FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES IN EVERY SCHOOL
A leadership program for Religious Education Co-ordinators

PILGRIMAGE INFORMATION BOOKLET
Prayer for Pilgrims

Heavenly Father, you have given us your Son Jesus to be our master and guide, and the Holy Spirit to lead us into the freedom of God’s children.

Be with us, sanctify us, and bless us. Spread the mantle of your kindness over every stage of our pilgrimage that we may become ardent disciples, wise teachers and humble leaders.

Deepen within us the awareness of our Catholic identity, that as true disciples, we may follow you wherever you may lead and bear witness to your Good News in our families, parishes and schools.

Bless, Lord Most Holy, this pilgrimage for Religious Education Coordinators, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary our Mother, and the patron saints of the Diocese of Parramatta and of our schools.

Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God
Have mercy on us
Holy Mary, Mother of God
Pray for us
St Peter and St Paul
Pray for us
St Agnes and St Clement
Pray for us
St Francis and St Clare
Pray for us
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop
Pray for us
Amen

Important Dates

Pilgrimage information session
9 February 2015
4:00 - 5:30pm
Barry Dwyer Learning Space

Collection of travel documents
23 March 2015
4:00-5:30pm
Barry Dwyer Learning Space

Pilgrimage
Jordan – Israel – Italy
8-24 April 2015
Tour Operator & additional travel arrangements and advice

Departure Taxes
Departure taxes are included in your overall costing. Harvest will manage this process.

Insurance Information
All pilgrims from Catholic Parramatta Diocesan schools and pilgrims employed with Catholic Education are fully insured by Chartis. Should you need to make an insurance claim, be sure to obtain the necessary police reports and paperwork to make the claim as it will be virtually impossible to get the paperwork once you return to Australia.

Luggage

Checked luggage allowance for an economy class airfare with Emirates is 30KG Flights between Tel Aviv and Rome on Elal Airlines is 23KG.

Cabin baggage allowance
You may board with one piece of carry-on baggage, subject to the following size and weight limitations:

- Handbag: 55 cm x 38 cm x 20 cm (22” x 15” x 8”)
- Weight must not exceed 7 kg (15 lbs)

Harvest will provide a carry on bag for your use.

Duty free purchases of liquor, cigarettes and perfume in reasonable quantities are also permitted in addition to the above.

Ensure you weigh your bags before departing for the airport. Travel light as you are totally responsible for your own luggage!

NEVER pack any money, passport, important paperwork or prescribed medicines in your checked baggage. Small padlocks for bags are a good idea. Some bags look the same so make sure you clearly identify your own bags for easy recognition.

Passport
Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months from the date you return to Australia.

It is also recommended that you always take with you photocopies of your passport details page in case of loss or theft of the original document.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) reports that pilgrims should carry their passports at all times.

*Note: The name on your air ticket must be the same as the name in your passport.

Visa Information
A visa is required for entry to Jordan. Harvest will manage this process. If you have not submitted your paperwork to date then you must do this ASAP.
Vaccinations

Please discuss vaccinations with your personal doctor. Some vaccines may be required depending on your personal health status.

The Travel Doctor - Travel Medicine & Vaccination Clinics
Level 7, Dymocks Building
428 George Street
Sydney, NSW, 2000
ph: (02) 9221 7133

74 Macquarie Street
Parramatta, NSW, 2150
ph: (02) 8861 9100

DFAT Travel Advice

DFAT provide advice for travel that is taken into consideration in the planning of itineraries. The DFAT travel advisory is monitored regularly and the advice acted upon.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Business hours

Business hours and weekend closures in the Middle East are different from those in the Western world.

Jordan

Store times can vary but generally Sat-Thurs 0930-1330 and 1530-1800; some shops open as early as 0800, others close as late as 2100. Some shops are closed on Friday, either all day or until around 1400.

Israel

Most Jewish businesses are closed on Friday afternoon and Saturday (Shabbat); Muslim businesses on Friday; Christian businesses on Sunday. Shabbat begins at sunset on Friday, when all public transport operated by Jews ceases until sunset on Saturday.

Italy

Businesses generally open at 9am and stay open until between 1 and 2pm when they close for lunch. Afternoon shop opening hours are generally from about 4 to 8pm. Most shops open for at least a half day on Saturday while others treat it as a normal working day. Few shops are open on Sundays.

Cameras & Photography

If your camera uses film, take plenty with you as it may be more expensive overseas. Also take spare batteries.

If you use a digital camera, take several memory cards rather than one big one (then, if your camera is lost or stolen, you won’t lose all your pictures).

If you use rechargeable batteries, you will also need a charger (and a transformer if the charger cannot handle 220 volts).

Photography (or the use of flashes) is prohibited in some sites, for copyright reasons or to protect art.

Use discretion in what you photograph. It is illegal to photograph police and military personnel and buildings and places considered security-sensitive, such as military installations and some government offices. You should exercise judgement when photographing people in Muslim and Orthodox Jewish areas and ask permission before photographing individuals.
Climate

Jordan
Jordan enjoys pleasant weather with April recognized as the best month of the year to visit Jordan, when temperatures are comfortable, rain virtually non-existent, and wild flowers carpet the desert, hills and valleys. The temperature varies from 16°C to 24°C.

Israel
Israel enjoys long, warm, dry summers (April-October) and generally mild winters (November-March) with somewhat drier, cooler weather in hilly regions, such as Jerusalem and Safed. During the months of April and May expect the unexpected, heat waves followed by sudden cold snaps. Be prepared for all weather conditions. The temperature varies from 18°C to 30°C.

Italy
Italy is bright and beautiful in spring during April, with plenty of sunshine with the occasional shower and pleasantly warm days, just right for sightseeing. The temperature varies from 14°C to 24°C.

Communication

Phone, internet and blog
Each pilgrim will be provided with a travel SIM that may be used in CEDP iPhones or another phone if the pilgrim chooses in order to connect with family and school. $200 credit will be applied to the SIM each week of the pilgrimage. Pilgrims exceeding the $200 limit will be invoiced for the amount. Naturally, in the event of an emergency at home, work or on pilgrimage the bill will be modified. It is requested that CEDP phones not be used without the travel SIM and that data roaming be switched off, except in case of emergency.

Pilgrims are encouraged to make use of wifi, which is readily accessible at each hotel in order to minimise cost and maximise connecting with loved ones and colleagues.

A blog will be set up in order assist with communication before, during and after the pilgrimage. We will have the opportunity to upload photos and to post reflections on the pilgrimage experience. The login details will be emailed to you.

Money and Expenses

Money - Countries and currencies

Jordan
The dinar (JD) is divided into 1000 fils (a “piastre” is 10 fils).
ATMs are common except in the smallest towns. Credit cards are accepted in top-end hotels and restaurants and some shops.
Some foreign currency (US dollars, UK pounds and euros) is accepted in cash.

Israel
The new Israeli shekel (NIS) is divided into 100 agorot. Foreign currency (especially United States dollars or euros) is usually accepted, though change will often be given in shekels.
ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted.
Low-denomination notes, useful for tips, taxis and places which do not have correct change, are hard to come by.

Italy
The Euro is divided into 100 cents (centimes, centesimi), with two decimals after the comma. So, a price will often be displayed as €10.00 (ten euros); or €2.14 (two euro and 14 cents), etc.
ATMs in Italy are known as Bancomat, and can be found anywhere in large cities as well as in small towns. Credit cards are widley accepted however some establishments charge a fee to use credit card.
Additional Expenses

Additional expenses may include lunches daily, any supplementary drinks at meal times, telephone calls, shopping, laundry and items of a personal nature.

What to take

A mixture of cash, credit card and debit card is advisable for visiting the Middle East. It can be useful to take some local currency for each country, for use on arrival, but United States dollars and Euro are accepted.

Keeping a supply of US$1 or Euro notes handy is useful for tips, bottled water and other small purchases.

Using a debit card (Travel Money) reduces the need to carry large amounts of cash, or find somewhere to cash traveller’s cheques. You simply load the card with cash before you leave home, then make cash withdrawals from ATMs as you need more money. (Unlike cash withdrawals from credit cards, these are not charged interest.)

It is wise to take more than one card and keep them in separate places. Your cards should have a PIN code and they should be valid for at least 30 days after your travel ends.

Changing currency and traveller’s cheques is usually cheaper at official exchange offices (which charge no commission) than at banks.

Tipping

Tipping in varying degrees is expected in all Middle Eastern countries. Pay scales are much lower than in the West, so tipping or “baksheesh” is often necessary for waiters and hotel staff to gain a liveable wage. A supply of small change (such as US$1 notes) is handy for this purpose.

- **Jordan**: Tips of 10% are expected in restaurants (and may be added to the bill). Similar tips for waiters and taxi drivers are appreciated.
- **Israel**: Restaurants expect 10-12% (sometimes already added to the bill). Taxi drivers don’t expect tips.
- **Italy**: Tipping in Rome is not expected. If there is a reason to tip, such as great service, the tip is token gesture of only a few coins.

Customs and etiquette

You should familiarise yourself with local and religious customs. Dressing and acting in a manner that shows respect for the host country’s social and cultural values should be the pilgrim’s aim. Conservative standards of dress and behaviour are expected at all holy sites. Sleeveless clothing or shorts above the knees are not recommended.

Jordan and Israel

The Sabbath (from sunset Friday until sunset Saturday) is closely observed in Orthodox Jewish areas in Israel. During this time of rest, driving and using electricity is restricted.

Electricity Plugs

In Jordan, Israel and Italy, a two pin adapter is required.
General Health

It is important to visit your own doctor about any personal medical condition you may have, prior to departing, to ensure you have an appropriate supply of any essential medication for the entire trip.

Prescription medicines must have an accompanying letter from the doctor.

Health standards in the Middle East are usually not as high as in Australia: different drinking and eating habits, and problems with water or food can sometimes lead to health problems and diarrhea.

You can reduce the risk of getting ill by drinking only bottled water and soft drinks. Don’t eat fruit that has not been peeled and take care eating salad vegetables that may have been washed in unclean water.

Care should also be taken when and where you eat seafood and ice-cream.

It is vital that pilgrims remember to drink plenty of bottled water and to carry bottled water with them at all times to avoid dehydration.

Changes in climate altitude and time zones can also contribute to feeling ill, so being reasonably fit before you leave Australia can only help.

When arriving, take it easy for at least the first 24 hours. It’s always a good idea to drink plenty of bottled water and eat light meals when changing time zones.

Being physically fit for these pilgrimages is essential and it is recommended that each pilgrim commit to a fitness program before departing: eg: walking 30min - 45mins several times per week.

Local Law and security

Jordan and Israel and Italy

Be aware that local laws and penalties, including ones that appear harsh by Australian standards, do apply to you. Refer to www.dfat.gov.au for further information.

Travel documents such as passports and visas (or copies) must be carried at all times as proof of identity.

Security: Personal

A few common-sense precautions can avoid risks to personal safety.

Keep a low profile. Don’t stand out in dress, speech or behaviour. Especially avoid wearing anything that identifies you with one side or the other in Middle East politics.

Take special care when crossing the street, especially if traffic drives on the opposite side to what you are used to. Allow for bad driving and reckless speeding; and, in some areas, drivers not using lights at night.

Security: Valuables

Carry your valuables close to your skin, in a money belt, pouch or inside pocket.

Keep your money, credit cards, traveller’s cheques and passport on your person or in the hotel security box (though you will need your passport on you whilst away from the hotel).

Outside pockets and handbags make easy pickings for pickpockets and bag snatchers, especially in crowds.

Don’t leave bags unattended in airports or other public places.

Time

Australia is 7:00 hours ahead of Jordan and Israel
Australia is 8:00 hours ahead of Italy
What to pack

Recommended Clothing and Equipment

Weather in Israel and Jordan will be in the low to mid 30’s with heavy humidity and the chance of unseasonal wet weather. In Italy the last of the summer heat should have passed with weather expected in the mid 20’s with expected rainfall. In preparation for weather changes, the layering method is the best. Accommodation is in reputable 3 – 4 star hotels with private facilities. Some hotels will have laundry facilities.

- Shorts and sleeveless dresses, sleeveless shirts & T-shirts and singlet tops are not permitted in religious sites.
- Long comfortable slacks/trousers/jeans
- Modest tops and shirts
- Shower/wind proof jacket, hat and scarf
- For visit to Vatican smart dress is required
- Headscarf for women is needed for entry to the Western Wailing Wall
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Small day back pack (to carry daily â€“ necessities)
- Sunglasses
- Personal toiletries (include ear plugs â€“ and eye shades to assist sleeping)
- Insect repellent
- High factor sunscreen, lip balm
- Personal medications
- Torch with spare batteries
- Personal compact umbrella, poncho
- Two pin power adapter
- Camera equipment
- Spare memory cards for digital cameras
- Spare rechargeable batteries (note: the opportunity to recharge may be limited in some places so bring several batteries)

Personal First Aid Kit

We suggest you carry certain basic supplies with you and any necessary personal medication you need. In your basic medical kit it is recommended you should have: antibiotic cream, Band-Aids, bandages, adhesive tape, elastic bandage, sterile swabs, throat lozenges, cold and flu tablets, nasal spray, aspirin, sun screen and insect repellent and diarrhea tablets.

Embassies

Jordan, Emergency Assistance

The Australian Embassy
41 Kayed Al Armouti Street
Abdoun Al Jonoubi
Amman, JORDAN
Telephone: (962 6) 580 7000
Facsimile: (962 6) 580 7001
Email: amman.consular@dfat.gov.au
Website: www.jordan.embassy.gov.au

Israel, Emergency Assistance

The Australian Embassy
Level 28 Discount Bank Tower
23 Yehuda Halevi Street (corner Herzl Street)
Tel Aviv 65136 ISRAEL
Telephone: (972 3) 693 5000
Facsimile: (972 3) 693 5002
Website: www.israel.embassy.gov.au

Italy, Emergency Assistance

The Australian Embassy - Rome
Via Antonio Bosio 5
00161 Rome, ITALY
Telephone: (39) 06 85 2721
Facsimile: (39) 06 85 272 300
Email: consular-rome@dfat.gov.au
DRAFT ITINERARY

Day 1: Wednesday 8th April 2015
DEPART FOR THE HOLY LAND

Day 2: Thursday 9th April 2015
VIA MOUNT NEBO TO THE DEAD SEA

This morning we fly into Amman, the capital city of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. We then travel to the Dead Sea via Biblical Mt Nebo for our inaugural pilgrimage Mass. Here, at the site where the Old Testament opened its door to the land of the New, Moses looked over into the Promised Land and blessed Joshua who was to lead the Israelites under God’s protection (Joshua 1:6-9). It has been possible for archaeologists to identify this sanctuary, thanks to the records left by two pilgrim-visitors of the fourth and fifth centuries of their travels in this region. One of these was Egeria, the pilgrim nun. His Holiness Benedict XVI, on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2009, said this while on Mt Nebo: “Here, on the heights of Mount Nebo, the memory of Moses invites us to ‘lift up our eyes’ to embrace with gratitude not only God’s mighty works in the past, but also to look with faith and hope to the future which he holds out to us and to our world.” We too can seize this opportunity to thank God for our journey thus far and anticipate the blessings that are to come. This afternoon we arrive at the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea to check-in to our beautiful hotel located on the shore. Here we will unwind and take the optional opportunity to float in the salty waters said to have healing qualities.

Dead Sea overnight (D = Dinner)

Day 3: Friday 10th April 2015
(END OF THE FEAST OF PASSOVER) DEAD SEA TO THE SEA OF GALILEE

Our pilgrimage continues this morning with a visit to Bethany Beyond the Jordan, one of the most recent archaeological and religious discoveries. The five springs here form a tributary of the Jordan River which is believed to be the Baptismal site of Jesus by John the Baptist. So authentic is this site that His Holiness Benedict XVI chose this as an essential place to visit on his last pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Here we will celebrate Mass, renew our Baptismal promises and spend time in reflection by the River Jordan. We then journey north to cross the border into the Holy Land of Israel, known as the land of the “fifth Gospel”. Journey on to Tiberias on the shores of Lake Galilee ... “Go to Galilee and you will find him there” (Mt 28:7).

Sea of Galilee overnight (B = Breakfast, D)

Day 4: Saturday 11th April 2015
MT TABOR / NAZARETH / CANA

We travel early this morning to the foot of Mt Tabor before ascending by taxis up the narrow winding road leading to the majestic summit. Here Our Lord’s divinity shone forth in the Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-2). After a memorable Mass in this breathtaking setting we will better understand Peter’s words ‘Lord it is good for us to be here’. Continue on to Nazareth, the town of Jesus’ childhood. Firstly, visit Nazareth Village, a recreation of the town and village life of Nazareth as it was in the days of Jesus. Here enjoy a traditional meal and take a parable walk back in time along the path which brings to life the environment and atmosphere which shaped Jesus’ early years and ministry. Later in Nazareth township, we will enter inside the Basilica of the Annunciation where a traditional cave becomes the focal point of Mary’s response “Let it be done to me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38). Here in the Basilica we will celebrate Mass. Also visit the nearby Church of St Joseph. Finally we come to the village of Cana where Jesus, at the request of His Mother, performed his first miracle transforming the water into wine at the wedding feast (Jn 2:1-11). Here, married couples may take the opportunity to renew their wedding vows, and single and widowed pilgrims will receive a special blessing.

Sea of Galilee overnight (B,L = Lunch, D)
Day 5: Sunday 12th April 2015

SEA OF GALILEE

Our day begins at the Mount of Beatitudes as we take time in this special place to ponder Jesus’ message of happiness – the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-12), reflecting in the beautiful garden settings of the mountain. Then to Capernaum, the centre of Jesus’ teaching and healing and the home to Peter the Apostle (Mt 4:12-20). After exploring this site, we travel through Sowers Bay and reflect on the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-9) before continuing through Magdala, the town of Mary Magdalene. Visit the Nof Ginosar Kibbutz, within which is preserved the remains of a first century fishing boat as in the days of Christ. We then set off from the shore in a traditional sailing vessel to encounter one of our most memorable pilgrimage highlights – a Private Mass floating in the centre of Lake Galilee. Here we will recall the miracles of Jesus calming the storm and appearing to the apostles walking on this very water. After Mass, we will continue back to the shore for our special ‘St Peter’s fish’ lunch. After lunch we travel around the lake to Korazin to relive the parables of the House built on the rock and the persevering widow.

Sea of Galilee overnight (B,D)

Day 6: Monday 13th April 2015

VIA HAIFA TO BETHELHEM

This morning we travel around the lake to Tabgha, site of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (Mt 14:20), before an important stop at the Church of the Primacy of Peter where Jesus challenged Peter and each one of us ‘Do you really love me, feed my sheep’. After Mass here we will spend some quiet time to pray in the beautiful gardens by the shore of the lake, and reflect on this very important “challenge” to each of us from the Lord. Departing Lake Galilee, we journey west to the town of Haifa which is the largest city in Northern Israel, and the third-largest city in the country. In this region we will visit Mount Carmel (Stella Maris) where Elijah smote the false prophets. Here we will visit Elijah’s cave where he lived and meditated before defeating the pagan prophets of Baal and where he hid when fleeing the wrath of King Ahab 22-May-14 and his wife, Jezebel. [Tradition also has it that the Holy Family found shelter in this cave for a night on their return from Egypt.] We will also visit the Carmelite Monastery and the Chapel of the Holy Family. After our visit here we will continue south by coach to Bethlehem, the City of David, to continue our pilgrimage through the life of Jesus. This evening we will spend time in prayer and reflection.

Bethlehem overnight (B,D)

Day 7: Tuesday 14th April 2015

BETHELHEM & SURROUNDS

Our day of pilgrimage begins with a visit at the Church of the Nativity built over the stable where Jesus was born. Bending low, we enter the church through the Door of Humility and descend into the Grotto of the Holy Manger. A silver star in the floor marks the very spot where Christ was born. The star’s inscription reads in Latin: Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus Natus Est (Here of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born). We then travel nearby to Shepherd’s Field to commemorate the appearance of the angels to the shepherds on that first Christmas night (Lk 2:8-16), with Mass. This afternoon we will journey up to Jerusalem – the City of our God. Visit Ein Karem, the birthplace of St John the Baptist and the site of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth “Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord” (Lk 1:43). Here, as pilgrims, we will spend some time reflecting on the joyful mysteries of the Rosary at this church dedicated to ‘The Magnificat’. We then proceed to the nearby Israel Museum where we have an orientation viewing of the Second Temple scale model of Jerusalem as it was in the time of Jesus. This model will help us to understand the layout of the Old City of Jerusalem as it was in the time of Jesus. We will also visit the Shrine of the Book to view the Dead Sea Scrolls. After dinner we will spend time in reflection and prayer.

Jerusalem overnight (B,D)

Day 8: Wednesday 15th April 2015

JERUSALEM

We begin our day on the Mt of Olives where we will firstly visit the Church of the ‘Pater Noster’ commemorating the site where Jesus taught His disciples the Lord’s Prayer (Mt 6:7-15). As we commence our walk down the Palm Sunday Road, we wander past the tombs of the Prophets Haggai, Malachi and Zechariah before arriving at the Dominus Flevit for Mass. This church was built on the site where Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem (Lk 19:41-44). Visit the Garden of Gethsemane, where we will enter the Church of the Agony containing the bare rock upon which Jesus is said to have prayed before his arrest. The outside garden contains olive trees, the roots of which go back to the time of Jesus. [From here we see the path Jesus was taken along as a prisoner while ascending Mt Zion to the house of the High Priest Caiaphas]. This evening, after dinner, we will join fellow pilgrims back at the Garden of Gethsemane for a memorable Holy Hour to contemplate the Agony of Our Lord, in the darkened Basilica.

Jerusalem overnight (B,D)
Day 9: Thursday 16th April 2015

JERUSALEM

After breakfast we enter the Old City, first visiting the Church of St Anne, said to be built over the birthplace of the Virgin Mary, and the Pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed the paralysed man (Jn 5:2-9). We then come to the Jewish section of the Old City for a general view of the Dome of the Rock, El Aqsa Mosque and the Wailing Wall. We then commence our Stations of the Cross, beginning from the Antonia Fortress where Jesus was condemned to death. See the Lithostrotos (pavement) in the Ecce Homo convent. Visit nearby the Flagellation and Condemnation Chapels as we pray and follow in Our Lord’s footsteps along the actual Via Dolorosa to the site of Calvary where we will celebrate Mass in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Walk the stairway climbing to the actual site where the Cross of Jesus once stood. The glass panels reveal the natural rock below which we may come to touch with our pilgrim hands. Also enter the Edicule containing the tomb where Our Lord rose from the dead. Following some individual free time for lunch in the Old City, we will gather in the afternoon for reflection and prayer. This evening, we hope to take the opportunity to visit the Pontifical Institute - Notre Dame Jerusalem Centre to experience a unique presentation on the Shroud of Turin. We then enjoy a nice rooftop dinner here.

Jerusalem overnight (B,D)

Day 10: Friday 17th April 2015

JERUSALEM & FLY TO ITALY

For our last morning in Jerusalem we will travel to Mt Zion where we visit the Cenacle room - the room of the Last Supper where we celebrate our final Mass in the Holy Land. In the afternoon we depart the City of Our God as we are transferred to Tel Aviv airport for our flight to Rome, the Eternal City. On arrival at Rome airport we will be met by our guide and transferred to our centrally located accommodation, Domus Australia.

Rome overnight (B,D)

Day 11: Saturday 18th April 2015

ROME PILGRIMAGE

After a private Mass at St Peter’s Basilica early this morning, we come to the nearby Vatican Museums for an unforgettable guided tour. Wander the spectacular chambers leading to the Sistine Chapel to view Michelangelo’s masterpieces, including the magnificent fresco of the Last Judgment. Continue through to the awe inspiring St. Peter’s Basilica, the largest church in the world for an informative exploration. Our guided tour will feature among other highlights Michelangelo’s stunning Pieta, the tomb of Pope St John Paul II, the great Confessional and the Crypt containing the tombs of several Popes. Continue on to enter the most visited attraction in Rome - the Colosseum. In 1749, Pope Benedict XIV declared the Colosseum a sacred site, as it was a place where early Christians had been martyred. View also the Circus Maximus and the Roman Forum en route. Enjoy the remainder of the afternoon at leisure.

In the evening, the group will have time together in prayer and meditation.

Rome overnight (B,D)

Day 12: Sunday 19th April 2015

ROME

Papal Event: We will proceed to St Peter’s Square where the Holy Father is expected to pray the Angelus with pilgrims from all around the world (subject to the Pope being in Rome at that time). Travel by coach this afternoon to the impressive St. Mary Major Basilica. Onwards to the Basilica of St. John in Lateran (First Papal residence) and the adjacent Holy Stairs brought from Jerusalem to Rome in 326AD by St Helena (as a favourite of pilgrims, these steps may only be ascended on the knees). Finally we visit the Basilica of Santa Croce in Jerusalem with its extraordinary collection of relics from the Holy Land including a full size replica of the Shroud of Turin. Mass this afternoon will be at one of the three basilicas. Some time this evening to reflect on our pilgrimage.

Rome overnight (B,D)
Day 13: Monday 20th April 2015
ROME PILGRIMAGE

Early this morning we will visit the excavations (Scavi) under St Peter's Basilica – the Necropoli. Escorted by a specialist Vatican guide, we will descend by foot down into the ruins of an ancient city under the Basilica. The 2 hour experience passes through ancient excavations and catacombs of the early Christian Church and culminates at the site where the original tomb of St Peter can be found. In the afternoon, we will continue our Christian Rome pilgrimage as we travel out to the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls and give honour to the Church’s greatest evangelist. Here we will celebrate our group Mass. Journey on then to the ancient Catacombs for a memorable guided tour. Marvel at these underground burial tunnels for Christians and Hebrews.

Rome overnight (B,D)

Day 14: Tuesday 21st April 2015
ROME TO ASSISI

This morning we will travel through stunning Umbrian countryside to the pilgrimage centre of Assisi where St Francis tended the poor and sick and founded the Franciscan Order.

On arrival in this medieval town we ascend to the Upper Town where we will enjoy a guided walking tour through some of the town’s highlights. Visit the Church of St Clare where we will kneel before the famous crucifix from which Jesus spoke to St Francis. Enter the Basilica of St Francis housing the tomb of St Francis (for Mass). We will visit the quaint Church of St Damiano built on the site where St Francis heard the voice of Christ speaking through the crucifix ‘go rebuild my Church, which you see is falling down’. The tour will culminate high up at the Hermitage (Eremo Delle Carceri), an oasis of peace and tranquility in the woods built on the site of a simple cave where St Francis often withdrew to spend many hours in prayer. The cave and the Chapel of Our Lady are preserved in the Hermitage. This evening we will celebrate our final night on pilgrimage with a special dinner.

Assisi overnight (B,D)

Day 15: Wednesday 22nd April 2015
ASSISI / DEPART ITALY FOR AUSTRALIA

This morning we awake to the sound of chapel bells, cobblestone footsteps and the tangible spirit of St Francis preserved within the walls of this holy town.

After checking out of our hotel we descend to the lower town where we visit and celebrate our final Mass in the Basilica of St Mary of the Angels on the plain where St Francis spent most of his life. Here we will see the Portiuncola, the thornless rose bush, the cave where the saint returned for prayer and the Chapel where he died in 1226.

We will then be transferred to Rome airport for our return flights to Australia.

(B)

Day 16: Thursday 23rd April 2015
IN TRANSIT

Day 17: Friday 24th April 2015
ARRIVE AUSTRALIA
Special Notes

All details of sightseeing listed and order of daily arrangements must remain subject to change due to any unforeseen circumstances, which may arise, or at the discretion of the pilgrimage leadership.

This overview is based on the standard pilgrimage departure and return dates. Please refer to your personal flight itinerary for more specific details or amendments pertaining to your travel.