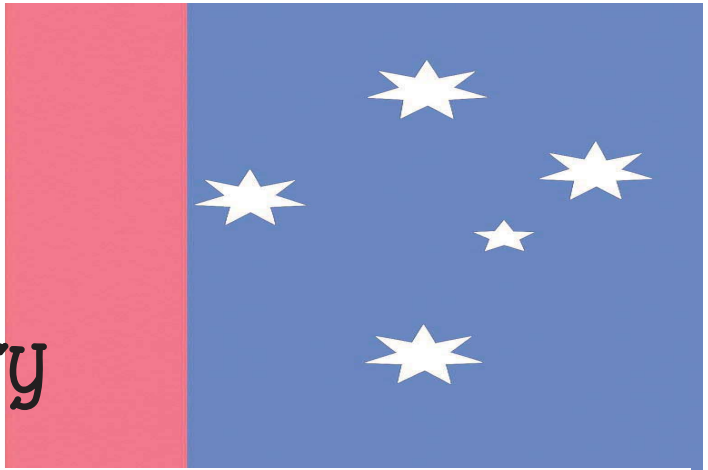


Madonna di Montevergine 70th Anniversary



The Madonna di Montevergine: A Commemorative Celebration of Seventy Years in Adelaide

My name is Domenico Zollo, and I was born in a small township called Squillani in the Avellino Province of the Campania Region of Italy in the now long-ago year of 1948.

Back in 1955, as I was about to commence my primary schooling in Italy, the Festa della Madonna di Montevergine was being held in Adelaide for the first time.

The devotion to the Madonna di Montevergine is one of the most popular amongst all Italians, but in particular those coming from the Campania region of Italy, and we have a very large number of Campani in Adelaide and indeed throughout South Australia.

This devotion was born with a small group of like-minded men led by two of the founders, Mr Corrado Catalano and Mr Orlando Saccone, who, having met several times, decided to bring the Icon of Our Lady of Montevergine to Adelaide, first asking permission from the Capuchin Friars at St Francis of Assisi Church, Newton. The Icon arrived in Adelaide, and the first Festa was celebrated in 1955 with its first president Mr. Corrado Catalano in charge of proceedings.

My dad Antonio Zollo who had emigrated in 1954, soon become a member of this group of devotees to our Madonna and helped with organizing the Festa.

I, my mum Maria Giuseppa and my brother Nicola emigrated to Australia in 1957, and we took up residence in Hectorville where Dad had built a house and every Sunday, we attended Mass at St. Francis of Assisi Church where both my brother and I became Altar Servers.

Having completed my schooling and having found myself a job, I maintained my connection with the church and the Italian community and attended all the festas held at St Francis of Assisi Church.

It was at one of the Madonna di Montevergine Festa that I met my future wife, Immacolata. It was while I was courting Immacolata that I was called up to do National Service, which I did between 1969 and 1971, serving 12 months in Vietnam. When I was discharged, Immacolata and I got married.

By now Mum and Dad were well entrenched as members/volunteers of the Festa della Madonna di Montevergine.

My dad always kept asking me to become a member of the Madonna di Montevergine Association, but I kept coming up with excuses not to join.

Finally, in 1985, I gave in to Dad's insistence and went along to one of their meetings, whereupon they immediately elected me as vice secretary.

At the passing of Mr Corrado Catalano a few years later, a new president was elected; his name was Mr Fiore Antonio Pallotta, who in turn decided to step down from his role as president (he has since passed away). I was duly elected as the association's third president, a role I hold to this day.

It has now been well over 35 years that I have held this role as president, and not a day goes by that somehow, I am not reminded of the humble beginnings of this great Festa and the great attraction the devotees from all over Australia have and show for our Madonna.

I am truly humbled but proud to be a part of such devotion.

All the festivities are held on the last Sunday in September every year at St Francis of Assisi Church in Newton, beginning with a procession around the vicinity of the church reciting the Holy Rosary and singing hymns to our Madonna and then making our way back into the church, where Solemn High Mass is concelebrated.

At the end of Mass there is a huge marquee set up in the St Francis of Assisi School grounds for the social part of the day/evening with entertainment and lots of food stalls selling homemade pasta, authentic Italian-style trippa, porchetta, and various BBQ foods, including full bar service, cake, coffee, and, not forgetting, a nice gelato. All this while we're being entertained by first-class local and interstate artists and occasionally artists from overseas.

We end the day's festivities by holding hands and all together singing one final hymn to our Madonna.

"O Maronna di Montevergine"

With great emotion we all sing.

‘Statti bona, Maronna mia, ca` l'ann che vene turnamma a veni.’

(Goodbye, my Madonna; next year we will come again.)

The Devotion to the Madonna di Montevergine has now become the largest religious festival not only in Adelaide, South Australia, but indeed Australia-wide, bringing together hundreds of devotees from other states as well. They come not only by organised bus tours but by private means as well.

Our Association is made up of approximately 100 people between members and volunteers that still go door knocking, bringing the Festa's Programme/Booklet to mostly families of Italian origins. All these volunteers are dedicated to continuing this long tradition for many more years to come.

It is with a profound emotion and a sense of pride that I say that the dream of a few men in the now long-ago 1955 has become a sweet reality and has reached this great milestone of its 70th anniversary.

‘EVVIVA LA MADONNA DI MONTEVERGINE’

Cav. Domenico Zollo OAM

President

Holy Mary of Montevergine Association

