

FROM MARYFIELD TO PADUA

Fifty lucky transition year students from Maryfield College travelled to Padua on a pilgrimage last April. Padua is a city that is most famous for its association with St. Anthony and his beautiful basilica. The day we arrived we were fortunate enough to visit this wonderful basilica. We saw the many different cloisters, the tomb and relics of St. Anthony. A number of our students left petitions here, as did many other pilgrims from other countries. We also blessed items by touching them on the tomb. As it was Palm Sunday, we attended a private mass with our teachers in a side chapel of the basilica, celebrated by an English speaking priest, Father Ramano. This was a lovely experience for us. It felt very personal, and we had a special sense of unity during this mass. We all sang together, prayed together and laughed together. It was very memorable. It was particularly uplifting because being in Maryfield is a huge part of our lives and the mass allowed us to reflect on this and to pray for all our families and friends back home in Ireland.

We visited Venice and saw the amazing Piazza San Marco (St. Mark's Square). St. Mark's Basilica, was outstanding and very beautiful. While in Venice, we also saw the famous Rialto Bridge and the Bridge of Sighs. Everything we saw while in Venice reminded us what a phenomenal world God has created.

We did a walking tour of Padua. We began this tour with a visit to the Scrovegni Chapel. The chapel contains magnificent frescoes painted by the artist Giotto which tells the story of Jesus' life and his parents. The chapel's beauty was breath taking and we find it difficult to describe using mere words. The detail and beauty of the artwork in the Scrovegni Chapel was honestly very inspiring. While it was difficult to absorb everything in the chapel, we did have some

time afterwards to process what we had seen. While reflecting we particularly remembered and considered the image created by Giotto to depict heaven and hell. This really made us think about eternal life and remember all of the people close to us that have passed away. Later that day we visited the Basilica di Santa Giustina. This is where the relics of St. Luke are held. We then visited a monastery which had St. Leopold Mandic's tomb. Father Roberto, a lovely Friar, brought us around the monastery and told us the history of Leopold Mandic. Father Roberto did not speak English but our wonderful tour guide, Mario, translated as Father Roberto spoke. This touched all of us, and we realised that no matter what language you speak or where in the world you are- faith can be a shared experience. By purely listening to his tone of voice and expression, we all felt what he was saying. We were very moved by the life of this humble saint and his compassion for others as he brought God's forgiveness to their lives as a confessor.

One of the most inspiring sights we saw while in Italy was the Sanctuary of Madonna della Corona. The journey there was long, but really worthwhile because of the beautiful views of Lake Garda. The sanctuary is positioned on the cliffs of Monte Baldo and the view from there is stunning. This place is said to be one of the most inspiring places of prayer in the world, and we had the chance to experience this for ourselves. While there we completed the '28 Steps' (an act of penance- as you climb the steps in prayer on your knees, remembering Christ's trial and persecution). A large number of our group took part and we completed the steps together in prayer and silence. Completing the 28 steps was genuinely so prayerful. While saying a prayer on each step we had the opportunity to identify what was really important in our lives. This is something not many teenagers often do. We have many distractions in our lives

but this gave us peace and quiet to step back from our hectic lives and gain an insight into what really matters.

That afternoon we visited the medieval city of Verona. We saw the romantic balcony from Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet'. We explored Verona for a while and then returned to Padua for our last night.

Having the opportunity to participate in the pilgrimage was amazing and for that we are thankful. The pilgrimage provided time for us to relax, step back and view life from many different angles. It encouraged us to consider faith in its many different aspects. It was an inspiring experience and one that many of us may not get the chance to repeat. The memories of this pilgrimage will never be forgotten!

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