



# THE COURIER

THE GENEVA  
SCHOOL  
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## *Ad fontes!*

*Ad fontes*, the clarion call of the Renaissance, called those who strove to engage the great conversation of ancient Greece and Rome to return “to the sources.”

This time last year students in the rhetoric school had the opportunity to sign up to visit Italy and Greece with academic dean Michael Eatmon. All year they worked hard to raise the money, and finally, on May 30, they left for an unforgettable ten-day trip to Florence, Rome, Delphi, and Athens.

These students have studied and debated in the classroom the glories and splendors of ancient Greece and Rome. They have been exposed to the great thinkers and artists of the past. They have been taught to appreciate the good, the true, and the beautiful. Now they had the chance to travel to the lands of the Colosseum and the Parthenon, of Michelangelo and Raphael, and to tread the same steps that the Apostle Paul trod when he addressed the gathered scholars and politicians at Mars Hill.

What follows are accounts of the trip from six travelers—four students and two chaperones.

*Above: The Colosseum in Rome*

*Back Cover: Looking down on St. Peter's Square from the Basilica*

*~ All photos (except paintings) courtesy of Michael Gmitro ~*

# Reflections on a Diamond

by Melissa Spilman

It has proven to be quite a difficult task deciding which part of our trip to share with you—like a diamond, each side of it reflects something entirely unique, beautiful, and worthy of attention. That being said, as an art student I find myself inexplicably drawn to sharing the aesthetic side of any experience. This trip brought those familiar but dim photographs to vividly-colorful life.

Looking out the frosty window of the airplane, the excitement and anticipation grew as we drank in the view: waves crashing on a foreign land, one covered in a green patchwork of fields and sprinkled with little Italian villas. Thinking back to last November, I can remember making a poster for a fundraiser for the trip and painting the shape of Italy in bright green. It was an amazing feeling knowing that we were now there, not in the familiar outline of America, but over there, in the one shaped like a boot. It was now so real, and I could not wait to see the rest of it.

After our journey through Tuscany (one of the most beautiful landscapes I have ever seen, particularly the medieval-looking churches), we arrived in Florence and subsequently visited the Accademia, which most notably houses Michelangelo's *David*. Walking into that room with David at the other end was positively surreal. I felt elated and absolutely stunned at my first view of what Italy had to offer. The "perfect" image of a man was right there in front of me, larger than life. I watched the light slip slowly over the marble figure as I approached, highlighting every contour in turn. It was truly an act of God that enabled Michelangelo to find that man in the block of marble with which he started.

Poking around the rest of the museum, Kara and I momentarily paused in front of a Madonna and Child, and I'm sure we caught the eye of some of those in one of the many Asian tour groups gracing most of Italy with their abundant presence. What might have attracted attention was our swaying as we examined that particular painting. We had discovered that the artist had used a different paint to ornament the figures, and we found that if we moved in a certain way we could see the

light hit the gold trim he had added and see where it was raised from the rest of the painting. While this may seem a simple thing to study, we found it fascinating, and upon further reflection, I have realized that this particular detail would have certainly escaped us in a photograph.

I saw many, many feet and hems of robes over the course of this trip, as the paintings were so large that when I was up close enough to examine them, feet were the only things at eye level. The most memorable feet I saw were those of a man in Raphael's *Transfiguration* in the Vatican Museum. I was unaware until this trip that one can be visually stimulated to gasp, but, indeed, it is possible, and this particular painting inspired just such a reaction. Walking into that shadowed room and seeing it in the middle, its rich colors and moving figures shining in the only lights in the gallery not dimmed, pulled my gaze straight to it. I was thrilled right down to my ballet flats—I was in the same proximity to

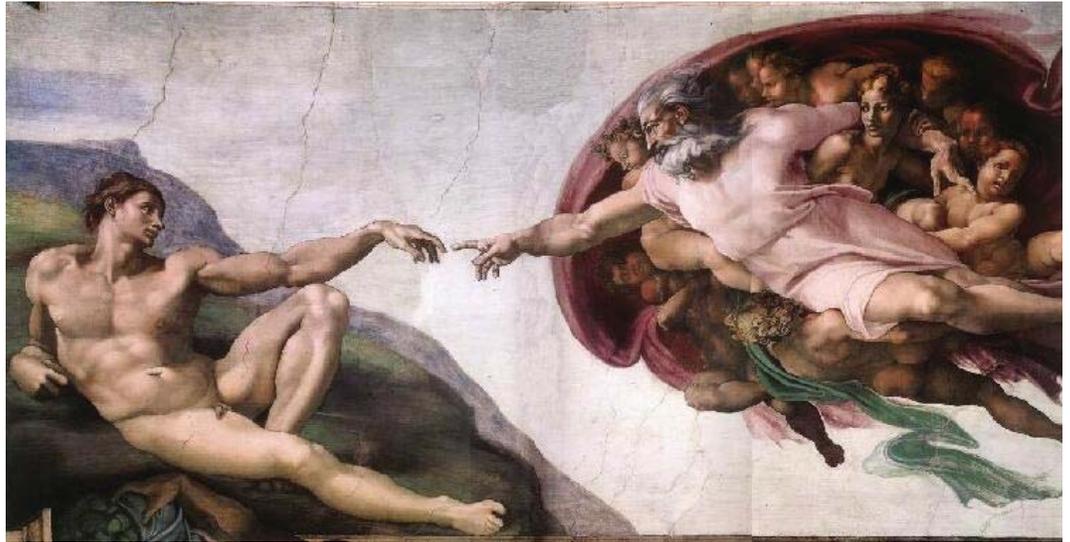
it that Raphael himself had been. It was truly inspired, one of the most amazing things I have ever seen. As Michelangelo once said, "The true work of art is but a shadow of the divine perfection." This painting was one of the best shadows of God's "divine perfection" that I have ever witnessed – to see that God guided him to create such a beautiful thing was quite an inspiration to an aspiring artist such as myself.

When writing on the aesthetics of a trip including Rome, one cannot overlook the Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's Basilica. When we finally found the Sistine Chapel (no small feat, I might add, as we had to walk through countless rooms in the Vatican Museums, each promising that it was around the next bend, before we finally reached it), we found ourselves in a crowded room full of people making more noise than one might imagine they would, with several guards standing

around for the express purpose of shushing them. When we finally sat down at the edge of the room, and at last began to take in what was above us, the noise seemed to melt away as I stared up at a ceiling painted hundreds of years before, but still vibrantly depicting biblical stories. It caught me completely off guard, for I had seen that ceiling a hundred times



in pictures, but words cannot describe the magnitude of its beauty and the feeling one gets when allowed to marvel at it in person. That same feeling returned at St. Peter's Basilica and all the churches we saw on the trip. To be able to worship God through the beauty of the building one is in as well as through the service being held must be the height of worship, and one of my deepest regrets about our trip is not being able to attend a service in one of those breathtaking cathedrals.



Some of the most impressive of the many columns that we saw on the trip were at the Colosseum. It is made of four different styles of columns, each having its own level. We learned that this was Rome's way of showing that they were built upon past generations and pressing into the future. On a side note, we were delighted to learn a few fun facts about the Colosseum as we sat just inside it, attempting to shield ourselves from the chilly rain from which it offered little protection. Our tour guide, Mario, informed us that the Romans used sand to cover the arena because it absorbed blood so well, and that they could fill it with water to re-enact a water battle in as little as eight hours. It was particularly interesting to hear this as, only moments later, we beheld the ruins of the arena, the platform used to fight on, now completely gone. As the rain swirled around us, it was easy to imagine the wet walls and columns covered in marble and glistening as Romans and people from around the world stood in the very places we were stepping as we dodged puddles. The view from the upper levels, coupled with a good imagination, transformed the Colosseum into a beautiful symbol of the architectural prowess of Rome.

Leaving Rome saddened us, but the prospect of Greece was comforting. As we stood on deck of the "cruise" that would take us away, the wind whipping our hair, we ponytailed it for a clear view of Italy and said our farewells. We awoke to the turquoise waters of coastal Greece. We traveled by bus up to Delphi, our bus driver greatly impressing us as he navigated the cliffs and narrow streets with daring precision. (It is worth mentioning that those who designed European streets clearly did not have charter busses in mind, making it possible to stick your hand out the window of said bus and touch signs attached to buildings as you passed them.)

We arrived at our hotel and then were off to the temple of Delphi, assaulted by rain once again. However, for the imaginative soul, there was repeated that sense of almost be-

ing a part of the past. One of the things Mr. Eatmon told us that articulated that feeling with striking accuracy was that we were separated from all those who had ever been at those places only by time. So there we were, walking with men such as Socrates around the temple of Apollo, with only a few thousand years between us.

Finally, we spent our last night in Athens. That night we went up to the top of our hotel and looked out over the city. We could see for miles; it was a bit of a shock to be surveying all the lights and movements of the city, and there in the middle stood the Acropolis, lit up and glowing against the black night sky. It was incredible to stand there and feel a breeze that only moments before had swirled around the columns of the Parthenon. It seemed close enough to touch, so real, yet it felt surreal as it appeared so dramatically different than when we had visited it that day.

Our journey through Italy and Greece was one of the most profound experiences of my life. Beauty was in everything; insignificant parks had statues, street lamps were mounted on decorative swirling iron, mountains took our breath away, cafes hid in alleyways, frequent fountains gave a soothing background to the hustle and bustle of city life, and looking down almost any street we saw rows of buildings beautifully decorated with balconies filled with flowers and shuttered windows topped with sculpted swirls. We so frequently saw something beautiful in unexpected places that it was easy to take it for granted, but it would often hit one in the most delightful ways. All this is to say that what we saw, felt, heard, tasted, and experienced on this trip was unforgettable and will remain with us as a brilliantly-faceted memory for the rest of our lives.

*Left: The Transfiguration by Raphael  
Above: The Creation of Adam (Sistine Chapel)  
by Michelangelo*

# *Finding the Sources*

by Jonathan Spilman

I've finally done it! I took the journey across the pond and can now say that I have officially set foot on the continent of Europe. I dove headfirst into the rich and ancient culture which gave rise to all of Western Civilization and, more importantly, The Geneva School. This was not just an excuse for a fun trip with friends; this was a quest "ad fontes," to the sources. This was an expedition to a place whose importance has been made more than clear to me since I was in third grade. This area in the northern Mediterranean harbors massive relics of classical civilization, the seat of church authority, the early church, the capital city of the Renaissance, and a place the ancients believed was the center of the entire universe, just to name a few. It hit me as I boarded the plane that I would be seeing and experiencing places which I had learned about for most of my life. I already felt well acquainted with Athens and Rome, and now, my perception would either be brought to life or thrown out the window.

My first taste of Europe was technically Madrid, but, seeing as all I did during my time in Spain was order a Frappuccino at Starbucks, I count the trip as having truly begun upon stepping outside of the airport in Rome. In a stupor from the ten hour flight, I desperately attempted navigating the incoherent traffic which our guide, Mario, described as "flowing like water." Safely on the bus, we spent the next few hours driving through countryside famous for being some of the most beautiful anywhere in the world. Sleep deprived and completely out of sync with the time zone, I would wake every so often to Tuscany's effulgent landscape of rolling hills, endless vineyards and fields of wheat. Tall, slender cypress trees swaying in the afternoon breeze lined

roads winding their way towards picturesque villas. It is so magical a place that, waking between quick naps on the bus, it was difficult to distinguish dream from reality.

Florence, capital of Tuscany and centerpiece of the Italian Renaissance, is the quintessential Italian city. Its narrow and winding streets, navigated with surgical precision by our driver, were lined with blocks of buildings with red clay shingled roofs. Brunelleschi's Duomo, one of the most famed and celebrated cathedrals in all of Europe, dominates the skyline. It was here that we saw the pinnacles of Renaissance architecture: Michelangelo's *David* and Ghiberti's gilded *Gates of Paradise*.

No one complained about the three hour trip to Rome. We had already seen that driving through the countryside was like being inside a living painting. Nine million people call the Eternal City home, and its sites are truly breathtaking. The center of the Roman Empire is dotted with vestiges of its once limitless power. The enormous Colosseum; magnificent Pantheon; the Vatican, with its incomparable collection of the world's greatest masterpieces; and St. Peter's Basilica, which on entering was for me the most transcendent experience of all.

These great works are meant to enrapture us, to lift our minds into the heavens. The artist may be bound by time but his works are not. They have inspired people through the centuries because each in its own way conveys ideals of goodness, truth and beauty; each in its own way points to God.

*Tuscany*



Much of the world now views these masterworks on their cell phone screens or through disposable cameras as they quickly snap a few shots of their friends standing next to them. Museum attendants at the Vatican walk around yelling “Silence!” in the Sistine Chapel to crowds showing little reverence. Without an understanding of Goodness and Truth, these works become shells of their former selves. People still journey from all around the globe to see them, not to be carried away by their beauty but merely to say that they’ve been there and done that. But we understand. I saw it in the tears we shed in Paul’s prison. I saw it on the awestruck faces of my friends as we gazed at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. High schoolers these days carry a bad reputation for their lack of appreciation of beauty, but this trip made it most evident to me that my peers and I are different. We are different because Geneva shows us things that matter and why they matter. We are given a love for the things that are lasting,



and our teachers’ hard work was evidenced in our appreciation for what we saw.

At times, our little expedition felt more like a neurotic family vacation than a school trip, but through the fun and excitement, I came away with a once-in-a-lifetime experience that reinforced my belief in my school.

### *Trevi Fountain in Rome*

## *Thank You*

by Isabel O’Driscoll

Sometimes when things are going well and we are pleased with a situation, we stay quietly content. Such is the case with our experience at The Geneva School. However, after my recent trip to Europe with the rhetoric students, I felt compelled to share my thoughts and gratitude to the Geneva faculty and administration for the tremendous work that is being accomplished in the lives of these students.

My daughter, Katie, has been attending The Geneva School for two years. We have found that the teachers not only exhibit mastery and passion for their subjects, but they have a personal commitment to the students to help them achieve excellence.

It was such a privilege to accompany Mr. Eatmon and the rhetoric students to Italy and Greece this summer. It was a pleasure to see the discipleship of the students by Mr. Eatmon and the obviously high standards for manners that Geneva teaches. Because of those high standards, an occasional

reminder from him about being ladies and gentleman was all that was ever needed. The teenagers were truly a pleasure to spend time with because they were polite, inquisitive, and eager to see and experience the things they learned about in the classroom. Everywhere we went people commented on the behavior of our group. Even our tour guide, Mario, commented at the end of our trip, “You guys really get it!”

An appreciation of truth, goodness, and beauty does not come without exposure and teaching. All parents know the importance of teaching children good manners, and we see the results, both good and bad, when we take them out into social situations. When The Geneva School took thirty-one high school students to Europe for ten days, it was a joy to see the results of the time and effort poured into the education of these students. I am happy to say that every parent and every teacher would have been proud to see the fruits of their labors.

# *I Went To Europe and I Fell In Love!*

By Bonnie Mitchell

Ah, Italia! How I loved the Tuscan countryside. It provided a visual feast of *cypress* trees, olive groves and tidy gardens tucked in and along hillsides where plaster-walled homes (yellow, white, tan and terracotta) rose from the hill-top as if they were one with the terrain while occasionally a castle proudly presented itself in their midst. The live audio accompaniment as we traveled was the beautiful voices of Geneva students (along with Michael Eatmon) joyfully praising God with superior stereophonics.

Arriving in Florence, the “new Athens” of the Renaissance, she showed us her architectural and artistic treasures, including the Duomo and Ghiberti’s *Gates of Paradise*, as we followed our able Italian-speaking guide, Mario Mamini, and our more than able multilingual mentor, Michael Eatmon (whose heart actually skipped a beat when he heard Giotto’s bell tower peal our first evening in Florence’s city center). The Arno river afforded beautiful views by day and by night, and it is easy to see why Ponte Vecchio is one of the top ten places in the world to receive a marriage proposal.

Rome also revealed her riches among her crowded cobblestone streets. Our troupe of intrepid travelers logged as much as twelve miles in a day as we trekked across the city to see Raphael’s paintings and Bernini’s sculptures. We ascended the dome of St. Peter’s Basilica and viewed the city below. We descended Spanish Steps and traveled on to the ancient city. We were moved to tears as we huddled in the Mamartine Prison and heard Mr. Eatmon read Paul’s letter to Timothy. We stood in the Colosseum, heavyhearted and rain drenched, and wondered how one gains such a violent thirst for destruction of life as the Romans had. We marveled in the ancient city to gaze up under still-standing ancient arches where heroes triumphant once rode. We were stretched in our minds, our emotions, our bodies, and souls.

More adventure awaited as we crossed the azure waters of the Adriatic Sea to reach the Grecian shores and climb narrow streets in a large, lumbering bus to the heights of Delphi. Though they did not know how to honor the one true God, I saw that they imaged His beauty and truth in many ways as they mused, played, competed, and worshiped.

The sights of Athens culminated our European travels, and I will always remember how it felt to stand where Paul gave his Mars Hill address, revealing the one true God to the Athenians as the one whom they worshiped as an unknown god. A short walk from this site we climbed among antiquated columns and steps as we overlooked Athens from that most ancient and famous hilltop, the Acropolis.

The European travel was glorious, but my heart was not lost to the magnificent treasures and experiences of Italy and Greece. My heart fell in love with a group of independent individuals making up a cohesive community called The Geneva School. Just as we marveled at Michelangelo’s *David*, I marveled at these high school students. We visually studied this renowned statue as a perfect composite of “best features” of different individuals as the replication of their individual body parts came together to form a perfect completion. So, too, these students modeled that very idea so beautifully as each brought a special gift or talent, perception or wisdom to the group as a whole. The way in which they chose to honor and respect each other, preferring “the whole” over their own individual part, was enough to cause me to fall in love with them. They truly were a representation of what is true, good, and beautiful, and they imaged well the great God whom they love and serve, and I believe He is well pleased.

*Parthenon in Athens*



# *Experiencing Ideals*

by Kara Jones

For most of us sojourners, this voyage to Italy and Greece was a dream come true. Many high school students dream of visiting Europe, and many do; however, the students on this particular trip had different dreams than most travelers. We wanted to see the famous sights, such as the Colosseum of Rome, the Duomo of Florence, and the Parthenon of Athens, but not just see them, experience them. Coming from a background of classical education, we have learned about the glory of ancient Greece, and the splendor of ancient Rome. At last, an opportunity came for us to travel and see the remains of those two civilizations that continue to influence the world. As Christians, this voyage allowed us to experience the splendor of God as manifested in great art and architecture. Indeed, this trip both culminated our classical education and had a powerful influence on our Christian faith.

Some may call Latin and ancient Greek dead languages, but they came alive as some of us were able to pick out words or phrases engraved in stone monuments and the bases of statues, as well as know the meaning of the S.P.Q.R. (from the Latin, “for the Senate and people of Rome.”) inscribed on manhole covers. With the opportunity to visit Vatican City, we encountered the only country in the world where Latin is the national language, as well as one of the largest resting-places of Greek artwork. In history classes from the grammar school to the rhetoric school, Geneva students are taught about Greece and Rome and how different time periods throughout the centuries reflect trends from their golden ages. The discourses of Greek philosophers and the speeches of prominent Roman citizens frequent our understanding of philosophy, rhetoric, and debate. After studying the art of the masters in books, we were able to look and study all of the angles, shadows, details and intricacies as long as we wanted. With previous knowledge of the things we were seeing, we could appreciate them and learn even more from them.

In Italy and Greece, nearly all of the must-see sights were created for the purpose of worship: some for the deities of ancient Greeks and Romans, but mostly for the early Christians worshipping God. Coming from Christian backgrounds, we were dazzled by the magnificent churches, cathedrals, and artwork all dedicated to the glory of God. As people, even non-Christians, walk into a cathedral from a busy city street, they suddenly grow quiet, taken aback by all around them that commands acknowledgement of God.



*Il Duomo in Florence*

There are no words to describe the feeling one gets from the high ceilings, ornate engravings, and stunning artwork in a European cathedral. Staring at the Sistine Chapel ceiling from below is a form of worship in itself, as one can stare and marvel at the magnificence of God as manifested through such breathtaking brushstrokes. One of the sights in Rome that many tourists pass carelessly by became one of the most meaningful parts of the trip. Paul’s prison, located in the ruins of the Roman Forum, is not beautiful. It is dark and small, it is dank and putrid; however, it was remarkably moving to be in the place where Paul spent his last days of suffering and where he wrote several epistles. As Mr. Eaton read II Timothy 4:1-8, all of us felt the deep sense of only being separated from him by time.

Almost all of the people that helped or served us on this trip commented to our tour-guide that we were one of the best groups that they had ever served, both in our behavior and engagement. They obviously noticed many differences in our group, and most of them can be attributed to our being classically-educated students, as well as Christians, traveling to what is now becoming a largely non-Christian continent. In our different tours we observed the other tourists in museums or visiting ancient ruins and how their behavior differed from ours. While they quickly passed through galleries, taking as many pictures as possible in the process, we would wander slowly around, pacing in front of many different statues and paintings, absorbing each detail, and commenting to each other about what made them beautiful. Goodness, truth, and beauty became the primary themes of this trip, and surely each of us took back home a better understanding of these ideals.

# *We Are But Imitators*

by Chris Randazzo

Since returning from our trip to Europe, I have frequently been asked, “What was the most amazing part of your trip?” One thing that came to mind was the Renaissance artwork in Florence: Michelangelo’s *David*, among some of his other works; the view of Florence from atop Michelangelo’s square; and Brunelleschi’s magnificent cathedral, namely the Duomo. Another thing that also dazzled me on this trip was the beauty of Rome—the countless natural-spring fountains beautifully decorated with sculptures, among which the Trevi Fountain was the greatest. Other awe inspiring sites included the Spanish Steps next door to the Keats-Shelley museum, the many obelisks, the different gates to the city, old Rome itself—the Colosseum, Victor Emmanuel’s palace, St. Peter’s Basilica, and the forever famous Sistine Chapel. I saw the prison in Rome where Paul wrote to Timothy and stood in Athens where Paul spoke to the Greeks. Most importantly, however, was the follow up, ending each day with a Bible study led by Mario (our tour-guide/God-fearing friend) and Mr. Eatmon.

Considering all of the above, I could not bring myself to award these experiences with being the most amazing part of my trip. I have been involved in many good Bible studies. While I have no doubts that Italy contains the greatest works mankind has ever had or ever will have, none of it

can compare with the works of God. As amazing as it was standing in front of Michelangelo’s *David*, it did not compare to carrying on conversations with fellow classmates, Mr. Eatmon, or graduating seniors. As amazing as it was seeing Michelangelo’s *Creation of Adam* at the Vatican, it did not compare to God’s creation, primarily the coast line and mountain chains of Greece. If I had to choose, I would pick mountain sides over cathedrals and people made in the image of God over paintings in the image of people.

I do not write this to put down castles, cathedrals or courtyards. Nor do I write this to minimize the greatness of the hard work and talent of some of the most brilliant minds in history. On the contrary, I write this to glorify God all the more and to draw worthy attention to the Creator of these great minds. With the amount of praise creation receives, how much more should our Father in heaven be praised.

**Let every created thing give praise to the Lord,  
For He issued His command, and they came into being.**

**Let them all praise the name of the Lord.**

**For His name is very great;**

**His glory towers over the earth and heaven!**

*Psalm 148: 5,13 (New Living Translation)*

