



THE CRACO SOCIETY

LINKS TO SAN VINCENZO SURFACE FOR 2021 FEAST

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Each year as we approach the feast day for San Vincenzo on the fourth Sunday in October new information, connections, or miracles seem to surface.

This year, Society member Marilyn Augustyne, discovered two marriage records for her grandparents 114 years ago that are connected to us today as we prepare to celebrate the 120th Feast of San Vincenzo at the Shrine Church of the Most Precious Blood in New York City. Her grandparents, Paolo Benedetto (b. 1883) and Anna Lucia Vitarella (b. 1885) were both born in Craco. They were married in the New York City Hall on December 13, 1906 but then they held a church ceremony at the Most Precious Blood on January 6, 1907. [Note: the Society's genealogy research has come across this same situation occurring during this era on several occasions. Why it was done is not clear.] Little did the couple realize that the church they were married in would be the future home of a San Vincenzo relic.

However, an even older and deeper connection to San Vincenzo emerged. The Rev. Fr. Nicholas Mormando, O.F.M., Cap., will be the celebrant of the feast day Mass this year. Besides Fr. Nick's family connection to Craco, it was his order that originally brought San Vincenzo to the town and provided a home for the relic for centuries (see story on page 2). It is a wonderful coincidence that Fr. Nick will be traveling from his assignment in Miami, Florida for a meeting in New York on this particular weekend that happens to be the 120th feast day celebration of San Vincenzo in New York. Or could it be the hand of Providence?

Recognizing the situation in New York, due to virus concerns, is constantly changing this year's celebration will mirror what occurred last year. Our Mass will coincide with the regular 11:30am Mass at the Shrine Church of the Most Precious Blood and will observe the protocols in place at that time.

The normal feast day luncheon celebration has not been planned due to the uncertainty. We anticipate an ad hoc gathering of people interested in dining together will be organized closer to the event.

Please make plans to attend if you are able. Your participation is important to keeping our traditions, history, and culture alive. We look forward to seeing you.

VIVA SAN VINCENZO!



A Link to Most Precious Blood—above are the marriage records for Paolo Benedetto and Anna Lucia Vitarella. The top record is the certificate from New York City Hall, while the lower one is from the Most Precious Blood, which is written in Italian.

San Vincenzo in Craco – shown left is the upright statue that was used in Craco Vecchio for their annual feast day procession. This photograph of the procession there dates to the mid-20th century and shows the beautifully ornate pedestal base that held the statue.



SAN VINCENZO IN CRACO

Craco's connection to San Vincenzo starts with the former Franciscan monastery of St. Peter, (the Observant Order of Friars Minor, O.F.M.) that was in the town. In 1769 a reliquary with bone fragments of San Vincenzo was sent from the Roman Curia to the head of the friary, M. Rev. Francesco Antonio. Following that, Fr. Prospero of the friary obtained permission to bring "a great relic of a glorious martyr and warrior named Vincenzo to his town and convent."

The relic accompanied by a bull by Francesco Saverio Passari, Archbishop of Larissa, assistant Papal and domestic Prelate of the Pope, written on April 18, 1792; attested to the authenticity of the relic. It mentions, "sacred body with flask of blood of San Vincenzo martyr exhumed at the cemetery of St. Ciriaca, ennobled by vestments of gold and silver ... and placed in a purple wooden casket decorated with gold and a crystal pane at the front."

The friars arrived with the relic of San Vincenzo's body and its case in Craco on May 9th at the Chapel of the Madonna della Stella. From there, "the holy body which was then carried in procession to the church of the Convent where there is a continuous flow of citizens and foreigners..." The Bishop of Tricarico designated the fourth Sunday of October as the feast day and that was certified by a letter from the Pope on September 8.

Attached to the convent was a chapel with a large alcove dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption. The benefactor of the alcove allowed it to be redesigned so it could accommodate the relic of San Vincenzo in the center along with the other saints. They remained in that alcove until 1983 when an earthquake destroyed a portion of the chapel.

The townspeople also created a statute of San Vincenzo in an upright position showing him as a Roman Legionnaire (shown on page 1). It was used for the feast celebrating San Vincenzo which had a specific format. It began nine days before the fourth Sunday in October with the recitation of solemn afternoon novenas. On one of the evenings a small procession took the statue from the Convent and walked around the "Cross" (La Croce), located at the entrance to the town. On Friday evening, after the novena, the statue of the saint was brought into the Chiesa Madre [San Nicola] located in the heart of the old town. On Saturday evening, before the novena, the statue was carried in procession back to the Convent. All celebrations culminated on Sunday with the Mass at the monastery and the procession that crossed the entire town. In the evening, in front of the Palace Rigirone there were bright

fireworks.

The devotion to the saint also included the formation of Confraternity of San Vincenzo, which lasted into the early 1900s. The confraternity members wore a white tunic with a turquoise color cape and belt. This group took part in the Mass, processions and, upon request at funerals.

Coming at the end of the growing season, the feast also played a role in helping the town prepare for Winter. On the Saturday before feast day a fair was held, a tradition that has lasted since the 1700s. Traditionally it was visited by people from neighboring towns of Salandra, Fernandina, Montalbano and Pisticci. The fair stretched from the entrance of Craco Vecchio to the other end of the town, at the drinking trough. On that day, people made major purchases of animals, foodstuffs: dried beans, "winter" apples, and dried peppers that would be used to season salami. This occasion allowed people to purchase provisions for the long winter that awaited the rural population.

Currently, the body of the San Vincenzo is in the small church, created from a former elementary school, in the Sant'Angelo section of Craco.



St. Peter's Friary—Shown above is a 1930 view of the monastery on a postcard shows the chapel that housed the San Vincenzo relic. It is the round shaped structure on the side of the building in the center of the image.

San Vincenzo Relic—Below is the relic as it is displayed today in the small chapel in the Sant'Angelo section of Craco Vecchio.



MADONNA DELLA STELLA RESTORATION UPDATE

The restoration project for the Madonna della Stella chapel is continuing. The latest information is from the architect, Nicola Camporeale, Don David, and Don Antonio who write,

“... it’s our intention to proceed to a subsequent step of work that will involve the removal of the cement plaster inside the church hall to allow the transpiration of the walls and create conditions of health inside the church. Unfortunately, these works amount to about double what was spent on the sacristy, but they are trying to be carried out through the great effort of the Diocesan Institute for the Support of the Clergy of which Don David is the President as you well know. The greatest hope is that which makes us believe that one day we will be able to affix the marble plaque that we have prepared and which I report to you below:

*D.O.M.
This Temple
for the greater glory of God
dedicated to Santa Maria della Stella,
was built in the first half of the 17th century
to the devotion of the spouses
Leonardo Antonio Lanziano and Giulia Barberio,
following the discovery of an effigy
of the Blessed Virgin Mary
inside a well
(now set in the current sacristy)
and in which since 1792 they have been exposed
to the veneration of the faithful
the Sacred Spoglie of San Vincenzo, martyr.*

*In the Year of the Lord 2021,
under the Episcopate of His Excellency
Rev.ma Mons. Antonio Giuseppe Caiazzo,
Archbishop of Matera - Irsina,
and the ministry of his parish priest,
the Rev. Don Antonio Lopatriello,
the Diocesan Institute for the
Support of the Clergy of Matera - Irsina
under the Presidency of the Rev. Don David Mannarella,
has carried out a restoration of the entire building
bringing it back to its former glory,
under the guidance of the architect Nicola Camporeale,
finding in the Crachese people, scattered in various continents,
a generous contribution,
as a sign of a devotion that has never subsided over time
and an imperishable and profound bond with the homeland
and in thanksgiving for the continuous heavenly gifts received.*

I wanted to share this with you because I believe it is right to share this gesture of communion and votive brotherhood with those who actively participated in order for the work to be completed. but also with those who did not have the material opportunity to do so, but expressed themselves through constant and continuous prayer.”

Arch. Nicola Camporeale



Madonna della Stella

PREGHIERA

Noi ti salutiamo, Vergine bella, Maria Immacolata, Madre di Dio e Madre nostra, Regina dell’universo, piena di grazia, aiuto dei cristiani, propizia Stella, porto di salvezza.

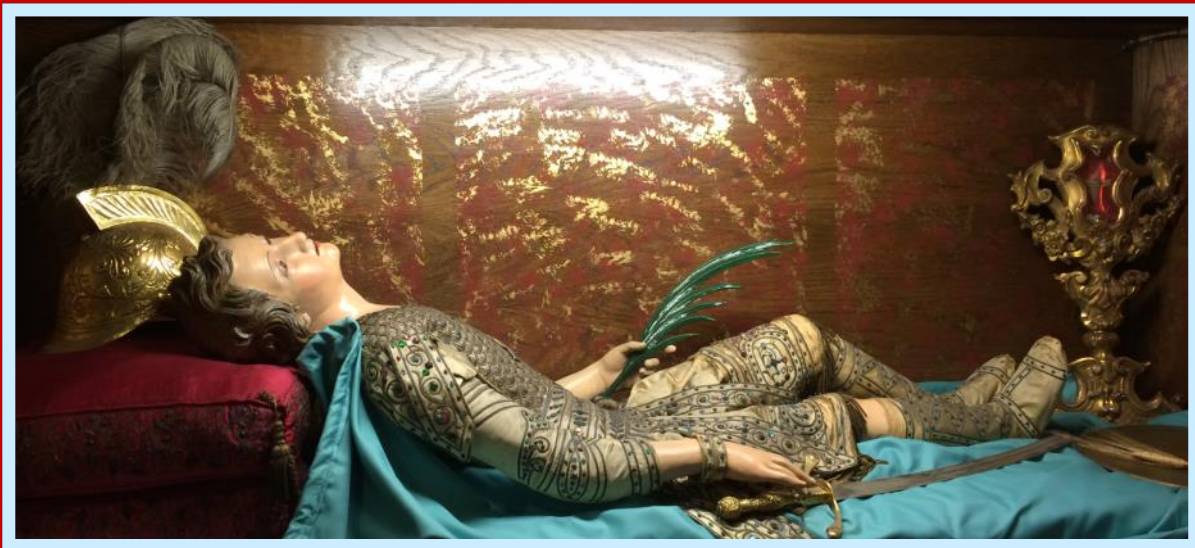
Deh! rivolgiti anche a noi un tuo amoroso sguardo, vieni in nostro aiuto e salvaci.

Prega per noi Gesù adesso e sempre, e nell’ora della nostra morte. Amen.

*Maria, Regina Incoronata della Stella,
prega per noi.*

The Craco Society
invites you to join us in celebrating the 120th Feast of

SAN VINCENZO MARTIRE DI CRACO



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2021

Mass at 11:30 AM

Most Precious Blood Church, 113 Baxter Street, Manhattan NY

Anyone interested in participating should contact
The Craco Society

memberservices@thecracosociety.org

774-269-6611

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