

## **Studera patristik inom masterprogrammet the *Religious Roots of Europe* (RRE)?**

“An atheist, a lawyer, an Adventist preacher and an orthodox monk have breakfast in a hotel at the edge of the old city of Rome...” What could be the beginning of an entertaining joke was actually my first encounter with the RRE programme. Having trained as a lawyer, I had applied to the master’s programme in order to gain a better understanding of the way in which the history of theology and religious thought has influenced our current understanding of law and society.

What drew me to the RRE programme was the way in which the history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are studied in parallel, that a considerable emphasis is placed on learning and engaging at least two of four languages (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Arabic) and the combination of in-person and online learning which allows for a lot of flexibility. I was especially attracted by the fact that, throughout the two years, the programme travels not just between three Scandinavian universities, but also to Rome, and to Israel / Palestine. It is one thing to discuss Mithraism, for example, a pre-Christian mystery religion, in the classroom; it is quite another to do so actually standing in a Roman, 1800 years old Mithraeum – the underground temple where worshippers of Mithras gathered to initiate members into their cult.

However, one of the most exciting aspects of the RRE programme are the discussions with the other students. While we learn a lot about the development of and historic relations between the three religions, it is remarkable to see how many of the questions we discuss in class subsequently become the subject of intense and fruitful debates among us students as we relate them to contemporary affairs or to our own backgrounds. Some students identify as believers, some are representatives of churches, some are declared atheists, some are mostly interested in history, some are at the beginning of their career, some have recently retired, some live in Scandinavia (most do not), some are interested in art, some in the languages. It is this mosaic of experiences and backgrounds that makes the RRE discussions so unique and enriching – in which other context do an atheist, a lawyer, an Adventist preacher and an orthodox monk discuss ancient mystery cults over breakfast at the edge of the old city of Rome?

*An RRE-student from the 11th Cycle*