

Rome, Open City, Part V

Director: Roberto Rossellini (1945)

Don Pietro and Marcello leave the church and head for Pina's apartment. As they walk, they talk.

Don Pietro asks, "Why don't you come to church anymore?"

"How can you waste time in church in these times?"

The priest is shocked. "But what are you saying?!"

"You are a priest and can't understand... We have to close ranks against the common enemy!"

"But, tell me... Who tells you these things?"

The two stop for a moment and stand face to face. "Romoletto told me," he answers honestly, looking up at the priest with a serious expression.

"Ah, Romoletto says these things?"

"Don Pie', please don't tell anyone!"

The sexton from the bread riot approaches. His blanket is still wrapped around him – and with good reason. Marcello calls out, "Here comes Purgatorio!" – apparently the man's nickname.

"What have you got here?" asks the priest, lifting the blanket for a look.

"I've been shopping," says the sexton. A great abundance of bread sticks out from the top of his bag.

"Wow! So much bread! What is it? Your entire bread ration card?" asks Marcello, as Don Pietro looks on suspiciously.

"Not even one coupon!"

"How come all this bread?" asks the priest.

"I don't know. This morning, they were celebrating –"

The priest cuts him off. "What?" and looks at him steadily.

"I don't know what holiday it was... even the baker didn't know. Excuse me, Don Pie', I'm leaving."

As he walks away, Marcello asks innocently, "What holiday could it be?"

"I don't understand," replies the priest and begins to walk.

"I hope my mother heard about it!" the kid comments.

Back at Francesco's place, Pina appears with coffee for Manfredi that she's prepared at her apartment.

In one hand, protected by her sweater, she has the hot coffee pot,; in the other, a cup and saucer.

"Here you go!" she says with a smile. "It might not be not very good, but at least it's hot. Drink up!"

She pours his coffee and sets the cup on the table.

Thanking her, Manfredi says, "Francesco told me that you two are getting married!"

"Yes, the wedding is a little late, you see, in my condition..." she says, running her hands over her belly. "But we set the date long ago, and then we had to keep postponing it for this reason and that. But now it's set!"

"And for when?"

"Tomorrow," she says, looking pleased.

"Ah! Then I'll have to get you a present!"

"Heavens, no!" she exclaims, placing her hand over his. She sits down and leans both arms on the

table. "It's a wartime wedding," she explains. "We go for a moment to Don Pietro and we do it quickly."

"You're marrying in the church?" he says, with a slight frown.

"Yes. Francesco didn't really want to, but I told him... 'It's better to be married by Don Pietro who at least is one of us... Rather than go to be married at City Hall by some Fascist, don't you think?'" She gives him a knowing look.

He nods. "In a way, you're right."

"The truth is... I believe in God." She looks down at the table, slightly embarrassed by the confession. Manfredi changes the subject. "And what do you do now? Are you working?"

"I used to work at the Breda fuse factory. But they threw us out." She shrugs and shakes her head.

"The Germans are taking everything away."*

**In fact, the Germans literally stripped the factories of their equipment, which they then transported to Germany and other occupied countries. The manufacture of fuses, which are used to set off bombs, hand grenades, and other explosive devices, would be of obvious value in wartime.*

When the doorbell rings, Pina is momentarily startled, but she realizes: "It must be Don Pietro." She stands and goes to the door; Manfredi stands too, and looks towards the door with a serious expression on his face.

The priest enters, holding his hat. Manfredi shakes his hand.

"Good morning, Don Pietro."

"Good morning."

They pause and Pina says, "Excuse me, I'll go out there."

When she has gone, Manfredi says, "Thank you for coming."

"Don't mention it."

Outside the apartment, Pina finds Marcello with his ear to the door. "What are you doing there, little boy?" she asks.

"Who's in there?"

"Who do you think? Go get some water. Hurry up! Get going!" She walks with him across to their apartment, pushing him by the back of the neck, much as Don Pietro had done earlier.

Marcello starts down the stairs but, as soon as his mother is inside and has closed the door, he turns around and tiptoes back up, trailed by the huge shadow he throws on the wall.

He climbs up the stairs toward the roof, stopping part way to give a whistle in code. At the top, Romoletto waits in the doorway, leaning on his crutches.

"I have to talk to you," says Marcello.

"Come in!"

Marcello enters and shuts the door behind him.

In Francesco's apartment, Don Pietro sits, gaze lowered, glasses in his hands, while Manfredi stands in front of him, speaking quickly. "There are five hundred men in the hills above Taliacozzo, a group of good men. We can't abandon them." The priest listens attentively. "The appointment is set for

tonight at six o'clock on the Tiburtino Bridge. One of them will come. It's better for me not to go because by now... I've been identified and besides, the curfew has been moved to five o'clock.*
"Right."

**The curfew did not apply to priests, to printing shop employees or to medical personnel.*

Don Pietro stands. "I'll go."

"I was sure you would."

"What is the message?"

"No message. It's money from the military committee."

"Ahhhhh...." Don Pietro looks down.

"Have I asked too much?"

"No." The priest shakes his head, still looking down, as if considering the gravity of the situation. "No, for those sacrificing themselves, it's too little."

Then Don Pietro looks at Manfredi. "How will I recognize him?"

"He'll stop on the bridge and whistle that song, 'Morning in Florence.'" Don Pietro doesn't react. "But of course, you wouldn't know it!" Manfredi smiles.

"I don't know. Which one?"

"The one that goes..." Manfredi begins to whistle the tune but, before he's gotten a few notes out, the priest joins him.

"Right, of course, everyone is singing it," he comments with a smile.

And so this scene closes with the two men in perfect harmony: the Catholic priest and the dedicated communist, despite their differences, aligned to free the country they both love.