

Baltimore archbishop prepares for pallium in Rome

ROME – Pilgrims joining Archbishop William E. Lori in the Eternal City to witness the ceremony in which he will receive the pallium from Pope Benedict XVI had a busy first couple of days. The group includes some folks from the Archdiocese of Baltimore, as well as some of the archbishop's former flock in Bridgeport, Conn.

Several priests from the archdiocese and other lay leaders joined the group for some Masses and a couple of other events.

The archbishop began the pilgrimage by welcoming the pilgrims at the Pontifical North American College, the seminary in Rome for students from the U.S. (and Australia).

The next day was packed with a tour and Mass at the Basilica of San Clemente, a tour of the Vatican Museums and St. Peter's Basilica, and then a reception at the residence of the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See.

The archbishop used the Mass at the NAC to pray especially for vocations to the priesthood. Praying "in the shadow of the dome which rises above the tomb of St. Peter," Archbishop Lori said that Peter, the first pope, responded to Jesus' call to "feed my sheep," and he noted that Christ has extended that call "down through the centuries, so that the Gospel can be preached to us, and the sacraments of salvation can be celebrated for us.

"After all," he continued, "without priests, there's no Eucharist, and without the Eucharist, there's no hope."

Before the Mass at San Clemente, Dominican Father Terrence Crotty, rector of the basilica, provided a tour of the basilica, which is unique in that it is a functioning church for the faithful of today within a 12th-century church, built upon a 4th-century Christian church, which itself was built upon the remains of a 1st-

century Roman building. With the 90-degree heat sweltering Rome, the pilgrims appreciated the cool respite on the tour of the foundations of the church and Roman building below ground.

During his homily, Archbishop Lori made reference to the special connection San Clemente has to the Archdiocese of Baltimore and his own ministry, as it was the titular church of his predecessor in Baltimore and Bridgeport, Cardinal Lawrence J. Shehan. He also made reference in his homily to the spectacular 12th-century frescoes above the altar of the Cross as the Tree of Life, gesturing frequently to the artwork that shows Jesus standing with his arms outstretched in the manner of a priest celebrating Mass.



Archbishop William E. Lori delivers his homily from the pulpit of the Basilica of San Clemente, the titular church of the late Cardinal Lawrence J. Shehan. (Christopher Gunty | CR Staff)

In the afternoon, pilgrims got a whirlwind tour of the Vatican Museums with one of the finest museum guides available, art historian Dr. Elizabeth Lev. Pointing out that the Vatican museums are considered in the class with the Louvre and other great museums in the world based on the strength of their collections and the number of visitors, she said the reason for the Vatican's collection is what sets it apart - its proximity to the dome of St. Peter's, above the tomb of the saint.

Referring to Peter's death at the hands of the Romans, she said they dumped him in a hole and filled it with dirt, and covered it with bricks to make sure another Christian's body didn't walk away.

"They thought they were throwing away the trash; instead they planted a seed," Lev said.

In a tour that brought to life the sculptures, tapestries and paintings of the museum, the Sistine Chapel - not the Sixteenth Chapel, Justin Bieber - and St. Peter's Basilica itself, Lev reminded the pilgrims continuously that the art within constantly expressed a deeper message about humanity's relationship to God.

Completing the tour in St. Peter's Square, she pointed out the sculptures of saints lining the top of Bernini's colonnade, whose "arms" reach out to embrace the piazza and all who visit. All kinds of holy men and women are represented there, she noted, each one providing us "someone you can look up to, someone you can emulate, some you can relate to."

Taking away a message like this is essential to such a visit; it's what a pilgrimage is about, Lev insisted. "It revitalizes you - sends you back into the world."

As evening drew on, the pilgrims had a chance to join all four of the U.S. archbishops receiving the pallium at Vila Richardson, the residence of the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, currently Miguel H. Diaz.



Archbishop William E. Lori chats with Miguel H. Diaz, the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See and his wife, Marian, who hosted pilgrims at their residence, Vila Richardson. (Christopher Gunty | CR Staff) <?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" ?>

The other archbishops are Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila of Denver, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Philadelphia, and Archbishop William C. Skurla of the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh (Ruthenian).

Ambassador Diaz and his wife, Marian, hosted the outdoor reception for the archbishops and their guests. Chatting informally with the guests later on, the Diazes discussed the role of the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, not as one who makes trade deals or other typical roles of an ambassador, but as one who seeks a convergence between the Holy See and U.S. foreign policy. Issues such as human trafficking, global health, peace-building and support of religious minorities carry over from administration to administration, Diaz said.

Having been a theology professor and dean at a Catholic seminary in Florida before entering the diplomatic corps, he told Archbishop Lori that it's unusual for a diplomat to have the background in philosophy and theology that he brings to his post.

He told the archbishop that academic life still beckons, but that he considers his diplomatic service “a break (from academia) out of service to his country.”

Speaking of the theology and philosophy he encounters at the Vatican, he later told guests, “I was teaching this stuff, and now I’m part of it.”



Archbishop William E. Lori chats with U.S. Cardinal William J. Levada, who serves as prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith in Rome. (Christopher Gunty | CR Staff)