

From Walt to Ros, Wednesday, June 26th.

I have so much to tell you I don't know how to begin. I doubt whether I will have finished the letter by the time the mail goes in, and in that case I will send in a partly completed letter rather than have you be without a letter for a day.

In my last letter I told you how I had reread your May letters in proper sequence and how much pleasure they had afforded me. They also made me realize that I don't answer your questions. I guess that my style of writing is different than most in that I don't need letters from you in order to write long letters (don't infer that your letters aren't important to me because they are one of the things that make this army life tolerable), and since I use your letters as a morale builder rather than a basis for writing my letters I don't usually answer your questions. May I therefore suggest that if you want certain questions answered that you write a Vmail with your questions on them, leaving a space for a yes or no answer and enclose the Vmail in one of your airmail letters? In that way you will be sure to get answers to your queries. I have decided that my style of letter writing should probably be called diaryic (in more ways than one).

There is one question that I remember, which I want to answer. This concerns the accuracy of the newspaper reports regarding the fighting, at least that which I have experienced during our push. You seemed to feel that they were not telling all, but actually they were amazingly accurate, much more so than even I expected to believe what they tell you. There are several terms which they may use which I want you to be able to picture vividly. When they say that fighting is fierce they mean just that, and that means that men are dying on both sides in larger numbers than usual, and that shells are coming over at a great clip, in fact it should call to your mind the description of the first few days of the campaign. That single little sentence carries a world of meaning. When they say that the enemy instituted rear guard action, picture a small group of desperate men in tanks, pill boxes, or self-propelled guns placed advantageously, eg. just beyond a bend in a road where they can fire at anything which may come down the road before being seen; and realize that the first Allies to enter that field of fire did so unawares and therefore suffered casualties in all probability. Usually this type of action involves the reconnaissance troops or the combat engineers (remember it was the combat engineers who met between Anglo and our front) and if they follow the teaching which they received in their training they can keep their casualties down to a minimum, viz. never go around a bend in the road or over a rise or dip in the road without first leaving their vehicle and inspecting the road ahead to make sure that it is safe to be traveled on. However, in the heat of the battle with the enemy retreating rapidly they are prone to not want to waste the time that this takes and as a result will suffer casualties. However this sacrifice of a few men will result in the location of the enemy troops and a call for shell fire or anti-tank guns or tank destroyers to be brought up to nullify the resistance and as a result will save considerable life and limb of the infantrymen who follow in the wake of these advance elements.

Patrols are active means that groups of men from both sides are going out in numbers varying from 6 on up to almost any number up to a company to find out what they can about the enemy. This is most commonly done at night and it is not uncommon to have some hard fighting with casualties occurring during these fights. In fact, I lost a very good friend during just such an engagement.

Even the words "casualties are light" has a connotation which must be remembered. This means heartbreak for some families back in the States, but fortunately this involves only a few families instead of the large number of families concerned with such a statement as "fighting is fierce and bloody".

So you see that if you pay attention to some of the apparently simple statements made in the newspapers you can get a better picture of what is going on among these men up in the front who are involved in the action.

Now to get on with the most pleasant and interesting experience that I have had since I left the states. The other day one of the infantry chaplains brought a letter to one of the men in my company which he had received from a priest whom he had visited. It turned out that the priest was a cousin of my man and he wrote a letter addressed to me beseeching me to permit LeClair to spend a few days with him. I immediately called the colonel to find out if this would be possible and learned that I could send him in only for one day. This I did and that night LeClair was returned to the company by the priest and a companion priest. They wanted to meet me and came over to my tent to find me in bed reading by candlelight. They were both clean cut men in their forties, talked English very well, and were very very pleased that I had permitted the cousin, whom he had never seen before, to visit with him. They invited me to visit with them, and I promised that I would and would bring LeClair with me. The impression I received from them in the short visit at midnite was that I would have a most enjoyable time when I visited with them.

The opportunity presented itself the very next day, and John, Van and I, using LeClair as driver, since no more than four can ride in a jeep, went to the monastery. Surprisingly John and I were slightly acquainted with the place, having stopped there the first night we were in Rome to contact our Regimental headquarters which were situated in the grounds.

The monastery is located on one of the seven hills of Rome, Monte Maria, and as a result has a superb view of the city. The entire grounds and buildings and personnel simply exude an atmosphere of peacefulness and rest, and it was most pleasant just to be there. The grounds are beautiful with semi-formal gardens, flowering trees and shrubs of all colors and shades, innumerable trees of all manner and description, including the striking cypress as well as other evergreens. Then, too, there was a certain portion of the grounds under cultivation. The buildings were similar to many others seen in Rome, consisting of two groups, one (they don't think of it as old) was built 150 years ago, but you'd never guess it, while the other is quite recent. These buildings were covered with vines having large purple flowers, looking ~~xxx~~ slightly like larkspur, but with an odor of sweet pea. At the time of our visit the flowers were in their second blooming, and were not profuse, but the fathers told us that in the spring there are so many purple flowers that the leaves of the vines are not visible, and the aroma is delightful all thru the area.

We spent the first portion of our visit meeting the various members of the group and it was such a pleasure. They exuded such a wholesome, cleanly and friendly atmosphere. I was quite surprised at the conglomeration of nationalities which were present. There was a venerable patriarch with a white beard reaching to his chest, An Armenian of 70 who was treated with considerable respect by all present, and with whose importance we were repeatedly impressed by our hosts. Then there was a handsome youth (24 years old) from Cuba who had one more year of training to undergo before he went to the States to attend Harvard where he planned to take a course in applied psychology. He spoke a smattering of English with a most cultured and gentle voice and it was a pleasure to listen to him. A Mexican priest, a Japanese priest, and a number of others whose origins we did not learn, completed the picture, except for our two hosts. These were French Canadians who had spent many years in Rome at this monastery. Father Giuseppe (whom we called Father Joe) was LeClair's cousin and had lived in Maine until he was 18 so that he spoke English very well, despite the fact that he was always apologizing for his inability to express himself, explaining that he had not spoken English for 23 years until the Americans captured Rome. His vocabulary was far better than the average American's, probably because he was using his knowledge of other languages as a basis for selection of English words. The other host was Father Girard (I believe) who also spoke a delightful English, altho not quite as fluidly as did Father Joe. They immediately brought out some white wine which they had just received from Velletri, one of the towns which we had captured and near which my unit had fought. We were joined by a group of 4

enlisted men from Regimental H.Q. who had made the acquaintance of the fathers at the time H.Q. was stationed in the monastery grounds. Since all of us were interested in going to the Vatican to see the Pope, we were unable to waste much time because the Pope can only be seen in the mornings. Knowing of the shortage of gas, we had brought a 5 gallon tin of gas in with us, so that the fathers could drive us around in their vehicle, since, if we took the jeep, we would have to leave one man to stand guard on it and that would mean that he would not be able to see the sights. Father Joe solved this problem by taking along one of the priests, and he was left to guard the jeep while we went in to see the Pope.

We rode down to the Vatican in two Fiats and the jeep, brought by the regimental HQ group. Father Joe explained that the Fiat in which we were riding formerly belonged to a very influential Jew of Rome, whom they had saved from persecution. Originally Rome had a population of from 8000 to 12000 Jews and this has now dropped to 4000, the remainder having gone by one of the numerous methods. Some went to America to avoid persecution, others were taken by the Germans for labor battalions or for prostitutes, others went to other cities, and still others were ~~interned~~ removed to concentration camps or were murdered. When the Germans first took over Rome, they demanded 50 Kilograms of gold from the Jews as protection against being harassed. The Jews were only able to raise 30 Kg. and the Pope donated the other 20Kg. Despite the payment of this gold, the Germans persecuted the Jews. To avoid this, many Catholic priests, at the risk of their lives, sheltered large numbers of Jews in their homes and buildings. It was in appreciation of this kindness that that Jewish friend of the fathers had given them the Fiat. Father Joe also told me that the very first service held in the Jewish Synagogue after the occupation of Rome by the Allies was one dedicated entirely to the appreciation of the kindnesses shown to the Jews by the members of Catholicism.

On arrival at St. Peter's, the two Fiats were permitted to drive into the grounds because they flew the Vatican flag, but the jeep was turned back and had to park on the outside. The Fiat in which we rode was in a bad way, and kept Father Girard busy much of the day. First of all the battery was dead, and as a result he had to park the car in some very out of the way place in order to have a downgrade to help the car start up. Actually this was not at all necessary since a Fiat is not much larger than a Crosley, and we could have easily pushed it to get it started. Then there was trouble with a leaky waterpump, and as a result we had to stop repeatedly to put more water into the radiator. Next there was an accumulation of carbon in the spark plugs due to the necessity of using naphtha because of the shortage of gas. This he had to clean out twice during the day. Finally there was a flat tire which had to be repaired. The Fiat was in sore need of new tires, but since tires were unavailable except on the black market, and since the price on this market was \$220 per tire, that was out of the question.

There was quite a crowd waiting to have an audience with the Pope, so that we had to wait for quite some time, but the time was not wasted because we had the opportunity of talking with Father Joe. He called our attention to the marble columns which form the imperfect circle around the esplanade in front of St. Peter's. These columns had been removed from the Colosseum centuries ago, and is one of the reasons that the Colosseum is now in ruins. They are made of a marble whose appearance improves with age, just like the marble which we saw in the Italian building of Rockefeller Center, only these columns are not polished as are those at the Center. As I told you in a previous letter, the entrance to the Vatican is to the right as you face St. Peter's. This entrance is made thru a tremendous bronze door which has several openings in it. On festival occasions both halves of this large bronze door are opened to allow the public to enter. Only one was open while we were there. As we all know, the Pope is an extremely shrewd politician, and to express his disapproval of the German occupation of the city, he had closed this half of the door and had only permitted the use of a smaller door inset in it, which required each person to step high over the

foot of the small door since it didn't reach all the way to the floor. When Hitler visited Rome, the Pope feared that he might come to the Vatican, an incident which he could not prevent because Hitler could merely come as a sightseer. To prevent this, he closed the Vatican for 1 month for "repairs and renovation" and he, himself, went into the country for a rest. Subtle politics, yes?

We also learned that the Vatican puts out a daily newspaper "Il Salvatore Italiana" which kept the Italian people informed of world news as it was, rather than as the propaganda of the fascist nations interpreted it. Father Joe told us that while the Germans were present, freedom of movement of civilians was greatly limited, and as a result very few people came to the Vatican or anywhere else, for that matter. Since the Allies have taken over, large crowds come and the natives are all over the place. This he didn't have to tell us for we saw it with our own eyes. In fact, any weekday in Rome looks like a Sunday in the States, with mothers and children in the parks, and tremendous crowds walking aimlessly along the boulevards.

Good!—Time's up and I haven't even gotten into the Vatican. Well, I'll continue this afternoon.

I'm continuing where I left off in the last letter, with us standing outside the bronze door of the Vatican waiting for the crowd to start moving. Actually the bronze door is not solid bronze, but has a sheet of bronze over a thick wooden oak door. You could leave it to us GIs to notice that the oak door was riddled with holes made by termites.

Father Joe told us that we might be permitted to walk up the "Royal Stairs" which faced the entrance or that we might use another portal to the right to go up to see the Pope. He explained that it was down the royal stairs that the Pope came to hold mass at St. Peter's, and that on special festive occasions he was carried down those stairs in a beautiful chair, borne on the shoulders of his palace guards. In order to make this ascent without danger of the Pope being unseated, the stairs are built with broad depth of step but only a few inches rise in each step. The stairs themselves are moderately wide, holding about 7 people abreast, and are extremely long, with attractive coiling and only moderately elaborate in comparison to the rest of the Vatican.

At the bronze door entrance stood a guard, picturesquely clad in powder blue uniform from head to foot, with knickerbockers, blue stockings reaching to the knickerbockers, a white circular collar which stands out very vividly against the solid blue, and with head covered by a large tan. It is exactly like the paintings of Italians as seen in the Middle Ages. He stood at the door with a tall rifle with bayonet unsheathed, and every time an officer would pass he would click his heels together. It reminded me of one of the Dranshtark stories.

Finally the crowd milled forward and slowly ascended the stairs. As we reached the top we were given a small medallion in a packet. The room was already crowded with soldiers of the American and British forces, French soldiers being sent into the next hall. Officers were separated from enlisted men and sent up to the front of the room nearer the dais on which sat the Pope's brilliant red throne. The hall in which he was to receive us is called the Royal hall and is a tremendously large room with beautiful gold ceiling, innumerable paintings on the wall, each depicting a religious scene. One of these showed the Pope returning to the Vatican after being exiled in Avignon, France. Another depicted a scene from one of the religious wars. All these paintings are the work of famous artists, and whenever a pope has work done by artists ~~in the Vatican or its properties~~ or does any reconstruction work about the Vatican or its properties, a large marble plaque is placed in the vicinity of the work giving credit to the Pope. Thus it is quite easy to tell which Pope was responsible for which pieces of work. Since we still had a period of waiting before we saw his eminence, I was all eyes as to

what I could see, knowing that you would be interested. The papal usher, who separated the officers from the enlisted men was dressed in bright red velvet, and was quite outstanding in his breeches of knee length. Father Joe tried to bring up the enlisted men in our group of 8, but was stopped by this usher. He spoke quietly with him for a while and the usher waved him on. I was curious as to what magic words he had said that brought about this violation of rules, since there were about 3000 people in the room it was obvious that it was necessary to adhere strictly to rules if order was to be maintained. Father Joe told me that he had explained his predicament of having a mixed crowd of officers and enlisted men, and expressed a fear that he might become separated from the enlisted men for whom he was responsible, so the usher permitted him to pass.

Father Joe talked constantly to us and soon had an audience of far more than our group of 8. It was a liberal education to be near him. The Vatican guards, famous in their own right, are quite an attractive group. They are all 6 feet or more tall, handsome men all, native Swiss born, wearing a costume which was originally designed by Michelangelo. This consisted of a plumed helmet of patent leather glass, a striped suit of shirt and knickers, with socks and gaiters to match of beautiful alternating stripes of gold and blue. Each had a lance about 8 ft. long with a battle axe (I think that is what it was) near the upper end shaped something like a tapir. They stood at a position equivalent to our parade rest, but permitted their eyes to wander around the room.

These Swiss guards have received the privilege of guarding the Pope because of a heroic rear guard action of Swiss soldiers in the years long past, which resulted in the Swiss soldiers being wiped out but allowed the Pope to escape his antagonists.

As we faced the papal throne, a large door on our left opened into the Sistine chapel, probably the most famous of the many famous rooms of the Vatican. On our right an open doorway led into the Ducal Hall, almost as beautiful a hall as the Royal hall; and to our rear was another hall, closed from our view by a red velvet drape, which we were told was the Pauline hall, built by Pope Paulus III or IV. At about the time that Father Joe had reached this point in his educational talk to us, the lights went on in the room as a signal that the Pope was on his way to our hall. Immediately the room became silent, which impressed Father Joe greatly. He told us that if the room had been filled with Italian soldiers there would have been an increasing hubbub and pushing would start. The Pope first stopped in the Ducal hall, where he addressed the French soldiers in French. He then was preceded into our room by his personal guards who wore blue serge suits with long trousers and with large gold epaulets at the shoulders. He followed them in shortly.

The Pope was immediately preceded by his personal representative, who did nothing that I could see except stand behind the Pope after he had ascended to his dais. The Pope was dressed and looked just like all the pictures which one sees of him, with white garments and a small white skull cap set well back on his head. He addressed a blessing to his audience and then in excellent English with only a slight Italian accent, hardly noticeable, and in a very well modulated voice he addressed us with a few words to the effect that since we lived such perilous lives now was the time for us to come closer to God. I am told that the Pope is quite a linguist, fluently speaking at least 7 different languages. He comes from a very prominent Italian family, the Pacelli's, and prior to his ascending the papal throne was a foreign ambassador for the papacy. Following his short address he told us that he would bless all religious objects which we had with us. I had bought a pretty cross and chain for Father Leon, and a rosary for Charles (M). I thought that I might send the medallion to Pat Shree since they were all blessed by the Pope, and I feel that they would be greatly appreciated by the recipients.

I also arranged to have some certificates which had been blessed by the Pope sent to you to be given to those names written in them.



After blessing the religious objects, the Pope shook hands with those near the door. It was interesting that he inquired whether the person was American before shaking hands, and did not shake the hand of any other nationality. I am not sure as to his reason for this, but felt that it might be his diplomatic way of expressing dissatisfaction with something that England had done. The group in the room crowded forward to shake the Pope's hand and kiss his ring and I stepped aside because I felt that the meaning to them would be greater than to me, and didn't want to deprive them of the privilege. In fact, one soldier present told us that this was the third time that he had come to see the Pope in the hope that he would be able to shake his hand and had not been able to get close enough to him to do so until this visit, and then only on Father Joe's insistence that he press forward and take the Pope's hand.

We were all interested in seeing the Sistine chapel, but its doors were locked. Father Joe waited for the milling throng to leave and then started thru channels to get the door open. We all tagged along with him wherever he went and finally after talking to four different people he reached the guardian of the chapel who kindly consented to open the chapel for us.

As you know, the Sistine chapel is famous for the murals of Michelangelo, and I am sure that you have read how he laid on a mattress on his back for long years while he painted the ceiling. If I remember rightly, there was a period of 2 years where he didn't even come down off his scaffold. The ceiling depicts religious scenes from the Old Testament and is impossible to describe because of the tremendous amount of detail. The room is tremendous, both in height, length and width, so that all of the paintings are quite large. At one end, near the altar, is Michelangelo's masterpiece, his Last Judgment. This occupies the entire wall, and I believe was his last work. The remaining walls were painted by other famous painters. It is in the Sistine chapel that the elections for naming the new Pope are made after the death of the last one.

We then returned to the monastery where, after another glass of the potent wine, which made all our heads whirl, we entered the dining hall—a large room with a long table and large chairs widely spaced. The furniture in the room, very attractive, was probably as old as the building. Father Joe and Father Girard ate with us, while the other Fathers did a disappearing act. The food, while very simple, was really excellent. We started off with barley soup (remember how I loved it? Well, I still do.) Next was a fried egg and greens. Then some cold luncheon meat which some Italians had stolen from the Germans and then sold to the Father without his knowledge of its source. Homemade cake—similar to the plain sponge cake which you used to make for me, with apricot jam, a product from their own trees. Apricots galore, wine and finally GI coffee. I must mention the delicious black rolls which they made. I really ate my share of them. The wine loosened all our tongues so that we were having quite an enjoyable time. Father Joe was so eager to show us more of the Vatican that he rushed us away despite the fact that we were enjoying ourselves greatly.

We waited for Father Girard in the esplanade of the St. Peter's Cathedral, and Father Joe told us a few stories while we waited. The esplanade was planned by the Italian Bernini, who did an amazing amount of work all over the city on Vatican property. It is 250 yards across, has the two semicircles of columns that I previously described to you. There are 284 columns in this group, all having been removed from the Coliseum, and on top of these columns are 100 statues representing saints. In the center of the esplanade, near the front entrance, is a tall obelisk which has a cross on its top, supposed to contain a small fragment of the original cross on which St. Peter was crucified. The obelisk had been placed in the square by Nero, and required a tremendous number of men to put it there. The story is told that while the work was being done, everyone was forbidden to talk on penalty of death and that an Italian seaman noted that one of the ropes being used in the work had dried out and was beginning to break. He called out that water should be applied to the rope, and instead of his being put to death for speaking, the Pope raised him and honor-

Palm Sundays. This they still do after more than 3 centuries. By this time Father Girard had returned from parking the car and we went back into the Vatican with hopes of seeing some of Raphael's works. However, we were too late and could not get permission to enter it. We therefore returned to St. Peter's Cathedral. Father Joe continued his educational talk, telling us that St. Peter's was 160 years old, and had been finished in the 17th century. It was planned by Michelangelo who originally made it as an equal armed cross (Latin cross, I believe it is called), with the dome to represent a dome similar to the Pantheon, but large enough so that St. Peter's could be considered the mother church of Rome. Actually, altho St. Peter's is right next to the Vatican, it is really not the official church of Rome, but St. John's which is older is considered to be this.

As one enters St. Peter's from the hot sun outdoors, he is struck by a cool breeze and notes that the temperature inside is much cooler than that outside. Actually the temperature is just about constant the year round because of the tremendously thick walls and great height.

The nave of St. Peter's is approximately 200 yards long. It is 150 feet high and the nave is 80 feet wide except at the cross. As I mentioned, the nave was originally designed as an equal-sided cross, but later Bernini, whom I mentioned earlier, got the Pope to agree that it would be more striking if the vertical part of the cross was lengthened (Greek Cross; I may have then reversed, but I think not). This was agreed to, and Bernini then made the esplanade with marble and columns taken from the Coliseum. The day I visited St. Peter's was supposed to be an especially important day because of the unveiling of the body of a Pope who had died 30 years ago. He was supposed to be in a rather good state of preservation but I felt that he was mummified in that his face was entirely black with erosion of the lip and the forehead. Many people had come to see this unveiling and most of them would kneel on the marble floor and pray for a while after seeing the dead Pope. Beneath the 117 meter high dome sits a tall canopy (47 meters tall--about 150 feet) with columns made of bronze and gold. Beneath the altar of this canopy lies the body of St. Peter. In front of the altar are 180 lamps of gold, which before the war were all burning continuously, but since the shortage of oil only about 16 of them are kept burning. The Pope is the only one who ever says mass from this altar.

Along the long portion of the nave, on each side, are large statues of the founders of different sects of the Catholic religion. A bronze statue of St. Peter is included in this group and since it is the custom of Catholics who visit the cathedral to kiss the toes of the statue and then to place their foreheads on it, the toes of the right foot of the statue have been practically worn away. On St. Peter's festival, which I believe starts tomorrow, the papal ring is put on one of the fingers of the statue and then everyone kisses the ring.

We continued to make the rounds of the cathedral somewhat hurriedly in the hopes of going up into the dome but when we arrived there we found that it had been closed for the day. I do want to mention the statue of the lions by Canova, the foremost sculptor of lions in the world. It is very realistic, and by some secret process he even worked inside the lions mouth giving it a palate and other normal structures. I mention this because you probably remember the story of how Canova got his start. It seems that he was working in the kitchen of a very rich nobleman and they were having a very formal affair. It so happened that the pastry cook's masterpiece did not turn out right and it was too late to make another elaborate cake, so Canova, the lad, asked for permission to make something in the limited time available. This permission was given querulously. Canova then took a slab of butter and carved a lion, perfect in every detail. The nobleman on seeing this masterpiece, called the lad to him and complimented him and sent him to school for more training. Do you remember the story in the early days of school?

We then went outside and waited around while Father Girard cleaned the spark plugs of the car. While I was waiting, I received a most unusual souvenir from St. Peter's. It was given me by the symbol of one of the trinity, the holy ghost. This in case you don't know it, is the dove. How doves are not as numerous as

St. Peter's as they are in the steeple of the Methodist church across the way so you see that receiving a souvenir from one of these relatively few doves is quite an unusual honor. The souvenir consisted of some droppings which struck me on the left shoulder, just as the dove were dubbing me a knight. Actually, at the moment, I wanted to be a knight of the bath, but after being assured that this most unusual souvenir was supposed to bring very good fortune, I decided that since there was nothing I could do about it other than wipe away the excess, I might as well accept the honor philosophically.

Our next stop was at Garibaldi Park, which is situated on one of the seven hills of Rome, and consequently has a beautiful view of the town. I had not been there before and enjoyed it very much. There is a tremendous statue of Garibaldi, one of the Italian patriots and unifiers, which is more or less the center piece of the park. The park is beautiful in a quiet, peaceful way, and is thoroughly used by the Romans. It was simply full of children and their watchful mothers, sitting on the lawns beneath the shade of the trees. It made me feel a bit homesick, seeing all those children playing in the park so peacefully. It's funny how you and the children are always forging into the foreground of my thoughts. No matter how difficult or how pleasant the situation, I always find myself thinking of your reaction to it; thanking God that you are not present when things are tough, and yearning for you to be having my pleasures when I spend time so pleasantly as I did during my visit with the priests.

Our next stop was at the church of St. Mary Major, also called St. Mary of the Snow. This is a beautiful large church, i.e. compared to American churches, but not with the tremendous churches of Rome. There is an interesting story told regarding its building. It seems that two wealthy Roman gentlemen had been considering the erection of a church in honor of the Christ Mother. One day in the middle of a very hot August, each, separately, had a vision in which the Holy Virgin told them she would give them a sign as to where to erect the church. That very day it snowed on the spot where the church was subsequently erected, and they felt that this was the sign that Mary had intended them to recognize. St. Mary of the Snow is famous for several things. The gold in its ceiling is of the first gold to arrive in Italy from the gold rush in California (or possibly the first gold to come from America at any time, I'm not sure). It has a famous relic, the crib of Christ. It has the most artistic chapel in Rome, and that probably means in the world. This is simply beautiful with paintings of great beauty, statues and bas reliefs that are striking. It is worth anyone's time to spend at least an hour in this chapel. Then, too, it has the most expensive chapel in Rome, i.e., filled with articles of gold and precious stones, and rare marble. However, one of the things for which it is most famous is its festival of St. Mary at which time in addition to an elaborate ceremony, there is a steady shower of white rose petals floating down over the scene during the entire ceremony. This is to simulate the snow in the middle of August and is said to be both beautiful and heaven-scented. The petals scatter as they are dropped from the dome and spread over a large area in the church to a depth of several inches. It really must be beautiful.

We never visited the Coliseum, which I now saw in a different light than I had on my previous visit because I now knew that all its beauty had been stolen from it, i.e., its marble columns and marble walls, to make the St. Peter's Cathedral a place of beauty. As you know, it is an immense structure formerly seating 80,000 people. The floor of the arena is no longer smooth but has had numerous small buildings of brick built in it many years ago to house a zoo. The seats have all been removed, probably to make marble stairs for some of the religious buildings, and the bricks which are now in the walls are really a modern restoration to keep the shape and size of the former magnificent building.

Next we went to another of Rome's famous hills to the Pincio Park, which is more exclusive than Garibaldi Park, since it is in a richer neighborhood. It is a tremendous park with statues, fountains, artificial lake and beautiful lawns and trees. Again, this park is amazingly well used by the Romans. From a balcony there is a lovely view of Rome with St. Peter's Cathedral standing over



it like a mother protecting her youngsters, and a view of the Vittore Emanuel statu a supposed attempt to duplicate the Acropolis of Athens. We then returned to the monastery, which as I said is on a hill, so in 3 successive steps we were able to see Rome from 3 different hills and therefore 3 different aspects--the west, the east and the north. To see the world's most beautiful city (in my opinion) from 3 different views was indeed a pleasure.

On our way up to the monastery we passed the home of Mussolini's mistress, and he did very well for her. The house is a very modern type of structure, and altho not too elaborate on the outside, is supposed to be extremely so on the inside. The house is now being used as an orphanage and maternity hospital--fate is a grim jester. From the roof of the monastery we were able to see the spot where Mussolini had planned to build a tremendous statue of himself overlooking the Forum of Mussolini. However, the fates of war destroyed this by melting it down for cannon.

After another drink of wine we were shown thru the monastery itself, and learned that they have 2 artists among their brethren who do beautiful work, one of these being the Japanese father. They have a lovely little chapel which is in the process of being repainted. Along tedious procedure. Two artists have been working on it daily for 2 months and have only finished 1/3 of the ceiling. We also visited the cellar which was filled with large flasks of wine and of course, had to have another glass of wine. As a result, I was beginning to get slightly on the tipsy side. It was a good thing that we then sat down to supper so that I could get some food into me to help neutralize some of the absorption of the wine. Supper consisted of the same soup that we had at noon, a Spanish omelet which was delicious, string beans, the usual dark bread, more wine (which I had to refuse) and coffee (G) plus apricots. I go into detail on the meals because it is quite an accomplishment to get food in Rome and I want to give you an idea of what the priests eat. To make sure that we did not eat them out of house and home we left them boxes of K rations when we were leaving and they were overwhelmed since they seldom have meat and also they love our Kraft cheese and chocolates.

After supper we sat around and talked and believe me, those saintly men are extremely well educated both in general knowledge, and also in world affairs. I learned that their order exists chiefly to help other priests, giving them haven in times of duress, arranging hotels or places for them to stay when visiting outside of their own communities, helping the sick priests, etc. They are well qualified for this benevolent task.

We were amazed to see how late it was before we realized it and unwillingly, we left. We gave them the food that I mentioned and also all of our spare cigarettes (in our case 3 cartons, which at \$1.50 per package was equivalent to \$45 on the barter market.)

I must apologize for going into all this detail, but I did so for several reasons. First of all this was the most interesting and education day I have spent away from home. Secondly, I thought that Judy might be able to use some of the information at a later date. Thirdly, I thought you might let Father Leon and Chas. Uhl and Pat Shrock read the portion about the Pope and St. Peter's Cathedral. Stress to Pat, if you should decide to allow him to read that, that it is not for publication. I am not looking for publicity, altho I don't want the people to forget me.

With the above description I think that you will get much more out of the post cards that I will be sending Judy of views of Rome.

Wait.