

AND NOW A WORD FROM YOUR PASTOR...

Don't ever let me do that again!!!

I've let it be known that I have always enjoyed traveling. As I've gotten older, I've decided to keep traveling as long as I'm physically able. You never know when the ole body says it's had enough. However, had it not been that I was traveling with a good friend who really looked out for me on the first leg of my holiday and then met up with a good set of parishioners for our pilgrimage across northern Italy, I don't know how I could have endured being away so long. Honestly, the days flew by but it's always good to be home in your own bed, with your dog (and two cats), and with a family you really enjoy and have missed.

Everyone has been curious and asking about my holiday. [I never take a vacation, just a holiday now and then...lol]. Instead of recounting my adventures over-and-over again, I'm going to give an account here in the bulletin for all to vicariously enjoy and experience. It will have to be in installments 'cause it would take too many pages and you'd probably get weary reading it in one sitting.

My friend and I had planned to take a holiday after St. Mary's Bazaar as has been my custom for many years. I've been rather well travelled, him not so much. So, I was anxious to explore some of my ole haunts as well as experience new places. I had visited Istanbul, Turkey in the mid 2000's, a stop on one of the many fabulous cruises with Gerusa and Nate Parks and company. I have wanted to return and spend a bit more time in what is a very historic and interesting city. We decided to make it the beginning destination of our trip.

Istanbul was the only city we booked a hotel before we arrived. During the rest of our travels, we searched out an interesting hotel either from recommendations of other travelers we met along the way or, of course, looking online. Overall, it worked out well, more-or-less...lol.

The hotel we booked looked a lot better online than what we encountered walking through the lobby door, but ain't that always the case?! After a night in a crummy, window-less handicapped accessible room, we decided to search for another hotel. A whole day was spent going from hotel to hotel. Either it was full or the room available was crummier than the one we had. I think we put on 8 miles walking that day. Ultimately, we returned to the hotel we booked and demanded a better room. I, of course, used my charm and good looks on the desk clerk, She did upgrade our room...it had a window.

Istanbul is a city formerly know as Constantinople. As Constantinople, it was founded by the Roman Emperor Constantine in 330AD. It was conquered by the Moslems in 1453AD. It has a rich and colorful history as the city that bridges the West and East. One part of the city is in Europe. The other part is in Asia. Its history is Christian Orthodox and Moslem.

I knew a lot of the history and had also been there for a brief time years before. Seriously, nothing changed...lol. It was still a very crowded city full of churches, mosques,

palaces and shops overflowing with merchandise...often the same merchandise just displayed differently. Everything is negotiable. It's a shopper's paradise. Confessing...I did my share to help their economy. You'll see me sporting some new duds I got dirt cheap.

The highlight of the city is the great church of Hagi Sophia. Its history spans 1500 years, built in 532AD as a church, then converted to a mosque in 1453, then converted into a museum in 1935 and re-converted to a mosque in 2020. I was first there when it was a museum, walking through the great doors and able to see all the building. Now, one only tours a small upstairs gallery and able to see down to the main floor where the Moslems worship. Our guide was critical of its reconversion into a mosque. Just down the street was the great Blue Mosque plus numerous other mosques that could and do serve the needs of the moslem population. She hinted that their president got mad at the West and did it for spite. We spent 5 days there, each day a new experience of the history and culture of this ancient city. The food was ok. They cook for tourists, I think. Was hard to find a local-jokel restaurant. The great Bazaar was overwhelming. I was on the hut for incense because I researched what was Istanbul known for. Incense came us quite a few time. So, after a diligent search, I found a very reputable source who guided me in choosing incense for our worship. Let's see if you can tell a new scent.

After our stay in Istanbul, we flew to Dubrovnik in Croatia. Again, a city that I visited in the mid-1900's. Actually, I visited several times as a stop over on the pilgrimage to Medugorje. It's an ancient walled city, often called 'Venice with streets'. However, when we arrived, it was hot, crowded (cruise ships had deposited thousands of tourists), dusty and not appealing. We had rented a car for the rest of our trip through Croatia. So, having no hotel booked, we decided to move on. That was the wonderful aspect of this trip that made it an adventure. We could just decide to move on. We took the recommendation of two young ladies manning the tourist desk and move on to Montenegro, never even on our horizon of visiting.

(to be continued)

Barn Bunnies Do It Again!!!

Our Rummage Team, affectionately known as 'Barn Bunies' have again made our Annual Rummage Sale a community event that helps so many in our area. Their hard work and team spirit has made collecting, culling, sorting, pricing and packing so many donated items an art. It's hard to believe that each year by the time of the sale, the rummage barn is full to the ceiling! Great Job, Bunnies! You make us very proud.