

## ROME WRAP 2017

James Coffey

The Papal Foundation traveled to Rome from April 26-29, 2017. It was again, a wonderful experience for everyone involved.

On Wednesday, April 26, following the meeting of the Board of Trustees of The Papal Foundation, the 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. Shortly before Mass, Cardinal Wuerl led the group in prayers at the Church doors for the dedication of the statue, "When I Was Naked." The Sculptor Timothy Schmalz also offered a few words and his thanks to all present.

In his homily for Mass, Cardinal Wuerl pointed out that while in Rome, *"we reaffirm our faith and we recognize that with the Eucharist we have new life in Christ."* The Cardinal went on to say that we are part of a chain of living witnesses that says, *"Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. For 20 centuries, Christians have been saying this. We, like the Apostles, want to tell our family and friends and everyone!"*

A special highlight of the Mass was the Sacrament of Confirmation conferred on Michael Spadea by Cardinal Wuerl. Michael is the godson of our new Stewards John and Aileen Crowley. *"To see our godson receive his Confirmation from Cardinal Wuerl in Rome was a great gift for Aileen and me," said John, "and one we will always remember."*

On Wednesday evening, the group continued on to a Welcome Reception at the Westin Excelsior Hotel. Cardinal Wuerl, Bishop Bransfield, the Board of Trustees, Stewards welcomed more than 70 Saint John Paul II Saeman Scholars from over ten countries. Speaking also for her husband John, Carol Saeman said to the Saeman Scholars, *"Continue with what you are doing for the Church. We are so proud of you."*

### **Papal Audience**

The morning began with an optional reflection on the upcoming Sunday Gospel. Said Stewards Louise and Jim Nolen of Berwyn, PA, noted that *"the Gospel Reflection was a great way for us to start the morning before we saw the Holy Father. It was a chance to stop and think about what the Gospel was saying to each of us personally, to benefit from the insights of others, and to share each of our prayer intentions. We invite others to join the Gospel Reflection when The Papal Foundation gathers again."*

Finally, the time for our Papal Audience had arrived. Because of increased security procedures around the Vatican, Foundation members and guests gathered in St. Peter Square under one of

the Colonnades, undeterred by a little rain. All made their way through the famous Bronze Doors, up the stairs, and into the Sala Clementina. As has been the custom, the group took some quiet time in the saying of the Rosary. Caroline Bortle, granddaughter of Stewards Carol and John Saeman offered reflections written in honor of her cousin, Courtney Saeman.

Just before the Rosary was finished, the group sensed something was about to happen. The Papal Attendants closed the grand wooden doors. When the doors reopened, Pope Francis entered the room. The applause was as instantaneous as it was thunderous.

Cardinal Wuerl began his remarks by assuring our Holy Father of the love and fidelity of the Trustees and Stewards of The Papal Foundation. The Cardinal also noted that The Papal Foundation's 2017 gift for grants and scholarships totaled \$10 million.

After thanking The Papal Foundation members for their *"desire to assist the Church's efforts to proclaim the Gospel message of hope to the ends of the earth,"* Pope Francis said, *"I ask you, as a vital part of your commitment to the work of The Papal Foundation, to pray for the needs of the poor, the conversion of hearts, the spread of the Gospel and the Church's growth in holiness and missionary zeal. And I ask you, please, do not forget to pray for me!"*

Following the audience, we returned to St. Patrick Church for Mass celebrated by Bishop Bransfield. The Bishop encouraged the attendees to *"pray for the Holy Father on his journey to Egypt, a journey out to the people just as Peter and the Apostles had made."*

On Thursday afternoon, several Stewards attended a presentation hosted by Papal Foundation Treasurer, Wayne Murdy, and Investment Advisor to The Papal Foundation, Steven Schott. It was the first such presentation on The Papal Foundation's investments. We believe there will be more of these opportunities.

Thursday evening was the much-awaited Rector's Dinner at the North American College, attended by many of the Stewards of Saint Peter and their guests.

### **Reconciliation Service**

Friday morning's Reconciliation Service was led by Fr. Tony Finn, OSA, pastor of St. Patrick Church. Fr. Finn's homily spoke to the heart of our time in Rome, *"We have come to the Eternal City. Let us ask God to heal us by his mercy."*

Following the Reconciliation Service, many of the Stewards eagerly gathered back at the Excelsior Hotel to view their photos of the Papal Audience, always a highlight of our time in Rome. Friday afternoon brought a variety of tour options including visits to Tre Fontane, the EWTN Rome Bureau Office, and the world famous Scavi Tour.

## **St. John Lateran**

Friday Evening, the group met for Mass at St. John Lateran Basilica. During Mass and his homily, Cardinal Wuerl asked for the help of Riley, Sean, and Brady Davis, grandchildren to Stewards Jim and Jackie Davis of Denver. The young children echoed the voice of the young lad in that day's Gospel. 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 Frank Hanna noted that our time with the Pope is an opportunity to truly know the hope that the Holy Father shows to the world through our faith in Jesus.

## **New Stewards**

Cardinal Wuerl, Bishop Bransfield and all of the Stewards showed their expressed appreciation for the Stewards of Saint Peter who were welcomed as Stewards for the first time, including:

Kathy and Ed Bernau, Jim and Felicia Coffey, John and Aileen Crowley, Sally and Leonard Leo, Kathy and Ward Fitzgerald, Den and Lynne Jilot, Lannette and Scott Turrichi, and Marian and Michael Shaughnessy (whose certificate was accepted by their daughters Anne and Kate.)

Saturday events included additional tours of the Swiss Guard Barracks, the Vatican Gardens, and time spent with seminarians of the North American College.

Steward Kathy Craft reflected, *"Our time with Sr. Emmanuela in the Vatican Gardens was a great grace. Sr. Emmanuela gives not just a tour, but what some Stewards have called, a 'mini meditation.'"*

Bishop Bransfield celebrated Saturday evening's Vigil Mass at the Basilica of St. Gregory. Immediately following Mass, Stewards and guests who were present enjoyed receiving a blessing of a relic of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta in the convent where Mother would stay when in Rome.

Papal Foundation family member, Dawn Marie Schwappach echoed the many wonderful compliments given by various Stewards when she said, *"To be able to step through the spiritual and physical history of Rome was both impressive and inspiring. What an awesome blessing for our family."*

The staff of The Papal Foundation sends its great appreciation to all of the Stewards of Saint Peter and to all who made the 2017 pilgrimage so memorable.