

My Roman Holiday

By Chris Hirschhorn

I was on the train from Paris, France to Rome, Italy, when a gentleman seated across from me on the train began a conversation (I suspected because of the camera he was carrying that he was a photographer) and he asked me if I was from the States.

Then he asked me if I'd like to visit St Peter's the next day. I said that I was on my way to Rome to visit St. Peter's. He, Franco Gremanani, explained that Pope John the 23rd was having a Consistory of Cardinals and he was going to St. Peter's too because his newspaper assigned him, a photographer, to cover the event. I was overwhelmed when he asked me if I'd like to be his guest at the event at St. Peter's and his companion at a dinner party afterwards.

I was fortunate to meet Franco and found myself sitting on the Pope's side of the communion rail at St. Peter's with several nuns during the gathering of Cardinals from around the world. The elegant dinner party that followed was a catered event in the home of one of Rome's elite. Afterwards, I thanked Franco profusely for the invitation and was on my way.

Then there was another amazing event. The next day I was lunching and the men at the table next to me and I became friendly. I told them of my desire to go to the opera in Rome. They got the pass from their hotel's concierge and that evening I attended the opera at Rome's Opera house. What a fabulous Roman experience! The gentlemen were expecting that I'd return the pass after the Opera but since the opera was quite long and it was late, I decided to return the Opera Pass the next day. So they phoned me and asked for the pass. I told them of my plan and they said, "Please return the pass or we'll have to pay for the lost pass." I did, of course, return the pass early in the morning and left a thank you note.

What a fabulous Roman Holiday I had, to be sure.