



## YOUNG MERCY LEADERS PILGRIMAGE

*On Friday, July 14, three Year 11 students from St Joseph's College Mildura, Nicholas Fasso- Opie, Lodia Tuyininahaze and Superanse Nduwarugira embarked on a pilgrimage to Europe.*

[Read here about their experience:](#)

Our first stop on the trip was Dublin, Ireland, the home of Mercy International and Catherine McAuley. Spending about a week in Dublin, Lodia, Superanse and I were able to meet and collaborate with likeminded students from all over Australia, Ireland, the United States, the UK and Belize at the Young Mercy Leaders Pilgrimage conference. The conference had a strong focus on developing leadership and cooperative skills, to ensure that the future is equipped with leaders capable of dealing with issues such as how to tackle inequality in society through to initiatives such as ending human trafficking.



Throughout the conference, we were able to hear from several experts in their respective fields such as Sr Angela Reed rsm, who runs the New York office of Mercy at the UN and who regularly addresses the United Nations General Assembly. After gleaning as much information as possible and processing it into an action plan to combat and reduce community inequality, we, along with our Australian contingent of around thirty, caught our third international flight in a week, this time to Roma, Italia.



While the city of Dublin and the wider area of Ireland we explored had a vibe not dissimilar to other Australian cities such as Melbourne or Sydney, Rome was a very different place. Hot, one might say; bustling and touristy may be other terms for it. However, despite the humid high 30s we experienced, while we twisted and weaved between crowds of holiday goers, Rome was truly a sight.

Exploring the city on foot is a must. Pacing ourselves through the city, we were able to tour the ancient Colosseum, the Roman Forum, toss a coin into the Trevi Fountain and climb the five stories it took to witness the beauty of the Roman cityscape from the dome of St Peter's Basilica. We were also able to take in the breathtaking pieces at the Museo Nazionale Romano and consume a gelato each day.



After two days in Rome, we embarked on a day trip to Florence, traversing almost a third of the country in only two hours from our starting point of Termini Station. After a morning of viewing the breathtaking Tuscan countryside, we arrived in Florence, beginning our tour as soon as we stepped off the train. Making our way through the narrow alleyways and the broad squares, we toured almost all of Florence. The Ponte Vecchio, the Duomo of Santa Maria del Fiore and of course, the sprawling, seemingly endless markets, brimming with leather and silk. While the city of Rome seemed to be endlessly busy, Florence was an entirely different city. Ostensibly soft and quiet, the

alleys seemingly oozing with secrecy, telling tales of another time, until, like a lightning bolt of electricity had hit it, the city came alive. The sweeping alleys opening up into squares jam packed with hundreds, perhaps thousands of tourists and vendors, exchanging Euros in return for scarves, pieces of art and of course, pasta.

After an afternoon in the Florentine markets, it was back to Rome where now slightly more adjusted to the buzz of the vibrant city, we were determined to make the most of our remaining time. Our final day saw us having a private mass at St. Peter's Basilica at the tomb of John Paul II and touring the magnificent Vatican Museums, where we were lucky enough to take in the grandeur of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel.

After nearly two weeks of exploring new cities, trying to navigate unfamiliar streets, meeting people from all around the globe, tracking down European coffee, bartering hard in markets and learning about how others lived and still live, it was time to return to Australia. Now equipped with new insight, skills and knowledge garnered from the trip, it is time to put it into practice.



*Nicholas Fasso-Opie, Year 11*