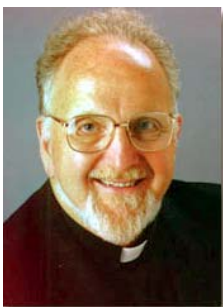


## *The bishop writes: Italy works to the glory of God*

**O**n the second third of my sabbatical, I toured Italy with 85 people under the leadership of Pr. David Oravec, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Frederick, Md. Two ideas stick strongly with me as a result of that experience.

First, the buildings, the art, and the sculpture all point to the competence of the artists who created them. Nowhere else I have ever been has



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even come close to matching the public art that has been so finely crafted. The ceilings of most public buildings are elaborately painted. Traffic squares are decorated with elaborately carved fountains of marble, still perfectly intact after 700 years. Halls are lined with huge tapestries telling stories of the cities or

of the Bible. This art would not be worth keeping if it were not done well. As it is, Rome can be proud of what is on display, and people's lives can be touched by its beauty every day.

Competence showed itself in a more modern way. We rode on large buses that seated 45. On the Amalfi coast, roads barely one lane wide have the mountain on one side of the road and a steep fall into the Mediterranean Sea on the other. The views are spectacular. But I am here to write this story only because of the skill of our bus driver who knew how to make the turns and who was able to pass within inches of cars without hitting them and approach within inches of falling over the cliff without ever falling. To me he became an example of one who, like the sculptors and painters, had a vocation and, because he did it well, many others' lives were affected for the good.

Secondly, the hymn "Give of Your Best to the Master" was lived out in Italy by a society

where faith was at the center of public life as well as private devotion. The most beautiful building in any town was the church. Devotion to the church was such that folks paid for artists to work from 20 to 30 years building or sculpting or painting the church. And there were artists who were glad to do it. In our time, the largest and most imposing buildings are business related, since that is what is most important to us. And by and large utility wins out over beauty in their construction.

To summarize: Italy presented two strong examples for me. 1. Doing the very best one can in filling one's calling is a gift to others and a sign of wise stewardship of the gifts God has given. 2. That in which we invest money and time is the core value of our lives and our culture. Italy was a marvelous example of what can happen when we work "to the glory of God."

Peace and joy,



H. Gerard Knoche, bishop