



Christmas 2020 Pilgrimage December 19-28, 2020 Vatican City, Rome, Assisi, Norcia

A Personal Invitation from Dr. Robert Moynihan

I would like to share with you some very exciting news. For more than 10 years we have been organizing and leading pilgrimages to Rome, Assisi and to other places. Many who have traveled with us have been enthusiastic about the experience, telling us that the pilgrimages were “once-in-a-lifetime” journeys. Along with the astonishing sights and profound souls we encounter along the way, perhaps the most unique aspect of our pilgrimages is the fact that we keep our Signature Pilgrimages very small. This pilgrimage will have only 12 pilgrims.

This small size allows our pilgrims access to private areas inside the Vatican and other places, and makes it possible to have more intimate conversations with bishops and cardinals who work within the walls of the Vatican and with the Franciscan Friars in Assisi and the Benedictine Prior in Norcia.

This pilgrimage will be centered on the Incarnation, the mysterious and marvelous fact that the Divine Author of all things entered into human history, embracing our same human flesh. We will read together some of the great Christmas sermons from ages past and meditate on certain passages from Pope Emeritus Benedict’s book on the “Infancy narratives” in the Gospels — stories of the birth of Jesus. Of course, there will be a strong Marian dimension, for Christmas is a time when we reflect on Mary’s “*Fiat*” (“Let it be”) — “Let it be done unto me according to your word.”

All of our pilgrimages are planned to be quiet and prayerful. We want your journey with us to be a peaceful, enjoyable and unforgettable experience, one that enriches your life and deepens your faith. Although we will visit many very special places, our journey is a pilgrimage, not a tour. The spiritual dimension — the search for a deeper encounter with God and a better appreciation of the history and life of the Church — is central. This is why the pace of our pilgrimages will be slow and peaceful, not rushed. There will be time for prayer and contemplation.

So, please consider joining me on this extraordinary journey to Rome and Assisi for Christmas. We expect it to be a wonderful, joyful and memorable time, with many hours devoted to prayer and meditation, in the places where St. Francis, St. Benedict and St. Peter once stood, while being close to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and to His Holiness, Pope Francis.

Robert Moynihan

Founder and Editor of *Inside the Vatican* magazine



*Join me for many dinners in Rome,
Assisi and Norcia.*

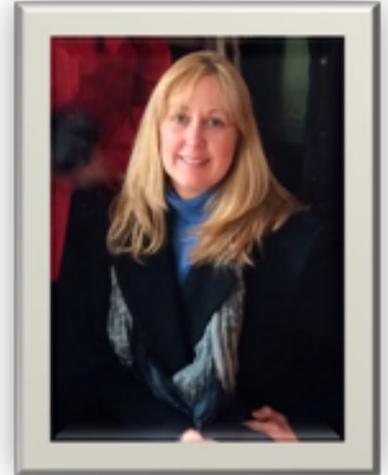


A Note from Deborah Tomlinson

Welcome to Inside the Vatican Pilgrimages!

Inside the Vatican Pilgrimages began in 2008, and since then we have organized more than 50 pilgrimages to the “heart of the Church.” I have organized and traveled on all of these unique experiences. It has been our policy to keep the size of the **Signature Pilgrimage** small, rarely more than 15 people, in order to keep the experience personal and intimate. We have found that the small pilgrimages create a bond of friendship that is very special. At the end of our journey together, our pilgrims often discover that not only have they visited some of the most important shrines in the Christian world, but that they have also made deep friendships with one another, and with those they have met along the journey — friendships that will last a lifetime.

These pilgrimages are a total immersion experience — unrepeatable and unforgettable, informative and transformative. The focus is not solely on the stones of the Basilicas of Assisi, Norcia, and Rome, but also on those living stones which are the souls of the people we encounter —the Franciscan sisters and brothers of Assisi, the Benedictine monks of Norcia, the cardinals and Monsignors of the Vatican, the Swiss Guards in Rome and even ourselves, the pilgrims.



Dr. Robert Moynihan, the founder and editor of *Inside the Vatican* magazine (founded in 1993), and I will be traveling with you for the entire pilgrimage. Robert is an expert on all things Roman, and his love of Italy is contagious. We will begin in Rome, then travel to the little town of Assisi, situated almost in the exact center of Italy. I like to think of Assisi as the heart of Italy. It was the home of St. Francis, whom some have called the greatest religious genius the West has produced.

For our days in Rome, Dr. Moynihan will share his knowledge and experience of the past 30 years as one of the leading Vatican journalists and scholars. Robert and I will also introduce you to some of our friends inside and around the Vatican. These Roman days will be filled with many experiences that will make you feel like a Vatican insider, not a typical tourist. The Vatican will become familiar to you as you gain a new understanding of how the Church operates.

The focus will not solely be on the workings of the Vatican, but also, and more importantly, on the Incarnation, the birth of Christ. The central theme of this and Mary’s “Fiat” will be woven into our Roman days while on pilgrimage.

After four nights next to the Vatican, we will then travel to Assisi to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Assisi is known for its tranquil silence, and we will take in this silence as we prepare for one of the most important feast days of the year – Christmas! The Advent season will come to an end, and as these long four weeks of waiting close, we will celebrate the birth of Christ, beginning the 12 days of Christmas.

While in Assisi, we will introduce you to our friends, the Franciscans, who live there, then listen as they share their stories. From Assisi, we will visit Norcia, the birthplace of St. Benedict, the Patron Saint of Europe and the founder of monastic life. Father Cassian, our friend and founder of the current Benedictine monastery in Norcia, will meet with us there to share a reflection.

I hope to greet you in Rome!

Deborah Tomlinson

Chief Operating Officer

Inside the Vatican magazine

Inside the Vatican Pilgrimages

Christmas in Italy 2020 Pilgrimage

December 19-28, 2020
Vatican City, Rome, Assisi, Norcia



Saturday, December 19, 2020—Christmastime in Rome, a special time, with quiet streets, manger scenes in every church, and the city dressed up in preparation for the coming of Christ. You arrive at Rome's Fiumicino airport, about 10 miles outside of Rome to the west, near the Mediterranean Sea. You may have seen the sea as your plane circled to land. Our private driver will meet you immediately as you exit the secured area and drive you straight to the Casa Bonus Pastor, right next to the highest spot of the Vatican City wall (just on the other side of the wall is where Pope Emeritus Benedict lives in the Vatican Gardens). The building, a converted Roman palace, is shaded by tall pine trees. It is an oasis of peace in the sometimes noisy modern city of Rome.



Robert and Deborah will greet you upon your arrival at the Casa Bonus Pastor. After a brief rest we will share our first lunch in the dining room, then meet to begin our Advent retreat. Afterwards, we will visit St. Peter's Basilica for Mass.

In St. Peter's Basilica, we will consecrate our time together to the Virgin Mary through a prayer at a little-known altar to Mary, Mother of the Church (*photo left*). The sacrament of Confession will be available in St. Peter's Basilica with priests who speak many languages, including English. Mass at the Altar of the Chair at 5 p.m. will follow. We will share our first dinner in one of our favorite restaurants near the Vatican. You will come to know the owner and become part of "*la famiglia*" ("the family")!

This is a unique time in the Vatican as Pope Francis continues to define his pontificate (2013-present), and as Pope Emeritus Benedict (2005-2013) continues to reside in Vatican City in a small convent inside the Vatican Gardens. The Vatican is quieter than normal in December, and we expect to have the opportunity to breathe in that peace, during these days of the "two Popes," Benedict and Francis, so very different and yet each filled with the love of Christ and of His Church.

“Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy!” (Luke 2:10)

Christmas is a wonderful time to be in Rome. The entire city seems to light up with a special joy, and there is even more peace throughout the city than usual. Little red and white lights flicker on kiosks set up in Piazza Navona, and the Vatican erects a larger-than-life manger scene in St. Peter’s Square, right next to the obelisk. Roman grandparents stroll with their grandchildren through the streets to look at the nativity scenes and little displays of stuffed animals and other children’s gifts. We will join them. People throughout Rome tend to be more courteous to one another “in the spirit of the season,” and the entire city can actually seem to become a small village. We, too, will become “Roman villagers” at Christmas.



Sunday, December 20, 2020 – Vatican City. We make a special private visit inside the high walls of Vatican City, then visit the site of a famous appearance of the Virgin Mary that most pilgrims never see. After breakfast, we will depart for St. Peter’s Basilica for Sunday Mass. After Mass we will gather in St. Peter’s Square to hear Pope Francis’s Angelus message and to pray the Angelus together, along with thousands of pilgrims from around the world. Then, we will have our first visit inside the Vatican. We will walk through St. Peter’s Square then into Vatican City, passing the guard gates, to visit a Vatican monsignor for a Christmas reflection. As we walk inside Vatican City, Dr. Moynihan will point out many interesting and little-known sites along our route.

In the afternoon, we will journey to the Spanish Steps, where Dr. Moynihan will guide us along our walking tour of Baroque Rome — the **Trevi Fountain**, the **Pantheon**, and the **Piazza Navona** (*photo, above*). Along the way, Dr. Moynihan will point out many interesting places, peeling away the layers of Roman and Church history.

We will stop for a visit in the **Basilica of Sant’Andrea delle Fratte**, which has a very special side chapel (*photo right*). In fact, it is so special that many come to Rome just to pray at this side altar. Our Lady appeared here in 1842 to Alphonse Ratisbonne, an avowed anti-Catholic French Jew, manifesting herself exactly as she appears on the Miraculous Medal. He was overcome with awe, sank to his knees, and was converted instantly. He later was ordained a priest.



The first Miraculous Medals were struck in 1832 and, while the Miraculous Medal devotion was already circulating throughout France after St. Catherine Labouré’s Marian apparition in 1830, it was this miraculous apparition to Ratisbonne that provided the impetus for the spread of the Miraculous Medal devotion in Italy. Marian pilgrims from all over the world travel to Rome just to visit this shrine, but most ordinary tourists and pilgrims just pass it by. This special chapel is also where the great Polish martyr, St. Maximilian Kolbe, offered his first Mass on April 29, 1918. As we stroll in Rome’s city center, we will stop at one of our favorite places for dinner, then try a delicious *gelato*. We will pause to take in the sites and the people walking in the famous Piazza Navona during the Christmas season.

Monday, December 21, 2020 – Rome. The great basilicas in Rome.

After breakfast, we will depart for the three other patriarchal basilicas in Rome, St. Mary Major, St. John Lateran, and St. Paul's Outside-the-Walls. (St. Peter's Basilica is the fourth patriarchal basilica.) Each of these churches is a glorious monument to the Faith and contains treasures of art and faith ranging from the wood of the crib from Bethlehem to the body of St. Paul.

In **St. Mary Major**, for example, there is a painting of Mary (*photo, right*), which is believed to have been painted by St. Luke himself, making it the oldest painting of Mary in the world. It is called the *Salus Populi Romani* (English: the **Protectress of the Roman People**; "Protectress" is a translation of the Latin "salus" which means "salvation" or "health"). It has traditionally been the most important Marian icon in Rome, and was crowned by Pope Pius XII in 1954. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI venerated the *Salus Populi Romani* on different occasions, and asked Mary on each occasion to "pray for us."



On the morning after his election, Pope Francis, as his first act, came here to pray before the *Salus Populi Romani*. Two months later, in May 2013, the month dedicated to Our Lady and the Holy Rosary, Francis prayed his first public Rosary before this ancient and venerable image. Francis has visited this Basilica to venerate this image more than 60 times since becoming Pope. We

too will venerate this icon, as well as a piece of the manger from Bethlehem.



St. John Lateran (*photo, left*) is the oldest and ranks first among the four Papal basilicas of Rome since it is the *cathedra* or "seat" of the Bishop of Rome. For centuries, from the 300s to the 1400s, the Popes lived here.

The façade has the inscription *Christo Salvatori*, "To Christ the Savior," indicating the church's dedication to Christ; the cathedrals of all patriarchs are dedicated to Christ himself. (it is also dedicated to John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, hence the name St. John in Lateran).

As the cathedral of the Bishop of Rome, this church ranks above all other churches, including St. Peter's, and so, unlike any other Roman basilica, it holds the title of *Archbasilica*.

St. Paul's Outside the Walls (*photo, right*) is dedicated to St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, who was beheaded in Rome, and this church contains his tomb. Also, this magnificent church contains the portraits of all 265 Popes in circular mosaics.



We will also visit the Holy Stairs ("*Scala Santa*"), located near the Basilica of St. John Lateran. These were the steps of Pilate that Jesus ascended when He was condemned to death. These stairs were moved from Jerusalem to Rome by St. Helena in the fourth century.

Also located near the Basilica of St. John Lateran is the **Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme** (English: *Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem*). This basilica contains many relics of Jesus' Passion, including thorns from His crown, nails used to crucify him, and the sign ("*titulus*") Pilate nailed above Christ's head. We plan to visit this church to venerate these sacred relics, time permitting. Along with these visits, we will take a driving tour to see more of the wonders of ancient Rome, including the Roman Forum, the Coliseum, Palatine Hill, Circus Maximus and the Arch of Titus.

After our visits to these wonderful and extraordinary basilicas, there will be free time to explore Rome on your own.

Tuesday, December 22, 2020 – Vatican City/Castel Gandolfo/Rome. As is fitting at Christmastime, today we focus on Mary, the mother of Jesus, and visit two of her greatest shrines. After breakfast, we will have our second meeting inside Vatican City. As we walk through Vatican City, Robert will point out many sites, including St. Stephens Church (*photo, left*), the oldest church in Vatican City.



Our meeting will be with a Vatican official who has worked closely with Pope Benedict and Pope Francis. Many times, we go into the apartments of these bishops and cardinals, sharing a pot of tea as we listen to their stories. These encounters are profound since they provide a window into the mind of someone who has devoted his life to the Church and is one of the closest advisers to the successor of Peter. You will leave with a new understanding of our Church today. We will also discuss Mary and the meaning of Christmas!

After our meeting, we travel outside of Rome to the beloved and well-known Marian Shrine, *Madonna del Divino Amore* (“**The Madonna of Divine Love**”). The history of this sanctuary dates back to the year 1740, when a man who was traveling to Rome was attacked by a pack of dogs and was about to be killed. Looking over at a tower in the town he saw an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary and he cried out to her for help. Suddenly the dogs stopped their attack and ran off.

As a result of this miracle, the image (*photo, right*) was moved from the tower to a nearby estate called “*La Falconiana*.” A church was built a few years later on the site where the tower stood and the image was returned to the spot. Pilgrims have been visiting the spot for almost 300 years.



In January 1944, as the allies were closing in on Rome, it was feared that the city might be destroyed in the fighting. The image from the Shrine was brought in pilgrimage to various churches in the city. The last of these was the Church of St. Ignatius on June 4, 1944, the day Rome was liberated. A week later, on June 11, Pope Pius XII went to the Sanctuary of Divine Love to pray and bestow on the image the title “Saver of the City.”

From that time on, large processions to the church have taken place regularly every Saturday night between Easter and the end of October. These processions are made on foot from near the Colosseum in the center of Rome to the Shrine, a distance of about 10 miles, taking about four or five hours to walk. Many would walk the 10 miles from the city center at night to arrive in time for the first morning Mass at the Shrine. These pilgrimages still take place today and you are welcome to participate. They start from Piazza di Porta Capena in Rome at midnight. Mass is celebrated upon arrival at the Sanctuary.



We continue onward to Castel Gandolfo (*photo, right*), perched on the rim of a volcanic crater, for lunch. Our lunch will be very near the palace overlooking Lake Albano, a breath-taking sight. Castle Gandolfo is known for the beauty of the surrounding nature and its elegant historic center. It has been elected one of the *most beautiful villages in Italy*. Above all, the small town is famous for the **Papal Palace** where Popes have spent their summers since the 17th century. However, Pope Francis has decided to stay in Vatican City for the entire summer, and not come here.



In the late afternoon, we will visit the **Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere** (*photo left*), the church in Rome we like the best. We feel it is the most beautiful of all. It is one of the oldest parish churches in Rome and the oldest church in the world dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The faithful have been gathering in this area since shortly after the time of Christ. In fact, in around 16 B.C., when Mary is thought to have been born, a natural oil spring appeared here and flowed into the Tiber, signifying the coming of the chosen vessel of God’s grace into the world. A column next to the altar marks this spot.

In this beautiful church, we will have the chance to meditate on Mary, the Mother of the Church, and the Mother of all who fly to her protection, and prepare for the birth of Christ. Dinner will be at one of our favorite restaurants in Trastevere.

Wednesday, December 23, 2020 – Morning: Rome.

Sunday Mass with Pope Francis. After breakfast, we will depart again for Vatican City and the Papal Audience. During the audience, Pope Francis will share a brief teaching and reading in Italian, which will be translated into English, French, German, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, and sometimes other languages, depending on the groups visiting. The Pope will follow with a greeting to all gathered in St. Peter's Square.

At the end of the Audience, the Pope will lead us in the "Our Father" in Latin. This prayer will be printed on the back of the Papal Audience ticket. After the "Our Father," Pope Francis will impart his Apostolic Blessing upon the crowd, which also extends to loved ones at home. He will bless any item that you may have purchased along our journey together. Afterwards we will have lunch near the Vatican, before departing for Assisi.



Wednesday, December 23, 2020 – Afternoon: Orvieto

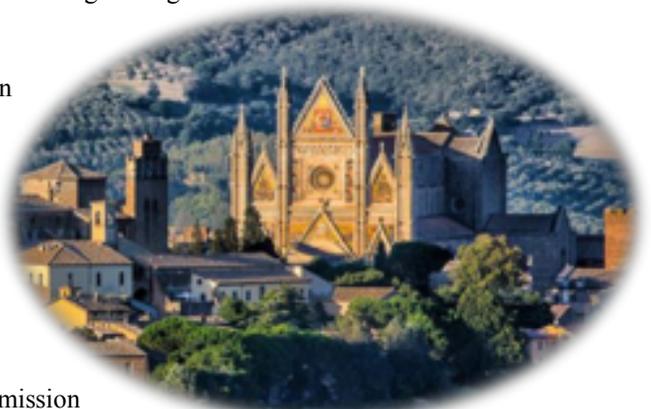
to Assisi. Into the land of St. Francis and St. Clare, by way of the Eucharistic miracle of Orvieto. As we drive north and east from Rome to Assisi for just under 3 hours, we will discuss a bit of history as we look out over the Italian regions of Lazio and Umbria. Lazio is the region where Rome is located and the center of Umbria is Assisi. The adjacent province is Tuscany. We will stop at an Italian "autogrill," known for good Italian snacks and meals, for lunch along the way.

After lunch, we will visit one of the most spectacular towns in Central Italy, Orvieto (*photo, left*). Here, we will have a brief visit to the famous **Orvieto Cathedral**, which is considered to be one of the highest achievements of Italian Gothic art and architecture. Few buildings in the world are this ornate, and at the same time – few have such a well-balanced and harmonious architecture. The cathedral (*photo, below*) is just a famous for the Eucharistic Miracle which has been kept in there since 1263.

Orvieto's Eucharistic Miracle

In 1263, a German priest, **Peter of Prague**, stopped at Bolsena while on a pilgrimage to Rome. He is described as being a pious priest, but one who found it difficult to believe that Christ was actually present in the consecrated Host. While celebrating Holy Mass above the tomb of St. Christina (located in the church named for this martyr), he had barely spoken the words of Consecration when blood started to seep from the consecrated Host and trickle over his hands onto the altar and the corporal. The priest was immediately confused. At first he attempted to hide the blood, but then he interrupted the Mass and asked to be taken to the neighboring city of Orvieto, the city where Pope Urban IV was then residing.

The Pope listened to the priest's account and absolved him. He then sent emissaries for an immediate investigation. When all the facts were ascertained, he ordered the bishop of the diocese to bring to Orvieto the Host and the linen cloth bearing the stains of blood. With archbishops, cardinals and other Church dignitaries in attendance, the Pope met the procession and, amid great pomp, had the relics placed in the cathedral. The linen corporal bearing the spots of blood is still reverently enshrined in the Cathedral of Orvieto today.



It is said that Pope Urban IV was prompted by this miracle to commission St. Thomas Aquinas to compose the Proper for a Mass and an Office honoring the Holy Eucharist as the Body of Christ. One year after the miracle, in August of 1264, Pope Urban IV introduced the saint's composition, and by means of a papal bull instituted the feast of Corpus Christi.

Assisi

Our Christmas Pilgrimage continues in Assisi, the City of St. Francis. With a population of about 25,000, Assisi is a small medieval town perched on a hill in Umbria in the heart of Italy. Assisi is one of the prettiest and most peaceful cities in the world, and has long been regarded as an important spiritual center. The Temple of Minerva, which two thousand years ago was a centerpiece of Roman Assisi, can still be visited today as a Catholic church. Here, in Assisi, both St. Francis and St. Clare lived, prayed, worked and passed into eternity.

Christmas time is a special time to visit Assisi. St. Francis created the first manger scene in the town of Greccio. A beautiful life-size manger scene is recreated each year in front of **St. Francis' Basilica** (*photo below*).



The Hotel Giotto (*photo, below right*) in Assisi will be our home for the next four nights. Hotel Giotto offers one of the best views in Assisi overlooking the Umbrian Valley with panoramic views from the large lobby, bar/café, and a large terrace.

Hotel Giotto has one of the most renowned restaurants in Assisi and is known for its ambiance and culinary delights. The dining room is filled with arches from the 1400s with breathtaking views of the valley.

The Hotel Giotto is situated very near St. Francis' Basilica, only a 5-minute slow walk. You will be able to visit the tomb of St. Francis early in the morning at 6 a.m. This is a quite an extraordinary time to be at one of the most visited tombs in all of Christendom, as you may find you are the only one praying at this time of day.



The First Christmas Crèche

The first Christmas crèche was born from the spiritual intuition of St. Francis of Assisi: deeply impressed and moved by the humility of the Incarnation, on Christmas night of 1223 he prepared a manger scene for Greccio, a small town about 60 miles south of Assisi.

"I would like to represent," said St. Francis, "the Child Jesus born in Bethlehem, and somehow seeing with the eyes of the body the inconveniences he found for the lack of things necessary for a newborn, as he was laid in a crib and as he lay in the hay between the ox and the saddle. "

There were several friars on the site; men and women came to celebrate from the country houses, carrying candles and torches to illuminate that night, in which, as the biographer still notes, "the Star lit up in the sky all day and time."

A priest celebrated the Eucharist and Francis of Assisi, who was a deacon, sang with his loud, sweet, clear voice, the Holy Gospel.

From Greccio, as a new Bethlehem, the image of the crib, the product of the heart of a saint, spread throughout Italy, Europe and the world, preserving intact, in different expressions of cultures and folklore, a fundamental, authentically evangelical message that Francis wanted to reach souls from the contemplation of the crib, a school of simplicity, poverty and humility.



The life size Crèche in front of St. Francis' Basilica, recreated each year in Assisi, Italy.

Thursday, December 24, 2020 – Morning: Assisi/Norcia. From the land of St. Francis to the land of St. Benedict. After breakfast in our hotel, we will travel for about 45 minutes in a private van to Norcia, Italy to visit our friends the **Benedictine monks** and to attend Mass with them in their new chapel. After Mass, our friend, Father Cassian Folsom, will share a private spiritual Christmas reflection with our small group of pilgrims.



Father Cassian (*photo, left;*) has battled a debilitating form of blood cancer in recent years, but his suffering has only deepened his spiritual vision. Some are beginning to say, in and around Norcia, that he is a living saint. We are very privileged to have this time with our old friend who is doing so much for the Church, and who always has profound insights to impart to our pilgrims. After the reflection with Father Cassian, we will share lunch with him and perhaps a few other monks at a delicious *agriturismo*, a farm-to-table restaurant, near the monks' new monastery on the hillside.

Norcia

Over the centuries, “Nursia” (the original Latin name) has in the Italian language become “Norcia”; however, it is still the same city—the heart of Benedictine monasticism. Benedict and his twin sister, Scholastica, were born here in the late 400s, at the time of the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West. Thus, we have in Norcia a “link” to the ancient world which perished in the fall of Rome, but was partially preserved through the mediation of Benedict and Benedictine monasticism through the so-called “Dark Ages” after Rome’s fall, between 500 to 1000 A.D., when civilization and learning were restricted to the little enclaves of Benedictine monasteries.

The Benedictine monastery in Norcia flourished for a millennium, but it was closed under the secularizing Napoleonic legislation that was introduced into Italy in the early 19th century, around 1810. From then on, for the next nearly 200 years, the monastery remained closed. Though it seemed as if the link with the past had been severed, the world did not reckon with Father Cassian Folsom, an American Benedictine. Cassian felt a calling to re-found the Benedictine monastery in Norcia, and his then-friend, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, encouraged him to do so. Thus, in 1998, Cassian came to Norcia with two companions, and on their own, with no help, they restored the ancient monastery and the Basilica of St. Benedict. Bit by bit, what they were doing began to be noticed, and other young men came to join them. Today, there are more than 16 monks in Norcia, and the monastery has gained a worldwide reputation for restoring the Faith.

Father Cassian retired as prior in November 2016, after a major earthquake devastated Norcia, destroying the Basilica of St. Benedict and the monastery Cassian had worked so hard to restore and revive. We will visit the new monastery in the mountains just outside of Norcia.

Thursday, December 24, 2020 – Afternoon: Cascia. From the impossible causes aided by the intercession of St. Rita to the beautiful villages of central Umbria. St. Rita of Cascia is known as the patron saint of impossible causes. We will visit her incorrupt body in the **Basilica of St. Rita** (*photo, right*) in the hill-town of Cascia, which is only a 20-minute drive from Norcia and we will leave any concerns that seem impossible on our hearts for St. Rita to handle!



After visiting Cascia, we return to Assisi to celebrate the traditional Italian Christmas Eve dinner — *La Vigilia*. Our meal will consist of several courses of fish, vegetables and local cheeses. (*photo left: dining in Hotel Giotto*)

The meal will be simple, in keeping with tradition for food on the evening before a religious holiday in Italy: you are supposed to have a *giorno di magro*, eating “lean” to help prepare your body for the holiday. Yet, the food will be plentiful and delicious – made by one of the finest chefs in Assisi – making it difficult to eat lean!

Friday, December 25, 2020: Merry Christmas! — Assisi. The arrival of Christ in the city where one of his closest follower lived and worked.



We awake to the joy of the birth of Christ in the town of a saint who long contemplated this magnificent moment of the Incarnation. The genius of St. Francis, in this regard, has affected all of Christian and western history since the 1200s.

For Francis, the humanity of the infant Christ, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger with an ox and lambs nearby, was evident and central to his understanding and love of Jesus, whom he wished to follow so closely.

Waking up in Assisi on Christmas morning is a profoundly peaceful experience, just as attending Christmas Mass in the Basilica of St. Francis is a profoundly joyous experience.

Today, we will have a time for private prayer and reflection in between our visit to our friend, the bishop of Assisi, followed by a celebratory Christmas dinner by one of the best chefs in Assisi—including wine pairings from the region of Assisi, several courses of fresh local food, and live music to fill the air.

Saturday, December 26, 2020 — Assisi. In the church calendar, the day after Christmas is the Feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr. This reminds of that the joy of Christmas is not unmixed with a certain sorrow. As the Feast of the Holy Innocents, December 28, also reminds us, that the coming of Christ was the greatest possible joy because God was with us, but it also meant that those who would bear witness to the arrival of Christ would be scourged, imprisoned and killed.

We will attend Mass in the morning at the **Church of St. Stephen**, an ancient stone chapel where the Bishop of Assisi, Domenico Sorrentino will celebrate. (*photo, right, Bishop Sorrentino in St. Stephen's Church in Assisi celebrating Mass on the Feast of St. Stephen, December 26, in 2018*). Bishop Sorrentino is famous for opening a new shrine in Assisi on the spot where St. Francis gave back all he possessed to his father, including his clothes. The bishop of Assisi at the time gave the naked Francis a simple garment to wear and welcomed him into the protection of mother Church. Bishop Sorrentino will greet our pilgrims and reflect on this decisive moment in the life of St. Francis.



After lunch, we will visit the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels in the valley at the bottom of the hill. Brother Alessandro (*photo left*) welcomes us with his beautiful smile and perhaps with a delightful song. His story is amazing, and his voice is angelic.

During Christmas time in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels we will see the famous “*All nativity scenes of the World.*” Over the years, people from all over the world have donated their manger scenes to the Friars in Assisi and they display the best works in the convent’s cloister.

We will return to the city center of Assisi to visit the **Basilica of St. Clare**. Dinner will be in the Piazza del Comune, the main piazza in Assisi, one of the most beautiful piazzas in all of Italy.

Sunday, December 27, 2020 – Assisi/Greccio/ Fiumicino. Leaving the land of Francis by way of the village of Greccio where Christmas is re-enacted, and then to our pilgrimage's end.



full day in Assisi will begin with morning Mass celebrated by a Franciscan priest at the tomb of St. Francis, followed by a tour of the **Basilica of St. Francis**.

After Mass, we will leave our beloved Assisi and head to the medieval town of Greccio, (*photo, left*) which is the birthplace of the nativity scene. Lunch will on our way in Foligno, another Umbrian town with delicious local food.

Late in the afternoon we will attend a re-enactment of the living nativity scene as it happened eight centuries ago when St. Francis staged the first-ever nativity scene in 1223. In the evening, we will have our final dinner together, reflecting on our experiences and the friendships we have deepened during our week together as fellow pilgrims.

Our journey will end at Fiumicino, Italy, at the Rome Airport Hilton, which is next to the Rome Airport. Robert and Deborah

will stay with you to assist you in your departure from Rome the next morning.

Monday, December 28, 2020 — Farewell. After an early morning breakfast and farewell, Robert and Deborah will escort you to the airport for your return home. Farewell to all of our fellow pilgrims, our friends, until we meet again...

Not mentioned in this sketch of our itinerary are perhaps the two most important points...

1) During our days in Rome, we hope to have the chance to meet with a number of Vatican monsignors, archbishops and cardinals, who will listen and respond to pilgrims' questions and concerns about the Church today, and about working alongside Pope John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. These meetings change from pilgrimage to pilgrimage, but they are always remembered by pilgrims as special moments to be close to the Pope as he leads the Church in this difficult period of history.

2) We prefer to schedule Mass in the morning, but there is a possibility that Mass times can fluctuate due to circumstances and event of the day. Each day we will have the opportunity to attend Mass. The Mass schedule of this pilgrimage will be finalized closer to the time of departure.

Pilgrimage Overview

Rome

- Spend 4 nights inside the Vatican, at the Casa Bonus Pastor
- Dine with Dr. Robert Moynihan and special guests and friends of *Inside the Vatican* magazine
- Experience Rome and Vatican City at Christmastime
- Visit and pray in the 4 major Basilicas of Rome: St Mary Major, St Paul-Outside-the-Wall, St. John Lateran and St. Peter's Basilica
- Visit the Holy Stairs and the Basilica of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem
- Visit many famous Roman sites in Baroque Rome via a walking tour of the Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain, Pantheon and Piazza Navona
- Visit and pray in the famous Basilica Sant'Andrea delle Fratte, where Mary appeared to Ratisbonne -- the catalyst for the arrival of the Miraculous Medal devotion in Italy
- Meet Vatican Monsignors, and perhaps even an Archbishop or Cardinal in their apartment, to understand better the Church today and to reflect on the meaning of Christmas
- Visit the Basilica of St. Mary Trastevere, an area near the Vatican where the first Christians lived in Rome
- Visit Rome's beloved Marian Shrine, Madonna del Divino Amore
- Lunch at Castel Gandolfo overlooking Lake Albano



Assisi

- Spend four nights in beautiful Assisi, a medieval city seemingly untouched by time, at the Hotel Giotto on Christmas
- Attend Mass at the tomb of St. Francis
- Visit the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels, inside of which is St. Francis' *Portiuncula*
- Visit the Basilica of St. Clare and pray at her tomb
- Meet some of our Franciscan friends in Assisi
- Visit Cascia and venerate the incorrupt body of St. Rita



Norcia

- Spend a half day in Norcia and dine in one of Italy's most distinguished culinary towns
- Visit the town where St. Benedict and his twin sister, St. Scholastica, were born in 480 A.D.
- Visit the new monastery of the Benedictine monks of Norcia, outside the city on the mountain
- Listen to reflections on Advent given by Father Cassian Folsom, OSB, prior emeritus and founder of the restored Benedictine monastery

Join Inside the Vatican Pilgrimages for this once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage!



Cost

\$5,675.00 per person – Land Package – Does not include airfare.

\$5,675.00	Regular price per person
\$ 175.00	Cash discount for payment by cash or check
\$5,500.00	Cash Discount price (double occupancy)

- **Discount price for payment by cash or check (savings of \$175.00)** – \$5,550.00. *For installment payments made by cash or check, the discount will be applied to the final payment.
- **Single Room Supplement** – \$500.00 Please note: there is a limited number of single rooms available.
- **All meals are included –except for 2 dinners on 2 days:**
 - 1st – Christmas Day – (However, Christmas lunch will include several courses)
 - 2nd – On our last travel day we will also have a large mid-day meal.
- **Bus** – Private, first-class motor coach bus and all group transfers are included.
- **Taxes and Fees** – All local taxes, porter fees and porter tips are included. Bus driver tips are not included.
- **Entrance Fees** – All entrance fees are included.
- **Arrival Transfers** – There will be one (1) group transfer to Casa Bonus Pastor after arrival at Rome’s Fiumicino Airport on **Saturday, December 19, 2020**. To be included in this group transfer, please ensure your flight arrives into Rome’s Fiumicino Airport before 12:00 noon.
- **Departure Transfers** – There will be one (1) group transfer from Rome Airport Hilton to Fiumicino Airport upon departure on **Monday December 28, 2020**. To be included in the group transfer, please ensure that your flight departure time is no earlier than 10:00 am.

This Pilgrimage Does Not Include:

- Airfare to and from Rome.
- Airport transfers (for those not arriving within specified time frames to participate in the group transfers)
- Meals not specifically identified
- Gratuities payable to bus drivers
- Other personal expenses, included but not limited to laundry services, internet services, mini-bar in hotel rooms, et cetera
- Items not specifically mentioned in the pilgrimage description literature

Additional Information

- A non-refundable deposit of \$500.00 per participant is required at the time of booking. Please make all payments payable to Inside the Vatican. If you prefer to wire funds, contact our office.
- The number of pilgrims is limited to 12 pilgrims to allow for a peaceful and personal experience.
- Dr. Robert Moynihan, editor-in-chief of *Inside the Vatican* magazine, and Deborah Tomlinson, COO of *Inside the Vatican* magazine, will greet you at the Casa Bonus Pastor and will accompany your group for the entire pilgrimage.

We will make every effort to adhere to the printed program and itinerary. On rare occasions it may be necessary to adjust arrangements due to unforeseen circumstances beyond our control (including such circumstances as the weather, airline schedule change, hotel requisitions, political disturbances or transportation mechanical problems). Should such adjustment be necessary, substitution will be made to the best of our abilities.

For more information or to reserve your spot, call 202-536-4555 or email Pilgrimages@InsidetheVatican.com.

Terms & Conditions

Christmas in Italy 2020 Pilgrimage

December 19-28, 2020

Inside the Vatican Pilgrimages, Inside the Vatican, Inc., its employees, shareholders, officers and directors are collectively referred to herein as "ITVP."

Household: ITVP defines household as those participants who dwell under the same roof and have the same address for at least 6 months per year.

Rates and Payments: Rates are based on applicable rates as of January 2019.

Land Package — \$5,675.00 *This does not include your airline flights.*

1st Payment: \$500.00 – Due at time of booking

2nd Payment: \$5,175.00 – Due Thursday, October 18, 2020, 60 days prior to departure.

Single Supplement — \$500.00. *If you are a single traveller, without a roommate, you are required to pay a single supplement fee*

Cash Discount: \$175.00 To receive cash discount, you must pay the total amount of \$5,500.00 by cash or check. Installment payment plans: if each payment is made by cash or check, the cash discount of \$175.00 will be applied to final installment.

Reservations and Payment Schedule: A \$500.00 per participant, **non-refundable deposit** is due at the time of booking. Balance is due 60 days prior to departure. If your reservation is received less than 60 days prior to departure, then full payment is due at the time of booking. Receipt of your **non-refundable deposit** shall act as your agreement to and understanding of these terms and conditions. Fax, internet, e-mail or phone reservations are welcome. The **non-refundable deposit** and/or payment in full must be received within 7 days of booking or reservation will cancel. A **contract is made when your reservation and payment are accepted by ITVP and any dispute shall be governed by Virginia law.**

Form of Payment: Bank/Certified Checks, Money Orders, ACH or Wire Transfers (please fax a copy of bank confirmation when wiring funds) are accepted forms of payment at any time. Personal checks are acceptable if received more than 30 days prior to departure date. You may also make Direct Credit Card Payments to ITVP (Discover, Visa and Master Card). Every reservation must be accompanied by a signed Registration Form. Returned checks will incur a \$50.00 service fee. In case of computer or human billing error, we reserve the right to re-invoice participants with corrected billing.

Flight Schedule: Land Package participants are responsible for purchasing their own air flights to arrive into Rome, Italy on **Friday, December 18, 2020** and depart Rome, Italy on **Sunday, December 27, 2020**. If a participant's flight arrives late into Rome or is rescheduled, it is the participant's responsibility to notify ITVP of such flight schedule changes.

Travel Documents: All required travel documents are the responsibility of the participant. For U.S. passport holders, a valid passport is required for travel to Italy and Vatican City, and **it must be valid 6 months after your departure date from the United States**. For passport holders from countries other than the United States, you are responsible for determining the required travel documents. ITVP will not be responsible for any delays, damages and/or losses, including missed portions of the pilgrimage, due to improper travel documentation. Cancellations due to lack of appropriate documents will incur the usual penalties.

Cancellations and Refunds: Cancellations must be received in writing and will be processed according to the date the written notice is received. Although a verbal cancellation is appreciated, it will not be accepted as official notice. Please mail the cancellation notice to the address below. Monies will be refunded minus the **cancellation fee**, calculated as follows:

- 60 days prior to departure: \$500.00 per participant (deposit)
- 59 to 30 days prior to departure: \$500 per participant (deposit) plus 50% of balance of total cost*
- 29 days or less prior to departure: 100% of the total trip cost*

*Trip cost includes: Land Package and single supplement, if applicable.

Tour Cancellation by ITVP: On rare occasions a pilgrimage may have to be cancelled due to lack of participation. In such a case, ITVP's sole responsibility is to provide a full refund. ITVP is not responsible and does not assume responsibility for any additional costs or any fees relating to the issuance and/or cancellation of air tickets or other arrangements not made through ITVP. Cancellations due to state advisories and/or state warnings, acts of war, war, terrorism, acts of God, natural disaster or any other circumstance outside the control of ITVP, are not the fault of ITVP. Great effort will be made to accommodate transfers to another trip or to revise the itinerary; however, cancellation for any of these reasons will not be eligible for a refund.

U.S. State Department & Other Agencies: From time to time the U.S. State Department (www.state.gov) and the Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov) and other government agencies and departments issue travel advisories or warnings for one or more of the destinations that you may be visiting on tour. We encourage you to contact these agencies directly to obtain the most current information. ITVP cannot change the cancellation terms or conditions based on the issuance of any such warning or advisory or the occurrence of any terror, problems or ill health, or other incident in one or more of the places this tour is scheduled to visit. All cancellation penalties must remain in full force and effect as outlined on this form. Travel insurance may or may not cover these possible causes for cancellations.

Photography: Agents of ITVP may take photographs or videos of its trips and trip participants. Participants grant ITVP permission to do so and allow ITVP to use such photos and videos for promotional or commercial use without payment of any fees or royalties. These photos will be available on our photo website InsideTheVaticanPhotos.com following the pilgrimage. A code is required to download these photos from Inside the Vatican's photo gallery. The code will be provided after the pilgrimage.

Room Service and Other Extraneous Charges: Room Service and extraneous charges not expressly listed as part of the Pilgrimage Package are not included. Should a participant request room service, or any other extraneous charge, including, but not limited to, mini bar, laundry services, internet charges or pay-per-view, the participant will be financially responsible for those charges to be paid at the time of check-out. If these charges are not paid at check-out, ITVP will bill the participant accordingly.

Luggage: Baggage is at owner's risk throughout the tour.

Airfare: No airfare is included in the cost of this package. For assistance purchasing airline tickets, please contact our office.

Gratuities: Gratuities are not included. The recommended daily gratuity per person is (3) euro for the escort, (2) euro for the driver and (1) euro for the tour guide.

Transfers: Group transfers to and from the airport in Rome are included.

Participation: ITVP reserves the right to decline or remove any participant on any of its pilgrimages if, in its sole discretion, it deems accepting or retaining any such participant as being detrimental to the pilgrimage. In addition, all participants must adhere to the rules of Vatican City and the Rules and Restrictions of the *Domus Bonus Pastor* in the event that we visit the *Domus Bonus Pastor*. In the event, any participant is removed from a trip, ITVP is not obligated to refund to such person that portion of the payment allocable to unused services.

Health Requirements: This pilgrimage requires significant walking. Any medical conditions or special equipment needs must be listed on the registration form. ITVP is not responsible for any medical condition that occurs prior to, during or after the pilgrimage.

Final Package: A final package containing documents and local contact information will be mailed to each participant one (1) to two (2) weeks prior to departure. A pilgrim book will be included for all adult participants. Upon receipt of your documents, you are responsible to check your itinerary, spelling of your name, dates, times and other important information to ensure their validity. Should your final documents have any errors, it is the participant's responsibility to contact ITVP immediately. Documents, including tickets, are not guaranteed if final payment and booking forms are not received by the deadline.

Unused Services: There will be **no refund** for any unused portions of the program. Refunds will not be made to participants who miss any part of the tour for any cause whatsoever.

Insurance: Although travel insurance is not included in the package, it is strongly recommended. Please contact our offices if you would like assistance in purchasing travel insurance.

Itinerary: Although ITVP and its agents and representatives will make every effort to adhere to the printed program and itinerary, on rare occasions it may be necessary to adjust arrangements due to unforeseen circumstances beyond our control (including, but not limited to, such circumstances as the weather, acts of God, airline schedule change, hotel requisitions, political disturbances, or transportation mechanical problems). Should such adjustments be necessary, substitutions will be made to the best of our abilities. A refund will not be given. Any additional costs necessitated by such changes are the full responsibility of the participant. We do not guarantee entrance into Papal events/Masses or preferred seating at these events, due to circumstances beyond our control such as, but not limited to, long security lines, fewer seats available than the actual number of tickets distributed, etc.

Printing Disclaimer: ITVP is not responsible for typographical or printing errors including errors in trip cost. We reserve the right to re-invoice or correct billing at any time.

Christmas in Italy 2020 Pilgrimage with Inside the Vatican Pilgrimages, December 19 – 28, 2020

Inside the Price: Land Package \$5,675.00 Single Supplement \$500.00

Cash discount price for payment by cash or check: \$5,500.00

Name as it appears on your passport: *(Enclose a copy of the picture page of your passport with this form.)*

Name you prefer _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____ **Country** _____

Home Telephone Number () _____ **Office** () _____

Cell () _____ **Fax** () _____

Email _____

Passport Number _____ **Exp. Date** _____

Date and Place of birth: *(required by hotels in Italy and Vatican City)* _____

Will you be traveling with a working cell phone? *(to contact you upon arrival if we are unable to locate you)* _____

If yes, please provide the number: () _____

Hotel Accommodation: Single Double/Twin Triple Matrimonial

Name of Roommate _____

Dietary Restrictions _____

Physical Limitations: *(Please check all that apply)* difficulty walking long distances
 difficulty standing difficulty climbing stairs medical conditions other
 none **Do You Use:** walker cane

Please Explain:

Emergency Contact _____ **Relationship** _____

Contact Numbers _____

I have received, read and agree to the Terms and Conditions for the **Christmas in Italy 2020 Pilgrimage, December 19 - 28, 2020**, as well as the Pricing Terms, Payment Terms, and the "Release" outlined on this side of the form. I also agree that Inside the Vatican Pilgrimages cannot be held liable for any injury or loss sustained during the pilgrimage. I agree to the cancellation terms and penalties.

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Print Name _____

Witness *(a non-family member)* _____

Witness *(print name)* _____

Release: Inside the Vatican Pilgrimages, Inside the Vatican, Inc., its employees, shareholders, officers and directors (collectively "ITVP") does not own or operate any entity which is to or does provide goods or services for your trip, including, for example, lodging facilities, transportation companies, local ground operators, including, without limitation, various entities, which may utilize the ITVP name, guides, sightseeing companies, entertainment, food or drink service providers, equipment suppliers, etc. As a result, ITVP is not responsible for any negligent or willful act or failure to act of any person or entity it does not own or control. Without limitations ITVP is not liable for any direct, indirect, consequential, or incidental damage, injury, death, loss, accident, delay, inconvenience or irregularity of any kind which may be occasioned by reason of any act or omission beyond its control, including, without limitation any willfully or negligent act, failure to act, breach of contract or violation of local law or regulation of any third party such as a cruise line, airline, train, hotel, bus, taxi, van, local ground handler or guide, whether or not it uses the ITVP name, financial default or insolvency of any supplier which is to, or does supply any goods or services for this trip. Similarly, ITVP is not responsible for any loss, injury, death or inconvenience due to delay or changes in schedule, overbooking of accommodation, default or any third party, attacks or bites by animals, insects or pests, injury or death while on activities sponsored by lodging facilities or by other third parties, sickness, the lack of appropriate medical care, evacuation to same, if necessary, weather, strikes, acts of God or government, acts of terrorism, or the threat thereof, force majeure, war, quarantine, epidemics, or the threat thereof, criminal activity or any other cause beyond its control. Should Dr. Robert Moynihan or Deborah Tomlinson be unable to participate in this event, reasonable efforts will be made to secure a substitute. Regardless of the participation of Dr. Robert Moynihan or Deborah Tomlinson, the tour will proceed as scheduled on the dates listed. By signing this form to participate on this trip you agree that the terms of the cancellation penalty will be binding upon you regardless of whether Dr. Robert Moynihan or Deborah Tomlinson is able to participate. ITVP is not responsible for any loss incurred by participant including lost days of the scheduled cruise/tour, due to a cancelled flight or other means and modes of transportation. We will have daily Mass and strive to be in places as indicated. However, sometimes this is not possible as the site may not be available for Mass or itinerary changes are forced upon us. In this case, an alternative site for Mass will be arranged.

For more information or to reserve your spot, contact our US Office at 1-202-536-4555 or email us at pilgrimages@InsideTheVatican.com

Revised: November 2018



Dear Sir or Madame,

Thank you for taking the time to read about the **Christmas in Italy 2020 Pilgrimage** being offered by Inside the Vatican Pilgrimages.

To join us, please mail the completed forms indicated below along with the appropriate selected payment to our U.S. office to reserve your space. Space is limited, so we recommend you contact us as soon as possible, either by email at pilgrimages@insidethevatican.com or by calling our office at 202-536-4555, to have a space reserved for you. We will hold your space for seven (7) days until we receive your registration information and payment.

The following items will need to be mailed to the address below:

1. **Registration Form:** Each participant is required to complete a registration form and include a copy of the picture page of his or her passport.
2. **Deposit:** Check for \$500.00 per participant, made payable to *Inside the Vatican*. If you prefer to wire funds, please contact our office.
3. **Cash Discount:** to take advantage of the Cash Discount of \$175.00, you must pay the full amount of \$5,500.00 per participant by cash or check, made payable to *Inside the Vatican*. For installment payment plans, each payment must be made by cash or check, and the cash discount will be applied to the final installment.
4. **Airline Reservations**—Once you have booked your airline reservation, please forward a copy to our office via email or U.S. mail.

**Inside the Vatican
14 W Main Street
Front Royal, VA 22630**

Final Payment Due Thursday, October 18, 2020

IMPORTANT NOTE: When booking your airline flights into Rome (airport code FCO) , it is best to arrive the day before, **Friday, December 18, 2020**, to allow time to rest from your overnight travels. The Airport Hilton is adjacent to the airport and very easy to access by an interior walkway. I will be happy to assist you in booking this extra night. If you do not plan to arrive a day early, it is best to arrive to the airport (FCO) by noon, or earlier, if possible, on **Saturday, December 19, 2020**. It may take 2 hours to arrive to the Vatican after your plane touches ground and this will allow you to have time to rest before lunch. For your return home, you need to book your return flight for **Monday, December 28, 2020**. We will be staying at the Rome Airport Hilton our last night of pilgrimage. If you need assistance with your airline flight arrangements, just let us know and we will be happy to assist you.

Should you have any questions about the pilgrimage, feel free to call us directly at 202-536-4555. If you would like to reserve your spot after business hours, simply send us an email to pilgrimages@InsideTheVatican.com, and we will respond to you on the next business day.

Please let us know how we can assist you in joining this pilgrimage!

Lily Keats
Executive Assistant
Inside the Vatican