

Ana Catalano
September 13, 2005
Rockefeller Center Internship Grants

Final Report of Summer 2005 Internship at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See

This summer, June 06-August 19, 2005, I worked as an intern at the United States Embassy to the Holy See, Rome, Italy. Living in Rome and working at the embassy was a dream that I could not have accomplished without the Rockefeller Center's Internship Grant. As per the request of the Grants Coordinator, I am happy to describe and evaluate my internship.

I had been living in Rome for two months studying Art History with the Dartmouth FSP before beginning work at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See, or Embassy Vatican, on June 6. This was a great help because I had a chance to brush up on my Italian language skills and find an apartment through the Italian classifieds, "Porta a Porta." Most of my grant went toward rent, which was not cheap in central Rome. I lived about five minutes north of the Pantheon, in the city center, Piazza di Firenze 24. My apartment was very small, but the location made up for it. I was able to walk to work each day—about a 35-minute walk each way.

Embassy Vatican is not a typical embassy. It is part of the State Department's Special Embassy Program; it is an embassy, but it has a more specialized role due to the nature of relations with the Holy See. The mission of the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See focuses on maintaining strong bilateral relations with Holy See officials and advancing close working relationships on areas of mutual interest, such as religious freedom, terrorism, human rights, and conflict resolution. The Catholic Church has over one

billion followers, and as the head of the Church, the Vatican likely has a strong influence over a minimum of ten percent (100 million people) of its followers.

I started work at an interesting time; Pope Benedict XVI had just been elected. Because I had been in Rome since the beginning of April, I was able to witness the whole papal transition. I was there from the requiem mass in St. Peter's square the morning after the Pope died, to waiting in line for four hours with fellow Dartmouth students to see him lying in state, listening to the Italians speculate about who the successor would be, and racing to St. Peter's Square along with the rest of Rome when the white smoke went up to in time to see Cardinal Ratzinger elected Pope Benedict XVI. I was naturally interested in how the new Pope would affect the government and foreign relations of Vatican city-state. As I quickly learned, the status quo was preserved in almost every way. All of the officers of the Roman Curia under John Paul II remained in their positions, facilitating an easy transition to the new government and also maintaining key diplomatic contacts for the U.S. Embassy.

My work at Embassy Vatican focused on advancing U.S.-Holy See relations on many diverse subjects, especially trafficking in persons and biotechnology. As an intern, I often accompanied my supervisor, political officer Peter Martin, on meetings with his counterparts at the Secretariat and acted as note-taker. Sometimes I would be asked to draft these notes into a cable or memo later on. I also prepared briefing memos for the political officer before these meetings or on certain pertinent issues such as the Iraqi Constitution and religious freedom or the U.S.'s stance on Venezuela. I found that I learned a lot about U.S. policy doing this type of research, much of which came from the

internal U.S. Government cables and websites designed to make key talking points available.

The issues that I worked with most at Embassy Vatican were biotechnology and trafficking in persons. The U.S. Government and the Vatican share an interest in helping to combat global hunger. To further this interest, Embassy Vatican has developed a dialogue with the Holy See and other missions to the Holy See on the subject of biotech foods. Because there have been cases when governments or priests in developing countries have rejected U.S. food assistance based on the misunderstanding that the Catholic Church is against agricultural biotechnology, Embassy Vatican has stepped up efforts to press the Holy See to add their voice to the debate on biotechnology. The embassy sponsored two large international conferences on the subject and encourages global media attention to the subject in hopes of opening a science-based discussion that will dispel prejudices that may cost lives. This summer I helped transcribe the speeches and notes from the last Embassy Vatican-sponsored conference on biotechnology for conference proceedings books to be sent out later this year. I also attended a meeting as note-taker between the USAID regional biotechnology advisor from Nairobi, Kenya, and a monsignor at the Holy See's Pontifical Science Academy.

The other issue that I did extensive research into this summer is trafficking in persons, a topic I knew relatively little about before. Following recent U.S. Government attention to this grave problem, Embassy Vatican has been working with the Holy See to promote human rights and abolish the scourge of this modern-day slavery. When the Pope speaks, Catholics worldwide listen. Problems that might be brushed under the table or overlooked, like trafficking in persons, can be brought to the fore of policy-making

and enforcing with multiple papal mentions. Combined with U.S. Government insistence in the form of the annual Trafficking in Persons Report, there is increased hope in eradicating this tragic problem.

The U.S. Government sponsors and funds training programs for women religious as first-responders and rehabilitators of victims of trafficking in persons. Embassy Vatican works with the development and coordination of these training programs, as well as working with Catholic Relief Agencies (CARITAS) and encouraging ongoing Vatican attention to this issue. My main project this summer was to compile a “TIP Timeline” which brings together key recent U.S. Government, Holy See and Embassy Vatican statements and actions to spread awareness and encourage dialogue about the issue of trafficking in persons. Links to appropriate websites, speeches, and cable references are included. One version is for internal use, to inform new embassy members (the incoming Deputy Chief of Mission and Ambassador) of our work, and one version is to send to the G/TIP office in Washington (without the USG sections) for their reference and information.

I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to work as an intern at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See. I learned not only about issues like biotechnology and trafficking in persons, but also what it is like to work at an embassy, albeit a very small one, every day. I learned about the foreign service and the State Department, and was the happy recipient of a lot of advice about what to do after I graduate. Thank you again to the Rockefeller Center for the generous grant that made it possible for me to take this internship and all the help along the way.