Many members of the Notre Dame family from Europe and the US gathered in Rome to share a series of events celebrating the weekend of the Canonization of Brother André Bessette, C.S.C. m\&\&dre’s life and ministry. The weekend was sponsored by the Center for Social Concerns, the Rome Studies Program of the Architecture School and the Nanovic Institute for European Studies, and was designed to give participants a chance to pray and celebrate liturgically, serve others and get to know each other around meals while in Rome.

Students currently studying abroad in Dublin, Angers, France and Rome joined alumni from the US, Rome and Spain along with faculty and staff and friends of the University from both Europe and the home campus. To kick off the weekend, participants were invited to the premier of a film documentary on the life and ministry of Brother André, produced by Salt and Light Television. They had the opportunity to meet with Fr. Richard Warner, C.S.C. the Superior General of the Congregation of Holy Cross, Br. Tom Dziekan, C.S.C. the Vicar General of the Brothers of Holy Cross, and Fr. Claude Grou, C.S.C. the rector of the Oratory of St. Joseph. Monica Townsend (ND class of 2012), currently studying in Angers offered this reflection: “The film was the perfect orientation to the weekend dedicated to the life of The Miracle Man of Montreal. Before it started, I knew very little about the life of Saint André, but by the end of it I felt really touched and inspired by his story.”

Saturday morning, students completed service projects cleaning at the hospice of the Missioners of Charity and sorting medicines to be donated to the poor by the Sant’Egidio Community. Jenna Heffernan ’12 shared her thoughts on the project: “I participated in the service activity, which was very touching, and almost calming. I have never visited a convent before, so I really liked the atmosphere. Not to mention that having the experience of saying the Our Father in Mother Theresa’s room was a once in a lifetime experience.”

After lunch and discussion at the Rome Studies building, the group attended a lecture on ‘Canonization in the American Context’ offered by Professor Kathy Cummings, Associate Director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism. Kathy enlightened the group on the process of canonization and entertained with examples found in the cases of several modern American saints.

After the lecture, the group joined pilgrims from Canada and the US at a prayer vigil in the Basilica Sant’Andrea della Valle. Later in the evening, the group had dinner at the restaurant Trattoria degli Amici, a ministry of the Sant’Egidio community employing people with and without disabilities working as a team to prepare and serve meals.

Sunday morning the group gathered to walk together to St. Peter’s Square, joining 50,000 pilgrims from around the world for the Canonization Ceremony and Mass. For many, this was the highlight of the weekend. Following the Mass, the luncheon at the Rome Studies center provided a final moment for the group to savor the weekend and celebrate as a community. Fr. Bill Lies, C.S.C. summed up the reasons for the Center’s efforts in organizing this weekend: “André’s example has a special place at the heart of our mission at the C.S.C., as he reached out with love and compassion to the sick and those in need. There is a beautiful stained glass image of him in one of the windows of Our Lady of Mercy Chapel in Geddes Hall, and we will soon find a special place in the chapel for a relic of Saint André that was recently gifted to us. This is a blessed moment for Holy Cross, Notre Dame and for the Church.”