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Darrell Fusaro (November 11, 2016)



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The Saint Pio Foundation's, "An Evening with Franc D'Ambrosio" is a hit. On Saturday, October 22, 2016, an intimate audience of approximately two hundred guests were treated to a full performance by Broadway star and actor Franc D'Ambrosio in Los Angeles, CA. Franc D'Ambrosio has been awarded the distinction of being the "World's Longest Running Phantom," having performed it more than 2,300 times in a decade, and also known worldwide for being the actor and singer who played the part of Anthony Corleone, the opera-singing son of Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) and Kay Adams-Corleone (Diane Keaton) in the film "The Godfather: Part III." Franc sang the Academy Award-winning theme song "Speak Softly Love" (Brucia la Terra) for both the film and the Original Motion Picture Soundtrack.

"An Evening with Franc D'Ambrosio" is a rare opportunity for Broadway and Opera fans to experience an up close and personal performance from such a talent. Franc D'Ambrosio's love for Saint Pio is evident in the love he packs into this show. "I love the audience. When I step out on stage I get the same feeling toward the audience that I have for friends I've invited to my home for a party. I'm enthusiastic about seeing to it that they have a good time", Franc said.

This event was the Saint Pio Foundation's very first benefit concert held in Los Angeles, CA and received an enthusiastic standing ovation. The evening was presented by i-Italy's good friend Darrell Fusaro, artist and co-host of the "Funniest Thing! with Darrell and Ed" [2] podcast, and also featured a performance by the Roberto Cani, Concert Master of the Los Angeles Opera, the acclaimed Italian tenor Luciano Lamonarca, President and CEO of the Saint Pio Foundation, and the Italian soprano Elisabetta Russo. The talented pianist Stephanie Lynn Smith accompanied all of the performances.

The Saint Pio Foundation [3] is a non-profit Catholic charity organization dedicated to the promotion of the spiritual charism of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina, commonly known as a Padre Pio. The Saint Pio Foundation is also committed to the support of the the Capuchin Friars Minor and the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza; Home for the Relief of Suffering, the hospital that was founded by Saint Pio in 1956 and is now owned by the Holy See, located in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy.
During the event guests had the opportunity to learn about Saint Pio [4], one of the most acclaimed Saints of the Roman Catholic Church. St. Padre Pio had an amazing sense of humor that was only surpassed by his kindness. He had an uncanny intuitive knowledge of people and a fondness for Americans. This fondness developed from his work with the American GI's during WWII after they fought to liberate San Giovanni Rotundo from the Germans. His love for America was so strong that he considered all Americans his spiritual children.

Before the end of the event the audience got to hear from the foundation's supporters, including Italian-American actors Gary Sinise, Joe Mantegna, Robert Davi and Franc D'Ambrosio, along with a series of Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, and some elected officials, including the Westchester County Executive, NY, Hon. Robert P. Astorino. Saint Pio Foundation President Luciano Lamonarca announced that first Saint Pio Award Ceremony will be held in Los Angeles, CA, on May 19, 2017. At which recipients of the Saint Pio Award, actor Robert Davi, Mr. and Mrs. Scott and Lannette Turicchi, and chef Celestino Drago will be awarded. Chef Celestino Drago is the owner of Drago Restaurants, recognized for being the best Italian restaurants in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

Foundation President Lamonarca also announced that the foundation will be signing a collaboration agreement with the town where Padre Pio was born, Pietrelcina, Italy, and the Capuchin Friars of the town of Pietrelcina this upcoming December, 2016. In December, 2017, the 130th anniversary of Padre Pio's birth, the foundation will sponsor, along with the Capuchin Friars of Pietrelcina, the first United States tour of a first-class relic of Padre Pio. This unique relic will give thousands of faithful Americans the opportunity of praying to Padre Pio.

In addition, the Saint Pio Foundation partnered with artist Tim Schmaltz. Schmatz's worldwide fame arose from his creation of the "Homeless Jesus," also known as "Jesus, the Homeless." Tim Schmaltz is creating four life-sized statues of Padre Pio titled, "I Absolve You." Each statue will be placed in Dioceses and Archdioceses in U.S. The interactive statue "I Absolve You", allows the viewer to experience the power of the sacrament of reconciliation.

"During his lifetime, many thousands of people from around the world journeyed each year to experience the grace of confessing to Saint Padre Pio, already considered a Saint and Holy Man by many at that time. He saw inside of people's hearts. Even now, each year thousands and thousands of priests embark upon the mission of saving human souls, and many of them recognize Saint Padre Pio as the model to follow in this most noble ministry.

The statue "I Absolve You" represents that ministry. It gives its viewers the sense of a confession with Padre Pio and a reminder of the importance of penitence. Padre Pio does not belong just to our beloved Catholic Church. His example, his teachings, and his mission are as relevant today as they were when he first shared them, perhaps even more so. The world aches to hear his message and to

see his example. So that is our mission we share with you.

Padre Pio's own testimony reminds each of us of the heartwarming experience of doing a selfless good deed. The feelings that accompany such experiences reflect the needs that we have to be connected to those around us. We gain far more than what we give away when we place another's needs above our own. When we give, our experience of being a benefactor is enhanced by the excellence of our efforts," said Lamonarca in conclusion.

For more information on how you can make a donation to the Saint Pio Foundation, as well as, purchasing tickets to the Foundation's upcoming, "An Evening with Franc D'Ambrosio" at the Bronxville Women's Club, NY, on November 19, 2016, and at the Saint Joseph Church, in Astoria, NY, on November 20, 2016, please visit www.saintpiofoundation.org [5]

The Saint Pio Foundation's, "An Evening with Franc D'Ambrosio" will be presented at the Bronxville Women's Club, NY, on November 19, 2016, and at the Saint Joseph Church, in Astoria, NY, on November 20, 2016. Click here for tickets.

–Darrell Fusaro

Darrell Fusaro is the author of What If Godzilla Just Wanted a Hug? [6], co-host of the Funniest Thing! with Darrell and Ed [7] podcast and a contributing columnist for i-Italy Magazine. [8]

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