

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

On a very early morning in June, I left with four members of the parish (Kathy and Dominica Smith and Rick and Judy Conaway) to fly to Rome, Italy, for a 10-day tour of that amazing country. We headed out at 6 a.m. and got to Denver, but then found out our flight to Rome was canceled due to mechanical issues. (I always think that when things go wrong at the beginning of a pilgrimage, that the devil is in the details and it is going to be a beautiful journey in the end). So we got a flight on Lufthansa to Rome several hours later and made it into Rome in the late afternoon the next day rather than the morning when we were supposed to arrive.

As the spiritual director of the pilgrimage, I celebrated Mass that afternoon with all the pilgrims I was supposed to lead throughout the tour. There were about 35 in all and so a good-sized group which also included Denise and Rich Corcoran and Ed and Barbara Pettigrew from the parish as well. I always say in my opening sermon that a pilgrimage is going to, by its very nature, have its ups and downs. But in the midst of those ups and downs there is a lot of glory.

So our delay in our flight out of Denver was just one of the the aggravations we would experience, but the glory always outshines the aggravations. God has a beautiful way of revealing himself in quiet but spectacular ways. Some of my wonderful memories from the pilgrimage:

The simple beauty of Italy as we drove through the countryside, the sun-kissed sunflower fields and the deep green of the olive trees. The simple beauty of Italian meals. We had a 45-minute break in Assisi one day and I had always wanted to visit the Church where St. Francis and St. Clare had both been baptized, so I headed up towards it and found it and said a few prayers for you and your intentions. It was lunchtime so I saw a little restaurant to my left but I was worried because I only had 35 or 40 minutes to spare before I had to meet the group again. There was outdoor seating but a very large and loud family was there, so I went inside and the nice young woman showed me to a quiet little table by an open window with a beautiful breeze blowing in. I ordered the spinach raviolis filled with eggplant and a nice salad and a glass of wine and told the young woman I only had half an hour to eat. She smiled and walked to the kitchen and my food was out in 10 minutes and I can honestly tell you it was one of the best meals I have ever eaten. The simple beauty of Italian cuisine!

I was so privileged to have Mass in front of the greatest of Eucharistic miracles at Lanciano and as I lifted the host for consecration, I realized that the monstrance containing the flesh and the chalice containing the Precious Blood from the great miracle was right behind me. This miracle happened far back in the 700s and here I was as a privileged pilgrim priest lifting the Body of Christ in front of that great miracle. Afterwards we had some time to pray and so I went into the chapel of the miracle and as I sat there a group of international young women missionaries stood and sang a beautiful hymn to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

At Mount Gargano, a magnificent site overlooking the Adriatic Sea, we visited the famous cave chapel which was not blessed by the bishop of that area but rather by St. Michael the Archangel himself. He appeared three times in that cave in the 400s, the earliest of any apparition of St. Michael in history.

Eating lunch with the pilgrims. They were so kind and generous to me and treated

me to lunch each day and it was such a pleasure and honor to sit and have a wonderful Italian meal with several of them. A great memory for me is having lunch with a woman named Josie. She had lost her husband a few years before and had lost her little boy to brain cancer many years before that, so now she was all alone in the world and asked on the last day of our tour, which was in Venice, if I might join her for lunch. I do not like tourist restaurants, so I asked her if we could walk down the back alleys of Venice. We came across a church there, a small one in comparison to most in Venice, and it was a beautiful baroque design inside but there was a simplicity that was inviting. A light shone on one young man's face above the altar in a painting there and I wondered who that young man was. My guide told me later that we had stumbled into the oldest church in Venice, dating back to the 500s, having been renovated over and over again through the centuries. It was dedicated to St. Theodore, the young man I saw in the painting above the altar. He had been the original patron saint of Venice before the remains of St. Mark were brought to the City and St. Mark took over as the patron saint. Josie and I then had a wonderful meal at a little restaurant set back from the crowds and visited for two hours.

Those are just a few of my memories. Precious memories. And there were so many more.

I hope to take a pilgrimage this summer. After the new year, the tour company I use will let me know what tours will be upcoming and I will announce that to you all sometime afterwards. It will most likely be in June (their schedule), so I hope you can join me. Where will we go? I'll leave that up to the Good Lord. He certainly chose this last June's tour and the wonderful people who came with me. I know and trust He will give me a wonderful journey ahead.

Sincerely in Christ,
Rev. Tim Farrell
Pastor



Baptisms

If you would like to baptize your child in September, please call Father Tim Farrell at 325-9743, ext. 2, to register for the baptismal preparation class for parents and godparents.

Second Collection

The second collection next weekend is the Good Shepherd Priests' Retirement Collection. The presence of the priests in our midst is a tangible expression of God's love for each of us. The hands of the priest nourish us by the very Body and Blood of Christ. From his lips is spoken God's very word and forgiveness of sins. The Diocese of Gallup has few resources to depend upon to secure the financial needs required to provide for the retirement of our priests. Please be generous as this is not only an expression of our gratitude for the years of service they have given us, it is also our response to the complete dedication of their lives that they have offered for each of us.

The Most Reverend James S. Wall
Bishop of Gallup