Viva La Mamma! An Italian-American Homage to Mother Italy.

Francesca Giuliani (May 22, 2012)



On May 11, IHCC-NY celebrated the annual Mother's Day ceremony at the Mother Italy Statue at Hunter College and received the moral responsibility of the statue from Justice Dominic Massaro. The ceremony was also the occasion to honor Consul General of Italy to New York Natalia Quintavalle for her role in the Italian-American community and as a proud Italian mother.

On May 11, the Italian Heritage and Culture Committee [2]celebrated the annual Mother's Day ceremony at the Mother Italy Statue at Hunter College [3].

This year's ceremony was a very special one, as it marked the day in which the moral responsibility of the statue was passed from Supreme Court Justice Dominic Massaro to the Italian Heritage and Culture Committee.

Joseph Sciame [4], President and Chair of IHCC-NY, told i-Italy that “It is wonderful to promise that annually we will come here on Mother’s Day weekend and on Columbus Day weekend to have these ceremonies which bring attention to our Italian and Italian-American heritage.”

Sciame added: “I think it is a wonderful opportunity for us and I’m proud for our board that such a decision was made to have us take on what we call the ‘moral responsibility’ of this artwork.”

The Mother Italy Statue, completed in 1953 by Italian sculptor Giuseppe Massari [5], expresses the struggles of the Italian youth as immigrants, and perpetuates the past with the figures of Columbus and Dante, located at the two sides of the bronze artwork.

A remarkable cultural piece, the statue has passed over the years through the hands of sculptor Massari to a noted resident of the Bronx, Nicola Brunori, then it was shepherded by Justice Dominic Massaro, and restored in 1990 with the help of the Italian Historical Society of America [6]. The statue finally found a permanent collocation in Hunter College’s Poses Park, where it was placed on June 26, 2000.

Justice Massaro attended the ceremony, and elaborated with i-Italy on the symbolic importance of the Mother Italy Statue for the Italian-American community: “Each of the figures of the monument expresses the making of the American Dream. Mother Italy represents all of the mothers who sent their children here to make our country such a great one. America’s greatest strength lies in the fact that we have enjoyed all of these people, who came here to give their contribution through their hard work.”

The ceremony was also the occasion to honor a proud Italian mother and a woman whose active role in representing contemporary Italy had her quickly earning the respect and the affection of the Italian and Italian-American community in New York, Consul General of Italy [7]to New York Natalia Quintavalle [8].

Calling Quintavalle at the podium, Sciame defined her as “a woman of achievement and a happy person,” and Quintavalle confirmed about her happiness in her speech: “I am happy to live in this city where I always wanted to live, and to receive this honor in the name of the Italian mothers, a group of which I am very proud to be part.”

Quintavalle told i-Italy that if on the one hand “it is true that the situation for mothers in Italy is not as good as we all wish it would be,” on the other hand “Italian women are extremely strong, creative and persistent, and that’s probably why they have to bear so much of the weight of our society on their shoulders. However, a lot is being done to bridge that gap in the protection of mothers, especially as far as work life is concerned, that Italy still has compared to other European nations. It is time for Italian women to conquer more social guarantees.”

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