

Rome... Eternally Yours

The Eternal City is aptly named.

Next year when hundreds of thousands from throughout the world make their Holy Year pilgrimages, among them will be many making their first trips to Rome as did Anthony J. Costello, Courier general manager, and I recently.

Perhaps these rookie impressions will serve to give others an idea of what to expect. True, events of Holy Year itself may make some difference, but we did visit the four major basilicas and most of the other points of interest visitors will want to take in.

Everything they say about Rome is true. It is monumental, literally and figuratively, beautiful to behold visually and sensually, and in its blending of the old and new an education no book could provide.

Timelessness pervades. The Colosseum still seems to resound to cheering and jeering crowds and although homeless cats now wander where lions once roared it doesn't require much imagination to bridge the gap.

Along the ancient Appian Way, the cadenced thumping of marching Roman legions still rumbles if you listen keenly, their trumpets still tearing the air, and at the Roman forum, one mingles with ghosts and life as it was even before the coming of the Savior began to make early changes.

The Arch of Constantine is a standing reminder of the time when Christianity became accepted, when the pagan way of life became transformed into transcendental importance.

In Rome you don't need historical background to sense the transition. A short trip from the ancient ruins is the center of Christianity — Vatican City — wherein lie the remains of St. Peter himself. A tip to the pilgrim

THE SLOT MAN

Costello's Column

— be sure to visit the "scavi" or excavations beneath the tomb of St. Peter where an archeologist guide will explain the certitude that Peter is indeed there just beneath the altar of St. Peter's — built some 16 centuries after his death.

In the tombs of the Popes, just across from St. Peter, is the body of Pope Pius XII and not too far away that of Pope John XXIII. You won't have to ask, it's the one with the biggest crowds and the freshest flowers. Hope blooming even in catacombs.

A short distance from St. Peter's is the Vatican Museum and Picture Gallery. From galleries containing ancient Egyptian statuary and sarcophagi through the great Raphael rooms to the Sistine Chapel, the senses are delighted.

History the easy way. From the Curia at the Forum where Roman senators began to meet as long ago as 680 B.C. to the Piazza Venezia where Benito Mussolini shouted his dark oratory to the present capital buildings, one sees the string laid end to present. Present day military abound, but unlike the Roman legionnaires, they haven't won many battles lately. An obelisk brought from Addis Ababa by Il Duce seems to be the last spoil of victory for Rome previously adorned by the great monuments and statues brought home by the ancient legions.

A further sign of the present at Fiumicino Airport soldiers decked out in camouflage gear, automatic weapons at the ready, serve to remind of the tragedy at this airport about a year ago when terrorists shot up the place, killing randomly

Another sign of the times, leashed police dogs used to sniff out dope in the luggage of visitors.

The modern Romans are sophisticated, keeping attuned to events. A cab driver tells of the omnipresent carabinieri (national police). "Perhaps they are fascisti, but at least they treat everyone the same, rich and poor alike."

As we passed the headquarters of the Communist party, it suddenly became clear why the CIA-Chile controversy was so in the forefront, how the graffiti (Viva Chile, Kissinger is a fascisti) got up so fast.

Then there is the Jewish ghetto, not mentioned in our guide book, which keeps the police busy because, as our taxi driver pointed out, "the Jews who commit very little crime themselves have to be protected from the fascisti." Eternal.

The Exorcist is opening. Signs on taxis advise: "Roma pulita dipende anche da te" — a clean Rome depends on you.

All in all, a busy seven days in Rome, what with several appointments with Vatican officials sandwiched in. We may not have had enough time to smell the flowers but it is just as well.

Costello is a family man as am I and the melancholy of "arrivederci Roma" was more than offset by the thought of family reunions. And when we got home there was another reminder — there also is eternity in a child's hug.



Photos by Anthony J. Costello

Roman policeman outside the Colosseum.



Renato Annibali, taxi driver, outside the Circus Maximus where chariots once provided ancient Romans with entertainment. The chariot scenes in the movie Ben Hur, starring Charlton Heston, were filmed on location here. In ancient days, 225,000 would gather to watch the races, with the rich using apartments in the ruins in the background, much as our modern day fans use special boxes in such stadia as the Houston Astrodome.



The roar of lions has faded.

Inflation Victimizing Poor, Official Declares

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — The executive director of the National Conference of Catholic Charities told the President's Pre-Summit Conference on Inflation that "immediate steps must be taken to alleviate the extra-heavy burden" of inflation "upon low income people and the poor." Calling this endeavor the "first priority," Msgr. Lawrence Corcoran challenged the emphasis placed on cutting the federal budget and said that more rather than less federal spending was needed. He noted that President Ford and various economists had already recognized the need for a program of public service employment.

To compensate for additional spending in what he called "people" programs, Msgr. Corcoran said reductions should be made in the defense budget, the space budget and in highway expenditures. He also called for tax reform, particularly the closing of tax loopholes for those in upper income brackets.

Testifying during two days of hearings organized by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, he noted that for too long the economy "has been considered the esoteric domain of academicians and the business world." He called for "greater attention to the human impact which results from the

economic policies of both government and private business.

While praising President Ford's inclusion of the human welfare sector in the discussion on inflation, he said it was this group which has the responsibility to speak on behalf of low-income workers, the elderly, the poor, and those on fixed incomes who are bearing a disproportionate share of the burden of inflation.

Among other specific actions urged by Msgr. Corcoran were reductions in food prices, without hurting the farmer who is getting only 40 per cent of the retail price paid for food. He said agribusiness and the non-farm

sector of the food industry must be made to reduce prices, and he banks to allocate certain percentages of funds for housing at conference to deal with the low-interest rates and of reinstating a federal housing loan problem.

On housing, the NCCC program of not more than 6 per cent interest executive director endorsed the

2 TO GET AWARDS

New York [RNS] — A priest active in television writing and directing and a well-known magazine publisher and columnist were named to receive the 1974 CARTA awards from the Catholic Apostolate for Radio, Television and Advertising here. They are Father James S. Conlon, a priest of the New York archdiocese who serves as chaplain at Mount St. Vincent College, the Bronx, and William F. Buckley Jr., editor and publisher of the National Review and host of television's "Firing Line" program on educational TV channels.