

My experience of three months Sabbatical Course in Rome

I write this article with a deep sense of gratitude to the Congregation for having offered me the possibility of this Grace-filled time!

This Course started in September 2019 with a live-in at a seaside resort at Santa Marinella. There were 64 religious women from 30 different Congregations; coming from all over the world. This live-in gave us time to relax, to pray and to get to know one another.

The course was very well balanced with lectures based on the Word of God, various spiritualities, religions, Theology, topics specifically on Consecrated Life, as well as media, the thinking of young people, and of the world today.....

Besides the very interesting lectures, cultural guided tours were organised mostly in the City centre. We visited of course the great Basilicas, we participated in a general audience with Pope Frances, and we visited the Colosseum and other churches of interest. At St. Peter's we went down to see where the remains of the Apostle were, and as we prayed there we felt very close to the Faith of the early church and martyrs.

Part of our studies was about Hebrew/Christian Dialogue. So we also had the opportunity to visit the Jewish ghetto in Rome and learnt that even up to today the Jews are still finding it hard to be accepted by the Christians, though we owe our Faith to this Nation who was first chosen by God for the Salvation of mankind!

One very interesting outing was a visit to the Mosque. We were given a warm welcome by the director of the Islam centre and the Imam took us around and explained the commonalities of belief between the Islam and the Bible teaching. He showed great respect for Pope Frances and spoke about the good relations there are between the Catholic Church and the Islam.

We also were given time to share our various and rich Charisms of the 30 different Religious Congregations. This helped us to appreciate more the richness of the Church and also the dedication and passion with which so many Religious across the world give their lives for the poor.

At the end of the course we lived a six-day retreat together, again at the seaside resort. A priest led the conferences with the theme "Face to Face", all based on the Word of God.

I must say that this grace filled three month Sabbatical helped me to look for God within who loves me as I am, to go deeper in myself and discover more all that is covering up the Image of God within me, accept the limitations, sin within and it is there that I cry for Salvation, and it is there that God will show His Presence and strength. This process makes me more aware that as God loves me He also loves the other, and the call to love as I am Loved by Him.

Besides being interiorly renewed, I felt also physically, and mentally refreshed. I would highly recommend and encourage other Sisters to participate in such courses as a spiritual renewal and physical refresher and recharging for the Mission.

“Gratitude is the memory of the heart” SME