

# CONFRATERNITY OF PILGRIMS TO ROME



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## Editorial

This is the fifth issue of the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome's *Newsletter*. For technical reasons it was not possible to publish it in December 2008 as scheduled but this delayed issue is exactly as it would have been had it appeared on time.

There are four articles, two letters, a listing of new additions to the CPR library and the section entitled "Secretary's Notebook," containing short items of information likely to be of interest to our members. John and Wendy Beecher have written a set of "postcards" of their pilgrimage, after which Howard Nelson continues his series of articles exploring the extraordinary richness that Rome presents to the modern pilgrim, with the third one dealing with Constantine's building programme. Alison Raju compares pilgrimage along the *Camino Francés* in Spain with the experience of the *Via Francigena* and Babette Gallard introduces us to the Italian association "Homo Viator."

Articles on all aspects of the pilgrimage to Rome are invited for subsequent issues. As a rough guide they should be somewhere between 1000 and 1500 words, according to the subject matter. Book reviews (300-500 words maximum) are also invited, as is also information suitable for inclusion in the "Secretary's Notebook" section. In the interests of variety the editors have decided to limit accounts of pilgrim journeys to one per issue.

Short items can be sent in an email but longer articles should be included as attachments and most WORD and RTF documents are acceptable. If you send pictures, though, please do not integrate them in the text but send them as separate files.

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# Postcards from a pilgrimage

John and Wendy Beecher

## Setting off and letting go...

On 7 April 2008 we left home, in snow, en route to Canterbury to walk the *Via Francigena* through France, Switzerland and Italy. Shortly before we left we chanced upon one of those humorous cards that reflected some of our feelings about becoming pilgrims:

*The Butterfly of Freedom* (thanks to Edward Monck)

"Why do you fly outside the box?"

"I fly outside the box because I can"

"But we know the box. We are SAFE inside the box"

"That, my friend, is why I leave it.

For you may be SAFE...

...But I AM FREE!"

We were free – to go as we pleased, to see new sights and to learn about geography, history and people along a route to Rome outlined, but not defined, by Archbishop Sigeric in 990 AD. Not being members of any organized religion, we hoped that our journey might be overseen by the "everywhere spirit", an all encompassing spiritual presence. Another quotation struck a chord for us. The explorer, Benedict Allen, said: "My navigation aids are very simple: a map and a compass. I feel it's important not to use things such as satellite phones on my expeditions. That way you are emotionally committed to the place, feeling the land and getting to grips with it, not just skating over the surface like a tourist." Thus we took with us our beloved maps and a compass, cut our reliance on technology and put our thoughts in journals rather than blogs.

Turning our thoughts away from past life, home and possessions, we placed our trust in those who were keeping an eye open for us and our home – neighbours, friends, family and our wonderful sons. As pilgrims we gained some understanding of ourselves - how we handled setbacks and challenges - and a little about some extraordinary people. What follows is not a route description but "postcards" from our journey.

## Being a pilgrim opens doors...

***The kindness of the Cupillards*** In the French Jura mountains, we took a short break from the daily walking. We found details of a "petite maison" for rent as a holiday home and phoned the owners, who cautiously agreed to

rent it to us. Arriving two days later, hot and tired with one of us rather ill, we found a little gem: a tiny cottage in the garden of René and Josy with extensive views over the valley of the River Loue and the small town of Ornans. We rested, washed clothes, cooked our own food, sat in the sun and chatted to our kind hosts. During our stay we continued to walk the route as far as Pontarlier using the local bus to reach our starting points and return home again. The cottage was originally the tool shed on the small-holding of René's grandfather which René had converted and extended, then built his own fine house on the land. Our hosts were deeply attached to their town and the river valley, showed us the beautiful landscape around the gorge and lent us several books about Ornans, the Jura, local history and pilgrimage. We were introduced to the intriguing ceremony of drinking absinthe (nearby Pontarlier is the absinthe capital) and Josy lent us a book written by a nurse working with blood donors, who had himself walked the Camino de Santiago and back again to his home village of Bresilley, 3,700 kms, to raise funds for the charity. We read most of this book - Jean-Marie Paulin, *Semeur d'espoir sur les Chemins* (ISBN 2.518276.9.5) - and picked up some good principles and practical tips:

- Don't make your *Camino* a copy of someone else's (i.e. everyone's journey is unique);
- Become a pilgrim, a walking pilgrim and not a strolling consumer;
- Without a challenge or a serious goal, one does not last long on the *Camino*.

A practical tip bought back delicious memories of childhood – carry a tube of condensed milk for instant energy!

***The polymath of Svizzano*** High in the Apennines, in a tiny village where we slept on mattresses in an eleventh-century abbey, part of which was converted into the village hall, we met Pietro, a local man who spoke excellent English and welcomed the chance to practice it. He had read more English literature than us, had many pen friends around the world, and was the organist for the parish church. In his spare time he was learning to dance the tango, researching his family history, and was a voluntary worker with a local mental health charity. On our return, Eric Newby's two books on the Apennines – *Love and war in the Apennines* and *A small place in Italy* were soon winging their way to Pietro. He subsequently emailed: "I couldn't help taking a dip into the past and feeling nostalgia for that peasant world where I was born and grew up and its lifestyle that...was definitely like the one described so accurately by Newby. A world where, although most people were so short of money, mutual help and keeping doors open to one another, to the foreigner as well, was usual."

**Pilgrims we met** Unlike the Way of St James, we encountered few pilgrims on the *Via Francigena*. We saw no long distance pilgrims until the Grand-

Saint-Bernard Hospice, where we met Ursula, a German anaesthetist (whose love of shopping scored a hit with Wendy in Aosta!), and Henri, a serious and solitary French/Polish pilgrim. At Pont-Saint-Martin, in the Aosta valley, we chanced upon Ben, a Dutch pilgrim who shared our low opinion of Italian maps and route marking. We met Francesco and Maria in the Apennines, Italian doctors, who introduced us to regional specialities and recommended the section from Lucca to Sienna; and a young American history student who had negotiated some travel funding from his college with a proposal to walk some parts of the *Camino Francés* and the *Via Francigena*.

**Some others on the way**, to mention only a few. The delightful farmer's wife at Margerie Hancourt with her two dogs, the only two in the whole of France that didn't bark and snarl and threaten to tear us limb from limb! Our hosts at Monchy la Gache. The advance party of Australians in Péronne, there for the 90th anniversary of ANZAC day - 1000 Aussies descending on the area when a few days later accommodation would have been a huge problem for us! The students from Parma University who rescued us from torrential rain, wind and mist taking us up winding roads to Cassio. The lady at the Hôtel de Ville in Aosta who stamped our pilgrim passports and, unbidden, gave us a guided tour of the historic rooms and introduced us to one of the three mayors! We enjoyed, when asked, with whatever language skills we could muster, telling people that we were pilgrims walking to Rome. They were always interested, often surprised, and sometimes quite envious – they would imagine how they would feel about making such a journey, and perhaps glimpse the Butterfly of Freedom. We would invite them to come with us, and laugh with them at such an amazing idea... but then they thought, maybe one day...

### **Landscapes...**

The *Via Francigena* passes through every kind of landscape, and we found clues about how life was moulded by the land. The open prairies of Northern France, for example, with war graves as footnotes to the destruction which has passed over the peaceful farms and valleys. The gentle slopes of Champagne, where men and the land have together spent centuries perfecting a world famous industry. The steep slopes and deep valleys of the Jura mountains, with grim castles guarding the narrow ways between the rocks and forests. The well-heeled and manicured villages and vineyards of the Suisse Romande, with stunning lake and Alpine views. The Alpine valley leading up to the Grand St Bernard Pass, steep narrow paths with chains and a suspension bridge over the cliff face, where traditional life gradually became more difficult, and although man has built sports resorts high in the snows, the weather is still the final arbiter, and man must provide refuges where he can from its strongest fury.

## Slices of history...

... which cannot fail to impress. Moving reminders of the Great War at Arras, Bapaume, Rancourt and Péronne; the might of Napoleon at Brienne-le-Château (his military academy) and Bourg-Saint-Pierre. The martyrdom of St. Maurice at Martigny with its great abbey founded in 515AD; the museum of the Alps in Bard, Val d'Aosta, set high on a rock; and many, many more, but two stand out:

**Corbeny** in France, an historically important place since pre-Roman times. Sigeric passed through here and may even have seen the relics of St. Marcos contained in the village church, visited by 23 kings of France, including Charlemagne, as well as Jean d'Arc. We were privileged to be invited by the *patron* of the Hôtel du Chemin des Dames (where we stayed, free internet access and the only pilgrim menu encountered on the route!) to view the relics as well as other historic items. His self-effacing commitment to the church and local history, the wonderful food and comfortable beds, was simply outstanding.

**The Stele people of Lunigiana**, which we discovered at the Museum in Pontremoli, carved during the 3rd millennium to 6th century BC, many thousands of years before Sigeric. A second iconoclasm occurred in Christian times when Christian bishops, up until 1000AD, actively encouraged people to break the "idols" and bury them under the church. A stone memorial tablet from the 8th century AD lists among the merits of the dead person that "idola fregit" (he broke idols!). How truly wonderful to discover the next day, at the fifth-century church of Pieve di San Stefano at Sorano, an original stele, formerly used as an architrave, now displayed in the church, and how moving to touch something that was carved way back in the mists of pre-history and ponder what was in the mind of our ancient ancestor. We wondered at the connection with the Berlin Holocaust memorial whose architect described the stone blocks as *stela*...

## In search of a bottle of champagne...

Staying in a chambre d'hôte in Verzy, Champagne, it seemed appropriate to drink the local product with our dinner, but this is a place where connoisseurs come to buy many cases at a time from the numerous champagne houses. Buying food for a picnic supper at the village butcher's we asked how we could buy just one bottle of champagne. After a few seconds thought, and with complex directions – "go up the lane round the corner, right here, left there, cross by the bell tower and knock on the door of no.4." We found our way to a large house and explained our modest need. We were treated with great respect, and bought one bottle of Hurier-Jouette et Fils Grand Cru for €11.80. Superb quality and a taste of luxury!

### **What's it all about then...?**

A kaleidoscope of memories – unusual and charming people, amazing countryside, wildlife galore – deer, hares, red squirrels, bats, birds of prey, frogs... And of course, highs and lows of emotions: if the weather's good, the route easygoing, we are well, and we've just been to a good town or place to stay, life seems perfect. But rain, route difficulties, or boring unpleasant towns and accommodation can make life seem a real burden. Gradually we learn from this process that we cannot control everything, we can only do what we can and what seems right at the time, but there will be problems, mistakes and disappointments; these are not our fault, so we should not lose confidence. We should accept that there are also unexpected good things that happen which we can treasure as our good fortune. The pilgrimage provides a great stream of experiences, as if to test us, but in truth this is because we are moving along a path which we do not know, because we are "out of our box," freely taking what the world provides. The pilgrimage gives us time and space to reflect on our experiences and our reaction to them, and this is a rare opportunity which does not occur so often in "real life."

This year we halted at Lucca, but Rome and St Peter still beckon us to complete our pilgrimage!

## Rome for the modern pilgrim, 3: Constantine's building programme

Howard Nelson

This is the third in a proposed series of articles attempting to give a chronological focus to the extraordinary jumble of monuments presented to the pilgrim when he or she arrives in Rome. Previous articles (*CPR Newsletter* 3 & 4, April & August 2008) have described the traces which remain of Peter's and Paul's time in Rome, and the catacombs. This one looks at the conversion of Constantine, and the churches he built in Rome<sup>1</sup>.



Colossal head of Constantine from the basilica of Maxentius on the Forum, and now in the Capitoline Museum<sup>2</sup>

The nature and the timing of Constantine's conversion to Christianity – a, possibly the, defining event in the history of the Church – have been the subject of long-standing controversy, and remain ambiguous<sup>3</sup>. I hope that an account of his church-building programme in Rome in the years

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<sup>1</sup> The planned series of articles is offered as the basis for an eventual, and shared, "CPR Pilgrim's Guide to Rome", so all comments and improvements will be warmly welcomed by [howard.nelson@wanadoo.fr](mailto:howard.nelson@wanadoo.fr)

<sup>2</sup> For more pictures of all the buildings covered in this article, see the newly-opened picture gallery on the CPR website, "The Road to Rome"

<sup>3</sup> Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, Cambridge Mass, Harvard University Press, 1981, contains probably the best modern discussion of Constantine's life and beliefs.

immediately following his defeat of his co-emperor and rival Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in October 312, and the promulgation of the Edict of Milan (granting freedom of worship to Christians and the restitution of church property confiscated during the Diocletian persecutions) in 313, may illuminate both his own attitude, and the constraints under which the newly-Christian emperor still had to operate.

Although it is evident that Constantine was familiar with Christianity well before the events of 312 and 313, his famous vision of the *Chi-rho* symbol in the sky, accompanied by the words “In hoc signo vinces” is generally interpreted as the crucial moment in his conversion. We have, however, conflicting accounts. Eusebius, in his *History of the Church*, completed before he met the emperor in person at Nicea in 325, is curiously silent about the vision, though he makes it clear that Constantine made public his adherence to Christianity as soon as he entered the city<sup>4</sup>. Lactantius<sup>5</sup> places the vision on the eve of the battle; while Eusebius’s later account, in his *Life of Constantine*<sup>6</sup> (written immediately after the emperor’s death in 337, and on the basis, according to its author, of Constantine’s own sworn testimony) suggests that it happened during his march from Gaul.



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<sup>4</sup> “But he, as if he possessed an innate reverence for God, was not in the least excited by their shouts or elated by their plaudits, fully aware that his help came from God: at once he ordered a trophy of the Saviour’s Passion to be set up under the hand of his own statue - indeed, he ordered them to place him in the most frequented spot in Rome, holding the sign of the Saviour in his right hand, and to engrave this inscription in Latin. I reproduce it exactly: *By this saving sign, the true proof of courage. I saved your city from the yoke of the tyrant and set her free; furthermore I freed the Senate and People of Rome and restored them to their ancient renown and splendour.*” (*Historia Ecclesiastica* Bk 9 Ch 9; Penguin translation.) This inscription is not included in the Einsiedeln collection of ca 800 (see fn.9), nor recorded elsewhere?

<sup>5</sup> *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 44.4 ff

<sup>6</sup> *Vita Constantini*, Bk I, chs 28-32

The Arch of Constantine; and the earliest known representation of the *labarum*, on a coin of 327

Further ambiguities remain. Lactantius reports that Constantine – on instructions given to him during a night-time vision of Christ - had his soldiers paint the *labarum* (the *Chi-rho* incorporated into a conventional Roman standard) on their shields, while it does not appear on the most obvious, and near contemporary, monument to the battle, the Arch of Constantine itself<sup>7</sup>. The *Life of Constantine* records that the whole army were witness to the vision; while – as one cynical modern commentator has remarked – the real miracle is that all 40,000 of them remained silent about it.

The inscription on the Arch attributes Constantine's victory to *instinctu divinitatis mentis magnitudo* - divine inspiration and greatness of spirit – conspicuously avoiding mention of a specific deity. And finally, for all his support for the Church, Constantine refused baptism until he was on his deathbed.

We are left with the possibility that his actions speak louder than his words. What then do his Roman churches tell us?

### The context: Constantine's secular building programme

The most striking thing about Constantine's Roman churches, for all their magnificence, is their relative inconspicuousness. Placed in the context of his overall building programme, and of the geography of the city, they may well not have seemed as remarkable to his contemporaries as they do to us.

According to Eusebius one of Constantine's first actions after his victory over Maxentius was to have his own statue erected "in the most frequented spot in Rome", holding, moreover, "the sign of the Saviour in his right hand". I have found no commentary on this passage, nor evidence of where the statue was placed, nor what has become of it. It must have been closely followed by the Senate's offer of the triumphal arch which still stands at the eastern end of the Forum area, and beside the Colosseum: one of the most prominent places in the city.

Constantine's arch however is noteworthy not only for the absence of any Christian symbols, but also for the absence of any specific iconographic reference to Constantine himself (the roundels in the upper register, for example, seem to have been taken from an earlier memorial to Hadrian<sup>8</sup>).

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<sup>7</sup> The earliest datable representation of the *labarum* seems to be on coins minted in 327.

<sup>8</sup> British Museum, *Hadrian, Empire and Conflict* (Exhibition Catalogue), London, 2008, pp. 171-172.

An equestrian statue of Constantine was erected later on (in 334, and not very long before his death, when he had been sole ruler of the Empire for ten years) between the Arch of Severus and the Curia: the statue is lost<sup>9</sup>, but the base was discovered in 1872, and the inscription – now itself lost – was recorded in about 800 in a manuscript now known as the *Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung*:

*Domino Nostro Constantino Maximo  
pio felici ac triumphatori semper Augusto  
ob amplificatam toto orbe rem publicam factis  
consultisque  
SPQR  
dedicante Anicio Paulino iuniore viro clarissimo  
consule ordinario praefecto urbi.*<sup>10</sup>

Constantine himself went on to appropriate and to complete the vast basilica overlooking the Forum, left unfinished by Maxentius, and to place in it the colossal seated statue of himself, fragments of which – including the extraordinarily powerful head illustrated above - now dominate the courtyard of the Capitoline Museum. The basilica itself, though more than half ruined, is still the largest structure on the Forum.



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<sup>9</sup> There are fragments – including the head and part of one raised hand - of a large bronze statue of Constantine in the Capitoline Museum – at the time of writing, placed in the atrium facing the original bronze equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, but uncaptioned.

<sup>10</sup> Abbreviations in the original filled out. Roughly: “To our Lord Constantine, great, pious and happy, ever August and bringer of triumphs, on account of his having extended the state, through his deeds and his policies, to the whole earth, from the Senate and People of Rome. Dedicated by Anicius Paulinus the younger, a high-ranking man, ordinary consul and prefect of the city.” Source: Gerold Walser, *Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung und der Pilgerführer durch Rom (Codex Einsidlensis 326): Facsimile, Umschrift, Übersetzung und Kommentar ...*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 1987 (Historia, Einzelschriften, Heft 53).

The basilica of Maxentius overlooking the Forum, completed by Constantine

He also completed the building on the Forum later (wrongly) known as the Templum Divi Romuli, and which was eventually converted in to the church of SS Cosmas e Damiano<sup>11</sup>.

He – or possibly Maxentius – was also responsible for the apsed hall, the Temple of Venus and Cupid, in the grounds of the Sessorium Palace.

He restored the Circus Maximus, and commissioned a new set of baths on the Quirinal hill; nothing remains of the baths themselves, the site of which is now occupied by the Palazzo Palavicini-Rospigliosi, but the twin statues of Castor and Pollux (copied from a 5<sup>th</sup>-century BC Greek original), now standing on the Piazza del Quirinale, were found in Constantine's baths.

All these projects were clearly statements of imperial grandeur and munificence, centrally placed and very prominent, and c typical of an imperial building programme; so how do the churches compare?

### Constantine's churches

Of the ten Roman churches built or initiated by Constantine, only two were within the city itself, and each of these was positioned hard up against the walls, and well away from the city centre. All the remainder were built in a rough circle 2 or 3 miles outside the walls, on the site of martyrs' tombs (see map). It was in fact left to the Popes, later in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and after Constantine's departure to found his new capital at Constantinople in 324, to found parish/missionary churches in more prominent and central locations<sup>12</sup>. It is tempting to suggest that the relative modesty of Constantine's church-building programme was of a piece with his tentative, almost non-committal attitude to Christianity itself: he favoured it, perhaps on a personal basis, but was not prepared – or perhaps not a in a political position – to give it total and unambiguous support.

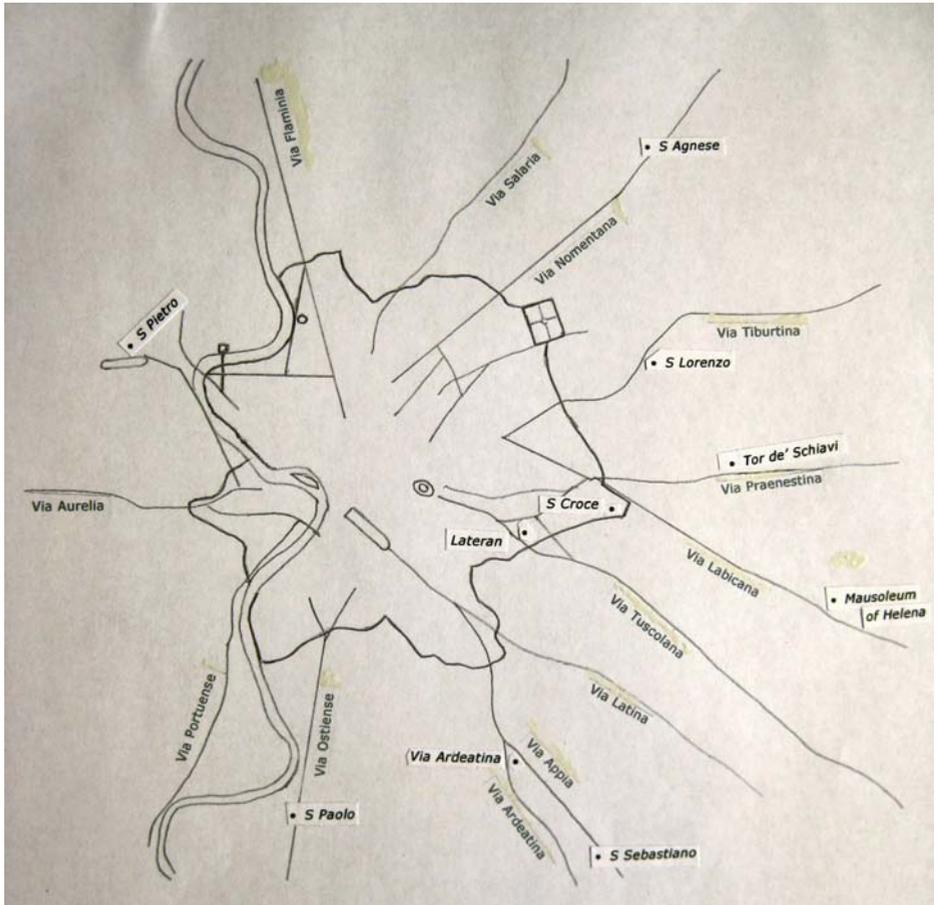
Two further features of Constantine's churches are worth mentioning: most were built on land already forming part of the imperial estates; and mausolea for members of the imperial family were attached to several of them. Each might be taken to reinforce the semi-private nature of his

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Krautheimer, *Rome, Profile of a City, 312-1308*, Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Later 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century church foundations in the city centre – often called *tituli* - will be covered in later articles in this series

foundations; in any case, they offer scope for a more subtle interpretation of the agenda represented by his building programme<sup>13</sup>.



Sketch map of Rome showing the Aurelian walls, the main roads leading into the city, and the location of Constantine's churches

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<sup>13</sup> Interestingly – and perhaps not surprisingly – Silvester's biography in the *Liber Pontificalis* suggests that Constantine built most of these churches at the Pope's request. The relationship between them would make an interesting study in itself.

Of Constantine's Roman churches, four are ruined, though more or less substantial remains are visible for each of them – and in two cases, more recent churches, with the original dedication, stand alongside; the remaining six are counted among the seven great pilgrimage churches of Rome (the seventh is S Maria Maggiore, which dates from 432-440); and although all but one of these have seen more or less extensive rebuilding, the traces that remain of Constantine's original buildings are a source of considerable fascination; and these form the main theme of this article<sup>14</sup>. They are covered as far as possible in the order in which they were built.

### *The Lateran Church and Baptistry*



Old S Giovanni in Laterano, in a wall-painting in S Martino ai Monti

By the time Pope Melchiades died in 314, Constantine had already presented him with the land on which to build the first Christian basilica, the *Mater et Caput* of all Christian churches. The land itself, located in the eastern angle of the Aurelian walls close to the Porta Asinaria, had been expropriated by the Emperor Nero in 65 A.D. from a family

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<sup>14</sup> The Liber Pontificalis records that Constantine, at Silvester's request, also built churches in Ostia, Albanum, Capua, Eusebius makes it clear however that Constantine also promoted the restoration of damaged churches, and the building of new ones, throughout the Empire, and with astonishing magnificence. After his defeat of the emperor of the east, Licinius, in 324, he built basilicas in the Holy Land (*Vita Constantini* 3.30-2), e.g. at the Holy Sepulchre, on the Mt of Olives, and the site of the Nativity in Bethlehem, with the on-the-spot involvement of Helena; and also at Mamre (E.D. Hunt "Were there Christian Pilgrims before Constantine?" in J Stopford ed, *Pilgrimage Explored*, p. 39). He also founded the original Church of the Holy Apostles in New Rome (Constantinople) in about 330, though it was unfinished at his death in 337.

surnamed Lateranus, and is thought to have come to Constantine as part of the dowry of his wife Fausta, sister of Maxentius. By the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century it was the site of a bath complex and the barracks of the Imperial Guard, the *Equites Singulares*; these were levelled<sup>15</sup> to lay out the original 5-aisled basilica, which was probably built between 314 and 318.

The church's original dedication was to Christ the Saviour, and it was first known as the Basilica Constaniana: Constantine may have intended it, in part at least, as an *ex-voto* offering in thanks to the Deity who had given him victory over Maxentius<sup>16</sup>. The dedication to St John (in fact to both the Evangelist and the Baptist) came later. The basilica and the adjoining papal palace were the site of the Holy See until the Avignon exile (1309-1377), after which it moved to the Vatican.

The church as we see it today is largely the work of Francesco Borromini in 1646-49, but it adheres remarkably closely to the size and layout of the original<sup>17</sup>. The present nave and double side-aisles rest on Constantine's foundations; the apse has been extended by some 20m, and the transepts have been added, as has the great porch at the (liturgical) western end. This then, the model for many later Christian churches, is a precious architectural document, clearly showing that Constantine and his architects rejected pagan temples as their model, drawing instead on the basilica, a secular building serving administrative, judicial, and other public functions<sup>18</sup>. The exterior was kept plain<sup>19</sup>, unlike that of pagan temples, while the interior was richly furnished<sup>20</sup> – as is made clear in the early sources (Eusebius, Lactantius, and Prudentius all stress the splendour of the imperial foundations), and as is to some extent revealed in the wall painting still preserved in S Martino ai Monti – so that Borromini's décor, while different in detail, may not be so very different in style and quality from the original. Moreover, elements of the present church (e.g. the speckled-green marble columns framing the monumental

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<sup>15</sup> And identified during excavations in 1934-38 below the present church.

<sup>16</sup> This is suggested by Herber Kessler and Johanna Zacharias, *Rome 1300: on the path of the pilgrim*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Hugo Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome from the fourth to the seventh century*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2005, has several diagrams relating the original to the present layout (pp 259- 262). I have relied on this work extensively for this article, and further references are given as HB.

<sup>18</sup> It was only some 300 years later that pagan buildings come to be adapted for Christian worship (e.g. the Pantheon, which became S Maria Rotunda in about 600).

<sup>19</sup> And indeed the building occupied the space between the Aurelian wall and the Aqua Claudia aqueduct, now largely disappeared, but which must originally have partly concealed it.

<sup>20</sup> This is well illustrated by the adjacent Lateran Baptistery, which has – remarkably – maintained its original plain exterior.

statues of the Apostles lining the nave, which, in the original church, divided the outer aisles from the inner ones, and which are just visible in the fresco preserved in S Martino ai Monti; and the four gilded columns framing the sacramental altar in the [liturgical] north transept) have been preserved; and the apse mosaic, restored in 1875-85, closely follows the primary design.

I find it hard to imagine the extraordinary effect this building, and the others which followed it, must have had on the minds of contemporary Christians, in whose memory the persecutions were so recent and so vivid; and remain curious as to the effect it must have had on the liturgy, hitherto adapted to far smaller, humbler and less overwhelming locations.

Possibly some idea of the demonstrative effect of Constantine's first buildings may be given by the adjacent Baptistry, which the neophyte entered between porphyry columns – an imperial prerogative. What clearer statement could there be that by becoming a Christian, one was entering the imperial domain? At the same time, one is forced to wonder whether Constantine's message, consciously or not, was intended mainly for the upper reaches of Roman society; it is not until the time of Pope Damasus (s 366-384) that we have evidence of baptisteries incorporated into more humble churches<sup>21</sup>.



The interior and exterior of the Lateran Baptistery

In addition to the eight porphyry columns surrounding the font, Constantine endowed the Baptistery with a golden incense burner, silver statues of Christ and John the Baptist, and seven silver stags (“as pants the hart ... “)<sup>22</sup>. There have been of course later repairs and restorations,

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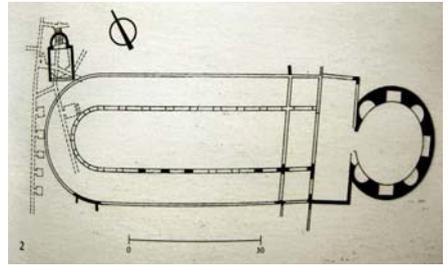
<sup>21</sup> E.g. San Lorenzo in Damaso. He began however with a baptistry in St Peters.

<sup>22</sup> HB p 38.

but the Baptistery is probably the building that gives us the clearest sense of the quality of church buildings from the time of Constantine.

### *SS Marcellino e Pietro and the Mausoleum of Helena*

Following the construction of the Lateran Basilica, Constantine chose to honour some of those who had, under his predecessor Diocletian, given their lives for the faith, and who had been buried in the catacombs outside the walls. He began with the martyrs Marcellinus and Petrus whose tombs lay on the Via Labicana (today the Via Casilina) to the southeast of the city, outside the Porta Praenestina (now the Porta Maggiore). Nothing remains above ground of the original three-aisled basilica<sup>23</sup>, which was completed by 320; but these martyrs, and the site of their tombs, were evidently of considerable importance, because in a second phase of building, a large circular mausoleum was added in front of the narthex, in which Constantine's mother, the Empress Helena, was buried in 329. Much of this structure remains visible today.



The Mausoleum of Helena and the ground plan of SS Marcellino e Pietro<sup>24</sup>

The church dedicated to SS Marcellinus and Petrus is of particular significance, however, because it departs quite radically from the layout established by the Lateran Basilica: the side aisles are now carried round behind the apse, giving rise to the modern term “ambulatory basilica”. It appears to have been the first church thus adapted to the reception of large numbers of pilgrims to the tomb of the martyrs, a design continued down the centuries to include the C5th century church of St John at Ephesus and the C12th cathedral dedicated to his brother James at Santiago de Compostela<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Except one of the smaller mausolea, which still serves as the chapel of the orphanage now standing on this spot.

<sup>24</sup> Taken from HB p. 265.

<sup>25</sup> See Eric Fernie, *The Four Routes to Spain and the Architecture of the Pilgrimage*, London: Confraternity of Saint James, 2008 (CSJ Occasional Papers #9), where this link is explicitly suggested.

### *Two ruined churches*

A similar combination of ambulatory basilica and circular mausoleum (the Tor de' Schiavi on the site of the Villa Gordiani), and dating from exactly the same period, lies on the Via Praenestina, to the east of the city, but although more of the basilica's foundations are visible above ground, nothing is known of its founder or its dedication, or of the member of the Imperial family for whom the mausoleum was intended. The complex seems to have fallen out of use in Late Antiquity.

Likewise, the outline of another ambulatory basilica has been found just a little south of the Domine Quo Vadis church, where the Via Appia and the Via Ardeatina divide. Again, nothing is known about the church's dedication is known<sup>26</sup>.



The Tor de' Schiavi basilica (left) and the excavation at Via Ardeatina (from Google Earth)

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<sup>26</sup> Though the *Liber Pontificalis* (#35) records that Pope Mark, Silvester's successor, built a basilica on the Via Ardeatina, where he himself was buried.

## *Basilica Apostolorum (San Sebastiano)*



San Sebastiano: the ambulatory

I touched on this church in describing the catacomb on the Via Appia (San Sebastiano) associated with it<sup>27</sup>. The church, originally called Basilica Apostolorum, is, of all Constantine's churches, the least changed from its original form, which seems to have been closely similar to the two just described: it must have been built by about 330.

It has long been believed that the church was called Basilica Apostolorum because the bodies of Peter and Paul were moved here for safety during the particularly fierce persecutions of Decius and Valerian in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and the many *graffiti* invoking the two primary saints have been taken as evidence for this. There was also a belief that the two apostles had lived in or near this place. Hugo Brandenburg<sup>28</sup> makes the point however that the tombs even of criminals were sacrosanct, so there would have been no need to move them, and moreover that there is no archaeological evidence for any tomb that their bodies might have occupied. It is more likely that at a time when access to their proper tombs was made difficult, a small shrine was erected here (perhaps similar in size and shape to those described by the presbyter Gaius for the burial places of Peter and Paul on the Vatican and the Via Ostiense in ca 200<sup>29</sup>), in a place of relative safety (for which there is archaeological evidence) as a focus for their cult, and that the *graffiti* – moving as they are – belong in this context. But the association with the apostles was enough to justify the building of this basilica, on a difficult and sloping site, in Constantine's time, to replace the former modest and unobtrusive shrine.

While to begin with, the veneration of Peter and Paul took place both here and at their own basilicas<sup>30</sup>, the focus gradually shifted away from the Via Appia, and the church was rededicated to St Sebastian, a Diocletian martyr buried in this catacomb, in the eight century.

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<sup>27</sup> See *CPR Newsletter #4* (August 2008), pp. 8-9.

<sup>28</sup> HB pp. 66-68.

<sup>29</sup> See *CPR Newsletter #3* (April 2008), pp. 30-32.

<sup>30</sup> J Elsner (art in Graeco-Roman collection) refers to competition between the three major roman sites (Peter, Paul, and Basilica Apostolorum/S Sebastiano) until about 400). [F/n added after submission: check source.]

It has been suggested that the mausoleum associated with the Basilica Apostolorum was intended for Fausta, Constantine's wife, until her disgrace and execution in 326<sup>31</sup>.

*Sant' Agnese and the Mausoleum of Constantina Augusta (Santa Costanza)*

This, located on the Via Nomentana to the north-east of the city, seems to have been the largest ambulatory basilica of all, and although it is largely ruined today, enough survives above ground to give a clear idea of its size and shape. It was initiated by Constantine and dedicated to the martyr Agnes<sup>32</sup> at the request of his eldest daughter Constantina, whose circular mausoleum – shared with her sister Helena - survives alongside as the present-day church of Santa Costanza.

Santa Costanza is a particularly lovely building, and may have provided the model for later circular churches such as S Stefano Rotondo. Twelve double-columns surround and support the plain and well-lit central space, and divide it from the outer ambulatory, which preserves much of the original 4<sup>th</sup>-century (and largely pagan) vault mosaic decoration.



The ruins of Sant' Agnese

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<sup>31</sup> See HB p. 69.

<sup>32</sup> Humiliated and killed at the age of 12 in the Circus of Domitian (now Piazza Navonna) in 304 and buried in the catacomb on the Via Nomentana.



The adjacent Mausoleum of Constantina (now Santa Costanza)

Constantine's church was already in ruins when the present church of Sant' Agnese fuori le Mura<sup>33</sup> was built nearby in about 630; it covers and gives access to the catacombs of the same name<sup>34</sup>.

The early years of the Christian faith were marked by martyrdoms, and the martyrs' courage and sacrifice was clearly a vital and compelling element in the growth of the early church. We have, it seems to me, in our day largely forgotten the meaning of martyr churches; but anyone who has visited the cathedral of Britain's own great martyr saint, Thomas Becket, at Canterbury, and heard the guides' account of Thomas's death – so vivid in the telling that it might have happened yesterday – will have some idea of the power of a martyr's story. It might well be worth bearing our experience of Canterbury in mind when visiting this and the other martyr churches of Rome, in order to gain a sense of the power they must have had when they were first built.

### *S Lorenzo fuori le Mura*

The basilica for San Lorenzo, one of Rome's most celebrated martyrs and – with Peter and Paul – early regarded as one of the city's patron saints, was built above the catacomb in which he was buried (in 258) on the Via Tiburtina, to the east of the city. Its remains, which bear a close resemblance to those of Sant'Agnese, lie under the present urban cemetery of Campo Verano. It was replaced about 585 by the present church, which lies parallel to the 4<sup>th</sup> century original. In 1216, the original apse was demolished and the building extended on a slightly different line, and the orientation reversed. The present raised – and very gracious

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<sup>33</sup> Beautifully described in Margaret Visser, *The Geometry of Love: space, time, mystery and meaning in an ordinary church*, Viking, London, 2001.

<sup>34</sup> See *CPR Newsletter #4* (August 2008), p. 12.

– chancel was the former (liturgical) west end; the long nave is the newer part of the building. It is a peaceful and venerable space.



San Lorenzo – the 6<sup>th</sup> century church, now the raised chancel

In principle, the sacristy gives access to the remains of the earlier church and the catacomb, but it was closed for restoration at the time of my visit.

### *S Pietro in Vaticano*



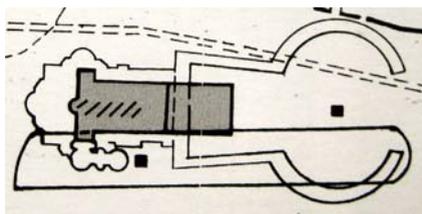
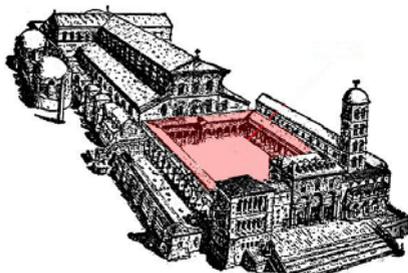
Old St Peter's, in a wall-painting in S Martino ai Monti

There can be little doubt that today's St Peter's, as did its predecessor, stands directly above the spot remembered from the earliest times as the site of Peter's tomb. He is believed to have been martyred in Nero's circus just below the Vatican hill, and buried nearby. Excavations during the 1940s revealed a modest tomb, directly below the high altar of St Peter's, and slightly pre-dating the more splendid pagan tombs which

surround it; and the bones of a robust man in his 60s or 70s, minus the feet, were also found<sup>35</sup>.

Only the eye of faith can determine to whom those bones – now replaced in the niche where they were found - belong to. What is evident is that Constantine's engineers went to enormous lengths to remove soil from the upper part of the Vatican hill to build the platform on which St Peter's stands: they must have had strong reason to build over this spot and no other.

Construction seems to have begun after Constantine's defeat of his eastern rival Licinius in 324, and to have been completed in 333, when both this basilica, and that dedicated to Paul, were consecrated. If one includes the square atrium in front of the church, the original five-aisled basilica was only a little smaller than its 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century replacement. It was the largest of Constantine's churches, measuring – without the atrium - 120 x 65 metres (against 100 x 55 metres for the Lateran basilica<sup>36</sup>). The painting preserved in S Martino ai Monti gives an impression of the interior, and numerous other records kept during its demolition allow us some sense of the size and magnificence of Old St Peter's.



Old St Peter's – reconstruction and plan showing its relation to Nero's circus and the present basilica<sup>37</sup>

imperial Drawings and plans of old St Peter's show two circular mausolea associated with it, one of which at least dates from the 4<sup>th</sup> century; but it is not clear whether these were intended for members of the family.

### *S Croce in Gerusalemme*

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<sup>35</sup> See *CPR Newsletter* #3 (April 2008), pp. 29-34.

<sup>36</sup> Of the others, Sant'Agnese and San Lorenzo were almost as long as the Lateran, though with three aisles instead of five. The rest were between 60 and 70 metres long.

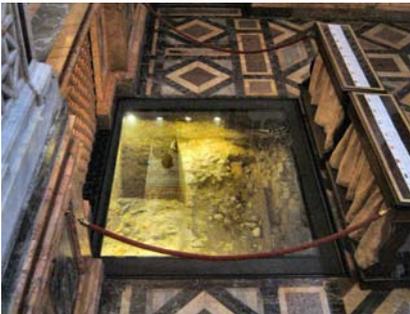
<sup>37</sup> From HB p. 275



Santa Croce offers us a different picture altogether. It was installed in a hall in the Sessorium Palace, located on the same strip of land defined by the Aqua Claudia and the Aurelian walls as the Lateran, and belonging to Constantine's mother; it seems to have been created to house the relics of the True Cross discovered by Helena in Jerusalem and brought back to Rome towards the end of her life<sup>38</sup>. Evidence of the original structure, despite later rebuildings, can still be seen in the exterior walls.

S Croce shares with the Lateran a combination of internal magnificence and external modesty, as well as a remote and partly-hidden location. It is the only Constantinian church to have been converted from an existing structure, although there was plenty of scope – and undoubted capacity – for a new building.

*S Paolo fuori le Mura*



San Paolo fuori le Mura: the original apse, and the nave of the present building

The basilica dedicated to St Paul is something of an anomaly among Constantine's churches, being apparently on a much smaller scale. Over the 2<sup>nd</sup> century memorial reported by the presbyter Gaius a simple hall about 21 x 12 metres was built in Constantine's time. A glass panel let into the floor just in front of the sarcophagus reveals the original apse, and shows that the first building was orientated in the opposite direction

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<sup>38</sup> HB pp. 103-108 raises doubts about Helena's actual role, and the sequence of events leading to the church's dedication.

from the present one; it may have extended as far as where the east wall now stands. Why Paul was at first accorded a memorial so much smaller than the other martyrs remains a mystery; it fell to three later 4<sup>th</sup>-century co-emperors, ruling from Constantinople, to commission in 383 a basilica that would exceed the original St Peter's in size and splendour. The present church, built after the disastrous fire of 1823, follows the previous ground plan, and is the second largest in Rome after new St Peter's. In so far as it reflects the 4<sup>th</sup> century building, it shows a growing appreciation of space, proportion and harmony; it is a gracious and tranquil place after the hurly-burly of St Peter's.

### Conclusion

The more I have thought about Constantine, and tried to work out the agenda which lay behind his church-building programme, the more I have come to see that in fact it raises more questions than it answers.

For all that the Lateran basilica seems so public a statement today, it was in fact tucked away on private land in a remote corner of the city, and half-hidden behind an aqueduct. It was on an imperial scale: one would expect no less, but was it intended more as demonstration of good will towards a community that had every reason to be wary, and meant for more or less private use<sup>39</sup>?

The churches that followed were all well outside the city walls, on the site of martyrs' tombs, but nearly all associated with circular mausolea for members of the imperial family. What was the balance between a desire to honour the martyrs; to give further reassurance to the community whose members had been killed by Constantine's predecessors; and to provide privileged burial sites for his relatives?

Why were the relics of the True Cross not given a new building commensurate with their importance? And why was Helena buried elsewhere, when proximity to relics brought from the Holy Sepulchre would have provided the most privileged of all possible locations?

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One might even wonder – though this may be an entirely wild idea – about the original purpose of the Lateran Baptistery, another circular building associated with a church: despite the importance of the rite of baptism, there was no precedent for a building of this design or on this scale. Might Constantine have intended it, at the outset, for his own

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<sup>39</sup> Richard Krautheimer, *Rome, Portrait of a city, 312-1308*, Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 24: "the Lateran basilica, its baptistery, and S Croce in Gerusalemme ... contributed nothing to transform Rome into a Christian capital."

mausoleum - porphyry columns and all – before, some twelve years later, and after his defeat of Licinius (which he could not have foreseen in 314), deciding to move to Constantinople (where his eventual mausoleum was associated with the Church of the Holy Apostles<sup>40</sup>)? Was it converted to a baptistery only when it was no longer needed as the emperor's final resting place? If he wasn't thinking of building his own mausoleum, once he had seized Rome itself, why wasn't he? And why, if it was intended as a baptistery, did Constantine not have himself baptized there<sup>41</sup>?

(Since drafting this article I have read Margaret Visser's delightful account of Sant'Agnese<sup>42</sup> in which she draws out the similarity in the design of early mausolea and baptisteries, with particular reference to that of Santa Constanza – inferring from the Liber Pontificalis [and other evidence that the building put up there as a mausoleum was fairly soon converted to a baptistery. So the idea may not be so entirely wild as I first thought.)

And for all his evident espousal of Christianity, why was it left to later Popes to build the first parish/missionary churches (incorporating baptisteries within not beside the church) in the city centre, a programme which they pursued with alacrity once Constantine had left Rome?

Can we take the fact that St Peter's came relatively late in the building programme as evidence for a continued reluctance on the part of the Christian community to reveal the site of the most important tomb of all? How much persuasion did Pope Sylvester need to lead Constantine to that humble shrine on the Vatican hill?

And why, finally, was Paul given a church so very much smaller than Peter – smaller even than several later and lesser martyrs? The fact that within 50 years later emperors rectified matters with a church even larger than St Peter's only points up the oddity of Constantine's choice.

And all these questions come on top of the great ones posed by the nature and the process of his conversion to Christianity, and the historicity of his vision before the Milvian Bridge. Truly, for one who may be said to have

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<sup>40</sup> See <http://www.byzantium1200.com/apostles.html> for a computer reconstruction of the Church of the Holy Apostles. It is clear that Constantine's mausoleum, which was preserved when the original church was rebuilt under Justinian, was a circular building adjacent to the body of the church. Incidentally, both St Mark's in Venice and St Front in Périgueux are thought to have been modeled on the Church of the Holy Apostles.

<sup>41</sup> The fact that he was long, though erroneously, believed to have been baptized here by Pope Sylvester only emphasizes the ambiguity of his gesture.

<sup>42</sup> Margaret Visser, *The Geometry of Love: space, time, mystery and meaning in an ordinary church*, Viking, London, 2001. See in particular pp. 188-191.

made a more decisive mark on the history of the Church than any other, he leaves us with much to think about.

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## Camino de Santiago / Cammino per Roma – a comparison

Alison Raju

“Walking to Rome is tough.” So began Chris Lawson’s account of his journey from London to Rome in 2006 (CPR *Newsletter* #1), encapsulating the experiences of following the *Via Francigena* on foot, at least as it stands at present. In comparison, however, walking the Camino de Santiago along the *Camino Francés* is a “doddle,” relatively speaking, of course, and this article looks briefly at some of the differences between the two routes.

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*Tough physically?* In France, until you get down towards Besançon and the Swiss border, there aren’t a great deal of “ups and downs” on the route but the distances between accommodation, especially of the economical kind, are often extremely long (for walkers, that is, though cyclists will have an easier time in this respect). Few places to sit down along the way either – hardly any church porches or handy seats in public place, no walls, rocks, shady trees, like there are all along the *Camino Francés*, just the occasional bus shelter. Worst of all, however, is that there are hardly any facilities along the way. Plenty of villages, yes, but very few of them indeed have a shop, a bar, a restaurant or a water fountain and you may go for two days at a time (before Arras, for example, and after Châlons-en-Champagne) without seeing any of these so draconian organization is needed to ensure that you have something to eat (as well as drink) when you need it. No handy bar to have a nice cold drink in sweltering hot weather, for instance, a coffee mid-morning, a hot meal in the middle of the day or somewhere to buy food supplies, like you do on the *Camino Francés*, where you find bars, shops and fountains every four or five kilometres and so are never very far from food and water. In Switzerland and Italy, however, things improve dramatically in this respect so you have this to look forward to, even if the landscape becomes a lot more strenuous - the long climb up to the Great Saint-Bernard Pass, for example, and the continuous ups and downs in Tuscany.

*Tough physically?* In the “old days” (i.e. before the early 1990’s), you needed to be physically fit to walk the *Camino Francés*, capable of covering 35-40 kilometres a day carrying all your supplies, sleeping on the floor in uncomfortable places without a shower and getting up again the following morning to start all over again. Nowadays things have changed of course,

and, if you have the time, an unfit/unwell person need only walk 10 kilometres (or even less) each day and find accommodation (often inexpensive) and services/facilities at frequent intervals along the way without any trouble. On the *Via Francigena*, on the other hand, you need to be fit before you start, especially in northern France, so unless you take a tent (campsites are plentiful there) or have a back-up vehicle you need to be able to walk long distances with a heavy rucksack, especially if you are doing the journey on a tight budget, as well as having enough French/Italian to telephone ahead for accommodation.

*Tough linguistically?* On the *Camino Francés* you can turn up at a refuge (usually open and waiting for you) and, nowadays, frequently find another English-speaking pilgrim to “show you the ropes,” even if the person in charge of the establishment speaks only Spanish. You will also frequently find plenty of other pilgrims to talk to though you also run the risk of walking the camino end-to-end in a sort of Anglo-Saxon “capsule,” isolated from people of other linguistic backgrounds. On the *Via Francigena*, on the other hand, you need a reasonable level of French/Italian to cope with the mechanics of finding accommodation, especially if this involves phoning ahead. However, in contrast to the *Camino Francés*, where pilgrims are now so commonplace as to no longer attract the attention of local people, on the *Via Francigena* you do meet people who are curious to know where you are going, what you are doing (and often why), and who like to chat to you. Obviously if your linguistic skills are up to it this can be a very enjoyable and enriching part of your experience but it also brings with it a sense of being an “ambassador,” paving the way for the pilgrims who follow you and the responsibility that goes with it. So unless you stay exclusively in the kind of up-market establishments where you can book everything up in advance on the internet you will need enough French/Italian to do more than “get by” ordering food and drink. The parish accommodation in France and Switzerland, for example, needs prior (and tactful) telephone contact while in Italy you will need a level of Italian sufficient to be able to track down that church halls that provide pilgrim facilities and talk to the person in charge. Not a blunt “where is the refuge?” but “is there a place where pilgrims usually sleep...?” And, of course, you may be lucky enough to meet up with other pilgrims, especially in Italy (where they are usually Italian) so being able to say more than just “hello” will add greatly to your pilgrim experience. (Some of these may well have “done” the *Camino Francés* but many, perhaps surprisingly, have not, and either start the *Via Francigena* from home or from the nearest point on the route to where they live.)

*Tough mentally?* The *Via Francigena*, at present, and unlike the *Camino Francés*, is definitely not a route for people who don't like extended periods of their own company. (For this reason you may be tempted to think you should look for a companion but weigh up carefully all the pros and cons before you make a choice you may regret – this area can be a real minefield.

In Italian, like in Spanish, there is an expression which alerts you to some of the possible dangers: “Meglio soli che male accompagnati” (better alone than in unsuitable company). There is hardly ever, at present, the “fraternity of the road” that exists along the *Camino Francés*, whereby you meet people in the evenings, even if you don’t walk with them during the day, and who you get to know as you go along, so you need to be very self-reliant if you decide to walk to Rome. The hardest part of the whole enterprise is not, however, the actual walking – i.e. the physical side – but the mental effort needed to find somewhere to sleep, night after night after night, especially if you are doing the journey on a tight budget, unlike *the Camino Francés* with its well-known, easily-located network of dedicated pilgrim refuges. It can often be difficult to remember that you are a *pilgrim*, too, on the *Via Francigena* at present, and not just a walker, as not only are you on your own but even if you go to church and/or stay in religious houses from time to time there are no dedicated pilgrim masses or other services or pilgrim discussion groups as there are, increasingly, on the *Camino Francés*.

*Tough financially?* Yes, very definitely. Hotel/pension-type accommodation in France and Italy is more expensive than Spain anyway, apart from the near absence of dedicated pilgrim accommodation on the *Via Francigena* akin to the refugio network along the *Camino Francés*. There is also no equivalent of the very good-value all-inclusive Spanish *menú del día* in either France or Italy and very, very few places at present where you can do your own cooking.

*Tough on your feet?* Yes, as there is a very great deal more road walking on the *Via Francigena* than there is now on the *Camino Francés* where, for the benefit of both pilgrims and other road-users much of the *Camino* has been re-routed onto newly-cleared old tracks and paths. It is therefore more difficult to “switch off” as you walk along the *Via Francigena*, even in Switzerland and Italy where, for the most part, the route is fairly well-waymarked, to say nothing of France, unwaymarked, where you need your map in your hand all the time.

*Tough, tough, tough...?* So why, then, the reader may well be wondering, and given all these difficulties, would anyone actually want to walk to Rome? There are all sorts of reasons, of course, ranging from the sheer physical challenge of such a lengthy undertaking through cultural/historic considerations to spiritual aspects in its widest sense. There is also the build-up of inner strength that takes place as one day unfolds before the next, seeing new places, meeting new faces, the simplicity of life on a *Camino*, pared down to its bare essentials, solitude, and each or a combination of them will be personal to each pilgrim, just as they combine to resemble the reasons that lead him/her to walk the *Camino Francés*.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Bourg St. Pierre to the Grand Saint-Bernard summit with *Homo Viator***

**Babette Gallard**

Most normal people would assume that one 2473 metre climb up to the summit of the Great St. Bernard pass is sufficient proof of devotion, grit and fitness, but anyone who knows us also knows that we are far from normal. We have completed three ascents in as many years.

This year, my reaction to Paul's announcement that we had been invited to join a 13km climb, from Bourg St. Pierre up to the summit, was less than enthusiastic. Memories of riding two bikes along tracks designed for goats do not fade quickly. Worse still, after a winter of sitting in front of our PC screens writing guidebooks, we were unfit, flabby and unprepared. No amount of reassurances could persuade me that it would be "much easier this time," but the prospect of a stop-over at the Montreux jazz festival on the way did.

Today, I can sincerely say that it was probably one of the best decisions Paul ever made. The climb certainly was much less demanding, but the pleasure and satisfaction we derived from it had nothing to do with our physical comfort, which is probably where I should introduce Danilo Pariso, the organizer.

Danilo is a founder member of *Homo Viator*, an Italian society established in 2001 for pilgrims who have completed the *Via Francigena* journey to Rome. As *Guado di Sigerico* (Po ferryman) Danilo has the opportunity to meet and encourage pilgrims to join the association, which currently has about fifty members. Twenty-five of these, including us, climbed together and exchanged pilgrim views and news - un forgettable, enlightening experience that we highly recommend.

*Homo Viator's* specific remit is to disseminate information and support development along the *Via Francigena* but it is also more generally active with regard to pilgrim-related issues. After the success of their first walking event, they plan to meet every year in July to complete another section of the route and are currently preparing a book of pilgrim stories. The only possible drawback is that Italian is the primary language, but Danilo intends to broaden his membership and the imbalance can only be addressed if more, non-Italian, pilgrims join.

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To see photos of our trip go to:

[www.pilgrikimagepublications.com/bourg\\_st-pierre+grand\\_st\\_bernard.htm](http://www.pilgrikimagepublications.com/bourg_st-pierre+grand_st_bernard.htm)

## Letter to the Editor

### The Seven Pilgrimage Churches in Rome

In his article with the above title which was published in the third number of the *CPR Newsletter* (April 2008) Almis Simans includes *Santa Maria Trastevere* among the "great seven" and omits *San Lorenzo fuori le Mura*. All the authorities I have consulted, however, include the latter and omit the former in their list of pilgrim churches in Rome.

William Wey, an English pilgrim to Rome in 1458, describes the traditional "seven" in Chapter 14 of *The Itineraries* in the following order: St. John (Lateran), St. Peter (on the Vatican Hill), St. Paul, St. Lawrence, St. Mary (the Greater), St. Sebastian and the Holy Cross. The order in which he names them does not follow a rational pattern on a standard route. For example: merely to visit the first four in the order given by Wey would mean zigzagging from the southwest of Rome (the Vatican) then a fair way back to the south (for St. Paul) and then up to the northeast (for St. Lawrence). Similarly, visiting the last three on Wey's list, in his order, would entail going from St. Mary down to the church of the Holy Cross without calling at St. Sebastian en route.

Wey seems to have visited personally 38 churches in Rome, in addition to the Great Seven. I hope I may be permitted to show, in a future article, some of the circuits he followed as he came to them at different times during the course of these tours. It may be noted that Wey's list does not segregate the four major basilicas from the three patriarchal ones, so does not reflect an order of seniority.

The order in which the churches were visited would be of less importance than the securing of the indulgences which they conferred.

**Francis Davey**

## LETTER TO VF FRIENDS, SUMMER 2008

### International Via Francigena Association

The *International Via Francigena Association* has welcomed its 1000<sup>th</sup> member!

The lucky "winner", Lucien, will receive the first of the new *Francigena* T-shirts when they are printed in September.

*Francigena accessories* will be available in a month at the Savelli Boutique on St. Peter's Square; a new addition to our product range is the *Francigena* T-shirt – *omnes viae Romam perducunt* – made especially for pilgrims.

Eleven years ago, the AIVF could never have foreseen the popularity that the *Via Francigena* is enjoying today.

The dedication of all our loyal members and friends has opened the way to new *inter-personal and inter-cultural exchanges* between pilgrims from such diverse countries as New Zealand, Estonia and Canada to name a few, with the inhabitants of the European countries crossed by the *Via Francigena*. Cause for all of us to celebrate!

Our new *website* [www.francigena-international.org](http://www.francigena-international.org) - produced by Claudia & Co. in 2008 - was our major priority this year; we strove to achieve a simple and welcoming presentation of

- the history of the VF and of the AIVF, including its archives
- the VF route taken by Sigeric in the 10<sup>th</sup> century with details, country by country, from England to the Vatican
- other pilgrims' routes converging on the VF towards Rome or to Jerusalem from Rome.

The success of the *Via Francigena* is now assured and can only go from strength to strength in spite of some continuing difficulties.

IMPORTANT INFO: the VF in **France** is undergoing an immense transformation; the administrative districts and the FFRP (Fédération Française de la Randonnée Pédestre - French Federation of Hiking) are working on it. In view of this, the AIVF has withdrawn its publications *Topofrancigena* and *Guide-Vademecum A*. So - until the new route is ready, why not start your journey at Sigeric's 55<sup>th</sup> stage, Jougne - Vallorbe (easily reached by train and from the airport in Geneva)?

**In Switzerland** the VF is beautiful and easier: you have the choice between *Swissmobile VF route No. 70* (215 kilometres) or, the route closer to Sigeric's, the 180-kilometre *VF Topofrancigena – CH.* But be careful at

Martigny-Croix: the right bank of the River Drance is more for mountain climbers while on the left bank, via Le Brocard, you will have 300m of busy highway road. The choice is yours.

To compensate for this temporary French closure, the AIVF will be opening the historic routes from **Germany** and the **Netherlands** through Switzerland, used by pilgrims, emperors, bishops, popes and merchants to join up with the VF and Rome. These publications will be in the familiar form of the *Guide-Vademecum*, accompanied by the *Dormifrancigena* and the *Topofrancigena-Roma* map sheets; they will be ready as soon as possible (beginning 2009 we hope!), thanks to Markus and Cornelius Check the web site for information.

The **VF signposting in Italy** continues to be very confusing. The signposting promised in 2007 by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs has not been put in place, aside from on a few main roads, or has been put in some wrong place like between Fucecchio and San Gimignano in Tuscany. Between Aosta and Pont St-Martin, there isn't any!

The AIVF remains committed to promoting awareness among institutions and improving its publications.

In spite of a few pilgrims' misadventures, the *Topofrancigena B* is perfectly valid; an improvement has been made near Robbio (Piémont). Let your footsteps bring the historic routes to life again! Getting lost a couple of times is just part of a pilgrimage so don't get discouraged and end up following the main roads suggested by some authors of VF guides. Thanks to everyone who sends us their valuable suggestions and comments, marked on the map in question if possible, so we can verify and update the documents for future pilgrims.

**Testimonium** at St Peter's in Rome: 950 VF pilgrims have been registered since July 2001. Our heartfelt thanks to Mgr Bruno Vercesi for all the extra work he has done for the pilgrims. To avoid the disappointment of refusal, the AIVF has prepared, in collaboration with the Vatican, an information questionnaire which is available at the sacristy at St. Peter's and on our website. It outlines the conditions that must be met to be registered (compulsory stamp in Acquapendente, 150 km on foot or 400 km by bike) on Sigeric's *Via Francigena*.

### **News from our partners**

- The Dutch association, *Pelgrimswegen naar Rome*, with which we share membership and products, is especially interested in the large number of Dutch cycling pilgrims and suggests ten routes for crossing the Alps and joining up with the VF again.

- The *Pays de la Leulène* Association (Pas-de-Calais) continues to promote the historic VF walking route while awaiting the final decisions of the *Parc Régional d'Opale* and the *Département*. Moreover, the association is working with the town of St. Omer on the cultural initiatives suggested by the International VF Association, in particular a series of "Chants d'Europe" concerts by a couple of Swiss musicians at the end of July / beginning of August on the VF in the Pas-de-Calais. We will also suggest an itinerant theatre / travelling players with a VF theme to our partners.
- The *Mormant Revivra* Association, thanks to a 9-year partnership with us, has been able to renovate and revive the old Templars' Hospice, restoring Mormant to its role as a stopover place for VF pilgrims.

The President's concern for **the damaged statue of Saint Pellegrino on the St-Gothard** road has paid off! Its restoration has aroused a great deal of interest in various enigmatic and obscure pilgrim saints: Roman and Greek from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries, French from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, Scottish from the 12<sup>th</sup>, and Italian from the 17<sup>th</sup>!! These saints are venerated on the pilgrim or transhumance routes.

To celebrate its 11<sup>th</sup> year of service to pilgrims the AIVF had the idea to produce the world's **first scientific monograph** on the subject: *San Pellegrino tra Mito e Storia* (Saint Pellegrino between Myth and History). This publication brings together the principal places dedicated to St Pèlerin in France, Switzerland and especially Italy. The AIVF is the instigator and coordinator of this publication, which will be presented at the Swiss Institute in Rome in early 2009.

### **Our new volunteer colleagues**

**Lia Negrini** for the secretariat and for updating the *Vademecum B* (in 2 or 3 languages, Italian–English–French?) - using many standardized symbols for museums, etc. – and the *Dormifrancigena*; **Hermann Heiter** for German-speaking pilgrims and **Raphael Sola**. Our multi-language pilgrims really appreciate the wonderful work of our five translators.

Our coordinators, committed volunteers to the cause of VF pilgrims, **Virginie Brouillard**, **Hubert Moulin**, **Joe Patterson** and **Gert Wich**, are pleased to continue offering you their assistance. **Adelaide Trezzini** is happy to meet you, if in Rome, at the end of your pilgrimage. If you have a SERIOUS PROBLEM CALL HER - Tel 06 853 02 675/ 06916507710.

We appreciate and warmly thank the families that offer lodgings to our pilgrim-friends. This provides an opportunity for enriching exchanges. The *WELCOME* list is regularly updated and available to VF FRIENDS.

Joe Patterson, 21 Overcombe Drive, Weymouth, Dorset, DT3 6QF Tel.01 305 833 331 [pilgrim2001@uwclub.net](mailto:pilgrim2001@uwclub.net)

Adelaide Trezzini 6 Largo Ecuador I-00198 Roma / cp 422 CH 6932  
Breganzona [info@francigena-international.org](mailto:info@francigena-international.org)

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## Additions to the CPR Library, July to October 2008

**Howard Nelson**

*The Library is housed with that of the Confraternity of Saint James at 27 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NY, which is open 11.00-3.00 p.m. on Thursday and at other times by arrangement with the CSJ Secretary.*

*The combined catalogue, which includes the index to the CPR Newsletter, is held online at [www.csj.org.uk/library.htm](http://www.csj.org.uk/library.htm). A keyword search for "CPR LIBRARY" will produce a comprehensive listing, by title, of all the 123 items currently held by the CPR.*

*Previous lists of additions to the Library have included articles published in the Newsletter, but they have been omitted here because they are probably not necessary, and to save space.*

**Alberti, Alberto et al**, I Sentieri lungo la Via Francigena  
Rome, Rai Radiotelevisione Italiana, 2005. 285 pp.  
Location: CPR. Acc no: #4627

**Ardito, Fabrizio**, Lungo la Francigena: a piedi sulla via di Sigerico dal Gran San Bernado a Roma  
Milano Touring Club Italiano 2007 Location: CPR. Acc no: #4624

**Barnes, Timothy D**, Constantine and Eusebius  
Cambridge Mass, Harvard University Press, 1981. 458pp  
Location: CPR. Acc no: #4632

**Bock, Emil and Goebel, Robert**, The Catacombs: pictures from the life of early Christianity, from "Die Katakomben", edited and enlarged by Alfred Heidenreich.  
London, The Christian Community Press, 1962. 48 pp + 68 plates  
Location: CPR. Acc no: #4626

**Canterbury City Council**, "New web portal for the Via Francigena in Kent".  
In: International Newsletter, Issue 2, Autumn, 2008, p. 2  
Location: CPR PAM 20. Acc no: #4629

**Chinn, Paul and Gallard, Babette**, Reflections, a pictorial pilgrimage: the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome.

Fougères, Pilgrimage Publications, 2008. 127pp.  
Location: CPR. Acc no: #4625

**Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome**, Via Francigena: Ancient Pilgrimage Route Canterbury to Rome. A leaflet  
n.p., [The Confraternity], [2008].  
Location: CPR PAM 21. Acc no: #4630

**Elliot, John**, "The Protestants in Rome"  
Offprint from Ecclesiology Today, Vol 33, May 2004, pp. 3-8.  
Location: CPR PAM 19. Acc no: #4605

**Rome, Sovraintendenza ai Beni Culturali**, The Capitoline Museums Guide  
Rome, [The Sovaintendenza] , 2006. 221 pp. Location: CPR. Acc no: #4634  
**Stevenson, J, ed**, A new Eusebius: documents illustrating the history of the Church to AD 337.  
London SPCK1987404  
Location: CPR. Acc no: #4633

**Vatican City, Segreteria di Stato**, [A letter of thanks for a gift made to the Pope by several pilgrim associations, and addressed to the Chairman of the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome] 2008 Location: CPR PAM 22. Acc no: #4631

## Secretary's Notebook

Bronwyn Marques

**Membership of the CPR** We currently have 141 members (couples are counted as a single member) of which many are from outside the UK. We have established a bank account and as soon as we have organised a simple method of payment we will implement the £10 membership fee agreed at the AGM in April 2008.

**Practical Pilgrim Day** This will be held on Saturday February 7<sup>th</sup> 2009. Please contact the secretary for more details.

**CPR Library** Pilgrims' journals are always a welcome addition to our CPR Library. A series of journals written over the years provides an overview of the development of the route itself. If you would like to donate a journal (word-processed, in a binder or folder) of your pilgrimage to the CPR Library please send it to Howard Nelson c/o the CSJ office, 27 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NY.

**Guide Books** Paul Chinn and Babette Gallard's guidebooks will be updated following changes which have been noted by some pilgrims. These will be in the new editions when published. Alison Raju's guide book is unlikely to be published before the end of 2009.

**Accommodation List** If you would like a copy of the CPR Accommodation List please email [culverwood3@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:culverwood3@yahoo.co.uk)

We have had a good deal of feedback from pilgrims this summer, including John and Wendy Beecher and Ann Milner. Any information received is very much appreciated as some accommodation closes and new alternatives open. Due to the small number of people who walk the route to Rome compared to the *Camino Francés* your feedback is even more valued.

**Canterbury-Dover Route** Peter Robins has updated his maps for the Canterbury-Dover route to use the Ordnance Survey's new OpenSpace API for "slippy" maps and has included a variant of the North Downs Way via Barfreton Church as well as the routes in the AIVF Guides which have been modified slightly from the previous version to go past Patribourne church. <http://petersmaps.googlepages.com/canter2dover.html>

**Hiking in Switzerland** - the main Swiss walking site - has recently been completely revamped, and the *Via Francigena* is now included both as one of the two international routes (the other is the *Via Jacobi*) and as no 70 of the regional routes.

[http://www.wanderland.ch/en/routen\\_detail.cfm?id=284505](http://www.wanderland.ch/en/routen_detail.cfm?id=284505) includes an overview of each section, height profiles, and links to the detailed Swisstopo mapping. The official length is 215km from Sainte-Croix to the Great Saint-Bernard pass.

**Route in Italy** We understand that the Council of Europe is hoping that the AEFV and the AIVF will work closer together. There is proposal for the two organisations to work on route upgrades, cooperating with local agencies and municipalities to improve safety and to keep as far away as possible from traffic roads.

**New maps** have been published for the Italian Culture Ministry on <http://www.librari.beniculturali.it/generaNews.jsp?id=98>

You can download, free of charge, road books, maps, GPS tracks and Google map tracks. The road books are in Italian, but they are very schematic, with an arrow for every crossing, so if you process them with an automatic translator they should be useful. It is suggested you print road books in A5 format (2 pages per A4 sheet, on both sides), to decrease weight (there are about 300 A4 pages that can be reduced in this way to 80-90).

The new route is an evolution of the one published in 2006 by AEFV. It avoids most busy roads and as much as possible stays far from traffic noise and pollution. The price paid is an increase in route length (about 5% more than previous version).

**Installation of signs** has started, and it is hoped it will be completed by the spring of 2009 from the Great Saint Bernard Pass to Rome.

**Via Francigena del Sud** Anyone interested in the current status of the development of walking routes from Rome on to Apulia (and who can read Italian) would be well advised to take a look at the book published as part of a conference earlier this month organised by the non-profit making Civita, and available for download on their website

[http://www.civita.it/pubblicazioni/altre\\_pubblicazioni/roma\\_gerusalemme\\_lungo\\_le/vie\\_francigene\\_del\\_sud](http://www.civita.it/pubblicazioni/altre_pubblicazioni/roma_gerusalemme_lungo_le/vie_francigene_del_sud)

This is a lavishly illustrated book (not only photos, there are some nice watercolours as well), so the download is some 25MB in total, split into 2 volumes. The first (106pp) contains articles from various academics on the historical documentation of the routes. The second (95pp) contains articles from the various developers on their own work; there is an overview map of the current status on page 3.

It looks as though the first objective is to develop a route to Monte Sant'Angelo, and leave the routes to the ports in the "heel" of Italy until later.

The **Gruppo dei Dodici** are working on a guide to a route they have developed from Formia to Rome, based on the *Via Appia Antica* and dubbed the *Via Appia Pedemontana*. <http://www.romaeFrancigena.eu/>

**Testimonium Database** This has been set up to record the name, date and number of the *Testimonium* of pilgrims who have reached Rome. This will be helpful to record the growth of the route as the authorities at the Vatican do not issue statistics as does the Cathedral in Santiago. If you have completed a pilgrimage either some time ago or recently and received a *Testimonium* or the certificate from the Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi it would be helpful if you would email the Secretary at [pilgrimstoromesecretary@yahoo.com](mailto:pilgrimstoromesecretary@yahoo.com) with details as stated above for inclusion on the database.

**Open Meeting Held on 1 November 2008** The theme was "Other Routes to Rome and Canterbury" and a brief synopsis of the day follows.

**Joe Patterson** and **Jim Brodie** spoke about the *Via Francigena Sud* and their journey up with Alberto Alberti's group. The photos shown were of rugged countryside and many historic towns and castles along the route. There was much special hospitality for this organised pilgrimage. This year they met up in St Peter's Square with three other groups of pilgrims who walked to Rome from other directions. A similar pilgrimage is being organised on this route next year and when we have details we will publish them.

**Ann Milner** and **Jim Brodie** spoke about their pilgrimage walking from London to Canterbury with a group from St Martin's-in-the-Fields. It was a short but intense pilgrimage with long days but well organised and once out of London very scenic. The organised pilgrimage made £28,000 in aid of the work St Martin's does for the homeless and a feature of this pilgrimage is that a number of their homeless clients undertake the pilgrimage every year.

**Howard Nelson** spoke about the St Francis pilgrimage which starts in La Verna and finishes in Poggio Bustone. Howard spoke eloquently about the history of St Francis, the sites on the route and the oddity of a pilgrimage where what is arguably the most significant site is at the mid-point of the route.

**Ann Milner** spoke once more but this time about the route she almost had to make up for herself walking the opposite way the signs pointed from Rome to Assisi. This is a new route with little or no written information in English and it was a real exploratory pilgrimage especially going in the "wrong" direction.

We were lucky to hear from **Eiler Prytz** who had travelled from Norway specially for the meeting. Eiler spoke about the work he and the Norwegian state has done to revive the *Pilegrimsleden (St Olav's Way)*. This is a pilgrimage to Nidaros (the old name for Trondheim and where St. Olav was buried), and where the different routes are evolving and growing all the time.

**Laurie Clegg** finished off the day with a short presentation his wife had prepared of their walk from Siena. They were members of one of the other groups which met up with Alberto's from the south in May.

### **Members' Journeys to Rome**

**Henri Kwasnik** Henri has walked from Lestrem to Rome on foot. Some thirty kilometres a day, alone. Having left on May 4th he walked into St. Peter's Square on July 5.

After being married for many years, when Henri Kwasnik announced last May to his wife Beatrice that he would walk alone to Rome, it was a surprise and she had her doubts. "I know he is capable of large-scale projects such as walking to Saint-Jacques de Compostelle, conducted in 2001, but I still had trouble believing Harry would walk alone, the path from Rome to foot on 1,900 km" she said.

"I was determined to get to the end but I was aware of the need to reassure my wife so I telephoned every day. After I arrived in Italy it was very hard, I suffered because my feet were in bad condition and I spent two days in hospital care." Henri said. "I learned to listen to my body and bear my pain, rediscovered the taste of a simple fruit, those things which we do not pay much attention to in our daily lives, and what satisfaction it is to be hosted by a local family, a parish priest, Franciscans and Protestant pastors, to be invited to spend the night and share a meal in simplicity."

**Dr Franz Xaver Brock** "I started the second part of my way on 25th of April 2008 from Ivrea, where I had to stop last year due to problems with my leg. I was a little bit afraid, that I would not find the route of the *Via Francigena* through Italy. I was more than surprised, though, that in the meanwhile the *Via Francigena* had been well marked in nearly all the provinces I walked through.

I met some people who were just marking the way by painting arrows. The VF can be used in both directions: for going to Rome as well as for going to Santiago, so they painted the direction to Rome in white and to Santiago in yellow.

In addition, the map: *La Via Francigena - Cartografia e GPS* issued by Monica D'Atti and Franco Cinti was a great help for me in finding the way

(also I was not using the GPS). Only in bigger cities are the VF signs sometimes missing or, when I had left the way for sightseeing, sometimes it was a bit difficult to find the right direction out of the towns.

The OUTDOOR booklet *Via Francigena* by Birgit Götzmann (in German) could be helpful, but she often mixes up right and left and east and west so I sometimes went wrong following her instructions.

For sleeping I often found places where I had to pay nothing or just give a donation. But sometimes you have to be content with a sofa or a place on the ground. I met only a few pilgrims, most of them after I had passed Tuscany. But being alone on the way did help me to better find myself and to come a little bit closer to God."

**Ann Milner** Ann has finished her journey to Rome and her blog can be found at the following web address: <http://www.walk2rome.me.uk/>

**Gareth Thomas continues his marathon** Some of you will have been reading Gareth Thomas's blog of his walk from Worcester to Santiago: <http://whizz-kidz-pilgrim.blogspot.com/>

Well, having got there he has decided to finish off the job by cycling to Rome from Canterbury. "This was never intended. As I walked away ... and up the hill towards the Seminario Menor [in Santiago] I decided the pilgrimage is not over. I'm going to cycle from England to Rome to start at the Pontifical Beda College." Gareth arrived safely and will be in Rome for some time.

**Benedict Protheroe**, the son of a Bristol Anglican priest, has completed his 1,200 mile walk from Canterbury to Rome. Benedict started his pilgrimage at the end of April. He raised money for the international development charity Practical Action during his walk.

**Alison Raju** walked from Canterbury to Rome in 2008, starting on July 12<sup>th</sup> and arriving on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.