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St. John Fisher in Galway

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St. John Fisher in Galway

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"I am sending this article to *Verbum* from my apartment in Galway, Ireland, overlooking the beautiful Corrib River. Tomorrow I head to Dublin to celebrate the long St. Patrick's Day weekend. I am over in Ireland for the Spring semester with nine intrepid St. John Fisher College students: Catherine Cunningham, Aidan Evans, Chelsea Marshall, Maggie Martin, Erin Mosher, André Remillard, Katlin Shippy, Brittany Sidari, and Sierra Stuckey. Together with 10 students from Hobart & William Smith Colleges, we have all traveled throughout the island, experiencing Ireland in all its glory in a first-hand way."



*Dr. Tim Madigan,
Director of Irish Studies*

ST. JOHN FISHER IN GALWAY

I am sending this article to *Verbum* from my apartment in Galway, Ireland, overlooking the beautiful Corrib River. Tomorrow I head to Dublin to celebrate the long St. Patrick's Day weekend. I am over in Ireland for the Spring semester with nine intrepid St. John Fisher College students: Catherine Cunningham, Aidan Evans, Chelsea Marshall, Maggie Martin, Erin Mosher, André Remillard, Katlin Shippy, Brittany Sidari, and Sierra Stuckey. Together with 10 students from Hobart & William Smith Colleges, we have all traveled throughout the island, experiencing Ireland in all its glory in a first-hand way.

This is the first of what will be an annual Study Abroad in Galway program offered by the college, in collaboration with Hobart & William Smith. The students are all taking a philosophy course with me entitled *Irish Thought: Past and Present*, in which they learn about such important thinkers as the medieval monk John Scotus Eriugena, Bishop George Berkeley, satirist Jonathan Swift, political theorist Edmund Burke, Catholic Emancipator Daniel O'Connell, playwright and wit Oscar Wilde, poet W. B. Yeats, and novelists James Joyce and Edna

O'Brien, all of whom have made major contributions to the literary, social and intellectual life of Ireland. The students in the study abroad program also take another requisite course, a class on contemporary Irish culture and society, taught by Irish literary scholars, sociologists, and historians. In addition, they are all taking two electives in a variety of disciplines, including biology, chemistry, communications, history, literature, philosophy, and theatre. And a few brave souls are even taking a course in Beginning Irish, trying to master the original language of the Island.

Special emphasis has been placed upon learning about the 1845 visit to Ireland of abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who met the great Daniel O'Connell while here, and dedicated the rest of his long life to the cause that O'Connell exemplified, the liberation of all human beings from any form of slavery that kept them from developing their full potential. Douglass moved to Rochester shortly after his return from Ireland. We celebrated his Irish connection with a conference on campus in February of 2013, and President Bain and I, along with Vice President Gerry Rooney and Chair of Religious Studies Father William Graf, took part in a ceremony commemorating Douglass's 1845 visit to Waterford, Ireland last October.

One of the most exciting aspects of the program is the fact that weekend trips to various parts of the Island are required parts of the schedule. The students have traveled throughout the country, with trips to Dublin (including the famous Croke Park Sports Stadium, the Guinness Factory, and the world famous Abbey Theatre, where they saw a performance of the play "The Risen People", Northern Ireland (Derry and Belfast, where they viewed a mural honoring the visit of Douglass to Belfast); Cork and Blarney (where they were able to kiss the immortal Blarney Stone!); the breath-taking Cliffs of Moher and the Dingle Peninsula; and the majestic Aran Islands off the western coast of Ireland.

In addition to the classes and trips, all students participate in a service learning community experience, where they work with various social service agencies throughout the Galway community. This gives them a chance to immerse themselves into the culture of the city, and get to meet people from all ages and walks of life.

It is no exaggeration to say that the students are experiencing more of Galway and Ireland as a whole in a single semester than many people do in a lifetime. For instance, while the Aran Islands are only a short distance from Galway, I have been astonished by how many native Galwegians have told me that they have never visited them.

Another highlight for all of us was going to the Galway Town Hall Theatre, to see the opening night of a new play about Modest Tchaikovsky, the brother and biographer of composer Peter Tchaikovsky. Modest relates stories about his famed brother between excerpts from some of his best-loved pieces performed by the Irish Chamber Orchestra. The actor playing Modest was none other than Bosco Hogan, whom I wrote about in a previous *Verbum*. He portrayed the namesake of our school, John Fisher, in the television series "The Tudors." It was a great treat to see this wonderful actor in an original production, and he took time after the show to meet with all of us. It was the closest we will ever come to meeting John Fisher himself!

I hope I have shown what a rare opportunity the new Study Abroad in Galway program has to offer St. John Fisher College students. It will be offered every Spring semester. We are already recruiting for the Spring 2015 semester. Interested students should contact Professor Kathleen Costello, the Study Abroad Coordinator, at kcostello@sjfc.edu for details. I want to thank the nine intrepid Fisher students with me this spring for being pioneers, and for helping to launch the program. Now I'm off to Dublin to see how the Irish celebrate their patron saint!



Bosco Hogan, Tim Madigan, and fans on February 12, 2014



At Croke Park



Students in front of Trinity College, Dublin where the Book of Kells is displayed