

# Buon Giorgio, Italia Day 4 from Assisi: Walking in the footsteps of St. Francis

## **Farewell to Florence:**

John Carroll took Florence by storm on Friday and Saturday, enjoying the sites, sounds, and shopping, along with the great food and live music in all the piazzas. It was a bit of a luxury to be in the same place for two nights, as living out of a suitcase from town to town is pretty challenging.

After breakfast on Sunday morning, we hit the road and headed for the hills of Umbria to the medieval town of Assisi, best remembered as the home of the gentle saint for whom our Holy Father took his papal name.



*Basilica di Santa Chiara (Saint Claire)*

I have looked forward to the possibility of visiting Assisi all my life, and it was pretty overwhelming to think that this “pilgrimage day” was finally here. As our motor coach drove up the country roads of Umbria approaching the Franciscan Holy City, I felt truly joyous.

## **Peace and prayer in Assisi:**

Having three unstructured hours during the day, my husband and I joined our other faculty to explore the amazing Assisi basilicas of Saints Claire and Francis, dine at a local cafe, and browse through some of the numerous small shops. I asked several merchants if they saw Pope Francis when he visited last year. The first lady I asked lit up and quickly showed me her small wooden cross which was blessed by the Holy Father who went right past the front of her shop.

How wonderful!!



*Lunch at an Assisi cafe: (from left) Lindsey, Rachel, Bethany, and Emily*

We soon after made new friends with the husband-wife owners of the wonderful Annamaria DiCosta Shop with beautifully designed jewelry and other handmade items on Via San Paolo. Anna also offers a wide variety of sewn, embroidered, and handcrafted cloth and fabric items. I bought a beautiful flowered tote bag, we chatted and exchanged photos, and they shared with us the pictures they took of

Pope Francis during his October 2013 visit to Assisi. How fantastic!!



*We loved meeting Anna and her husband at their Annamaria DiCosta Shop (www.annettejolie.it) with personally designed jewelry and handmade fabric items on Via San Paolo.*

### **Remembering prayer intentions:**



#### *Approaching the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi*

The highlight was praying at the tomb of Saint Francis: I will never forget that for as long as I live ... Remembering the intentions of family and fiends, my students and their families, my associates at John Carroll and the Catholic Review, and in a very special way, my Franciscan friends and their families and ministries. Powerful intercessions from this holy, much loved saint.



*Praying at the burial of San Francesco in the crypt area of the basilica*



*Several JC students and I chatted at the portico by the Basilica di San Francesco with Indonesian Sisters who were now working in Italy.*



*Our John Carroll group at the portico outside the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi.*

We later had a very comfortable stay in the lower part of town by the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli, which we visited in the late afternoon while many of the kids caught up on Wifi in the hotel lobby.



*Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli in the lower town of Assisi*

After dinner at the lovely Hotel Cristallo, which was spacious with gorgeous balcony views of Assisi, my husband and I returned to Assisi with English Chair Christine Zurkowski and her husband for a quick last visit. The upper town and churches had cleared out completely and it seemed that we had the entire place to ourselves.



*Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi at night: Palm Sunday 2014.*

So spiritual and peaceful, with full moonlight.... Again, I'll never forget it.

**Next stop:**

After a wonderful day and night in this peaceful oasis, we are heading south on Monday morning toward the Bay of Naples to visit Pompei. Then onto the Sorrento coast for dinner and overnight.

Arriverderci from Assisi: I will talk to you tomorrow from Sorrento!!