter's Basilica and the opportunity to walk through the Holy Door of the last of the four major Basilicas in Rome.

In the evening, the group was able to visit the famous Pauline Chapel which is rarely if ever open to the public and to view Michelangelo's two frescos, The Conversion of St. Paul and The Crucifixion of St. Peter.

The staff of The Papal Foundation sends its great appreciation to all of the Stewards of Saint Peter and to all who made the 2016 pilgrimage so memorable.

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