

Welcome to the UP TechTalk Podcast. Coming to you from the new Academic Multimedia Studio on the University of Portland campus. Produced by: Academic Technology Services. With your hosts, Maria Erb and Sam Williams.

Sam: Thank you for joining us for the UP TechTalk podcast, this is episode 2. Last week we had stated that Michelle Sunderland would be joining us from Technical Services. We have rescheduled Michelle to October the 24th. Today we have with us Fr. Rutherford CSC, professor emeritus with the department of Theology. Thank you Fr. Rutherford for joining us today.

Fr. Rutherford: Thanks for having me.

Maria: Fr. Rutherford it's such a delight to have you with us, and you've got a big event coming up next week on October 24th. I'm holding a flyer for it in my hand and it says "Why are these people smiling? Two words Pollentia Expedition". Please tell us about the event coming up.

Fr. Rutherford: On Friday, the four UP faculty, that is three faculty and one emeritus, are gathering as many faculty and staff folks as we can to tell our story, but also to tell the story of the context of Pollentia, the world in which Pollentia lives. The town of Alcúdia, beautiful, little, medieval, walled town on the north coast of Majorca. And so, we want to tell our story about Pollentia and the expedition and the excavation, but we also want to invite people to share ideas that they might have or they might generate coming out of our experience at Pollentia.

Maria: Why is it such a rich community there? It sounds like it's just a hotbed of all kinds of things.

Fr. Rutherford: Well, It is actually, Maria, because, well, we were living in this little town, and Pollentia, the Roman city that is the site of the excavation is just adjacent to it actually. Alcúdia is the expansion of what was the ancient Roman city of Pollentia. It's a walled city, medieval, and one little factor that caught our imagination was that there is no garbage pick-up inside the walled city because all of the garbage and recyclables are outside the wall of the city. So every day you see people walking with their garbage and their recyclables outside the wall. Now, if you live on the wall, that's nice. If you live in the heart of the city, that could be a 10 minute walk! And people do it. And so, it was the thought of "wow!" maybe sustainability could be an interesting topic to explore, in a world that deals with it in this fashion.

Sam: You were one of the participants in the Pollentia expedition and you also had with you...

Fr. Rutherford: Fr. Ron Wasowski, helping with aerial imagery and Drs. Ray and Ronda Bard in chemistry working in the world of material analysis.

Sam: So what got you to Pollentia to begin with, like what... so we know that according to this we've got an expedition that went to Pollentia, but why Pollentia?

Fr. Rutherford: Right that's a good question and a bit of a long story. But, I'll try to keep it short. For many years I've been doing research in early Christian archeology, in the area of baptismal architecture, so baptisteries. And you know, that's the project that Information Services helped me work through last year and submit a grant to the National Endowment for the Humanities and all this work that we are still continuing there. And one of my trips in search of baptisteries in the early Christian world was to Majorca. And, on that occasion I found what I was looking for, but I also met an archeologist, a Spanish archeologist, from The University of Barcelona whose name is Miguel Cao. And he turns out to be the director of the expedition of the excavation at Pollentia. And so, we talked and we brainstormed and he said well, someday you need to come to Pollentia and look at what we have. Time passes, another year goes by and I was back in Majorca on another occasion and planned to meet up with him. We brainstormed again and said well, you know, "next summer, let's see what we can do." So that was 2012, 2013, 2014 we end up with ten UP family related folks there working with him at the excavation at Pollentia. Now Miguel is interested primarily in the Roman city. His charge is excavation of the Roman city, and that's what he has all his teams working on. But, for years he knows that there is also this Christian cemetery on the south end of the site. His other interest being late antiquity, early Christianity, he wanted actually to get to excavate. Um...that, of course, was interesting to me as well because except for the years I've spent on baptisteries the other end of my career was spent on funeral related things; funeral related rituals throughout history, Christian funeral rituals, and cemeteries. It's sort of a womb to tomb, tomb to womb conversion thing going on here, you know? And so, in thinking, he convinced me that there was evidence of an early Christian cemetery there and that is the kind of thing we'll talk about on Friday when we can tell our story. But in my mind, Christians in history didn't just bury their dead and run off. If there is a cemetery there's got to be a church somewhere. And if there is a church somewhere, in what was one of the only two major cities on the island in early Christianity, there's got to be a baptistery. Churches in that part of the world, in that kind of a city, would not, not have a baptismal structure in them. So, that's why I call this "Baptisteries through the Back Door". You know, finding a baptistery by way of the cemetery. Now, whether we'll ever find the church or the baptistery remains to be seen. But that's the goal. First of all, it's the cemetery. So how did we get to Pollentia? From the baptistery, to an archeologist, to brainstorming, to visiting, to saying, well you know, maybe we could collaborate? Next year ten of us are there in the international, cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary experience. Now what am I doing there? I'm not an archeologist. I'm a theologian.

Sam: That's a very good question. So you went with a group this past summer.

Fr. Rutherford: Right.

Sam: And so I can't remember exactly when you left but it was in July?

Fr. Rutherford: End of June

Sam: End of June, so you brought a big group with you, so what was the, I guess, what was the goal for you when you went on site?

Fr. Rutherford: Ah the...we had three chores for the first week. The second week had its own chores. The three chores for the first week was: to find ... re-survey the land to find where the initial evidence for this cemetery, these early graves was on the site. The second one was to mark out a grid. If we thought we found them, to mark out a grid of the area and really pinpoint where they would be. And then the third point was to do a surface walkabout to see what, if anything, was on the surface of the ground that would indicate anything of its history. So, that was week one. Our goal was to find these graves, that had been identified in the 1920's, and we did, actually we did!

Sam: Oh wow!

Fr. Rutherford: One of our team, a UP alum in theology actually, and the MAPM, Master of Arts, Pastoral Ministry program, is also an engineer for the forest service. And she was with us, and she was our survey lead. She and a Spanish survey lad from the archeological team worked really hard for that week with all of us shuffling around doing what we could to help relocate the coordinates that are about 100 years old. Now all of our engineers, civil engineers listening will know that survey, land survey, has changed quite a lot in 100 years. And the pointing of coordinates and so on, has changed a lot. So they were working with ancient field notes, and old coordinates to find these things. So, we pinpointed where we thought through the survey they would be. And then in the second week the goal was to say okay, that's where you think they are, are they really there? So, the second week was devoted to an excavation trench, or a test trench, it was basically 2 meters, 2 yards wide and 5 long. Just to see if that within that little space we were close enough to one of those graves. So we dug, started the excavation and by the end of the week we, as shows up in the blog, we found evidence of the graves that had been excavated earlier as a test, earlier on in the 20's. We can now expand from their initial graves, they found thirty-some graves in a row, and we were able to identify that row and a couple of those graves, so now we know where we can go.

Sam: So part of that story, telling that story was through, you mentioned it briefly, was that Wordpress blog,

Fr. Rutherford: Right

Sam: that Wordpress blog that was built before you left the University campus. And so Academic Technology Services worked with your team to build out this Wordpress blog and lent some cameras and equipment to take with you. And Ronda Bard in chemistry here at the University, I think she is a lecturer here at the University,

Fr. Rutherford: Correct.

Sam: She took on the task of documenting this story. So there's definitely a lot of great information out there.

Fr. Rutherford: We can give them the address. Do you want to give them the address?

Sam: Yeah. So we have wordpress.up.edu/pollentia and that is with 2 “Ls” so, P-o-l-l-e-n-t-i-a. It was fun for me to sit here at the University of Portland and see the blog come to life. And see these great images coming back of the work that you were doing. Do you have any words on the blog itself?

Fr. Rutherford: Well, sure I think, the reason I thought we could give the audience the address right up front, because if one goes there you can kind of scroll through, you can start at the bottom and work chronologically, or just look at the highlights. And the pictures really kind of tell the highlights and one of those pictures is a picture of the president of the autonomous community of the Balears Islands, as it is officially called. It would be like to governor of all of the islands, receiving all of the Pollentia archeological team in the presidential palace in Palma. So this was at the beginning of our second work week. And so... the excitement really for us, that we were trying to communicate on the blog is, here are ten, oh I don't know... mostly silver-haired, mostly senior citizens, happily Jake Bard was with us, who is only in his 30's, so there is a little young life among us, so here you are with mostly silver-haired mostly senior folks amidst all these young Spanish archeologists showing up at the presidential palace in Palma. And the excitement was, here we were, you know, how many thousands of miles from home, being acknowledged by the president, the governor of a pretty phenomenal part of the world, for work that we were doing that the University of Portland was doing. He mentioned us by name, and we got in the local press by name and their official presidential blog by name. And their website, we are there on the website with pictures such as you see in the blog. One of the other pictures in the blog is the president autographing our book. So that's one piece. The day that we found the graves and the pictures that go with that, it was important. The day that we did a... they wanted us to a presentation to the whole group, there were about 50 people working the excavation while we were there, and we were just 10 of this group, they wanted us to do a presentation about what we were doing, and so we did. And in that presentation Ray who was working, Ray Bard, who was working with the chemical instrumentation right along the XRF, x-ray spectrometer, hand-held x-ray spectrometer, one picture on the blog is Ray with all those students who were totally excited about the way in which this spectrometer could measure the elements of the ...

Sam: So we have science coming in now into the dig, not just pure archeological...

Fr. Rutherford: Right we have the technology coming in from the science as well. And the other piece of the science is Fr. Wasowski's aerial imagery work. We were there with both a helium balloon, which also shows up on the blog very nicely. And the new drone that environmental studies bought for the University that we carried with us.

Sam: So, it sounds like it was an amazing experience and we'll all get a chance to hear about it more next Friday.

Maria: At the event.

Sam: What's the date of the event?

Maria: The 24th

Sam: The 24th of October. And it's going to be in the Library...

Fr. Rutherford: No

Maria: Holy Cross Lounge at 5:30.

Sam: Okay

Fr. Rutherford: In Franz Hall, 3rd floor of Franz Hall just outside of the Garaventa Center...

Sam: Oh perfect.

Fr. Rutherford: where they always have the "Thirst Thursdays". So people who know about "Thirst Thursday" will... or is it "Thirst Fridays"?

Maria: (chuckling) "Thirst Fridays" yes...

Sam: "Thirst Friday", we'll put a plug in for the Garaventa center as well.

Fr. Rutherford: Anyway they are hosting, and we need to say that they are co-sponsoring this with the Provost's office and our group from Pollentia. But we do need to say that the time Friday is 4:00-5:30 with refreshments.

Maria: Yes, nice. I see wine and cheese on the flyer.

Sam: So, Maria if you want to summarize that again for the audience.

Maria: Okay, okay. Be sure to attend on Friday October 24th from 4:00-5:30pm in the Holy Cross Lounge that's the third floor of Franz and its right outside of the Garaventa Center. Don't miss it!

Sam: And thank you Fr. Rutherford for speaking with us today and having this fun conversation. We definitely love hearing about your work and hopefully I will get to go to Spain someday, it's still on my radar!

Fr. Rutherford: Better not be the bucket list...

Sam: Right? Exactly

Fr. Rutherford: We want you there, after all we are looking at documentary filmmaking for archeology and ground penetrating radar and...

Sam: And tons of opportunity for students.

Fr. Rutherford: Absolutely.

Sam: So there's tons of opportunity for student research, but also just the storytelling and faculty research. So, if they wanted to do that people can contact you if they have additional ideas.

Fr. Rutherford: Right. And above all come on Friday just to share ideas with us as to how, or what creative projects you can see coming out of an experience like this, that four faculty and six volunteers had looking down the road, and talking with Fr. Art Wheeler about potential study abroad opportunities are also there. There is a lot for students.

Sam: Definitely a lot of opportunities.

Maria: Right. Well thanks again Fr, Rutherford, always a joy to see you.

Fr. Rutherford: Well, you're welcome.

Sam: Thank you for joining us another episode of the UP TechTalk Podcast. Reminder: we post a podcast every Friday morning, and you can find us at wordpress.up.edu/techtalk.