



THE ROME EXPERIENCE

A SUMMER PROGRAM FOR DIOCESAN SEMINARIANS

2020

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MISSION & VISION

In 2007 several US bishops familiar with the positive impact of St. Josemaria on diocesan priests expressed interest in a formative program for their seminarians inspired by his spirituality and teachings. St. Josemaria Escriva (1902-1975), founder of Opus Dei and the Association of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, devoted many years of his life to supporting diocesan priests through fraternal and spiritual formation and remains a role model for many priests today.

As a result, in 2009, Midwest Theological Forum and the St. Josemaria Institute organized a six-week program of academic courses and spiritual formation designed to complement the formation in seminary. Specifically, the program focuses on helping seminarians to enhance key characteristics of priestly identity, to develop a plan of life, and to cultivate a love for pastoral ministry.

The program begins with a five-day silent retreat in Ars, France, village of St. John Vianney, to reflect on the meaning of the priesthood. Some seminarians have remarked that this retreat was the most memorable experience of the entire program.

Following the retreat, the seminarians go to Rome for academic courses in Theology, History of the Church, and Christian Art and Architecture. The courses are supplemented by visits to Vatican Congregations, attendance at Papal Liturgies and General Audience, and pilgrimages to churches and holy sites throughout Rome and surrounding towns. The pilgrimages, in particular, are opportunities for the seminarians to pray at the tombs of the great saints and martyrs of the early church—to deepen their friendship with Jesus Christ and priestly zeal for the New Evangelization.

Courses and activities are planned within a daily schedule centered on the celebration of the Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, and an hour of meditation before the Blessed Sacrament. An emphasis on daily prayer, learning to contemplate the life of Jesus, is essential to helping the seminarians to keep the presence of God. The daily schedule also includes time for fostering fraternity among classmates which is so important for priestly life.

The program concludes with seeking the motherly intercession and protection of the Virgin Mary through pilgrimages to the Marian Shrines of Monserrat, Torreciudad, and Lourdes.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In the spirit of pilgrimage—*of prayer and sobriety*—the program offers:

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

- 5-day silent retreat in Ars, France
- Daily schedule including Holy Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, mental prayer, and the Holy Rosary
- Sacrament of Penance, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and spiritual meditations
- Learning how to have and commit to a plan of life
- Living in close proximity to the Holy Father
- Pilgrimages to churches and tombs of the martyrs and saints

FRATERNITY

- Opportunity to meet seminarians from across the USA
- Daily prayers, meals, and classes
- Cultural activities
- Sports and hiking excursions
- Free-time

HUMAN & INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

- Being immersed in the cultural history of the Church
- Experiencing the beauty of the Church's art and architecture
- Academic courses taught by expert instructors from USA & Rome
- Guided tours and excursions to religious and cultural sites
- Papal liturgies and audiences
- Visits to Vatican Congregations

PASTORAL FORMATION

- Talks and discussions about challenges to the priesthood today
- Interchange of experiences with visiting bishops and priests
- Daily encounters with people of diverse needs and backgrounds on the streets of Rome

BISHOPS ADVISORY BOARD

His Eminence James Cardinal Stafford
Major Penitentiary Emeritus of the Apostolic Penitentiary

Most Rev. David R. Choby +
Former Bishop Diocese of Nashville

Most Rev. James D. Conley
Diocese of Lincoln

Most Rev. Robert W. Finn
Emeritus Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph

Most Rev. Jose H. Gomez
Archdiocese of Los Angeles

Most Rev. Bernard A. Hebda
Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Most Rev. Robert C. Morlino +
Former Bishop Diocese of Madison

Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki
Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

Most Rev. Alexander K. Sample
Archdiocese of Portland

Most Rev. Kevin W. Vann
Diocese of Orange



ACADEMIC COURSES

The academic courses follow the directives of Vatican Congregation for the Clergy's *Directory for the Ministry and the Life of the Priests* (1994) and *The Gift of the Priesthood* (December 8, 2016).

PRIESTS IN THE NEW EVANGELIZATION (.50 credit)

Future priests need to have a physical and spiritual closeness to people that touches and moves their hearts, as Pope Francis has expressed, in response to the Church's summons to a New Evangelization. St. John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests, did all of these things while re-evangelizing Ars after the spiritual ravages of the French Revolution. While on retreat in Ars, and in Rome, seminarians will contemplate the meaning of a priest is *a priest forever* and how the remedy for *everything* is personal holiness. The lives of St. John Vianney, St. Josemaria Escriva, and Pope St. John Paul II, patrons of The Rome Experience, will serve as models and inspiration for reflection on what it means to be of the world but not worldly and how to maintain the dignity of the priesthood at all times and in all places.

THE HUMAN VIRTUES FOR PRIESTLY FATHERHOOD, CHARACTER, STEADFASTNESS, & SELF-MASTERY (1.25 credits)

Every priest needs to be Christ in his daily life to succeed in his priestly mission. The *Directory for the Life and Ministry of the Priest* emphasizes the human virtues as cornerstones for the priest being a well-rounded, resilient, and reliable man, capable of ministering effectively to God's people with supernatural outlook. With the current confusion on gender in our society, the Church needs men with a clear priestly identity who steadfastly exercise the strength of character to help promote the holiness of all men and women, celibate and married, lay and consecrated. This course will offer a theoretical account of these virtues and how they can be acquired through Aristotelian-Thomistic anthropology, and St. Josemaria Escriva's practical proposals for seeking holiness through the virile pursuit of the human virtues.

PASTORAL PRACTICE SEMINAR (.50 credit)

This seminar will help the seminarian bridge the gap between the theological and spiritual principles learned during The Rome Experience with the lived experience of a parish priest. The goal is to help the seminarian to understand his future responsibility as a priest to imitate and live out Christ's own pastoral charity—a pastoral charity that, in essence, requires a total gift of self to the Church and that makes special demands on the parish priest (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 1992).

THE BASILICAS, CHURCHES, & CATACOMBS OF ROME (1.50 credits)

The patriarchal basilicas, catacombs and other ancient churches in Rome are an encyclopedia of Church history and theology taught not in words but in indelible images of architecture, sculpture, painting and mosaic. As with the interpretation of stained glass windows, however, one needs to learn the art of "reading that encyclopedia," by understanding the meaning and context of the symbols used. Through readings and discussion in the classroom, and a series of in-depth guided tours, seminarians will have the various volumes of this "encyclopedia" opened for them, to confirm them as followers of Christ and future evangelizers.

COURSE ACCREDITATION

The Rome Experience courses are accredited by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Piazza Sant'Apollinare, 49, 00186, Rome, Italy, www.pusc.it/eng

TENTATIVE DAILY SCHEDULE

"If you use your time well, Rome will leave a mark on your soul, a deep, lasting imprint. And, you will be able to be a more faithful son of the Church." - St. Josemaria Escriva

The Rome Experience's daily schedule* is designed to help the participants benefit the most from all the offerings of the program, to foster fraternity, and to remain intimately united to Christ through prayer and study.

Visits with family, friends, brother seminarians, and priests are only permitted during scheduled free time. Family and friends visiting Rome should be informed of this policy. Visits from vocation directors, rectors, or bishops may occur at any time that is convenient.

WEEKDAYS:

8:00 AM	Breakfast
9:00 AM	Class
10:00 AM	Class
11:00 AM	Break
12:00 PM	Angelus/Class
1:00 PM	Lunch

The daily schedule also includes:

- Morning Prayer
- Holy Mass
- Afternoon Tours/Classes
- Evening Prayer
- Dinner
- Holy Rosary
- Examination of Conscience and Night Prayer

WEEKLY SCHEDULE INCLUDES:

- Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction
- Confessions and Spiritual Direction
- Papal Liturgies
- Visits to Vatican Congregations
- Tours and Excursions

Students have free time every Saturday from noon until Sunday evening prayer.

*PLEASE NOTE: The daily schedule is subject to change. A final schedule will be given to each seminarian at orientation.

2020 TENTATIVE ITINERARY

Rome, "The Eternal City," attracts millions of visitors each year. While several visits in Rome and its environs are scheduled, seminarians will be strongly encouraged to maintain a spirit of prayer and pilgrimage, remembering that they have come to Rome as future priests to pray and study next to the Chair of St. Peter and the saints, while providing a witness to the Faith.

MONDAY, MAY 25, 2020 (CHICAGO):

Arrive in Chicago
Orientation
Accommodations – University of St. Mary of the Lake (Mundelein, IL)

TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2020 (CHICAGO/LYON):

Afternoon Flight Departing for Lyon, France

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2020 (LYON/PARAY LE MONIAL):

Arrive in Lyon
Pilgrimage to Paray-Le-Monial
Accommodations – Hostellerie des Trois Pigeons

THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2020 (CLUNY/ARS):

Pilgrimage to Cluny
Arrive in Ars
Accommodations – Foyer Sacerdotal Jean-Paul II

FRIDAY, MAY 29, 2020 (ARS):

Pilgrimage to the Basilica of Notre-Dame de Fourvière in Lyon
Begin Spiritual Retreat

TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2020 (ARS):

Retreat Ends

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2020 (ARS/ROME):

Arrive in Rome
Accommodations - Centro Internazionale Animazione Missionaria (CIAM)

THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 2020 (ROME):

Academic Program Begins
Courses at CIAM and the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 2020 (ROME/BARCELONA):

Arrive Barcelona
Pilgrimage to Monastery and Shrine of Our Lady of Montserrat
Accommodations – Hotel Tres Caminos

FRIDAY, JULY 3, 2020 (TORRECIUDAD):

Pilgrimage to Shrine of Our Lady of Torreciudad (Huesca)
Day of Reflection

SATURDAY, JULY 4, 2020 (LOURDES):

Pilgrimage to Sanctuary and Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes (France)

SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2020 (ZARAGOZA/MADRID):

Visit to Chapel and Museum of Claretian Martyrs of Barbastro
Pilgrimage to Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar (Zaragoza)
Arrive Madrid
Accommodations – Casa de Espiritualidad Emaus

MONDAY, JULY 6, 2020 (MADRID/CHICAGO):

Return to the USA

THE ROME EXPERIENCE

Monday, May 25 – Monday, July 6, 2020

HOW TO APPLY

The Rome Experience is designed to complement existing programs of formation in diocesan seminaries for seminarians who have completed their first year of theology. Seminarians interested in applying must be recommended by their bishops and vocation directors.

APPLICATIONS

Download the application at www.theromeexperience.org

DEADLINE

Applications for the program and scholarship must be received or postmarked by:

Monday, January 6, 2020

SCHOLARSHIPS

Midwest Theological Forum has established a scholarship fund to assist those seminarians who are in need of financial assistance. Limited partial scholarships are available based on merit and need. Some personal fundraising will be asked of applicants. See the program application for more information.

SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS

Because there are a limited number of openings for the program, incomplete or late applications for the program and the scholarship cannot be considered.

Applications may be submitted by mail, fax, or email to:

Mr. Thomas Pierzchanowski
Program Coordinator
The Rome Experience
4340 Cross Street, Suite 1
Downers Grove, IL 60515

Tel 630-541-8519 x 28
Fax 331-777-5819
Email info@theromeexperience.org
www.theromeexperience.org

*PLEASE NOTE: The itinerary is tentative.
A final schedule will be given to each seminarian at orientation.

“My hope for myself and for my brother seminarians who embarked on this Rome Experience pilgrimage is that with the companionship of Mary, Saints Peter, Paul, Josemaria, and all the Saints we’ve encountered and prayed with along the way, we will return home with a deeper relationship with Christ, with a greater sense of the family of Saints that surround us, and that we might venture out with courage into the great mission and adventures that lie ahead.”



JEFF STEPHENS

Seminarian, Archdiocese of Cincinnati
The Rome Experience 2019

“During my time in Rome, I have heard the same words of Christ to Peter at the end of the Gospel of St. John: *Do you love me?* As I visit the tombs of the martyrs and see the relics of our faith, I cannot help but to say: *Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!*”



NICK NAPPIER

Seminarian, Diocese of Tyler
The Rome Experience 2019

“Being in the town of the saintly Cure d’Ars gave us the desire to affirm God’s will just as John Vianney did more than 150 years ago. For this reason, it was helpful to be pulled out of our ordinary circumstances and daily routine, which can leave us in our own world with our own projects and plans. The good of taking time for a retreat in an unknown place was beneficial in allowing us seminarians to contemplate eternal truths, mainly what God has revealed through his saints, especially John Vianney.”



MARC GUSTINELLI

Seminarian, Diocese of Palm Beach
The Rome Experience 2019

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