

SAINT ANN GAZETTE JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH 2023

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Season's Greetings, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The St. Ann membership sure is lucky, as we have the club to get us through the long winter. Rather than hibernate, we have the club's many events and activities to make us feel warm no matter how cold it gets outside.

A new year brings a new beginning. A new leadership and board of directors bring new opportunities for new ideas and a fresh energy as we make our plans for the coming year. I urge the membership to be more involved and volunteer to help out. It is very rewarding and is a lot of fun.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the membership for supporting me as president – it has been an honor. I have always lead with my heart to always do what was best for the club. I have been a hardworking president, chairing dinners, and numerous events to raise much needed funds as we came out of a Covid closure. My last event is a fun, casual New Year's Eve event. I felt it was important to have something so our members that like to celebrate the New Year are not home alone. I would love to see you and shake your hand or give you a kiss on the cheek to say "Thank You" as 2022 comes to an end.

Farewell, I will be around. I wish you all the best health, happiness and prosperity to all members and their families.

President, Vinny Scicchitano

GREETINGS FROM THE AUXILIARY PRESIDENT

Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year to all members. Our last year was a very good year for our club, the Holiday Craft Fair was very successful, thank you Patti and Virginia and all of our volunteers, the St. Ann's sauce was a big seller. Our Christmas decorations are beautiful thanks to Patty Fogliano and her committee for making our club look so festive. Our bingo seems to be going very well come down on Monday evening and join the fun. Thank you all for your support in the past year and hope this year is even better. We have many events to look forward to in the coming year, our entertainment committee is planning many events.

Congratulations to our new board, thank you Maria Chuhta and Barbara Antonelli for your many years of service on the board.

Auxiliary President, Joanne Guaglione

CELEBRATE NEW YEARS AT SAINT ANNS

It's coming. New Years Eve. Last event of the year. Yes, it's a party, not a dinner. From 8:00pm to???? Music by Old School Band. Bring your own food or snacks if you like. \$15.00 for members, \$20.00 for non members. Cash bar. No reservations or tickets

involved. Just pay at the door. Dress is mild to wild, This will be a great time to rub elbows with other members or just dance the night away. For any new members, or any long time members that haven't been around for a while, this will be a great chance to make new friends, or renew old friendships. Champagne toast at midnight included, coffee and cookies after. Hope to see many of you there having a great time.

Vinny Scicchitano

AN EDITORS NOTE

Anyone that is reading this is probably a Saint Ann member, and as such you should feel extremely proud of all we have done as a club not only for our members but the community at large. Saint Anns is an outstanding part of this community and God willing we will continue to do so, well into the future. Keep up the great work. A very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of us. The Editor

CHRISTMAS IN ITALY

Christmas is a major holiday in Italy... which means Italians celebrate lots of great, unique Christmas traditions. Across Italy, *Natale* tends to be a family-centric holiday, a time to stay at home (and eat) with loved ones. But customs also vary from city to city, from exactly which dishes are served, to when to open presents, making every region an interesting place to enjoy the holidays.

Want to know how to experience Christmas like an Italian? Here are some of the most popular Christmas traditions in Italy, and how to celebrate them.

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

Italians kick off the Christmas season (and start decorating) on the Day of the Immaculate Conception, December 8 in other countries, Thanksgiving (or even Halloween!) signals the start of the Christmas season. In Italy, though, Christmas officially kicks off with the Day of the Immaculate Conception of Mary on December 8. This is when decorations go up (both on the streets and inside Italian homes) and when some Christmas markets start.

Decorations and huge Christmas trees can be found in main piazzas, like in front of the Colosseum or in Milan's Piazza Duomo, and *Babbo Natale* (Father Christmas, the Italian version of Santa Claus) spreads holiday cheer.

One Christmas tradition in Italy: a Christmas market. The one in Piazza Navona in Rome is typical and well attended.

As an aside, this holiday, which is both religious and state-sanctioned (meaning lots of offices and businesses will be closed on December 8), doesn't have anything to do with

the day of Mary's conception. Instead, it celebrates the day when the Church decided that Mary was born *without* having the stain of original sin. (So no, no one is saying Mary was pregnant for only three weeks!).

During the eight days before Christmas, go caroling – and keep an eye out for bagpipe players!

The eight days before Christmas, also known as the *Novena*, are filled with carolers singing traditional songs around the neighborhood. If you're in Rome, southern Italy or Sicily, keep an eye out for the *zampognari*, or bagpipe players—they travel from the nearby mountains to play their merry folklore carols.

PRESEPI, PRESEPI, AND MORE PRESEPI

Along with the fancy lights, wreaths and trees, *presepi* (nativity scenes) are displayed in many churches and piazzas. Crafting these ornate works of art by hand remains an artisanal tradition in many parts of the country. If you want to go to the source, head to Naples; the southern Italian city is world-famous for their hand-made *presepi*. It still has whole streets with one workshop after another devoted to the craft.

DON'T EAT MEAT ON CHRISTMAS EVE...

To prepare and purify their bodies for Christmas Day, Italians avoid meat on *la Vigilia* (Christmas Eve). Although the idea is to eat lean, most indulge on multiple courses of fish... sometimes as many as seven.

...BUT DO GO TO MIDNIGHT MASS... OR PUT ON SKIS?

After the family dinner, many Italians head to midnight Mass at their local church to celebrate. (Some Romans even head to the Vatican for Mass with the Pope!).

But traditions vary from city to city: Up north, in Cortina d'Ampezzo in the Dolomite Mountains, thrill-seekers ski down the slopes with torches at midnight to welcome Christmas.

ON CHRISTMAS DAY, EAT AWAY

After the "light" Christmas Eve dinner, on Christmas Day, Italians invite their family and friends for a large lunch that usually goes on all day. Many save up to have the most lavish celebration possible, serving up traditional dishes like *pasta in brodo* (pasta in broth), roasts and traditional desserts like panettone.

The festivities don't end on December 25

Celebrations often extend into December 26 with the national holiday of Santo Stefano; families get together and eat leftover Christmas dishes and sweets.

The official end of the Christmas season, though, isn't until January 6—the Day of the Epiphany, and the twelfth day of Christmas. On the eve of the Epiphany, families usually prepare a large dinner to mark the end of the holiday season; children are given candy or coal (usually made of black sugar), depending on if they were naughty or nice. After January 6, you'll see Christmas markets close and decorations start to come down.

When you exchange gifts depends on where in Italy you are!

Ask an Italian when her family opens gifts, and it might give you a clue to where she's from! Gifts are commonly exchanged on Christmas Day after lunch—sometimes with the belief that Jesus has delivered them – take that, Santa! But some smaller, northern Italian cities believe that the blind Saint Lucia brings gifts for children on December 13, so they open them that morning.

Other families may wait until January 6. The Epiphany is when *la befana* – a kind of “good witch” who is believed to have followed the wise men, but got lost—drops off presents. *La befana* is a particular tradition in Rome and Bologna, where the main piazzas often host fun activities for children; in Venice, locals believe that *la befana* arrives every year by boat! Regardless of when they open their presents, many Italians keep their wrapped gifts on display on the pyramid-shaped *ceppo*, along with candles and other decorations.

WHO WAS SAINT ANNE?

St. Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary, according to tradition derived from certain apocryphal writings. St. Anne is one of the patron saints of Brittany and Canada and of women in labor. As the grandparents of Jesus, Anne and her husband Joachim are also considered the patron saints of grandparents; their feast day is celebrated on July 26.

Information concerning her life, which startlingly parallels the Old Testament story of the barren Hannah and her conception of the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 1), is found in the 2nd-century *Protevangelium of James* (“First Gospel of James”) and the 3rd-

century *Evangelium de nativitate Mariae* ("Gospel of the Nativity of Mary"). According to these non-scriptural sources, Anne (Hebrew: Hannah) was born in Bethlehem in Judaea. She married Joachim, and they shared a wealthy and devout life at Nazareth. Grieved by her barrenness, Anne promised God that she would dedicate her firstborn child to the Lord's service. The couple then received a vision of an angel, who announced that Anne would conceive and bear a most wondrous child, Mary. When the child was three years old, Joachim and Anne, in fulfillment of her divine promise, brought Mary to the Temple of Jerusalem, where they left her to be brought up.

PIETRO LORENZETTI: *BIRTH OF THE VIRGIN*

The *Protevangelium* account of the life of St. Anne became the foundation for establishing the liturgical feasts of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary (September 8) and the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (December 8), which is usually observed as a holy day of obligation. The dedication of Mary at the Temple became so important in church doctrine that by 1585 Pope Sixtus V included in the Western church calendar the liturgical feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary (November 21). Although this festival originated early in the East, probably at Jerusalem in 543, its first Western observance was recorded in England in the 11th century. Indeed, the *Protevangelium* long had great authority in Eastern churches, and portions of it were read during the various feasts of Mary by the Greeks, Syrians, and Copts.

In addition to the narrative of the *Protevangelium*, certain other traditions hold that Anne, widowed shortly after the presentation of Mary at the Temple, subsequently remarried (once or twice) and is the grandmother of one or more of the Apostles, including John and James (sons of Zebedee), Simon, Jude, and James the Less (son of Alphaeus) and also of James, "the Lord's brother," depending on the source. Eastern literature on Anne, going back to the 4th century, does not follow the fantastic legends of medieval Western tradition. The mother of Mary is revered in Islam, though she is not named in the Qur'an.

Saint Anne's followers were fervent in the Eastern church as early as the 4th century, and many churches, the first dating from the 6th century, were built in her honour. In the early 8th century, Pope Constantine probably introduced her devotion to Rome. Anne became extremely popular in the Middle Ages and influenced such theologians as Jean de Gerson, Konrad Wimpinar, and Johann Eck. In response to attacks on her followers by Protestant reformers, devotion to St. Anne was further promoted by post-Reformation popes. In art, depictions of the Holy Family with St. Anne were especially popular in Germany, where they first appeared in the 14th century and were widely represented in the 15th; in the 15th and 16th centuries they were also frequently depicted in Italy and Spain.

AND NOW YOU KNOW WHO SAINT ANNE WAS

NEW AUXILLARY MEMBERS

Ada Spinola-Mayer: Ada, born and raised in Norwalk and now living in Wilton, was recommended by Patty Calcone who she has known for 60+ years. Ada and her husband have four children and two grandchildren. Ada values time spent with family and friends and enjoys volunteering for Minks to Sinks and the Norwalk Seaport Association. She also enjoys reading, gardening and cruising.

Julia Elgin has 2 children, 10 grandchildren and 4 great -grandchildren! Julia was married for over 50 years before being widowed five years ago. She was also a nurse for over 30 years before retiring. Julia was born in Manhattan, lived in Westport for over 30 years and is now residing in Norwalk. Over the last three years she has made good friends with some of the wonderful people at St. Ann's so decided to join the Auxiliary.

Susan Hall was born and raised in Norwalk where she still lives with her family. She is married with three children and is also retired and happy to be volunteering again (Susan previously volunteered at Tracey School). She has several friends at St. Ann's, and is pleased to be joining the Auxiliary.

Jennifer Kraft was born, raised, and is still currently living in Norwalk. She has two young children and enjoys spending time with her family and friends when she's not working. Jennifer values good hearted, genuine people and good conversation.

Karen Leone Scianna - who says the first thing you will notice about her is her red hair - was born in Norwalk. She has two children - one a meteorologist/Naval Commander and one a civil engineer/math teacher, and three grandchildren that she treasures. Karen enjoys baking, cooking (especially her grandmother's meatballs with raisins), fashion design, staging, decorating and singing! She is one busy lady but plans to keep even busier with St. Ann's.

PLEASE READ

Anyone wishing to contribute to this newsletter is encouraged to do so. Please contact Eric Fleisch at 203 847-7669 or by e-mail at bige101@optonline.net. The next edition will be sent on or about March 1, 2023

If you know any member that is sick or hospitalized, please bring it to the attention of the Board of Directors or Eric Fleisch at 203 847-7669 or by e-mail at bige101@optonline.net. For the Ladies Auxiliary contact Ellen Marucci at (203) 847-5536. A gift basket and card will be sent. If anyone knows of an auxiliary member who has been permanently placed in a nursing home, please contact Betty Brink with the information at 203 847-8133. We would like to keep in touch with them by sending a card.

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**EVENT CALENDER
JANUARY**

- 2 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30
- 4 Joint Meeting 8:00 till 9:00
- 9 Blood Drive 8:00am till 1:00pm
- 9 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30
- 16 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30
- 19 Ladies Dinner 7:30 till 9:30 \$25.
- 23 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30
- 25 Men's Dinner 7:30 till 9:30 \$30
- 27 Blood Drive 12:00pm till 6:00
- 30 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30

FEBRUARY

- 1 Men's Meeting 8:00 till 9:00
- 2 Ladies meeting 7:30 till 8:30
- 6 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30
- 13 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30
- 16 Ladies Dinner 7:30 till 9:30 \$25
- 20 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30
- 22 Men's Dinner 7:30 till 9:30 \$30.
- 27 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30

MARCH

- 1 Men's Meeting 8:00 till 9:00
- 2 Ladies meeting 7:30 till 8:30
- 6 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30
- 13 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30
- 16 Ladies Dinner 7:30 till 9:30 \$25
- 20 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30

27 Bingo 5:30 till 9:30

29 Men's Dinner 7:30 till 9:30 \$30.

We do our best to be accurate however, times and dates are subject to change.