



G.K. Chesterton once said, "London is a riddle. Paris is an explanation." As the Christmas celebrations rapped up the four of us Navigare headed to Paris and while we were there, we discovered many explanations! We headed to the airport early on the morning of December 27th and took a two-hour plan ride to the French capital. We took a taxi to the center of Paris and stopped at a nice pizza place for lunch before we headed to the Museum of Orsay. Located just across the River Seine from the famous Louvre Museum the Museum of Orsay is home to the largest collection of impressionist and post-impressionist art in the world. This includes works like "the Bal du Moulin de la Galette" by Pierre-Auguste Renoir as shown to the right as well as many works by Van Gough like the *Starry Night Over the Rhone* and



Van Gough's self-portrait shown to the left. The museum was filled with art of all sizes and types like Monet's *Blue Water Lilies* which was 100 years old or a model of the Statue of Liberty

that was created by the original artist, Bartholdi, for the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900. After walking through the museum for a few hours we decided



to cross a bridge over the River Seine that has the tradition of lovers writing their names on the locks and throwing the key into the river. After crossing the river, we were rewarded with our first view of the



well-known Eiffel tower. Even though it had been a long day of travel, we were all excited to line up for a picture with one of the most famous monuments in France. To the right of the picture you can ask see the Luxor Obelisk which was originally located in Luxor, Egypt before being moved to Paris in 1836. After a memorable first day in Paris we went to the grandparents' house of girl who we attend school with. When she heard that we were going to Paris here grandparents graciously offered to let us stay in their house while they were away on vacation.



The next morning, we woke up and headed to the amazing Sainte Chapelle. This church was constructed in only seven years by St. Louis IX, king of France, in order to house many Christian relics including the crown of thorns. It is easily recognizable by its countless number of beautiful stain glass windows that surround the entire church. Sadly, it no longer is used to hold relics nor the



celebrate Holy Mass but it is still a very beautiful place to see. The tiles that surround the church show the stories of the bible and the history of obtaining the relics. We then walked over to Notre Dame and ate lunch across the river looking at the rebuilding efforts going on there. It was hard to see any progress going on as most of it was happening inside the cathedral but we were still able to see the wooden braces holding up parts of the cathedral as well as the



cranes that are working to restore it. After lunch we walked to the Sorbonne University which is filled with history. It was the University that St. Francis Xavier attended and was where he would meet St. Ignatius of Loyola. One of my favorite books about St. Francis Xavier as well as one of the favorite books of Fr. Javier is "Set All Afire" by Louis de Wohl. The book begins at this

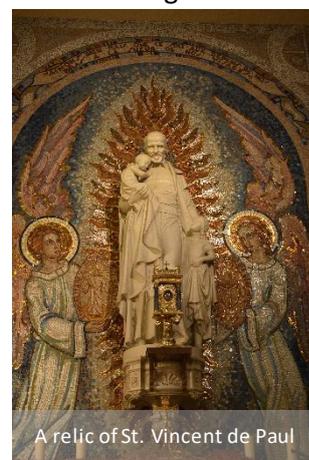


university and it was really cool getting to experience some places from a book I was so fond of. Our day was already made but our next destination was one that blew us away. After looking back at our trip to Paris we all agree that

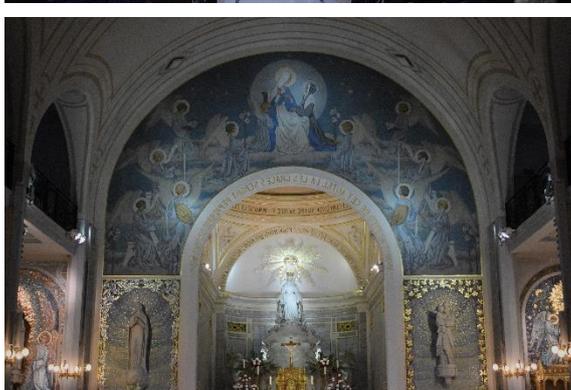


the best part was getting to see the Chapel of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

The chapel itself might not be able to compare in size or art to the Louvre or the Eiffel Tower, nor did it have a countless number of beautiful stain glass or massive vaulting arches of Sainte Chapel, but the faith and the witness of it that was present in that chapel was something that was truly amazing. It was here on three



successive days, while at prayer, Saint Vincent de Paul showed Saint Catherine Labouré his heart, each time in a different color. The heart appeared white, the color of peace; then red, the color of fire; and then black, an indication of the misfortunes that would come upon France and Paris in particular. Shortly after, St. Catherine saw Christ present in the Sacred Host, and on June 6, 1830, the feast of the Holy Trinity, Christ appeared as a crucified King, stripped of all his adornments. In 1830 St. Catherine Labouré,

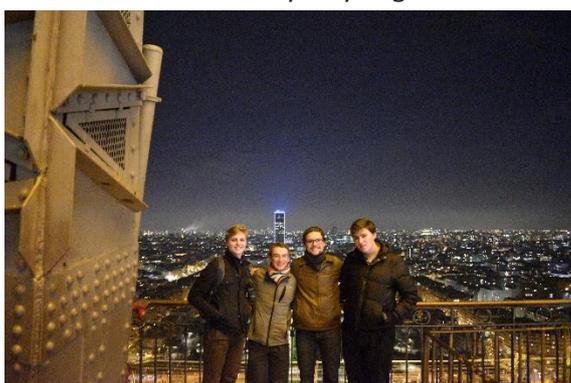


then 24, received three visits from the Blessed Virgin Mary. On the first visit, the night of 18 July, she received a request that a Confraternity of the Children of Mary be established. Later she was to request the creation of a medal with the following invocation: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Just sitting in this chapel, you could feel a sense of peace and comfort. We were able to stay and pray a holy hour as well as attend Mass there. The incorruptible body of St. Catherine was present there as well. There were many people there from all over the world who had come to ask the Virgen Mary for her intercession. Even when compared with the massive



churches and cathedrals of Paris, nothing comes close to the beauty and peace of this little chapel. It truly was incredible. Later that day we stopped at the Pantheon to take a picture in front of the place where Napoleon Bonaparte was buried. Then we headed to a well know monument that we saw earlier in our trip but wanted to see up close.

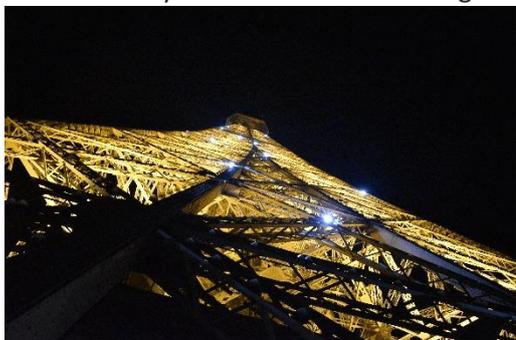
We had read about it as kids in middle school and talked about it to compare heights of the world's tallest buildings but there is nothing quite like seeing the Eiffel tower in person! We went at night and because of it we were able to see the Eiffel Tower lit up against the dark Paris sky. We walked along the park located in front of the tower and as you get closer to it, you realize just how big it is. After going through security, we climbed the stairs to the second level of the tower... all 674 of them. Now this is a good time to mention that our classes at our university are almost all on the fourth level and the only way to get to them is by stairs. So, while we were pretty well



conditioned for stairs, by the time we climbed the last stair we were ready for a breather. Had the climb up not taken our breath away, the view from the tower certainly did. You could see all around you and watch as the massive spot lights attached to the top of the Eiffel Tower shone around Paris. Had that not been enough we made it to the top just in time for a spectacle that happens only once every hour. As the clock struck 8pm the Eiffel Tower erupted into a flash of sparkling lights that could be seen for miles. It was quite a spectacle and was a cherry on top of our visit to the Eiffel Tower. We were getting tired at the end of a long day so we decided to make our way home. After descending the 674 steps and catching our breath once more we started towards the



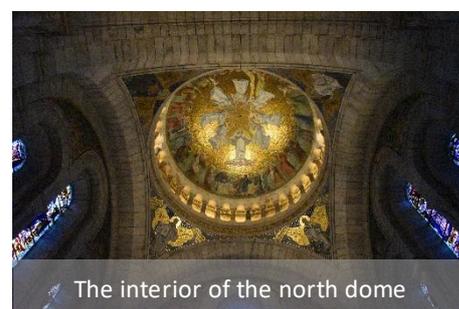
metro only to find that we would get the chance to see one more famous landmark before we hit the sack. One thing to note is that while we were in France is that the metro workers went on strike causing a little bit of trouble for us. But luckily, Stephen Suddjian (pictured to the right of our photos at the tower) planned the trip to Paris well and was able to make the necessary changes on the fly in order to ensure that we had a great time. We decided that if we were to take the metro, we would get home too late so instead we searched for a taxi. This search



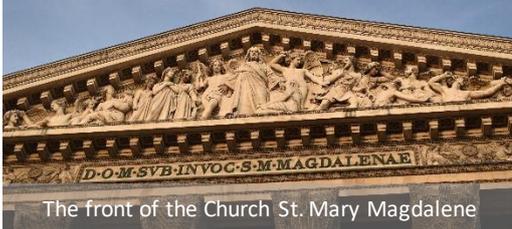
led us to the Arc de Triomphe which is quite possibly the largest roundabout in the world! It is the interception point of 12 roads that turn in to an 8-lane roundabout, which I really don't know how it works because I am American... We found our taxi, headed home and slept well after one great day.



The next day, Sunday December 29th, we visited Sacré Coeur which is a beautiful basilica located on a hill that overlooks all of Paris. It is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and was consecrated after WWI in 1919. It was constructed on the highest part of the city and is the second most visited landmark in Paris.



The interior of the north dome

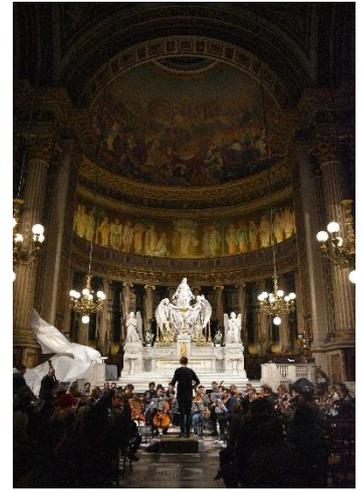


The front of the Church St. Mary Magdalene



Later that day we visited the Paris Academy of Music with two golden, statue of liberty like, angels overlooking the square below. We then visited the Church of St. Mary Magdalene and its interesting Parthenon like structure. Inside was a beautiful altar and frescos as well as an orchestra playing in the front. Then we headed back home to get a good night's sleep for our last day in Paris.

The final day before heading back to Madrid we made a visit to the most visited museum in all the world: The Louvre. Seated on the River Seine the Louvre is one of the only museums that can boast being a fortress, royal palace, and museum all in the same place. It has countless works of art from some of the most famous artists in history. There were hundreds of statues there like to the one to the right which is a statue of Athena discovered in the ruins of a Roman villa in a vineyard near Velletri in 1797. To the left is a statue called *Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss* created by Antonio Canova and finished in the year 1800. Needless to say, we did not see everything that the Louvre had to offer. If we were to look at every piece of art for 30 seconds, it would take us 100 days to see everything in the Louvre. With that being said, we still got to see so many works like the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, created 200 years before Christ, which is said to be one of the most influential statues in history. To the left is the four of us Navigare standing in front of *The Coronation of Napoleon*, a massive painting that spans almost 10 meters wide and is over 6 meters tall. The Louvre contains many ancient works of art as well like the *Great Sphinx of Tanis* which is thought to date back to almost 3000 years before Christ and the *Code of Hammurabi* which is a collection of 282 rules established by the Babylonian king Hammurabi, who reigned from 1792 to 1750 B.C. We also caught a glimpse of the *Mona Lisa* in a very crowded room of people. This trip was truly amazing and while we have yet to see the riddle of



London, Paris is an explanation we will never forget!