

# YouthSpace

## Learning to become missionaries



**Patrick Muldoon** describes his experience of the Emmanuel School of Mission

In his message for Mission Sunday 2012 Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said "Faith is a gift that is given to us to be shared. It is a talent received so that it may bear fruit. It is a light that must never be hidden". These words have special meaning for me because my life has been truly blessed by my involvement in the work of evangelisation. I have encountered the infinite goodness and providence of God which has instilled in me a deep desire to be missionary and trust more in His plans rather than my own.

Two years ago I made a big leap of faith. I was offered a place to study at the Emmanuel School of Mission in Rome for the academic year 2011/2012. I trusted in providence and gave up my job, desiring to learn how to be a true missionary with the intention of serving the Church in Ireland on my return. God certainly did provide and I had the great support and prayers of my sponsors enabled me to realise my dream of spending a year in the eternal city.



Members of the Emmanuel School of Mission at a Mass in the Pro-Cathedral during a Dublin mission.



Patrick Muldoon (middle right) and friends from the Emmanuel School of Mission.

The Emmanuel School of Mission (ESM) is a nine month programme run by the Emmanuel Community that aims to help young Catholics aged 18-30 receive formation in the Catholic faith and build up leaders of the Church and local communities. The school in Rome is under the patronage of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the programme which is certified

by the Lateran Pontifical University has four core pillars: academic formation, spiritual life, community life, and mission. Through these dynamic aspects of life at ESM I learned to be missionary in heart, action and mind and came to know my true desires, hopes and dreams.

### Knowledge

The academic formation deepened my knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and of Church teaching. The study covered a wide range of areas including Dogmatic and Pastoral Theology and we were privileged to have excellent teachers who volunteered their time to teach us, many of whom worked in the dicasteries of the Curia. The classes were interactive, practical and engaging, and helped me gain a clear understanding of what the Church teaches and apply it to practice.

The spiritual life at the

school led me to explore more deeply my personal relationship with God and be more open to the presence of the Holy Spirit. During the year we had daily Mass, adoration, praise, guided retreat days, time for silence, personal prayer, reflection, and the constant support of a spiritual companion, chaplain and the leadership team. I found that by letting go of my human struggles and accepting myself in my weaknesses I was able to experience the loving mercy and compassion of Christ who wants us to cherish every moment and live life to the full.

The community life was certainly the aspect of the school which had the most impact on me. It was such a privilege to live in a close knit community with 19 other students from 12 different countries, an experience I'm unlikely to ever have again. This helped me form authentic friendships, develop my

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talents and grow in patience, understanding, confidence and love. My 'ESM family' helped me to grow so much as a person, and through them I feel God was moulding me into the person He wants me to be. I felt I met Him personally in each of my brothers and sisters and learned the importance of loving in the small things which has helped me to grow concretely as a person, striving to live out the graces of adoration, compassion and evangelisation in my daily life.

### Preparation

The formation at ESM is focused resolutely towards mission. At the school we were taught to never switch off as missionaries and had ample opportunity to put into practice what we learned in class. Each week we went on street evangelisation with the World Youth Day Cross and compassion service administering to the poor, lonely, sick and destitute of Rome. These missions gave me a deeper understanding of the suffering of others and what it really means to be a Christian. The school also facilitated four weeks of mission in Dublin with the Irish Emmanuel Community in conjunction with the International

Eucharistic Congress. We underwent rigorous preparation for these missions and I learned how to evangelise and communicate the Gospel effectively and appropriately to both believers and non-believers in the multi-cultural society of today.

Spending a year at the Emmanuel School of Mission truly was an amazing experience. I learned so much and it certainly has changed my life.

The highlights of my year were so many that it would be difficult to encapsulate them all. It was such a great privilege to live in a vibrant Catholic community at the heart of the Church in Rome, close to the collaborators of the Pope and immersed in the lives of the saints. During the year we met with many of the Congregations and Councils of the Curia and I had the special privilege of meeting Pope Benedict XVI with a delegation from the International Eucharistic Congress, a truly grace filled moment I'll never forget.

### Young pilgrims

It was fantastic to welcome young pilgrims to Rome at Centro San Lorenzo – the International Youth Centre at the Vatican and home of the World Youth Day Cross, where helping animate the weekly International Youth Mass was a great learning experience which deepened my understanding and knowledge of liturgy. Some other enriching aspects of life at the school included the re-enactment of the Via Crucis on Good Friday in Saint Peter's Square, taking part in pilgrimages to learn more about the lives of the martyrs, attending various conferences and colloquiums, and hosting cultural evenings to present the Irish culture, tradition and food.

Overall the school has given me a great desire to live my faith more radically and has taught me to live in the present moment in gratitude for all that I've been given in life. ESM Rome has equipped me with the tools necessary to use my gifts effectively to further my mission of serving the Church in Ireland and I would highly recommend the school to any young Irish person interested in getting more from their faith.

*To find out more about the Emmanuel School of Mission in Rome visit [www.esm-rome.com](http://www.esm-rome.com) For information on the Emmanuel Community in Ireland see [www.emmanuel-community.ie](http://www.emmanuel-community.ie)*



A group of missionaries from the Emmanuel School of Mission in Rome.