

Class of 2018 Ventures to Milano, Italy

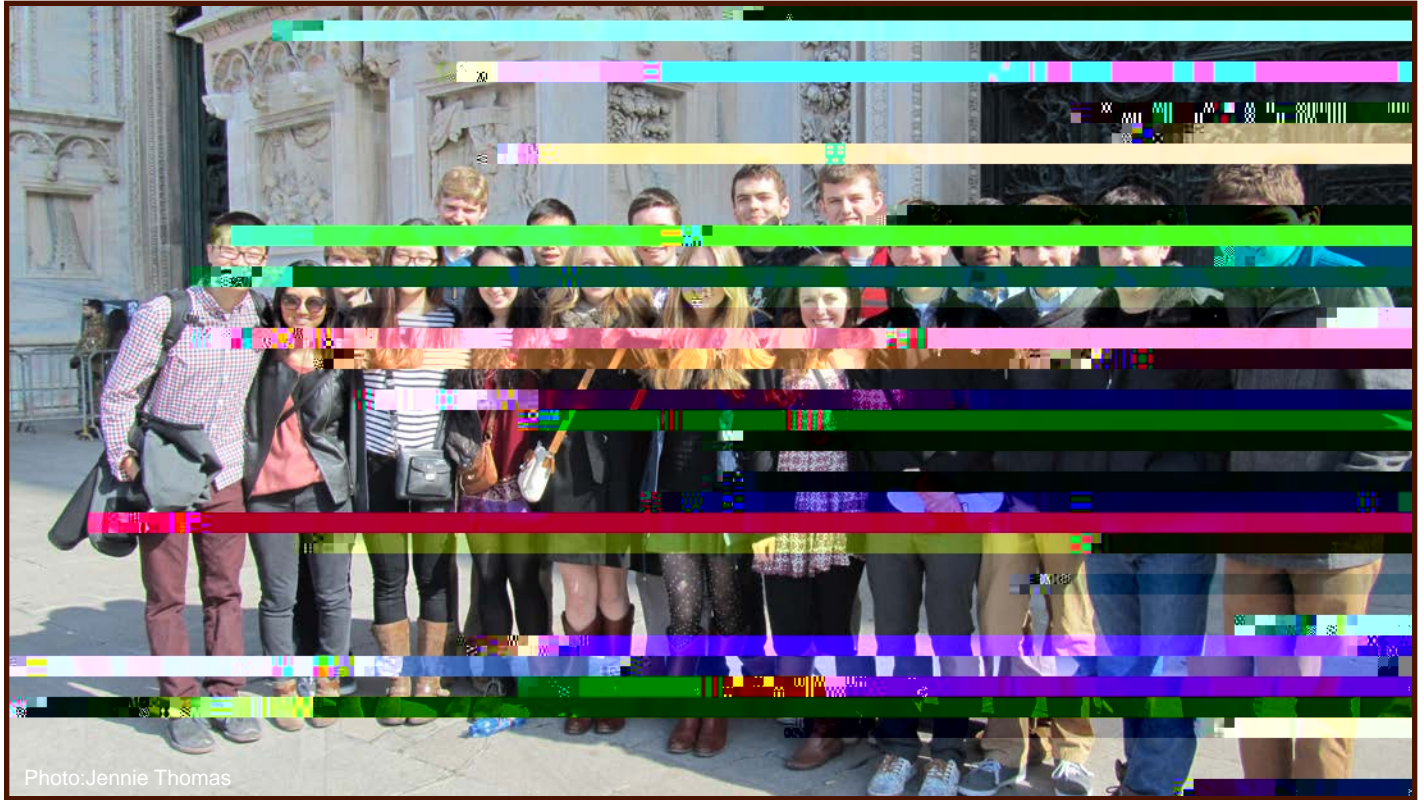


Photo: Jennie Thomas

By Jacob Ciafone, A&S '18

The annual Spring Break trip to Italy brought this year's freshmen to Milan, fashion capital of the world. The journey began on a late Friday afternoon. Two buses, two fights, and nearly twenty-four sleepless hours later, we had finally reached our destination. While our eyes took in the unfamiliar surroundings, Fr. Keenan shepherded us to a small pizzeria

that would have comfortably sat five. With hot slices in our hand, we flowed out of the restaurant and anticipated the week to come.

The rest of our first day was spent snaking through the streets of Milan. Every so often the group's chatter fell silent to Fr. Keenan's descriptions of places of interest. We walked block after block until finally we came to a stop. The time had finally come for our first full Italian meal. Dish after dish came from the kitchen. Just when we had thought we had eaten our fill, another course was placed before us and our appetites found a second wind. The eating and conversing stretched into the

night. When we finally emerged three hours later, a full moon was hanging over Milan.

The next morning found us gathered in the lobby of our Hostel ready for 9 A.M. Mass in the Duomo. We entered the massive Cathedral for the first time and marveled at the world that engulfed us.

After Mass we went to the Pizzeria Gennaro for a welcome lunch. We then spent the afternoon exploring Milan for ourselves. After some time, we met where our day began—on the steps of the Duomo. This time, we headed to the Brera. For many years, the

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Brera served as a Jesuit school for Milanese youth. When Napoleon took control of Lombardy, however, the school was seized and eventually turned into an art gallery. When we entered, we took out time to take in the cultural history around us. Caravaggio, Mantegna, and Hayez, among many others, were represented.

Monday promised to bring us out to a more distant corner of the city. Amongst commuters and students, we took our places in a subway car, counting down the remaining stops to our destination. After a switch of trains, we exited and walked to one of the most important spiritual centers of Milan.

The Basilica of St. Ambrose was, as its name suggests, the home church of the patron saint of Milan, St. Ambrose. He had a massive impact on the development of Christianity. Currently, his church houses beautiful mosaics and paintings. Behind the high altar, visitors can even see the resting place of the famous saint. As we walked back from the church to the center of the city, we transported from the spiritual to the artful. This next event would bring us through

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proximity. The church around which the community Certosa di Pavia is centered stood out even in the long list of beautiful churches that we saw. It united our favorite things of each of them into one building. It is large, but not pompously so. Its paintings and statues flow into one another without being overwhelming or pretentious. We even found admittance into the cloisters behind the church building. Though most of us doubted our ability to live our lives in solitude, the entire experience was quite moving.

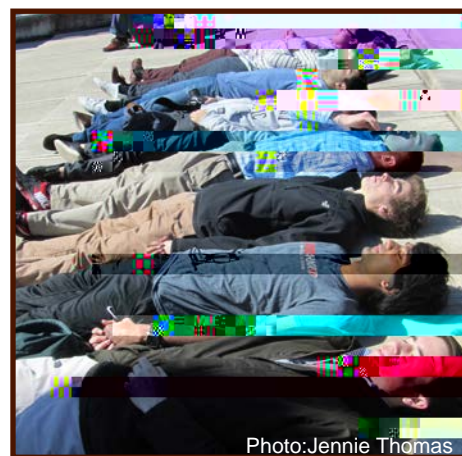
So far our time had been spent in the fat plains around Milan. In the distance though, we could always see impressive mountains. Finally, we took a train ride north into the foothills of the Alps. Leaving the metropolis behind us, we entered a peaceful, verdant world. Lake Como has a reputation for beauty, and we were not disappointed. Picturesque buildings on twisting narrow streets sit at the bases of steep cliffs. We took the majority of the day exploring without any given destination, stopping for lunch at a local restaurant.

As a relaxing day of pictures and window-shopping drew to a close, we assembled on a dock to await a ferry. We were scarcely the only ones. A large group of Italian students was also on the dock. Group inched closer to group. Whatever the spark was, we'll probably never know, but in a flash some fifteen Italians had surrounded a group of our own. The energy was positively high, despite our initial inability to communicate. After a few attempts to speak in Spanish by several of our number, Austin



Bodetti, the group's only Italian speaking student, came over and tried to make sense of the matter. It turned out the Italian students were Southerners who had come north for vacation. After a few more minutes of high-energy conversation, we rushed to board the ferry that took us to the train back to Milan.

Our last day dawned. The trip had gone by right before our eyes. We ventured into central Milan one last time. Warm sun and strong wind buoyed our spirits as we made our way to the Castello Sforzesco. Once a defensive bulwark of the city, the fortress now houses art. The most famous piece is Michelangelo's unfinished Pieta. Though rough, the statue offers a different look at one of the most tender moments in Christian artistic representation. "After the museum, we returned once more to the Duomo to climb to the roof. The endless stairs spiraled up and up into a tunnel of marble. We emerged into a forest of statues, buttresses, and detailed craftsmanship that is hard to describe with words. From the roof we had a breathtaking view of the city that we had been exploring over the past week.



“This, our last organized activity ended with a class of Presidential Scholars lying hand in hand atop the fourth largest cathedral in the world.”

After we descended, we had several hours of free time to see the city one last time.

Dinner brought us once more to a common table. A wonderful experience was finally coming to a close. We said our thanks to Jennie and Fr. Keenan, two people who through tireless work made the trip flow seamlessly for all of us involved. We left the restaurant closer than ever, and went to bed one last time in Milan.

By Ali Mills, A&S '18

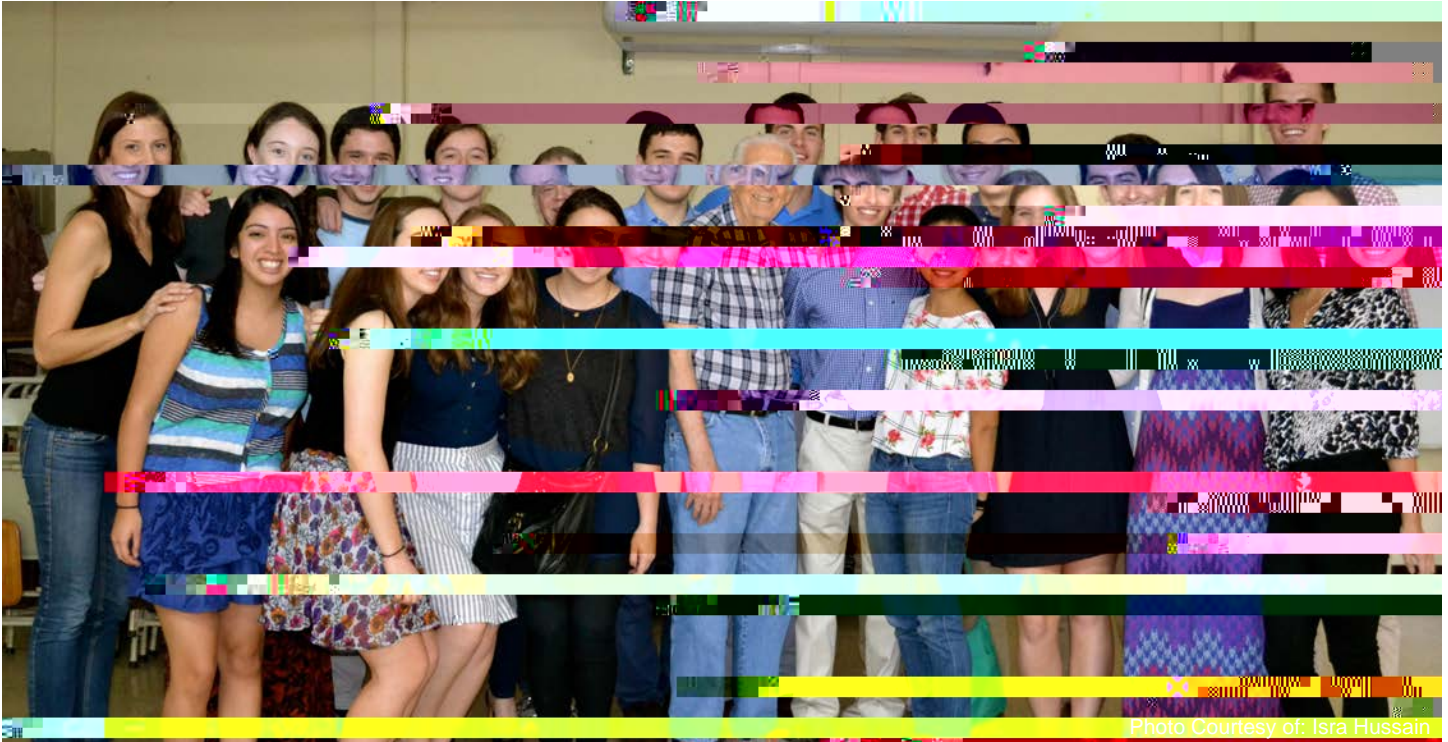


Photo Courtesy of: Isra Hussain

By Matthew Perryman A&S'17

Gabelli Presidential Scholar Program Class of 2017 spent an action-packed five days in Nicaragua visiting a wide range of organizations and meeting an even wider range of people all united in one quest: to change Nicaragua for the better. Selflessness radiated from such figures as Fernando Cardenal S.J., the only Jesuit reinstated to the Order, and Tio Antonio, the proud owner of the Cafe de las Sonrisas. There was a certain spiritual charge to the trip felt by the religious and non-religious alike; Fr. Cardenal's story was a homily directed to mankind as a whole, not only those of a specific faith.

Fr. Cardenal famously led the National Literacy Campaign and played an important part in the Sandinista Revolution. He felt strongly about his involvement with this movement because of its

Father Fernando Cardenal: Jesuit Priest, former Minister of Education during the Sandinista Revolution, Coordinator of the National Literacy Campaign

greater focus on the welfare of all Nicaraguans. The Jesuits, however, were unhappy with the violent side of the revolution—its goal was to overthrow the unpopular Somoza regime. Fr. Cardenal recounted his overarching life story, emphasizing the important parts with poignant and powerful anecdotes. A courageous selflessness pervaded all aspects of his life; he had a certain confidence in his experience with humanity that empowered him to become entangled in the Sandinista Revolution despite the Jesuits' disapproval and the immense danger. Fr. Cardenal's religion was certainly important in his decision, but he still valued his sense of justice over his position in the church. This theme of valuing the good of the underprivileged above all else was present throughout trip and a reason for hope in Nicaragua.

Tio Antonio had a vision to remedy the dignity of the deaf. He felt injustice in the particular difficulties that the deaf had to confront in their job search and had an idea for how to target this struggle and create capabilities. Thus, Cafe de las Sonrisas was born, a small restaurant and hammock workshop in Granada that provides the deaf with career opportunities. Antonio emphasized that providing people with jobs is more important than any sort of charity; while charity demeans the value of persons, employment shows them their significance.

Although there was no strict religious association with Antonio beside some brief allusions to God, I felt the same sense of spiritual selflessness in him that Fr. Cardenal exemplified. They both

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emanated a wonderful happiness that was almost innocent; they had hope that their visions for Nicaragua would one day be realized and have dedicated their lives to this actualization. Nevertheless, they understood the reality of the situation, recognizing the ongoing struggle of promoting justice in the second-poorest country in the western hemisphere. As a sophomore scholar, I think I can speak for all when I say that the trip was important for our ongoing conversation about issues of social justice. The Summer Service Learning Program experience last year allowed us to work under local leaders in the struggle for social justice in Boston. The Nicaragua experience took us a step further by promoting social justice on the international scale, providing the class with a more global perspective. We no longer worked beneath leaders to promote justice but spoke with them almost as equals, trying to glean what we could from their experience so we could apply it. Now we must bring this experience back and use it to lead our own social justice project.



Above: Hagop '17 during a visit to Café Sonrisas, owned by Tío An-vqpkq<"Kv"ku"qpg"qh"v j g" † tuv"echgvgtkc u"kp"v j g"C o gtkecu"cp f"v j g"6vj "kp"v j g" world integrated fully by workers with different capacities (particularly deaf people). It's a project that trains people with disability and provides diverse work opportunities, including hammock making.

Below: The class visited La Corriente Feminista and spoke with Maria Teresa Blandon, the founder of the Feminist Movement and extended women's movement, Founder of the Association of Rural Workers

