

CATHOLIC EDUCATION: A GLOBAL EXPERIENCE

Through study-abroad programs, students at Catholic colleges and universities see the world through the lens of the Faith.



Studying in Rome gives young people a chance to live and learn in 'the heart of Catholicism.'

> PAGE 2B



Immersion programs help students see the important role Ireland has played in the history of the Church.

> PAGE 15B



Students learn how to apply lessons of service, theology after time spent in Mexico and South America.

> PAGE 5B

ROME

Studying in the 'heart of Catholicism'

Students, educators share what it's like to live and learn in Rome

By Katie Yoder

When 21-year-old Elisabeth McGovern studied abroad in Rome last year, the experience transformed her — as a student and as a Catholic.

"Rome made Christ's presence in every aspect of life visible," the college senior from Chicago told Our Sunday Visitor. "Jesus is physically present in the churches found every half block; he is manifest in the countless holy people you encounter in class, on the streets and in your friends; he is victorious in the pagan temples converted to Catholic churches; he is known in our prayer and study."

McGovern, who is majoring in actuarial science, applied mathematics and Catholic studies, flew to the Eternal City as a part of the Catholic Studies in Rome program at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota.

As the university's Catholic Studies Rome program director, David Foote oversees the program offered to Catholic Studies majors and minors each spring semester. The university also offers programs that take place in the fall and in January.

"One of the things that our students really look forward to is, they're going to the very heart of Catholicism," described



Foote, who is also the associate professor in Catholic studies.

The entire city serves as a Catholic classroom for students, U.S. educators agreed while highlighting the value of learning there.

"I think it's impossible to be in Rome and not encounter something — if not a thousand things — that have been influenced by Catholicism," Robert Dowden, director of international programs at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., said. He pointed to everything from the architecture and fashion to the Vatican and the local people.

At Catholic University's Rome Center, students can study abroad in the fall and spring semesters, as well as in the summer. The same is true at the Rome campus run by University of Mary based in Bismarck, North Dakota.

While studying abroad, students experience education in a new, hands-on way, said Leroy Huizenga, associate dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at University of Mary.

"It's one thing to learn about Rome or St. Benedict or the Catholic faith in the U.S. It's quite another to do so at the historic sites like Monte Cassino or the Vatican itself," he said. "The subject matter of each course comes alive."

Resuming after the pandemic

All three programs in Rome halted in spring 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic surged through the country — and the entire world. The Catholic University of America, St. Thomas and University of Mary sent students home.

Now, three years later, the programs are back up and running. In fall 2021, University of Mary resumed full operations. Catholic University sent a limited number of students to Italy at that time and, this semester, it is welcoming a record number of students to its Rome Center.

St. Thomas' Catholic Studies Rome program resumed in Spring 2022. The program is the same, Foote said. The only difference now is a lower number of participating students. He expects next year will be back to normal.

Academic value

For their students in Rome, each university anchors its curriculum to the city.

Catholic University offers a liberal-arts intensive curriculum with regular semester courses divided into three areas: ancient Rome, Christian Rome, and modern and contemporary Rome. The courses are in art, literature, philosophy and theology.

University of Mary students can enroll in similar classes at their university's Rome campus, with courses in art, philosophy, history, theology, classics and Catholic studies. The course names reflect the focus on Rome, with titles such as "Art of Italy" and "Grandeur of Rome."

At St. Thomas, students

take two theology classes and a Catholic studies "topics in Rome" course at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican university also known as the "Angelicum." They also participate in a separate art history course on the Sistine Chapel.

All three programs include Italian language courses.

Cultural value

The Rome programs invite students to engage with Italian culture as they learn.

University of Mary promises excursions to St. Peter's Basilica, the Vatican Museums, and even an audience with Pope Francis. St. Thomas' Bernardi Campus recommends students explore local beaches, open markets and Italian food.

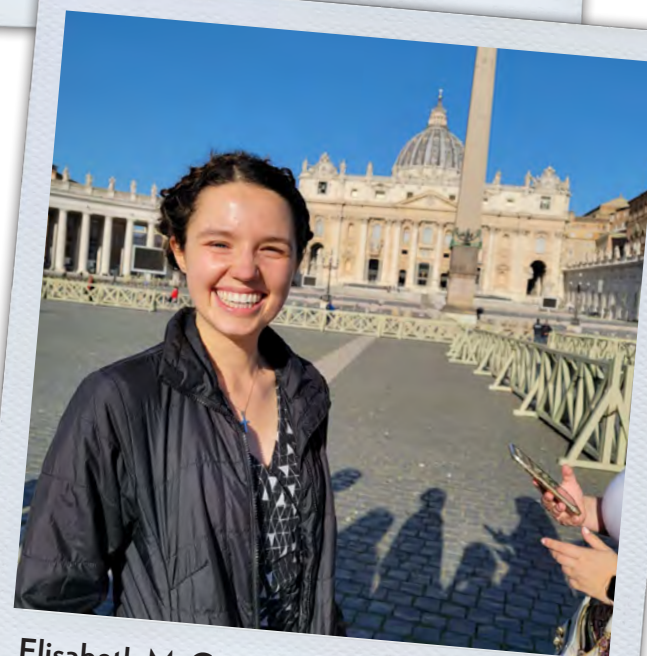
With Catholic University, students can participate in pasta- or pizza-making classes and intern with Church and secular organizations.

These programs also encour-



A group from the University of St. Thomas

Courtesy photo



Elisabeth McGovern, a student at the University of St. Thomas, poses in front of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Courtesy photo



Students from the University of Mary attend a Mass in Assisi, Italy.

Courtesy photo

Continued on Page 4B



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Continued from
Page 2B

age students to encounter the locals by serving those in need. Foote highlighted the struggle of refugees seeking safety in Rome; St. Thomas students can serve them by volunteering with the Missionaries of Charity. At Catholic University, students participate in service opportunities with local organizations of faith, Dowden said.

Outside of Rome, St. Thomas and Catholic University offer side trips to destinations such as Assisi. Catholic University and University of Mary allow students to travel to other European countries.

Spiritual value

All three Rome programs have their own chapels — in addition to the many churches in Rome that, Foote said, overwhelm students with their number and beauty.

University of Mary's program involves regular Mass and sacraments on its Rome campus, Huizenga said. Students also interact and learn from seminarians and chaplains from the Pontifical North American College.

St. Thomas provides a team of chaplains who offer spiritual direction, Mass and confession. Highlights include a spiritual retreat at the nearby Castel Gandolfo and the chance to participate in the station liturgies, which Foote described as a Lenten tradition dating back to the Middle Ages.

Catholic University offers Sunday Mass, occasional daily Mass and student-led opportunities, including the Liturgy of the Hours and the Rosary. Seminarians and deacons from the Pontifical North American College assist with the campus ministry.

Their students can also take part in religious celebrations and traditions that take place in Rome. Among other things, they have the opportunity to attend liturgies led by the pope and meet Church leaders and theologians.

Personal growth and friendship

U.S. educators and students said that one of their favorite parts



Students from the University of Mary pose at the Vatican. Courtesy photo



Students study classic works of art while studying in Italy. Courtesy photo

about the Rome program is the opportunity for lifelong friendships and personal growth.

"Living in Rome with my classmates, falling in love with the city, the culture, and the Church with them has given me friends that I know will be with me for the rest of my life and beyond," Wyatt Parks from Stafford, Virginia, a senior at the University of Mary studying philosophy, bioethics and Catholic studies, said of his time in Italy last spring.

His classmate, Gabe Fanning, from Martin, South Dakota, saw his life change after traveling to Rome in the fall of 2021.

"When I look back on my time in Rome, the more that I realize that Rome was not something that was designed for only the academic aspects, but it was also so designed to transform the students into better people," the junior majoring in politics and philosophy and minoring in Catholic studies said. Through his university's program, he experienced the Church's traditions and history to become, he said, someone "radically in love with Christ."

Katie Yoder is a contributing editor for *Our Sunday Visitor*.

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MEXICO AND SOUTH AMERICA

Learning solidarity in a foreign country

Church history in other countries shows the importance of living in the light of the Gospel

By Paul Senz

One of the goals of a college education is to broaden one's horizons and understanding, and to be more aware of the global society we live in today. For many students, one way this is accomplished is through study-abroad programs.

Marcus Mescher is associate professor of Christian ethics in the Department of Theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati. He took students on faculty-led programs to El Salvador in May 2015 and March 2020, and he will be returning with a new group this March.

The program in El Salvador is framed by a semester-long course focusing on the connection between Christian faith



and solidarity. Students prepare for the program by reading the letters and homilies of St. Oscar Romero, the Salvadoran bishop who was martyred in 1980. Students learn about the history of the Church in that country, including others who were martyred for their faith; once there, they visit the sites where these events happened.

Students are hosted by the Jesuit University of El Salvador (the UCA) through the Centro Ignacio Ellacuría, named for the Jesuit university president murdered for his vociferous critique of a military regime that

killed 75,000 civilians in the 1980s. Here they learn about "a faith that does justice" by accompanying Salvadorans in rural parts of the country, Mescher said. This accompaniment is not just theoretical, but takes shape in the real world.

"Here they get to witness how community is formed, what it takes to empower leadership at the local level, and how they can use their studies at the UCA to help solve problems Salvadorans face, whether it's access to clean water or building a computer lab and helping to teach digital literacy skills," Mescher told Our Sunday Visitor.

Grappling with theology

After their time in El Salvador, the second half of the semester is spent processing what they experienced and strategizing how these lessons can be translated to the context of the United States.

"The trip is focused on the

possibilities and limits of solidarity with the people of El Salvador, but also drawing on our time there to inform our efforts to overcome social distrust and division here in the U.S.," Mescher said.

The turbulent history of the Church in El Salvador gives students the opportunity "to confront the ways that the Gospel gets domesticated in our time and place," Mescher said. "It is powerful to stand in the UCA rose garden where the Jesuits were dragged in the

middle of the night and killed (after enduring campus bombings and death threats on the radio and newspaper for years), to visit Romero's home

Continued on Page 6B



Students from Xavier University pose in El Salvador. Courtesy photo

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Continued from Page 5B

and pray at the chapel where he was assassinated." The trip feels like a pilgrimage to especially holy places, he said.

The study-abroad program also makes it possible for the students to collaborate with students at the UCA and local Church leaders, many of whom were inspired by the sacrifices of these martyrs. In the face of gang violence, extortion, government corruption, high rates of unemployment, domestic violence and more societal ills, these local ecclesial communities offer support and encouragement, and the students from Xavier University are proud to collaborate in these efforts.

"It is a less parish-centered and more of a people-centered vision of learning from and aspiring to emulate Jesus' teaching and healing ministry," Mescher said.

Mescher and his students were in El Salvador in March 2020, so the trip was cut short due to lockdowns and travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Until this semester, it hasn't been possible to offer the course again. However, going forward, the program will continue in full force, and the collaboration of Xavier and the UCA goes on.

The topic of solidarity was particularly attractive to Samantha Mossing, who graduated from Xavier in 2022, and went to El Salvador with Dr. Mescher in 2020. Not only does the country have a history that has been greatly impacted by United States involvement, but she felt she should challenge the notions of El Salvador as

"dangerous," "poor," and generally "troubled."

"I was seeking an immersive experience that would broaden my perspective on the various issues that theology should grapple with," Mossing said.

Mossing saw this trip as "more like a pilgrimage, an encounter, a spiritual experience, and an opportunity to build relationships that I never could have had otherwise." The history of the Church in El Salvador, particularly the activity of the Jesuits, as well as St. Oscar Romero, also drew her attention and helped draw her into the program.

Studying across the border

The University of St. Thomas in Houston has also resumed its study-abroad programs around the world, while continuing to monitor risk factors in destination countries and any new travel restrictions that may be imposed.

"One of four key pillars to 'Greater Things' (our strategic vision for 2030) is to accelerate our standing as a global innovator in Catholic higher education," said Hans Stockton, associate vice president for international relations and engagement at the University of St. Thomas. "This includes expanding curricular, student, and faculty virtual and in-person exchange and collaboration with our old and new partners throughout the world."

These opportunities abound at the University of St. Thomas. In recent years, students have studied abroad in countries including Argentina, Australia, Chile, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Japan, Taiwan, Mexico,

Costa Rica and more.

Stockton recently returned from a visit to the Pontifical University of Mexico and John Paul II Junior College in Belize. The university has been engaging sister Catholic universities throughout the world and particularly in the Americas, Stockton said.

As the University of St. Thomas is a Catholic institution, the study-abroad programs do have a particularly Catholic bent to them, although each is different. "Each trip has its particularities in terms of faculty expertise, subject and location," Stockton said, "but our faculty-led studies abroad have in common intentional learning, action and contemplation instructed by the intellectual tradition and teachings of the Church."

Over spring break, the International Studies Program will lead students to Argentina as part of a class on food security and economic development. Additionally, students from UST's pioneering Pragmatic Studies Program will travel to Belize this summer and conduct service projects with the San Pedro Roman Catholic Church and St. Theresa's Casita Parish Ministry there.

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns meant that the study-abroad programs were shuttered for a time, but they are back in full swing now.

"While ever vigilant about the health and safety of our students, we are back to full speed with our study-abroad programs and activities," Stockton said.

Paul Senz writes from Oklahoma.



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SPAIN

Care for the whole person

Spain study abroad aligns with Jesuit mission

By Katie Yoder

Students who study abroad in Spain not only immerse themselves in the Spanish culture but also live out Jesuit values in a concrete way, according to Jesuit educators with international programs in that country.

“The Jesuit mission has always sought to engage with people of all cultures, value systems and faith traditions,” Emma Meade, assistant director of study abroad at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, told Our Sunday Visitor. “Study abroad gives our students the opportunity to reflect and engage more profoundly with the world as global citizens.”

International programs offer students more than classes or the opportunity to travel, Ashley Jost, interim director for Student Affairs at Saint Louis — Madrid Campus (SLU-Madrid), said.



Spain, she emphasized, is “also a place where we take very seriously the need to cultivate and care for the whole person, which is a Jesuit tradition.”

SLU-Madrid, Holy Cross and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., make up three Jesuit schools that promise an experience different from the typical study abroad program in Spain: Their students attend full-fledged international campuses.

SLU-Madrid serves as the European campus of Saint Louis University in St. Louis. Students can earn entire undergraduate or graduate degrees there — or study abroad there for a sum-

mer, semester or full academic year. The university welcomes students from its sister campus and other U.S. universities. The primary language of instruction is English, and students can choose to live in residence halls or with host families.

College of the Holy Cross partners with three different universities in Spain. Its students can enroll at Universidade da Coruña, Universidad de Granada and Universidad de León. At all three institutions, students learn in Spanish and have the opportunity to stay with local families in that country.

Students in the Georgetown in Madrid program directly enroll at either the Universidad Complutense or Universidad Pontificia Comillas. The students must already know Spanish and have the option to stay with host families.

Resuming after the pandemic

All study abroad programs

run by Holy Cross, including in Spain, came to a halt in spring 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, in spring 2021, it began to send a limited number of students abroad once again.

Today, Meade says, interest in their programs abroad is “stronger than ever!” Since the

pandemic, they have grown, expanding their programs in Spain to include Universidad de Granada.

SLU-Madrid temporarily pivoted to online courses during the pandemic, while Georgetown University suspended study abroad programs at different points, a spokes-



Students from the College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts hold up flags in front of the cathedral in León, Spain. Courtesy photo

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The Madrid skyline features the Santa Maria la Real de La Almudena Cathedral, which students are able to visit as part of their immersive experience. Adobe Stock

person there said. It started moving forward with select study abroad programs again in fall 2021.

A Spanish immersion

At Holy Cross, students experience Spanish culture firsthand, from taking courses in Spanish to living with local families.

“Our programs in Spain are particularly special because of the language immersion aspect,” Meade stressed, adding that her favorite part of administering study abroad programs in Spain is seeing how much students improve linguistically.

Their students also learn side-by-side with Spanish students at their host universities.

“This gives our students a real taste of what education looks like in Spain, and what college life is ‘really like’ for Spanish students,” Meade said.

Outside of the classroom, Meade added, Holy Cross has a network of host families across the country “who take great pride in introducing our students to Spanish culture and family life.”

SLU-Madrid also promises a cultural experience, inviting study abroad students to stroll through the Buen Retiro park or attend a theater production on Gran Vía. The campus encourages students to visit the city’s world-class museums, street festivals and athletic offerings.

Students learn both inside and outside of the country. At SLU-Madrid, Shakespeare students tour his childhood home and see the Royal Shakespeare

Company perform in Stratford-Upon-Avon, England, while earth science students have the opportunity to study coastal ecology in the Mediterranean Sea.

With Georgetown University, students can take part in optional cultural and social activities with Spanish mentors, attend dance or theater performances, cooking or wine-tasting classes, and group dinners. They explore Madrid by engaging with local organizations, sports and community service.

Service opportunities

At SLU-Madrid, Jost said that volunteer activities and opportunities are considered just as — if not more — important than other extracurriculars.

The university partners with dozens of organizations for service opportunities, Jost said, from environmental groups to organizations that aid victims of domestic violence. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, the school matches each individual student to a cause he or she cares about.

“Service learning is a really big part of the Jesuit mission to care for the whole person,” Jost said. “You’re becoming an international human and in the process you’re becoming culturally aware of differences and all the things that make international travel so special — but, physically, through the lens of being and caring for others.”

Katie Yoder is a contributing editor for Our Sunday Visitor.

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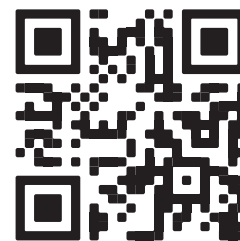
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ENGLAND

Experiencing a bigger world an ocean away

Studying in England opens horizons, deepens faith for students

By Joseph R. LaPlante

Catholic colleges and universities have reinvigorated options for students to study abroad in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that literally shut down the world in 2020 and 2021.

Hundreds of students with good grades and stellar reputations as scholars on their campuses are again spending a semester or a full year abroad from Italy to England, Mexico to Portugal, Costa Rica to Thailand, and dozens of other locations.

"The goal is cultural emergence," said Kamryn Moore, education abroad coordinator in the International Services Department at Saint Louis University in Missouri.

Moore studied abroad when she was an undergraduate. She studied international human rights in Thailand, Costa Rica and Ecuador, so she knows firsthand the benefits of "exploring interests that would not have been available" on a student's home campus.

Saint Louis University has some 800 students studying abroad, including 10 to 12 each semester in England in a program operated by Fordham University at Blackfriars Hall at Ox-



ford University.

"Our students majoring in theology, philosophy and history explore their interests in an in-depth way through their courses and excursions," Moore told Our Sunday Visitor. "Cultural emergence was good for me."

A deepening of faith

Cultural emergence benefited Justin T. Andries, a Providence College senior due to graduate in May — one of a number of Providence students who studied in England and created an individual major to accommodate his academic interests when he went abroad.

As a freshman, Andries majored in biology, but his interests expanded into Black Studies over his subsequent academic years. He created Global Health Equity as his major through the fourth semester of the Development of Western Civilization Program, which consists of a team-taught,

Continued on Page 12B



A look at the Blackfriars Permanent Private Hall and Dominican House of Studies in Oxford, England. Flickr/Pjposullivan

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Colloquia extends the interdisciplinary approach beyond the humanities to relate western history and culture to histories and cultures beyond the west.

"Being in a different country, I was comparing other health care systems to the United States' health care system and looking for ways that both could improve," Andries told Our Sunday Visitor.

He found that pursuing his Catholic faith in England by attending Mass in various churches and seeing religious works of art, from stained glass windows to architecture to statuary, changed his perspective.

"I got a little closer to God as I opened my eyes to how big the world is," he said.

Christian Wilwohl, dean of Global Education at Providence College, told Our Sunday Visitor, "The second semester Western Civilization study in London has played an integral role in the Western Civilization program. It is an ideal location to go and explore how London contributed from the Age of Exploration to current times."

"It is interesting for students to get another perspective that can help them strengthen their faith and spirituality."

Finding confidence abroad

Julia Zgurzynski, now a senior, left the Providence, Rhode Island, campus for her junior year abroad in England to explore her major through the school's highly regarded Western Civilization program.

"I love English literature, Victorian literature and poetry," she told Our Sunday Visitor. "One of the coolest museums that I visited a few times had preserved the Victorian period in its rooms."

Zgurzynski said the experience abroad "helped me feel more confident about going to new places." She is applying to master's degree programs in Europe in philosophy with a goal of eventually earning a doctorate of philosophy from a European

university.

"Studying in England definitely strengthened my faith by attending Mass with other students from other countries and going to Mass in various churches and seeing differences in other churches," she said.

With 13 Providence students in London now, the program is looking strong, Wilwohl said.

"We held an information session (recently) and 25 students attended," he said.

Hannah Bechtold, international programs coordinator at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan,

said the school's study abroad program "has struggled to return to its pre-pandemic operations." The school does have several students abroad now and offers shorter study abroad opportunities this spring.

Currently, 12 Aquinas students are studying abroad — mostly in Ireland, but also in France and Argentina. "We also have two short-term trips happening in May (one to Ireland, one to Sweden and Finland) which students still have time to sign up for."

The England study abroad program is sought after by Aquinas students.

"We partner with St. Mary's University (Twickenham, London) to provide a semester-long study abroad program for students," Bechtold told Our Sunday Visitor. "Our students appreciate taking courses that apply to their general education or elective credits in a setting where they can be abroad but also understand the language."

"While some of our other study abroad programs offer internship opportunities, most of the students who hope to go next fall mentioned the internship component as one of the main reasons they were interested in going to England. Students seem to be thinking more about their future careers and taking steps that will either set them apart or provide them with a unique perspective. Studying abroad is a good way to do both and is part of our college's vision to prepare the whole person to lead a life of purpose and success in service to a just and sustainable world."

Joseph R. LaPlante writes from Rhode Island.

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FRANCE

Immersion program offers a deep dive into a new culture

By Maryann Gogniat Eidemiller

St. Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania, started its study-abroad program to Ambialet, France, in 2008. This year, Theresa Horner, chair of the Department of Public Health and an assistant professor, is currently with 11 students who signed up for the three-month semester based in a centuries-old former Franciscan friary.

"The experience is one of total immersion," she said. "Living in Ambialet allows students to engage daily in activities that foster interactions with village residents. The priory chef, Silvi, introduces the students to wonderful French cuisine. A simple walk into the village fosters conversations in both French and English with community members, the owner of a local café and even the mayor."

There are outings and field trips to Albi, Toulouse, Paris and Barcelona, and to historical and religious sites that foster a deeper understanding of Catholicism. For students in health



care majors, public health excursions visit local schools, nursing homes and psychiatric facilities. That aligns with the university's mission and encourages students to emulate St. Francis by serving the needs of others. All students take a course on early and medieval Church history and architecture, and they visit several cathedrals.

Leona Horner, director of the Office of Study Away, participated in past programs as a student and as a professional at the university.

"These experiences open the students' eyes to be able to see how important Catholicism is in France and how similar and yet

different the culture is in comparison to Loretto," she said.

"Studying abroad is a priceless experience that not only helps students learn about new places and cultures, but they meet new people and gain a global perspective while having so much fun. Students learn to adapt, expand their communications or foreign language skills, and grow outside of their comfort zone."

Eric Sepich, director of the Ambialet program, had his student experience in 2009.

"Studying abroad is truly life changing," he said. "Getting to see cultures and traditions different from our own, we can't help but be moved."

Una Banovic, a senior biology major from Pittsburgh, is currently in France, where, she noted, people are more laid back and relaxed than in America.

"We're always doing one thing after another, keeping ourselves so busy," she said. "Studying abroad has made me see my own life from a different perspective. The trip has



Una Banovic, a senior, takes a selfie in France. Courtesy photo

definitely made me better appreciate the beauty of Catholic churches and traditions. I am of the Eastern Orthodox faith, and I have noticed many similarities between both religions. I am very fascinated by the differences, as well."

Brett Thaler from Altoona, Pennsylvania, a junior nursing major, chose St. Francis because studying abroad was an experience that he wanted to incorpo-

rate in his nursing plans. He was in the program last semester.

"I gained a lot of new knowledge on many things, including how different cultures conduct day-to-day life compared to us, and how different people interact in different places," he said. "Going on this trip was one of the best decisions I ever made."

Maryann Gogniat Eidemiller writes from Pennsylvania.

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IRELAND

Learning important lessons from the past

Experiences studying in the Emerald Isle give students a glimpse of the country's Catholic history

By Maryann Gogniat Eidemiller

When Michael Taylor visited Scotland 31 years ago, he took side trips to Northern Ireland, where in 1972, Bloody Sunday erupted in the country's ethno-nationalist conflict.

"A car bomb exploded when we stepped off the boat. I didn't know that The Troubles were still going on," he said, referring to what the three-decadeslong conflict was called.

Taylor is associate professor of education and director of Catholic Studies for Graduate Education at the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. Several years ago, he started leading students in study-abroad programs to Ireland. It's an opportunity, he said, for them to experience the great history and culture that's become a beacon for peace and reconciliation.

"It's not just getting a sense of Christian unity," he added. "We want them to experience different traditions and different faith traditions."

A different culture

The University of Mary's program in Ireland and North Ireland will be held in May. The itinerary is filled with history, tours, faith, culture and



education, including a theology course on the apologetics and fiction of C.S. Lewis.

In solidarity with the university's Benedictine roots, staff and students will live in a monastic tradition of traveling together, praying and eating together, and reaching out in community service. There will be prayer and worship in both Catholic and Protestant churches, and a visit to a rock in the woods where Catholics under persecution in the 1700s secretly celebrated Mass.

Students stay at a Carmelite retreat facility, a historical home and at other universities. Day trips will take them to cemeteries, museums, prisons, restaurants, pubs, gardens and places that Pope John Paul II visited. One stop is at a monument to the Choctaw people who donated food during the Irish famine of the 1840s.

John MacLeod of Grand Forks, North Dakota, graduated in December with majors in history and Catholic studies. He now works in admissions at the university.

"I think the biggest thing for me when I went to Ireland last May was just seeing how faith is lived out in different ways," he said. "It was good to see how both communities get along very well now, that age-old enemies from Britain and Ireland have grown to see each other as not much different than the other. That's a lesson for a lot of us. This



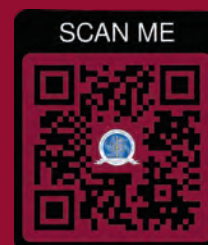
Christendom students pose in front of Celtic cross. Courtesy photo

Continued on
Page 16B

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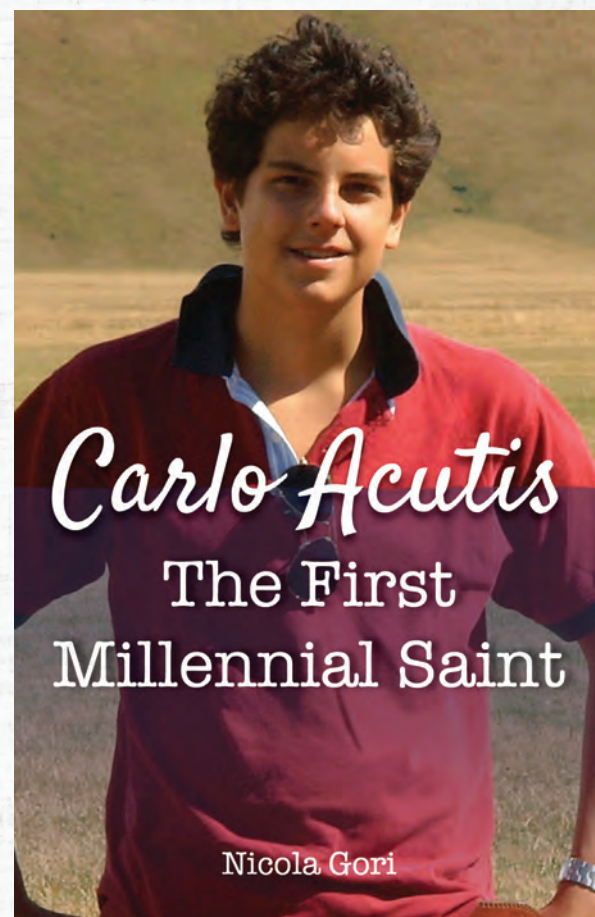


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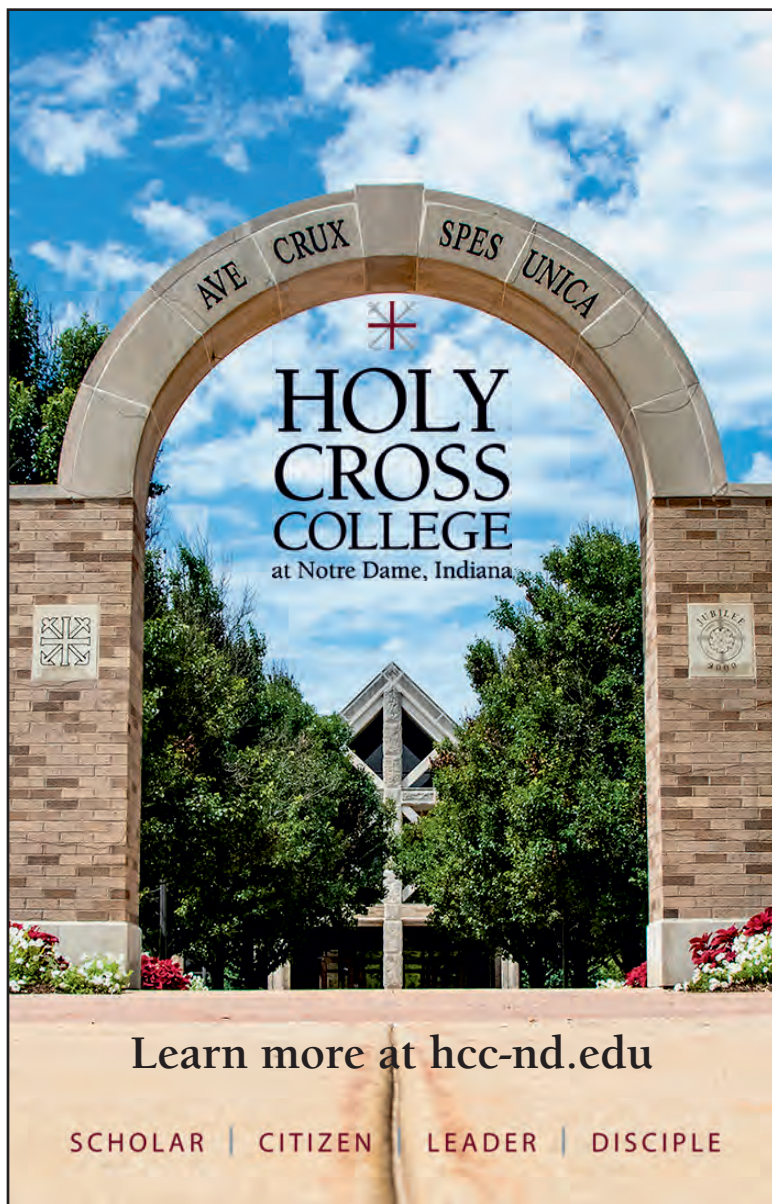
Pope Francis wrote that Carlo Acutis' witness "indicates to today's young people that true happiness is found by putting God in first place and serving him in our brothers and sisters, especially the least."

Carlo died in 2006 at the age of 15. He was declared venerable in 2018, and was beatified in 2020. The next step will be canonization, making him the first millennial saint.



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Continued from Page 15B

trip definitely opened up my mind."

Lucy Bartholomew, who also went last May, grew up in a military family and has lived abroad.

"I have Irish heritage, and I'm really interested in Irish culture," she said. "My greatest takeaway was that you can find community no matter where you go, even if you don't have the same religion or political views. You can find something in common and a way to connect. I really liked seeing how different it was than when Dr. Taylor first went there, how much reconciliation has taken place."

An elementary education major, she plans to incorporate some of that history into the classroom. "It will definitely influence my teaching career," Bartholomew said.

Exploring beauty and faith

Christendom College in Front Royal, Virginia, will hold its ninth St. Columcille Institute from July 21 to Aug. 13 at a Capuchin retreat center in Donegal, Ireland.

"This has been an Irish watermark in the history of the college's founding president, Dr. Warren Carroll," said Christendom president Timothy O'Donnell, who accompanies the students. "He always saw that Ireland had a unique role in Western civilization and the history of the Catholic faith."

The institute seeks to strengthen the faith and deepen the understanding of young Catholic leaders. Three courses cover Irish history, literature, and theology that focuses on apologetics and evangelization.

"It covers: How do you give a reason for hope; how do you deal with the problem of evil; how do you talk about the existence of God; and what is the Church expecting us to do?" O'Donnell said. "It covers how to communicate effectively, practically and intellectually about the Gospel."

There's time to explore the beautiful forests and bay, become immersed in Irish culture and to make friends.

Thomas Ward went to Ireland in 2019, the same year he

graduated. He's now Christendom's donor relations officer.

"It was a vacation, retreat and amazing classes all rolled into one," he said. "It really impressed on me the beauty and authenticity of true Irish culture, of truly delightful Irish locals who genuinely wanted to know about you."

The immersion in the stunning beauty of rolling hills and ocean cliffs gave him a greater appreciation of the Catholic faith's spiritual beauty.

"Having daily adoration, Mass and the sacraments was truly an integrated experience," Ward said. "It was spiritually intense but, at the same time, refreshing because there was a great rhythm to each day."

The institute is open to Irish students, as well. Michelle Kelly, who lives near the Knock Shrine, attended in 2019.

"It was a powerful experience to be with people authentically Catholic and alive for the Faith," she said. "It was also eye-opening seeing my own country in a new light."

"It was a powerful experience to be with people authentically Catholic and alive for the Faith."

The students, staff and institute had such an impact that she's now a senior theology major at Christendom College and plans to pursue a master's degree.

"I will take back my education to Ireland, where I will serve the Church," Kelly said.

History and art

Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, has a partnership with Mary Immaculate College in Limerick, Ireland.

"It's a liberal arts college, and our students typically get classes that will be useful for their graduation," said Daniel Musso, director for the study abroad program.

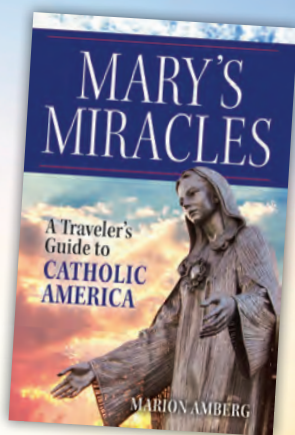
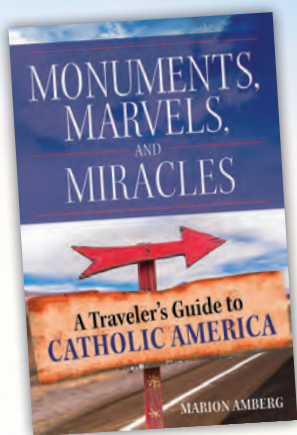


University of Mary students pose in Ireland. Courtesy photo



A priest prays over an outdoor altar in Ireland. Courtesy photo

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Nicole Hraban of Windsor, Colorado, a junior majoring in journalism and mass communication, attended last semester. One of her most meaningful experiences was in Dublin when she saw the Book of Kells, an ancient illuminated manuscript of the Gospels.

"It was so cool to see the history and artistry of the book up close, and to think about who might have read the book before I did and how these pages have survived generations," she said. "It was also interesting to be in a place where Catholicism was purposely suppressed, and to think about how Catholics during that time must have felt."

Alice Camp of Monett, Missouri, a junior English major, also went to Ireland last semester.

"Visiting a place with rich Catholic history was amazing," she said. "It was very interesting to see the beautiful old churches, and how being Catholic was intertwined in daily society. I was blessed to be able to travel and see the Catholic history all over Europe."

Maryann Gogniat Eidemiller writes from Pennsylvania.

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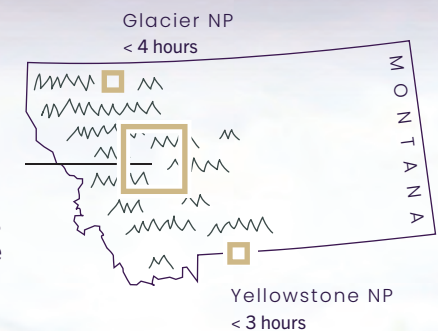
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* Mass for Young People, Homily, Czech Republic, April 26, 1997

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