



A SPIRITUAL & CULTURAL JOURNEY TO ITALY

Under the Spiritual Direction of Fr. José N. Alfaro, Pastor
Saint John Neumann Catholic Church in Miami, Florida

9-Days: December 26, 2024 to January 3, 2025

Land Only Itinerary – Airfare Not Included



AN INVITATION TO JOIN US



Dear fellow pilgrims,

I extend a heartfelt invitation to embark on a transformative journey to the heart of the Vatican and Italy with me at the end of the year.

I had the privilege of living in Rome for three years while I got a post-graduate degree in Church History. My time in the Eternal City granted me a profound understanding of the rich tapestry of culture, the warmth of its people, the layers of history, the captivating beauty, and the spirituality of countless saints. Now, I am eager to share these enriching experiences with you.

A pilgrimage is an opportunity to momentarily detach from life's relentless pace and forge a deeper connection with our Lord. Together, we will engage in prayer, explore the relics of revered saints, and marvel at the breathtaking architecture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

A delightful enhancement to our pilgrimage is the unique opportunity to embark on it during the Jubilee Year. This auspicious period, known for its special dispensation of grace, presents the Catholic faithful with the chance to go through the Holy Doors and receive a plenary indulgence.

Tailored specifically for young families with children of all ages, this pilgrimage promises to be an unforgettable experience. We will surely create enduring memories that will linger in our hearts for a lifetime.

I sincerely hope you can join us on this sacred journey.

Peace and abundant blessings,
Fr. José N. Alfaro

OUR DAILY ITINERARY

Day 1, Thursday, December 26: Departure from the USA

Each participant is responsible for making their own flight arrangements to Rome.

Day 2, Friday, December 27: Arrive in Rome / Transfer to Assisi via St. Mary of the Angels

Our journey commences as we gather at the Rome Leonardo Da Vinci (Fiumicino) airport at 1:30pm. Here, we will board our waiting motor coach, embarking on a scenic drive to the captivating region of Umbria, home to the town of Assisi. Our first stop is the village of Santa Maria degli Angeli, where we will partake in a Mass and explore the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels, housing the Porziuncola—a small chapel repaired by St. Francis and the friars. The chapel, nestled within the larger Basilica, offers a poignant reminder of St. Francis's dedication. Following this visit, we proceed to our accommodations for check-in and a delightful dinner. (D)

Day 3, Saturday, December 28: Assisi: Discovery of the town

Our day begins with a Mass at the Basilica of St. Francis, a source of inspiration for Pope Francis. A local guide then leads us on a captivating walking tour of the city, visiting key sites associated with St. Francis. These include the Chiesa Nuova, constructed over Francis's family home, and the Basilica of St. Clare, the final resting place of St. Clare. Here, we also see the original "San Damiano" crucifix that spoke to St. Francis, urging him to "rebuild my church." Francis interpreted the dream literally and went to work on repairing the chapel of San Damiano; only later did he understand the deeper meaning of the dream.

Our exploration also takes us to the Church of St. Mary Major, where we encounter the tomb of Carlo Acutis (May 3, 1991 – October 12, 2006), a remarkable young man who documented Eucharistic miracles worldwide. He was beatified on October 19, 2020. The afternoon is at leisure for lunch and a leisurely stroll through historic cobbled streets, followed by dinner at a local restaurant within walking distance of our accommodations. (B, D)

Day 4, Sunday, December 29: Assisi / Siena / Florence

After breakfast and checkout, we embark on our motor coach for the enchanting town of Siena. Set on three hills, the town of Siena is drawn together by winding alleyways and steep steps, with the Piazza del Campo at its center. Siena is popularly known for the festival of Il Palio, a twice-annual barebacked horse race around the town's Square (Campo).

The day begins with Mass at the Church of San Domenico, showcasing the authentic portrait of St. Catherine. This afternoon we meet our guide for our walking tour, beginning at the Duomo, originally designed and completed between 1215 and 1263. Visit includes the Duomo Museum to see the masterpiece of Duccio. We'll also visit the sanctuary built over the former home of St. Catherine. The main square of this medieval town is absolutely charming. Our journey then takes us to Florence, where we check in at our hotel for dinner and an evening of relaxation. (B, D)

Day 5, Monday, December 30: Florence: Exploring the city

This morning, a local guide accompanies us on a walking tour, encompassing the Baptistery of San Giovanni, one of the oldest buildings in Florence. It is dedicated to John the Baptist. The octagonal building is famous for its gilded bronze doors, particularly the Gates of Paradise by Lorenzo Ghiberti. We also visit the Cathedral, and the renowned Piazza della Signoria. After celebrating Mass at the Church of Santa Croce, where the tombs of Michelangelo and Dante reside, we enjoy free time for lunch. The afternoon provides an opportunity to explore the iconic Ponte Vecchio. The remainder of the day is at leisure, with dinner served at our hotel. (B, D)

Day 6, Tuesday, December 31: Florence / Orvieto / Rome

After breakfast and checkout, our motor coach transports us to the hilltop town of Orvieto, adorned with Italy's renowned Gothic cathedral. Because of its strategic location, Orvieto for centuries served as a refuge for the popes in troubled times. The cathedral has deep ties to the Feast of Corpus Christi because of the Eucharistic Miracle kept in its side chapel, a story we learn during our guided visit of the Cathedral. Here we celebrate Mass. We enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. Our journey then continues to Rome, where we check in at our hotel for the night. (B, L, D)

Day 7, Wednesday, January 1: Rome: St. Peter's Square, historic walking tour

Celebrate the New Year with Mass and a visit to St. Peter's Square. At the center of the square is an ancient Egyptian obelisk erected at the current site in 1586. The open space of the plaza was designed so that the greatest number of people could see the Pope

give his blessing, either from the middle of the façade of the church or from a window in the Vatican Palace. Lunch is on our own.

After receiving the Papal Blessing, a local guide leads us on a walking tour of historic central Rome. Highlights include the Trevi Fountain, Piazza della Rotonda, the Pantheon, and the Basilica of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, housing the tomb of St. Catherine of Siena. Enjoy some free time for exploration and perhaps a gelato at Giolitti's before concluding the day with dinner at our accommodations. (B, D)

Day 8, Thursday, January 2: Rome: St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican Museums & Panoramic tour of Rome & St. Paul's Outside the Walls

Begin the day by entering the Holy Doors of St. Peter's Basilica, where we will celebrate Mass. The guided tour of the Basilica includes Michelangelo's Dome, Bernini's Baldachin the spectacular mosaics which adorn the side altars and the renowned Pietá. There are over 100 tombs located within the Basilica, including 91 popes. Subsequently, we explore the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel. The restoration of the Sistine frescoes reveals startling bright colors - a new light on Michelangelo!

Following lunch on your own, a panoramic tour aboard our motor coach takes us past the Roman Forum, Colosseum, and Piazza Venezia, concluding at the Basilica of St. Paul's Outside the Walls. Here, we discover the Tomb of St. Paul the Apostle. After his execution and burial in Rome in the 1st century AD, Saint Paul's followers erected a shrine over the grave. Early Christians frequently visited the site to honor the great Apostle. The first church on the site was, founded

by Emperor Constantine in 324. In 386 Emperor Theodosius began the construction of a much larger basilica. According to the inscription on the triumphal arch, it was consecrated in 390 and completed in 395. Although heavily restored, the present basilica looks much the same as it did in the 4th century. Tonight we gather for a special farewell dinner at a local restaurant. (B, D)

Day 9, Friday, January 3: Rome: Departure to the USA

After breakfast and checkout, a coordinated transfer takes us from our accommodations to Leonardo Da Vinci (Fiumicino) Airport in Rome. (B)

Note: *While we do not anticipate changes, there may be occasions necessitating alterations to the itinerary due to airline schedule changes or other unforeseen circumstances. All Masses are subject to local Church schedules.*

Pricing & Registration Information: Tour Number 24-039-1226

HOW TO REGISTER: Registrations are processed in the order received and many groups fill up quickly, so please register soon. Deadline for initial registration is **June 30, 2024**. To attempt to register after this date, inquire first to learn if any space is still available. Online registration is not available at this time.

To make your reservation, complete the Registration Form included in this PDF document and submit your \$500 per person deposit, mailed to the address shown on the bottom of the Registration Form. CTC will send your invoice via postal mail within two weeks of our receipt of your deposit. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure, by **September 27, 2024**.

LAND ONLY PACKAGE: This package is sold exclusively on a 'Land Only' basis, meaning all travelers will make their own airline arrangements.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

- 1) Discount Price (payment by check or money order)
- 2) Standard Price (payment by credit or debit card).

Prices are per person based on double occupancy. A very limited number of single rooms may be available at the supplement shown below.

CASH DISCOUNT PRICE (payable by check or money order)

Land Only Package: \$3,699 plus gratuities of \$165, for a total package price of **\$3,864**

STANDARD PRICE (payable by credit or debit card)

Land Only Package: \$3,918 plus gratuities of \$165, for a total package price of **\$4,083**

SINGLE ROOM SUPPLEMENT: \$495

YOUR PRICE INCLUDES: Religious house in Assisi and Rome and first class hotel in Florence or best available accommodations (all with private facilities); sightseeing; and meals per itinerary (B, L, D); and is based on a minimum of 30 fully paying passengers. Please see the Registration Form and Terms & Conditions for more details.

GRATUITIES: Tips are included in the total package price for restaurants, hotel porters, motor coach drivers, local guides and your tour manager.

HEALTH DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS: Please refer to the Terms and Conditions of this brochure for guidance on documentation requirements.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Once your initial registration deposit is processed by CTC, you will receive an email with information on suggested travel insurance options. CTC strongly suggests the purchase of travel insurance to help protect your investment in the trip and to help provide medical coverage outside the United States. We also strongly suggest you purchase the broadest coverage available with the least amount of exclusions. Because some travel insurance plans contain time-sensitive benefits, we encourage you to do your research and purchase insurance in a timely manner.

WALKING: Please note, this journey involves considerable walking on cobblestone streets and uneven pavement and requires being on your feet more than usual. We recommend that you be in good physical condition to enjoy this pilgrimage to its fullest.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Your Local Contact:

Ms. Carolyn Gatcliffe

Email: carolynplt@sjn-miami.org

