

Based in Rome at Santa Maria Basilica in Trastevere and named after the church where they were founded, the community of Sant'Egidio was the topic and focus of the recent 'Conversations at the Center,' in Brighton. As a canonically recognized Catholic lay movement in the Church, the community, whose pillars are prayer, friendship and service to the poor, is also a dynamic humanitarian effort in the world today.

The presentations and facilitated discussion, which followed the Sunday liturgy, were given by Nick Coccoma, who is a student resident at the Assumptionist Center while pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at Boston College and a member of the community since 2007 and Kerri Marmol, the Boston area coordinator. Several other members of Sant'Egidio were also present.

Founded in Rome in 1968 by a high school youth, Andrea Riccardi, in response to Vatican II's call for a revitalized spirituality in the Church, Sant'Egidio has grown to include more than 70,000 members in dozens of countries around the world. Its apostolic activities include mediating peace negotiations in warring countries, administering an AIDS treatment campaign in Africa and advocating for the global abolition of the death penalty.

Meeting once a week in various locations for prayer, friendship and service to the most needy and marginalized in the Boston area, they reach out to children, families, the disabled and the infirmed, especially in nursing homes. They also significantly befriend prisoners and participate in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue when possible.

By who they are and all they do, the Sant'Egidio members passionately respond to Jesus' invitation to witness by loving friendship and compassion by asking Him, as did the disciples,

"Where are you staying?" It is evident, that as faithful imitators of the Master, they are a precious leaven in the Church today.

A brunch followed where the discussion continued.