Fifty Years of the Rome Center

1962–2012
Fifty Years of the Rome Center 1962–2012
I remember sitting in my dorm room at Seattle University thinking of how glamorous it would be to spend a year studying abroad. The program I had in mind was the Loyola University of Chicago Rome Center of Humanistic Studies. I received my letter of acceptance on stationery signed by John Felice. Rome was waiting for me, not to mention Florence, Venice, Naples, Capri… Just the thought of it was intoxicating. I left Portland, Oregon, amidst the tears of my father, who thought I might never return. He was partially right! Once on a plane bound for New York, my world and my life would change forever.
Looking back on the past 50 years of the Rome Center, and my particular role in it, a flood of the most wonderful memories comes to mind, not only about my year as a student at CIVIS but in all the succeeding years and campuses that followed. There are the memories of all the carefree and crazy things we all did, our travels to exotic places, the sad times we experienced in our small community, the fantastic faculty and administrators who left lasting impressions on us, and Rome’s citizens who taught us to appreciate their way of life. I feel blessed to have shared in some small way in fulfilling the vision of our founder, John Felice. My position is quite unique in that I was a student at CIVIS and I later worked at the Rome Center for more than 30 years. In 1975, John Felice and I were married. Perhaps no one’s life has been so transformed by the Rome Center than my own.

The idea of transformation through study abroad has persisted through half a century, and it still has the power to capture the minds of young people. Like most alumni, I had no idea how far-reaching my decision to study in Rome would be. I am who I am today because of my years at the Rome Center and the exposure they gave me to other ways of living, thinking, and loving. I think continuously of all the wonderful people who came into my life through that Rome Center door—John, students, faculty, administrators, and even my present companion. All of these people, along with my experiences, have made me a better person. This is what the Rome Center is all about.

This shared experience creates a special bond among our alumni. I’ve often stated that it doesn’t matter when you attended the Rome Center, our experiences are very similar. I am always thrilled when our younger alumni meet the older generations and come to understand what the Rome Center has meant to so many. They join us in becoming part of our enduring heritage once they cross over to that very “elite” group known as Rome Center alumni. They may have enjoyed computers, washing machines, and better facilities, but we all share the experience of having been transformed by the Eternal City.

Every class over the past 50 years was the best. Each class develops a personality of its own, and I’ve learned something from every one along the way.

Alumni often ask me if their class was the best, or what campus I liked the best. As far as our four campuses go, each alum’s memories are tied to the campus that he or she attended. I will always have a soft spot in my heart for CIVIS, but I would be less than truthful if I didn’t admit that it was our most spartan campus. I think the Villa Tre Colli campus was the most beautiful with its wooded property, charming old villa, tree-lined “viale,” formal gardens, and, of course, Camilluccia’s wishing well. The Via Trionfale campus was a huge building with unusually high ceilings and big terraces off of almost all the rooms. I am very happy now that we have a permanent home on Via Massimi, the campus from which about half or more of our alumni now come. We’ve had great years there, and it has great possibility for future expansion.

With regard to all the different classes, every class over the past 50 years was the best. Each class develops a personality of its own, and I’ve learned something from every one along the way. Throughout the years, I have found the students to be very clever and very humorous. I remember always looking forward to the arrival of each new group of students and watching their faces after returning from that first trip to St. Peter’s Square, after which they would exclaim, “AWESOME!!! I can’t believe I’m here.”

Here’s to 50 years of transformation, 50 years of the Rome Center, and 50 years of AWESOME!!!

Your friend and fellow alum,

KATE FELICE (JFRC ’63–’64)
PAA WELCOMES THE LOYOLA UNIVERSITY FOREIGN STUDIES GROUP
I

It usually started with “goodbye.” Goodbye to friends and family. Goodbye to your home, your city, your country. Goodbye to knowing all the rules. Goodbye to the ordinary.

You came by boat. You came by plane. You tried to pack a lifetime into a suitcase and found out how little you actually needed. Your feet touched ground in the Old World. You had your passport stamped. Full of nervous energy, you met your roommates, your classmates, and some of your lifelong friends for the first time. You probably stayed up way too late exploring and talking. You might have tasted your first gelato, stolen a glimpse of St. Peter’s, and stumbled into Piazza Navona, still not believing you were in Rome.

Then you woke up on your first morning in Italy, with one of your life’s greatest adventures ahead of you, and it felt like one big “hello.”
The day had finally arrived. Ninety some of us were gathered around the walkway and entrance to Lewis Towers on Chicago’s ‘Magnificent Mile.’ We all mulled around visiting with family members once more prior to departure.

Tufts of snow and ice soaked in dirt were all that remained of winter on a cloudy February day. Mom had baked a large carton of chocolate chip cookies that I stashed away in one of my bags. The students were assessing the collection of young men and women with whom they would spend the next several months. There in the center of it all stood il padre, the master of this universe, John Felice. We soon learned that the good father had severe motion sickness and would fly to Rome to meet us when we arrived on the Saturnia.

Time finally came to say our goodbyes. Motors on the buses revved, and we all climbed aboard. Our buses headed south to the toll roads stretching east to New York. For each of us, whether we appreciated it or not, a life-altering experience had begun.

JOHN LEE, MD, FACS
(JFRC SPRING ’62, SSOM ’67)
It may have been loud. It may have been chilly. Hot water may have been optional. It may have been cramped and crowded, but none of that mattered. For six months, a year, or longer, it was your home in Rome.

The John Felice Rome Center has had four locations, all on the northern side of the city. Each one possessed its own character. Some were larger, better situated, or more beautiful than others, but all of them provided you with a place to study, eat, sleep, and have the best time of your life.

The Rome Center’s campuses also gave you an address in Italy, whether it was on Viale del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Via della Camilluccia, Via Trionfale, or Via Massimi. When you gave it to friends and family, wrote it on envelopes, and told it to taxi drivers, it was your proof that you were more than a tourist—you were a local.
Loyola University

IN ROME

University Roman Center is a natural outgrowth of the increased need for living in an international world. The world is constantly growing, and communication and transportation systems have made it possible for people to know about events happening all over the world. This has stimulated interest about the world around them. In our modern age when world peace is essential for the survival of the human race, it has become even more important that international understanding become the beginning of promoting this awareness of the world around us.
The Casa Italiana Viaggi Internazionali Studenti, or CIVIS, was part of the Olympic Village that was built for the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome and became the original home of the Rome Center. The campus was located close to the Stadio Olimpico, the northern bank of the Tiber, and the Ponte Milvio neighborhood.
In order to expand enrollment, in the fall of 1966, the Rome Center moved from the Olympic Village to the Villa Tre Colli. This campus, which was leased from the Vatican and was also known as Camilluccia, included three buildings on 25 acres of land on Monte Mario.
Loyola (Rome) To Relocate, Move to Villa

Loyola University’s center for liberal arts in Rome (Italy), the largest international center operated by an American university in Europe, will move to new quarters this fall.

The announcement was made July 17 by the Rev. John F. Egan, S.J., director of the Rome center and director of foreign studies for Loyola, a test for Rome center students, and their parents on the University’s Lewis Towers campus.

In the fall, the five-year-old branch of Loyola Institute for 260 students in a newly-leased villa located on Monte Mario in the northwest section of Rome. The property includes several gardens and a villa that overlooks the city from the north to the west. It provides a view of St. Peter’s Basilica beyond Rome.

The new location, Father Egan said, “will enable the Rome Center to expand its enrollment and facilities, introduce new programs and enlarge its dimensions."

Renovation of the three buildings is now nearly completed. Father Egan said. The property is being leased from the Vatican.

The new quarters will provide student housing facilities, private rooms for the faculty, art classrooms, a library and research room, a study hall and reading room, a language laboratory and administrative space.

Located on Monte Mario, the villa’s furnishings have been brought over from the college’s old quarters on Campo de’ Fiori. Father Egan said the move is the result of a need for expanded facilities and a desire to be closer to the Vatican.”
My dear Students,

I would like to be one of the first people to welcome you to our new Rome Center. Many of you have admired the beauty of our old campus. I personally feel that you will find our new campus much more suited to the purpose for which you have come to Rome and equally as beautiful.

We have, in the past, moved the Rome Center on three occasions. This third move has been our largest and most difficult with only three months to complete the operation of both remodelling and moving.

Quite obviously, you will notice that many refinements need to be made on the building and grounds. For these reasons I especially ask your cooperation to bear with us during the first weeks as we iron out many details.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have and I look forward to meeting you during the “first weeks” of the academic year.

Very sincerely yours,

John Pollio, S.J.
In the fall of 1972, the Rome Center moved once again, this time to the Villa Maria Teresa, which was located almost due west of the Villa Tre Colli campus. The campus was also known for the street on which it was located, Via Trionfale.
In 1978, the Rome Center moved for the last time to its current location on Via Massimi on Monte Mario. In 2009, Loyola University Chicago purchased the 5-acre campus from the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, establishing the center’s permanent home in Rome.

Via Massimi

In 1978, the Rome Center moved for the last time to its current location on Via Massimi on Monte Mario. In 2009, Loyola University Chicago purchased the 5-acre campus from the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, establishing the center’s permanent home in Rome.
You didn’t come to Rome to hang out on campus, but you did anyway. That meant playing football on the grounds, spending an afternoon on a blanket “studying,” and, sometimes, going to class. You were surprised to find that the faculty demanded your time and attention and that you learned more about Rome than where to find the best gelato. You discovered that some of the most enlightening cultural experiences could be had right at home. You had no idea it could take 45 minutes to call a hotel in Amsterdam from Italy. Even doing laundry was an adventure. But after a long day, Sesto and Sebastiano or Rinaldo and Nella reminded you how lucky you were to be living in Italy (not to mention giving you a chance to practice your Italian).

But most of all, you learned how living in a building full of friends—even if it’s on foreign soil—can make you feel right at home.
Making a Statement

“In 1972, we were at war in Vietnam. One night we heard, through Radio Free Europe, that President Johnson was sending in more troops. We met and decided to appeal to Pope Paul VI to speak on our behalf and encourage a speedy end to the war. We composed a letter and sent it to the Pope.

In the letter, we explained that we were American students who were concerned about our country and our family members and friends who were fighting in Vietnam. We asked him, a man of peace, to help us. John Felice was contacted and given tickets to a papal audience for the entire student body. Classes were cancelled as we all headed to the Vatican. During the audience, the Pope asked the American students to stand. Then he addressed us.

In his speech, he spoke about our concern and urged our president to seek an end to the war. When we returned to campus, we spent the entire day talking about the experience and gathering together with our guitars to sing songs of peace. I remember it was the first time I heard ‘Susanne’ by Leonard Cohen. To this day, the entire experience remains one of the most memorable of my life.”

PAULA NERI HENNESSEY
JFRC SPRING ’72

Pope asks ceasefire in Indochina fighting

VATICAN CITY, May 3 (AP) — Pope Paul today called for a cease-fire in Vietnam and a stopping up of negotiations to end the “murderous and senseless destruction” of war there.

The pontiff’s message, one of the longest English-language public statements ever made by the Pope, came in direct response to an appeal from American students attending Catholic universities here. The appeal was drawn up by students assigned to Loyola University’s Rome center.

In his response during a general audience, the Pope called for “rapid, sincere and effective” negotiations to end the Southeast Asian war.

“As the representative of Christ, teacher and King of Peace, we are obliged to deplore every war, in its causes, its inhuman violence and its murderous and senseless destruction,” the Pope said with a harsh and fatigued voice.

The American students had asked the Pope three days ago to “reiterate your numerous pleas for peace.”

The statement was sent to the Pope through the Vatican secretariat of state three days ago. The students deplored the “unfortunate and costly escalation in seemingly endless violence of the war in South east Asia.”

In a tense voice, the Pope said: “We know that these young students sharing the same ideals as many of their fellow students in the United States and in the rest of the world, are now suffering because of the aggravation of the war in Vietnam in which their country is involved.”

Pope Paul, who turns 75 in September, appeared tired from a heavy schedule of audiences and other activities in the last few days.

He addressed the American students at the end of his weekly public audience. He had an extra public audience for thousands of workers on May Day Monday when he also met separately other three large groups.

He addressed speeches to all of them.

Today’s speech was one of the longest the Pope has ever delivered in English. It conveyed a deep sense of anxiety over Vietnam which recalled his fervent pleas for peace of several years ago.

After the Vietnam talks started in Paris, the pontiff had made only brief references to the Asian conflict in his public speeches. His speech today echoed the anguish he often voiced in 1967 - 1969.

He said: “We express the hope that on both sides the operations of war will come to an end and that noble and generous proposals for rapid, sincere and effective negotiations for a cease-fire and for peace will prevail over every other interest, and that in this way an honorable and peaceful solution is made possible.”
A Chariot Awaits

"The venerable #67 bus, circa ’72–’73. It was our cheapest way down off the “mount” and into the city center. How our hearts leapt with joy when we finally saw it rounding the bend by STAMDA, the neighborhood department store!"

SHEILA REYNOLDS-TRAINOR (JFRC ’72–’73)
It could have been London. It could have been Madrid. Your road led you to Rome. For a few months, the city of the Caesars, the Popes, Michelangelo, and Fellini was also the city of you. You had the privilege and the opportunity to explore one of the richest urban landscapes on earth. By the end, you knew which rivers were represented in the Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi, who was buried in the Pantheon, and the real name of the Coliseum. You could have been a tour guide. But Rome is a city of small as well as big, the city both of St. Peter’s and the corner tabaccheria. Like any everyday Roman, you took the bus, haggled with taxi drivers, sent your mail from the Vatican, got your photos developed, shopped at an enoteca, and ordered primi and secondi piatti. You learned that underneath two and a half thousand years of history and one of the world’s most glorious artistic legacies, Rome is still just a village.
A CARBURANTE TURISTICA

Viale Minostrino, 10

Center of Human}

USA

Chicago

The "Late Night" Bakery

50 LIRE

5/01

This may seem to some of you an unattainable idea, but throughout the course of the year we have had evidence of our students' progress. It is a pleasure to be aware of this maturing process.
Negative to Positive

“I arose early on March 19, 1963, and downed a quick cup of cappuccino in anticipation of attending the beatification of Luigi Maria Palazzolo later that afternoon at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. John Felice, S.J., director of the Rome Center, had acquired some front row seats that promised close proximity to Pope John XXIII.

Armed with my Kodak box camera, I was a young man on a mission to get a good picture of the Pope. But St. Peter’s is big and dark, and I was down to my last flashbulb. Suddenly, loud cheering arose as people spotted the Pope. He was headed right at me! I peered down into the viewfinder as his image danced around in it. The flashbulb winked in the dim light, but I wasn’t sure if my mission had been accomplished.

Several days later, I retrieved the negatives I had dropped off at a small photo lab near campus. One negative appeared to have captured the Pope’s image very well, but I wouldn’t know for sure until it was printed. I decided to take it home with me and have it printed in the U.S. Three months later, upon my return home, I eagerly searched through my clothes, souvenirs, and books but couldn’t find the negative. It was LOST!

In preparing for the 50th anniversary of the Rome Center, a call went out for mementos and pictures. I recently searched through our basement and discovered a “Rome” box containing letters, pictures, and a host of other material that brought back many fond memories. There was even an empty Pan Am ticket jacket. I was in the midst of tossing it out when I was possessed to stop and pull back the inside flap. A 2” square negative was tucked in the corner. ‘Could this be the lost negative? Yes!!!’

I took the negative to a photo lab. The technician, Rachael, and I stood in the dark room and waited for the fragile image to develop. Slowly the image of Pope John XXIII came to life before our eyes. We both whooped with joy. So the mystery of the lost negative was solved, and a bit of my self-esteem is restored. And, although it took almost 50 years, this is one instance where a negative truly turned into a positive.”

JOHN W. POYNTON (JFRC SPRING ’63)
Traveling

"Rome is your classroom and Europe your campus.” —JOHN FELICE

From the earliest days of the Rome Center, when John Felice took a group of students and faculty on a tour of Europe in 1961, the philosophy was to bring students to Rome and then encourage them to leave. Ever since, students at the Rome Center have been hitting the road. You were fortunate to live in Europe during a time of peace when borders opened, language barriers were falling, and traveling was largely limited only by budget, time, and imagination. The departure board at Termini is just a taste of the places you explored: Firenze, Venezia, München, Wien, Praha, and more. On Rome Center-sponsored trips you may have found yourself even further afield: Egypt, Syria, Israel, Athens, or even Soviet-era Moscow.

These trips were not mere vacations; they were opportunities to lean into the discomfort of otherness, to test your boundaries, to get yourself into and out of trouble, to get by with a handful of Lire and your wits. You learned as much about yourself as you did about your destinations.
Berlin Wall
Checkpoint Charlie

Germany
Soviet Union
Visiting with the Queen

Alia Baha Ad-Din Touqan was a student at the Rome Center for a number of years in the late ’60s and early ’70s. In 1972, she married King Hussein of Jordan and became Queen, but she died tragically in a helicopter crash in 1977. LINDA HOLSAPPLE HARRIS (JFRC SPRING ’70, BS ED ’71) recalls standing in Red Square with Queen Alia trading sticks of gum for Soviet medals. “Then a big black limo drove up and took her away. I thought she had been kidnapped, but she had been taken to a special event to honor her. None of us had any idea of her importance.” The international airport in Amman is named in Queen Alia’s honor.
Middle East, North Africa
Greece
The last few nights were a whirlwind of packing and partying. The money was spent, the souvenirs bought, the farewells taken. You came home with a suitcase full of laundry and enough memories to last a lifetime. Your family asked you how it was, and you didn’t even know where to begin. Your old friends wanted to hear stories, but you couldn’t find the words to do it justice.

You’d completed one of your life’s greatest adventures. A chapter in your life ended while another began. You became a seasoned, experienced, “world traveler.” You’ll never be the same or see the world in the same way again.

The transition back to “normal” life may have been tough, but you took comfort in the fact that you knew you’d go back to Rome one day. Just to be sure, you took out an insurance policy before you left: a single coin at the bottom of the Trevi Fountain.
One Last Plunge

"On the night of May 25, 1972, some of us Rome Center students ‘visited’ the Trevi Fountain to say farewell to Roma after having spent nine glorious months in the Eternal City. The police thought we were grabbing tourists at random and throwing them in the fountain, so they arrested me and my friends. With the help of the Jesuits, and later being told we were just throwing in our fellow students, they released us in time to make our charter flight home to Chicago the next morning. What a way to end a fantastic and very memorable experience."

JOHN BANCHERO (JFRC ’71–’72)
The John Felice Rome Center is truly grateful to all of the alumni who submitted content for this history book. Nearly every image on these pages came from you, the alumni. The following is a list of all the alumni who shared their memorabilia and their memories.

The founding father of the Rome Center

John Felice, the founder of the Rome Center, was born in Malta in 1923 and served as a British intelligence liaison officer during World War II. He was deeply affected by the devastation he saw during that war and, in combination with his Jesuit faith and training, dedicated his life's work to bridging cultural gaps through education. In 1959, Felice accepted an assistant professorship of theology at Loyola University Chicago. In 1961, he took 65 American teachers and graduate students on a tour of Europe, a tradition he continued from his days giving tours of Rome to American soldiers stationed in Italy.

In that year, at a meeting with Italian President Giovanni Gronchi, Felice convinced the Italian government to support a permanent study-abroad program for American students, and on January 5, 1962, the Loyola University Rome Center of Liberal Arts began with three faculty members and 92 students. Fifty years later, over 14,000 students have studied at the center that now bears Felice's name.

Famed for his energy, fluency in several languages, and incredible connections within every stratum of Italian society, his guiding hand has shaped the lives of thousands of individuals around the world.

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Famed for his energy, fluency in several languages, and incredible connections within every stratum of Italian society, his guiding hand has shaped the lives of thousands of individuals around the world.
This book is dedicated to the memory of John Felice, founder, first leader, and guiding spirit of the Rome Center that now bears his name.