

# The Signature

The Student Newsletter of the Department of Catholic Studies at the University of St. Thomas

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**“Monte Cassino” Night**  
Friday, February 20th, 2009  
Sitzman Hall, 7:30 p.m.

**Caritas**  
Wednesdays 4:15-5:30 p.m.  
Christo Rey Jesuit High School  
Contact: catholicstudies@stthomas.edu

## Deadlines

**Rome Applications**  
Due: Rolling basis  
Applications: Contact Mary Harnan

**Catholic Studies Scholarship**  
Due: TBA  
Applications: Website in “Academics.”

**Internships at the United Nations Mission of the Holy See**  
Due: Monday, February 16th, 2009  
Who: Seniors and recent graduates

**Catholic Men’s and Women’s Housing**  
Due by: Tuesday, February 17th, 2009  
To: Laura Stierman  
Applications: Website under “Living Communities.”

**Caritas: Catholic Studies Service Initiative**  
Contact: cathstudies@stthomas.edu

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## Thousands Gather in Washington D.C for the 2009 March for Life

January 22nd, 2009, marked the 36th anniversary of the infamous Supreme Court decision which legalized abortion in *Roe v. Wade*. Close to 200,000 pro-life activists descended on the National Mall in Washington D.C. – the largest crowd yet to attend the March for Life. Only two days before, the Mall had been filled with 1.8 million people who came to witness the inauguration of President Barack Obama, who is pro-choice.

A group of students from both the University of St. Thomas and the University of Minnesota had the incredible opportunity to attend the 2009 March. They began their trip to Washington on Wednesday, January 21st, filled with anxiety about the unexpected.



*A portion of the crowd of thousands on the grounds of the United States Capital*

“I was concerned about the actual protest, all the trouble, and people feeling cranky about us being there,” said freshman Abby Saffert.

Once they arrived in Washington their anxiety was put to rest when they were greeted with open arms by the parishioners at the Church of St. Steven the Martyr. Later that day, they attended Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception where over 20,000 people were present, plus hundreds of priests and seminarians.

“It was nice to see so many people gathering for the Eucharist and the homily was about pro-life issues. It was a wonderful way to start the week,” said Saffert.



*Nick Haugan and Audrey Anderson at the March for Life*

At 2:00 pm on Thursday, the March for Life began, the theme being “RE-MEMBER, the Life Principles mean “Equal Care” with No Exceptions!” The March began at the Mall and ended at the steps of the Supreme Court where several speakers, including the founder of “Silence No More,” Terri Schiavo’s brother, and Michelle Bachman spoke about the importance of life.

Speakers also talked repeatedly about the controversial Freedom of Choice Act, commonly known as FOCA. FOCA is a bill before Congress which states that every woman in the United States has the right to terminate a pregnancy due to health reasons or before the fetus is viable.

“The March gave an atmosphere of hope to the city because it wasn’t like other protests; it was very quiet, nothing obnoxious. Very peaceful,” said freshman Audrey Anderson.

The trip continued into Saturday where the group attended a conference about the importance of being pro-life. Many speakers talked about how it is important to uphold life in all stages and one speaker in particular talked about how “we [students] are not the future of the pro-life movement, we are the pro-life movement.” This saying and many others inspired college students to put what they learned at the conference and at the March into action when back on campus.

**March** continues on page 2

March *continued from page 1*

“Just because you are a college student does not mean you cannot do anything,” said Anderson.

The conference also talked about what to do when you are confronted with someone who is pro-choice. Participants learned that the best thing to do is to first establish a common ground and always remember that nothing will change unless you love the person you are talking to.

Overall, the 2009 March for Life proved to be a great success in that it was one of the largest yet. Not only was this the case in Washington D.C. but all around the nation, including a record crowd close to home in St. Paul.

“The March opened up the power of prayer. To know prayer is doing something is wonderful to see,” said Saffert.

*Audrey Anderson and Abby Saffert enjoying the sun at the March for Life*



*Sara Kovach*

## 10 Things I Will Miss Most About Rome

After spending four months in the Eternal City it is good to be home, but there are definitely many things I will miss.

**1. The Bernardi Community** -- How often is it that you get undergrads, graduate students, seminarians, a professor and his family, all living in the same building? The experience of living in Bernardi, growing as a community, and becoming good friends with a new group of people is incomparable. We shared so many laughs, had many interesting conversations, and really helped each other to grow in numerous ways, not the least of which was in our faith. It was a living experience that I will remember it forever as some of the most formative and enjoyable months of my life.

**2. The Chaplaincy** -- Fr. Carola, Fr. Justin, the seminarians from the NAC (North American College) and Nina (a consecrated laywoman friend of Fr. Carola's who led formation for the Bernardian women) only added to the experience of living in Bernardi. They provided formation, allowed us to celebrate Mass in our chapel and helped us to really come together as a group and as a family. For many of us, the silent retreat was a very prayer-filled and powerful weekend to evaluate our lives and our situation. It really helped us to take advantage of the rest of our time in Rome, and put things in perspective.

**3. Seeing the Pope** -- You know you are privileged when your chances for seeing the pope are not limited to only a few opportunities. Don't get me wrong, I

went whenever I could, but it is definitely a luxury when you can pick and choose among a variety of papal events to attend and you don't feel guilty if you miss one or two. I will never forget the first time I saw the pope and realized, finally, that this was real, that I was in Rome, at the center of the Church, really connected with the roots of Catholicism.



*Above: Girls from Bernardi on retreat near Castel Gondolfo*

**4. Wednesday Night Community Dinners** -- This is similar to numbers one and two, and as I write this I realize a common theme is community. However, Wednesday night dinners were a highlight for all of us. Picture a huge table, seating some 40 people, covered in a nice tablecloth, with wine, bread, and a delicious meal. The Mass and discussion before dinner were also very special times. It was a time to share together, to forget about the busyness of our lives, our class schedules and anything else we had going on. It was a time of laughter and fun, just enjoying each others' company.

**5. Classes at the Angelicum** -- Although the European system is much different

than the American educational system, classes were still an important part of our trip. The Angelicum is a beautiful place to go to school and our classes were very interesting and taught by extremely competent professors. Learning about the Catholic Faith, its foundations, and its influence on things like art, while being able to visit the places we learned about really added to my understanding and appreciation of what I was learning.

**6. Day Trips** -- Living in Minnesota we take day trips to Wisconsin, Iowa or the Dakotas, but none of these places are very different from the Twin Cities. Living in Rome, however, day trips to remarkable places are quite feasible. Throughout the semester we made day trips to Siena, Perugia, Assisi, Florence, and a number of other cities that have miracles, important significance in the lives of the saints and absolutely breathtaking scenery. The Italian countryside is very beautiful and one of my favorite things about my stay. A word to the wise: beware of the sharp curves in the roads, especially if you get carsick. Many of these cities are built on steep hills and were not designed for large tour buses!

**7. Walking through Rome** -- How often, when walking to school each morning, does someone get to pass sites as well known as the Spanish Steps and the Trevi Fountain? When it was raining, walking 45 minutes to school was sometimes a pain, but if the weather was nice, it was amazing just to enjoy the beautiful buildings and monuments that are scattered throughout the city. It is a city with so

**Missing Rome** *continues on page 3*

**Missing Rome** *continued from page 2*  
 much beauty and so much history.

**8. Scholar’s Lounge and Abbey Theater** – Going into the semester I never would have thought that some of my favorite restaurants would be Irish Pubs. Yet these two restaurants quickly became favorites for our group. When we craved something a little different from Italian fare of pasta and pizza (and even when we didn’t) we went to these two places for some amazing Irish stew and lots of fun conversations.

**9. Gelato** -- I would be remiss if I did not mention an important Italian staple food: gelato. Although I didn’t eat it as much when the weather got colder, our first month or two were spent with several trips a week to get gelato. So many flavors and each one so delicious!

**10. And finally, as strange as it will sound, I will miss missing**

**home!** -- In Rome I had the time of my life, but it was all tinged with a bit of homesickness. In Rome I realized how much my family and friends mean to me. The saying is true that absence makes the heart grow fonder. When I am in the familiar setting of St. Thomas or my hometown, it can be easy to take all the wonderful people in my life for granted. But four months away from them really made me realize how special and important to me they are.

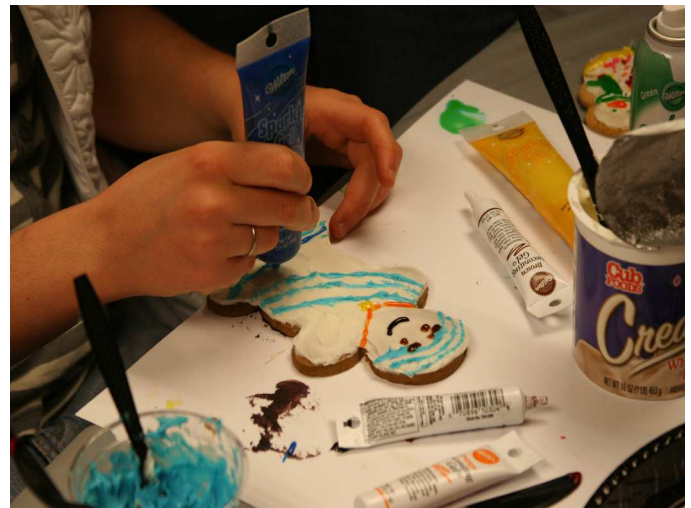
As my fellow former Bernardians and I settle back into life on campus, there is much we will miss about Rome. Like all experiences, it becomes a part of us and will remain with us for the rest of our lives. It has formed us, and changed us, and it is now up to us to keep alive within us all the things we learned, and to let them enrich our experience back at St. Thomas.

*Laura Janas*

## Advent Open House a “Sweet” Success



*Left: Stephanie Gockowski with her award-winning Mother Teresa cookie*



*Right: The art of Christmas cookie decorating*

Wednesday December 17th, 2008, meant final exams and projects, packing for home, and...the annual Catholic Studies Advent Open House!! Students and staff enjoyed sub sandwiches and good conversation, along with Christmas trivia (with prizes for winners!). And back by popular demand was the cookie decorating contest, where students used various colors of frosting, sprinkles, and candies to make some beautiful (and clever) creations! Snowmen, Christmas trees, and stars were popular designs while there were even sightings of a Fr. Keating cookie and a Jesus cookie too!

**Congratulations to first place winner junior Stephanie Gockowski with her Mother Teresa cookie! Everyone who participated had a “sweet” time indeed!**



*Right: Seminarian Gabriel Walz shows off his decorating skills*

*Below: Dr. Gerlach’s little girl likes cookie decorating too!*



Photos courtesy of Mary Harnan and Molly Wiersma

## Local Best: Places to get Fish in the Twin Cities this Lent

Why do the fishing industries get excited around this time of year? Because of the Lenten fish fries of course! But why exactly do we abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent? The rules of fasting have certainly evolved, but originally, all flesh meat and animal products such as eggs and cheese were given up throughout the Lenten season. Also, only one meal was consumed per day. However, it was difficult for those who labored to maintain their strength, so several smaller meals were permitted, and eventually meat was only prohibited on Fridays and Ash Wednesday. "Pious works" would merit the consumption of a dairy product, but eventually this too was waived. As we fast this Lent, let us be conscious of how small sacrifices can open us up to the greater reality of relying even more closely on God. Enjoy these dining suggestions this Lent, which starts on Wednesday, February 25th this year.

1. **"Best Fried Fish at Any Hour"** Mickey's Dining Car 36 W. 7th St. St. Paul, MN <http://www.mickeysdiningcar.com/> - Anyone who likes to hang around downtown St. Paul will have surely seen this cozy, unique diner. Open 24 hours, 7 days a week, you will find yourself in love with the beer battering on their cod and clam strips, both available as part of a basket with coleslaw and fries for under ten dollars. So stop by with a group of friends or a date, order up some fish and a malt, and travel back in time to the days of the 1940s.

2. **"Best All-You-Can Eat Fish Fry"** St. Pascal Baylon Catholic Church 1757 Conway St. St. Paul, MN 55106 <http://www.stpascalbaylon.com/> - Got an appetite? Sponsored by the Men's Club, St. Pascal's will be having an all-you-can-eat fish fry every Friday during Lent from 4:30- 7pm. What's on the menu? You can get baked or fried cod with all the fixings, and socialize with parishioners at this east side parish.

3. **"Best Traditional Fish Fry"** Church of St. Albert the Great 2836 33rd Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55406 <http://www.saintalbertthegreat.org/> - Recognized in the 2006 City Pages as the "Best Fish Fry in the Twin Cities," the Church of St. Albert the Great works every year to maintain that high standard of delicious fish as well as serving special cheesy mashed potatoes and hash-brown wedges. Different weeks, they feature special events throughout the night such as raffles, bingo, and parish booths. If you are willing to drive a little, you will find yourself enjoying this parish's "famous" fish-fry.

4. **"Best Take-out Fried Fish"** Mac's Fish and Chips 1330 Larpenteur Ave W., St Paul, MN 55113 -- Wanting to bring back fried fish to your dorm? Open 11 am- 8:30 pm Tuesday through Saturday, Mac's Fish and Chips mostly caters to take-out orders, but also has a small dining area inside the restaurant. Known for their generous portions of fish, Mac's also serves fried shrimp and clams.

*Elizabeth Jamison*

## A Roman Christmas

*Gloria in Excelsis Deo.* These were the words sung by our Holy Father just before he said the opening prayers for Midnight Mass, and immediately the bells of St. Peter's chimed, ushering in the day we as Catholics celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day. Celebrating Christmas in Rome at Bernardi was different for me, as I was away from friends and family, but surprisingly I felt more at home this Christmas than I ever have.

The Christmas festivities at Bernardi began with a Christmas party on December

23rd at the home of our Christian Art and Architecture professor, Dr. Elizabeth Lev. I arrived late, but we sang Christmas carols and she served Christmas cookies, egg nog, and mulled wine to my fellow Bernardians and I. Next was our Christmas party at Bernardi. We drew names from a hat for Advent Angels (a sort of Secret Santa) a couple of weeks prior, and at this party each Advent Angel revealed himself to the person whose name he drew, and gave that person a Christmas gift. It was beautiful to see how thoughtful the gifts were, and to see the happiness on the face of the person whose Advent Angel I was.

One week later we waited in line for St. Peter's Basilica, singing Christmas carols to pass the time. Some other people in the crowd even joined us! Next was Midnight Mass at St. Peter's, and at that Mass I was fortunate enough to make eye contact with the Holy Father for a second or so as he was processing in. I waved at him, and he waved back, and I'll never forget that moment, or the beautiful Mass, undoubt-



*Above: Pope, bishops and priests process to place the infant Jesus in its place in the Nativity scene*

edly the most beautiful Mass I have ever attended. When the Holy Father speaks, he speaks with love and authority, and you can see how much he loves Our Lord and His Church in how he speaks and how reverently he celebrates Mass. We are very fortunate to have such a wonderful and holy man as the shepherd of the flock of the Lord.

The following morning, Dr. Cavanaugh and his wife made breakfast for all of us Bernardians, and it was absolutely delicious. Then a group of my fellow Bernard-

**Roman Christmas** continues on page 5

*Below: Nativity scene inside St. Peter's Basilica*



## The Lowdown on Lent

To a non-Catholic, Lent may be a period of extremely strange rituals and practices. Why on earth would you sprinkle dirt on your forehead and then go on a diet for a month or so? But the truth is that extreme beauty lies in this penitential season of 40 weekdays and six Sundays in that it is a time of preparation for the great feast of Easter. Officially starting on Ash Wednesday (February 25th this year), Lent concludes with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on the evening of Holy Thursday (thus starting the Easter Triduum). The number 40, the weekday length of this season, holds special significance in that it indicates one generation or a very long time. It is also the number for testing, trial, and waiting (recall the flood of Noah, Israel's wandering in the desert, Moses' time on Mt. Sinai, Jesus' temptation by Satan, and His post-resurrection ministry). Historically Lent, which comes from the Anglo-Saxon words for "spring" and "March," had been a final retreat-like period of preparation for catechumens, who would be initiated into the Church at the Easter Vigil. It then evolved into a time of renewal for all baptized faithful, a period of reexamination and going into the desert with Jesus for personal reflection.

The practice of putting ashes on the forehead at the start of Lent comes from the ancient Ninevites in the Book of Jonah whose penance involved wearing sackcloth and bearing ashes. It is a humble reminder that life in this world is finite, that "you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Blessed with holy water and scented with incense, the ashes used on Ash Wednesday are created from burning the palms the previous Palm Sunday. They should remind the faithful that God

is loving and forgiving to all who come before Him with contrite hearts.

Before Vatican II, Catholics were required to fast every Friday of the year (in commemoration of Good Friday) and every single day during the season of Lent. Since then the universal fast of the Church has been reduced down to the Lenten season. According to Dr. John Boyle, Catholics fast from the things that are "not essentials of life." It is a special



ascetical practice where Catholics slow down and draw nourishment from a source other than food. Indeed, while Lent is a time of increased prayer of the soul, fasting is in a sense "prayer of the body." We take the focus off of ourselves and put it onto something bigger. There is a definite link between the desires for food and those for carnal pleasures, a connection between gluttony and lust, and Lent should be a time of fasting from both these struggles. "The reduction of rich foods is a matter of tempering food and bodily appetites. It's about self-mastery," says Dr. Boyle. Meat was a luxury food in ancient times, only eaten by the wealthy, so in consuming fish rather than meat, one descends to a level of poverty. Everything connected

to meat was included in the fast long ago, including milk and eggs. This is perhaps a reason why the Easter egg was so popular – it hadn't been eaten for over 40 days! Along with the fast from meat, Catholics oftentimes participate in a personal fast from something they enjoy. Why not try something different this year, such as fasting from Facebook, energy drinks, gasoline (walk or bike!), or credit card spending!

Praying the Stations of the Cross is a post-reformation Lenten Catholic practice, but the idea is certainly older. It is closely linked to pilgrimages made by the faithful to the Holy Land to visit places related to Christ, especially His passion. For those who couldn't make the journey, replica pilgrimage sites were constructed, with stations so that you could follow Christ closely or walk with Him. Overall this practice arises, according to Dr. Boyle, "out of the piety of the Church's faithful as an expression of fidelity and love." In 1731, Pope Clement XII established the 14 stations known today. Then on Good Friday of 1991, Pope John Paul II introduced an alteration of the traditional stations, which includes Jesus' betrayal by Judas, denial by Peter, and promise of the Kingdom to the good thief getting crucified next to Him. The majority of Catholics, however, still pray Clement's traditional Stations of the Cross.

Above all, when taken seriously, Lent can be an incredible season. "If we are attentive to the disciplines of Lent, then it's a chance to turn from ourselves to God so we are better prepared to celebrate the greatest of feasts at Easter," Dr. Boyle remarks. It is a great time to learn from weaknesses and grow as a person of faith. When asked to give some advice to

*Lenten Lowdown continues on page 6*

**Roman Christmas** *continued from page 4*

ians, Father Carola, and I went to the noon Urbi Et Orbi blessing in St. Peter's Square, where the Holy Father delivers an address and then blesses the city and the world. It was very beautiful and moving. After the Urbi et Orbi, we all attended a potluck lunch prepared by the Bernardians. We each brought a dish to share, and it was very moving to see the love and care that went into preparing this meal. We also got a chance to talk and celebrate together the Birth of Our Lord, free of commercialism, and because of that, the true meaning of Christmas was very clear and evident here at

Bernardi.

The next week or so after Christmas I took the time to truly grasp what the Nativity of Our Lord meant, and realized that without the Incarnation, there is no crucifixion or resurrection. Without God becoming man, man could not get to heaven. As a popular Christmas hymn states, "For unto us a Son is born, unto us a Son is given".

*Michael Blissenbach*

# For the Fridge

## *Lenten Prayer*

*Almighty and Everlasting God,  
You have given the human race  
Jesus Christ our Savior as a model of  
humility.*

*He fulfilled Your Will by becoming Man  
And giving His life on the Cross.*

*Help us to bear witness to You  
By following His example of suffering  
And make us worthy to share in His  
Resurrection.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus  
Christ, Your Son.  
Amen.*

*Our Father...  
Mary, Mother of Jesus,  
you were Jesus' gift for us from the  
Cross.*

*He gave you to us as our mother.  
Intercede for all our needs.*

*Hail Mary...*

*Glory Be...*

**Perpetual Adoration** starts soon! Don't forget to sign up for a time with Jesus! Contact Philip Schumaker at [pjschumaker@stthomas.edu](mailto:pjschumaker@stthomas.edu) for more information.

If you are interested in working as **Layout Director** for the Signature next fall, please contact Paula at [thel9640@stthomas.edu](mailto:thel9640@stthomas.edu).

young Catholics in keeping the season of Lent, Dr. Boyle replied, "Don't do things to make other people's lives miserable!" If you give up sweets for Lent and Grandma slaves in the kitchen all day making cookies, you better eat the cookie and find something else to do that day! Also, "Lent is not a time to be surly and bitter." It is about helping us become detached from ourselves, not complaining that we can't have pop or don't get to watch our favorite TV show. Finally, "When you fail, don't give up but rather begin again. Learn humility – it's not all about you, it's about grace. Don't try to be a spiritual superman. Lent is not a season of despair – it's a season of joy and hope because Easter is at the end." And Dr. Boyle makes it clear that Sundays don't count as part of Lent! Not only are they not included in the calendar of Lent's 40 days, Sunday is the Lord's Day and is meant to be about rejoicing, not a day of fasting and penance. This doesn't make Sunday a day of "indulgence and letting loose" but rather a day of rest and worship, where some alternative form of self-denial can be practiced.

If you're anything like me, you find Lent to be a challenging yet extremely rewarding season! The good news then is that it doesn't need to stop on Holy Thursday! Rather Lenten practices should be kept with the idea that they will be made a part of our everyday Christian life. One could compare the season to spring cleaning. For a few weeks some intense work is done around the house (or prayer, fasting, and almsgiving done in our lives), making the home fresh and renewed (ready for Easter). But cleaning doesn't have to occur just during spring... wouldn't it be great if the house was clean all the time? Likewise, Lenten practices such as going to daily Mass, reading more of the Church Fathers, fasting from video games, or giving time and money to the poor, should be made a part of our year-round life. Here's to a blessed Lent!!

Sources: The Catholic Source Book by: Rev. Peter Klein, [www.catholiceducation.org](http://www.catholiceducation.org), and [www.churchyear.net](http://www.churchyear.net).

*Paula Thelen*

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The Signature is published by the  
Department of Catholic Studies

The Signature  
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Mail 55-S  
2115 Summit Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105-1096