

JCCA Journal

JCCIA honors deserving duo on June 13

Four hundred guests attended the Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Humanitarian of the Year Gala on June 13 at the Hilton Chicago to express their congratulations to our most deserving recipient, Dr. Enrico Benedetti, and our beloved Peacemaker, Father Fragomeni. Family, friends and associates sparked with enthusiasm as they greeted the awardee. The congratulatory messages reflect the high esteem held for the doctor from many prominent colleagues and community leaders. The doctor's invitees were so impressed with this most prestigious award. The guests were quiet, attentive and stirred by the doctor's humble remarks. It was quite evident our Humanitarian was overwhelmed with this significant honor. Fr. Fragomeni was articulate, and surprised all as he sang his acceptance speech, the peace prayer of St. Francis, a traditional Catholic hymn. Buona fortuna and mille grazie to both. Chairing this prestigious event was Nick Vangel and Antonio Romanucci with Dominic DiFrisco and Dominic Gambino as co-chairmen. The invocation was said by Father Claudio Holzer, JCCIA chaplain.



JCCIA crowns *La Bella Regina* on July 12



For 57 years, young ladies of Italian descent have entered the queen Pageant of the JCCIA hoping to reign over our spectacular display of elation at the Columbus Day Parade. What a great inspiration it was to see 26 young ladies come forward showing publicly their love of their culture, heritage and community. They were a stunning portrait of luminous enthusiasm. They stand out as role models for all of our youth. The emphasis was on leadership. Their spirits stimulated their leadership. Our young ladies are the luster that makes our community shine. The audience was extremely proud of our young contestants and extremely proud of the parents for promoting strong pride in our heritage. What a grand finale — one queen, Natalie DeRose Loss, and six members of the court: Samatha G. Aiello, Patrice Giuseffi, Sarah Lukcas, Alexa Rose Mazza, Dominique Mazza and Marisa Schullo. Thank you to all the beautiful contestants who made this a very emotional and exciting event.



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Papal Inconoronation a highlight of 116th Mt. Carmel Fest

by Jo Ann Serpico, President

In the June issue, my column focused on a special blessing that the Shrine of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel was preparing for, and that I was privileged to be a part of. From the day we departed for the pilgrimage to Rome on May 4 until the actual feast day of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in July, I was inspired by the vast dedication to Madonna del Carmine in the village of Melrose Park. For 116 years, the faithful have been committed to a public display of their devotion. Generation after generation continues with religious fervor. In Melrose Park, this is a way of life. This year, the celebration was magnified by the Papal Inconoronation. The new crowns were made for Mary and the Infant from gold donated by the dedicated followers. Their love generated the desire to have new crowns. This generation added their example for the next generation just as those that went before them for 116 years have set the example and values of their most devout tradition. The village is blessed in this way of life. They are also blessed to have Fr. Claudio Holzer to lead the way.

Pope Benedict's blessing given on May 6 was the ultimate sequential measure in preparation for the June 28 Inconoronation.

I will always cherish being at the Vatican at the audience on that sunny morning. Father had made the arrangements for our entourage. We were seated very close to the path where the Papal transport journeyed into the crowd. It was my first time to be in the presence of any pope. Joyful tears came to my eyes as the Pope passed by.

At one point, a petitioner held up his infant son. The Pope placed his hands on the child's head. It was an overwhelming moment. All I kept repeating was "Oh My God."

Once we were home, preparations escalated for the Inconoronation. When keeping in touch with my fellow pilgrims, the conversation was always about their getting ready for the Inconoronation. Father Claudio had photos on the back wall of Pope Benedict accepting the crowns from his hands. The entire parish marveled at the holy journey, stimulating the excitement for the Inconoronation.

On June 28, the celebration commenced with a 12:30 p.m. procession throughout the streets surrounding the church. Our Lady wore a veil as the women of the parish, dressed in brown and white, carried her and the Infant. Young girls dressed in white carried tall white poles with baskets affixed to the top, brimming with yellow roses and white callilies surrounded by thick white and yellow satin ribbons cascading down. The beauty of their devotion expressed their great joy.

The Knights of Columbus led the procession in front of the Madonna and the solemn Papal High Mass was celebrated by Bishop Perry, Bishop Paprocki and seven Scalabrini priests, together with priests of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

The Mass was televised live on EWTN Catholic Television with Father Gino Dalpiaz commentating and broadcast live on Relevant Radio and Radio Maria. The Shrine was filled beyond capacity. I was privileged to have the honor of giving the first reading, followed by Dr. Carl Aliamo, who gave the second reading. The inspirational homily was said by

Bishop Paprocki, followed by the actual crowning. While the Madonna was being crowned, Carol Loverde graced us with her angelic voice by singing "Ave Maria." Also lending their voices to this historic mass was Jack Miuccio and Liliana Bartolotta. That evening, there was a celebration at Villa Brunetti planned by Lou "Sonny" Nicotera. What a beautiful finale!

Shortly after the Inconoronation, the solemn Novena began. This year's celebrant was Father James Presta of St. Joseph Seminary. The first five nights focused on the luminous mysteries of the Rosary. During the discourse, Father inspired the people with his words and touches of humor. Tuesday night of the novena there was the banner presentation. Other religious societies paraded in procession with their banners in homage to the Madonna. Wednesday night of the Novena was the most moving sight to behold. The Madonna and Infant child were surrounded by thousands of red roses. Families brought the roses to the altar and they were placed on the steps leading to the *baldacchino*. What a profound display of dedication and loyalty! From Wednesday to Saturday night, Father talked about the most common titles of Mary: Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady of Loreto, and finally, Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The Novena is the most reverent preparation before Sunday's feast of the Madonna del Carmine. In closing, Father Presta expressed, "I am humbled by your devotion."

Finally, the day of the feast, I attended the 9 a.m. Solemn Mass in English and Italian together with thousands of the faithful. What a spectacular event — church bells rang continuously and the Madonna was brought out and led by 55 statue bearers (men dressed in white gowns and brown capes). The outpouring of emotional spirit was manifested with families holding up their infant babies to the Madonna, asking for prayers and blessings. The bells continued to ring as the procession was led with music by the Sicilian Band of Chicago and Caliendo's Banda Napolitano.

The candlehouses are another tradition carried on by families of long standing in the community of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Joe Rosa, Chairman of the Inconoronation Committee and a candlehouse maker, expressed, "Sunday (of the feast) is a very emotional day. The dead walk with us." It was very touching to see the families remember their beloved deceased with photos on many of the candlehouses.

On July 16, the actual Feast Day, Fr. Agostino remarked during his homily, "I see your devotion to the Madonna ... and she is your Madonna." After Mass, Father Holzer said, "What amazes me is their deep devotion for over 116 years." Father went on to tell of a 92-year-old woman, now living in Las Vegas, who returns to Melrose Park every year to walk in both the morning and afternoon procession, which she has done since she was 16 years old! He added, "I have asked all of the parishioners to bring their old photos and I will write a book telling of this awe-inspiring devotion to the Madonna."

This entire spiritual experience has left an impact on me. All day long, I hum the tune of "Madre del Carmine, Prega Per Me."