
NOTES

Holy Years in the Economic Life of the City of Rome

Paolo Brezzi

University of Rome

1. Rome in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period was a city rich in historical tradition, with a glorious secular and religious past, but it lacked the economic resources capable of attracting those entrepreneurial middle classes who had created the fortunes of other cities in north and central Italy. In such a city an event such as Holy Year, occurring with a certain regularity and both drawing into the city large numbers of foreigners and keeping them there for an extended period, necessarily encouraged commercial activities and increased production. Inevitably such an event profoundly affected the structure of local life, and it is therefore well worth drawing attention to, and describing, the social and economic consequences of the Holy Years. Even if less obvious than more common topics such as religious ceremonies, the phenomenon of pilgrimages and events which served to edify the faithful, they are of no less importance and interest to the historian.

An undertaking such as the Christian Jubilee was really enormous and, even if one leaves aside the spiritual significance, it confronts the historian with a vast range of problems — provision of accommodation and food for

* The essential purpose of the Christian Jubilees, or Holy Years, is to afford a plenary and solemn indulgence for the faithful and obtain grace for the Church as a whole. To obtain the Jubilee indulgence, pilgrims to Roma are obliged to visit the four major basilicas a set number of times. The first Jubilee was announced by Boniface VIII, and Dante and Giotto were amongst the pilgrims. For the time of Sixtus IV (1471-84), the Jubilee was celebrated regularly every 25 years, with the exception of the 19th century. The Jubilee is initiated when the Sacred Doors of the four major basilicas are opened, and ends on Christmas Eve when the Pope closes the Sacred Door of St. Peter's.

the visitors, sanitary organization, organization of food supplies, the policing of those who arrived and departed, supervision of transport and public order, to mention only a few — each of which require specific methodological analysis. This is not to suggest that it is essential to view a phenomenon which impinged on highly intimate and individual feelings, as well as on the charismatic features of the Roman pontiff in a purely secular or material light, but rather that it is important to identify those features which most greatly affected the environment in which the Jubilees took place over the course of many centuries. For these were the aspect of the Jubilees which set off chain reactions and which served to bring back a spark of life to the rather stagnant character of the city of Rome, which after the 14th century had ceased to constitute the theoretical and real centre of western Europe and which was in constant decline both as a political and cultural centre.

Spurred on and guided by the Church, the municipal authorities tried with the advent of each new Jubilee to do their best. Their success varied greatly, but their efforts are well worth examining, for by studying what was resolved and effected it is possible to obtain some idea of the precepts on which they were based, of the principal criteria on which public administration was conducted, of the interests which had to be catered for, of the difficulties which had to be avoided and overcome, and of the advantages produced — or in other words of the final balance of benefit and harm accruing to the population of Rome. In doing this it is important to bear in mind the dual status of the population, composed of the inhabitants of a specific, well-defined, geographical area which was already, as we have noted, of secondary importance, but which was nonetheless directly and jointly responsible for the success of each Jubilee, at least in so far as its external and documentable aspects were concerned (the spiritual benefits are obviously a factor which we are not in a position to assess).

2. Before the celebration of each Jubilee one finds repeated the same fears over the safety of the future visitors and the same references to the dangers which would confront them on the roads leading to Rome. Brigands and bandits made the roads unsafe, while the travellers' discomforts were increased by natural obstacles which were considerable. The journey from the Alps to Rome still normally took twenty days, although between Bologna and Rome there were twenty-four relay stations not to mention the numerous *xenodochia*, inns, and monasteries scattered along the route. Severe measures were adopted and thieves who robbed travellers were summarily hanged, but these do not seem to have struck noticeable terror into others. Travellers in those days, however, were considerably more able to withstand such trials than their modern counterparts. The important document normally known as the *Honorantiae civitatis Papae* contained the following instruction to the tax collectors:

Omnia sine ulla decimation debent dimittere romitetas addecimare nec eis ullam contrarietatem facere et si quis fecerit, sub anatagem sit.

In the year of the first Jubilee, 1300, the Council of Bologna decided in November to restore the road over the Appenines from San Ruffillo to Pietramala near the Florentine frontier, because it was used « *per peregrinos qui ire et redire habeant Romam propter indulgentiam peccatorum ipsorum recipiendam* ».

The principal routes by which the endless streams of travellers made their way to Rome were Francigena, which from Piedmont, via Pavia and Piacenza, crossed the Apennines at Mons Baronis (Cisa) and continued to Lucca and the Laspice of Altopascio (on the way a bequest entitled Scandinavian travellers to drink all the wine they chose free of charge in Piacenza and Lucca, while pilgrims travelling from Paris were provided with a pass which entitled them to spend the night at Altopascio). Even more important were the routes from Milan and the Trentino which converged on Bologna, then Florence and through San Casciano and Poggibonsi reached Siena. Here it joined the former, and continued through Montefiascone and Viterbo, finishing in sight of Rome at Monte Mario, which was then known as *mons gaudii*. Climbing to the summit of the hill the traveller could at last see the destination he had so long dreamed of and all his cares were forgotten, even though, before the mid-16th century at least, the view of the city which now lay at his feet can hardly have been spectacular.

The sea routes, which disembarked first at the port of Ripa and later at Civitavecchia, were much less used, and from this direction the view of Rome was even less impressive. But no sooner had the traveller entered the city than he was confronted with the problem of finding accommodation. Here it is necessary to draw a distinction between the first Jubilees (those between 1300 and 1500) and the remainder, and also to note that here, as subsequently, we have left aside the Jubilees of the present century given that circumstances are so greatly changed.

At the time of Boniface VIII and Dante there were probably no more than four licensed hotels in Rome, and these were clustered around the Parione quarter (practically the modern Campo di Fiori) and in the Orso and Tor di Nona districts (present day Ponte quarter). There were also a number of hosteleries and taverns where it was possible to eat and drink, but not to sleep. The inns were then totally inadequate to cater for the pilgrims and the majority had to turn to private rooms with the inevitable result that these were quickly over-booked and exhausted. There were also hospices and charitable institutions, and we shall return to these shortly. The price for a room and stabling for a horse was one large "tornese", which was dear, although in certain places the price was even higher. To evaluate the cost precisely, however, it would be necessary to establish the

buying power of money at this time which involves a highly complicated and difficult calculation.

It was common practice for a number of individuals to sleep in the same room, and sacks filled with straw or primitive mattresses slung over trestles provided the most comfortable beds, but the pilgrim often had to make do with a simple quilt stretched out on the floor. Sheets and blankets were in general use from the 14th century, but other articles were considered luxuries, there were no window panes and the only heating was provided by stoves. All in all one is struck by the total absence of privacy and comfort which is expected today in even the humblest rooming house. Were a traveller to fall ill while he was at an inn, however, and if he had no friends or means to obtain attention, then he was able to turn to one of the special confraternities, such as the one near San Salvatore delle Copelle, where he would be looked after.

The customers of the Roman inns were a varied group, for the greater part male and of middling social position. The bulk of those who took private rooms on the other hand were women, and frequently women of easy virtue, although with the approach of a Holy Year the authorities went to great lengths to drive prostitutes off the streets of the city, rarely it would seem with great effect. To assess the relationship between facilities and guests it would be necessary to know the number of permanent inhabitants in the city as well as the numbers of foreigners who arrived during the first Holy Year. In both cases the figures are highly unreliable. The census of resident citizens was conducted for purely fiscal purposes, and calculations were made by hearths, or family units, rather than per head, so that the figures varied widely.

As far as the pilgrims were concerned the chroniclers tended to give very general and often grossly exaggerated numbers. Even a serious observer like Giovanni Villani did not venture beyond phrases of the following sort: « . . . a very great part of the Christians living at this time made this pilgrimage, both men and women, from distant and varied countries and also from near and far. It was the most marvellous thing that has ever been seen ». Elsewhere one finds only vague references, such as: « . . . so great was the multitude that passed by that it was near beyond belief. Husbands, wives, children, all went leaving their houses locked up, and all came together in perfect devotion to receive this pardon ». The majority speak of the swarms of pilgrims, of armies on the march. Guglielmo Ventura of Asti declared without hesitation that « the crowd of them was so great that no man could count them », while a German chronicler claimed that there was « a mighty concourse of all the peoples of the world », and the chronicler of Parma noted that « not only the hostels and taverns but many other houses too were providing lodging, food and drink for payment, and each day they were full with men and people ». A figure of something in the region of

200,000 pilgrims for the whole year would probably not be far out. This figure was considerably exceeded in following years, but it should be remembered that the first Jubilee was declared unexpectedly in response to popular demands, and officially did not commence until late February and so lacked proper preparation.

For the next Holy Year (1350) — the only one to occur in the absence of a pontiff in Rome, because Clement VI like so many other 14th century popes was in Avignon — there are two important "live" witnesses whose accounts cannot be dismissed. Both Petrarch and a minor poet from the Abruzzi, Buccio di Ranallo, provide abundant information. Petrarch himself undertook the pilgrimage to Rome and his enthusiasm was not dimmed by the fact that his leg was broken by a kick from a horse in Viterbo, and he elegantly described his experiences in a letter to Guglielmo di Pastrengo: « . . . side by side walked the Spaniard and the Cimbrian, the Briton, the Greek and the long-haired Swabian . . . » (many others also mentioned the large number of German and Hungarian pilgrims), and the second sang in dialect. « So great was the multitude going to Rome that we saw everywhere crushed together. Never before was there so great a crowd . . . », wrote Ranallo, and he was able to find a telling imagery to describe the behaviour of the Roman landlords; when receiving the new arrivals they seemed like angels, but then turned out to be veritable curs, renting a single bed to three or four different people, and then when the moment of going to bed arrived seven or eight would be placed in the same bed, but it was necessary to be patient « and not ask questions ».

The food situation was even worse. The Romans had suffered considerably from the long absence of the papal Curia and from the political disturbances of the previous years, which had witnessed Cola di Rienzo's coup and its failure, and sought by every means to draw maximum profit from the Jubilee in order to revive the economic situation of the city and the surrounding area. Prices rose sky-high, and the authorities intervened, although rarely to any effect, to prevent abuses. It would appear that there was an effective merchant organization which was capable of monopolizing sales of principal foodstuffs in order to ensure that the purchasers had to pay the prices which suited them, and when profits fell the same organization was able to see to it that the goods vanished from the market and was able to prevent non-Roman merchants bringing wine, grain or fodder into the city so that they should not offer competition or any other inconvenience. All the usual tricks were played to the full, as Villani noted when he wrote that « . . . the Romans cheat the butchers and use clever ruses to mix up good and bad meat which they sell to them ». The Abruzzi poet was of the same opinion. « . . . Veal and salted pork were very dear, as was fish, and I have good reason to know such things . . . ». Buccio also stated that in May there were hundreds of ships in the port of Ripetta, all laden

with grain, fruit and wines, and he described in fulsome terms the effort required to bring all this ashore, concluding: «...at Ripa we counted it all. There was so much stuff that we were utterly amazed».

In the previous Holy Year the food situation must have been better. The pope had made provision for procuring victuals, but even so there seems to have been a shortage of food for orders were given to nearby towns to bring the grain which they were obliged to hand over to Rome much earlier than usual, and visitors were obliged to bring with them the provisions which they and their beasts would require. The problem of providing food was nearly always one of the most urgent and difficult on the occasion of a Holy Year, and its persistent reappearance is highly symptomatic. By way of further example, during the Jubilee in 1400 it appears that the pilgrims found "abundant victuals" (in the words of a chronicler), yet another author, Sercambi, drew a very bleak picture of the state of public order: «...it could be said that to be in Rome is like being in a wood — there is no justice, no love, no reason and no unity there». In 1450 there were more ups and downs, as is evident from the pages of Matteo Palieri and Paolo del Mastro, both diarists of the period. One sample is sufficient: «A very great number of foreigners and of our people came here, especially in April, May and June, and then again between September and Christmas; many who came in May and June died on the way and in the hospices, but for the rest of the time they have been healthy enough and in large numbers». Nearly all mention the quiet period and mention the fears it caused amongst the Roman merchants when «it seemed to each that he would be undone» (today we would say that the merchants feared bankruptcy when they could not sell their stocks). The plague also made its visitations «and the dead fell to the ground like dogs in the midst of the infested air, and were burned by the heat and the dust», but in the autumn the danger receded and the people began to return once more: «...and so many came to Rome that there was no room to stand and even when every house became an inn still there were not enough. They went begging for the love of God that they might pay someone to give them lodging, but when they found none they had to sleep outside, half dead with the cold, and it was pity to see them. The mills could not produce more bread because there were not enough baking ovens». The pope was in fact forced to shorten the lengths of their stay and reduce the number of visits required to the different basilicas, because «the people are abundant and are starving Rome».

3. What we have discussed so far falls under the heading of the situation of hospitality, of providing food and lodging, in the 14th and 15th centuries, that is in the final period in which Rome was still by and large a medieval city. But once the major crises of the early 16th century had been overcome (the Protestant reformation, and the splitting away of half of Europe from Rome, which could not but affect the number of pilgrims flocking to

Rome to celebrate the Holy Years), there is an evident revival in the late 16th century which continues through the 17th and 18th. The situation had changed greatly, facilities were much improved and provisioning operations were altogether more accurate and comprehensive. But before turning to this second phase it is well worth considering two further aspects of the earlier period, that is the state of the roads and the profits which the Romans drew from the hundreds of thousands of people who flocked to their city during the first four or five Holy Years.

There is no need to describe again in any detail the typical state of the roadways in a medieval city. The roads had no proper foundations, so there was no means of removing dust and stagnant water, they were narrow, winding, filthy and stinking, but even allowing for such defects the roads leading to the basilicas in Roma which the Jubilee pilgrims were obliged to visit presented further hazards of their own which the authorities attempted to circumvent as best they could. St. Paul's was not only situated in a distant position, but was often inaccessible when the Tiber was in full spate, with the result that the basilica was often substituted by that of Santa Maria in Trastevere which was closer. But, as one can easily imagine, the greatest difficulties surrounded access to St. Peter's in the Vatican, not only because the roads were scarcely passable but in particular because there was only one bridge linking the two banks of the Tiber. The bridge was nearly always choked by a ceaseless mass of travellers. In order to make progress easier it was probably the case that barriers were erected by means of the vendors' stalls (*casellae mercatorum*) which were located over the whole span of the bridge, and there were also guards. There is no mention of any serious incidents here, although the Asti chronicler, Guglielmo Ventura, noted that on several occasions he saw men and women « trampled under the feet of the others, and on several occasions I myself escaped the same fate ».

But what had been avoided in 1300 did unhappily occur in 1450 towards the end of the Jubilee which had been staged with such great success by Nicholas V. At that time the Campo Marzio area was very heavily populated and was also the main business and shop-keeping centre. This served to make movement difficult along the road then known as the "*canale di Ponte*" (present day via di Banco Santo Spirito), which was in any case obstructed by the triumphal arch of Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius and by a small church dedicated to SS. Celsus & Julian. This faced the river and had in front of it a flight of stairs. It should, also, be remembered that the arches of the bridge itself were on a considerable gradient, and that the walls of the Leonine city, close to the Castel S. Angelo, almost touched the bridge. A gate, known as the *Aenea* because it was adorned in bronze, was set in the walls and passing through this the pilgrim came directly into the famous arcade that led to the basilica. In view of

this it is less difficult to understand how it was that a minor incident, which occurred on the evening of 18th December while the crowds were moving away from St. Peter's after receiving the papal benediction, had lethal consequences. A number of horses or mules panicked, and the people near them tried to move backwards out of the way, but the rest of the crowd, not knowing what had happened, continued to push forward with the result that those in front were driven under the animals' hooves. In the ensuing tragedy there were over a hundred deaths and many others were also thrown into the Tiber.

The pope ordered prayers to be said for the souls of the dead and had two circular chapels built on the side of the bridge near the city where the tragedy had occurred. The merchants' stalls were also demolished, as well as a number of nearby hovels, the inhabitants of which were evicted, and the rubble was used to level out the gradient. Gratian's arch was also demolished, but subsequent efforts to rationalize the thoroughfares of the quarter remained unfinished even though the popes continued to issue repeated instructions on the subjects. News of the catastrophe was sent all over Europe by the representatives in Rome of different countries and individuals, and the verbal reports of the surviving pilgrims when they returned home helped change the fact out of all recognition.

On the advice of Leon Battista Alberti Sistus IV undertook various operations to repair roads and building in preparation for the Jubilee of 1475 which envisaged a bold attempt to introduce the concept of town-planning involving the demolition of a large number of houses in order to open up new roads, but which also gave rise to complaints from those involved. But on this score credit must finally be given to a pontiff who in other respects does not enjoy a very good reputation — Alexander VI, who was in office during the Jubilee of 1500. As far as our topic is concerned he not only showed himself to be aware of his ecclesiastical duties (by celebrating the opening ceremonies and other functions with great solemnity and fervour) but also carried out his obligations as head of State and rector of the city with intelligence. He made the Via Cassia safer by banishing the Corsi family who won their living by robbing travellers, made proper arrangements for provisioning the city by collecting vast supplies of goods in new warehouses which he had built, with the result that prices also were controlled, and saw to it that new hospices were opened to welcome the foreign visitors. The first pilgrims who arrived found that the Borgo Vecchio, the traditional way of entry, was barred to them, but saw that a new road which made it easier for the crowds to pass between the Castel Sant'Angelo and St. Peter's had been built. This was known as the Via Recta, or Alessandrina, and more commonly simply as the Borgo Nuovo.

We are now faced by the difficult and much debated problem of the financial advantages which the Romans drew from the Holy Years. We must first set aside the series of false accusations, vague rumours, and real lies, and go directly to the facts. It is certainly true that there were many generous offerings, and good profits, but to suggest that the entire enterprise was no more than a massive speculation dreamed up by the Curia is not only irreverent, it is also untrue. One must be as wary of minimizing the income as of talking in exaggerated terms of the fabulous gains. Villani confirmed that « much treasure came to the Church » and that « the Romans all became rich ». Other observers talked of the « limitless gold » which was raked in by the two priests before the Confessional in St. Peter's. Stefaneschi, who was well-informed about the first Jubilee, noted, however, that for the most part the alms came in small coin, the gifts of the poor who gave readily enough but not in a way to amass great sums.

In 1350 pope Clement VI took action from Avignon against the canons of St. Peter's who had disobeyed his rulings on the use of the alms given by the pilgrims. Instead of employing them to assist the basilicas which had been damaged in a recent earthquake, the canons had used them for their own profit. In Clement's letter it was explicitly stated that: « *rituntur propriis applicare commodis* ». But when these unworthy priests, encouraged by friends and relatives who found it very pleasant to live off the backs of the pious and unsuspecting pilgrims, were forced to return their ill-gotten gains, they attacked and gravely wounded the altar keeper of the Basilica. For the Jubilee of 1450, Paolo del Mastro gives us very detailed information: « The Trades which made the most money were these, that is first the bankers, then the grocers and apothecaries and the painters of the Sacred Countenance (these made huge profits), followed by the hosteleries and taverns, especially those on the outskirts of the city and in the squares of St. Peter's and St. John's; but every Trade fared pretty well ».

The office and function of Treasurer for the whole of the Holy Year had been contracted out to Cosimo de' Medici by the pope, and the famous Florentine bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci informs us that: « In the year of the Jubilee, the Medici bank held more than a hundred thousand florins belonging to the Church, from what I have heard from the most reliable and trustworthy sources ». Profits of all kinds came to swell the finances of the Church, and pope Nicholas took the opportunity to realise one of his dearest wishes, buying books and erecting monuments. Vespasiano, who had known him well for many years, observed that in the same year « very large sums of money came to the Apostolic Throne, and the pope began to build in many places and also to send for books in Latin and Greek from wherever they might be had, and taking no heed as to the price ...

But he did well to spend money and not hoard it as so many others did; and thus Pope Nicholas was a light and example to literature and to the lettered ».

On the same grounds, however, the Jubilee of 1500 was much less successful, because the pontiff's son, Cesare Borgia, used the funds collected from the pilgrims to finance his wars and, which was even worse, his own whims and fancies. Alexander VI had had a special sealed coffer built which had three locks on it, and which was placed near the sacred portal of St. Peter's. The pilgrims' generosity was great, as a contemporary chronicler, Sigismondo de' Conti, observed, but instead of being used to restore churches and maintain religious institutions the alms all ended up in the evil manner we have described.

It is easy enough to understand how misdeeds of this sort encouraged the type of accusations which the reformers began to level against the Catholics only a short while later, so bringing into question the essence of the indulgence which had been reduced to a sad trade in which pardon seemed to depend only on payment. But this need not concern us here, especially as this flood of money affected the Romans themselves in only the most marginal ways. It was in the same period too that various factors of economic recession were beginning to converge, making the economic and social life of the city hard, miserable and insecure. It was only two years after the Holy Year of 1525, which passed with little success and hence with little consequence locally, that the terrible sack of Rome took place in 1527. But despite the grief and damage which this caused, it also acted as a purge which cleansed the city and the Church of many pestilent microbes.

4. Radical changes began to occur in both economic and social conditions in Rome from the mid-16th century onwards. The Counter-Reformation and the Council of Trent led to a revival in religious life and to an improvement in the moral atmosphere and in ecclesiastical conduct, but our main concern once again will be to see how the perennial urban and logistical problems presented by the celebration of the Holy Years were tackled in the centuries of the modern period. Without dwelling too long on the usual provisions for controlling prices, preventing evictions, cleaning the streets, collecting victuals, controlling the price of foodstuffs, and so forth, we shall concentrate again on the aspects of hospitality which awaited the pilgrim in Rome, for it was here that the greatest developments had occurred. On the topics just mentioned, however, we can provide several brief examples. From 1573 Gregory XIII issued regulations covering rents in order that landlords should, not shirk their obligations, and drew up

an official list of prices for foodstuffs. He also repaired the ancient Rotto bridge, and opened the new spacious and level Via Merulana between Santa Maria Maggiore and San Giovanni in Laterano. In his decree he instructed that: « Holy Years must be a time for joy and devotion for all those sustained by the benediction and must not become occasions for making profit and other calamities ». The *Avvisi* of Rome noted of the same Jubilee on March 26th that « the gathering of pilgrims is indeed incredible ». Fearing a shortage of grain, Prince Colonna offered a vast quantity to the pope « so that it would be possible to keep supplies abundant ».

But where and how were this mass of visitors, who especially at times of the major religious ceremonies became legion, lodged and accommodated? Even though they had come to Rome for religious motives, the pilgrims needed food and rest and somewhere reasonable to stay in the city. In the first place there were a number of institutions and religious orders whose principal task was to assist pilgrims. The principal European nations had for some time taken care to provide hospices for their nationals arriving in Rome. The Germans had S. Maria dell'Anima, which had been formally sanctioned by Boniface IX in 1399, the Flemings S. Giuliano, the Spaniards S. Maria di Monserrato and later S. Giacomo as well, the French S. Luigi to which St. Ives of the Bretons was joined. There were also hospices for the Bohemians, Poles, Swedes, English and Scots, while later provision was also made for the southern Slavs, Armenians and Ethiopians. All were well endowed with money and were able to offer not only free board and lodging for a certain number of days but also small sums towards the cost of the return journey. There were also a large number of regional Italian confraternities which performed the same function for Italians coming from the provinces and other states on the Peninsula. To these must also be added a further thirty hospices provided by the Guilds, hospitals, conservatories for fallen women and girls, charitable foundation and so forth. Finally, of a more directly ecclesiastical nature, there were also a number of seminaries and colleges for student clerics.

The confraternities, or lay associations with philanthropic ends, were particularly active during the Holy Years, in particular the confraternity of the SS. Crucifix at S. Marcello, which provided lodging for pilgrims in the *palazzo* Loreto in the Campo Marzio, that of the *Raccomandati alla Madonna* of the SS. *Gonfalone*, of the *Stimate*, of S. *Caterina*, etc. Each had a governor, overseers, butlers, stewards, and chose its patrons amongst the Cardinals. In fact amongst the noble Roman families there was something of a division of influence, so that the Barberini, the Orsini, the Borghese and the Chigi each took an interest in one confraternity or another,

allowing them to use their property for lodgings, making them generous endowments, and participating in their major ceremonies and rites. In this manner ties were created which overcame social divisions, which were at that time quite clear-cut, and even if this did not provide any equitable solution to the problems it did at least mean that the lowly and the powerful came together in the same penitent's habit.

The Arch-Confraternity of the Most Holy Trinity of the Pilgrims, founded in 1548 near S. Salvatore in Campo by Filippo Neri and his followers, who had for years practised piety and charity, quickly became the most important of all. At the start it was a very modest enterprise, but the Jubilee of 1550 allowed the confraternity to expand and assume its future characteristics. The institution was subsequently transferred to the church of S. Benedict in Arenula, which was rebuilt and consecrated to the Trinity. In 1575 the number of individuals to be given shelter each day was fixed at 600, but the institution's growing enthusiasm and attraction meant that all limits were soon removed, to the great material and spiritual benefit of those who travelled to Rome that year. It was estimated that the confraternity had welcomed over 170,000 individuals, who had been lodged either in the hospice built for that purpose beside the church or else in the surrounding houses. The grandest names amongst the local nobility competed keenly to donate money and goods, and even took it as an honour to be allowed to wait on the guests and performed the most menial tasks with zeal and without hesitation (this was true of the men as well as the women). Even though he had already taken Holy Orders and was on the point of founding a new religious order, that of the Oratorio, Filippo Neri himself supervised and organized everything.

To give some idea of the scale of consumption, we know that the Arch-Confraternity in 1575 supplied 1000 *quintals* of grain, 500 hectolitres of wine, 3,000 pounds of bread and about 3,000 eggs. Bread, wine and meat made up respectively 29%, 29% and 23% of the total expenditure, and this indicates the type of sustenance which was offered to the pilgrims. We do however have more detailed descriptions of the pilgrims' menu: « In the pilgrims' refectory there are three rows of tables, one in the middle and the others on either side, all of which are new. There are 356 places which are all served at the same time, food being given once a day, in the evening, as it is not possible to return earlier if one visits the four basilicas . . . To eat there is a large plate of salad and another similar of beef or cold lamb, depending on the season, cut into pieces but allowing a half *libbra* per person, as well as broth a small glass of wine and a small roll. The priests in addition have a plate of figs or nuts.

Whoever asks for more bread or wine is given what he requires. On fast days instead of the plate of meat there is a dish of tunny fish or of herring. In the midst of the refectory there are three large bronze lamps each with ten wicks, while on the walls there are about twenty small tin lamps, and 40 wax candles on the tables, so that all is beautifully lit up and it is a wonderful sight to see ».

The organizers' scruples even went so far as to appoint special « deputies in charge of the kitchen » whose task it was « to see that everything is well prepared and seasoned with due attention to cleanliness, to see that all rice and vegetables are free of soil and other filth. After fish has been fried, they are to see that the oil is returned to the vats and is measured, making note in the register of the volume (i.e. what remained). They shall see that no more fire is used than is required, that the plates are well washed, the kitchen kept clean and the cooking utensils as well ». From the copious documents which are preserved in the Vatican and the State Archives it is possible to draw extremely detailed information, and the detailed instructions drawn up by the Confraternity indicate in detail the arrangements made before each Holy Year, and give detailed financial accounts and so forth. We cannot dwell long on these at present, although it is worth repeating that they illustrate a very wide range of the social and economic realities of the age and really allow us to penetrate the living heart of the local situation in Rome.

For the greater part the guests of the hospices of the Trinity Confraternity were people of humble condition who came from the *popolo minuto*, the vast majority from different regions of Italy because foreigners had their own hospices. Whenever a new group arrived at the door, their identity was first established by examining the passes with which they had been issued by their local religious authorities before leaving home. The scrutiny was rigorous because many tried to deceive and attempted to make a living out of pretending to be pilgrims. Those admitted were issued with another pass (marked *T Roma*) which was renewed every evening, the counterslip being used to number the days passed in residence. Women were received separately from men. In the short time available the members of the Confraternity also tried to give some modest religious instruction, but probably the best lesson derived from the treatment received which greatly impressed the rough but honest pilgrims, who, when they returned home, would recount a thousand times over to their friends the details of their journey.

The absence of any detailed records of the composition of these people means that we must use other sources to identify the travellers. For example

the mayor of San Germano (present day Cassino) related that 200 men and 180 women departed from the commune to obtain the Jubilee in the Holy City of Rome. They were enrolled in the company of the SS. Sacrament, and he declared that « because the multitude is very great it is not possible to name them one by one » but he recorded that 65 carried red mozzettas and the others « carried a card with the sign SS and beneath it the signature of the canon or parish priest of the cathedral », which was followed by the seal of the commune.

To conclude this brief description of the welcome which the Romans were able to provide on the occasion of the Holy Years, it is clear that the different Confraternities did constitute, as has been written, « an impressive receptive organization, if their different activities are taken together, which originated from their charitable works. Without this it would have been impossible to solve the problem of providing lodging and sustenance for the pilgrim in the Jubilee years. The poverty of the majority of the pilgrims meant that they were never potential customers for the inns and hotels, which were left for the rich who were in any case more numerous than in normal times and than the normal volume of foreigners to which the commercial hotels were geared. The integration of these two forms of hospitality, the commercial and the charitable, clearly emerges from a study of the activities of the Confraternity of the Trinity ».

5. The successive Jubilees of the 17th and 18th centuries followed with perfect regularity for two hundred years and more along the lines which we have described above. There were no major innovations or episodes of any particular importance, and the Jubilees indicated the organizing power of the renewed Catholic Church and showed the strength of its ties with the faithful living far from the centre. The information which we could give differs little from what has already been described, although a careful study of individual years would reveal slight changes and distinctions resulting either from the differing instructions given by individual popes or from the circumstances in which individual Jubilee were held. Each pope was different in character and personality, more or less austere, magnificent, infirm through age or disease, followed his own political objectives, and tended to avoid damaging the interests of the powerful family which happened to support him. For the second factor one need only remember the many wars which were fought in Europe in these years, the decline of the power of Spain and the rise of that of France, the dearths and plagues, and on the other hand the signs of economic and commercial recovery, not to mention the evolution of public opinion and of new ideas which, as is well known, caused a noticeable deterioration in the

circumstances in which the Jubilee were celebrated. The Enlightenment critique, the spread of the Encyclopaedia, and the mixture of scepticism and frivolousness certainly did not conspire to welcome the penitential summons which accompanied the declaration of the Jubilees. These rapid notes are necessary if we are to fully understand a historical event, such as constituted by the series of Holy Years, for it cannot be isolated or frozen. It is essential to show the bonds and links which tied it to its age and not to neglect the historical reality by which it was surrounded and from which it was, of necessity, a product.

In a city such as Rome, which still had less than 100,000 inhabitants, there were clearly a good number of individuals who were either over enthusiastic or servile, who were kept quiet either by force or through gifts of food and money. Commerce and artisan industry were of little importance and the majority preferred to find a living as officers of the Curia or else in the retinue of the great nobles. Those who « followed the Roman Curia », the courtiers, the retainers of the popes and cardinals, their servants, all hoped to obtain — as a Venetian ambassador wrote with rather malicious pessimism — « nothing more than ease, luxury, and the public and personal pleasures which are the fruits of idleness which has only the appearance of tranquillity rather than of a tranquillity based on virtue, generosity and true feeling for the public good ». Another valuable description was provided by Carlo de Brosses, the president of the *parlement* of Burgundy, who came to Rome in 1740. De Brosses was an open-minded individual with a great flair for spotting the weaknesses of the social world which he frequented, and he wrote that: « The Pontiffs who from the time of Sixtus V onwards have done so much to make the city magnificent have done nothing for the countryside and nothing to improve the economy. The form of government is the very worst that can be imagined. Imagine the situation when you have a population one third of which is made up of priests, another third by people who hardly ever work and the final third by people who never work — a country which has virtually no agriculture, no commerce, no industry, even though it is sited in the midst of the most fertile countryside and provided with a long and navigable river. Its ruler is often aged, is in power for only a short period, is incapable of acting directly and is surrounded by relatives all intent on pressing their own interests as far as possible, and when there is a change of ruler the only result is that a new band of thieves take over the places of those who have satiated themselves. They tell me that it would have cost less to build a quayside from the entrance to the city right up to the Castel Sant'Angelo than has recently been spent on the redecoration of S. Giovanni in Laterano. In fact

I know that there was discussion over which of the two projects would provide the most useful employment for the money, and S. Giovanni won the day. What a lack of judgment! . . . The maxim that you must kiss St. Peter's feet and bind his hands is still current, but everyone seems more intent on the second than the former! ».

To return to the context which concerns us most directly, that is social and economic rather than religious and ecclesiastical history, let us look at arrangements made by Clement VIII (Aldobrandini) for the Jubilee of 1600. Large supplies of grain were brought from Sicily, new lay hospices were made ready, orders were given that the streets be repaired and operations against bandits and brigands were effected, and the hoteliers and private landlords were subject to rigorous control (500 mattresses and as many blankets were also provided by the Jews of Rome). Despite this profiteers soon began to appear, and the governor of Rome quickly rounded up a handful of landlords and presented them with the alternative of reducing their prices or receiving a good whipping. On another occasion it was the bakers who were subject to the same treatment when it was discovered that they had hidden flour in order to send prices up. Another papal edict forbade the keeping of large and even small pigs in the city's thoroughfares, and yet another forbade individuals to clutter the streets with stones and rocks which would impede traffic. To stress the city's holy character the festivities of Carnival were also forbidden, and only certain theatrical performances were permitted to be held in the colleges run by religious orders, and even here it was necessary to chose the topic carefully.

In 1650 preparations for the Holy Year were directed by the famous Olimpia Maidalchini, sister-in-law of the Pamphili pope Innocent X. Committees were appointed in each of the 14 quarters of the city, who went from house to house collecting linen and food, and we know that in the Monti district Laura Altieri, the marques Nari and a certain Maria Rosarij collected 22 pairs of sheets, two table cloths, 45 serviettes, 9 towels, 11 handkerchiefs, 8 pillow cases, as well as plates, candles, and three barrels of wine — either the collectors were highly persuasive or else the inhabitants were very generous! At this Jubilee, as at others, foreign embassies took the opportunity to provide sacred diversions and the most sumptuous and extravagant ceremonies, but unhappily many of these processions gave rise to shameful fights between hostile groups over questions of prestige and precedence, issues which played a very important part in public life, but which also concealed the bitter rivalries between France and Spain or between Naples and Tuscany. Other altercations arose from petty parochial jealousies, and local quarrels which we need not spend time on, although

they deserve to be mentioned if we are to obtain a realistic impression of the mentality of the period.

The Jubilee of 1700 was promulgated and opened by Innocent XII, but due to his death in September of that year it was closed by Clement XI. That of 1775 was delayed by some months due to the death in September 1774 of Clement XIV following which the conclave took 135 days to elect the Braschi pope Pius VI, who on February 26th personally opened the holy door of St. Peter's. These circumstances were aggravated, however, by the developments which we mentioned at the start of this section, with the result that the event was of no great moment, and the number of visitors and the scale of public interest was greatly reduced. The Holy Year of 1750, conducted under the auspices of the Lambertini pope Benedict XIV, was more successful.

Finally a word on the only Jubilee celebrated in the 19th century; 1800 was missed because Pius VI had died shortly before in exile and the conclave to appoint his successor was held in Venice. There was no Jubilee in 1850 because Pius IX had only recently returned from Gaeta, and in 1875, although the Jubilee was promulgated and certain ceremonies were performed in St. Peter's there were very few pilgrims and the impact on the economic life of the city was minimal. This left only the Holy Year of 1825, celebrated in an atmosphere of total reaction, in fear and suspicion, under the Della Genga pope Leo XII. The Cardinal della Somaglia was Secretary of State and was obsessed with the fear that political conspirators and members of the secret societies would use the guise of pilgrims to swarm into the city where they might plot murders and massacres undisturbed (as Cardinal Wiseman reported). The papal treasurer was also horrified by the thought of the deficit which these extraordinary expenses would cause, creating financial difficulties which would be hard to solve.

The Monsignor Governor and the other heads of the administration arranged provisions, limited the increases in food prices and rents, and cast a careful eye over public morality. All festivities were banned, the opening hours of taverns were limited, while only the basilica of St. Peter's was illuminated and firework displays were allowed only in the Castel Sant'Angelo. On 21st August the city magistrates performed the Jubilee visits (to the four basilicas) in procession, dressed in their full ceremonial costumes and following the sumptuous ancient ceremony. Massimo d'Azeglio, however, gave a less respectful description: «For twelve whole months Rome has been transformed into a vast establishment for spiritual exercises: the theatres are shut, there are no balls and even the Punch and Judy men have been driven off the streets».

Reactions, whether scandalised or moralising, such as these are not our primary concern in this brief description of the history of the Holy Years. It is clear that over a period of many centuries the Jubilees have played an important role in the economic and social life of the city of Rome. For this reason they are important not only to the historian of the Church but to whoever wishes to « know how things really were », as the old definition of our discipline goes. But in his well known book *Dei Diritti dell'Uomo*, Nicola Spedalieri had already in 1791 described the purpose, nature, function and effects of the pilgrimages to Rome: « Rome is the mother of all the faithful, and the centre of Christian unity. In visiting the tomb of St. Peter together, individuals from different nations come to see one another as children of the same mother, and so brotherly love is bred which destroys the seeds of discord and war. At the same time they increase and stimulate commerce. To forbid the pilgrimages would be like tearing away the bonds which tie the peoples together with the result that all would become strangers . . . Were I to defend Rome I could easily show that as there are more poor people than rich who make these pilgrimages, the number of those who give is greater than that of those who receive ».