



ROMAN TIMES

THE WEEK AT SIEL

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LaSalle
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Week Two: Memory and Dream

Greetings again from Rome and SIEL, where the participants have just completed week two of this exceptional program. As all of us become more familiar with both the challenge of its purpose and the wonders of its setting, we also are beginning to discover that there is a powerful relationship between the two. SIEL happens to take place in the center of the Lasallian world, which happens to be up the street from the center of the Catholic world, and both happen to be located in the birthplace of the western world. I was told that things are close together in Europe. However, until this week I never knew the powerful implications of this convenient geography.

Like most major urban centers, Rome is modern, fast-paced, edgy. But Rome is also antique, savory, nuanced. There are not many places where one can step out of a high-tech subway and literally onto the foundations of western civilization. Romans seem to take this unique character in stride, molding its distinctive personalities into an earthy, if not primal, combination of passion and detachment, intensity and playfulness, sacredness and profaneness, uproarious confusion and unperturbed serenity.

If the experience of Rome boggles the mind, then the Vatican completely overwhelms. Walk into St. Peter's Basilica and realize the inadequacy of all of your previous notions of "big". Compare its expanse to that of the image of the ignominious hillside grave that was its origin. Metaphors for the smallness of our greatness within the immensity of the greatness of God and for the rise of a futile movement of eccentrics that became the faith of millions.

The Generalate sits on Via Aurelia, a busy avenue that runs through the northwest quarter of Rome. Enter the gates and somehow the full-tilt noise of the street mutes and your pace slows. You see a statue, then a name, and that is all it takes. From a place deep inside you comes a recognition that somehow you are home. Except in a place where you have never been. With people that you have never met. Except that you know them well. Where they all speak in different tongues. Except that they all speak the same language.

The chance to process these mythic paradoxes began with Brother Paulo Dullius from Brazil. He started our week with the topic "Reflections About the Subject", a psycho-sociological exploration of the formation of sub-

ject, of the individual person. Significant aspects of this are the roles that are played in an individual's or group's self-construction by memory, where the past always lives in us, and dream, where the future always begins in us. The urgency for persons or groups to integrate memory and dream into their present identity was then highlighted in the second part of the week when we were introduced to both our own Lasallian archives and that of the Pontifical Gregorian University. From two quite different perspectives came the same striking message: To preserve the past is often to destroy it, because a preserved past is protected away from the present and can no longer itself live and enlighten, but only be forgotten or ignored. Rather than to preserve the past, the task is to pass it on.

And so, while week one was about the origins of the Lasallian story, week two was about the very nature of story, about how the acts of remembering and envisioning come together to form an incarnational present, one that consciously connects our past and our future as a means of both self-discovery and self-determination. The life of the Lasallian mission is a dynamic tension between honored past and vital future where our memory of who we were and our dream of who we will be join together to inform us of who and how to be right now. The ongoing need is to view our mission in terms of discerning together how best to faithfully embody both memory and dream for each other and for those whom we serve.

As week two concludes, I am left to reflect on these lessons about past and future. My fellow Lasallians and I spend our days in the midst of living symbols of the human story. From the Generalate to the Vatican to Rome itself, wherever we look we find people's footsteps. These footsteps tell us much about from where these people came. They also tell us much about where they appeared to be headed. However, to just deduce this information is not enough. As Brother Paulo explained, "To simply study the past is just intellectual curiosity. We must delve into the past in order to improve upon the present." And, one might add, to help to unite Lasallian memory and dream. What an adventure! See you next week.

Live Jesus in our hearts forever!
Bob Carrejo