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Warriors take healing trip to Rome

HEIDELBERG, Germany – During an audience with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican in Rome June 19, 36 Warriors, family members, cadre and staff of the Warrior Transition Battalion- Europe (WTB-E) received a standing ovation from more than 2,000 international visitors.

The audience with the Pope was one of many stops during a weeklong journey of spiritual resiliency led by WTB-E Chaplain (Capt.) Eric Dean. The Memorials of Faith tour visited historic sites that reminded the attendees the countless hardships and persecutions of both Jews and Christians over the centuries. It was an immeasurable and healing experience for our Wounded, Ill and Injured, Dean explained.

Sites visited included a tour of the Vatican, the Roman Colosseum and the Catacombs of Saint Domittelli, where many of the soldiers received Holy Communion during a service led by Dean.

“I hope that family members and Warriors have a spiritual encounter in one way or another while on this trip,” Dean said on the long bus ride back to Schweinfurt, Germany.

This is the third year Dean has been able to guide Warriors through Rome and each time it is a different experience. The Memorials of Faith tour is funded by a grant that is specifically designated to support the needs of wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers provided by the U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains' office.

The USO office in Rome helped to organize and reserve ticket for all the tours. After the tour of the Vatican, Warriors received a lunch reception from the USO as well.

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Spec. Jared Goldberg and his wife, Rebecca, of Baumholder, said, "It was an amazing trip and I wasn't ready for the support we received during the Papal Audience."

The tour wasn't all about spirituality; at night child care was provided to ensure couples received some time to go out into the city and explore Rome on their own, or to allow them to receive marriage training.

One couple who took advantage of the evening out in the city was Spec. Michael Robinson and his wife, Julia. The Robinsons, who have been to Rome before, spent their time searching for "the best pizza place in Italy."

During the tour, Dean provided spiritual thoughts and scriptural quotes at each site to provide guidance, food for thought, and spiritual healing. In his own words, Dean asked everyone to ponder "whose victory will the mural of your life celebrate?"

Warrior Transition Battalion-Europe consists of a headquarters in Heidelberg, along with companies in Landstuhl, Schweinfurt and Vilseck. Its mission is to provide mission command and administrative support to Soldier's requiring complex care; co-ordinate and synchronize care, treatment, and services through the Triad of Care multidisciplinary team (Primary Care Manager, Nurse Case Manager, and Squad Leader); and promote readiness for the Soldier and their Family to transition back to the force or to civilian life.

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Cutlines (Photos by Staff Sgt. Michael Mattice):

Rome 1: Spec. Michael Robinson, a member of Schweinfurt's Charlie Company, WTB-E, looks at the inner workings of the Colosseum in during a spiritual resiliency trip to Rome.

Rome 2: Warrior Transition Battalion-Europe group photo in front of the Coliseum in Rome, during memorials of faith chaplain's trip.

Rome 3: Maj. Ray Jablonka, WTB-E executive officer, and his family toss coins into the Trevi Fountain in Rome during the memorials of faith chaplain's trip to Rome.

Rome 4: Spec. Akindade Johnson, a member of Kleber Kaserne's Alpha Company, WTB-E, and his wife walk down the Spanish Steps during the memorials of faith chaplain's trip to Rome.