

In the Footsteps of Paul and John  
St. John Vianney Pilgrimage  
October, 2007

Travel Log and Occasional Personal Remarks  
by Bob & Marijka Ulanowicz

Monday, October 8

It was about 10:15 when Joe and Trudy Mihalcik stopped by to pick Bob & Marijka up and take them to the SJV parking lot. It appeared many fellow travelers were accompanied by their spouses or friends who had come to see them off. Mary Posey was even sent off by her dog! The bus got underway at 11:10 with about 35 people aboard. (We were 43 in all, but several were to meet us at Dulles Airport.) Fr. Daly led us in recitation of the rosary as we drove through the upper County. Along the way, Marijka and Bob ate a really nice lunch that Marijka had prepared for the ride.

Arriving at Dulles, we checked in for Air France Flight 039 to Paris, but there was a long wait before boarding, which was passed in the B Terminal. While we were waiting, M & B called their daughter Vera to see how she had done on the GREs? (Well, fortunately!) Eventually, we boarded, but there was a further 45 minute delay, while the ground crew tried to locate the baggage of a missing passenger. The flight got off before 6 pm, however, and we were soon on our way across the Atlantic.

Tuesday, October 9

The flight over the Atlantic was relatively brief, because of the usual jet stream tailwinds. Our early arrival time (ca. 06:30, or 12:30 EDT) made it difficult to get any sleep. At Charles de Gaulle Airport we wound up in a dingy, uncomfortable terminal building without any seating. It was another 3.5 hour delay and some, like Pete Abresch, simply went to sleep on the floor. We didn't board AF 1590 at the gate, but were bussed instead all over the airport to our plane waiting on the ramp. (It appears the driver wasn't sure where he was supposed to go.) The flight nevertheless got off on time and arrived in Istanbul right on the mark (2:25pm.)

We were met as we exited customs by our guide for the Turkish leg of the trip, one Mr. Sabahattin Canliel, who asked to be called simply Sabah. Sabah spoke accentless American, although he had never spent any long time in our country. It seems he was born in Holland of Turkish parents, and when his family returned to Turkey, the parents had sent Sabah to the American school in Istanbul. Sabah had a wise-guy but affable mien about him, and we all immediately bonded with him. He entertained us on the ride to the Nippon Hotel in the Taksis section of downtown Istanbul, where Marijka and Bob drew Room 419.

After a little more than an hour of rest, there was Evening Prayer in the downstairs meeting room, followed by dinner in the restaurant. Dinner at the Nippon was fixed menu

and served. After dinner there was a talk by Cassie Garcia on the Byzantine Empire, and we retired to our room. Exhausted, it was lights-out at 9:30pm.

Wednesday, October 10

Our alarm had been set for 06:45 wakeup. We heard the call to prayer, which Sabah explained was an amplified, live human voice. The breakfast downstairs was buffet style (as would be all that followed in Turkey.) Everyone assembled outside the hotel and walked as a group about ½ mile to St. Anthony's Church. St. Anthony's (of Padua) was built by French Franciscans about 1904 and for a while had an adjoining monastery. It was also the residence of Angelo Roncalli (later John XXIII) when he was Papal Nuncio in Istanbul. It was while he was in residence there that he wrote out several thousand pseudo-baptismal certificates for Jews who were seeking to emigrate to Portugal (but had to be Catholic to do so.) These souls escaped extermination and his action earned a place for Roncalli in the Hall of the Righteous in Jerusalem. Fr. Daly said Mass and was assisted by Msgr. Brady. Our group was joined at Mass by a like-sized contingent from San Francisco, consisting mostly of worshippers of Philippine background.

After leaving church, we walked several blocks to meet up with the bus, which then drove past the Pera Palace Hotel, where passengers on the Orient Express were once housed. Sabah tells us that Istanbul contains 2,400 mosques, 500 churches and 12 operating synagogues. He also points out the aqueducts, which were built in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century and modified by Justinian in the 6<sup>th</sup>. We continued on to the Blue Mosque. The Blue Mosque was so named because there were extensive Nicean blue tiles on its interior walls. In order to enter men had to wear long pants and long sleeves, while women had to wear long skirts, long-sleeved blouses and scarves. Of course, everyone had to take off their shoes and carry them with them in a small plastic bag. The Blue Mosque had been built later than the nearby Christian Hagia Sophia, which it was meant to rival. The Turkish architects had learned something in the interim about making buildings able to outlast earthquakes. The building was supported by four "elephant columns", and the dome of the Mosque remains today, many earthquakes later, almost a perfect circle.

From there it was but a couple of hundred yards to the nearby Hagia Sophia (Church of the Holy Wisdom, sometimes referred to as St. Sophia's.) This was an extremely important historic church. It was here that the delegates sent by St Vladimir of Kyiv heard the voices from the choirs in the balcony that sounded to them like angels in heaven. Their impression was key to the conversion of the Kyivean Rus'. During the 8<sup>th</sup> Century the iconoclasts had covered the extensive iconography on the walls with marble panels and masonry. It was here in 1054 that delegates from the Church of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople issued countervailing excommunication orders – a rift that has never quite healed. The church was plundered in 1204 by the Fourth Crusade from Venice and finally fell to the Turks in 1453. It was then converted into a mosque, and decorated with Qur'anic calligraphy. With the advent of Ataturk and the Republican rebellion, the church became a secular museum, which it remains today. It is forbidden to pray in the church (at least openly.)

Continuing along the line between the two churches, we entered Topkapi Palace, the residence of the Sultans, along with their harems and Janissaries. Here there were museum rooms devoted to the lifestyle of the Sultans, including the fabled jewels (e.g., the Topkapi dagger and the Spoonmaker's Diamond), portraits of the Ottoman Sultans and the kitchen utensils used to cook and feed some 600 people daily. Marijka and Bob had lunch along with Tracy Doyle and Debbie Wessler at the Palace cafeteria overlooking the Golden Horn. They sat next to a nice German couple, who took their pictures and told them about their own tour in Paul's footsteps.

Our bus then took us to the Bazaar. One could call it the world's first mall, as it was completely covered and several blocks on a side. There were shops selling every conceivable bauble or trinket. We stocked up on Turkish Delight and a few other souvenirs. We didn't tarry long, however, and retreated from the crowds to a nearby sidewalk café and bar, where George and Sandy Sullivan were already having beer with a few in our tour. Being the ruffian that Bob is, he got the group singing "He's a Damn Fine Guy" to George and a few others who likewise had left the Bazaar and joined our table. We were surrounded by several tables of Dutchmen, who took our singing as a challenge and answered back with songs of their own. We countered and a friendly competition ensued. They outnumbered us, so we eventually had to quietly concede the field to them. As we left for the bus, they were really getting into their cups, and the whole street resounded. It was funny as we walked back to the bus to watch the Turks hurrying in the opposite direction to see what the commotion was all about!

We returned to the hotel for a dinner of layered crepes, salad, beef tips on mashed potatoes and flan. After dinner there was Evening Prayer followed by three reports -- one by Rosalie Helms on Modern Turkey, another by Peter Abresch on the Ottoman Empire and the final one by Marijka on icons and iconoclasm. Unfortunately, everyone was so exhausted by the day's activities and residual jet lag that many dozed off during Marijka's talk, which had taken her hours of preparation. It was lights-out at 10:25p.

Thursday, October 11

Today is the last day of Ramadan and the people of Turkey are in a "Christmas-Eve"-like mood. We were awakened again at 06:45 and finished our packing. We all met for Mass at 07:45 and went upstairs to the restaurant at 08:45. Our luggage was all loaded onto the bus and we set out on our last day in Istanbul.

Our first stop was at the Basilica Cisterns. This was an amazing feat of Roman engineering! The Romans had piped in water from the surrounding countryside and stored it, not in an open reservoir, like we do today, but in an enormous underground cistern. The cistern is roughly rectangular, several city blocks on a side. The ceiling is about 30' high, supported by columns spaced some 20' apart and is vaulted between the columns. Standing in the cistern one has the impression that one is in some dark imperial palace. The cistern was designed to store water almost to its roof, but now only a foot or so is maintained for show (and there is a large community of fish that thrive, presumably on food given to them.) Only part of the cistern is open to the public. We were told about

the 3,000 Janissaries (palace guards) who were called into the cistern by the Sultan (who suspected their rebellion), and were cruelly massacred there. There was one corner with a little restaurant that could be booked for wedding parties and meetings. The cistern was used in a James Bond thriller to film a speed boat chase in the dark cavernous labyrinth.

We returned to the bus and were driven to the Ortakoey, a waterside park on the Bosphorus whose Turkish name translates as “Midway” (apparently between the Black Sea and the Marmara.) There by the waterside was a baroque mosque by an Armenian architect and a walkway of food shops where we could take lunch. The specialty recommended by Sabah was “kumpir”, a baked potato stuffed with all kinds of vegetable delights.

We then continued north almost as far as the Black Sea to board a tour boat that would take us all the way downstream back to Istanbul. There were only 43 of us as passengers on the boat, but there was a full complement of vendors who pressed us persistently with their wares. We had fresh-squeezed orange juice and strong Turkish tea. We cruised past any number of beautiful mansions (this being prime real estate), including the last Sultan’s palace and the home that was built for Ataturk’s convalescence during the last year of his life. We cruised under two bridges connecting Asia with Europe.

We disembarked very near the center of Istanbul and walked to the Spice Market. Like the Bazaar we visited earlier, this one also was enclosed. After buying a few trinkets as souvenirs, Marijka and Bob repaired to the square outside, which was just jammed with last minute holiday shoppers. It was a very festive atmosphere. It was especially touching to see so many young, observant Muslim families. Bob bought some roasted chestnuts, and as he was eating them, he became conscious that there wasn’t a speck of litter on the pavement (and Bob wasn’t going to be the first to drop his huskings, biodegradable though they may be!)

We walked back to the bus and were driven to the Istanbul Airport, where we took leave of our driver, Reggio, and entered the Airport. A minor catastrophe was avoided when Linda Vulina’s passport turned up missing. Fortunately, it was located back on the bus. We proceeded thru security to wait on Turkish Airlines Flight #0238 to Denizli. Ramadan ended while we were in the air, and we were all treated to a special “fast-breaking” snack pack, that included the traditional date and water (the first items to be consumed) as well as a sandwich and a package of “Cup-of Soup” to be mixed with hot water that the stewardesses distributed. Once on the ground, we met our new bus driver, Mustafa, and were on our way in the dark through a desert-like landscape. It was a one and a quarter hour trip and we said Evening Prayer along the way. Our hotel was named Lycas River nearby the town of Pamukkale. It was a spa in the thermal springs area west of Denizli. Marijka and Bob were given room 7211. The restaurant stayed open for us and provided a buffet spread that included lots of nice vegetables. Afterwards we scoped out the spacious swimming pool and the nearby thermal bath fed by the hot springs. It was lights-out at 11:02pm.

Friday, October 12

Bob set the alarm for the civilized hour of 07:00. He was able to rise and go to the nice pool for a before- breakfast swim! Breakfast was at 08:30, and we were on the bus by 09:00. We drove to the site of the ancient city of Colossae. All that was visible was a mound of earth some 30' high and several hundred meters across. Sabah told us that the farmers who work the land over the city often come across artifacts. So while the group was making its way up the side of the hill, Bob ran ahead to the top and began searching the fields. Sure enough, he quickly came across two pieces of terra cotta that were visible human artifacts. One was a small quadrat with a ridge across the middle. The ridge had been visibly daubed by a finger. The other looked like a piece of a vase with part of a ridge showing. Bob was excited with his find, and ran down to rejoin the crowd now assembling on the hillside.

Father Daly started reading from the third chapter of the letter to the Colossians. Mary Claire continued with the reading, and Marijka was asked to read after that. It was our first stop at an archeological site, and Bob was impressed that we were reading from scripture while standing on the very spot to which the epistle had been addressed. As Bob stared at his artifact with the finger marks, he pondered how the indentations were made, probably in less than a second, some 1900 years ago; and now here he stood with a vague connection across the years to the human who had made them. Bob gave the piece of vase to Msgr. Brady. Sabah then warned us that we were strictly enjoined by the Turkish government not to remove artifacts from any archeological site. If caught with one, we would wind up in prison. Figuring that he was not in possession of some national treasure, Bob quietly slipped the shard into his pocket. He later asked Msgr. Brady if he had tossed his piece. Monsignor replied that he still had it.

It was not a very long drive on to Laodicea, the second of the seven churches addressed in the Book of Revelation. Unlike Colossae, which had remained completely unearthed, Laodicea, which was on the top of an arid hill, was in the early stages of excavation. Sabah led us through the warm sun (it was pushing 90F) to the middle of a field on which hundreds of pieces of marble had been laid out, grouped according to type. Sabah then told us about how Laodicea had been fed by two aqueducts, one from hot thermal springs and the other from a cold river. The former was stored in a caldarium and the latter in a frigidarium. Both waters were used for different purposes, and there was a pool, called a tepidarium where the waters were mixed to become warm water. This was what had prompted the author of Revelation to refer to the city's Christian community as neither hot nor cold. The eye salve for which the city was renowned was also referred to in Revelation. Suddenly, seemingly meaningless phrases were given new significance, and we were standing on the very place about which it was all written. Before he started talking, Sabah had placed his hat on top of a piece of granite column lying on the ground near his feet. When he had finished, he said he had a surprise for us. He picked up his hat to reveal a carving on the pillar. It was a Christian cross "growing" out of a Jewish menorah! It was a crude chiseling that was essentially graffiti that some early Jewish Christian had surreptitiously left on the backside of a column.

It being Baryami (the celebration after the end of Ramadan), we had the place all to ourselves. Marijka was approached by a young Turkish guard, who wanted to know if she were Russian (not the question to ask her! :) She exchanged a few words with him and realized that the beautiful Russian, Ukrainian and Moldovan girls that he was extolling were in fact part of the white slavery business in that area.

We were then allowed to roam the grounds for about 45 minutes, under the watchful eyes of the guards. Marijka and Bob were joined by Tracy Doyle and Debbie Wessler as they walked among the pieces, which had been segregated according to function. We discovered some lentils with carvings on them of fish, pomegranates, cows, etc. These were the signs of the merchants who occupied the stores (fish merchant, fruit stand and butcher shop, respectively.) Imagine one of today's billboards lasting 1900 years! Marijka even sighted the symbol of Aesculapius (entwined snakes), indicating a doctor or pharmacist. Then there were pieces with (Greek) text on them, and we had fun trying to make out what they said. It was as if we had been released into a garden of antique delights as we flitted from one discovery to the next. The experience was to be one of the high points of the entire trip for Bob.

Alas, our time was up and it was back onto the bus with us. We were driven to Hieropolis at the head of Pammukale. Pammukale was this large hill about a hundred or so feet high that was snow white with calcium carbonate. The  $\text{CaCO}_3$  was the mineral residual of hot water springs that ran down the hill. There were a few hot water pools at the top into which we were allowed to wade. On the grounds were the ruins of an old temple. Apparently, even in ancient times these springs served as a spa for those with various sicknesses. At one end of the grounds was an enclosure where the springs were deep enough for swimming. The springs there looked identical to springs in Florida, but that was deceptive, because these springs were hot. Bob didn't have his swim suit, besides which, it cost nearly \$10 to swim. Instead he and Marijka had lunch from a shop there. Marijka had spinach phyllo, while Bob ate a half-dozen enormous figs.

On our way back to the hotel we stopped at what Sabah had billed as a "surprise". It seems that many of the ancients who came to the springs for healing died there instead. Disposing of the bodies became a problem, so the locals began to demand a "deposit" of everyone coming to the springs. Should a visitor be so unfortunate as to die while at the springs, his/her deposit was used to bury them in a nearby necropolis. That's right, the surprise was a visit to the necropolis! All of the graves had been looted long ago and so were empty. Some Russian tourists were lying in the tombs and having their pictures taken recumbent in them. Bob elected simply to take a picture or two of the city of the dead.

Back at the hotel, we had a rare 3 hours of free time, and we all gathered by the pool. Most of the other guests there were German, and Bob had fun practicing his German by mixing it up with a group from Bremen. Mass was held at 6:30 in the basement of our block of rooms. There must have been upwards of 600 people in the restaurant for dinner. It was a real scramble to beat out the Germans, who were very adept with their elbows

(but congenial nonetheless on a one-to-one basis.) After dinner we met in the dark beside the pool to listen to two reports. Trudy Mihalcik talked about the Caliphate and Joe Garcia about the Judaizers (those who insisted on gentile converts to Christianity holding to the Moasic Law.) A long discussion ensued about where Catholicism was headed. It was lights-out at 11:45.

Saturday, October 13

The alarm rang at 06:00. As we filed into breakfast, we were able to buy pictures that a photographer had snapped at dinner the night before. Bob and Marijka bought one of the two of them at table. The Abresches bought one of Annemarie sticking her tongue into Peter's ear. After breakfast it was report to the bus by 07:30. Our first stop was at Philadelphia in the present day town of Alaschir. It was the fourth of the churches addressed in Revelation. Only three of the pillars of the church there remain standing. This time Bob was asked to read the passages pertaining to the church. To him it was a strange feeling to be reading what had been written 1900 years ago about a group that met on the very spot where we were standing.

It was back on the bus and down the road a bit to Sardis, the fifth of the seven churches we were to visit. We sat in the synagogue from which the early Christian converts had come. The walls of the synagogue were decorated with some beautiful geometric murals, one of which could have been taken from the artist Escher. We take group pictures, stroll the Roman road and look at the excavated and reconstructed workshops, some with crosses etched into the marble. The huge gymnasium was easily as large as any modern facility.

As we wound our way towards the sixth church, we passed numerous tumuli – mounded burial sites for Greeks at about the time of Christ. It began to rain, rather heavily by the time we got to the church at Thiatira. Rather than get off the bus, we parked alongside and listened to the passages that referred to this church. The site looked in about the same shape as the remnants of Philadelphia. Lunch was at a roadside cafeteria called Huenkar, where we could order excellent meatballs (kuefte) and salad.

As our itinerary had been foreshortened, we arrived a full 1 and ½ hours early in Izmir (Smyrna) at the church of St. Polycarp. Polycarp was a local bishop who followed in the generation after the evangelist John and who was martyred for his faith. We were hoping that the sexton (an Italian nun) there would allow us to have Mass early and be on our way. Alas, we were told by the grumpy lady that the church would be used in the interim and that we had to wait until our appointed time (5pm.) We then cooled our heels strolling along the harbor of Izmir, along with a parade of humanity (it was still a holiday) going up and down the malecon. Marijka and Bob got lost on their way back to church. They bumped into Joe and Cassie Garcia, who were likewise unsure of the way back. The four finally connected with the rest of the group in the nick of time.

St Polycarp's had been reconstructed over its 6<sup>th</sup> Century ruins in a baroque style popular at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It reminded Bob of churches in Baltimore of similar

vintage, only much better maintained. Bob had the privilege of lecturing at vigil Mass, and he was absolutely astounded by the acoustics! One could whisper at the lectern and hear one's voice bellowing back in response. Our singing was unusually good. Apparently, our heartfelt celebration melted the heart of our crabby hostess, who apologized for her earlier abruptness. We see in her apology a true sign of Divine intervention. :)

After Mass we were bussed to our accommodations for the night – a 5-star hotel called the Izmir Princess (presumably operated by the Princess Line, which uses the port of Izmir for its cruises.) We were warned not to touch anything in the mini-bar, as it would cost us in blood. Bob hurried to change and make it into the heated pool before dinner. It was nice and big, but off-kilter (crescent-shaped) for swimming laps. It turns out that the pool was far and away the best thing about the hotel. When Bob returned to his room, it was quite warm and stuffy. They turned off the A/C (which Bob don't like, anyway), but they were on the leeward side of the building and absolutely no air blew into the room. The buffet for dinner was nice, but we all soon discovered that much of what normally comes with dinner was "extra". If one wanted water, it was available for over \$5 per liter! Beer and wine were exorbitantly more (house wine at \$50 a bottle.)

Sabah had asked us all to watch the Europe's Cup match between Turkey and Moldova, in which Turkey was highly favored. Back in their stuffy room, Bob & Marijka found the channel and watched Turkey struggle against the underdog, managing to salvage a 1-1 tie in the final minutes. It had been a moral victory for the Moldovans and a stinging disappointment for the Turks. The Turks were still eligible for the Cup, but now would have to defeat arch-rival Greece the next week (when we would be in Greece.) It was lights-out at 11:22.

Sunday, October 14

Alarm was once again at 06:00. It had been an uncomfortable night, with no ventilation to speak of. At breakfast Msgr. Brady wanted a glass of squeezed orange juice. He was told it would cost him \$11. We were off again at 07:30, and Bob was tempted to shake the dust from his sandals upon departure. It was a long ride to Bergama near ancient Pergamum. We listened to two reports about the letters of John and the Qur'an and a lengthy discourse from Sabah about Islam, which devolved into a pontification on Turkish and Middle East politics. We stopped at a turquoise, gold and onyx store for WC and shopping. Marijka bought herself a nice pair of turquoise earrings mounted in gold.

Before going up the mountain to Pergamum, we stopped at the Asklepion, an early Greek form of hospital. We were taken below ground to where the patients were housed. A stream ran down the middle of the hallway beneath a grating. It provided a restful brook-like trickling sound. From above were openings to a mezzanine where healers would whisper sweet encouragements, like, "All will be well!" or "You are getting better!" Seems these folks understood well the connection between the psyche and the physical. There was also a small theatre, which today is still used for summertime meetings of medical associations.

We continued up the mountain towards the acropolis (high city.) The last few hundred feet were on foot. We were told that the library at Pergamum (ca. 200,000 volumes) was second only to that at Alexandria, and that this was the city where parchment had been developed. There was a very large arena here and also a temple to Zeus, which was denounced by the author of Revelation as “the Seat of Satan”. The view from the summit back upon Bergama was impressive, although it was cold and rainy. We made our way down the scary switchback and into Bergama, where we stopped at an eatery that catered with a limited menu to tourists. They specialized mostly in kebobs. Marijka had a lamb kebob, and Bob enjoyed the spicy chicken version.

From there our second long ride of the day was to Selchik and the Basilica of St. John. Not much was left of the church which once had rivaled St Sophia’s. The tomb of St. John was marked on the ground near the center of the church. The baptistery in this church was the inspiration for the baptismal pool in St. John Vianney. At one end of the church a balcony looked out on the flood plain of the river Meander (after which the curves in coastal rivers are named.) This alluvial plain had been sea at the time of Christ and gradually had silted up, so that it is now flat farmland. Off to the side was the famous city of Ephesus, which in antiquity had been a seaport, but was abandoned when the harbor silted over. (Apparently, dredging harbors wasn’t a strong card in the suite of Roman engineering expertise.)

Our final stop for the day was at the Pine Bay Inn, a hotel on the side of a hill overlooking the harbor of Kushadasi. Bob and Marijka were given Room 4021, which was more of a suite with two double beds. We had Sunday evening Mass in a glass-lined hall, accompanied by the background noise of the cooks and waiters setting up downstairs for dinner. Just after dinner, B & M bought a half-hour of Internet (slow) to check email and send brief messages home. Finally, Bob dressed to swim in the pool. The evening was slightly cool, but the water was reasonably warm. Bob’s approach to the pool caused a stir among the waiters, who were convinced that he was plum crazy. Bob told them that we in Maryland swim until November in the Chesapeake. One of the waiters, not to be outdone, said he swims until December there. The loud hoots and shouts the group made as Bob dived into the pool indicated that maybe that boast was a bit of bravado. It was lights-out at 11:32.

Monday, October 15

Our last full day in Turkey began at 06:15. After breakfast, we put off for nearby Ephesus. Along the way, Marijka led the group in Morning Prayer. We arrived just before the gates opened to the public (08:00.) We spent a full two hours walking through Ephesus, beginning at the Upper Agora (where wholesale commercial and civic agreements were transacted) and going downhill past the Odeon and various temples to Hadrian, Trajan, Artemis, Hercules, and Domitian. (The cruel Domitian had ordered that the city build a temple to him, and so they built a “Potemkin”. To ensure that the emperor would never enter their sham, the city fathers had the head of the goddess Medusa placed over the lintel. They knew that the superstitious Domitian was deeply afraid of Medusa

and would never pass under her visage.) We viewed the remnants of the men's latrines, which individuals might occupy for hours at a time, discussing important business with their patrons sitting next to them!

On the opposite side of the main street were the homes of the elite, with their intricate mosaic sidewalks. A major renovation of these houses was underway. Towards the bottom of the hill stood the magnificent façade of the library, which was the third largest (behind Alexandria and Pergamum) in the ancient world. A particular feature of the library was an indoor connection to an adjoining brothel, so that the men could enter the library and pass into the house of pleasure out of the sight of the women of the City. We had our group picture taken in front of the library façade. We then walked into the nearby theatre/arena, which seated upwards of 24,000 people. While seated there, we were addressed by Mary Claire McIlvanie in the manner of Paul. We then walked through the public agora and into the parking lot, where our bus was waiting for us.

Our bus took us up the mountain on one side of Ephesus to Mary's House. The evangelist John records that, just before Jesus died on the cross, he remanded his Holy Mother into the care of his "beloved disciple" (presumably John.) Legend has it that John took Mary with him to Ephesus and cared for her there. If that had been the case, then the Dormition and Assumption would have taken place in Ephesus. In 1812 a German nun and mystic, Sister Anne Catherine Emmerich, had a vision of Mary in this house (although Emmerich never left Germany.) She described the house and its location in great detail, and a house built in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> Century was discovered according to the vision, built on earlier foundations that could be dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD.

Regardless of whether or not this was the house in which Mary ended her earthly life, the place exuded a serenity, thanks in no small part to the care with which the Franciscans give to the natural surroundings. Msgr. Brady said Mass at a pavilion next to the house (in the cold wind), and Marijka had the privilege of lecturing. We attracted some attention from other pilgrims and they joined in our celebration. Below the pavilion there was a bank of fountains, the water from which was believed by the Muslims to be miraculous. (This is a sacred site to the Muslims, who also venerate Mary.) Before leaving the grounds, Bob visited the men's WC, a dark, dank building that nonetheless had an elongated opening along one wall that opened out on one of the most beautiful, verdant mountain scenes that he had ever experienced (this, despite the area being otherwise a parched, brown landscape.)

Our bus then cruised downhill to nearby Seljuk, where we visited a museum with many of the artifacts recovered from the ruins of Ephesus. One particularly gory display dealt with the gladiators who had fought at the arena there. From there it was but a short hop to a government sponsored co-op that makes rugs and educates the touring public on the dying art of making Turkish rugs by hand. We were lectured in a room near the entrance, where three looms were being operated by young women. They demonstrated the "double knot" technique that is characteristic of Turkish carpets. They also demonstrated how thread was spun from cocoons of the silkworm. Then we were moved into a large room and were seated along the walls. Each person was served an ample portion of

Turkish “peda” (a variation of Italian pizza) and apple tea, another favorite of the Turks. Then the big pitch began: Rug after rug was brought forth and rolled out at our feet in dramatic, choreographed fashion. (All that was wanting was the usual music that accompanies fashion shows.) The master of ceremonies described in smooth detail the features of each sample (some of which were truly impressive.) Their efforts were not in vain. Our group bought on the order of 10 -12 rugs, averaging well over \$1,000 each.

After consuming our quota of “Raki” (a Turkish drink similar to, but stronger than Greek Ouzo, which the grateful merchants showered upon us), we motored to Melitus, a garrisoned stop on the Silk Road from which Paul sailed on his return to Jerusalem. Like nearby Ephesus, Melitus had bordered on the sea, but now was several kilometers inland due to siltation. The Theatre at Melitus was of Roman origin. Sabah asked us to date the theatre in light of the fact of its Roman architecture. Marijka answered 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC. Sabah asked her how she knew? Marijka replied that it had to be about the time soon after the King of Pergamun had joined his kingdom to Rome. Sabah then said that he could cry (out of joy, of course. :) The stadium was not carved out of a hillside, but rather constructed upwards out of the low plateau. There was an inscription (in Greek) to the fact that Mark Anthony had visited it.

Below the slight escarpment lay the agora and the Roman baths, which had been a present to the city by Faustina, wife of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. The baths had been reasonably excavated and reconstructed and were quite impressive. On our ride back to the hotel, Sabah regaled us with a detailed description of the customs that surrounded his recent wedding. We returned rather fatigued to the Pine Bay to join in Mass (which Sabah attended) and have dinner. Some of our group went to town to dissipate the rest of their Turkish Lira. Bob and Marijka returned to their room instead. It was lights-out at 10:47.

Tuesday, October 16

We slept in until 07:47. After breakfast, Bob walked downhill to a nearby store to buy some nuts and exhaust what few Turkish Lira he and Marijka had left. Then our bus drifted down for a 10 -minute ride to the harbor at Kushsadası, where we would board our cruise ship for the Aegean. We said goodbye to Mustafa and bid a fond adieu to Sabah. We even saw and waved to Reggio, our bus driver in Istanbul, who happened to be dropping off another group at that time. George handed out our tickets and passcards for the boat, then we picked up our luggage to roll them thru customs and onto the ship – The Louis Mediterranean Cruise Liner, “Ruby”. This was the first cruise ever for B & M.

It seems that the boat we had originally booked had sunken back in April, and this vessel had been pulled out of mothballs and rushed into service as its replacement. It was about 300’ long and had 9 decks. Bob & Marijka were assigned to cabin DO95 on Deck 4. It was an inboard cabin with two twin beds but no opening to the outside. It was compact and well designed. We all were asked to attend a safety drill up on Deck 6, and because of recent events with this Cruise Line, most thought it best to attend. We had a sit-down lunch in the restaurant. B & M sat with two ladies from California, one of whom had the

unusual name of Susie Peace. At 2:30 pm we assembled in the cinema for Mass. We had to hurry the liturgy along, because we had the auditorium booked only until 3pm. Soon after the consecration the PA system started blaring about our imminent arrival at the isle of Patmos, and it droned on without stopping. We had to talk and sing over the noise.

We did not pull up to the dock in the port of Skala, but rather anchored in the Bay of Patmos. The island was a jewel. All the houses were sparkling white against the lovely blue of the sea. We had to board a tender boat to go onto the island. (Each time we left the boat, we had to have our ticket swiped so that the crew could maintain an accurate count of who was not on the boat.) Once on land in Skala, we boarded a bus for an afternoon tour of the island. Our guide was named Michael, and our driver was Dennis (Dionysius, actually.) We ascended the side of the mountain behind Skala as far as the cave where St. John had had his visions that he recorded in Revelation, but the place was packed, so Mike told Dennis to proceed directly to the Monastery of St. John at the summit. The monastery was founded by the monk John Chrystodoulos in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and has remained virtually untouched (the longest uninterruptedly active Christian monastery in the world) over the centuries -- largely because Patmos has no strategic value and is unsuited for agriculture. Thus, it has remained peopled mostly by Greeks over the years. That isolation accounts for the age and richness of its holdings. The island hasn't been plundered. Paul sailed via Patmos on his third journey, and John was a hermit on the isle for three years, along with his assistant, Prochoros.

We first saw the antechamber to the church and then we proceeded to the museum, where the collection of icons was superb! The icons represented the Cretan school of iconography. The beauty of the icons has an energy and light that seems to emanate to the viewer -- a few in particular -- the icon of St. Michael the Wonderworker, Sts. Peter and Paul embracing, and the weeping Theotokos. There was even a fifth Century manuscript of the Gospel of Mark (one of the oldest in existence!) This turned out to be the highpoint of Marijka's trip. She recognized many of the originals that she had seen reproduced in religious art books.

By the time we had finished our visit at the museum, the crowds down at the cave had dwindled, and we descended. The atmosphere in the cave was quiet and reverential. Our guide explained how Prochoros had written his own notes about John during the early First Century AD, and that he had described the location of the cave quite clearly. He had even described an earthquake while John was receiving his vision and how it had created a three-lined crack the ceiling of the cave. Archaeologists have determined that this particular cave is the only one that fits Prochoros' description, and the crack can be seen quite clearly. (In fact, Orthodox visitors venerate the location by placing their hand into the crack [which we did, likewise.]) The cave measured about 25 ft. long by 15 ft deep and six ft. high. One might argue whether John's vision was inspired or a hallucination, but there was little doubt that the place where we were was historical. It was impressive to be in such close quarters with history.

Our bus left us off in Skala, a small town with souvenir shops, where Marijka bought a few more mementos. Fr Daly explored some of the back streets and came across a barber

shop in which the barber was chanting along with the Orthodox Evening Prayer on the radio. He went in and signed to the barber that he wanted a haircut. He appeared later that night at dinner neatly shorn. B & M made it back to the Ruby just in time for 7:15 dinner. It was assigned seating, and they dined with Fr. Daly, Msgr. Brady, Tracy Doyle and Debbie Wessler. The priests showed up ½ hour late for dinner, which prompted Osama, our waiter, to give the ladies (who had been on time!!) a good dressing down! Bob had the ocean perch, while Marijka had lamb. After dinner, M & B explored all the decks, and Bob waited in line to use one of the two (extremely slow) Internet ports to send a message home. B & M returned to their cabin, and it was lights-out at 11:32.

Wednesday, October 17

The clock showed 07:47 when Bob awoke. It could have been anytime, as they had no window to the outside. Overnight we had cruised to the island of Rhodes, and one could tell by the diminished engine noise that we were putting into port. Today M & B decided to take their breakfast at the buffet on the stern. Soon, the PA system was calling all the crew to a drill, just as the passengers were preparing to go ashore. We swiped our cards and walked down the gangplank and into Rhodes Town. M & B walked past the (dry) moat and through the gates into old town. They gradually made their way up the main thoroughfare towards the highest point of the town. Walking past the local mosque, they arrived at the Grand Master's Palace, the fortification built by the Knights Templar.

On the way up, they had spied a nice-looking restaurant named Odysseus and stopped in for lunch under the grape arbor. Marijka had octopus, while Bob feasted on calamari. To accompany these delicacies they quaffed down some Zorba's beer. Their picture was taken by a nice German couple at the next table. (Bob is a bit of a bore in this regard. He always wants to practice his German.) They bought their final installment of souvenirs and walked back to the Ruby. Marijka wanted to rest her feet, while Bob struggled with the slow Internet to try to send a copy of a paper to Dr. Stuart Kauffman (unsuccessfully. The machine wouldn't recognize Bob's flash memory.) Bob was aching to go swimming. The weather was warm and clear. It was about a 3-mile hike to Elli Beach on the very northern tip of the island. Bob put on his suit under his pants, grabbed a towel and set off. Upon arriving at the Beach, he disrobed and wandered into the surf. The water was quite warm (ca. 80F), very clear and a nice blue. The bottom fell off quickly, but was easy to see in the clear water. He collected several attractive stones from the bottom. It was a most refreshing swim! He toweled off, put on his clothes and hiked back to the Ruby.

Back on board, Marijka had written out all their Greek post cards and was working on her notes. She had gone to read at the Piano Bar, when Debbie Wessler came over to talk with her. Back at the cabin, Bob showered and dressed for Mass, which started in the cinema at 5:30p. It was Captain's Dinner tonight and so a dress-up affair. Marijka decked out in her Coimbra dress, while Bob wore his silk jacket. Mass let out just before dinner, but there was time to stop by in the main lounge for a cocktail at the Captain's Reception. Fr. Daly and Msgr. Brady showed up in their clerical garb, and this must have impressed Osama, because, unlike the previous evening, he fell all over himself trying to be nice to those at the table. Marijka and Bob both had trout.

After dinner, we re-assembled in the cinema to listen to six papers, mostly on local subjects, like Patmos, Crete, the Bosphorus and the Ecumenical Councils. As we poured out of the cinema, we noticed on a TV monitor in the hallway that the Euro Cup game between Turkey and Greece had commenced. Although Turkey had controlled the ball most of the game, Greece capitalized on one lucky break and won the game 1-0. M & B returned to their cabin and watched a History Channel show on (appropriately enough) the Knights Templar. It was lights-out at 11:34.

Thursday, October 18

Again, we had been underway during the night and awoke at 07:48 docked at Hieraklion in Crete. After breakfast (on the stern), everyone hurried off to town to take in the sights. B & M walked down to the forbidding Venetian Fortress, but decided against the admission fee. They headed instead up the main tourist street and found a shop that sold stamps for our postcards. Walking still further, they noticed a church back a block off the main drag. It was St. Titus church, the home of the Metropolitan of Crete. St Titus is considered to be the founder of Christianity in Crete, and the church is a showcase of Cretan style iconography. The original church had burned down and was rebuilt as a mosque by the Turks. It was again converted to a church during the 1923 exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece (mutual ethnic cleansing.) The icons were most impressive, (especially the one of St. Anastasia). M & B tarried there a while and then had to walk briskly and then take the bus shuttle to make it back to the ship on time.

Once back aboard, Bob sent an email back to CBL to have the librarian send his papers to Dr. Kauffman. We watched as the Ruby pulled from the dock and got underway. Then it was time for Mass at the cinema. M & B took lunch at the buffet on the fantail, and then went below to close out their account and retrieve their passports. They then went up to the piano bar lounge to watch the approach to Santorini. In Ancient times, Santorini Island had been known as Strongili, which means "round" in Greek. Strongili was the victim of an enormous volcanic eruption in 1500 BC. The eruption was so huge that experts consider it to have been the main cause of the destruction of the great Minoan civilization on the island of Crete (some 70 nautical miles away), which we had just visited. After the explosion, the centre of Santorini sank, and the many earthquakes that followed destroyed a big part of the rest of the island. Today, the island resembles a circular rim around a doughnut-shaped embayment with a barren basaltic mound in the middle. During our approach, the rim appeared to be snow-covered from a distance. As we drew nearer, the white turned out to be a city perched at the crest of a gigantic escarpment.

The Ruby docked in the bay and we took a tender to the docks at Fari at the foot of the cliff. There were three options to get up to the town above: One could take a cable car, go up a switchback on a donkey, or climb the switchback on foot. Marijka and Bob rode the cable car up. (Msgr. Brady and Mary Posey took the donkeys.) At the crest, Joe Mihalcik took M & B's picture against the backdrop of the dramatic cliff. Bob was in wonderment as to how the city had been built and maintained in spite of this geographic obstacle? M

& B set out in search of the PTT to mail their cards. As they walked into the town, it soon became clear how the town had been built. Off in the distance one saw how the land sloped gently down to the sea. Bob felt stupid. It was as if one had approached Scientists Cliffs from the Bay and then had marveled how anyone could have gotten the building materials up the cliffs to build the houses on the ridge. :) After mailing their cards, M & B stopped at a small outdoor bar for a glass of Mythos, the ubiquitous Greek beer, which soothed Marijka's headache.

Marijka took the cable car down the cliff, and then watched the donkey tenders bag the donkey dung for fertilizer (much needed on this island.) Meanwhile, Bob braved the donkey dung and descended on foot. (It was 637 steps, not the 566, as advertised!) They met up at the bottom and took the tender back to the Ruby, arriving just in the nick of time for dinner. Dinner was open seating, and B & M supped with Linda Vaulina, Barbara Steiner and the two reverends. M & B discover that Barbara is from Cambridge and knows the Kennedys! After dinner, many of our group gathered on the fantail to say the rosary. Then it was back to our rooms to pack up and put our luggage out in the corridor to be picked up during the night. It was lights-out at 11:24.

Friday, October 19

During the night the Ruby had cruised to the mouth of the harbor of Pireaus in Athens. The alarm was set for 06:00, because we had been told that we had to be ready to disembark by 07:00. By the time we awoke, our luggage had already been taken. It was a buffet breakfast in the restaurant and everyone was ready by the appointed time. Trouble was, the Ruby hadn't yet received permission to enter the harbor, and so we had to cool our heels for a full 2 hours! There was yet another long delay in unloading our luggage from the ship (after that entire hubbub about surrendering our luggage before morning bathroom time!) The suitcases from Deck 4 were some of the last ones off the boat.

It was well onto 11:00 by the time we met our new Greek guide, Ms. Christiana Vaveki, who was slight and soft-spoken – a contrast to the large and dynamic Sabah. She led us to our bus and introduced us to our bus driver, Aristotle. We drove north along the side of Athens and stopped at the canal that divides the Isthmus of Corinth. The ancients had been unable to excavate the high ridge connecting the Peloponnese peninsula with the mainland of Greece. They had devised an ingenious track overland with wheels dug into the earth. The vessels were then dragged over these “rollers” to the other side. The current canal dates to 1893 when French engineers used modern excavation techniques to dig over 200 feet and create a sea-level connection. There was a cafeteria of sorts nearby where we had lunch. Marijka ate a poor excuse for a ham and cheese sandwich, while Bob filled up on peanuts.

We then motored another half-hour to the ruins of ancient Corinth, where Paul had helped to establish a church. The city itself lay at the foot of a high mountain that was crowned with the acropolis (high city) that served as refuge when the city was under attack. The acropolis had last been reworked by the Knights Templar, and we did not get to visit it. Meanwhile, down below Fr. Daly and Msgr. Brady said Mass not far from the

ancient bema, or public soapbox, where Paul had been tried by the proconsul Gallio. The sky was composed of sublime altostratus, and with the cypress in the background, the site took on an other-worldly air. The nearby museum contained some fabulous statuary, most of them without heads. It appears that back in 1990 thieves had stolen into the museum and made off with 264 pieces of rare artifacts, including most of the heads of the statues. Many of these were later recovered in Miami.

Then we were off to the ruins of King Agamemnon's city, Mycenae. Mycenae dates as far back as 3,000 BC and had peaked about 1,600 BC. As legend holds, it was Agamemnon's army that had defeated the Trojans by infiltrating their city in the body of a large wooden horse, which the Trojans had thought was a gift from the gods. The excavation of the city had been started by German archeologist, Heinrich Schliemann, who also had discovered and excavated Troy. The entrance to the city of Mycenae was topped by a lintel on top of which was a large triangular stone with lions carved on its face. The stone distributed the weight of the wall above away from the lintel. This structure was the forerunner of the arch, which was developed later. Within the city walls were "beehive" tombs that served as burial spots for several hundred bodies, each of which was added serially until the floor space of the tomb had been exhausted. One such burial had been designated as containing the remains of Agamemnon and his wife Clytemnestra. Off in the distance to the west was a ridge called Agamemnon's mountain. If one looks closely, one can make out the image of a bearded man lying on his back, with his head to the left side – the purported profile of King Agamemnon.

On the way to our hotel, Christiana related the epic of the confrontation between Troy and Mycenae. Once in downtown Athens we were deposited at the 5-star Divani Caravel Hotel, where we were given Room 120. Dinner was served shortly thereafter in the hotel restaurant (pastitsio, fish and veggies.) Unfortunately, Bob had developed a sore throat and had trouble getting his meal down. After dinner Marijka had a lively discussion on religion with Kathy. M & B went up to the rooftop to see the wonderful view of the city by night. The Parthenon beckoned off to the west, all lit up. It was lights-out at 11:13.

Saturday, October 20

Our wakeup call came at 06:30. The breakfast buffet was almost identical to the fare that we had for breakfast throughout Turkey – olives, cucumbers and yoghurt. We then boarded the bus for the short ride to the Roman Catholic cathedral, St. Dionysis, where we were to have Mass. Along the way, Christiana was citing religious demographics in Greece and she mentioned that almost every extended family has a (token) Catholic in it. Bob quietly wisecracked something to Marijka to the effect that every family has to have a "black sheep". Christiana somehow overheard it and, to Bob's embarrassment, took major umbrage and chastised Bob in front of everyone. (Some days it doesn't pay to get out of bed!)

St Dionysis resembled a large city parish in the US. Msgr. Brady celebrated Mass and Fr. Daly gave the homily. We were joined at Mass by a half-dozen or so others. On the way out of church, M & B stopped to talk to one of them – a lady from Sri Lanka. This slight

woman, named Marya, daughter of Sebastian, recounted how she was going blind from diabetes and was unable to get medical treatment for it. It seems that church/state medical care is available, but that one must be Orthodox to qualify. Marya said that her family has been Catholic for generations, and that she would rather die a Catholic than convert and qualify. Marijka gave her a small donation and we both promised to pray for her.

On the way to the Acropolis, we stopped for a WC break at the stadium that had been built to house the first modern Olympic Games in 1896. As with Pergamun, one had to climb the last few hundred feet up to the Acropolis. While the climb was not physically demanding, the footing was rather precarious. Also, it was threatening to rain, and wet marble makes for even slipperier footing. We made it safely up, although Bob dropped his digital camera (which, miraculously, continued to function [after a fashion.]) The Temple to Athena (Parthenon) was impressive, as billed, and was under heavy renovation. Off to the side we viewed the Erechtheum, with its southern portico that is supported by six draped female figures (caryatids), the paragons of beauty of their time.

We descended the acropolis towards the Agora and stopped along the way beneath the Areopagus, just to the west of the hill. This was the place where Paul addressed the Athenians with his famous “To an Unknown God” speech (Acts 17:22-31.) Fr. Daly handed Bob the NT and asked that he stand where Paul did and read the speech. (Actually, a flatbed truck was parked exactly where Paul stood, and had Bob been nimble enough of mind, he could have jumped up on the bed to do the reading.) As he was about to start the recitation, he recalled reading warnings posted around the Acropolis to the effect that anyone caught making or causing undue noise would be expelled from the park. Bob didn’t want to get the boot, or whatever else it was that they did to black sheep, but this speech was special. Paul was attempting to use philosophy to speak to philosophers, and that was a task quite familiar to Bob from his work with the science/religion dialogue. Besides, Paul’s was an impressive speech (possibly helped along by the fine Greek used by the author of Acts.) So he wanted to do a good job of it and use his voice projection to its full advantage.

As Bob began the recitation, he became very conscious of where he was standing and focused with unusual concentration on the speech. His surroundings became a blur to him, and he remembers them only in snatches. He was vaguely conscious of many people taking his picture. Bob recalled that a fair number of passers-by stopped to listen and even a few of them took pictures. Would the gendarmes appear as well? Fortunately, it was not a long speech. It was over and the curious quickly dispersed. Bob was left filled with a quiet elation that to him was the emotional highpoint of his trip – a truly surreal experience.

We exited the park proper and proceeded through the Agora, which was open to the non-paying public. We toured a small 12<sup>th</sup> Century Church on the Agora and walked along the portico of the Stoa, which had been beautifully reconstructed by some of the many dollars of John D. Rockefeller. As we exited the Stoa, it began to rain in earnest. Marijka and Bob huddled under their single umbrella as they walked back to the bus, which returned us to our hotel. It was about 2:45p and everyone was hungry. Rather than eat at

the expensive restaurant café, M & B walked about two blocks in the rain to an eatery called “Pita Pan” (written in Greek, of course.) Lunch there was quite pleasant (Marijka had a gyro and Bob did the chicken souvlaki), and they washed it down with a medium Mythos beer – all for ¼ of what it would have cost them in the hotel.

After lunch was some rare free time. Marijka caught up with her notes and scouted out the room where our Saturday vigil Mass would be held. Bob decided to take in the heated pool on the rooftop. As he entered the elevator in his bathrobe, clutching his towel, Bob encountered someone who apparently was the supervisor of service personnel. The impressive gentleman inquired of Bob why was he going swimming in the pouring rain? Bob simply replied to him that one has to love swimming to understand! Having pity on a wretch like Bob, the gentleman kindly showed Bob a back entrance to the pool so that he could avoid getting soaked by having to approach the pool through the deluge. The warm water (ca. 85F) was a comfortable refuge from the uncomfortably cool rain.

Back in the room, Bob showered and dressed for vigil Mass, which was held in the Pelle Room. M & B both lectored, and Marijka sang the responsorial song (which she had practiced earlier.) Dinner was almost identical to the night before, except chicken replaced fish as the main course. Fortunately, Bob’s throat was feeling much better. M & B returned to their room and packed for the morrow. It was lights-out at 11:24.

Sunday, October 21

The alarm woke us at 06:00, and we rushed to pack and get our luggage out the door. We had the usual breakfast, and it was on the bus by 08:00. It was a long (6 hr.) ride to Kalambaka and the mounts of Meteora. Marijka started the trip off by leading the group in Morning Prayer. We made two WC stops, the second one also included lunch. We listened to several of the prepared essays to pass the time. There was a brief stop at the site of the battle of Thermopylae, where 300 doomed Spartans held off many thousands of Persians so the main army could escape, regroup and defeat the Persians in the decisive battle of Plataea.

Upon approaching Kalambaka, we could see the mountains in the distance. They were tall shafts of igneous rock that had been uplifted by earthquakes and then eroded, leaving a jagged moon-like profile -- like what one sees in certain regions of China. Our first stop after entering the town was at our hotel for the night, but only to take a WC break. We then drove through the valleys of Meteora, looking aloft at the seven monasteries perched high above. In the faces of many of the shafts were caves carved out by the original hermits, who had fled to this isolation to escape the opulence of Byzantium. A few of the caves were still used from time to time by religious groups. Apparently, climbing up to and down from the caves had been a perilous activity that claimed the lives of many a hermit. (Seeing the caves, one can readily believe this.) Eventually, the hermits came together into communities and built durable structures on the pinnacles.

We viewed the monasteries of St. Nicholas, the Holy Apostles, St. George, the Dormition, and the convent of St. Barbara (the name Marijka’s father had wanted to give

her.) We see some of the baskets by which the monks and nuns were raised to the top. (These are still used today to deliver food and goods aloft.) Now there are steps, many of which are quite steep and long. Bob was hoping we would have the opportunity to climb the challenging stairs to one of these abodes, but we finally stopped at one that was accessible by road – the convent of St Stephen’s, overlooking the town of Kalambaka. The women in our group had been told to wear long skirts and the men had to wear long pants. In the church of St Charlampios on the grounds we were given a full lecture on iconography – how the formulaic positioning of the icons allowed clergy to teach the history and tenets of the faith to illiterate believers. The skull of St. Charlampios is kept in the church in a cabinet-like space, masked by an icon, which one could venerate. We also visited the original church of the convent, St Stephanos, and Marijka was a bit disappointed/dismayed by the sorry state of the icons here. They had been badly vandalized by the Communists during the Greek civil war (following WWII), and no effort has been made to restore them. Then the call to prayer (for the resident nuns), was sounded on a wooden plank, signaling time for our departure.

Upon our return into town we stopped at a shop where icons were written. Like at the carpetorium in Ephesus, we were given plenty of ouzo and the Greek equivalent of Turkish Delight. There was a quick demonstration of some of the methods used in writing icons, and we were set loose to shop for our favorites (at a 20% discount). Debbie Wessler became interested in one antique Slavic icon, and Marijka helped her to interpret the Old Slavonic headings on the scenes depicted. Christiana asked Marijka how she could read them, and upon learning that Marijka was Ukrainian, she exclaimed that a Ukrainian couple was working at the shop. The husband was summoned and engaged Marijka and Bob in conversation (in Ukie, of course.) It turned out that Taras Davidiuk, as he was named, was born in Kosmach, which was only a few kilometers away from Ivano-Frankivsk, where Marijka came into this world! Marijka became quite animated in conversation (Taras being a handsome fellow) and even began talking to Debbie in Ukrainian! So taken by the repartee was Debbie that she bought the expensive piece. Taras later brought his wife, Rostislava, out to meet M & B. On the short bus trip to the hotel there was a drawing of the receipt tickets for a few prizes from the shop. Marijka won a tears vase (used to collect tears from mourners at a funeral and buried with the dead.)

Once again in high spirits, we were delivered to the Hotel Divanis Meteora in the middle of town. M & B were housed in Room 137. Dinner was much the same fare that we had eaten at the Divanis Caravele back in Athens. Following dinner, we had Evening Prayer and two papers. Bob gave the first on Orthodox Christianity. Having seen the day before how delicate relations were between Orthodox and Catholics, Fr. Daly decided to save this presentation until it could be given in private. Tracy gave a take on the “filioque clause” issue that had sparked the Great Schism. Again, this was something best discussed under a sectarian umbrella. We retired to our rooms, and Marijka and Bob (and apparently many others in the group) watched most of a B-movie of Odysseus, starring Armand Assante as Odysseus, Isabella Rossellini as Athena, Bernadette Peters as Circe, Irene Papas as Anticleia, Geraldine Chaplin as Eurycleia and Vanessa Williams played Calypso. It was lights-out at 11:55.

Monday, October 22

Yet again, the alarm rang all too early at 06:00. It was hurry to get the packed luggage out the door and ourselves down to breakfast. The bus was ready to head further north by 08:00. It was a long ride to Beroea. After Morning Prayer on the bus, the sun broke out and our closing hymn (serendipitously) was “Morning has Broken”. Marijka then gave her talk on Acts 10 – 15. It was hard for Marijka to keep people’s attention when they were sitting behind her, and she was disappointed that all her work on the talk had been to little avail. Upon entering Beroea, we stopped in the middle of town at a monument to where the bema had stood. There was a large triptych stone wall in mosaic. In the middle were three old steps, reputed to be remnants of the original bema, which lay under a mosaic of Paul as an old man. (Well, old for his day, at least. M & B reckoned that Paul was probably executed in his late forties.) To the right was a large, colorful mosaic of Paul preaching to the Jews of the synagogue in town. (They were reported to have been very receptive to his message.) On the left hand side was a mosaic (also quite colorful) of a recumbent Paul having a vision of a young man. Bob was able to make out from the inscriptions that the image was that of a Macedonian. Christiana overheard Bob explaining this to someone and asked Bob to explain aloud to the group what had been depicted. (Bob had apologized privately for the black sheep remark and apparently had been forgiven.) It was Paul’s vision in Troas of a Macedonian telling him there was need of Paul in Macedonia (Acts 16:9.) The triptych was completed in the early 1960’s. Immediately adjacent to the monument was the Elementary School of the Bema of St. Paul. The students there were at recess and called to us through the fence that enclosed their schoolyard. Several of our group went over and gave the kids a chance to practice their English.

It wasn’t too far from the center of town to Vergina, where the virtually untouched tomb of King Phillip of Macedon (Alexander’s father) had been discovered in 1977. It was an archeological find of the first dimension. The Greeks had built a museum right into the tumulus itself. So much of what was buried with Phillip (and his wife, who sacrificed herself [?] at the time of Phillip’s burial) had survived the ages in excellent shape – his armor, the sarcophagus that held his bones, the jewelry and trinkets that were part of the burial practice, etc. On the wall at the entrance to an auxiliary tomb was a mural of the abduction of Persephone, which was an incredibly mature work of art. The faces and the emotions portrayed on them were astounding. Several of us commented on the amazing connection we feel with the subjects represented.

From the tomb we walked a block up the street to a cafeteria named (appropriately) the Phillipeon for lunch. As Bob pushed his tray along, it slipped off the track. The plate broke and his food went flying everywhere. Bob was aghast, to say the least! He was most impressed, however, how one of the staff ran over to him and told him not to worry. The gentleman returned immediately with a bucket and mop and whisked up the mess. Meanwhile, someone from behind the counter had made up another tray and plate with exactly the chicken and beans that Bob had ordered. Within 3 minutes no trace of the mess was left (except in Bob’s own embarrassed mind, that is. :)

After lunch, it was a straight run to Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece. The traffic in the city was horrendous, due in some measure to the construction of a metro that was ongoing. We were supposed to have a tour of the city upon entry, but Aristotle and Christiana thought better of it and decided to go straight to the Capsis Hotel. As we waited in traffic, various people read to the group from Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians. The Capsis was an Art-Deco style hotel. M & B were assigned to Room 409, which looked out onto a parking garage that had been converted into the Eluethera Pentacostal Church. Mass for the day was held in the Alexander Room. The dinner menu was pretty much the same fare that we had been having for the last three days.

After dinner, Sandy and George Sullivan (who had been renamed Soulyvan the Great, due to a misspelling by the Greeks on the Ruby) sponsored a party to consume the remainder of the altar wine. The occasion also became a celebration of Peter and Annemarie Abresch's (they of "stick her tongue in his ear" fame) 47<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Spirited by the wine, Mary Posey proposed to Bob that they use up some extra time on a phone card that she had purchased to call Bob's sister, Nancy back at Calvert Memorial. Bob went with her downstairs to the phone bank and they had a nice brief chat with a surprised Nancy. Returning to the room, it was lights-out at 11:11.

Tuesday, October 23

Our final day of touring began again at 06:00. By this time Bob had a full-blown cold (as did perhaps 1/3 of the group.) That had interfered some with his sleep (that and the stuffy room.) After breakfast, it was a 2.5 hr. drive to Philippi with only one stop for a snack and the WC. The ancient city of Philippi is transected by a busy 2-lane modern road. Our first visit is to the court where trials were heard. Fr. Daly read to us of Paul's trial that had occurred there, and we looked into one of the prison cells. (It was at Philippi that Paul was released from his chains by an earthquake. [Acts 16] His jailer was going to commit suicide, thinking his charges had escaped. Paul stayed his hand, and eventually converted the jailer and his family.) We then crossed the road to the bema and viewed a mockup layout of the city, which lay along the Egnatian Way. We looked at the foundations of a 4<sup>th</sup> Century church with a beautiful mosaic floor that had been dedicated to Paul by Bishop Porphyrios.

The bus took us less than a mile down the road (that parallels the Egnatian Way) to the Baptistery of Lydia. Lydia was the first European to be baptized by Paul, somewhere in the vicinity of this building. Just below the baptistery was a small islet in the river Gangitis (now known as Lydia's River) on which a tiny altar had been built along with some steps into the creek. On the shoreward bank there were also steps out of the rivulet, so that the two stairs formed a baptistery where adults could be immersed. The beautiful setting with the gurgling brook, the lovely trees and the greenery was very conducive to recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit here. There was some question as to whether we should have Mass outdoors, but Fr. Daly decided to set up on the island, and the congregation sat on some concrete seats in an amphitheatre that faced him and the stream between us. During Mass the sun appeared surprisingly through the heavy clouds and

remained out until after the consecration. Mass was a moving experience, only the moment was spoiled for Bob when his digital camera died for good about a second before he was going to capture the Mass. Unfortunately, Marijka didn't have her camera either. Once we were back on the bus, the rain commenced again in earnest.

After Mass we repaired to a restaurant in nearby Kavalas, where we had a sit-down lunch. It was rather chilly, but we were warmed by outdoor kerosene heaters and wine. Marijka and Bob both had calamari. The long ride back to Thessaloniki was made without a break, and most of the group fell asleep along the way. Upon arriving back at the hotel, Marijka suggested that she and Bob look for some hot tea, so they walked along the main street and found a café about 4 blocks away. Bob also wanted to buy some bananas, but they were unable to find a shop that sold them. (Bananas seemed in short supply throughout both countries.) M & B returned to the hotel for dinner, and after dinner the group assembled for a brief recap of the trip, at which time all were invited to share their highpoints with others. We presented George and Sandy with an icon in appreciation for all their hard work. It was back to the room to pack for the getaway very early next morning. Lights-out was at 10:44p.

Wednesday, October 24

We had set the alarm for 04:30, but Bob arose at 04:14. Bob was feeling quite low due to his cold, and had not slept well at all. The hotel opened the restaurant early at 05:30 especially for us. We were on the bus for the ride to the airport by 06:15. While we waited in line to check into Aegean Air Flight 105 to Athens, Marijka said something about Ukraine that was overheard by a fellow waiting a few persons ahead of her. He turned around grinning and made the fatal mistake of saying derisively, "There's absolutely nothing to see in Ukraine!" Marijka immediately retorted, "I beg to differ!" and then cast him such a glare that he was reduced to a pool of spattering grease on the marble floor! As we left the counter, we took leave of Christiana and headed for the gate.

In Athens we stood in line for over an hour before the ticket counter opened for Air France Flight 1233 to Charles de Gaulle in Paris. On this stretch Marijka sat next to and chatted with Debbie. It seems that long trips on the ground are the rule for de Gaulle airport, and our transit this time was no exception. We landed at Terminal D and had to go to Terminal E, which sounds like an easy task. It wasn't. We went every which way by bus and by foot and through two security checks before we arrived at our gate. At the gate we met Ella Ennis from SJV and some fellow pilgrims from the DC area who were coming back from Lourdes, and they joined us on this leg. As it was, we boarded Air France Flight 026 about 10 minutes late and had to wait another 20 minutes before push-back. We had dinner and a snack on the flight.

Upon arrival at Dulles, we sped through pass control and customs in record time and were on the bus by 8:35p. Most slept on the ride to Prince Frederick. Bob partially awoke several times and constantly had the feeling that they were driving in a sunken roadbed with stone walls outside the windows. Just before arriving at Prince Frederick, Fr. Daly led everyone in a prayer of thanksgiving for such a safe journey. No one had been injured

or taken seriously ill on the trip. Arriving at the Vianney parking lot at 10:12p, M & B stowed their bags in the Mihalcik Vibe and headed for Port Republic, reaching Paw Paw Spring by 10:35. Thanks be to God!