

PILGRIMAGE TO ITALY

Padua * Venice * La Verna * Florence * Siena * Assisi * Orvieto * Rome

November 11-21, 2019

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B = breakfast D = dinner

Sunday, Nov. 10 – Depart U.S., for overnight flight to Venice. Dinner and breakfast served aboard.

Monday, Nov. 11 – A short distance west of Venice Airport is the charming medieval walled city of **Padua**. Here we venerate the relics of **St. Anthony in the Basilica** of the same name, and will celebrate **Holy Mass at his tomb**. St. Anthony was born in Portugal, but came to Italy to follow St. Francis and became a great and dynamic preacher of the Franciscan Order. We check in to our hotel on the edge of Venice, and have dinner together. **B & D Venice**

Tuesday, Nov. 12 – Our walking tour of Venice will include a visit to **St. Mark's Cathedral**, so beautifully adorned with mosaics. We will enter the **Doge's Palace** and see its infamous **Bridge of Sighs**. A demonstration of glass blowing will conclude the tour. This afternoon make sure to take the opportunity for a romantic ride in a gondola on the waterway “streets” of the city. At 4:30 PM we will celebrate **Holy Mass** in a chapel of St. Mark's. We have dinner near St. Mark's Square and then return to our hotel. **B & D Venice**

Wednesday, Nov. 13 – Today we travel south along the Adriatic coast, turning inland to reach **La Verna**, a mountain town in the eastern section of the Tuscany region. It was here on the peak of Mount La Verna that **St. Francis of Assisi** in a state of mystical contemplation of Our Lord Crucified received in his body the **Mark of the Stigmata**, the five wounds of Our Suffering Lord. This is the place of our celebration of **Holy Mass** today. We motor a short distance west to reach **Florence**, flourishing center of the Renaissance and Medieval center of Europe's trade and finance. We check in to our hotel in city center and have dinner together. **B & D Florence**

Thursday, Nov. 14 – We celebrate **Holy Mass in Santa Maria Novella** church just steps from our hotel. Our guided city tour of Florence, Art Capital of the world, includes a visit to the Academy of Fine Arts which houses Michelangelo's sculpture of **David**, the **Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore** and its masterfully done bronze Baptistry doors worthy to be called by Michelangelo the “Gates of Paradise.” We tour the Piazza della Signoria and its Loggia, **Santa Croce** filled with the tombs of the famous. Onward we enjoy a breathtaking view of Florence from **Piazzale Michelangelo**. The rest of the day is at leisure for exploring on one's own. The shops are laden with jewelry of Florentine gold and silver, exquisite leather goods and bargains of all kinds. Dinner is included this evening. **B & D Florence**

Friday, Nov. 15 – This morning we head southwest to **Siena**, a delightful medieval town, but important because of the connection with St. Catherine, Doctor of the Church and reformer of the Papacy. In the church of St. Dominic we celebrate **Mass at the Relics of St. Catherine**. Our walking tour takes us to the **Piazza del Campo** and to the Gothic Cathedral of dark and light marble. We continue on south through the scenic hills of Umbria to **Assisi**, the city sanctified by the life of “il Poverello,” **St. Francis of Assisi**. **B & D Assisi**

Saturday, Nov. 16 – This morning we celebrate **Holy Mass in the Basilica of St. Francis at the Saint's Tomb**. Our walking tour will show us first the magnificent frescos by Giotto in the Basilica that depict the life of the saint. As we walk up to the main piazza, we are struck by the fact that all the buildings are of sandstone with a slight rose hue. We reach the **Basilica of St. Clare**, Foundress of the Poor Clare nuns, and see her tomb. In the upper chapel we venerate the Crucifix that was originally located in San Damiano church. Our Lord from that crucifix spoke to Francis the command to “Rebuild My Church.” Late morning in our free time those who wish to do so can walk downhill to visit the church of San Damiano itself. After time for lunch we drive to the plains below Assisi to go inside **St. Mary of the Angels Basilica**. There we visit the **Porziuncola**, the little chapel where Francis gathered his followers. This evening we have dinner together in our hotel. **B & D Assisi**

Sunday, Nov. 17 – We motor to the west and reach the beautiful hill town of **Orvieto**. It is here that in 1263 Pope Urban IV proclaimed the authenticity of a Eucharistic miracle, that the Sacred Host had bled during a Mass celebrated in nearby Bolsena. We can still see the Corporal associated with the miracle enshrined within the Cathedral of Orvieto. From this event the Church instituted the **Feast of Corpus Christi**. The Cathedral's façade is adorned with a splendid and world famous mosaic. At 11:00 AM we will **celebrate the Eucharist** in its Chapel of the Corporal. We continue traveling south to **Rome, the Eternal City**, and arrive to check into our hotel. We have dinner together this evening.

B & D Rome

Monday, Nov. 18 – This morning we drive to the outskirts of Rome to visit **St. Paul Outside the Walls**, a beautiful Basilica dedicated to the Apostle of the Gentiles, where we will celebrate **Holy Mass**. Our tour begins after Mass. We next reach the **Basilica of St. Clement**, built over the home of our fourth Pope and over some truly interesting ruins of ancient Rome. Our tour concludes nearby with an explanation of the **Colosseum** as well as Ancient Rome – the Arch of Constantine, Roman Forum, Palatine Hill and Circus Maximus. Our afternoon is free. Much can be seen by walking through Old Rome: the Piazza Navona, the Pantheon, Trevi Fountain, Spanish Steps and countless church where tombs of saints and great masterpieces can be discovered. Rome, the Center of the Roman Empire and Center of the Church! This evening we can sample delicious Italian cuisine on our own.

B Rome

Tuesday, Nov. 19 – **Holy Mass** this morning will be near the tomb of the Pope St. John Paul II in the magnificent **Basilica of St. Peter** in Vatican City. As we walk through and pray, our thoughts are flooded with events that have taken place here and the people who have worshiped in this great center of our Church. After Mass we will be guided through the **Vatican Museum**, seeing especially the **Sistine Chapel** with its awesome frescos by Michelangelo. The tour concludes with an inside visit of the Basilica.

Afternoon: This afternoon we can continue our own exploration of the Eternal City. Nearby the Vatican are religious articles shops where we can find items that we may want to carry to the Papal Audience tomorrow for blessing. Maybe an ascent to the top of St. Peter's dome will be our quest. The reward is a fantastic view of Vatican City and Rome. This evening we walk to a restaurant close by our hotel to share a light dinner together, giving us room to sample some wonderful gelato ice cream on the walk home!

B & D Rome

Wednesday, Nov. 20 – This morning we will experience a highlight of our Roman stay, attendance at a **PAPAL AUDIENCE** at St. Peter's, depending, of course on the presence in Rome of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. After the Papal Audience and a break for lunch, we will drive to the most illustrious church dedicated to Our Lady, the **Basilica of St. Mary Major**. There we celebrate **Holy Mass**. We also visit the nearby **Basilica of St. John Lateran**, the Cathedral Church of Rome, and see its richly adorned interior that inspires much devotion. We return to our hotel and prepare to go out and celebrate together at a Farewell Dinner with wine and music. **B & D Rome**

Thursday, Nov. 21 – We check out of our hotel and transfer to the Rome airport for our return flights to the U.S., arriving this same day in our home cities.