

Heritage

As I subconsciously heard our tour director mutter the words, "Our next stop will be the Trevi Fountain", my head jerked up from its slumped over position against the bus window. Stepping off the bus to interlock arms with my grandparents, we began walking the streets of Rome. As we neared the fountain, the tourists consumed the narrow streets.

Being hardly a teenager at the time of my trip to Italy, it contributed to my growth as an individual in more ways than I could have anticipated. The pride I took in being Italian was only furthered by my experience in visiting the motherland. Walking around the streets of Italy, I was able to feel my heritage like never before. The beauty and history that the country had to offer was undeniable. However, I knew I had it even better than most tourists, as my grandparents filled every location we went sightseeing with stories of the lives of my ancestors. With every spot we visited, Italy felt less and less foreign. Through this, I was able to recognize all that my ancestors sacrificed in deciding to take on a new land alone. For an adolescent girl visiting abroad, I left with much more than a stomach full of pasta and camera roll full of tourist site photos. I left with perspective.

Throughout my upbringing, my Italian heritage has meant a great deal to me. From an early age, I have fond memories of family gatherings filled with loud conversation and delicious homemade food. It was around the dinner table that I learned the values that are so deeply rooted in my identity today. The importance of family is the epitome of Italian heritage as I see it. Being raised in an Italian household has provided me with a support system that is unmatched. Through it all, I have always known the support of my family to be unwavering. In being fortunate enough to make numerous unforgettable memories with my immediate and extended family, I have grown up surrounded by countless individuals I would be lucky to take after.

It goes without saying that my great great grandparents had to work very hard to make a life to be proud of so far away from the land they were used to calling home. The importance of a strong work ethic has continued to be instilled amongst those of us in the generations since. Along with an inclination to be outspoken in nature, I have pursued an education that I not only wanted but continue to prove I deserve a right to. In taking my studies so seriously, it is my hope that my family can take pride in their youngest member. I would only continue in striving for academic success in my transition from Marianapolis Preparatory School to Pennsylvania State University with the support of the Sons of Italy, working to honor all of those with whom I share my beloved heritage.