

Madison Hagen

Class of 2014

Major in Architecture

The Architecture of Ecumenical Monasteries

Rome, Italy; Taize, France

This summer I spent two weeks with the brothers of Taize at their monastery just north of Lyon, France. I spent the first week sketching and studying both the interior and exterior designs of the large monastic complex and speaking with other guests about their experiences within the space. I spent the next week in silence, continuing to sketch and to reflect on both the architecture and the experience at Taize. Upon leaving Taize, I stopped in Rome, where I spent ten days exploring the various types of churches within this ancient city – from the early medieval churches like Santa Maria in Trastevere to the more modern cathedrals on the outskirts of the city.

My thesis, which is the culminating project of my architectural education here at Notre Dame, will be a proposed design for an urban monastery tucked into the urban fabric of Los Angeles for the brothers of the monastic order of Taize. The two weeks that I spent at Taize this summer was crucial in the future development of my thesis design. I was able to document the unique vernacular style of the Taize community – observing everything from the shed roofs and wooden panel siding to the drapes that serve as a backdrop within the church. I have always found the church particularly interesting and this summer I was able to sketch its spaces to better understand why the interior of the church is so captivating. For example, this summer at Taize, I noted the common motif, which echoes the silhouette of early Christian basilicas, repeated throughout the entire church. Every detail is crucial; my thesis design should in some way reflect the architectural and design choices of the original Taize monastery.

My research in Rome also will play an important role within my thesis, as I connect the monastery for the brothers with the surrounding urban fabric of Los Angeles. Rome has countless of examples of this condition – a Christian church and monastery engulfed by its surrounding city scape. Without this time in Europe to deepen my understanding of ecumenical monasteries and their relationship to its surrounding environment, producing a well-rounded and, more importantly, well informed thesis design would have been impossible.