

## Reflections from Rome SSND Heritage Pilgrimage (June 18 – 29)

By Yvonne DeBruin

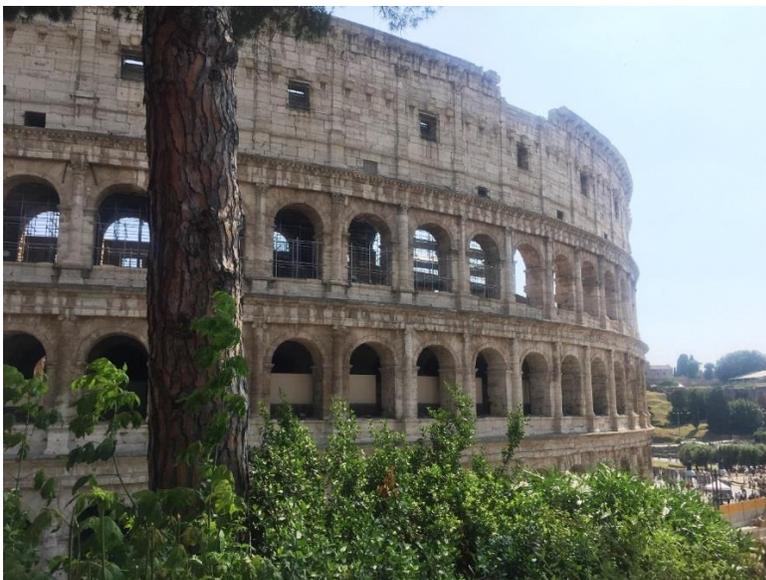
Rome is quite a city! Oscillating between ancient ruins of the Romans, the rich heritage of our Catholic faith, and life in the current times, the experience has been amazing and both inspiring and tiring!



Yesterday we attended an Audience with Pope Francis. We rose early to get a seat and catch a glimpse of Pope Francis and were successful in both endeavors. It was energizing to hear the names of each group read aloud followed by cheers from the group. Witnessing this faith experience and its importance

for the people from all around the world gathered at the Square was humbling and gives me hope for a world in need of direction.

That afternoon, we visited the Colosseum and the Gate of Constantine.





Today we went to the Vatican Museum with the hope of visiting the Sistine Chapel. That this was challenging is an understatement! Our guide led us through various exhibits at the unexpectedly hot and crowded museum. The breeze from the open windows let in only wisps of relief. Halfway to the Sistine Chapel our guide received notice that the Chapel had been closed. We were led out of the building only to learn an hour later that the chapel had reopened.

Our perseverance was put to the test. We retraced our steps and made our way into the chapel. Although we did not get much time to look around and absorb the beauty of Michelangelo's frescoes, we did get in. The crowds and security personnel quickly moved us

through, "Avanti! Avanti!"



Later that afternoon we visited St. Paul's Basilica. It is a papal basilica outside the Vatican walls, but on Vatican property. It is the largest basilica in the city of Rome, and visitors can see where the sarcophagus with remains of St. Paul are held.

Tomorrow we will conclude our pilgrimage with a visit at the SSND Generalate. Throughout the pilgrimage, participants have enjoyed getting to know School Sisters at our international locations: Regensburg, Neunburg vorm Wald, Munich, Vienna and now Rome. We were touched by their joyous embracing of mission and ministry and by the fruits of their labor and prayer.



By visiting the various places and hearing of their accounts of ministry and the people they serve, we deepened our sense of the internationality of the congregation. Being at airports, in hotels and strolling through those large cities deepened that sense of a globalized world and the importance of sharing the SSND mission and charism of unity with the world.

We are grateful for all the prayers that supported us on this pilgrimage, and send our prayers to all of you.

