

A Pilgrimage In the Footsteps of St. Paul the Apostle Greece and Rome

May 29 – June 13, 2005



A monument to St. Paul the Apostle in the modern city of Berea, Greece where, as a result of the preaching of St. Paul in the local synagogue, the people “received the Word with all willingness and examined the Scriptures daily to determine whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Sunday, May 29th Day 1 - Departure

Meet at St. Paul's at 9AM to take a shuttle to LAX as a group.

Depart from LAX at 12:45PM on United #890 to Washington/Dulles, arriving 8:50PM.

Depart from Washington/Dulles at 9:30PM on United #932 to Frankfurt, arriving 11:30AM.

Depart from Frankfurt at 1:05PM on Lufthansa #3382 to Athens, arriving 4:45PM.

ATHENS

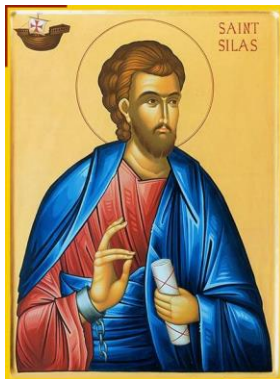
Monday, May 30th Day 2 - Arrival in Athens

We arrived in Athens in the early evening, picked up at the airport and taken to our hotel where we had dinner, met our guides and settled in for a good night's rest after a very long flight.

Athens has been a city for 3500 years, the oldest city in Europe, and is known to every schoolchild as the birthplace of western civilization. Athens is named for the ancient Greek goddess Athena, the daughter of Zeus and protectress of the city. Its greatest glory was during the 5th century BC when Pericles oversaw the building of the Acropolis. Within a scant 70 years, the city was presented with the literary masterpieces of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes; the works of Hippocrates, the father of medicine; and the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides. The city also produced three of the most influential philosophers in human history: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. During the 15th through the 18th centuries, the period of Ottoman occupation, Athens was reduced to a town of less than 10,000 people. But in 1834, it became the capital of modern Greece and today has a population of well over two and a half million people.

Tuesday, May 31st Day 3 - Seeing Athens

Reading the Scriptures: St. Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16-34)



Now while Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout Gentiles who worshipped the God of Israel; and in the market place every day with those who chanced to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers met him. And some said, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities" -- because he preached Jesus and the Resurrection. So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some strange teachings to our ears; we wish to know therefore what these things mean."

Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new. So Paul, standing in the middle of the

Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious; for as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And He made from one man every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of the places where they would live that they should seek God, in the hope that they might grope after Him and find Him. Yet He is not far from each one of us, for ‘In Him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your poets have said, ‘For we are indeed His offspring.’ Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation made by the art and imagination of man. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed, and of this He has given assurance to everyone by raising Him from the dead.” Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, “We will hear you again about this.”

At that point, Paul went out from among them. But some people joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

After breakfast, we spent a full day of sightseeing in Athens. We visited the Acropolis (literally, “the upper city”) and saw the Parthenon and the museum there. The Acropolis has been used almost continually since 1300BC, first as a military fortress and later as a



The Parthenon

site for worship. In 490BC the Athenians began construction on the building that was the precursor of the Parthenon as we know it today. It was still incomplete a decade later when invading Persians destroyed Athens and leveled it to the ground. The Parthenon was begun again under the patronage of the famous Athenian statesman Pericles and was dedicated to Athena in 438BC during the 85th Olympiad. One of the world’s most famous buildings, 230 feet long and 100 feet wide, it was designed by the architects Kallikrates and Iktinos to house a 40 foot statue of Athena covered with gold plate. Today, when we think of the Parthenon our

image is of a large white building. But in fact, all of the sculptures created for the Parthenon were brightly colored and gilded. Did you know that the Parthenon was a Christian Church dedicated to the Virgin Mary for over a thousand years, longer than it was a temple to the ancient goddess Athena? The Parthenon served as a temple dedicated to Athena until 392AD when the Christian Roman emperor Theodosius declared Christianity to be the only legal religion of the Empire. By the 5th century the Parthenon had been re-consecrated as a Christian Church and in 662AD was dedicated in honor of the Virgin Mary. In 1204-1205AD, following the conquest of Athens during the Fourth

Crusade by the Latins and the Franks, the Parthenon became a Roman Catholic Church known as *Santa Maria di Athene* and later *Notre Dame d'Athene*. Following the conquest of Athens by the Ottoman Turks in 1460, the Parthenon was turned into a mosque. During the Venetian siege of Athens in 1687 led by General Francesco Morosini, a shell hit the Turkish supply of gunpowder stored in the Parthenon and the resulting explosion did extensive damage to the building. Parts of the Parthenon, today known as the Elgin Marbles, are named for Lord Elgin, the Englishman who acquired them in 1801-1803 from the occupying Turkish authorities. He sold them to the British government in 1816 and today they can be seen in the British Museum in London.

Nearby is the Areopagus where St. Paul delivered his first sermon to the Athenians (*Acts 17:16-23*) as you read above and the original Greek text of which is inscribed on a commemorative tablet at the foot of the stairway leading up to the Areopagus. The Areopagus, meaning “the Hill of Ares,” takes its name from a mythological trial that took place here when Ares, the ancient god of war was acquitted of murdering the son of Poseidon, god of the sea. By the time St. Paul arrived in Athens in 51AD, the city had fallen from its ancient splendor, which was as far distant from his own time as the Elizabethan England of Shakespeare is from ours.

We also visited the 19th century Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens that houses the relics of two martyrs of the Ottoman occupation of Greece (1453-1821): St. Philothei (1522-1588), a nun renowned for her charitable work among the city's disenfranchised and poor, especially women, who was tied to a pillar and beaten to death by a band of Turks who had forced their way into her convent; and St. Gregory V, the patriarch of Constantinople, who was executed by the Turkish government at the beginning of the



The relics of St. Philothei of Athens

Greek Revolution in 1821 by being hung from the doors of the entrance to the Phanar in Constantinople. An Anglican minister, the Rev. Walsh, who was in Constantinople at the time, described Patriarch Gregory V's death in his memoirs, published in London in 1826: “The old man (he was close to eighty years old), was dragged under the gateway where the rope was passed through the staple that fastened the folding doors and was left to struggle in his robes in the agonies of death. His body, attenuated by abstinence and emaciated by age, had not sufficient weight to cause immediate death. He continued for a long time in pain which no friendly hand dared abridge and the darkness of night came on before his final convulsions were over.”



The “Little Cathedral”

We visited several other Byzantine churches like the “Little Cathedral,” a 12th century church that sits just behind and to the side of the much larger 19th century Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens. Called the “Little Cathedral” because it is only 40 feet long and 25 feet wide, this cruciform, domed church was built by Michael Choniates, who served as the bishop of Athens from 1180 to 1204. It is dedicated both to the *Theotokos* and St. Eleutherios the martyr. In addition, we visited the 11th century Kessariani Monastery on Mount Hymettos about 20 minutes outside of Athens. The Monastery of Kessariane, whose *katholicon* is dedicated to the Presentation of the Theotokos, was built over the sight of an earlier classical temple dedicated to Apollo and later, Aphrodite. The temple’s original floor and Ionic columns were incorporated into the monastery structure and the *katholicon* or main church still stands undamaged.

Wednesday, June 1st Day 4 - Athens and Corinth

After breakfast, we visited the famous Byzantine Museum near *Syntagma* (Constitution) Square in Athens to view hundreds of ancient icons spanning the 4th through the 19th centuries. Originally called the Villa Illissia, this elegant Florentine-style mansion was built between 1840 and 1848 by Stamatis Kleanthis for the Duchesse de Plaisance (1785-1854), an eccentric woman, the wife of one of Napoleon’s generals and a key figure in Athenian society in the mid-19th century. Art collector George Sotiriou converted the house into a museum in the 1930’s. Three rooms have been created from fragments of now lost Byzantine churches: a 5th century three aisled basilica; an 11th century domed cruciform structure; and a post-Byzantine church. Elsewhere on the ground floor, the exhibits range from early Christian 4th century basilica fragments from the Acropolis to 15th century sculptures from the Frankish occupation of Greece.

Then we will travel to the ancient city of Corinth, where St. Paul lodged with a Roman



The Temple of Apollo at Corinth

Jewish couple, Priscilla and Aquila, fellow tent and sail makers, and made a momentous decision for the history of Christianity: it was in Corinth that Paul stopped preaching solely in synagogues and decided to begin his missionary work among the Gentiles (*Acts 18:6*). Although Corinth had been an ancient Greek city that had fought against Athens in the Peloponnesian War, the Corinth of St. Paul’s day was a Roman port city that had recently been rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44BC. It was a larger city than Athens at the time, having a population of approximately 100,000 people (about two-thirds the size of Irvine). It was the seat of the governor of the Roman province of Achaia and its patron deity was the goddess Aphrodite or Venus, as the Romans called her. The ancient Roman geographer and historian Strabo (64BC-21AD) reported that there were 1,000 “sacred” prostitutes associated with Aphrodite’s temple. Corinth had a widespread reputation for sexual

immorality of all kinds. In fact, in the Greek of St. Paul's day, the verb *corinthiazein*, "to live like a Corinthian" meant to live a life of debauchery and sexual promiscuity; and the phrase *kore corinthe*, "daughter of Corinth" was a euphemism for prostitute. Apollo and Aesklepios, the Greek god of healing, were also worshipped there and some of the columns of Apollo's temple from the 6th century BC still remain standing, although much of the ancient city has been destroyed by invasions and earthquakes in subsequent centuries.

On our way to Corinth from Athens, we will pass by the Corinthian Canal. There were a



The Canal at Corinth

number of attempts to dig a canal here in ancient times, most notably by the Apostle Paul's executioner, the Roman emperor Nero. In 66AD, 14 years after St. Paul's stay in Corinth, Nero used 6,000 Jewish captives taken prisoner by Vespasian from the lakeside villages of Galilee where the Jewish War had begun – men whose fathers and grandfathers may well have heard the Lord Himself teach – to begin work on digging a canal. They failed, and the canal was finally dug by a French company that commenced their work in 1881 at the spot where Nero had given up. The canal was completed in 1893.

Reading the Scriptures: St. Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1-18)

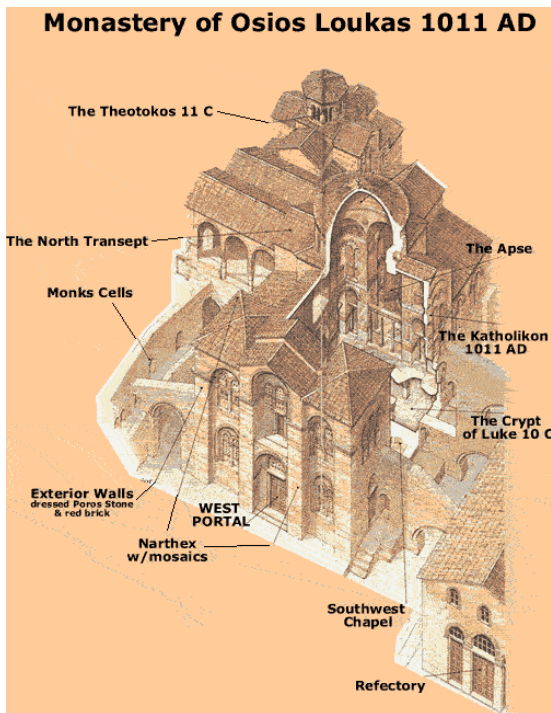
After this he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them; and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them, and they worked, for by trade they were tentmakers. And he argued in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God; his house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all of his household; and many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you; for I have many people in this city." And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack upon Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying, "This man is persuading men to worship God contrary to the Law." But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, I should have reason to bear with you, O Jews; but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your

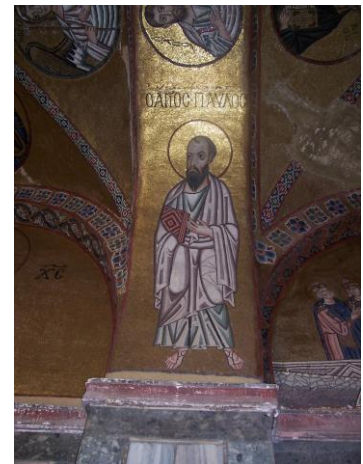
own Law, see to it yourselves; I refuse to be a judge of these things.” And he drove them from the tribunal. And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to this. After this Paul stayed many days longer, and then took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila.

While in Corinth, we saw the ruins of the ancient temple of Apollo, the agora, the Roman Odeon and Gallio’s seat, the chair from which the Roman governor Junius Gallio refused to condemn St. Paul. Gallio was not your average Roman governor, but the brother of Seneca, the famous philosopher and tutor of Nero. Corinth has been an archaeological dig since 1895, so we will stop by the small archeological museum in Corinth. We will visit Cenchreae, the eastern port of Corinth, where St. Paul shaved his head “because of a vow he had taken” (*Acts 18:18*) and then see the old harbor from which he sailed on to Ephesus before returning to Athens. Several years later, St. Paul would write two letters to the troubled “Church of God which is in Corinth” (*1 Corinthians 1:2*) and it is in the first of these letters that he would define what love means for a Christian: “*Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, conceited or arrogant. Love is not ill-mannered, selfish or irritable. Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not rejoice in evil but rejoices in the truth. Love is eternal. Make love your aim*” (*1 Corinthians 13:4-6, 8; 14:1*).

Thursday, June 2nd Day 5 - The Monastery of Osios Loukas and Delphi



After breakfast we departed Athens for a 6 night/7day coach tour of Greece. Today we visited the Monastery of *Osios Loukas* or St. Luke of Steiris, a 10th century monk. He was known as a healer and a prophet. Two characteristics of this saint that are repeated over and over in accounts of his life are his strict personal asceticism and his benevolence and generosity towards others. This monastery is one of Greece’s most impressive examples of early monastic architecture and is famous for its ancient Byzantine mosaics. During the Ottoman occupation of Greece, Osios Loukas witnessed a great deal of



fighting as the cannons in the courtyard testify. Today, the monastery is home to only a handful of monks but the relics of St. Luke of Steiris, which had been taken in 1204 when the area was occupied by Frankish invaders connected to the Fourth Crusade, were returned by the Vatican to the monastery in 1986.

An eleventh-century mosaic of St. Paul in the Narthex of Osios Loukas

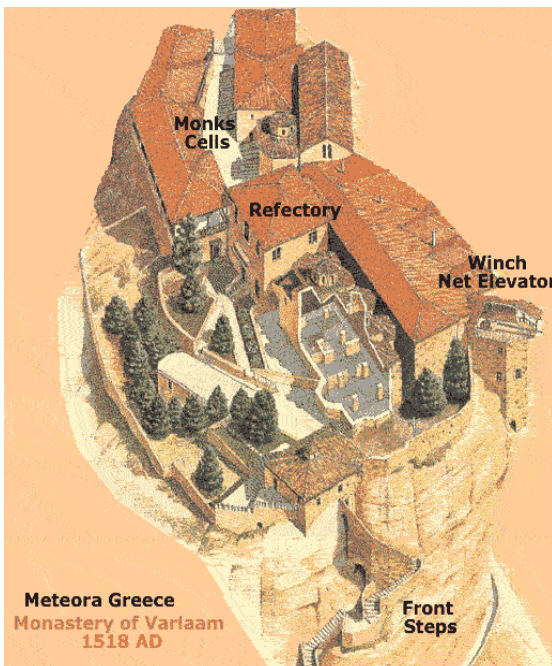
St. Luke's memory is celebrated in our Church on February 7th and the return of his relics from the Vatican on May 3rd.

We will continue on to Delphi and, on the slopes of Mount Parnassus, visit the ancient ruins of the temple of Apollo and the museum there. Delphi was renowned in the ancient world as the dwelling place of Apollo. From the end of the 8th century BC individuals came from all over Greece to consult the god on what course of action to take in both public and private life. The Oracle of Delphi was the means through which worshippers could hear the voice of Apollo, spoken through a priestess or *pythia*. Questioners paid a fee called a *pelanos* and sacrificed an animal on the altar. The incantations of the *pythia* were often interpreted by a priest, but the answers given were often ambiguous, at best. King Croesus of Lydia (ruled 560-546BC) asked if he should make war against King Cyrus of Persia and was told that if he crossed a river, then he would destroy a great empire. In marching on Cyrus, Croesus and his troops crossed the River Halys. Croesus ultimately lost his battle against Cyrus, so the empire he destroyed turned out to be his own. We will see the Castilian Fountain used by those who visited Delphi to purify themselves before placing questions to the Oracle, the 4th century BC Tholos of the Rotunda and the remains of a Christian basilica at the entrance to the archeological site.



The ruins of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi

Friday, June 3rd Day 6 - The Monasteries of Meteora



After breakfast, we drove to the town of Kalambaka and visit the thousand year old monasteries of Meteora, perched high atop some of the most unusual and striking rock formations in the world. How these monasteries could possibly have been built on top of these virtually inaccessible peaks is a subject of awe and fascination for pilgrims and visitors alike. Today, these smooth, vertical stalagmites have become a destination for rock climbers, who are, perhaps, among the few who can truly appreciate the feat of the early 9th century hermits who first climbed these massive pinnacles to live in caves and fissures in the rocks. Some of you may also remember that the monasteries of Meteora, particularly that of the Holy Trinity, which in 1981 served as the backdrop for the 12th "James Bond"

film, starring Roger Moore, *For Your Eyes Only*.

Please note: modest dress is required. No bare shoulders; no shorts for men; skirts necessary for women.

The name “Meteora” literally means “suspended between heaven and earth” and, of course, evokes the English word “meteor.” Meteora is the name first given to these pillars of stone by St. Athanasios of Meteora who lived in the 14th century. The highest rock, crowned by the Monastery of the Great Meteora, rises over 1,300 feet above Kalambaka. For many centuries the monasteries perched on these rocky pinnacles were accessible only by a series of ropes and wooden ladders. However, the ladders produced such intense vertigo that the monks began to use the large nets they had devised to haul up supplies for people as well. In the 1920’s stairs were cut into the rock in order to make the monasteries more accessible. The Monastery of the Great Meteora was founded by St. Athanasios in 1382 with the financial assistance of the Serbian emperor, Symeon Uros. Its *katholicon* or main church is named for the Transfiguration of Christ. The 22 monasteries of Meteora (of which only six are active communities today; the remaining sixteen being pretty much in ruins) contain exquisite Byzantine iconography, some of it by the famous 16th century iconographer, Theophanes the Cretan. The Monastery of St. Stephen the First Martyr is one of two convents on Meteora. It has about 40 nuns and a beautiful, unimpeded view of the plain towards Kalambaka. The refectory of the monastery, built in 1587, has been transformed into a museum with a collection of illuminated manuscripts, post-Byzantine icons and elaborate wood carving and silver work. The other convent, Rousanou, was built in the 16th century and renovated in the 1980’s by the Greek Archeological Service. It is now a convent with 10 nuns. The people of the towns of Trikala, Kastraki and Kalambaka still reverence Rousano as a place where refuge was freely given during the Turkish persecutions of 1757 and the Greco-Turkish War of 1897.

THESSALONIKI

Saturday, June 4th Day 7 - Berea and Thessaloniki

After breakfast, we drove to Vergina, one of the most famous archaeological sites in all of Greece, where in 1977 archaeologists discovered the tomb of the father of Alexander the Great, King Philip II of Macedon, whose bones were found in a stunningly beautiful gold funerary box emblazoned with the symbol of the Macedonian Sun. King Philip was from a long line of Macedonian kings that began about 640BC. He was assassinated in 336BC at the wedding of his daughter Cleopatra. One can still find the Macedonian Sun as a symbol adorning modern flags in this region of Greece. The largest town in the region is Veroia, today the center of the local peach growing industry. But in New Testament times, the Apostle Paul preached the Gospel here after his initial visit to Thessaloniki and found fertile soil for the Gospel to take root. In a town of only a little over 40,000 people there are today more than 40 churches. In fact, some call the town “Little Jerusalem.” There is an outdoor mosaic shrine memorializing St. Paul’s visit to Veroia with a beautiful mosaic of St. Paul directly over the four ancient marble steps from which it is believed he preached.

Reading the Scriptures: St. Paul in Berea (Acts 17: 10-15)

As soon as night came, the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived, they went to the synagogue. The people there were more open-minded than the people in Thessalonica. They listened to the message with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were true. Many of them believed; and many Greek women of high social standing and many Greek men also believed. But when the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul had preached the word of God in Berea also, they came there and started exciting and stirring up the mobs. At once the believers sent Paul away to the coast; but both Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. The men who were taking Paul went with him as far as Athens and then returned to Berea with instructions from Paul that Silas and Timothy should join him as soon as possible.



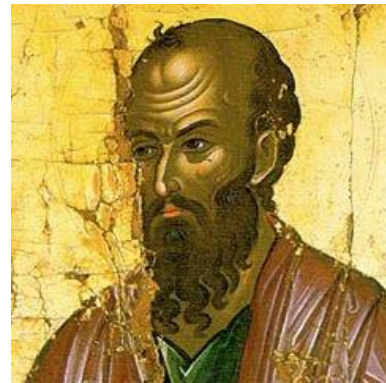
Part of the outdoor monument to Saint Paul in modern Veroia

We then went on to Pella, the ancient capital of Macedonia and the birthplace of Alexander the Great, where he was tutored by the philosopher Aristotle. Unfortunately, the Pella Museum was closed so we continued on to Thessaloniki.

Thessaloniki is the second largest city in Greece. Cassander, a former general of Alexander the Great, established the city of Thessaloniki in 315BC, naming the city after his wife, who was also Alexander's half-sister. The Romans captured the city in 167BC and incorporated it into their Empire. In St. Paul's day, Thessaloniki was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, important for its location on both sea and land routes of travel. St. Paul preached in Thessaloniki in 49-50AD (*Acts 17:1-9*) and would later write two letters to the Thessalonians. In fact, St. Paul's *First Letter to the Thessalonians* is considered by most modern scholars to be the first book of the New Testament to be written, probably sometime in 50-51AD from Corinth.

Reading the Scriptures: St. Paul in Thessaloniki (Acts 17:1-12)

Now when Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Paul went in, as was his custom, and for three weeks he argued with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded, and joined Paul and Silas; as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked fellows of the rabble, they gathered a crowd, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the people. And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brethren before the city authorities, crying, "These men



who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them; and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”

And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard this. And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Beroea; and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

Sunday, June 5th Day 8 - The Churches of Thessaloniki

This morning we began a day of visiting the most important churches in Thessaloniki by attending Liturgy at the St. Demetrios Cathedral, the largest and one of the most ancient churches in all of Greece, located in the heart of the old city and there venerate the relics of the patron saint of Thessaloniki.



Demetrios was a Roman military commander and a Christian in secret who refused to follow the orders of the Emperor Maximian (286-305AD) to begin rounding up, arresting and executing the Christians of Thessaloniki. For his insubordination, St. Demetrios was arrested and eventually executed on October 26, 304AD. The Cathedral that bears his name

is built over the sight of his burial place and houses his relics. It was in 312AD that a small house church was built over the tomb, which can still be seen in the crypt. Through the centuries, a series of churches were built on this site and during the Ottoman occupation the Cathedral was used as a mosque (1430-1912). Also in the Cathedral are the relics of St. Anysia, who was executed in 285AD, during the persecution of the emperor Diocletian and whose memory is celebrated on December 30th.

The Church of St. George (also called the Rotunda) was originally built as a temple dedicated to Zeus and probably intended to also serve as a mausoleum for the Roman emperor Galerius (ruled 305-311) who had it built. It was converted into a Christian church by the Christian Roman emperor Theodosius (379-395). During the Turkish occupation, the church was used as a mosque. When Thessaloniki was freed from Turkish rule in 1912, the building was again rededicated as a church. The minaret near the church is the only one that has been left standing in Thessaloniki.

The Church of the Icon made without Hands, built in the early 5th century is one of the four oldest churches in all of Greece. Like so many other churches it was used as a mosque during the Ottoman occupation. In fact, when the Sultan Murad II captured Thessaloniki, he had inscribed on a column in the north aisle of this church, “The Sultan Murad captured Thessaloniki in 1430.” Unfortunately, the icon “made-without-hands” has long since disappeared in the chaos of the Ottoman period.

The Church of the Holy Wisdom, built in the 7th century AD, has magnificent 8th and 9th century mosaics. After the fall of Thessaloniki in 1430, it was used as a mosque until 1912.

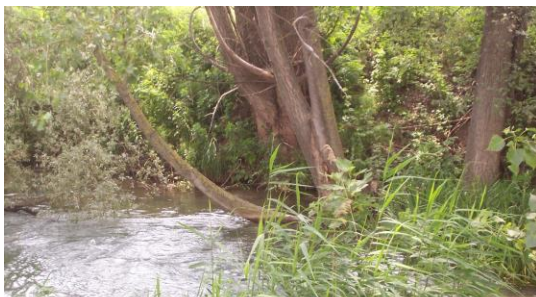
The Metropolitan Cathedral, built between 1891 and 1914, was the first domed church allowed to be built in Turkish occupied Thessaloniki and houses the relics of St. Gregory Palamas (1292-1356), an Athonite monk and later the Archbishop of Thessaloniki. St. Gregory Palamas was an exponent of the Jesus Prayer and the discipline of hesychasm or mystical stillness, the uninterrupted worship of the living God in the human mind and heart. We remember St. Gregory Palamas each year on the second Sunday of Great Lent for precisely his emphasis on the fact that we as human beings can really know and experience God in Christ through the Holy Spirit and not merely know something about Him.

We also visited the tiny 5th century church of St. David high in the acropolis of the city and surrounded by houses. This chapel, which was built over a Roman bath house, is all that remains of a 5th century monastery established by St. David of Thessaloniki. In the apse of this small church is a wonderful 5th century mosaic of the vision of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:26-28), with a beardless image of Christ in the center flanked by the Old testament prophets Ezekiel and Habbakuk, and surrounded by the symbols of the four evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. For whatever reason, it was not destroyed but concealed by calf-skin and plaster during the Turkish occupation, when the building was used as a mosque. It was only rediscovered in 1921 when the building was restored as a church. There are also some frescoes from the 12th century of the Birth (Christmas) and Baptism (Epiphany) of Christ.

We also visited the 15th century White Tower, which is both the city's symbol and most prominent landmark. During the 18th century it was used as a prison for insubordinate janissaries, the elite troops of forcibly converted Christian boys who became servants of the sultan. In 1826, on the orders of Sultan Mahmud II, many of the janissaries imprisoned in the tower were massacred. The tower, for many years, carried the name "The Bloody Tower" because of this event. After Thessaloniki won its independence in 1912, the tower was whitewashed as a symbolic gesture to expunge its Turkish function. The whitewash was later removed and today the White Tower houses a wonderful collection of Byzantine icons in both mosaic and fresco. We also hope to view the excavations of the Roman market, theatre and baths.

Monday, June 6th Day 9 - Philippi

After breakfast, we begin our journey east, arriving at Amphipolis, a city established in the 5th century BC and viewing the extensive archeological sites and museum. Sts. Paul and Silas traveled through Amphipolis on their way to Thessaloniki (*Acts 17:1*). We will also visit Philippi, a city named after the father of Alexander the Great, where St. Paul preached the Gospel – his first mission on European soil – and where Lydia and her household converted to Christianity. St. Paul also wrote a *Letter to the Philippians*.



Reading the Scriptures: St. Paul in Philippi (Acts 16:11-40)

Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the

The stream in which St. Lydia and her household were baptized by the Apostle Paul

following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the leading city of the district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days; and on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul.

And when she was baptized with her household, she begged us saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and us, crying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; and when they had brought them to the magistrates they said, "These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and every one's fetters were unfastened.

When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.

But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." And the jailer reported the words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore come out and go in peace." But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now cast us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out." The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. So they went out of the prison, and visited Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they exhorted them and departed.

We then explored the archeological site at Philippi, which in the 1st century was a Roman military town, as well as the crypt where tradition states that Paul and Silas were prisoners (*Acts 16:11-40*). The river where Lydia was baptized still exists and runs through the barren plain about a mile north of the ruined city. Lydia was the first European Christian and the house church she presided over with her family and servants was the first church on European soil. From Philippi, we will travel to Kavala, the ancient city of Neapolis where St. Paul first set foot on European soil, for a brief sightseeing tour of the city and then returning to Thessaloniki to the hotel for dinner.

Tuesday, June 7th Day 10 - Sailing around Mt. Athos

After breakfast, we will drive to the harbor at Panagia Bay and board our boat for a cruise along the west coast of Mt. Athos, the thousand year old monastic republic, stopping briefly at Ouranopolis, a quaint fishing village. Known as the Holy Mountain among Orthodox Christians, Mt. Athos is, at 6,660 feet, the tallest point of Chalkidiki's most easterly peninsula. Athos is an autonomous republic ruled by the more than 1700 monks who currently live in its 20 monasteries and their dependencies. Settled by Christian hermits seeking solitude as early as the 7th century AD, it is the Great Lavra founded by St. Athanasios the Athonite in 963AD that is the earliest and largest of the monastic communities of Athos.

Wednesday, June 8th Day 11- The Shrine of St. Parakevi and Thermopylae

After breakfast, we began the long drive to Athens, seeing the Greek countryside. On the way, at the northern border of Thessaly, the valley of the River Peneios narrows into a dark and mysterious gorge. Here, we stopped and visited the chapel of St. Paraskevi. We later stopped at Thermopylae, the site of one of the most famous last stands in history, where King Leonidas of Sparta and his troops held off Persian invaders for several days before being overrun. We arrived in Athens that evening.

ROME

Thursday, June 9th Day 12 - From Athens to Rome

After breakfast, we will transfer to the airport for our flight to Rome.

Depart from Athens at 9AM on Aegean #650 to Rome, arriving 10AM

During our time in Rome, we stayed at the Trilussa Palace Hotel in the Trastevere section of Rome. Trastevere (trahs-TAY-veh-ray) literally means "Across the Tiber."

Two thousand years ago, at the time of Christ and the Apostle Paul, the word "Rome" meant civilization itself. In what we think of today as Europe, everything was either civilized (part of the Roman Empire, either Greek or Latin speaking) or barbarian. Today, Rome is Italy's political capital as well as the capital of Roman Catholicism. Ancient Rome, the largest city of its day, had a million inhabitants. The city's population is currently given at about 2.6 million.

Reading the Scriptures: St. Paul in Rome (Acts 28:16-31)

And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier that guarded him. After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews; and when they had gathered, he said to them, “Brethren, though I had done nothing against the people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was arrested as a prisoner from Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar -- though I had no charge to bring against my nation. For this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”

They said to him, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brethren coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. We desire to hear from you what your views are; for with regard to this sect we know that people everywhere are speaking against it.” After they had appointed a day to meet with Paul, they came to him at his lodging in great numbers. And he explained the matter to them from morning till evening, testifying to the Kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

Some were convinced by what he said, while others disbelieved. So, they disagreed among themselves. As they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: ‘Go to this people and say, ‘You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and they have closed their eyes; lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for Me to heal them.’ Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.” And he lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered.

On our arrival, we met up with our local guide for an afternoon tour of some of the most important monuments of the ancient Roman Empire.



The Arch of Constantine with the Coliseum in the background

We visited the Roman Forum, the political, commercial and religious center of ancient Rome. The Palatine Hill, which can be seen from the Forum, is where Rome was founded, *circa* 753BC, by two orphaned brothers named Romulus and Remus, said to have been nursed by a she-wolf. We will also see the Basilica of Constantine and the Arch of Constantine, both built to celebrate his victory over his political rival Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in Rome in 312AD, a battle that made him sole emperor of the Roman Empire, a

victory Constantine attributed to his vision of the Cross of Christ. These two monuments mark a real turning point in the history of Europe. The Arch of Constantine was built in 315AD, just a few years before Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to his new city on the Bosphorus, Constantinople.

Near the Arch of Septimus Severus on the Forum, we will also see the Mamertine Prison, an ancient cell block more than 2,500 years old where both the Apostles Peter and Paul were held at one time, shortly before their martyrdoms. Downstairs, you'll see the pillar to which Peter (and many other prisoners throughout the centuries) had been chained, awaiting his execution. To understand this prison – and ancient Roman prisons in general – imagine people chained up, often tortured, amid fat rats and rotting corpses, awaiting their own death. On the wall near the entry are lists of notable prisoners, both Christian and non-Christian, and some of the ways they were executed: *strangolati*, *decapitato*, *morto di fame* (died of starvation).

Nearby is the Coliseum, where gladiatorial games were fought and thousands of Christians were executed for their faith as part of the Roman Empire's attempts to eradicate Christianity during the first 300 years of Christian history. It was in the Coliseum that St. Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, was executed for being a Christian *circa* 115AD. He wrote 7 letters that have survived and in his *Letter to the Romans* says: "It is better for me to die for Jesus Christ than to rule over the ends of the earth." The Flavian Amphitheatre, the *real* name of the Coliseum, was begun by the emperor Vespasian, inaugurated by Titus in 80AD and completed by Domitian, at a time when the Roman Empire was at its peak. Slaughter was an important part of Roman entertainment. At its 100-day inauguration ceremonies, over 2,000 men and 9,000 wild animals were killed. Slaves would squirt perfumes around the stadium to help mask the stench of so much blood. The Coliseum could accommodate as many as 50,000 people and the



The interior of the Flavian Amphitheatre or Coliseum

concrete, enabling them to build structures on this "colossal" scale. The Coliseum is a vast ellipse, covering about 6 acres, measuring 615 feet by 510 feet and about 158 feet in

"games" were always free, sponsored by politicians to bribe the people's favor and to keep Rome's continually growing mass of poor and unemployed rabble off the streets. It was the largest amphitheatre of antiquity and one of the great architectural achievements of the ancient Romans.

The exterior of the Coliseum says a great deal about who the Romans were. They were more engineers than artists. The Romans pioneered the use of the rounded arch and

height (roughly the equivalent of a 15 story building). They first made a shell of brick and then filled it in with concrete. When it was finished, the whole thing was faced with shining travertine marble that is still visible on the upper level. While the essential structure of the Coliseum is Roman, the façade is Greek, decorated with three types of classical Greek columns: Doric at the bottom, Ionic in the middle and Corinthian at the top. Copies of Greek statues stood in the arches of the upper two stories. Unfortunately, only about a third of the original Coliseum remains standing today.

Friday, June 10th Day 13 - The Vatican

Today, after breakfast, we toured the Vatican Museums, home to one of the world's most important art collections of Greek, Roman and Christian antiquities. We will see the Sistine Chapel and view Michelangelo's majestic masterpiece. And, by the way, when we enter the doors of the Vatican Museum, we will be leaving Italy for another country: the Vatican is itself a separate state, apart from Italy. This tiny, independent country was established in the 19th century and consists of just over 100 acres within Rome. It has its own postal system, considered by many to be more reliable than the postal system of



Italy, and even its own police and radio station (KPOP).

With the fall of the Roman Empire and the collapse of civilization in Western Europe, the Roman Catholic Church became the great preserver of ancient learning and culture. The Vatican Museums originated as a group of sculptures collected by Pope Julius II (reigned 1503-1513). Much of what is today in the Vatican Museum was collected by the Renaissance popes of the 15th and 16th centuries. This is one

of the largest and most important museums in the world, a temple to culture and art both Christian and non-Christian. Expect to spend the morning here and barely scratch the surface of what is to be seen. The entrance building covers the ancient world (Egypt, Greece and Rome); the next building covers its "rebirth" in the Renaissance (including the Sistine Chapel). We will see everything from ancient Egyptian mummies, Greek statuary and Etruscan art to saints' reliquaries, paintings by Raphael, Abraham Lincoln's letters to the Pope and the huge 4th century porphyry marble coffin made for Constantine's mother, Helen.

The Sistine Chapel takes its name from Pope Sixtus IV (reigned 1471-1484). It is the personal chapel of the pope and the place where new popes are elected. It was Julius II who commissioned Michelangelo to undertake the painting of the Sistine Chapel. (Remember the 1965 movie *The Agony and the Ecstasy* with Charlton Heston starring as Michelangelo?) On the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo painted the entire history of the world prior to the coming of Christ. To do so, he spent four years (1508-1512) on his back, craning his neck on scaffolding six stories high, covering the ceiling

with frescoes of biblical scenes. Just in sheer physical terms, it's an astonishing achievement: over 5,900 square feet, with most of the painting done by his own hand. This is a very personal work – the Gospel according to Michelangelo, so to speak. In the 1980's, using computers, photography and spectrum analysis technology, the ceiling was cleaned and restored revealing colors of unexpected vibrancy after the removal of centuries of dirt and soot from candles, incense and oil lamps. We all wanted to stay in this room for a long time, drinking it all in.

We visited St. Peter's Basilica (*modest dress required, no shorts or bare shoulders*)



The interior of the dome of St. Peter's Basilica

St. Peter's Basilica is the largest church in Christendom, with a massive dome designed by Michelangelo and built on the site where St. Peter is buried. Nearly 2,000 years ago, this area was the site of Nero's Circus – a large chariot race course. (Remember the movie *Ben-Hur*?) The ancient Egyptian obelisk that stands in the center of St. Peter's



The body of Pope John XXIII exposed for veneration by the faithful in Saint Peter's Basilica

Square was where ancient Roman chariots made their hairpin turns. This obelisk is 90 feet of solid granite that weighs over 300 tons and was brought to Rome by the infamous emperor Caligula. The Circus was also the site of the first persecution of Christians, instituted by the madman, Nero. Nero (ruled 54-68AD) was one of Rome's most notorious emperors. He murdered his own mother,

kicked his pregnant wife to death and “married” a teen-age boy in a mock ceremony. Eventually, he committed suicide by stabbing himself in the neck. It was in Nero’s Circus in the first century AD that Christians were forced to fight wild animals and gladiators or they were simply crucified. Some were crucified, tarred up and burned alive as human torches to light up the evening races. One of those killed here during that persecution *circa* 65AD was the Apostle Peter. At his own request, Peter asked to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to die as his Master had. His remains (relics) were buried in a nearby cemetery where, for 250 years, they were secretly revered.

After the Roman emperor Constantine legalized the practice of Christianity throughout the Empire in 313 AD, he built the first St. Peter’s Basilica to mark with honor the place where the Apostle Peter was murdered and buried. “Old” St. Peter’s Basilica stood for more than a thousand years (329-1500). By the time of the Renaissance, St. Peter’s Basilica was in such a state of disrepair that it became clear that an entirely new basilica had to be constructed. The Basilica we see today was begun in 1506, only two decades before the beginning of the Protestant Reformation by Martin Luther, and was actually built around the old one. The “new” St. Peter’s Basilica we see today took more than 120 years to complete and the “old” St. Peter’s was literally dismantled and carried out the door of the new one. The current basilica covers six acres and has a capacity of 60,000 standing worshippers. The dome of the Basilica, designed by Michelangelo, rises to a height of nearly 450 feet, higher than a football field on end. Unfortunately, Michelangelo died in 1564 at the age of 92 and never saw the completed dome. The dome was finally completed in 1590. By law, no building in Rome can be built taller than the dome of St. Peter’s Basilica. We can and will take an elevator up to the first level in the dome where we’ll be able to view both the interior of the basilica hundreds of feet below us as well as take in a wonderful view of St. Peter’s Square and the city of Rome.

Marked in the floor of St. Peter’s near the central doorway is a round slab of porphyry stone in the maroon color worn by ancient Roman officials. This is the spot where, on Christmas eve in 800AD, a new era in western European history was inaugurated when Pope Leo II crowned Charlemagne (Latin for “Charles the Great”), who was the King of the Franks (the French), as *Imperator Romanum*, the “Emperor of the Romans.” This act was unprecedented and led to the establishment and development of what was later to be called the Holy Roman Empire in Western Europe, as distinct from the Eastern heirs of the Roman Empire in Constantinople who looked at Charlemagne as a barbarian upstart. Charlemagne (ruled 768-814AD) was also a significant historical figure in the eventual split between Orthodox and Catholic Churches. He refused to accept the decrees of the 7th Ecumenical Council in 787AD that restored the use of icons in worship; and in 809AD he convened a synod of Frankish bishops that declared the Latin phrase *filioque* (“and from the Son”) - a much later and illegitimate addition to the original text of the Nicene Creed - to be a part of the Creed and that the Creed was to be recited with this interpolation in all Frankish churches. This is still done in the Roman Catholic Church to this day and remains something of a theological stumbling block between our two communities.

We will tour the tombs of the popes (where, for example, Pope John Paul II was recently buried) beneath the main altar reserved for papal celebrations of the Mass and that is shrouded by Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini’s (1598-1680) massive seven-story bronze

baldacchino or altar canopy, which “extends” the altar upwards and reduces the perceived distance between floor and ceiling. It was commissioned by Pope Urban VIII in 1624. Bernini almost personally invented what we today call the Baroque style and was a master sculptor, painter and architect as well as the engineer who laid out St. Peter’s Square. St. Peter’s Square, with its ring of columns, was designed by Bernini to symbolize the arms of the Church welcoming everyone. There are 284 columns, each 56 feet high, done in Doric style, topped with 140 statues of saints, each one 10 feet tall. We will view the relics of saints entombed in the side altars of St. Peter’s as well as see Michelangelo’s famous *Pieta*. It is carved out of a single block of Carrera marble and is the only one of his works that he actually signed. Michelangelo was only 24 years old when he completed this masterpiece of Christian art. It was his first major commission, done for the Holy Year 1500. *Pieta* means “pity” and this scene of Mary the Theotokos holding the dead Christ in her arms after His body was taken down from the Cross is filled with maternal tenderness. Unfortunately, on May 23, 1972 a madman with a hammer entered St. Peter’s and attacked the statue. The damage was repaired, but that’s why a shield of bullet-proof glass protects the *Pieta* today.

Saturday, June 11th Day 14 - The Churches of Rome and the Catacombs

This morning after breakfast we began a tour of Christian Rome visiting a number of ancient churches and the Catacombs of St. Callixtus. Among the churches we visited are:

San Giovanni in Laterano – named for St. John the Evangelist, this is the oldest Church in Rome, the first public building open for Christian worship in Rome following the legalization of Christianity by the emperor Constantine. It opened in 318AD and until 1870 all popes were crowned here rather than in St. Peter’s, as this was the original cathedral church for Rome. It has been rebuilt several times, most notably in 1646, but there are some 5th century mosaics in the baptistery. This church also still houses the *Scala Santa*, the Holy Stairs, which the Emperor Constantine’s mother, St. Helen, brought to Rome from Jerusalem in 326AD. These 28 marble steps are from Pilate’s residence in Jerusalem and the Lord Jesus climbed these steps on the day he was sentenced to death. To this day, pilgrims will climb these steps on their knees, in repentance.

Santa Maria Maggiore – This is one of the earliest churches in Rome dedicated to the Virgin Mary and was built in 432AD following a dream of Pope Liberius in which the Theotokos appeared to him and told him to build a church in her honor. At this time, the city of Rome was in a steady decline, having been sacked by Alaric the Goth in 410AD. St. Mary Major contains a number of 5th century mosaics telling the story of Moses as well as the Coronation of the Virgin, a 13th century mosaic by Jacopo Torriti, showing Christ crowning Mary as Queen of Heaven.

Santa Prassede – This is a church founded by Pope Paschal I in 822AD and decorated by Byzantine mosaic artists from Constantinople. These are considered to be the best Byzantine mosaics in Rome by most art historians. In the apse, Christ is depicted standing between St. Praxedes (for whom the church is named) and her sister, St. Pudentia, two Roman women associated with the ministry of the Apostle Peter in Rome.



*A mosaic icon of Christ with angels
in the Chapel of St. Zeno*

The Chapel of St. Zeno, completely covered by mosaics, is even lovelier, a mosaic jewel-box built by Pope Paschal I as a mausoleum for his mother, Theodora, who is depicted on the side wall of the chapel with a square halo, indicating that she was still alive when her son built this for her.

San Clemente – Here, like few other places, you’ll see the many layers of Rome. A 12th century Christian basilica sits atop a 4th century Christian basilica, which sits atop a 2nd century Temple dedicated to the

ancient pagan warrior god Mithras. This church is named for Rome’s fourth pope, St. Clement, who wrote a letter to the Corinthians *circa* 96AD that we still have as part of a



collection of writings commonly referred to today as “the apostolic fathers,” and represents that generation of Christians immediately following the Apostles. At this time, being Christian was a capital offense and Clement was executed for being a Christian *circa* 100AD by being drowned: tied to an anchor and then tossed overboard. You’ll notice anchors throughout the artwork in the upper church. In the apse of the upper church are some wonderful 12th

century mosaics, including one of the crucifixion of Christ that is particularly beautiful. The lower church is a 4th century church and in the far left corner of this lower church, near the staircase leading down to the Temple of Mithras, is the burial place of St. Cyril, one of the most important missionaries in Christian history. It was St. Cyril, together with St. Methodius, two brothers from Thessaloniki, who in the 9th century were sent from Constantinople to do missionary work among the northern Slavic peoples. Finding no written language among the tribes to whom they were sent, they invented what is today called the Cyrillic alphabet, an alphabet based on the Greek alphabet that forms the written basis, for example, of the modern Russian language. It is as a result of their missionary efforts that Russia and Bulgaria became Orthodox Christian countries. Their feast day is celebrated in our Church on May 11th and the hymns for that day proclaim both Cyril and Methodius as the “equals of the Apostles and teachers of the Slavs.” At the lowest level of this church is a Temple of Mithras, one of the many eastern mystery religions brought westward from Persia by Alexander the Great and his troops. This religion was particularly popular among Roman soldiers.

San Paolo fuori le Mura or St. Paul's Outside-the-Walls is one of the four major basilicas of Rome. After his execution in Rome by being beheaded (one of the privileges of Roman citizenship) during the persecution of Nero, the Apostle Paul was buried in a cemetery on this site, about two kilometers from the city walls, on the road to Ostia, Rome's ancient port. A shrine, or *cella memoriae*, was soon erected and became a place of pilgrimage. The first church constructed on this site after the legalization of Christianity was built by Constantine in 324AD. Between 384-386AD, the Christian emperor Theodosius began the building of a much larger basilica that was completed in 395AD. In 1823, a fire started by a negligent worker who was repairing the lead of the roof, resulted in the destruction of much of the ancient basilica. Of this ancient basilica there remains only the interior portion of the apse with the triumphal arch and the mosaics of the latter dating from the 5th century. The current basilica was reconstructed along the foundations of the old basilica. Along the nave are mosaics of all the popes, beginning with St. Peter and ending with John Paul II, with room left for future additions. The high altar is a papal altar, meaning that only the reigning pope or those with his blessing may celebrate Mass there. It stands over the tomb of St. Paul where archaeologists have recently unearthed a sarcophagus that would have come from the main floor of the 4th century basilica and bears the inscription "Apostle Paul, martyr." In February of this year, this announcement made international news. But, in fact, the Apostle Paul's sarcophagus was found "where we've always known it to be," as one of the archaeologists involved in the dig said. The canopy above the altar is by Arnolfo di Cambio and was built in 1285.



Fifth century mosaic of Christ in the Church of St. Paul's Outside the Walls



To the Catacomb of St. Callixtus

We visited the Catacombs of St. Callixtus, the "official" cemetery for the early Christians of Rome and the burial place of 3rd century popes. In ancient Roman times, by law, no one was allowed to be buried within the walls of the city. Most pagan Romans were into cremation, but Christians then as now preferred to be buried. A few wealthy, landowning Christians allowed their property to be used as burial places. The 40 or so known catacombs circle Rome about three miles from its center. From the first through the fifth centuries, Christians dug an estimated 375 miles of tomb-lined tunnels, with networks of galleries as many as five layers deep. The tufa stone – soft and easy to cut,

but which hardened when exposed to the air – was perfect for what was needed. It was here that ancient Christians, their faith being illegal and punishable by death, gathered to celebrate funeral services and the anniversaries of the martyrs and other dead. On occasion during persecutions the catacombs were used as places of refuge and for the secret celebration of the Eucharist.

Perhaps on the way back to the hotel (if we haven't seen it already) there will be time to stop by the Church of *Santa Maria in Trastevere*, one of the oldest Churches in Rome and built on a site where early Christians worshipped illegally, in secret. Dedicated to the Virgin Mary there are striking 12th century mosaics in the apse depicting Mary enthroned with Christ.

Sunday, June 12th Day 15 - Liturgy

This morning we attended the celebration of the Liturgy in the tiny and ancient Church of St. Theodore, given to the Greek Orthodox Christians of Rome to use for worship by the late Pope John Paul II on November 30, 2000, the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, as a gesture of goodwill between our two churches. San Teodoro, as it's called in Italian, is a church with deep historical associations for the Greek community in Rome and thus a very fitting gift. Built in the late 4th century and named after St. Theodore the Commander, a Roman soldier martyred for the faith earlier in the 4th century in Amasea (present day Turkey), it contains some wonderful 6th century mosaics in the apse of the Church. The number of Greek Christians in Rome later grew in the 7th and 8th centuries, as thousands fled persecution during the Iconoclast Controversy in Byzantium and found sanctuary in the city near the Church of St. Theodore. On July 1, 2004 – after years of restoration work – Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew inaugurated its use for worship by the Greek Orthodox community in a solemn celebration of services, thanking Pope John Paul II for his kindness and expressing the desire that the Church of St. Theodore can become a bridge between our two Churches.



*The sixth century
Church of Saint Theodore*

In the afternoon, after services, we visited the Pantheon, the ancient Roman temple to “All the Gods,” which is one of the best preserved and most ancient buildings in Rome, erected 27-25BC and is today a Roman Catholic Church. The Pantheon looks like a pretty typical ancient pagan temple from the outside, but this is one of the most influential buildings in art history. Its dome was the model for the dome of the cathedral in Florence which launched the Renaissance, for Michelangelo's dome for St. Peter's Basilica and even the dome of the Capitol Building in Washington, DC. The dome of the



*The Pantheon, the ancient Roman Temple
dedicated to "All the Gods"*

Pantheon was the largest there was for more than a millennium, until the Renaissance. It is as high as it is wide: 142 feet from floor to rooftop and from side to side. The dome is made from concrete that gets lighter and thinner as it reaches the top. The walls at the base are 23 feet thick and made from heavy travertine concrete; near the top of the dome, the walls are less than 5 feet thick and are made with a lighter volcanic rock (pumice) mixed in. At the very top of the dome is its oculus, or eye-in-the-

sky, some 30 feet across and the only source of light for the interior. The millennia old floor has holes in it and slants towards the edges to let rainwater drain off. In more recent times the Pantheon has been used as a burial place for two of Italy's modern royalty and, more importantly, the Renaissance painter Raphael (1483-1520), some of whose work we saw in the Vatican Museum, is entombed to the left of the main altar in a glass case. The Latin inscription on his tomb reads: "In life, Nature feared to be outdone by him; in death, she feared that she would die." A humble man! This was our final day in Rome.

Reading the Scriptures: St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 12:9-11, 17-18, 21

Love without hypocrisy. Hate what is evil. Hold fast to what is good. Love one another warmly and be eager to show respect for one another. Serve the Lord with a heart full of devotion. If someone wrongs you, do not repay him with a wrong. Do what is good in the sight of everyone. In so far as it is up to you, live at peace with everyone. Never take revenge. Do not let evil defeat you. Instead, conquer evil with good.

Monday, June 13th - Going Home

After breakfast we transferred to the airport in Rome for the return flight to the US.

Depart from Rome at 12:55PM on Lufthansa #3843 to Frankfurt, arriving 2:55PM.

Depart from Frankfurt at 5PM on United #933 to Washington/Dulles, arriving 7:45PM.

Depart from Washington/Dulles at 9:25PM on United #925 to LAX, arriving 11:45PM.



*Standing outside the entry doors to the Church of St. Paul-outside-the-Walls
where the Apostle Paul lies buried beneath the main altar*