

## **Heywood Community School Choir's Visit to Rome**

Heywood Community school has a long and proud musical tradition. The contribution of music both through the formal curriculum and through the extra-curricular programme is highly valued. Whether it be the production of school musicals, the school traditional Irish music group, school talent shows, or the school choir, students are encouraged to get involved.

Following months of practice, planning and preparation 46 students from Heywood School Choir and their accompanying teachers touched down at Aeroporto di Fiumicino, Rome on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September. The group was transferred to the Pontifical Irish College where they would stay for the next three nights. Fr. Paul Finnerty (Vice Rector) welcomed the group to the College over some light refreshments. Following practice in the college chapel the students had an opportunity to relax. Many of them spent the afternoon enjoying the beautiful weather at the college's swimming pool. That evening after dinner the group had an opportunity to explore some of Rome's best-known attractions on foot, including the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps.



On Friday 20<sup>th</sup> the students visited the Basilica of St. John Lateran and a number of the students climbed the Holy Stairs on their knees. The choir sang at the 5pm Mass in St. Peter's Basilica. A large congregation of many different nationalities gathered for this celebration at the Altar of the Chair and they showed their appreciation for the choir with a round of applause after mass. After mass the students had dinner at Pizzeria alle Carrette. A leisurely stroll through Piazza Navona including a stop at Giolitti's ice cream parlour brought a most memorable day to a close.





The concert performed by the choir in the chapel of the Irish College on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> was the highlight of the trip. You could hear a pin drop in the chapel as those present were treated to a spiritual performance of sacred music interspersed with some traditional Irish pieces. The repertoire included well known hymns such as Ave Maria, Panis Angelicus and Nella Fantasia. It was a truly moving performance by the choir and they received a lengthy standing ovation at the end.

Following Sunday morning Eucharist in the Irish College (where the choir enriched the liturgy) it was off to the Vatican for the Angelus Prayer led by Pope Francis. The evening was spent relaxing on the shores of Lake Albano and a visit to the Pope's summer residence in Castel Gandolfo. An evening flight from Fiumicino saw the group arrive back in Dublin in the early hours of Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

It was a truly memorable few days for all those involved and a special mention must go to Ms. Julianne Woods whose achievement in coaching the choir to such a high level is remarkable.

