

# i-Italy NY

All Things Italian in New York  
Year 3, Issue 3-4,  
March-April 2015  
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## i-Italy NY

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A magazine about  
all things Italian  
in New York City

Year 3 - Issue 3-4  
March-April 2015

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Copies printed this  
month: 50,000.



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## Editorial

# Milan to New York, New York to Milan

→ **Letizia Airos**

*"Glorious. More satisfactory to me than St. Peters. A wonderful grandure. Ascended,—Far below people in the turrets of open tracery look like flies caught in cobweb.—The groups of angels on points of pinnacles & everywhere... Might well [illegible] host of heaven upon top of Milan Cathedral."*  
— Herman Melville

As always, I'm leading off with a writer and poet. This time the writer, though not Italian, is writing about what has been a symbol of Italy for centuries. And what a description of the Milan Cathedral the author of the mythic Moby Dick has given us! The year was 1857. But even today, those who have been there know: this grand, magisterial impression still dwells in the Duomo. And yet our cover story is an invitation to get to know not only Milan and its cathedral during the six months of the city's Expo, but a little something more. High up among the spires, there is a dearly beloved statue that has strong ties to the United States and New York more specifically. The statue is dedicated to Mother Francesca Cabrini, the Milanese-born American citizen. To find out more about her, be sure to check out the cover story.



Interviewing Dario Franceschini, Italy's Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities at the Italian Cultural Institute.

What you hold in your hands may seem like a vast mishmash of articles, but there are tangible links that bind its Italian and American contents. Alongside Mother Cabrini, you'll find stories peopled with other important Italian Americans, from Mario and Matilda Cuomo in the political arena to Tony & Marisa May and Lou Di Paolo in the world of fine dining. And Fred Gardaphe digs into the history of Italian Americans in his interview with Maria Laurino about her companion book to the hit documentary "Italian Americans" that

*Old and new media, online and print, television and smart phones – each has its own role to play in an integrated communication project like i-Italy.*

recently aired on PBS. And Paul Moses recounts how the (equal but different) Irish and Italian communities managed to "make peace." The theme of diversity makes an appearance in the art world too, as Gaetano Pesce talks about what sets women apart in anticipation of his jewelry exhibit "For Her." Finally, it's springtime. The last few months' images of an ice-shagged New York are fading from view, and the city seems to be coming back to life. In i-ItalyNY you'll find a long list of events, stories, and tips on how to spend your free time and where to go in Italy. In our back matter we take you to one of the most stupendous and least known corners of Italy: Cilento.

I-ItalyNY's unique assortment of stories brought to you on television (you've seen our weekly show, haven't you?), the web, social media and in our print magazine is a real gamble given the challenges facing the publishing industry these days. But it's a gamble that's paying off thanks to you. Please continue to follow us, give us heart and write to us! We always want to hear your comments.  
Alla prossima!

(letizia.airos@i-Italy.org)

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The Mother Cabrini spire  
on the Duomo of Milan

● A CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN IN NEW YORK

# Save the Beauty Save the Saint

The Duomo of Milan has been a mecca for centuries and continues to draw around 6 million visitors annually. But maintaining this timeless Cathedral's original beauty requires many intense, costly restoration jobs. The goal of the Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo, also thanks to the help of International Patrons of Duomo di Milano, is to collect 13,5 million Euros, so as to end the more urgent restoration activities. Today significant results have been reached and about 5 million Euros have been collected, over 500,000 Euros coming from small donations. In 2015 it will be revamped again, and, thanks to the construction efforts of the Veneranda Fabbrica, the Cathedral will be looking its best for the Universal Exposition opening in Milan this spring. This will be a unique occasion to participate in a great restoration project and to leave a mark in the history of the Cathedral. By adopting a spire, you will allow future generations to keep enjoying the Italian artistic and cultural heritage. That's why we're bringing you this story, in the hope that you too will want to participate in safeguarding the Duomo and its treasures, starting with the restoration of the statue dedicated to Mother Cabrini, the Milan-born saint, popular New York missionary and patron saint of emigrants around the world.

● The fifth largest church in the world and the largest in Italy, Milan's Duomo is a special, magisterial site. Built in several phases over six centuries, beginning at the end of the 1300s, the church has long fascinated believers and non-believers of all denominations. Its 3,400 statues and 135 spires make it the largest outdoor sculpture gallery in the world. No visitor could ever forget the profile of the Duomo in the distance, soaring over Milan, thanks in large part to its original spires. No other church has so many. But the spires, typical components of Gothic architecture, are also very fragile. They require constant care and complex maintenance work to ensure their safety. The mobilization to find sufficient funds for the job has led to a new crowdfunding initiative in New York by International Patrons of Duomo di Milano ([www.duomopatrons.org](http://www.duomopatrons.org)) on the crowdfunding platform For Italy ([www.foritaly.org](http://www.foritaly.org)).

## Save the Saint

People have always helped financing the construction and maintenance of the Duomo with donations of goods and money over the centuries, thus participating to a great challenge towards the future that now has evolved internationally. A call to responsibility expanding rapidly all around the world and which has recorded significant adhesion not only by Milan

citizens, but also by entrepreneurs and patrons from United States of America and China.

Thanks to International Patrons of Duomo di Milano and the crowdfunding platform "For Italy," which is dedicated to preserving Italian heritage, it's possible to contribute to the maintenance of the spires and statues by donating just \$50. And even small donors can have their names inscribed on a plaque nearby the spire. You don't even have to be from Milan or Italy. As highlighted by Federica Olivares, Italian art publisher: "the challenge of this platform answers a real need: it creates a virtual place where all the lovers of Italy and its excellences, wherever







A concert on the rooftop of the Duomo of Milan.

in the world, can take part in tangible projects to bring into the future of mankind the Italian artistic and cultural heritage". The Duomo is not only part of our religious heritage, it's an architectural asset for all mankind. But why would you have to make a contribution from the United States, in particular from New York? What makes i-ItalyNY so interested? Here's something that only a select few know.

**One of the statues towering over the spires of Milan's Duomo depicts Francesca Xavier Cabrini (1850-1917), the Milan-born missionary sister who was the first naturalized American citizen to be made a saint.**

### **Mother Cabrini**

The campaign *Save the Saint* has special resonance in New York, given the city's history of Italian immigration and the fact that one of the statues towering over the spires of Milan's Duomo depicts Francesca Xavier Cabrini, known in the United States as Mother Cabrini. Born in 1850 in a small town near Milan, at 27 years old Mother Cabrini, founder of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, sought to obtain the approval of the papacy to establish a mission in China. The Pope suggested she go "not east but west," to the United States, to help Italian immigrants then arriving in the US in droves and facing extreme poverty. Cabrini listened, and 126 years ago, in 1889, she herself landed in New York. For almost 30 years, she and her Missionary Sisters tirelessly supported immigrants and the poor, establishing dozens of orphanages, hospitals and schools, from New York to Philadelphia, Chicago to Los Angeles, Denver to New Orleans, and eventually in South America. New York's Cabrini Boulevard is named in her honor, as is Cabrini Street in Chicago, where Mother Cabrini died in 1917. Cabrini was beatified

## **How to Donate on 'For Italy'**

**If you love Italian art, culture and lifestyle**, now you can be part of it all: "For Italy" is the community where people from all over the world can show their love towards Italy, interact with each other and - mainly - contribute to the protection of Italian art and culture, heritage of the whole world. Take an active part in crowdfunding campaigns, do not miss the chance to carve your name into the history of Italian art. Help the Duomo di Milano shine for generations to come! Your generosity will be compensated!

**Make a gift** to International Patrons of Duomo di Milano Inc, and ensure that the spire dedicated to St. Francesca Xavier Cabrini (Mother Cabrini) is safeguarded and restored. All donations to International patrons of Duomo di Milano are tax deductible.

**For Italy** is comprised of two passionate Italian entities dedicated to preserving culture: ARPANet and Arts Council. **ARPANet** studies and promotes the adoption of technological and communicative instruments. **Arts Council** is a leader in relations between cultural institutions and enterprises, working to enhance synergies and give economic support to the immeasurable artistic and monumental landscape of Italian heritage.

<http://foritaly.org/donate.asp>

in 1938, and in 1946 she became the first naturalized citizen of the United States to be made a saint. Her popularity extends beyond the Italian-American community, and her method is recognized as being extraordinarily prescient in today's world; her initiatives are still a point of reference for social service workers.

But how did Mother Cabrini wind up on the Duomo? During World War II, one of the cathedral's statues was irrecoverably damaged. Its subject's identity was unknown. In the ensuing years, while people were trying to figure out how to replace it, Cabrini was made a saint. Shortly thereafter, the decision was made to dedicate the statue to her—and by association to all the world's emigrants. Its realization was entrusted to sculptor Michele Boninsegna and the new statue was installed in 1956. Since then, Cabrini has looked down upon the city of Milan from up high, bridging the gap between past and future, Italy and America, and Milan and New York.

### Save the Cabrini Spire

Francesca Cabrini seems to be saying from on high: "Miracles do happen, but we need your help." Today the spire and the statue need continuous restorations to shine for the future generations—and that means funding. The nonprofit organization *International Patrons of the Duomo di Milano*, established on October 2014 has begun collecting funds in New York to restore the statue. "This crowdfunding campaign," says Chief Development Officer of International Patrons Alessandra Pellegrini, "was started to promote and develop fund-collecting operations for the Duomo di Milano in the U.S.: Those who make donations will receive a little something in return. In the case of Mother Cabrini, perhaps the most exciting deal is that with 50 dollars people can have their name inscribed on a large plaque right underneath the spire." The sum for restoring the spire has been set at \$150,000, and contributors can make donations on the "For Italy" website. We at *i-ItalyNY* have joined the call. "Miracles do happen, but we need your help."



## Mother Cabrini, the Saint of Italians in America

by Anthony Julian Tamburri\*

Frances Xavier Cabrini, born in the province of Lodi in Lombardy, eventually came to the United States toward the end of the nineteenth century. It was due to total serendipity that she became the saint for Italian immigrants in this country. It is also a sweet paradox that she, from the north, arrived during the great wave of southern Italian emigration to the United States. Having taken her vows in 1877, three years later she and six other nuns founded the religious institute Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As we read earlier, wanting to provide help to immigrants beginning in the U.S., Pope Leo XIII suggested instead that she go west, where, according to him, the already thousands of Italian immigrants in the U.S. were in great need of assistance.

Mother Cabrini and six others arrived in the United States in 1889 and hit the ground running, so to speak. As they did in Italy, here, too, Mother Cabrini and her team founded the requisite housing, a series of schools and orphanages, and the necessary hospitals that chiefly served the Italian immigrant

communities. Actions supported by the Church, for sure, but actions also emblematic of what Italians can do in order to help other Italians in need. In all, they founded close to 70 institutions of all types in numerous cities throughout the United States – Chicago and New York the two principal cities associated with Mother Cabrini today, as well as Cabrini College in Pennsylvania.

Undoubtedly, Mother Cabrini was an exemplar of all things possible and thus a symbol of hope for all. She herself had crossed the ocean in 1889 and, in so doing, had followed the same route that thousands of other immigrants had and were taking. Privileged as she was in her role as nun – and let us underscore at this juncture her gender – she was a woman of great acumen,

having succeeded in overcoming great obstacles of the time and demonstrating how all things were possible. In this sense, then, she was also an example of how one can get things done and, more important, how we can still today – and let us say should – open doors for all people who are in need of such assistance. Her legacy clearly lives on both within and beyond the Italian/American community. Italian Americans continue to serve and donate to many Catholic and social institutions today, at times even beyond. If there is one thing to bemoan, it is that her medical institutions of New York – Columbus Hospital and the Italian Hospital,

which eventually became the Cabrini Medical Center – could not be sustained and consequently closed in 2008.

Nonetheless, Mother Cabrini remains that shining light not only for all those whom she helped, but, to be sure, that exemplar par excellence that we, today, should emulate for the dedication so necessary to get things done for the better good.



\* Anthony Julian Tamburri is the Dean of the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute (Queens College, CUNY) and Distinguished Professor of European Languages and Literatures.



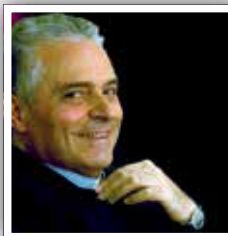
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## Immigration: Is it Really Not Our Business?

by Mons. Gennaro Matino \*

"Millions of families today experience the dramatic condition of refugees," writes Pope Francis. "And Jesus and his family faced the same difficult reality..." The problem of borders, of major waves of immigration affecting every corner of the world, of masses of people driven out by hunger, desperation, political terrorism, war and ecological devastation—the product of historical colonialism and present-day corruption—is a problem that concerns us and, more significantly, anyone hungry for justice. "Refugees and immigrants," adds the Pope, "aren't always really welcomed, respected, or appreciated for the values they bring."

Like prisoners trapped in a mine, people from the Southern Hemisphere arrive on our shores hoping for a better future, for a bit of air. Our shores in Italy have become a theater of adventure, a dream of redemption and defeat, where men, women and children, fleeing totalitarian regimes, arrive clinging to masts and makeshift boats.

Too many people look the other way, the Pope seems to be saying, when faced with injustice and war. They have no compassion for their struggling neighbors. Instead they secure their own borders and hoard provisions, fearing a hypothetical worldwide disaster. If pressed to welcome someone into our country, we do it out of self-necessity, not in the spirit of fraternity. When the poor immigrant comes to work here, neither her rights nor her dignity is always respected. Nor is her right to an honest contract. We offer immigrants underpaid work, work we won't do anymore.

The movement of immigrants from one part of the world to another would seem to be determined by the individual freedom that the global world has accepted. Opening borders to allow for free trade should, of necessity, allow people—more than goods—to cross borders. In reality, more often than not, what looks like free will is instead an obligation, a necessity dictated by survival instinct: relocation is not born out of the freedom to travel elsewhere, but rather out of the impossibility to do otherwise, since it's the economy that, by guaranteeing free borders, causes forced deportations, investing and disinvesting from one part of the planet to another, as it pleases.

"Justice sees not," writes Euripides in *Medea*, "with the eyes of those who hate unwronged at sight their fellow, ere they learn his character. The stranger needs must carefully conform himself to his adopted home; nor have I thought of praising the citizen who with his airs is rude unto his fellow, through ill-breeding." Although he wasn't quoting Euripides, Pope Francis was certainly thinking of the Gospel when he reminded us that the culture of affluence makes us "insensitive to the screams of others," placing us "in a soap bubble," in a situation "that leads to indifference." Moreover, today there exists "globalized indifference." "We have grown accustomed to the suffering of others, it doesn't concern us, it doesn't interest us, it isn't our business!" But is it really not our business?

\* Gennaro Matino teaches Theology and History of Christianity in Naples, where he runs the parish of SS. Trinità. He has written several books and essays, and collaborates extensively with both traditional and new media.