

A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY

During September I was fortunate enough to have been one of sixteen people on “The Experience of Catholic Culture Tour and Pilgrimage” sponsored by the Catholic Theological College Melbourne.

To be on such a tour/pilgrimage was a once in a lifetime experience for me as we spent a month visiting Ireland, Scotland, England and Italy. To get the most from this unique opportunity, much reading had to be done in advance, so more often than not the midnight oil was burning, despite the 6.00 a.m. rise most mornings... Masses were celebrated daily in churches, ruins, cathedrals and chapels of Catholic and Anglican persuasions. At one stage I was not quite sure which way I was leaning. However when Matins ended with “God Save the Queen” in the Chapel Royal at the Tower of London I quickly came to my senses. Having heard some fine choral singing in the Anglican cathedrals I appreciated their devotions of Matins and Evensong. Perhaps we could learn from them



To visit, to worship and to marvel at such places as St Kevin’s Glendalough, Cardinal Newman’s Chapel in University College Dublin, the Mercy International Centre, Trinity College, St Columba’s Abbey Iona, Abbotsford House, Melrose Abbey, St Margaret Clitherow Chapel, the Loreto Bar Convent York, St Aidan’s Lindisfarne, Rochester, Westminster Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, Littlemore (Blessed John Newman), Oxford, St Ethelreda’s, Shrine of St Julian Norwich, ‘Stonor’ the home of recusants, the place where St Edmund Campion was hidden and where he wrote his famous defence of the Church, Downside Abbey, Domus

Australia, San Clemente, St John Lateran, the Gesu, St Peter’s Basilica, the Apostolic Palace, the recently restored Pauline Chapel, the Vatican gardens, Monte Cassino Benedictine Abbey, Subiaco Monastery, Propaganda Fide, the Crypt of St Peter’s, Orvieto and Florence was amazing, enriching and so moving.

Each was a highlight and had its own magic not to mention its impact on the faith of each of us. Faith is essentially relationships as it involves and revolves around human beings and the good Lord. We were able to better understand the gift faith is and how the ordinary as well extraordinary folk lived out their faith and helped each other through their perseverance in following Christ our Saviour, no matter the cost, whether that be Blessed Cardinal John Newman, Saints Julian of Norwich, Aidan, Columba, Margaret Clitherow, Edmund Campion, Benedict and Ignatius.

The icing on the cake for me was to lead the Eucharist in the crypt of St Peter’s Basilica. It was an experience I shall never forget and one from which I shall draw much in the years ahead. Having reached three score years and fifteen, I can now better understand that the mature years are an opportunity for travel, an opportunity for different work situations and an opportunity for life and the passing of the values of that life for others.

I only hope and pray that many of you get the opportunity to have a similar experience as I had.



Tom Brophy p.e.