

Entering the Eternal City!

Rome



Day 7: The Gateway to the Sacred

"A pilgrimage is not a vacation – it is a journey of the soul into the heart of God." –
Inspired by Thomas Merton

We begin this new day of our pilgrimage with hearts full of gratitude for the days behind us. We prepare to take flight (literally) toward the very heart of Christendom: ROME, the Urbs Aeterna – the Eternal City! The flight itself becomes symbolic: we are moving into a broader layer of pilgrimage. As Thomas Merton once observed, "The geographical pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out of an inner journey". Today, we take flight!

Upon arrival in Rome, we step onto soil that has borne the footsteps of martyrs, saints, apostles – and countless pilgrims like us. Domes and bell towers rising in the golden light, centuries of faith carved into stone, walls, and story. Here, every corner has a past, and every monument speaks of mystery.

Behold, The Trevi Fountain, where waters dance and wishes are whispered. This Baroque masterpiece is more than just beauty – it is a reminder of the Christian symbol of living water. Pilgrims often toss a coin not merely in hope of return to the Eternal City, but as a gesture of trust in God's providence and the return of grace. Behold, the Spanish Steps, connecting the Piazza di Spagna to the Church of Trinita dei Monti. The steps are not only an architectural wonder but a metaphor of spiritual ascent. Merton reminds us, "In the spiritual life, there are no plateaus. We are always climbing, always drawn higher".

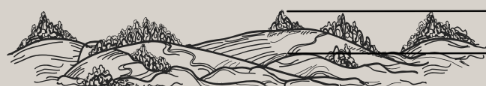
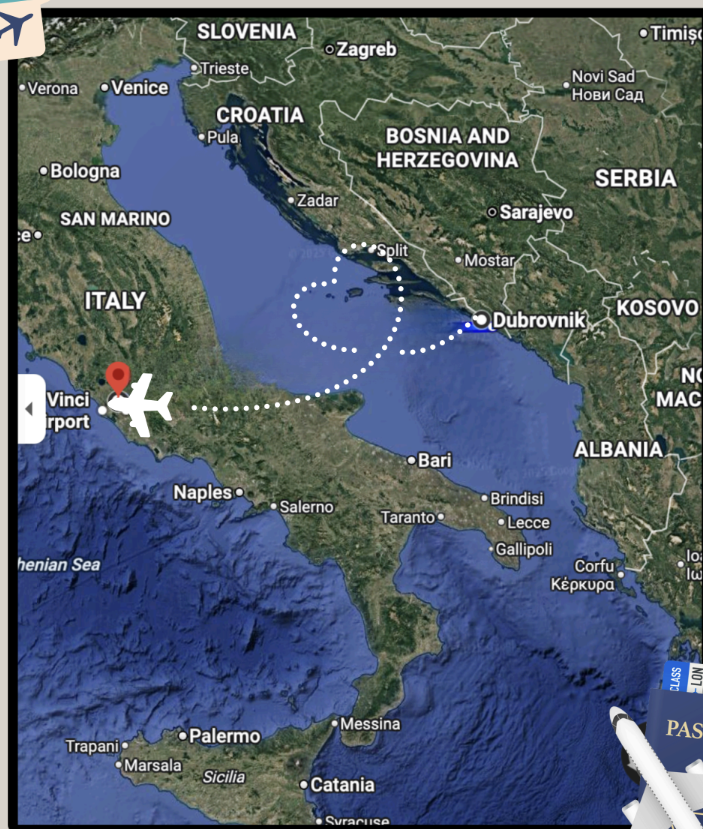
So we continue to climb today – not just stone steps, but the stairways of the soul, moving slowly, deliberately, upward toward the mystery.

We gather this evening for a Roman dinner, savoring pasta or pane, but also recognizing the deeper communion of shared faith experiences and growing friendships. Every meal on pilgrimage becomes a Eucharistic echo – fellowship, thanksgiving, nourishment.

Tonight, we sleep in Rome, the city where emperors ruled and where martyrs knelt, A city where the eternal intersects the earthly.

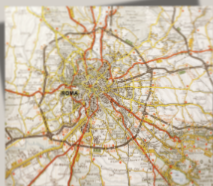
Rome will demand of us depth, surrender, awe – love! It is not simply a destination or a stop on our pilgrimage, but it is crucible of transformation. As we rest tonight, let us open ourselves to what Rome might reveal – not only in its basilicas and cobblestones, but in the quiet spaces of our hearts.

From Dubrovnik to Rome: ~ The Eternal City ~



GREAT
THINGS
NEVER COME
from
COMFORT
Zone

~ La Citta Eterna ~



... And so, under the amber glow of Rome's eternal lamps, we close our eyes to a city that never sleeps—but prays. The cobblestones beneath our feet have echoed with the steps of saints, apostles, and pilgrims like us, hearts open and searching. Tonight, the Tiber flows quietly, as if whispering ancient blessings beneath the bridges of time. The dome of St. Peter's rests under the same stars that watched over Peter and Paul. We too, weary but full, settle into the stillness—grateful, wrapped in the hush of holy history, and ready for the dreams that only Rome can inspire.

PRAYER:

Lord of every journey,
Tonight we lay down our heads in Rome—
the city of saints, martyrs, and apostles,
where stone and spirit meet in timeless praise.
We have traveled far, and You have been our guide.
As we walk these ancient streets,
remind us that we are part of a story
much greater than our own.
Let this night renew our hope,
heal what is weary,
and deepen the heartbeat of our faith.

Amen.

Pilgrim Tip:

As you drift to sleep in this holy city,
think of one saint who walked these same
streets before you.

Ask for their intercession.

Let their courage inspire your own
response to God's call
— not just on pilgrimage,
but in the quiet journey of daily life.