

TRAVEL

Couple enjoy papal visit and great art in Italy

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

Irene and Casey Ambrose of Bloomfield Hills had been to Italy several times before, but this time was different, an adventure that began at church.

"I have a daughter (Eileen) who likes to go to 6:15 Mass at St. Hugo's," said Irene.

The Rev. Monsignor Michael Dylag of the Pope John Paul II Cultural Foundation was saying Mass.

"We went up to talk to him, we knew other people that he knew," Irene explained. "He mentioned that he was a friend of the Pope. He said, 'If you're interested when I take a trip you can come along.'"

Dylag had known the Pope when both were at Orchard Lake's St. Mary's Seminary.

The Ambroses joined a group of 32 that left the day after Thanksgiving for a scheduled Dec. 2 meeting with the pontiff.

John and Mary Kruse of Bloomfield Hills also joined the group. The scheduled meeting was delayed by two days, but on Dec. 4 the audience was arranged.

Italy was a familiar vacation spot for the Ambroses. He is a longtime Walled Lake attorney and she is a well-known commercial artist. According to Casey, he goes where his wife takes him, and it's her love of art that has drawn them back to Italy. This trip, in addition to meeting His Holiness, they had planned a trip to Florence, a rich repository of Renaissance art that they had missed on previous visits.

On the day they were to meet the Pope, a convoy of taxis lined up outside their hotel. Once inside the Vatican, they went from one chamber after another, climbing several staircases in the process.

"They took us inside a waiting room filled with beautiful paint-

ings and sculptures outside his private chapel," Irene said. "We were told the Pope would arrive soon in the chapel and kneel in prayer. You come in when the Pope is ready to say Mass."

Pope John Paul II said Mass for the group and then joined the visitors in the adjoining library where a receiving line was formed.

"When he came to us, Monsignor Dylag introduced us in Polish, I understand a little Polish," Irene said.

Pointing to Casey, Irene said, "Then he started talking Lithuanian. (The Pope's mother is Lithuanian.) The Pope looked at him and said 'God Bless Lithuanian.'"

Casey said the Pope called him a Litvak, a common term for Lithuanians.

John Paul gave each person a rosary with his coat of arms. Dylag shared breakfast with Edmund Cardinal Szoka, former archbishop of Detroit and the Vatican's chief financial officer.

The papal visit was followed by tour of the Vatican.

"It was interesting," Casey said, "everyone knows Michelangelo did all these things, but (Giovanni) Bernini did many designs and sculptures."

The trip to Florence almost didn't happen because of a confusing train schedule, but the couple finally made their way to the beautiful city. There they visited the grand palaces of the Medici. They saw Michelangelo's "David," the Duomo mosaic church (the Cathedral of Florence), the Baptistery of St. John, the Uffizi Gallery and other famous sites.

"It's a beautiful city with so much happening," Irene said. The trip to Rome and Florence



Papal audience: Pope John Paul II is introduced to Casey and Irene Ambrose by The Rev. Monsignor Michael Dylag in the Vatican library.

was a last minute adventure that created a scheduling problem for the busy couple. In May they had scheduled a post Christmas trip to Mexico. They barely got home from Italy and took care of Christmas, when they were on the road again.

Though past the age when most people retire, the Ambroses keep busy with their professional and social activities. Irene is an active artist. Casey continues working at the law practice that he shares with some of his children. The couple have eight adult children. He has also won notoriety for his sax playing. His trio performs every week at a son's restaurant.

Vatican sculpture: Giovanni Bernini's "Ecstasy of St. Teresa," one of many works by great Renaissance sculptor in the Vatican.



Leading prayer: His Holiness John Paul II second leads a prayer at the Vatican.

GREAT ESCAPES

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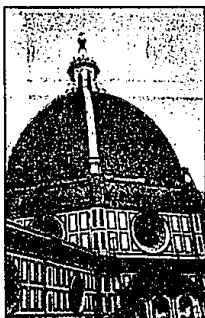
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CROSS COUNTRY

REI (Recreational Equipment Incorporated), 17659 Haggerty Road in Northville, presents Bob Taylor's slide presentation, "Cross Country Skiing in Yellowstone National Park," Wednesday, Feb. 11. Taylor has been doing alpine (downhill) skiing for 40 years and nordic (cross country) for 26. For times and more information, call REI (248)947-2100.

TUSCANY VACATION

The Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association is still taking reservations for its special arts tour, "The Hill Towns of Tuscany and Umbria," May 10-22. Join



Romantic Italy: The beautiful architecture of Florence is just one of the many sights that the BBAA will take in during a trip to the "Hill Towns of Tuscany and Umbria."

Janet Torno, BBAA executive director, for an excursion to two of Italy's most beautiful regions. The tour guide will be Shelby Perlove, professor of art history and director of art administration at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. Highlights of the trip include the famous churches and cathedrals of Florence, the leaning tower of Pisa, the zebra-striped cathedral of Siena and the birthplace of St. Francis of Assisi. Accommodations will

include six nights at the Grand Hotel Minerva in Florence and four nights at the Hotel Athena in Siena.

For more information, contact Janet Torno at (248)644-0866 or Dallas Phillips of Phillips Travel at (248)437-1733.

MAPLE SYRUP

The Deerhurst Resort will hold its Maple Syrup Festival March 7 to April 5. On March 27-29 guests can enjoy the Maple Syrup Festival weekend package for \$289. Canadian which includes two nights accommodations, a Friday evening reception, Saturday breakfast and dinner, a sugar bush tour, a musical stage show, Sunday brunch and take-home pancake

kit. Price is per person based on double occupancy. The resort is in Huntsville, Ontario. For reservations, call 1-800-441-1414.

COUNTRY MUSIC WEEKEND

The 18th Annual Country Concert will be held at Hickory Lakes in Shelby County, Ohio, July 9-12. Classic rockers America and Creedence Clearwater Revisited join a lineup of country music entertainers including Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, Clint Black, Doanna Carter, Lorrie Morgan, Collin Raye, Diamond Rio, Neal McCoy and others.

For ticket and camping information, call 937-295-3000 or write to Country Concert '98, Ft. Loramie, OH 45845 or check their website at www.coun-

tryconcert.com

BLOSSOMTIME FESTIVAL

The communities of St. Joseph and Benton Harbor are preparing for the annual Blossomtime Festival, April 26 through May 3.

The theme of this year's festival is Legends of the Silver Screen.

For more information, call or write to the Blossomtime Festival, 161 East Napier Ave., Benton Harbor, MI 49022 or call (616)926-7397.

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