

I Miei Giorni Romani [*My Roman Days*]

Tom Tucker [P 1963]

Preface: *I am writing this at the age of 73. It's been fifty years since I returned from my studies in Rome. They were marvelous years of growth and maturity. At the same time, I often thought of some more whimsical and touching experiences that happened to me during those years. These are some of those experiences that I want to share with you.*

I. "I don't even like Wine! (April 1965)

It was a lovely spring day at the end of April, 1965 in Honesdale, Pennsylvania at Kilroe Seminary. We were at lunch. The provincial council was visiting and they had finished up their meetings that morning. After lunch ended, Fr. Peter Miller, scj, the Provincial Superior got up to make some announcements about some decisions the Council had made. As he finished up, he paused and almost as an afterthought he said, "oh yes, Frater Tom Tucker will begin his studies in Philosophy in Rome this coming September"...and sat down.

My life had suddenly changed...and for the better as it worked out. I was in shock and all I remember saying was, "I don't even like wine." Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would be going to Rome. Other scholastics had been sent to Rome for studies over the years. But, me?

I tried without success to find out how this happened and what it meant. I had not even been asked if I would like to study there. That evening I called home to tell them the big news. My mother answered the phone and I blurted out the news. Her response was, "oh good they told you. Fr. Tom (Garvey) told us about a week ago but asked us not to tell you. Congratulations. We're very proud of you." she said.

Over the summer I enquired about studying Italian but I was told it wasn't necessary. I could study it when I got to Italy. So instead, I took a course in economics 101 that was offered at Honesdale that summer. I always scratched my head at not taking Italian, but what did I know? I found an Italian study guide and started learning a few more words and expressions than simply Mafia, ciao, bello, pizza and that most famous Italian university, "whatsa mattah U."

In the fall I returned to Kilroe to make our annual retreat before renewing vows. I recall thinking to myself that the Order must trust me if they were sending me off to Rome while still in temporary vows. That made me feel good. We renewed our vows on September 8, 1965 and I was scheduled to leave New York on the brand-new Italian ocean liner, Michelangelo on the 12th. It was all getting exciting and frightening. I was going alone on this voyage across the ocean. I was 20 years old and thus far in my life I had been in Illinois, Indiana (Donaldson and

South Bend), Wisconsin (Hales Corners), and driven through Ohio to Pennsylvania. A seasoned traveler I was not.

The culture of the SCJ's held hard work in great esteem. Thus, the three days between vows on Sept. 8th and my leaving on Sept. 12th I was put on the farm to work. Everyone else had started classes so they didn't want me to be bored. The corn was being harvested so I was assisting Br. Frank Miller as he filled the silos with corn and silage. I thought to myself that if they wanted me to remain humble about the honor of going to Rome to study, doing this work for a couple of days would keep my ego in check.

Tom Garvey, scj, and Jerry Clifford, scj drove me down to New York City to catch the boat. I was going by boat I was told because Fr. DePalma (Superior General since July 15, 1959) had books and materials that filled a trunk and sending me by boat was a cheaper way to get both me and his stuff to Rome. We arrived later than planned and there was only time to get my luggage on the boat and for me to get my ticket stamped so no long good-byes. Within an hour the boat was pulling away and I waved goodbye to the USA and began the most exciting, demanding and rewarding three years in my life.

II. The Michelangelo (September 12, 1965)

As I stood on deck waving goodbye to my country, I happened to be standing next to four young women from Windsor, Ontario. They had all taken a leave from their jobs (3 teachers and a nurse) and were going to spend 6 months travelling around Europe. They couldn't have been more excited. In the mysterious ways of life, we became good life-long friends but sadly two of them are already deceased.

The ship was loaded with college students going to Europe to study in cities like Madrid, Rome, Bologna, Marseilles, etc. As I got to know them, I realized that I was popular precisely because I was a seminarian. I was not looking for a romantic interest so the women could relax around me. I was not competition for the men so they would seek out any information I had on any of the young ladies. I however had a schedule significantly different from them. They tended to stay up late at night to dance, drink and socialize with each other. I however was up early for daily mass and in my berth at a somewhat reasonable hour.

After 5 days at sea we approached the **Rock of Gibraltar**. I thought I was in a dream as I looked out upon at this iconic scene.

III. Napoli (September 18, 1965)

A day later we could see land again and we knew that our long voyage was coming to an end with our arrival into the magnificent bay of Naples. "**See Naples and die**" is the expression. I was thrilled to see Naples but very much wanted to continue to live.

Bob Hess met me at the dock and I immediately felt safe. I knew Bob had a year's experience in Italy under his belt and this man can handle anything. I knew I was in good hands. In the early evening we arrived into the first Italian scj house, the Provinciate of the Southern Italian province. We arrived after supper and when we entered I remembered seeing several men watching the evening news, called Telegiornale. I was just in a daze with the foreign language and all the people. I smiled and shook hands and again, even though I understood nothing, I felt safe being in an scj house.

Later that evening, I wandered back into the rec room and the TV was still on and several were watching. As I looked more closely it was none other than Jackie Gleason in one of his sit-coms except this time speaking perfect Italian. I could have almost cried because it was a taste of home.

IV. The SCJ International College (September 20, 1965)

The next day we took a train up to Rome and then hopped two buses (#64 and #98) and were dropped off at the foot of the stairway (97 steps) leading up to the Collegio Internazionale dei Sacerdoti del Sacro Cuore, (International College of the Priests of the Sacred Heart) my home for the next three exciting years.

I liked the College immediately. It was large and airy. We looked out onto an interior courtyard with beautiful ferns, trees, grass and flowers. It was always well kept up from the diligent and loving hands of two Dutch brothers: Rutgerus and Gordianus.

After putting my luggage in my large and airy room (three times the size of the rooms in Kilroe) Bob took me on an extended tour of the house ending up on the roof of the College where one could walk the length of the building where one had a birds-eye view of the cupola of St. Peter's Basilica. I was struck that it was so large and seemingly so close to the college.

The next day several of us took the bus into the city dressed in hot, black cassocks. It was the rule in Rome that all clerics would wear their habits even out in the city. So off we went, hot and steamy, to see the incredible sights of this "Eternal City". I was absolutely thrilled to be there.

Here were some immediate differences living in Rome than in the US:

1. At home manual labor, besides our studies, was an essential part of each day. In Rome, studies were the most important and manual labor was not expected.
2. At home the only place one could smoke was in the recreation room or outside. It was limited to two times during the day. In Rome you weren't allowed to smoke in the recreation room and one could smoke whenever one wanted in your room and outside.
3. Alcohol was significantly limited in the USA to special occasions and then it was a beer or two and only in the recreation room. In Rome it was expected that you had a bottle

of some type in your room to offer anyone who came in for a visit. In addition, wine was offered at the noon and evening meals.

4. At home one never had a visitor in your room. In Rome visiting in your rooms was a major part of life.
5. I arrived in Rome about six weeks before my 21st birthday. For two consecutive years I was the “bambino” of the College as the youngest member of the community.

V. Not Subito, adesso!

There was a very holy Italian brother who answered phones, manned the front entrance, went each day to the Vatican to deliver mail, ran a thousand errands for the thousand needs of the International community. He was in stature about 5 feet tall. He had a perpetual smile on his face and a warm and generous spirit. When he wasn't busy with his many duties one was sure to find Brother Silvestro in the chapel praying. He wouldn't call it praying strictly speaking, he would say it was just spending time with his good friend. It was common knowledge throughout the college that Silvestro was simply a saint.

Because he had so many different responsibilities, he couldn't always get to things immediately. An impatient American scj who was staying at the college asked Silvestro several times for various favors. Even though Silvestro did not literally know one word of English, he understood what people wanted with gestures etc. To every request Silvestro wouldn't complain or say I can't do it. He would smile and often times say, “Si lo faccio subito.” (Yes I'll do it immediately.) Which for an Italian really means, I'll do it as soon as I can.

Our impatient American who barely spoke much Italian once confronted Silvestro when he asked another favor and was told “subito” (immediately), he responded gruffly, “Silvestro, not subito, adesso.” (Silvestro, not immediately, NOW!)”

VI. Learning Italian

One year my work responsibility was to bring down to the laundry all of the baskets of soiled clothing and later in the week to return the laundry to the respective individuals. It was a mindless task and not very demanding. One day when I came back to pick up the clean laundry. I picked up my basket of laundry with a shirt on top. I noticed the shirt was warm from just being taken out of the dryer. So, in my attempt to make some conversation to the Sisters, I said, “Suora, la mia moglie e calda.” Thinking I just said to her, Sister my shirt is hot/warm. To my surprise they burst into laughter at what I just said. Then one of the Sisters pointed to my shirt and said “Maglia (shirt)” not “moglie (wife). I couldn't believe I had just said that “my wife was hot” instead of “my shirt is warm”. And so, the humbling experience of learning a foreign language continued.

VII. Pontifical Gregorian University (PUG) (1965 – 1968)

The Gregorian University is the Jesuit University in Rome and was known for education primarily in dogmatic theology. The Biblicum was also run by the Jesuits and specialized in studies in sacred scripture. The Angelicum was the Dominican university and its specialty was preaching. The Alphonsianum was the Redemptorist University and its forte was moral theology. The Lateran University had a historical reputation for training in canon law. But the “Greg” was the primary university where students from all over the world went for their studies in philosophy and theology in preparation for ordination to the priesthood. A large number of American bishops in years past had studied in Rome at the Gregorian as they were being groomed to be bishops someday.

I was sent to Rome to earn a licentiate in philosophy (Ph.L.). It was a three-year program. I found out after returning to the states that the degree in a Catholic university in America would recognize that as the equivalent of a Master’s in philosophy.

At that time, Latin was the language of the university. All classes were taught in Latin. All examinations were done in Latin. It was a daunting prospect when I first started wondering to myself how I would ever be able to understand the professors and then understand and integrate the subject matter.

I must say that the actual experience of taking classes at the Gregorian was by far the worst educational experience in my life. These are some of the reasons for that:

- All classes are taught in Latin
- Professors only lectured in Latin from books they had written. They entered the Aula (large lecture hall) and began lecturing. 45 minutes later the class ended and they left.
- There was no give and take with questions and answers.
- There was generally one examination for the course at the end. It was usually a 15 minute oral examination where the professor asked questions and the student would try, to the best of his ability, respond to the question.
- In the philosophy section of the university the major classes would often have 150 students sitting and passively taking notes.
- One could read other books during the lectures, or daydream or whatever because the professors only focus was on lecturing.

VIII. Second Vatican Council (December 5 & 6, 1965)

Vatican II was in its 4th and last session when I arrived in Rome. It was truly an historic event which I’ll never forget. I recall the first time I was in St. Peter’s Square on a weekday when the bishops were arriving for the daily session which lasted from 8 AM until 1 PM. 2200 bishops, all dressed in episcopal cassocks arriving in the square and entering the basilica. It was ablaze in crimson.

In time I heard stories how one could actually attend one of the private sessions of the Council. I found that it was relatively easy. All one had to do was to get a bishop to sign a form in which

he sponsors the person who is requesting a “tessera” which allowed that person to witness one day’s private session of the Vatican Council.

Well if there ever was a classic example of not letting your schooling get in the way of your education, this was it. I got the necessary form and Bishop Hermelinck, a Dutch scj from Indonesia would happily sign for anyone. However, when I asked him, he agreed but warned me that it would be very boring, “Jah Tom they talk all morning in Latin and we listen to bishops get up and talk. That’s it.”

I received notification by mail that I was eligible to get a tessera scheduled for December 5, 1965. That day was the second last day of the Council. I was told I needed to go to a specific office of the Vatican across the street from St. Peter’s. On the given day, without actually asking permission from the superior to skip classes that day, I acted like I was going to class but rather than hop on the bus going to the Gregorian University I went down the street and hopped our favorite #98 for St. Peter’s. This was going to be a high-class form of hookey.

When I got to the right room, I joined about 50 people who were milling about. Then an Italian cleric appeared and started calling out the names that were on the various tesseras. When your name was called you took your tessera and off you went. Tony Russo and I got our tesseras and quickly walked over to St. Peter’s, up the main steps leading to the central doors and passed by the Swiss guards by waving the tessera in front of them. No one was validating them at all.

It was a momentous occasion. Crossing the Piazza, entering the main doors of St. Peter’s, Swiss Guards, St. Peter’s all lit up and bishops walking in all directions. Heady stuff this. I was so delighted and grateful to have this experience. We had been told to go to a specific loggia around the papal altar where we would attend Mass. After Mass we sat and just tried to take in the enormity of the moment. Watching cardinals, archbishops and bishops getting up to speak to a specific point on the document they were discussing/debating.

Bishop Hermelinck, however, had told us the night before that the “best part of the morning was the coffee break”. He also gave us specific directions as to where to meet him. e.g. “underneath the fresco of St. Margaret Mary in the side chapel of St. Augustine”. We met him as we were told, early so we could be one of the first ones served. When it opened up a bar had been set up that must have been the length of a football field and one could pick up a sweet roll and coffee, cappuccinos etc. We were elbowing our way up to the bar with the thirsty hierarchy of the world.

At the end of the morning session Bishop Hermelinck invited us to go up into the bleachers where the bishop sat. They all sat according to seniority: Cardinals were closest to the papal altar, then archbishops and bishops. Bishop Paul Verschuren, scj, a Dutch bishop who was the bishop of Helsinki, Finland was literally the youngest bishop in the world at one of the sessions

so he had the dubious distinction of being seated in the last section on the highest row of seats in St. Peter's.

The experience of seeing and feeling like a very small cog in this historic Council was overwhelming. I kept pinching myself and said "try to take in everything". It made me proud and reminded me that it has to be the Holy Spirit at work because I couldn't see how anything could come from this ecclesiastical Tower of Babel.

Bishop Albert Hermelink, scj (Sept. 5, 1898 – February 25, 1983) introduced us to some of the bishops whose seats were next to his. I noticed that the Archbishop of Manchester, England was next to him and a bishop from Nigeria, Africa on his other side.

He introduced us to a young American priest from the Diocese of Gary who was in Rome studying for a doctorate in Canon Law. He was working each day as the ecclesiastical go-fer to this particular section of bishops. While talking with him he mentioned what a shame we couldn't come tomorrow for the last private session of the Council before the closing Mass and ceremony outside in the Piazza on December 8, 1965. He mentioned he would be distributing the finished copies of the decrees of Vatican II so he would be extremely busy and could use some help.

I immediately thought what a wonderful experience it would be. Father Dehon was a stenographer for Vatican Council I in 1868 and I, his spiritual son, could assist on the last day of the private sessions of Vatican II. I decided then and there that I was going to do everything I could to make that happen.

The very next morning I again did not go to the university because of the age-old principle of not letting your studies get in the way of your education. I returned to the same room in the Vatican building as I had the day before and stood with a whole flock of people waiting to pick up the ticket that would allow them into the Vatican Council.

The priest started calling out the names and one by one each person would take their respective ticket and leave. At the end there were only two of us still standing waiting for our tesseras. The priest asked our names and then when he checked he said there was no ticket for either of us. We of course acted as if we were disappointed and surprised by this mistake. And then, as if the Holy Spirit intervened, the phone rang. Father put down the remaining 5 or 6 tickets and went to answer the phone. I looked at the other guy across the table and he looked at me, we realized we were both Americans. I whispered, "do you need a ticket?". He looked at me and vigorously nodded his head as I was reaching out for the first ticket I could get my hands on. He grabbed the next one and we both hightailed it out of the office, across Via Conciliazione and through St. Peter's Square to assist for the second time at the Vatican Council—with stolen tickets.

We knew the routine. As we entered the main doors of St. Peter's Basilica, we waved our tickets in front of the Swiss Guards and entered. We then went along the side up to the loggia opposite the Papal Altar to be at the daily Mass. It was a carbon copy of the day before except that we were now there under false pretenses. I rationalized that I was there to do volunteer work for the Church.

Mass ended and I immediately proceeded to the back of the basilica to the section where Bishop Hermelink was seated. I couldn't get over how comfortable and excited I felt as I started up the stairs on the back side of the episcopal bleachers. That was until...

Coming down the back stairs was a tall distinguished bishop. I stopped and made room for him to pass. But as he was coming past me, he stopped. "Dove il tuo biglietto? (Where's your ticket?)" Undeterred I pulled my ticket out of my pocket and handed it to him. He looked it over but before returning it he said to me, "Come ti chiami tu?" (What is your name?) I paused for a moment and then in horror realized I never looked at the name of the person on my ticket. Quickly I indicated that I didn't understand his question. He proceeded, "Parlez vous francais? I shook my head. "Sprechen sie Deutsch?" Again, a shake of the head. "Do you speak English?" I looked meekly at him and said softly, "A little bit." He then said, "What is your name?" I muttered interiorly a bad word and then tried my best lie by saying the ticket wasn't really mine but of one of my confreres who is home sick and couldn't come today and we didn't want the ticket to go to waste. "What is his name?" I looked blank and tried to keep up my losing battle by saying, "I didn't know him very well etc. etc." At that point the bishop started shaking his head as he showed me the ticket. The name on the ticket was Francisco de Cortez Alabanza. I then figured the bishop could readily tell that I didn't look much like a descendant of Don Quixote.

He would not budge nor give me a break. He quietly but firmly insisted that I needed to leave. I then turned to go down the stairs and I said good bye to my Bishop while thinking to myself when I get down the stairs, I will lose him around one of the pillars, take off into the crowd and return in 20 minutes and once again get upstairs to do my duty for the church.

Well, as if my friend didn't have enough to do, he followed me step by step all the way to the doors of St. Peter's with Swiss Guards standing at attention and it was there that I was thrown out of the Second Vatican Council!

To say I was disappointed doesn't catch my true feelings. I stood outside for several minutes to determine my next move. I couldn't go back to the college because I was supposed to be at the Gregorian. So I decided to go back to the university and attend the classes because it was only 9:30 AM.

When I arrived at the university who did I meet coming out of class but Tony Russo who gleefully asked what I was doing at the University. He knew my grand plan and didn't think it would work. "What happened?" I paused and said without thinking, "I just got thrown out of

the Council.” I expected some sympathy from my good friend and confrere but instead he started laughing and telling anyone nearby “this guy just got thrown out of the Vatican Council”. Everyone around me was interested so I told them my tale of woe. To a man they loved the story and without realizing it I became a minor folk hero because of the dubious distinction of being “asked to leave” the Vatican Council.

IX. “It was your socks, your Eminence” (December 8, 1965)

I had the wonderful privilege to be in Rome on December 8, 1965 for the formal closing of Vatican II. It was a very exciting day. The piazza of St. Peter’s was packed with people. The ceremony began and ended with nearly 2,200 bishops in miters and fully vested enter St. Peter’s square for the outdoor Mass celebrated by Pope Paul VI as the official closing of the four-year (1962-1965) Council. I have a striking photo of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen pausing near me. I saw bishops from all over the globe. It was very moving.

After the Mass I had arranged to meet a good friend, Tom O’Connor who was studying at Loyola’s Rome Center that year, at the obelisk. We met up and talked about the magnificence of the occasion and its historical importance. But as we chatted, I noticed the Square was remarkably empty of the thousands of people who had been there for the Mass. I then saw a lone cleric hustling out of St. Peter’s in a simple black cassock. He came closer and I then noticed a pair of bright red socks. I looked again and I recognized it was Cardinal Heenan, the Archbishop of Westminster (London). I stopped Tom as he was speaking and said, “come quickly”. I ran over to catch Cardinal Heenan and his young clerical secretary and asked if we could have a photo. He looked surprised and then irritated but I wasn’t going to be put off. He relented so I gave my Kodak instamatic to his secretary and got Tom and I in the photo with him. As we were waiting for the photo to be taken, the Cardinal said to me, “How did you know?” I smiled and pointed down and said, “It was your red socks your eminence”. He frowned then gave a perfunctory smile for our photo and hustled off to his dinner.

X. Grandma Palladino and I...and Pope Paul VI (December 20, 1965)

Tony Russo was ordained to the priesthood in the chapel of the International College on December 17, 1966. Most of his family and some friends from Chicago came to Rome for this wonderful occasion. Tony’s Grandmother, Cecelia Palladino also made the trip despite her age of 83. It was her first trip back to Italy since she immigrated to America with her two daughters, Elenora and Margaret.

On December 20, 1966 a “private” audience was being held for all the young men who had just been ordained to the priesthood and their families and friends. Tony, his classmates and the Russo family were all going to attend. I considered myself as a good friend of the family so I was going as well. I told Tony and Mrs. Russo however that I was aware it would be a big challenge for Grandma to keep up because of all the walking. I offered to stay with Grandma

and she and I would proceed at her speed and we would find the family once we arrived at the audience hall in the Vatican.

In St. Peter's Square Grandma and I took off at a leisurely pace towards the audience hall up several flights of stairs. We started slowly up the stairs but by the time we reached the 2nd floor Grandma told me she wouldn't be able to make it. I understood and we both resigned ourselves to not being able to attend the audience and we would meet up again with everyone at the obelisk in St. Peter's as we had agreed. Grandma and I sat down on a marble bench until she rested and we could retrace our steps.

It was then that a classmate of mine walked by with several other people who were going to the audience. He asked what I was doing there and I explained our predicament. He then said to me, "why don't you take the elevator up to the audience hall". "What elevator?" I queried not having been inside the Vatican before. He then indicated that down the hallway I'd find the elevator.

We took the elevator and upon arriving there, the door opened to a long line of bishops and Monsignors all dressed in their finest religious garbs. By some sort of miraculous luck my spiritual director, Monsignor John Fleming from New York walked by and saw Grandma and me in the elevator. He smiled and greeted me and with a quizzical look and asked me, "What are you doing here?" I went on to tell him my story and introduced him to Grandma. We stepped out of the elevator and he quickly decided on a plan of action. "Tom, I'll take Grandma with me and you, you get lost. I'll meet up with you after the audience." So, Grandma took Monsignor's arm and off she went into the audience hall. They were seated in the midst of the big shots about 100 feet from the Papal chair where Pope Paul was going to give his speech. I didn't get lost but tried to stand back and not be noticed. I stood by the door looked out to where the Pope would speak and the bishops (and Grandma) were seated. Behind them were the barricades where a thousand people or more had come for this "private" audience.

The Pope entered from the other side and went to his chair, greeted everyone and then delivered his speech to the newly ordained and their families. He then got up and, per protocol, went down to the 40 or so bishops who were seated in front of the barricade to greet them. When he reached Monsignor Fleming I watched as he briefly explained to the Pope that Grandma was the Italian grandmother who had come from America for the ordination. You could see the Pope immediately warm up and smile at Grandma. He extended his hand to give her a blessing but she snatched it and immediately started kissing both of his hands and crying in sheer joy at her unexpected good fortune meeting the Pope. The pope spoke briefly with her and then extricated his hand and gave her a blessing as she gazed into his eyes while still crying. It was a magnificent gift to a well deserving woman of faith and goodness.

The Pope went on and greeted the other bishops and then went to the barricades where he greeted the people who were standing closest to the barricades. The Pope then left as did

everyone else. I was still discreetly standing by the door watching all this in amazement. When Monsignor returned Grandma to me, I couldn't thank him enough. Grandma hugged him and thanked him. We then got on the elevator and took it all the way down to "terra firma" (ground floor) and walked to the obelisk to wait for the family to join us. We sat there stunned by our good fortune and Grandma kept saying what a wonderful miracle to have met the Pope.

We waited about 30 minutes until the Russo's arrived and they were thrilled to have been at the audience as well as very sorry for us and our bad luck. It was then that Grandma looked at me and said, "Tomasso, should we tell them our secret?" I smiled and nodded my head and Grandma went on and told them our story that neither they nor we could believe happened.

XI. The King and I (Easter Sunday 1966)

After the Papal Mass on Easter Sunday 1966 and the Pope's blessing to the city and the world in St. Peter's Square, I along with thousands of other people started walking home because the streets were clogged and walking was easier. Our college was about a 20-minute walk and I would make it home in time for pranzo. I got separated from other SCJs who had also gone to the Mass. I did meet a classmate of mine from the Scotch College and we walked together.

Walking along the perimeter of the Vatican walls we came up to a gate that was used by the "pezzi grossi" (big shots) such as ambassadors to drive into Vatican City. As we reached that point the policeman stretched out his arms to stop us for a moment to allow several Mercedes to drive out. The last Mercedes stopped right in front of me and my Scottish friend because of the traffic.

I looked down into the car and the man who was driving was a very elegant looking man in a beautiful suit. Then a moment later I realized it was King Constantine of Greece who months earlier was forced to leave Greece because of a coup. I had read about him and had seen his photo many times in the Roman newspapers. I also recognized his wife Queen Beatrix and the Queen Mother. I then started jabbing at my friend who irately said "what!?" I then started pointing down to the royal family which was only three feet from us. But as I was pointing, the King turned his head and smiled. I, of course, stopped pointing and smiled back and without thinking said, "Happy Easter...King". He smiled and in perfect English responded "Happy Easter to you as well." Right then the police stopped traffic and the king was able to ease his car out into traffic. At that point my Scottish friend, more accustomed to royalty than I said, "You idiot, you don't say 'Hello King' to a king. You should have said 'Your Majesty'. I told him that, not being accustomed to running into royalty on the street, I couldn't think of the right term to use.

I know the King appreciated my greeting and forgave me for my breach of protocol. The King and I both had a wonderful Easter day 1966.

XII. Doctoral dissertation defenses (1966)

Several of the scj's were studying for their doctorates in various fields of theology and other disciplines. When they had completed their courses and oral examinations, their last major hurdle was the defense of their doctoral dissertation. It was done at the university in front of three professors. One of whom was the professor who was his adviser during the long, tedious road of completing their dissertation.

When the big day arrived, anyone was welcome to go and sit in and listen to the defense. Afterwards there was a sacred ritual of stopping at the tavern called "Dodici Apostoli" (12 Apostles) which was located off the Piazza Venezia.

Between September and Christmas of 1965 two Dutch SCJs defended their theses. Fr. Adrian van Dyke in sacred scripture and Fr. Willehm van Paassen in moral theology. I was very interested in watching this ritual and to share their joy after several years of study and the long, demanding period of time in writing their doctoral dissertations. What I experienced was a testament to their intellects as well as their cleverness.

Because the final session of Vatican II was taking place, there were several SCJ bishops from around the world residing at our Generalate/International College. Both of our doctoral candidates invited several Dutch scj's to their doctoral dissertations. Fr. Van Dyke not only invited the bishops but his parents, dressed in traditional Dutch outfits, were also present for his defense. As I sat and watched the two separate defenses take place, I smiled as I observed the three Jesuit priests from the Gregorian University enter the room to see representatives of the episcopacy as well as parents dressed in colorful garb. In each instance our candidates solemnly introduced the respective bishops and their dioceses, ranging from Indonesia to Finland. Not a bad way to capture a bit of a psychological advantage.

XIII. It's only a game...(May 1966)

In the spring of 1966 the community held a General Chapter in Rome. It is the highest legislative body in the order. It is the Chapter that determines the direction and priorities of the world-wide order for the following six years. In 1966 religious communities were charged with an even more important responsibility in that they were to begin the long process of "refounding the community and the Founder's charism" in light of the changes wrought by the Second Vatican Council.

Representatives of all the world-wide provinces were arriving for the Chapter. One lovely day after lunch while we were enjoying afternoon recreation, Fr. Anthony DePalma, scj our American Superior General was playing a very active game of bocce with three Italian scjs.

During that time a taxi arrived and out stepped four of the American representatives for the chapter. We were notified of their arrival and went to welcome them. We realized that Fr. DePalma hadn't come and I remembered he was playing bocce. I offered to run over and notify

him that the Americans had arrived knowing that he too would be interested in welcoming them. I discreetly told him that the Americans were here thinking he would stop the game and go immediately. He didn't.

I waited another 10 minutes and once again whispered that the American delegates had arrived and once again, he nodded but kept concentrating on the game. I stood there wondering why he didn't stop the game. In about 20 minutes the game ended and we both walked back together to greet our visitors. On our way, he said to me, "Tom, I know you wanted me to leave the game. I'm a competitive person and I love the challenge of winning in any sport, even if it's only bocce so I wasn't about to leave the game until it was over. To tell you the truth, I'd try to beat my mother if I were playing her in any game. However, when it's over, it's over." He smiled broadly at me and on we went.

XIV. "Get me off the train on time" (August 1966)

In the summer of 1966 I needed to go to one of our European provinces to spend a period of time called Tertianship, preparing to take perpetual vows. I selected the English province for obvious reasons of language preference.

In early August, 1966 I was due to be at the English novitiate in the picturesque town of Barton-Under-Needwood near Burton-on-Trent. That was several miles from the larger city of Chester located conveniently in northern England's Cheshire.

I was coming from London where I had spent a week with my Aunt Nora Monnelly and her family. That would be my closest touch to home for the three years I was in Europe. Aunt Nora reminded me of my mother and I very much enjoyed hearing stories about "Kate" (my mother was Katherine) in their growing up years.

For reasons I neither liked nor understood, even at my age of 21, I was expected to wear the Roman collar. I certainly must have looked like a "boy-priest". I took an express train from Victoria station whose final destination was Liverpool and whose only stop was Chester. It was a lovely day and I was looking forward to seeing the beautiful English countryside. I was sharing the compartment with two older English ladies who were going all the way to Liverpool. We chatted a bit and I mentioned that I was studying to be a priest in Rome. They smiled and responded with the appropriate "isn't that lovely". As the trip went on they chatted away and I was immersed looking out at this wonderful country.

I guess I must have fallen asleep because before I knew it, I woke up with a start and the train was stopped at the Cheshire station. I looked around and realized it was my stop. As I jumped up the train slowly started pulling away from the station. I muttered out loud a very naughty word, grabbed my suitcase and ran for the closest door. When I reached the door, it was picking up speed so I instinctively threw my suitcase out on the platform. As I was about to jump out of this moving train, we left the platform. I then grabbed hold of the door which

swung out. The force of me jumping on to the door swung me all the way around to the window of the compartment I just left and all I saw were my two lady friends agasp with fright as they watched this maniac get ready to jump.

Jump I did. I must have fallen 15 feet to a bed of rocks where I rolled over in my once clean, black suit and Roman collar. For some reason that I didn't deserve, I didn't hurt myself. I ripped my pants from the fall but I was safe and sound even though by all rights I could have been dead.

As I stood up, I heard the screeching of brakes and railway cars bumping into each other as the express train slowly came to a stop. I started walking back to the platform where there was a ladder, I climbed to get back on the platform only to meet one of Cheshire's finest, the Bobbie. He looked at me and asked if I was absolutely crazy or what?

I meekly told him that Cheshire was my stop and I needed desperately to get off. He took me by the arm and said "come with me" as he shook his head. He took me into a room with the manager of the train station to try and understand what and why this happened. As I tried to answer them, they realized I made an absolutely absurd decision and nearly lost my life doing it.

They then left to discuss what to do with me. I thought going to jail wouldn't be the best way to start my tertianship nor would it make a good first impression on the English priests and brothers.

Again, for reasons I didn't deserve they came back and in a disgusted sort of way told me how stupid I was and how lucky I was. But they would let me go. The train had already gone on its way once they found out I hadn't died so things could return to normal at the station.

As I've rethought what happened I concluded that my irrational behavior was the result of my fear of arriving late. We were living a strict way of life and I was intimidated by it and did not want to do anything contrary to what was expected of me. However, I could have lost my life by trying to save it.

XV. Happy Easter – "Bonne Paque" (Easter 1967)

Fr. Cornelius Veringmeier, scj was a wonderful, holy man who was the Superior of the International College's community. He was a Dutchman who spoke Dutch, Italian, English, French, and German. That was almost typical of the Dutch scjs in Rome. They used to say that no one spoke Dutch so they were forced to speak the other languages. He was well suited to be our Superior. I was very fond of him and admired him greatly.

In my second year (1967) on Easter night we had a wonderful party. Strange as it seems now the refreshments were simple cookies with red and white wine. The room was full and everyone was talking and laughing and smoking. In several different languages everyone was

enjoying each other's company. Every few minutes contingents from different countries would spontaneously burst into a song native to their country.

I was sitting with two confreres from Luxembourg, an Italian, and about 3 Brazilians. We were all friends. I was enjoying myself immensely with the laughter and singing. I was eating the dry cookies and washing it down with wine. I started noticing that my glass was never empty and saw that each time my glass came empty one of my so-called friends filled it with red or white wine.

In a couple of hours, I was feeling no pain and singing up a storm. But as the evening progressed Fr. Veringmeier decided to call it a night. As he got up to leave, I noticed and muttered to someone that he was leaving and we should go over and say good night to him. I can remember a couple of them telling me to stay put because I was in no condition to do anything. Not being put off I struggled to get up and got to the door before he left. He turned and saw me and he also told me to go back and sit down. Instead, full of vino and the Easter spirit, I placed my hands on his shoulders and looked him in the eye and said "Mon pere, Bonne Paque". (Father, Happy Easter). Why I said it to him in drunken French is beyond my recollection. He smiled broadly and said, "Tom, go and sit down."

That night Bob Hess helped me up to my room. I barely got in the room before everything in my stomach decided they wanted out Bob, in his typically kind manner got me into bed, took my shoes off and threw a blanket over me and cleaned up my room. The next thing I remembered was waking up around 10 am the next morning with a massive headache, sometimes referred to as a hangover. I had never been that drunk before and never felt so awful in my life. I couldn't face wine for a few weeks after that.

I got up and dressed, went out into the corridor and who do I meet in the corridor but my friend Father Veringmeier from last night to whom I wished a Happy Easter. He looked at me and said, "How are you feeling?" I told him simply, "Terrible". He smiled and said "Good" and continued on his way.

To this day I admired how he didn't reprimand me or try to give me a lecture. He knew and I knew that I blew it. He simply smiled and was satisfied that I was paying for my exuberance of the night before.

XVI. "I flew Chou En Lai to the peace talks in Formosa" (Summer 1967)

I spent the summer of 1967 living in our French province while studying and practicing my French. I was fortunate to live in the French provincialate while attending the Institut Catholique. I lived there for six weeks and then went to our petit seminaire (minor seminary) in a suburb of Paris called Viry Chatillon. I and a couple of other scholastics (from Italy and Chile) worked by painting, cutting grass and other tasks. I also spent a few weeks in the other petit seminaire located outside of Strasbourg in a town called Raon l'Etape.

It was while I was there that a French brother told me about an American Trappist monk who was living a few miles away as a hermit. Being American the brother thought we should meet. Being a hermit, I thought he didn't want to meet anyone. But the brother somehow knew this American and told me he was *tres sympathique* (very friendly).

One afternoon I took a bike and followed brother's directions to go over and disturb this American hermit. I came upon an old French farmhouse and went over to the door and knocked. A tall, angular man came to the door dressed in mechanics overalls. In my best French I explained who I was and why I came by. I apologized for disturbing them and this man smiled and said to me, "I'm the one you're looking for. I came here to find God and if I can't find God in you, I'm a pretty poor hermit. Come on in."

For the rest of the afternoon we sat and talked, and talked, and talked. I shared his simple lunch of bread and cheese and an apple. We spoke of the war in Vietnam. We discussed de Gaulle's recent trip to French Canada where he inappropriately encouraged an independent Quebec. He knew of very little that was happening in the world. We talked sports and he was a Yankee fan. We spoke about our lives, religious life and how and why he ended up in the woods of eastern France. He explained that he had studied in Rome about 12 years earlier. He was in community with a French Trappist who contacted him after ordination about whether he was interested in living as a hermit. They had discussed their leaning for a more contemplative life while in Rome.

Thomas Merton had moved out of his community to live in a hermitage five years earlier in his monastery in Kentucky so the Trappist leadership was allowing that. However, the French Trappist thought it wise to not be completely alone. So, these two men (I never met the Frenchman) lived in this old farmhouse. The other man was a weaver and made vestments in order to raise money for their expenses. Fr. Matt resorted to making wicker baskets which were sold in town. He smiled weakly when he told me he made baskets almost as if to say, "desperate measures for desperate times". But it was then as he told me his story that he modestly mentioned he was a pilot in the USAF before entering the Trappists. He went on to say that his most exciting flights were when he flew Vice Premier Chou En Lai back and forth from Beijing (known then as Peking) to Formosa for peace talks.

As we spoke, he told me he was doing this on a three-year trial basis. "I'm trying to deepen my relationship with God and to do my part to pray for our world." I understood what he meant having read many of Thomas Merton's books. He said that he enjoyed reading novels because it gives him a taste of our world today and its values. I subsequently sent him a couple of books I had finished. I continued to send him paperbacks that I thought were worthwhile for a few more years. After his three-year stint, he decided he would return to his monastery in Georgia and I have not had contact with him since.

As you can see, it was an afternoon I will never forget. He was such a wonderful, funny, sincere, open and prayerful man. His life has been a touchstone for me.

XVII. “You flunked History of Philosophy exam” (Summer 1967)

After my second year in Rome I spent most of the summer in France studying French and working in our seminaries. But I received a very sad and scary bit of news when I received a letter from Rome notifying me that I had not passed the oral exam in my history of philosophy course.

I was shocked, scared and embarrassed. I never expected that because I felt rather confident I did well on that examination. I knew from experience that one could take the exam again in the fall before the beginning of the next school year. I wrote to my Superior in Rome, told him the bad news and reported I would return to Rome two weeks earlier than planned to study for the repeat examination.

It ruined my summer. I felt sick inside and worried that if I failed again, I might be sent home...a failure. I asked for a couple of books to be sent to me and I could begin my studies while still in France.

I returned to Rome as I had planned and determined to successfully retake the examination. But I needed to go to the university to schedule that exam. When I went and told them I needed to schedule the day and time for my retake exam, they checked their records. After several minutes they came back to me and said that their records show that I had in fact passed that exam back in June! There had been some terrible mistake and they realized their mistake and now needed to notify the person who had in fact failed. For a moment I felt sorry for him. But I was so relieved and pleased with the news that even though I had changed my summer plans etc. I was free and did not have to worry any more.

XVIII. “You may give your answers in English, if you like.” (July, 1968)

The vast majority of exams at the Gregorian were 15-minute oral exams during which one’s professor could ask any question he wanted on all the material covered during the whole year. You had no other exams during the year. You had no papers to write. You had your one and only exam at the end and, oh by the way, they were in Latin.

In June, 1968 I had to take my comprehensive examination of all the material we had studied in the past three years. I had already completed a research paper on a topic in philosophy. All that was left was this enormous challenge. I entered the large aula where four professors were seated at each corner of the room. Over 60 minutes each student would sit before each of the four professors for 15 minutes and take four exams in the four major areas of study. I would be questioned in courses on metaphysics, cosmology, epistemology and history of philosophy. It was a daunting challenge for which I did not feel up to the task.

My first exam was in metaphysics and my professor that year was an Irish Jesuit named Francis O'Farrell. I liked him. He was tall and distinguished and had an easy smile. So, I thought I'd give it a chance and asked him before the exam began if perchance we could have the examination in English since both of us spoke English as our mother tongue. He looked at me incredulously as if I asked him for the answers to the exam. His smile vanished and he did not even respond but rather started in Latin to ask me the first question.

By the time I reached my fourth professor I must have been in a stupor. I sat down and the Spanish Jesuit who taught this course looked at me and smiled. "You are American?" he asked me in Italian. I wearily nodded my head. He then said to me in a heavily Spanish-accented English that he spoke English and if I wanted, he would allow me to answer in English. I couldn't believe my ears. I perked right up and thanked him. He then proceeded to ask me in Latin his first question.

I remembered immediately the sage advice from others at the College and who had been through this medieval form of torture that whenever possible, answer the question and just keep talking. When the professor indicates he had a question, keep talking. You never wanted the professor to ask for a clarification or even worse, an explanation of what you just said. So I barreled along in English commenting, "as I have mentioned Father previously" or "I'm sure you would agree etc.". As I did so I could sense that the good Father's English wasn't so hot but I thought he might just be too proud to tell me to slow down or ask for me to repeat what I was saying.

So for 15 minutes I rattled on answering the question he posed until the magic moment when the bell was rung and the exam time was over. Poor Father didn't say a word throughout it all. I smiled at the end and graciously thanked him and then promptly got up and left, whispering "Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus".

Psssst, I passed the orals and received my Licentiate in Philosophy (Ph.L.) from the Pontifical Gregorian University.

XIX. "Here we are Down Under..." (Fall 1968)

In the spring of 1968, a few weeks before my comprehensive exams, which were 4 fifteen-minute oral exams in Latin covering all the material I had studied in the past three years, a women's religious community named the Little Company of Mary was holding its General Chapter. Because our provincial, Fr. Noonan was a good friend of many of them, they enquired if any English-speaking priest could come over to celebrate daily Mass for them during the few weeks of their international meetings.

I recall that Fr. John Czyzynski, scj was the main one to go over for their daily Mass. The second thing I remember was that after Mass they offered a breakfast just like at home: eggs, toast,

cereal, yogurt etc. That news touched off my devotional spirit and I suggested to John that I could serve the Masses with the sisters.....and, oh yes, stay for breakfast.

Over the weeks I got to know some of the sisters. At the end of their meetings on the last day we were saying goodbye. I had no idea that I would not be saying goodbye to three of these Australian sisters for the last time.

When I successfully passed my Licentiate exams and packed up to make my trek home I stopped in London where my aunt and uncle both lived with their families. I had been very fortunate to visit them each summer I was in Rome.

One morning I took a bus down to Trafalgar Square for the last time. While perched on the second level of the bus I looked down and saw three religious women in the habit of the Little Company of Mary sisters. So, I thought I could hop off and say that I had met some of their sisters in Rome. When I caught up to them on the street they turned and they were the three Australian sisters whom I had met in Rome!

We all marveled how that could have happened. We chatted and then once again said goodbye. However, a few days later when I was in the Dublin airport with my Irish Uncle waiting to pick up his daughter, who comes walking out from the terminal but the same three Aussies. Again, we marveled and laughed at how small the world was becoming. We said goodbye again.

About ten days later after visiting with my Irish relatives I took a plane back to New York city to take care of some things that I was asked to handle. The morning after I arrived, I was walking through Rockefeller Plaza on my way to morning Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, I spied ahead of me three light blue veils. I knew for certain without even seeing their faces who they were. I ran up to them and tapped them on the shoulder to the complete amazement of them and me.

Several weeks later in the fall, I received a humorous card with an Australian postmark. At that moment I hadn't immediately thought of my three travelling companions. I opened the card and on the cover it said, "Here we are Down Under" and when you opened the card it said, "and where in the hell are you"? !

XX. Some reflections (June 2018)

It has been a pleasure to share some fond memories of three years of my life that I was fortunate enough to spend in Rome. I arrived in Rome just short of reaching my legal age of 21.

I felt as though I was catapulted to Europe where I had the remarkable privilege to experience a broader vision of life. Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Holland, England and Ireland were countries I visited.

I came to a greater awareness of history. I met people for whom World War II was simply 17 years earlier. I saw some of the damage of the war in Coventry England. I caught glimpses of the greatness of the Roman Empire as I came to know the Eternal City.

I met Uncles, Aunts and cousins who lived in England and Ireland. I spent three grueling days barefoot, without sleep and only one meal a day (dry bread and black tea) at an ancient center of prayer and penitence called Lough Derg off the coast of Donegal.

I came to know and respect even more my religious community and its myriad ministries in most of the European countries. Every house I visited I thought I was at home because I was with my brothers. SCJs are known for their hospitality and I can attest to that. Being in Rome I had a sense of the global Church. It helped me to see my Catholic church in its humanity with Cardinals riding down Roman streets in their Mercedes. But I also saw my Church in the poorer areas of the city living out the Gospel in orphanages, prisons, hospitals, and everywhere there was need.

Being in Rome and visiting St. Peters so often helped me to see the grandeur of our Catholic tradition but also caused me to scratch my head and wonder how many artisans and how much money was needed to build the 350+ churches in this magnificent city. As usual, so much of the Church's grandeur was built on the backs of the poor.

Thank God I came to learn that I too am part of this human and divine reality. I have a responsibility to live the Gospel or not. Rome taught me to know what is true and to always hold on to the truth of who we are called to be.

And in the midst of it all, I studied Philosophy at a renowned Jesuit University in Latin where pedagogically we were in the Middle Ages. I spent three years wondering to myself if I was up to the task and whether I'd be able to pass the exams and secure the degree I was sent to achieve. Luckily, with more studying than I had ever done in my life, I was able to achieve my goal.

Rome is for me much more than a city. It provided me with life experience that I could never replicate. More than anything I am profoundly grateful for this experience. Thank you for sharing my experiences of a very special time in my life.

Roma pensa nei secoli.

(Rome thinks in terms of centuries.)

Roma locuta est, causa finita est.

(Rome has spoken, the cause is finished.)

S. P. Q. R. are the letters on the Logo for the city of Rome:

Senatus Populusque Romanus (*The Senate and the Roman People*)

(Italians say, "Sono porchi questi Romani." which means "These Romans are pigs.")

Historical tidbits of Rome

1. Campo de' Fiori – it went from being a place of execution to a fruit, flower and vegetable outside market.
2. Piazza Venezia is at the foot of the Campidoglio (Rome's City Hall) and Santa Maria de Aracoeli. In the Piazza is the balcony from which Mussolini gave his speeches to the Italian people during WW II.
3. Forum, Colosseum, and Circus Maximus in the city center form the largest urban archaeological area in the world.
4. Appian Way is 9 miles long.
5. Aurelian Walls were built between 271-275 AD—11.8 miles around the largest city of the ancient world.
6. Castel Sant'Angelo - 180 AD - was originally designed as Hadrian's mausoleum and became an imposing papal fortress. It is decorated by stone angels done by Bernini's students.
7. Capitoline Hill – administrative center of the city - Piazza di Campidoglio (1563) designed by Michelangelo.
8. Between the Palatine and Aventine hills lies the Circus Maximus.
9. Pantheon with the oculus was started in 27 BC by Agrippa. In 609 it was made into a Christian Church. Now the tomb of Raphael is located inside. The original doors of the Pantheon were taken and melted down and used for the front doors of St. Peter's.
10. Piazza Navonna - Fountain of the 4 rivers: Nile, Ganges, Danube, Rio de la Plata, designed by Bernini in 1651.
11. Trevi Fountain – Bernini 1640. It's at the foot of the Quirinal Hill.
12. St. Peter's 12 apostles which are on the front of St. Peter's are all 18.7 feet tall.
13. Vatican City State: It encompasses not only St. Peter's but Santa Maria Maggiore, San Paolo fuori le Mura and San Giovanni Laterano. Ratified by the Lateran Treaty by Mussolini February 11, 1929.
14. Bernini Colonades 1656-1667 - arms reaching out to Rome and the World. 284 columns, 88 pillars, 140 statues of saints. Egyptian obelisk brought to Rome by Emperor Caligula.
15. St. Paul's - built by Constantine, destroyed in 1823, and rebuilt in 1854.