

Listening with “Astonished Ears”

“Astonished ears”, this is one suggested translation for *attonitis auribus* in the *Rule of St. Benedict* (Prologue 9). Eastertide is a period for “astonished ears”. This came home to me when viewing yet again one of my favourite Caravaggio paintings “The Supper of Emmaus”, usually on display at the National Gallery in London, but now showing at an exhibition here in Rome.

One striking point in this painting is that not only the eyes of the disciples, but even their ears and nostrils seem wide open. These pilgrims have “astonished ears”! Clearly Caravaggio is zooming in on one marvellous moment of the Emmaus event (Luke 24:13-35), namely when “they recognized him in the breaking of the bread”. As Christ’s hands reach out both to bless the off-centred bread and wine and to beckon you and me to the table, the disciple on the left looks like he is about to leap out of his chair in surprise and the figure on the right, with his pilgrim’s shell, stretching out his hands (in cruciform fashion) seems to be so energized by this encounter that he would be willing to follow Christ anywhere – even to the cross. His outstretched hand is also reaching out to you and me, inviting us to come to the banquet. As one art historian says, “Everyone and everything seems



The Supper at Emmaus (1601) by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

spasmodically electrified: foreshortened hands flung into space; a jaw-dropping, napkin-spilling epiphany”.

In this season of joy and delight, I wish for all of you, dear friends, the gift of “astonished ears”, that like these disciples at Emmaus, we are literally on the edge of our chairs—with eyes and ears wide open ready to see and to hear the Good News of the Risen Lord. This is the way to enter into that new life Christ offers each of us. In her poem *Sometimes*, Mary Oliver gives us a glimpse of how to do this:

Instructions for living a life:

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.

Donna Orsuto

The Spring/Summer 2010 Study Programs at the Lay Centre

Praying with the Saints in Rome

Sunday, 30 May - Saturday, 5 June, 2010

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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 through the ages. The lectures, discussions and site visits will focus on the various traditions of spirituality that are reflected in the lives of the saints who have lived, ministered and worshipped throughout the various stages of church history in the Eternal City.

All of our study programs include:

- + Daily Liturgical Celebrations
- + Presentations & Guided Discussions by Dr. Donna Orsuto, Other Professors from Various Pontifical Universities & Vatican Officials
- + Guided Visits to Significant Churches & Sites Related to the Lives of Holy Women & Men in Rome
- + Opportunities for Fellowship & Experiencing Roman Cuisine

For the latest information about any of these programs, including updated tentative schedules, please visit:

www.laycentre.org

Towards Co-Responsibility of Priests & Laity: Wisdom from the Past, Hope for the Future

Sunday, 6 June - Saturday, 11 June, 2010

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In his address on 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 of the Priest, 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 while recognizing, in the words of Benedict XVI, that “there is still a long way to go ... lay people who are ready to work in the various apostolic fields are still few and far between.”

Sixth Annual Association of Catholic Colleges & Universities Rome Seminar

Sunday, 20 June - Friday, 25 June, 2010

PROGRAM OPEN TO PRESIDENTS, ADMINISTRATORS AND SENIOR FACULTY OF ACCU MEMBER INSTITUTIONS. CONTACT THE ACCU FOR MORE INFORMATION: accu@accunet.org.



Rev. William Henn, OFM Cap. gives lecture.

John Calvin Focus of 2010 Week of Prayer for Unity

For more than 20 years, the Lay Centre and the Centro Pro Unione have collaborated to provide a keynote lecture and ecumenical celebration of the Word during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity for the English-speaking community in Rome. Hosted at the historic Centro Pro Unione at Piazza Navona, in the room used by ecumenical observers at Vatican II during their weekly debriefings, the lecture this year was delivered by Father William Henn, OFM Cap, on "Echoes of John Calvin's Ecclesiology in the Reformed-Catholic International Dialogue." The ecumenical celebration of the Word was presided by Rev. Willie McCulloch of St. Andrew's (Scottish) Presbyterian Church in Rome, and the preacher was Rev. Gerry Whelan, SJ. The recommended order of service from the Joint Working Group of the WCC and PCPCU had been developed locally in Scotland, in honor of 2010 marking the 100th anniversary of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 that sparked the modern ecumenical movement.



Kassim Bawah received by Pope Benedict XVI.

Islam-Catholic Dialogue

Resident during the first semester of the 2009-2010 academic year, Muslim scholar Kassim Bawah had the opportunity to meet with Pope Benedict XVI in early February 2010 before returning to his native Ghana to continue to promote dialogue and peace between Muslims & Christians.

Lenten Journey Begins with Ash Wednesday Oasis

"The problem is, in our culture, that we tend to equate doctrine with doctrinaire and morals with moralism." The former Master of the Dominican Order, the British Friar Timothy Radcliffe addressed a crowd at the Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas on Ash Wednesday, 17 February. In his conference, entitled "A Spirituality for the 21st Century," he said that balancing genuine evangelization and witness with dialogue and charity, seems to be the greatest challenge facing Christians today. We have to counter a broad-culture message of relativism, but do so without falling into fundamentalism. This seems like the simplest message of the Gospel, but any honest listener will hear thousands of stories of would-be or former Christians who lost their faith – not in God – but in the poor example of the Christians they encountered.

Students Walk in the Footsteps of the Early Christians

A group of 20 students from St Mary's College of California completed a Jan Term Course planned in association with the Lay Centre from 12-29 January 2010. Professor David Gentry-Akin was the main instructor of the course along with Donna Orsuto and Robert White. Each day featured class presentations and discussions, guided site visits, liturgical celebrations and opportunities for building camaraderie among the students. Although concentrated in the city of Rome, the course also featured excursions to Subiaco and Assisi.



Dr. David Gentry-Akin and Sr. Denise Robillard, SA, with St. Mary's Jan Term students in Assisi.

Vincent Pallotti Institute 2010

The Vincent Pallotti Institute offered a Lenten Retreat Weekend entitled, "Alive in Christ." Rev. Timothy Costello, SM, guided more than twenty participants from 5 to 7 March at the Passionist Retreat House. The weekend featured liturgical celebrations, guided reflections and discussions on different themes of Christian spirituality. Two other study programs were also held during the first months of 2010: "Exploring Diverse Ways of Praying" with Dr. Joan Barclay Lloyd, Rev. Michael Paul Gallagher, SJ, Rev. Robert Ombres, OP and Rev. Allan White, OP; and "The Seven Deadly Sins" with Donna Orsuto, Abbot Edmund Power, OSB and Rev. Jeremy Driscoll, OSB.



Crowd gathered to hear Rev. Timothy Radcliffe, OP, during his Oasis in the City conference.

Evening Sponsored by US Embassy to the Holy See Marks African-American History

In honor of African-American history month, the first celebrated in Rome by two new US ambassadors both appointed by the first African-American President, the Lay Centre co-hosted a viewing of the PBS documentary, *Legacy*, with a discussion afterwards led by U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, Dr. Miguel Díaz, and Ambassador of the U.S. Mission to the U.N. Agencies in Rome, Ms. Ertharin Cousin, on Monday, 22 February 2010. It was a change of pace from the theological, philosophical, and pastoral discussions that usually dominate conversation at the Lay Centre as the two ambassadors both shared from their personal experiences, answered a number of questions from a well-mixed audience of about 50 persons, and facilitated a conversation. Much of the dialogue ranged around the elements common to any family or individual successfully overcoming individual and systemic oppression, disadvantage, or other challenges. Faith, family and community were the key themes, and they were especially noted as the only sources to help when even "the system" failed in its intended aid. In an age when the postmodern generations are facing the juxtaposition between a life of being told "you can be whatever you want to be" by parents, teachers, and society at large with a decade of economic crises and limited opportunity, even Ambassador Cousin's son once commented to her, "how can we ever achieve more than your generation has achieved? There's nothing left for us!" Echoing the generation across social and racial lines, the "entitlement" generation which was "promised" six-figure salaries straight out of college often cannot even find a job.



Donna Orsuto responds to His Excellency Dr. Miguel Díaz, US Ambassador to the Holy See.