

**Christmas Greetings from Rome**  
***A light will shine on us this day:***  
***The Lord is born for us.***

*Response to the Psalm for the Mass at Dawn, Christmas*

Watching the Advent wreath become brighter each week creates a spirit of anticipation and hope. It is a particular delight this year for us to pray together around the advent wreath in our new chapel, in this stunningly beautiful place. As the candles are lit each week, we also remember our friends scattered around the world. Be assured that as we celebrate Christmas this year here in Rome, we pray that the light of Christ will bring peace and joy to you in this holy season and always.

*Donna Orsuto*

*The Advent Wreath that graces the Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity where the student community gathers for prayer each evening. Also pictured is the original icon of the Most Holy Trinity from the Chapel of the Foyer Unitas at Piazza Navona where the Lay Centre opened its doors to a student community in 1986.*



## The Lay Centre Opens Its New Doors at the Passionist Monastery on 1 October 2009



*Retired US Ambassador Tony Hall greets the resident community in the dining room of the Lay Centre during a visit on Tuesday, 13 October 2009.*

1 October 2009 was the official opening date for the Lay Centre at its new home at the Passionist Monastery. The twenty strong community represents various countries (including Albania, Canada, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Serbia, and the United States), and includes Muslims, Greek and Serbian Orthodox, Catholics, and an Anglican. The first weeks of the semester provided the community with various spiritual, cultural and practical formation opportunities. Among these was the first community evening and Celebration of the Eucharist with Rev. Tim Costello, SM, in our new chapel. The Mass included a blessing of the new residence and was celebrated on the anniversary of the dedication of the original chapel at the Foyer Unitas at Piazza Navona on 7 October 1962.

## Secretary of the CDF Speaks at the Inaugural *Oasis in the City* at Lay Centre's New Location



The second-ranking official of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, (CDF), Archbishop Luis Ladaria Ferrer, gave the inaugural Oasis in the City Evening at the Lay Centre's new location. The lecture was on the CDF's 2008 instruction *Dignitas Personae*, dealing with a range of bioethical issues including IVF, stem cells, and cloning. The discussion focused on the dignity of the human person as understood in theological anthropology, the service that science provides to serve that dignity, and where to draw the line when public figures (such as a politicians) do not profess a view entirely commensurate with Catholic moral teaching on these complicated issues.

*(Left picture) Donna Orsuto welcomes Archbishop Luis Ladaria, SJ, at the opening Oasis in the City evening on Tuesday, 10 November 2009.*

**Mark Your Calendar to Join us on Thursday, 21 January at 4:30 pm for the Annual Ecumenical Lecture and Celebration of the Word on the Occasion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at the Centro Pro Unione** (Via Santa Maria dell'Anima, 30, Piazza Navona in Rome). Rev. William Henn, OFM Cap, will give a lecture entitled "Echoes of John Calvin's Ecclesiology in the Reformed-Catholic International Dialogue." Free entrance. Call 06.687.9552 to make reservations.

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## PLAN ON JOINING US FOR STUDY PROGRAMS IN 2010

### **VPI Winter Program 2010:**

**Exploring Diverse Ways of Praying**  
Thursdays - 14, 21, 28 January; 4, 11  
February from 9:30 am to 12 noon

This study program will explore how iconography, painting, poetry and literature are popular as instruments for entering into prayer. Part I will examine icons from a historical perspective and consider the teaching of the Church regarding icons and their use in public worship. Part II will explore how poetry can be an instrument for prayer and a reflection on the role of imagination in meditation. Part III of the study program will consider the role of art in prayer in the works of Fra Angelico. Part IV will explore how poetry and prayer relate in the poems of Elizabeth Jennings (1926-2001).

### **Praying with the Saints in Rome** 30 May – 5 June 2010

Using the city of Rome as a point of departure, this program will be an opportunity to deepen your Christian identity and spirituality by exploring how various martyrs and saints have lived out the call to holiness in the city of Rome through the ages.

### **Towards Co-Responsibility of Priests and Laity: Wisdom from the Past, Hope for the Future** 6 June – 11 June 2010

In his address to the Opening of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome on the Theme: "Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility" on 26 May 2009 at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, Pope Benedict XVI asked the following question: "To what extent is the pastoral co-responsibility of all, and particularly of the laity, recognized and encouraged?" In this year dedicated to the priesthood, this study program will reflect on the treasures of our tradition which speak to the ways that co-responsibility has been promoted in the past to explore possibilities for the contemporary Church in the world.

**For more information about these  
upcoming study programs, including  
graduate credit opportunities, visit:**

**WWW.LAYCENTRE.ORG**



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## UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2010

**Wednesday, 3 February at 4:30 pm**  
**Annual Benefit Evening for the  
Lay Centre.** The Friends of the  
Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas invite  
you to an evening with the Rev.  
J. Michael Joncas, who will give a  
lecture entitled "Psalms: The Cries  
of the Human Heart" at Georgetown  
Visitation in Washington DC.  
Please call Nancy Lindsay at (202)  
364-4256 to make reservations.

**Ash Wednesday, 17 February at  
6:00 pm Oasis in the City Time  
for Reflection and Prayer at the  
Lay Centre.** Renowned writer and  
preacher Rev. Timothy Radcliffe,  
OP, will give a lecture entitled, "A  
Spirituality for the 21st Century."  
In lieu of a reception, guests are  
invited to make a contribution to  
the Rice Bowl Project. The evening  
will also include Sung Vespers.

**Friday evening, 5 March through  
Sunday afternoon, 7 March**  
**Annual VPI Lenten Retreat at  
the Casa d'Esercizi Spirituali dei  
Passionisti.** Rev. Timothy Costello,  
SM, will guide the weekend of  
prayer, discussion and fellowship  
on the theme "Alive in Christ".

## Congratulations, Newlyweds!



*Radwa Thabet and her husband Mohamed Ammar  
at the reception on their wedding day.*

It is with great joy that The Lay Centre announces the wedding of Radwa Thabet and Mohamed Ammar on Friday, 17 July 2009 in Alexandria, Egypt. Radwa was part of the Lay Centre resident student community for two semesters while she was pursuing studies in the Religion & Culture Faculty at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Our prayers are with them both as they begin their new life together as husband and wife.

## Oasis in the City Focuses on Jewish-Catholic Dialogue

On Tuesday, 1 December 2009, the Lay Centre hosted Rabbi Jack Bemporad for an Oasis in the City entitled "The Hebrew Bible, Human Rights and Interreligious Dialogue." The evening also included sacred music performed by Maurizio de Veroli and his band. Rabbi Bemporad is a Professor of Interreligious Studies at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome and the Director of the Center for Interreligious Understanding and the Senior Rabbinic Scholar at the Chavurah Beth Shalom in New Jersey.



*(Left picture) Rabbi Jack Bemporad during his lecture. (Right picture) Maurizio de Veroli and his band performing sacred Israeli music during the Oasis in the City evening on Tuesday, 1 December 2009.*

The evening focused on Jewish understandings of the contemporary discourse on human rights in international relations and dialogue.