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May 13, 2026

The Very Rev. Donald X. Higgs, V.E. V.F. Catholic Italy Pilgrimage

October 11-22, 2026 - 12 Days

\$6,499 from Charleston, WV

For Info & Reservations, Contact Fr Don Higgs, Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 1114 Virginia St. E., Charleston, WV 25301 - Telephone: 304-685-2367 - Email: dhiggs@dwc.org

Sunday, October 11 - Day 1 – USA/ ITALY – Today, we depart from Charleston, WV to connect with our overnight flight to Italy. We enjoy in-flight movies, dinner, and breakfast aloft.

Monday, October 12 - Day 2 - ROME/ MONTECATINI - Upon arrival in Rome, we are met and board our motor coach for the ride to the Florence area. We stop for lunch on our own, then we continue to the delightful nearby spa town of Montecatini Terme whose streets invite us to stroll after dinner at your hotel. The balance of the day is at leisure.

Tuesday, October 13 - Day 3 - FLORENCE - Today, we drive to Florence where our first stop is “Piazzale Michelangelo” for the best panoramic view of this spectacular city one could ask for. We proceed with a tour in Oltrarno, starting from Ognissanti Church with Mass. We continue along Via Tornabuoni to Piazza Santa Trinità. We cross the bridge from which we will be able to admire all the beauty of Ponte Vecchio from a distance and continue the walk in Oltrarno. We continue our walk passing Palazzo Pitti (external) and we will finally reach Ponte Vecchio where we will be free for shopping and/or to enjoy a delicious Italian ice cream. In the afternoon we will be free for personal adventure or shopping. We return to our hotel dinner and overnight.

Wednesday, October 14 - DAY 4 – LA VERNA/ASSISI - Today we journey through the Italian countryside arriving in La Verna, where St. Francis received the stigmata. Lunch (Pranzo) is included. Our time in La Verna includes the “Sasso Spicco,” a unique rock formation at La Verna, where St. Francis meditated on the Passion of Christ. We partake in the 3 p.m. procession, a historic and deeply spiritual

tradition that has taken place every single day since 1431. Franciscan friars and pilgrims walk in solemn procession from the Basilica to the Chapel of the Stigmata, the spot where St. Francis of Assisi received the wounds of Christ in 1224. Our day ends with dinner and overnight in Assisi at our hotel.

Thursday, October 15 - St. Teresa of Avila - Day 5 - ASSISI - Our day begins with Mass at the Hermitage of the Carceri, a place St. Francis retreated from the world to pray and fast. We take time here for quiet prayer and meditation. Afterwards, we return to the upper village of Assisi for a tour with stops at the Basilica of St. Francesco, where St. Francis is buried. We break for lunch on our own. Our tour continues at the Church of St. Clare to view the famous San Damiano crucifix, followed by the resting place of newly beatified St. Carlo Acutis who was 15-years old when he died in 2006 from leukemia. Acutis' tomb is where St. Francis stripped naked and renounced his father's wealth. The remainder of the day is free for prayer, quiet, shopping and absorbing the spirit of this place that produced three saints. Dinner and overnight at our hotel.

Friday, October 16 - Day 6 - ASSISI/ORVIETO/NAPLES - This morning, our first stop is in the lower town for a visit to the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels, and the Portiuncula, Francis' Church of the Little Portion. We see the place where St. Francis met “Sister Death” and take time for quiet prayer, confession (if available) and shopping. We travel south to Orvieto for a visit and Mass at the breathtaking Cathedral, which is known as the jewel of Italian architecture. Inside the Cathedral is the Chapel of the Corporal, which houses the chalice cloth involved in the Eucharistic Miracle, which occurred in nearby Bolsena. In the 13th century a pilgrim priest named Peter of Prague was celebrating Mass at

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the crypt of St. Christina. He was having a faith crisis concerning the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and while speaking the words of the consecration, blood started to drip from the consecrated Host.

Subsequently Pope Urban instituted The Feast of Corpus Christi. Lunch on our own. Afterwards, we make our way to the seaside town of Naples along the Mediterranean for dinner and overnight.

Saturday, October 17 - Day 7 – ISLE OF ISCHIA - This morning, we leave Naples by boat to visit the beautiful Island of Ischia. We enjoy a short orientation tour. Afterwards, we are free to enjoy the day at our leisure. One optional spot for interested pilgrims would be the popular Giardini Poseidon Terme, which offers a beautiful spa with volcanic thermal pools, exquisite gardens and delicious local food for lunch. Following Mass at one of the churches here we return to Naples for dinner and overnight.

Sunday, October 18 St. Luke - Day 8 – SORRENTO/ROME - Today, we enjoy a morning trip to nearby Sorrento. After Mass and lunch in Sorrento, we head north to Rome where we visit the Basilica of St. Mary Major where Pope Francis is buried. St. Mary's also holds relics of Christ's Holy Manger from Bethlehem and a piece of the true cross from Golgotha. The golden ceiling of St. Mary's is decorated by the first gold brought back from the New World by Christopher Columbus. The Spanish Catholic Kings—Ferdinand and Isabel—gave the gold as a gift to the Pope. We take time to pray at St. Mary's, the largest church dedicated to Mary in the west, before we travel to our hotel for dinner and overnight.

Monday, October 19 - Day 9 – VATICAN/ROME - Today, we visit St. Peter's Basilica where we celebrate Mass in the crypt. After Mass, we pray at the tombs of St. John Paul II and St. Peter the Apostle. Back upstairs in the main sanctuary, we view the treasures of St. Peter's including the *Pieta*, Bernini's "Window of the Holy Spirit" made from alabaster as well as his famous altar columns. One column contains the spear of St. Longinus, which was on display earlier this year. St. Longinus, the

Roman centurion who pierced the side of our Savior, was converted by the blood and water that flowed from Christ's Sacred Heart. After lunch on our own, we visit the Vatican Museums which culminate in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. We return to our hotel for dinner and overnight.

Tuesday, October 20 - Day 10 – TIVOLI – Our itinerary offers a treat today with a visit to Tivoli, with its UNESCO World Heritage sites. Tivoli offers Renaissance gardens of the Villa d'Este (famous for its fountains) and the vast ancient ruins of Hadrian's Villa (Villa Adriana). We enjoy a delicious, included luncheon with wine tasting. We also explore the historic town center before returning to Rome. Dinner and overnight in our hotel.

Wednesday, October 21 - Day 11 – PAPAL AUDIENCE/ROME - This morning, we make our way to St. Peter's for an audience with Pope Leo XIV, if he is in residence. Afterwards, we visit the Holy Stairs and the Basilica of St. John Lateran. Following lunch on our own, we continue with Mass and a visit to the Basilica of St. Clement where our underground tour shows us how three churches were built on top of each other in the 1st, 4th and 12 centuries. We move then to the Basilica of St. Lawrence, the martyred deacon who famously said as he was being grilled to death: "Flip me over, I'm done on this side." They have the grill in the church! St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr who was stoned to death (Acts 7), is also buried here. Dinner and overnight at our hotel.

Thursday, October 22 - Day 12 – ROME/ USA – We transfer to the airport in Rome for our flight home with unforgettable memories to cherish for the rest of our lives.



SCAN ME

While we at Unitours do everything possible to make our Pilgrimages comfortable, a certain amount of strenuous walking will be required. Depending upon a pilgrim's age & strength, parts of your program may be too taxing if a person has mobility limitations, is older or disabled. Be advised that such pilgrims may be unable to visit some of the places listed on this itinerary.

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Mail to: Fr Don Higgs, Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 1114 Virginia St. E., Charleston, WV 25301

Please reserve ___ seats on this Catholic Italy Pilgrimage - October 11-22, 2026

Enclosed please find deposit of \$500 per person (Payable to Unitours, Inc.)

PLEASE ENCLOSE A COPY OF YOUR PASSPORT (Passport MUST be valid until April 22, 2027, or later.)

Name(s) as appears on passport) _____

My Roommate: _____

Address: _____

City, State & Zip _____

Daytime Telephone: _____

Email Address: _____

Name(s) as you'd like them to appear on nametags: _____

Charge my deposit to ___ Visa ___ MasterCard ___ Amex ___ Discover

Card # _____

Exp. Date _____

I understand that certain charges such as air taxes, fuel surcharges and rates of exchange can affect the final cost and I agree to pay such costs should adjustments be necessary. _____

Signature _____

TOTAL TOUR PRICE: The tour price is based on airfare, cruise, land rates and rates of exchange in effect March 27, 2026. All rates are subject to change without prior notice. Should the rates go up or down, an adjustment would be made prior to departure. Refunds CANNOT be granted for any accommodations, services or events that are not used nor if you deviate from the tour. If fewer than 25 pilgrims participate a price adjustment may be necessary.

PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS: A valid passport is required. At the time of printing, U.S. citizens holding valid passports DO NOT REQUIRE visas. Passport MUST be valid until April 22, 2027, or later. Citizens of countries other than U.S. - please contact the consulate of the country or countries being visited to determine visa requirements.

AIR TRANSPORTATION: International flight reservations are being held on American Airlines. No stopovers are permitted. Any changes after ticket is issued carries a mandatory charge of \$200. Once the tickets are issued, they are NON-TRANSFERABLE AND NON-REFUNDABLE. Any requests to change a ticket once issued will incur a reissue fee of \$200 plus any fare differential will apply. Cancellation of air seat within 90 days of departure will incur a \$200 penalty.

DOMESTIC AIRFARE: For those who make domestic air arrangements to the originating city of this tour, your tour host and Unitours strongly recommend the purchase of tickets that can be changed without heavy fees and penalties as international flight schedules are always subject to change.

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS: Specially selected hotels based on twin occupancy with private bath. Single Room supplement of \$940 will be charged where requested and available. If you do not have a roommate and Unitours is unable to arrange one, you will be billed for the single room supplement. All singles are subject to availability.

MEALS: Breakfast and Table D' Hote dinners are provided daily except where noted in the itinerary. An extra charge will be made when coffee, tea or other beverages are not included in the menu of the day with the dinner meal.

TIPS AND TAXES: Tips and taxes normally appearing on hotel and restaurant bills as service are included, as are all government and local taxes on hotels and meals, portage of one suitcase per person. International departure taxes of \$136 plus current fuel surcharges of \$520 are included (subject to change). TIPS TO TOUR MANAGER/GUIDES, DRIVERS OR DINING ROOMS STAFF OF \$118 ARE NOT INCLUDED. One average sized suitcase not exceeding 50 lbs total weight and 62 linear inches (height plus width plus depth) is permitted throughout the trip.

NOT INCLUDED: Expenses and items not specifically mentioned in this brochure are NOT covered, including but not limited to: passport and visa fees, meals not listed and items of a personal nature such as laundry, wines, liquors, mineral waters, after dinner coffee or tea, sightseeing or services other than those specifically mentioned, tips and taxes mentioned above, excess baggage and insurance, etc.

DEPOSITS AND CANCELLATIONS: A deposit of \$500 is required to secure reservations. Any balance is to be paid in full no later than 60 days before departure of tour. Final payments received at Unitours after 45 days before departure must include a \$25 late payment fee. (This does not apply for new reservations made after 45 days of departure.) Reservations made within 60 days of departure must include full payment. Amex, Discover, Visa and MasterCard are accepted with signed

reservation form. Final payments will be applied to same credit card on final payment due date. Cancellations made from time of reservation to within 61 days prior to departure - - \$400 administration fee (charged to deposit) plus any air penalties noted above. In the event of a cancellation from 60 to 31 days prior to departure - - \$400 administration fee plus up to 50% of the land cost, plus any air penalties noted above. No refund for cancellations received within 30 days of departure. All cancellation and refund claims must be in writing to Unitours, Inc.

BANK FEE: A fee of \$50 will be charged for any check that is returned to us for insufficient or unavailable funds.

DEVIATIONS: A service charge of \$50 pp will be applied for any deviations made in tour, (where possible), PLUS any additional air or land charges incurred.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Optional Travel Insurance is strongly recommended for your trip. See www.Unitours.com/travelInsurance for full details and to purchase coverage.

LAND ARRANGEMENTS: The tour operator reserves the right to change the itinerary due to unforeseen emergencies.

RESPONSIBILITIES: Unitours, Inc., the organizer, and their representatives act only as agents for the tour members in making arrangements for hotels, transportation, sightseeing, restaurants or any other services in connection with the itinerary. They will exercise reasonable care in making such arrangements, however, they do not assume any liability whatsoever, for any injury, damage, loss, accident or delay to person or property because of any acts of war or terrorism, any act of default of any hotel, carrier, restaurant, company or person rendering any of the services included in the tours. The tickets, coupons, tariffs, rules or contracts currently in use by any carrier, hotel, restaurant or other contractor rendering services shall constitute the sole contract between such contractor and the tour member. Unitours Inc., or the organizer, accept no responsibility for any damage or delay due to sickness, pilferage, labor disputes, machinery breakdown, quarantine, government restraints, weather or any other cause beyond their personal control. No carrier shall be responsible for any act, omission or events during the time passengers are not on board its own conveyance. The right is reserved to cancel or change itineraries or substitute services without notice and to decline to accept or retain any passenger at any time. In view of statutory or contractual limitations that may apply to personal injury or property damage losses the purchase of accident and baggage insurance is strongly recommended. Optional travel insurance offered by Unitours must be paid with your final payment.

ERRORS: In case of printing, typographical errors, computer errors, verbal or human billing errors, we reserve the right to invoice or re-invoice participants with corrected billing.





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UNITOURS, inc.

Custom Catholic Pilgrimages

Italy



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STEPMAP