

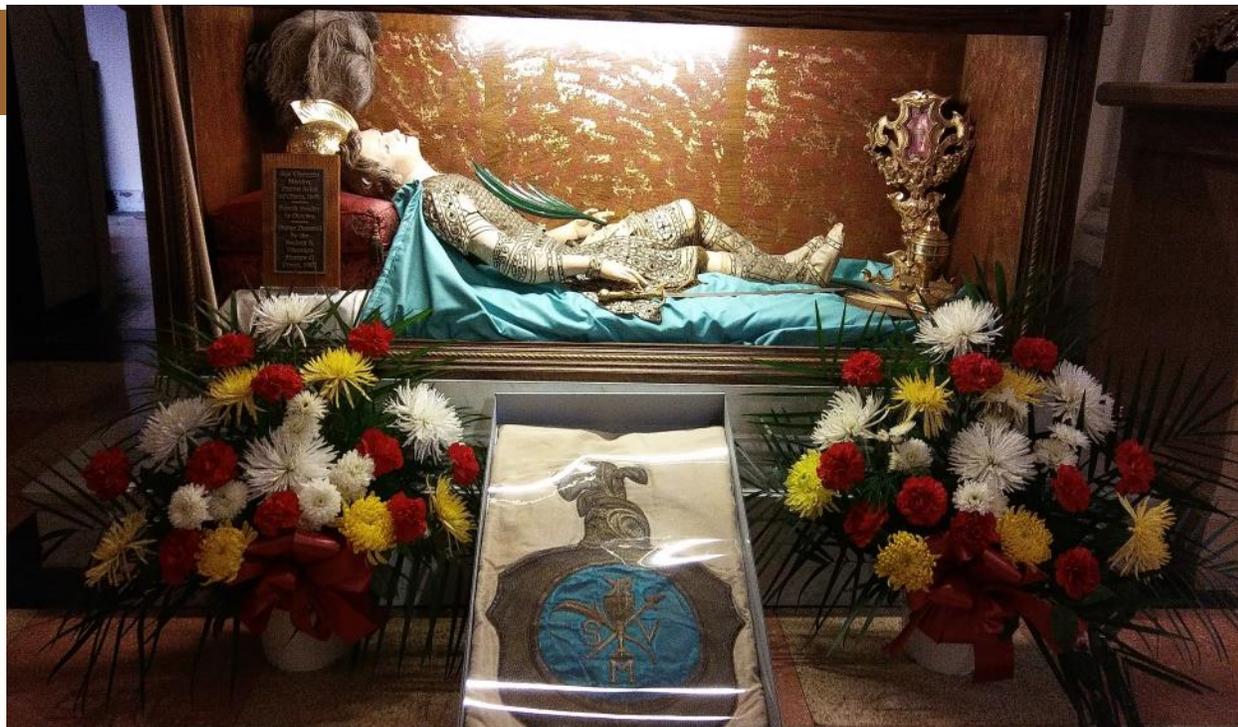


THE CRACO SOCIETY

120TH SAN VINCENZO FEAST IN NEW YORK

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The 120th celebration of the feast of San Vincenzo Martire di Craco in New York City was a wonderful event continuing the traditions.

Due to Covid restrictions seating size at the church was reduced. But with 48 members and regular parishioners present, the Mass appeared very well attended. Live streaming by Salvatore LaRocca allowed the Mass to be viewed by individuals throughout the world.

This year saw a new location hold a small celebration. Historically, the feast was celebrated in Craco and New York City. This year the Camperlengo family held a celebratory gathering in Tampa, Florida (see photographs page 3).

The feast celebration in Craco started with a traditional nine day novena leading up to Sunday when the Holy Mass was presided over by S. E. R. Mons. Giovanni Intini, Bishop of Tricarico (see photographs on page 2).

The crowd of Cracotans in New York City at the Most Precious Blood Church again gathered around the statues of San Vincenzo that were on display and their excitement over meeting exploded in

conversations and stories before the start of the Mass.

Participating in the Mass celebration were Michael Salomone, Tom Rinaldi and Stephen LaRocca serving as Lectors.

In keeping with the tradition of “giving San Vincenzo music and song,” we were joined by Jared Lamenzo, the parish’s musical director, who extracted resounding and brilliant tones from the church’s organ while Cantor, Jackie Hayes sang beautifully and included the hymn, *Inno a San Vincenzo* that was written in Craco by Don Carlo Romano when he was a young seminarian to honor the town’s protettore.

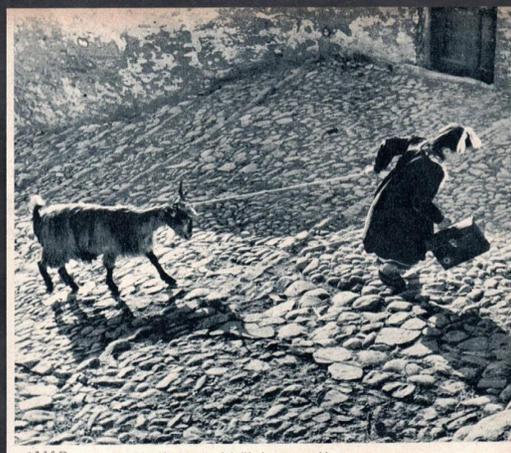
After the Mass, an impromptu luncheon developed and contingent gathering at DaNico Ristorante at 164 Mulberry Street.

Our great appreciation goes out to the parish community at the Shrine Church of the Most Precious Blood for hosting us and providing a home for the statue and relic of San Vincenzo.

We look forward to a new and wonderful event next year on October 23, 2022.

Mark your calendar now and plan on joining what we hope will be a larger and more normal celebration next year.

Viva San Vincenzo!



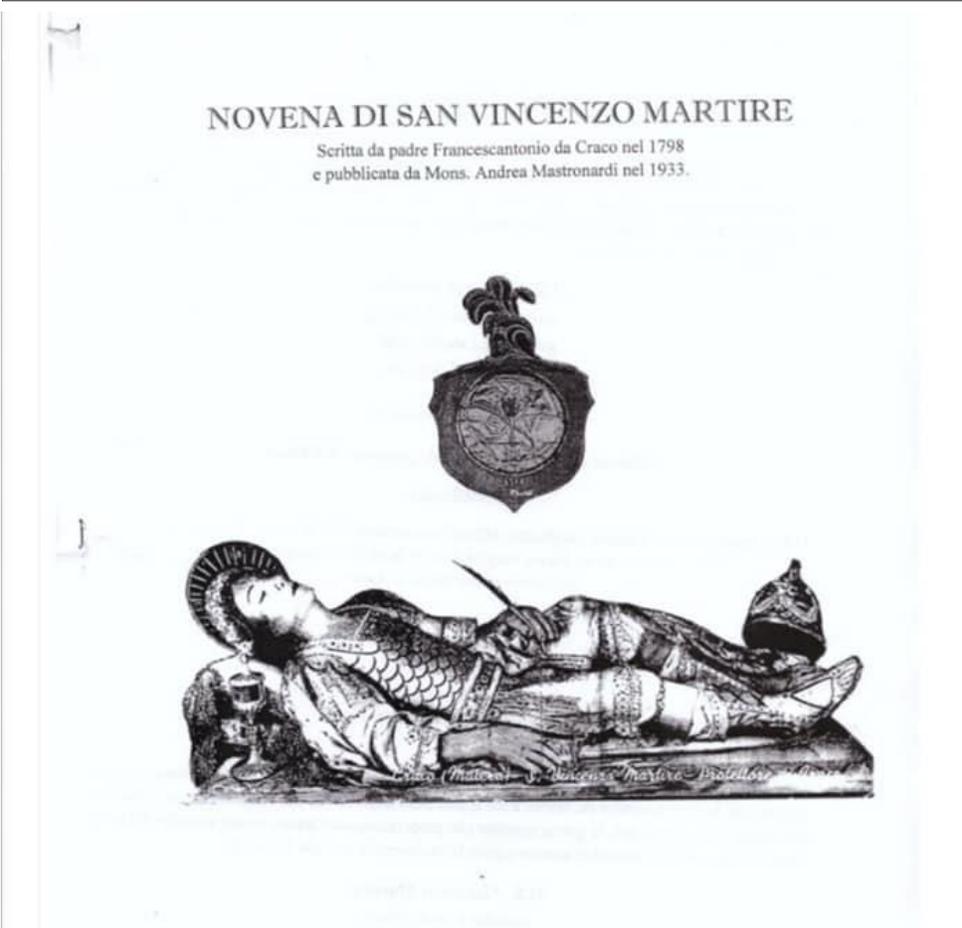
CRACO Maria se rend à l'école avec sa chèvre.

Learn the story about Maria's goat on page 4.

CRACO'S CELEBRATION



Above left, Interior of the Church of San Nicola in Craco Vecchio. Above right: Mass in Craco Peschiera. Left: Newly restored San Vincezo statue in Craco. Below: Novena booklet for the feast celebration in Italy. For more photographs and information about the Craco event see: [\(20+\) Parrocchia San Nicola Vescovo Craco - MT | Facebook](#)



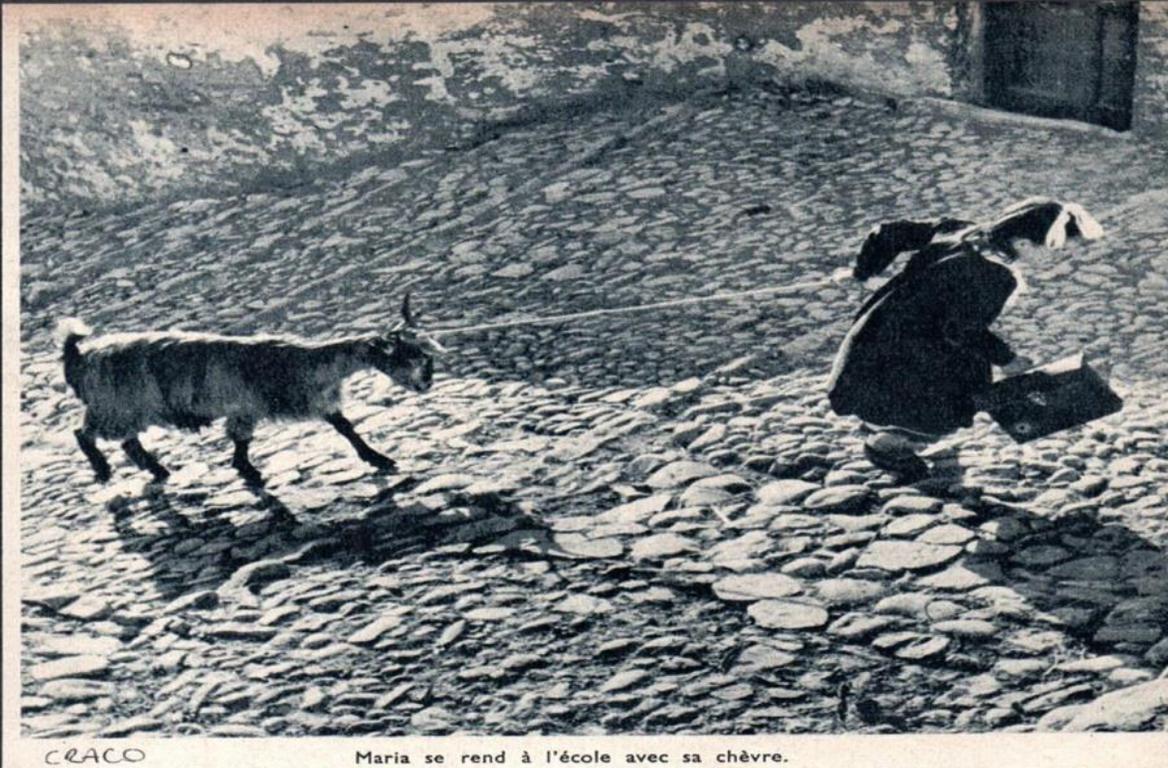
IMAGES IN NEW YORK



Above left: Historic statuette of San Vincenzo with gifts attached. Above: Mass at the Most Precious Blood Church. Center left: Jim Benedetto and Marilyn Augustyne out side church. Center: San Vincenzo "joining" the celebration in Tampa. Below: Lunch gathering at DaNico Ristorante. Bottom left: The DeCesare family with Fr. Nick Mormando. Bottom right: The Camperlengo family gathering celebrating the feast of San Vincenzo in Tampa Florida.



THE SCHOOL BEYOND EBOLI-CRACO



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riri85

In June 2020 the above photograph was published in the Newsletter explaining it was found on the internet with French text explaining, “Maria going to school with her goat.”

Recently, Donato Vena shared some historic material he found on the internet that included an article from the 1960s about education in small Italian towns that highlighted Craco.

“The School Beyond Eboli” was an article written for The Tennessee Teacher by Jean Marabini. Jean Marabini was a French educator who worked for UNESCO during that period. The Tennessee Teacher was a magazine published by the Tennessee Education Association.

The Marabini article gives us a wonderful insight about life in Craco before the Frana with comments about the culture of Basilicata. Opening with a quote from Carlo Levi about the towns in the region which he described as, “islands each with its own folklore and ancient traditions.” Marabini immediately jumps into these by telling the reader that his driver approaching Craco warns of “the evil eye in this part of the country.” He then explains they encountered a group of women dressed in black when a thunderstorm broke out and the car burst a tire.

The next day Marabini visited Craco’s school located then in the barn of the old monastery. There were 234 children attending with a headmistress and eight assistant-teachers. Each day they fed the children a warm lunch but were so cramped they had to eat standing up.

Marabini explains the challenge of getting parents to

send their children to school then instead of putting them to work. Pointing out that Craco had 3,000 sheep, 60 cows, and 300 mules to be looked after. One Italian law, requiring drivers to be able to read, helped the teachers persuade parents to allow their children to attend school and claimed illiteracy was wiped out in Craco by then.

At this point we learn the story about Maria and her goat in the photograph. Maria was an eight year old student who brought her goat to school every day because there wasn’t anyone at home to look after it. The goat apparently bleated during classes but

provided a lunchtime bowl of milk for Maria.

Marabini then describes some of the ancient traditions and folk practices. Pointing out the difficulties of eking out life in the barren landscapes of the region, there is a history of resorting to magic as a defense against on life’s uncertainties.

He mentions that many of the school children in Craco wore little sacks suspended on gold chains that contained the ashes of their umbilical cords as a protection. Giorgio, a nine year old student told Marabini how his parent put his newborn brother in the family’s oven to protect him all his life from the protection of fire.

With regards to weddings, Marabini mentions relatives standing watch over the house of newly weds to keep out the “monacello” the mischievous goblin who was responsible for all the misfortunes of married life. Another practice was to place a scythe with the tip pointing up to discourage the imp. The most interesting trick to occupy the monacello was to spread newspapers outside the house, because he was obliged to count every letter and symbol on the pages keeping him occupied until morning.

We learn from Marabini, that these practices were fast disappearing as the educated children viewed these old folk practices with skepticism, although stories and legends are still told.

In closing Marabini recommends that small town schools, like the one in Craco, help build up a written record of the tales and legends to preserve the culture.

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[See more images of the feast day and learn about Italian American history at:](#)



The School

Beyond Eboli

JEAN MARABINI

"Schools can play an important part in helping to improve living conditions in isolated villages such as Craco. They can also help to build up a written record of the tales and legends composed by local poets and which form the basis of popular culture."

Craco is a village in southern Italy. It lies on a hilltop, somewhere on the borders of Lucania and Calabria, in a region, rich in folk traditions, which is still little known even to most Italians.

Describing this part of Italy—beyond Eboli—the novelist Carlo Levi has said that it is like a series of "islands" each with its own folklore and ancient traditions. The description is apt since in these mountain valleys Greek and Albanian are spoken as well as Italian, Byzantine churches adjoin cave dwellings, and Protestant sects still subsist together with Jewish communities and so-called "Tolstoyan" hermits.

Craco is a typical village of these parts. I arrived there late one afternoon over a rough, winding road fringed with olive trees which seemed to be clinging to the bare hillsides. A storm was threatening and my driver remarked: "You have to beware of the evil eye in this part of the country." As we drove into the village we met a group of women dressed in black; there was a sudden clap of thunder, heavy rain began to fall and we burst a tire.

But the next day the "evil eye" seemed to have been exorcised. The sun was shining brightly and I set off to visit the 234 children who are attending school in the converted barn of a former monastery. The headmistress, a stout and friendly woman, was anxious about the lack of space in her school: "We get a subsidy from the Government and from F. A. O. to serve a hot meal at

midday," she explained. "But our improvised dining hall is so cramped that the children have to eat standing up".

It was quite a task, the headmistress told me, to persuade parents to send their children to school instead of putting them to work in the fields. Of course, the 3,000 sheep, 60 cows and 300 mules owned by the villagers all need looking after. But thanks to the skill and diplomacy of her eight assistant-teachers, the headmistress has gradually succeeded in winning over the parents.

In one of the classrooms, I met eight-year-old Maria who comes to school with her goat because there is no one to look after it at home. The goat bleated pitifully during the arithmetic class but at lunchtime it provided a large bowl of milk for its young mistress.

There seemed to be more boys than girls in the school, probably because you must be able to read to obtain a driver's license for a motorbike or car. Unfortunately, this obligation does not reduce the number of accidents on the roads. However, it is not so much because of motorbikes as through the Government's efforts that illiteracy has been practically wiped out in Craco.

But in spite of the changes wrought by modern techniques, the peasants of Calabria and especially of Lucania remain very much attached to their ancient traditions. Side by side with religious ceremonies, they still practice ancient

rites which seem to be the heritage of a distant, pre-Christian past. It is a hard struggle to eke out an existence on these barren hillsides, and their belief in the power of magic is a kind of defence against the uncertainties of life. In the end they almost confuse these practices with religion.

They believe that on occasions such as births and weddings it is particularly important to protect their families from evil influences. Many of the school children in Craco still wear a tiny bag suspended on a chain round their necks which contains the ashes of their umbilical cord. And a nine-year-old school-boy, Giggio, told me how, when his little brother was born, his parents made a show of putting the baby into the oven so as to protect him all his life from the dangers of fire.

Similarly it is not unusual for young people to ask their relations to stand watch over their house on their wedding night in order to keep out the "monacello," a mischievous goblin whom they hold responsible for all the misfortunes of married life. To keep the "little monk" from doing any harm, a scythe is placed by the door with its tip pointing upwards, or newspapers are laid on the ground. Since the "monacello" considers himself obliged to count every single letter or symbol in the paper, he will be kept busy for a long time—at least till morning.

Such practices, however, are fast disappearing. Since the opening of the school and the introduction of books and newspapers in the village, young people view these ancient superstitions with increasing scepticism. But they still retain their gift of poetic expression. Tales are told on winter evenings when the family gathers around the hearth, and at funerals long poetic laments are improvised by the deceased's next-of-kin and recited together by all the mourners.

Schools can play an important part in helping to improve living conditions in isolated villages such as Craco. They can also help to build up a written record of the tales and legends composed by local poets and which form the basis of popular culture. (UNESCO)