



## NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER **dicembre** 2024

### NOVEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The speaker at our November Membership Meeting was our own, Trustee Greg Canteri. Before retirement, Greg was a meat cutter. He shared a lot of his insights into grades and cuts of beef and beef products, plus a bonus about turkey preparation.



### CHANGE OF VENUE

At the November Membership Meeting it was announced that AIH was severing its relationship with HCC and moving back to Pine Ridge Country Club for future Membership Meeting, beginning with the January 2025 meeting. See Enclosure No. 1, a letter from President Paolucci, for more details.

### NEW OFFICERS, TRUSTEES, AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

After our cluster of resignations last month, the Executive Committee is happy to report the following assignments, in compliance with our Bylaws.

- Tony Iliano Sr. will remain as our Facebook Manager
- Carmen Cesa has agreed to serve out the balance of Vice President Wassum's term through 30 Jun 26.
- Sal Carriere has agreed to serve out the balance of Trustee Iliano's term through 30 Jun 26.
- Dennis Rosa has agreed to serve out the balance of Trustee O'Keefe's term through 30 Jun 26.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

*prossimi eventi*

**December 2024**

In accordance with our Bylaws, there is no scheduled Executive Committee Meeting nor Membership Meeting in December.

**9 February 2025, Sunday**

#### AIHC NFL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME POOL

- Committee Chair: John Perrotti
- Kick Off Time: 6:30p ET.
- Venue: Caesar's Superdome in New Orleans, LA
- The completed 50/50 Board will be posted on the club website prior to kick-off.
- Cost per Square: \$100.00
- See Enclosure No. 2 for more details.

**26 April 2025, Saturday**

#### AIH REVERSE RAFFLE

- Committee Chair: Bob Andriano
- Committee: John Perrotti, Jim Federico Sr., and Gus Paolucci
- Venue: LaVera Party Center
- Time: 6:00p – 11:00p
- Cost: TBD
- Dinner: Sit-down, family-style, Italian themed dinner, a full bar with bar tender, plus Italian themed antipasto and dessert tables.
- Capacity: 200
- Guests: Members, spouses, and guests are certainly invited but reservations are required.
- See Enclosure No. 3 for more details.

### SAVE THE DATE

Be sure to mark your calendars now for these events:

**9 FEBRUARY 2025, SUNDAY, AIHC SUPER BOWL LIX POOL**

**26 APRIL 2025, SATURDAY, AIH REVERSE RAFFLE**

### DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

*Compleanni di dicembre*

Bob Andreano .....	14
Dennis Rosa .....	24
Bill Cheraso .....	28
Greg Canteri .....	29

When you see these members this month, be sure to wish them a Buon Compleanno.

### HEALTH AND WELFARE

*salute e benessere*

The committee reported the following:

- Richard O'Keefe's wife is still fighting her medical condition.
- Trustee Perrotti will be having some knee surgery over the holidays. Good timing John.

Please keep these individuals and their families in your thoughts and prayers.

If you know of or hear of any Health or Welfare issues involving a member, please pass that information on to Gus Paolucci at [Paolu88G@gmail.com](mailto:Paolu88G@gmail.com) or 440-477-5877

### SPECIAL DAYS IN DECEMBER

Here are just a few of the not so well-known special days this month for your observance.

01 Dec: Eat a Red Apple Day  
09 Dec: Christmas Card Day  
12 Dec: Gingerbread House Day  
16 Dec: Chocolate Covered Anything Day  
20 Dec: Ugly Sweater Day  
23 Dec: Festivus  
24 Dec: Eggnog Day  
26 Dec: Thank You Note Day  
31 Dec: Make Up Your Mind Day  
*The above information was taken from [timeanddate.com/holidays/fun](http://timeanddate.com/holidays/fun).*

### FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION 8 DECEMBER

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception is still misunderstood. On Dec. 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the dogmatic bull *Ineffabilis Deus*. In it he stated, "The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, savior of the human race, preserved from all stain of original sin." Since then, Catholics have celebrated the feast of the Immaculate Conception each year on the anniversary.

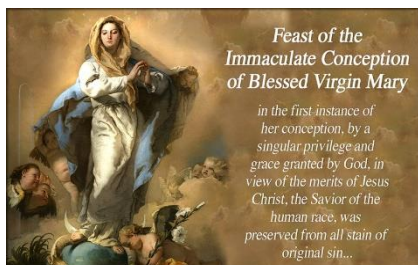
Many people still misunderstand the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. In the encyclopedia *World Book Millennium 2000* we read in the entry for Immaculate Conception, "The term is often confused among non-Catholics with the Virgin birth."

One example of such confusion is the statement by Gordon Sinclair, a broadcaster for CFRB, on Dec. 8, 1939. He said, "Today, the Catholics are trotting off to church to celebrate the Virgin birth." He was clearly wrong.

Sixty-one years later, in an article in The Globe and Mail entitled "A masterful performance" (about the visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel), Michael Valpy wrote, "...at Nazareth, where Jesus' immaculate conception was announced." He confused the conception of Mary with her conception of Jesus. He implied that immaculate conception means conception without a human father.

About one year later in a lengthy article in The Globe and Mail, entitled "There's something about Mary," Valpy wrote, "She herself was proclaimed by the Catholic Church in 1854 to have been immaculately conceived, meaning without sex." Despite reading 75 books about Mary, he did not understand the Immaculate Conception. In fact, Mary was conceived in the womb of her mother Anne, following intercourse with her husband Joachim. This likely happened about 15 years before Mary conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the plays, Sister Act I and II, which toured Ontario a few years ago, one of the jokes told was about the Immaculate Conception. But it was based on the misunderstanding cited above. When I pointed this out to the elderly Catholic woman who related the joke to me, she replied, "But we say in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 'Queen conceived without original sin, pray for us.' " In the hundreds of times that she had prayed that litany, she always thought that the word "conceived" referred to Mary's conception of Jesus, rather than Mary's conception in the womb of her mother Anne. This shows that even some Catholics misunderstand the Immaculate Conception. Such Catholics should reflect on Mary's words spoken to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes in 1858, "I am the Immaculate Conception."



In English, we have a saying, "a picture is worth a thousand words." With a picture, perhaps people who do not understand the concept would grasp the reality of Mary's sinlessness. Such a picture was painted by the Flemish painter Jean Bellegambe (1470-1535). It is titled St. Anne conceiving the Virgin Mary. It shows St. Anne at prayer and Mary as a fetus, glowing like a neon light in her womb, because she is sinless and does not suffer from the darkening effects of original sin.

Mary's sinlessness from the moment of her conception was to prepare her for her vocation to be the mother of Jesus, the Messiah. It should have been unthinkable for Jesus to spend nine months in a womb that was ever under the influence of the devil.

As Catholics celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception, they should make sure that they understand the true meaning of the honor given to Mary. They owe this to God, who brought about the Immaculate Conception. They owe it to Mary who is the Immaculate Conception. And they owe it to themselves and to those to whom they will explain it.

*By Fr. Francis X. Johnson, S.J., Catholic Register Special, 30 November 2006*

## 1908 MESSINA EARTHQUAKE 28 DECEMBER 1908

### Earthquake

On Monday, 28 December 1908, at 5:20:27 an earthquake of 7.1 on the moment magnitude scale occurred. Its epicenter was in the Strait of Messina which separates the busy port city of Messina in Sicily and Reggio Calabria on the Italian mainland. Its precise epicenter has been pinpointed to the northern Ionian Sea area, close to the narrowest section of the Strait. It had a depth of around 5.6 miles.

The earthquake almost levelled Messina. At least 91% of structures in Messina were destroyed or irreparably damaged and 75,000 people were killed in the city and suburbs. Reggio Calabria and other locations in Calabria also suffered heavy damage, with some 25,000 people killed. Reggio's historic center was almost completely eradicated. The number of casualties is based on the 1901 and 1911 census data. It was the most destructive earthquake ever to strike Europe. The ground shook for 37 seconds, and the damage was widespread, with destruction felt over a 1,700 square mile area.

In Calabria, the ground shook violently from Scilla to south of Reggio, provoking landslides inland in the Reggio area and along the sea-cliff from Scilla to Bagnara. In the Calabrian commune of Palmi on the Tyrrhenian coast, there was almost total devastation that left 600 dead. Damage was also inflicted along the eastern Sicilian coast, but outside of Messina, it was not as badly hit as Calabria. The mesoseismal area was confined near the coast along a 0.6 to 2.5 mile wide belt that shook and destroyed Messina and surrounding villages. Catania, the largest city in eastern Sicily, did not incur notable damage.

The elevated death toll was due to the fact that most people were asleep, and killed outright or buried alive in their beds, as their houses

collapsed on top of them. Thousands were trapped under debris, suffering horrific injuries of which many would die. One week before the earthquake, 160,000 inhabitants were counted in the entire Messina commune. On 28 December, Messina was even more crowded than usual, due to the number of overnight visitors from outlying areas who had come to the city to see a performance of Giuseppe Verdi's opera, *Aida*, which had been staged the previous evening at the Vittorio Emanuele II theatre.

### Tsunami

About ten minutes after the earthquake, the sea on both sides of the Strait suddenly withdrew as a 39-foot tsunami swept in, and three waves struck nearby coasts. It struck hardest along the Calabrian coast and inundated Reggio Calabria after the sea had receded 230 feet from the shore. The entire Reggio seafront was destroyed and people who had gathered there perished. Nearby Villa San Giovanni was also badly hit. Along the coast between Lazzaro and Pellaro, houses and a railway bridge were washed away.

In Messina, the tsunami also caused more devastation and deaths; many of the survivors of the earthquake had fled to the relative safety of the seafront to escape their collapsing houses. The second and third tsunami waves, coming in rapid succession and higher than the first, raced over the harbor, smashed boats docked at the pier, and broke parts of the sea wall. After engulfing the port and three city streets inland beyond the harbor, the waves swept away people, ships that had been anchored in the harbor, fishing boats and ferries, and inflicted further damage on the edifices within the zone which had remained standing after the shock.

The ships that were still attached to their moorings collided with one another but did not incur major damage. Afterwards Messina harbor was filled with floating wreckage and the corpses of drowned people and animals. Towns and villages along the eastern coast of Sicily were assaulted by high waves causing deaths and damage to boats and property. Two hours later the tsunami struck Malta, rushing into Marsamxett Harbor and damaging property in Msida. About 2,000 people were killed by the tsunami in Messina on the eastern coast of Sicily, and in Reggio Calabria and its coastal environs.

### Scale of destruction

Messina lost almost half its population and the entire historical city center was devastated including its Norman cathedral, which had withstood previous earthquakes such as the severe one in 1783; just the perimeter walls and apses remained standing.

The Messina shoreline was irrevocably altered as large sections of the coast had sunk several feet into the sea. Houses, churches, palaces and monuments, military barracks: commercial, municipal and public buildings had all collapsed entirely or were severely damaged. Many structures were cracked shells, roofless, windowless and standing upright precariously. The Maurolico boarding school in Corso Cavour was pulverized, burying the students. A total of 348 railway workers were killed when the two railway stations crumbled.

The American consulate fronting the harbor was reduced to a pile of rubble; the British consulate sustained little outward damage with its flag still flying, but the interior was completely wrecked. American consul Arthur S. Cheney and his wife Laura were killed. The French consul and his children also lost their lives, although his wife escaped. Ethel Ogston, wife of the British vice-consul, died instantly after being struck by a falling balcony as she attempted to escape through the streets with her husband, Alfred, and daughter, both of whom survived. Former US vice-consul and Messina correspondent for the Associated Press Joseph Pierce and his family were crushed to death when their damaged home in Via Porta Real Basso, close to the harbor, was brought down by the force of the waves created by the tsunami.

Italians who died included sculptor Gregorio Zappalà, the Chief Prosecutor (Procuratore Generale) of Messina Crescenzo Grillo, Giacomo Macrì, former rector of the University of Messina, politicians Nicola Petrina, Nicolò Fulci and Giovanni Noè; as well as local patriots of the Italian unification, members of the nobility, academia and literati. Socialist historian Gaetano Salvemini survived but lost his wife, five children and sister. The Questore (Head of Police) Paolo Caruso died in his office, killed by a fallen beam. Anglican priest and football pioneer Charles Bousfield Huleatt along with his family and other players of the Messina Football Club died. Composer Riccardo Casalaina and his wife perished alongside one another in their bed. Tenor Angelo Gamba, who had performed on stage in Aida the evening before the earthquake, also lost his life together with his wife and two sons when the Hotel Europa collapsed. The Hungarian soprano Paola Koralek (who sang the role of Aida) was lying awake when the earthquake struck. She leapt from a window of the damaged Hotel Trinacria, breaking both arms in the fall.

The earthquake wrecked the commercial section along Messina's Corso Vittorio Emanuele that skirted the seafont which included the elegant "Palazzata". This was a long sequence of grand buildings that fronted

the sickle-shaped harbor. The "Palazzata" had originally been built in baroque style in the nineteenth century and was mainly the work of Simone Gullí. Most of the baroque buildings had been destroyed in the earthquake of 1783 and were rebuilt in neo-classical style in the early nineteenth century. It was the imposing neo-classical "Palazzata", with some of the surviving baroque buildings, that was almost entirely destroyed in 1908. The shaking was especially intense in the port area resulting in the permanent displacement of the stone paving in a "wave-like pattern". Damage was heaviest in the old historic center and the low, level central and northern sections of the city due to the soft sandy soil; it was less severe in the mountainous western part as the structures were built on firmer terrain such as Gonzaga Fort which was unscathed and remains to date. The area between Cathedral Square and the 16th century Civic Hospital which fronted Torrente Portalegni was obliterated; the adjacent Via Porta Imperiale was struck particularly hard on both sides. The Torrente Bocetta zone also received severe damage.

The 17th-century Real Cittadella, which guarded the harbor, was partially destroyed. Huge crevasses and fissures opened in the streets and these as well as the mounds of rubble, and falling masonry, hampered survivors who had fled from their razed homes to seek safety. Two of the main thoroughfares, Via Garibaldi and Corso Cavour, were rendered impassable by the hillocks of rubble and debris 16 feet in height. Families had become separated and a torrential downpour of rain that had begun only minutes before the earthquake added to the confusion, impeding visibility along with the darkness and thick clouds of dust. The great gas tanks at the northern end of the city blew up, entombing living survivors and the already dead. Fires broke out, caused by broken gas pipes, which added to the chaos and destruction. The ground continued to shake with repeated aftershocks causing remaining structures to topple down onto the ruins of demolished edifices killing and injuring rescuers and those who had survived the main shock.

Survivors described having seen horribly disfigured bodies and injured people badly maimed and screaming for help. Cobbler Francesco Missiani and his family came upon two dying girls, both of whom had suffered appalling head and chest injuries. Processions of naked survivors carrying pictures of saints appeared in the streets. People searched with bare hands through the debris for trapped loved ones. Rescuers at the scene managed to save some people clinging precariously to gaping upper stories, windows and teetering balconies by using ropes to pull them to safety. Similar scenes of destruction were replicated in Reggio

Calabria. Its historical center was eradicated and the monumental Aragonese Castle, one of the few edifices to have survived the 1783 earthquake, was badly damaged. With the exception of one mansion, all the structures in its principal thoroughfare Corso Garibaldi were destroyed including the Cathedral, municipal buildings and palazzi. Only about 50 houses remained standing in Reggio.

The civilian and military hospitals in Messina, and the civic hospital in Reggio Calabria all lay in ruins with nearly all the doctors and nurses dead. The injured in the two cities had no medical support or medicine until outside relief arrived and hospital tents were set up. Telegraph lines were cut and railway lines mangled, making communication impossible. Most of Messina's officials were killed or gravely injured, along with almost the entire police force and soldiers of the garrison who perished when their respective barracks collapsed. Many officers in the garrison survived, their accommodation being more substantial. Prisoners who had escaped death when the prison fell began looting property and even robbing corpses of their jewelry. In Reggio an estimated 1,800 convicts died when the prison was destroyed. Peasants from nearby rural villages joined the looters. Troops were soon sent to Messina and martial law was declared by General Feira Di Cossatto.

Rescuers searched through the ruins for weeks, and whole families were still being pulled out alive days following the earthquake, but thousands remained buried beneath the rubble, their bodies never recovered. Buildings in Messina had not been constructed for earthquake resistance, having been built out of small stones and carelessly applied mortar with heavy tiled roofs, ornamental cornices, unsupported cross beams and vulnerable foundations on soft soil. Many had four or five stories. The most populous areas in the city were concentrated in and around Via dei Monasteri (today Via XXIV Maggio), Via Casa Pia and Via Porta Imperiale; all of which were located in the historic city center. In addition to the poorly constructed buildings, the widespread destruction in Messina and Reggio Calabria was due to the telluric movement having been so close to the surface.

### Relief efforts

News of the disaster was carried to Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti by Italian torpedo boats which set out from Messina to Nicotera, where the telegraph lines were still working, but that was not accomplished until midnight at the end of the day. Rail lines in the area had been destroyed, often along with the railway stations. Pope Pius X filled the Apostolic Palace with refugees.



The Italian navy and army responded and began searching, treating the injured, providing food and water, and evacuating refugees (as did every ship). Giolitti imposed martial law under the direction of General Francesco Mazza with all looters to be shot, which extended to survivors foraging for food and searching through the rubble for trapped family members. King Victor Emmanuel III and Queen Elena arrived two days after the earthquake to assist the victims and survivors.

#### International response

The disaster made headlines worldwide and international relief efforts were launched. With the help of the Red Cross and sailors of the Russian and British fleets, search and cleanup were expedited. The Russian battleships *Tsesarevich*, and *Slava* and the cruisers *Admiral Makarov*, and *Bogatyr*, British battleship *Exmouth* and the cruisers *Euryalus*, *Minerva*, and *Sutlej* were ordered to provide assistance. The SS *Afonwen* was in Messina harbor during the quake (anchored in 45 fathoms of water, but there were only 30 fathoms when she sailed full of refugees). The French battleships *Justice* and *Vérité*, and three torpedo boat destroyers were ordered to Messina. Two battleships of the U.S. Navy's Great White Fleet, the *USS Connecticut* and *USS Illinois*, along with supply ships *USS Celtic* and *USS Culgoa* also delivered succor. The American supply vessels including the tender *USS Yankton*, buttressed with extra medical personnel and supplies from the battleship fleet, delivered supplies to help the refugees and remained on station giving medical aid. Other nations' ships also responded.

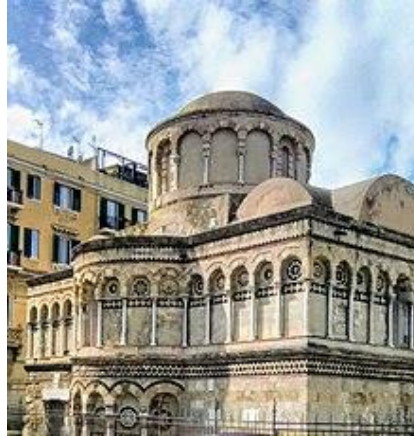
#### Commemoration

The King of Italy later awarded a commemorative medal for 1908 earthquake assistance, struck in gold, silver and bronze.

Several streets in Messina have been named after the Russian sailors, including Largo dei Marinai Russi. In 2012, a monument to the Russian sailors, designed by Pietro Kufferle in 1911, was installed in the city, and a bust of Emperor Nicholas II was opened in Taormina; a bust of Admiral Fyodor Ushakov was set up in 2013.

#### Reconstruction

When the reconstruction of Messina began in 1909, authorities mandated architecture to be able to withstand earthquakes of variable magnitude. Initially, a plan was adopted to demolish the remaining structures of Messina and to transfer the city and its port elsewhere in Sicily, but strong protests from the Messinesi led to the discarding of this suggestion.



*Church of the Santissima Annunziata dei Catalani, built in the 12th century, one of the few structures that survived the earthquake*

A few structures survived the earthquake – they included the domed medieval Church of the Santissima Annunziata dei Catalani, the Gothic Santa Maria Alemanna church, the Byzantine San Tommaso Apostolo il Vecchio church, San Ranieri lighthouse, Forte del Santissimo Salvatore, the 18th century Palazzo Calapaj-d'Alcontres, Giovanni Montorsoli's Fountain of Neptune and the Barbera spinning mill (later converted to a museum to house the art treasures salvaged from the ruins). The Real Cittadella, Mategriffon Castle, Vittorio Emanuele theatre and Monti di Pietà remained standing but sustained considerable damage. The 16th-century Church of Ringo in the fishermen's quarter of the same name along the northern Messina riviera withstood the shock and survives to date. The "Scalinata Santa Barbara", large sections of the Muro Carlo V and a number of 18th and 19th century houses in the ancient quarter of Tirone survived; additionally, several houses in Via Fata Morgana and Via Giordano Bruno remained standing and are in use today. Although some of the dwellings (known as *le mignuni* in local dialect) located in the slum of Avignone also remained standing relatively intact, they have since been demolished. In Reggio Calabria the Palazzo Nesci was one of the few 19th-century structures to withstand the earthquake.

The new city of Messina was constructed on the rubble of the old city using the plan of a modern layout of a "city regularly cut up like a checker board" with buildings of uniform size and height as presented in 1911 by architect Luigi Borzi (1853–1919). This necessitated the demolition of buildings that were salvageable but did not conform to the new urban plan. These included the Palazzata, Baroque San Gregorio church situated above Via Monasteri and the 18th century Chiesa delle Anime del Purgatorio located in Via Cardines and Largo Purgatorio. The latter church was badly

damaged but principally in the apsidal section and was reparable. It was demolished to extend Via Garibaldi in a southerly direction.

#### Relocation

In the wake of the earthquake, many of the homeless residents of Messina and Calabria were relocated to various parts of Sicily and other regions of mainland Italy. Others, including the majority of the survivors from the poverty-stricken Avignone quarter of Messina, resorted to emigration to the US. In 1909, the cargo ship *Florida* carrying 850 emigrants from Naples collided in a fog with *RMS Republic*. Three people aboard the *Florida* died in the collision. The passengers descended into panic and the captain had to shoot in the air to calm them down. The ship was eventually rescued and arrived in New York.

#### Effects on society

The disaster affected the local economy and Messina faced a temporary depopulation after so many homeless survivors had sought refuge elsewhere, in particular Catania and Palermo where a large number found work as artisans. It has been estimated that only 19,000 remained with just 2,000 in the old city center. However, there was soon a huge influx of migrants, mostly from nearby Sicilian and Calabrian localities who were needed as necessary laborers for the reconstruction. According to the 1911 census the population of Messina had increased to 127,000. Among these were many Messinesi who had returned to their native city. Men notably outnumbered the women which resulted in a decrease in marriages.

As late as 2021, families were still living in the wooden barracks in zones known as *Baraccopoli* which were erected in 1909 to provide temporary housing for the homeless survivors.

Because of its dearth of historical buildings due to the catastrophic 1908 earthquake, as well as the 1943 Allied bombardment during World War II, Messina has been called "the city without memory".

*The above information was taken from Wikipedia.*

## WORLD EVENTS IN DECEMBER

### 7 Dec 1941: Pearl Harbor was bombed

On December 7, 1941, at 7:55a, Hawaii time, a Japanese dive bomber, bearing the red symbol of the Rising Sun of Japan on its wings, appeared out of the clouds above the island of Oahu. A swarm of 360 Japanese warplanes followed, descending on the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor in a ferocious assault. The surprise attack struck a crucial blow against the U.S. Pacific Fleet and drew the United States irrevocably into World War II.

#### 8 Dec 1980: John Lennon was shot

On December 8, 1980, John Lennon, a former member of the Beatles, was shot and killed by an obsessed fan in New York City. The forty-year-old artist was entering his luxury Manhattan apartment building when Mark David Chapman shot him four times at close range with a .38 caliber revolver. Lennon, bleeding profusely, was rushed to the hospital but died enroute.

#### 12 Dec 1980: da Vinci notebook sold for \$5.1M

On December 12, 1980, American oil tycoon, Armond Hammer, paid over \$5.1 million for the Codex Leicester, a notebook from visionary artist and scholar Leonardo da Vinci. The notebook, written between 1506 and 1510, contains various writings and illustrations and is one of about thirty books that da Vinci created throughout his life on different subjects. The Codex, which is seventy-two pages long, consists of about three hundred notes and drawings, all related to water and the way it moves. The text reads from right to left in da Vinci's favored mirror-writing technique and was written in chalk and brown ink. The notebook was originally discovered by a painter in 1690 in a chest of papers belonging to Guglielmo della Porta, a Milanese sculptor who had studied da Vinci's work. Thomas Coke, the First Earl of Leicester, bought the manuscript in 1717 to add to his impressive art collection, hence the name Codex Leicester. After Hammer bought it in 1980, it was auctioned off again in 1994 and purchased for \$30.8 million by Microsoft founder, Bill Gates.

#### 17 Dec 1933: First NFL Championship Game

On December 17, 1933, the inaugural NFL championship football game took place between the Chicago Bears and the New York Giants at Wrigley Field. The Bears defeated the Giants 23-21.

#### 25 Dec 336: First Christmas Celebration

On December 25, AD 336, the first known celebration of Christmas on December 25<sup>th</sup> took place in Rome.

#### 28 Dec 1908: Messina Earthquake

On December 28, 1908, a major earthquake, followed by a tsunami devastated the Italian city of Messina, killing at least 70,000 people.

*The above information was taken from the This Day in History 2024 daily calendar.*

## ITALIAN EVENTS AND FESTIVALS IN DECEMBER

Planning a winter trip to Italy in December? You are in for a treat! Visiting Italy in December usually means two things: Christmas Markets and winter sports.



Or, how about taking a ski trip in the Italian Alps or Dolomites mountains? You could shred powder down some of the best slopes in Europe and enjoy *après ski* while relaxing on a terrace in one of Italy's incredible ski resorts, basking in the winter sun.



### Holiday Festivals and Events in Italy in December

Italy has more national holidays in December than any other month. It's not surprising at all that Italy would have more than one national holiday to celebrate Christmas time considering it's a Catholic country.

This means there are tons of events, festivals, and other things to do in Italy in December. Here is a list of fun celebrations to add to your Italy in December Itinerary.

#### 1. Bolzano Christmas Markets

Of course, visiting Christmas markets is one of the best things to do when visiting Italy in December. Italy doesn't have many markets as they're more of a Bavarian tradition than a Mediterranean one, but you'll find some good ones in the northern Italian cities like Milan and the capital city of Rome.



Bolzano is renowned for being one of the best Christmas markets in Italy. Located in the South Tyrol region near the Austrian border, the Christmas atmosphere here is unparalleled

and it starts in late November and continues into early January.

Over 80 businesses set up stalls in wooden huts selling everything from locally made ceramics and sweet treats in Piazza Walther. Naturally grown Christmas trees surround the town but there is always an impressively large Christmas tree that stands in the piazza too.

There is always an ice-skating rink in Piazza del Municipio, a nativity scene in Bolzano Cathedral, carol singers in the evening, and Christmas lights on every street.

#### 2. Giant Christmas Tree Lighting in Umbria

Speaking of Christmas lights, December 8th is widely regarded as the start of the Christmas festivities in Italy. It's the day every town and city in Italy unveils its Christmas tree and decorations.



One of the best Christmas trees to check out when you visit Italy is the one in Gubbio, Umbria. It's known as one of the 'World's Largest Christmas Trees' in quotation marks because it's technically not a Christmas tree, just the shape of a Christmas tree lit up with colorful twinkling lights on the side of a hill.

Despite it being a bit of a cheat, it's still amazing to see in person.

#### 3. Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception

The first national holiday of the month, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, is also celebrated on December 8th. This day celebrates when God graced the Virgin Mary to lead a life free of sin.

Since the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary is an official national holiday, government services like post offices and other businesses are closed. Many Italians will attend mass on this day and the pope will lay a wreath on the Madonna statue in Piazza Mignanelli in Rome.

#### 4. Green Line Festival in Florence

Florence is a magical city year-round, but it's especially beautiful on a winter trip thanks to the Green Line Festival, formerly the Florence Light Festival. Hosted from December 6th to January 4th, this festival is almost a work of art.





The city projects Christmas images onto the walls of the city's most historic buildings, including the Ponte Vecchio, every evening. There is a new theme each year and it's something fun that will drag you out of your hotel room in the evenings despite the freezing cold weather.

### 5. Christmas Eve

While Christmas Eve isn't a national holiday in Italy, it's still a special day! Italians celebrate with a huge feast on the evening of December 24th called *La Vigilia*. It is supposed to be a meat-free meal to purify the body before big celebrations the next day.

Many restaurants serve set Christmas menus during the festive season. Source one in the city you are visiting so you can enjoy some delicious cultural and local food on Christmas Eve when you visit Italy.

### 6. Christmas Day

A national holiday that needs no introduction, in Italy and many other countries around the world, is Christmas Day. You can expect all businesses to be closed on December 25th for the national holiday as most Italians will be celebrating Christmas with their families at home.

As well as enjoying a huge feast yourself, it's a fantastic time to wander around whichever city or town you are staying in. Bring your camera as you'll never have seen the place so quiet.

### 7. Urbi et Orbi Blessing in Vatican City

One of the best places to be on December 25th is the capital city of Rome or, more specifically, Vatican City. *Urbi et Orbi* is the name of any public address that the Pope gives from his balcony in Saint Peter's Basilica to those watching in Saint Peter's Square and via the media.



It translates to 'to the city and to the world' and the Pope gives one every Christmas Day. If you really wanted to be somewhere special during this national holiday in Italy, you couldn't pick anywhere better.

### 8. St. Stephen's Day

The day after Christmas, St. Stephen's Day, is also a national holiday! So, don't expect any businesses or attractions to be open on December 26th either. It's tradition for Italians to visit the nativity scene at their local church on St. Stephen's Day.

### 9. New Year's Eve

New Year's Eve isn't a national holiday in Italy, but January 1st is, so you may find that December 31st is treated like one anyway! Many offices don't open over the entire holiday period and some businesses will close at midday.



Most cities celebrate New Year's Eve with fireworks and live music.

### Weather in Italy in December

You can expect cold weather in Italy in December with some unpredictable rain and wind. Average temperatures in the north are much colder than in the south largely due to the mountains in this region.

### Best Places to Visit in Italy in December

#### 1. Dolomites

The Dolomites are one of the best places to visit in Italy in December for two reasons. First, the ski season will be in full swing by December with lots of snow for skiing and snowboarding. And second, it's home to one of the best Christmas markets in Italy.



The Dolomites Mountain range stretches across three regions in Northern Italy: Veneto, Trentino Alto-Adige, and Friuli Venezia Giulia. These mountains are a UNESCO World

Heritage Site and painfully underrated compared to the rest of Italy.

One of the best ski resorts in the Dolomites is Madonna di Campiglio. It's within the Brenta Dolomites Mountain range and the Madonna di Campiglio resort is only 75 km away from the city of Trento.

For anyone wanting to visit a Christmas market in Italy, the Bolzano Christmas Market is the best and is also located in the Dolomites. You'll find a bustling market with vendors selling delicious seasonal and local food, a skating rink, a beautifully decorated tree, and a nativity scene in the cathedral.

#### 2. Milan

Traveling to Italy earlier in December? Milan is the perfect place for Christmas shopping. It can be freezing cold in the winter months but inside stores are the perfect place to stay warm.



Christmas lights at Navigli Milano Italy

Milan also has Christmas market stalls in Piazza Duomo with striking red tents instead of the usual wooden lodges. You can also head inside Milan's Duomo, the largest cathedral in Italy, to see a lifestyle nativity scene.

#### 3. Italian Alps

While the Dolomites technically belong to the Alps, when most people think of the Alps in Italy, they usually think of the Aosta Valley region on the Swiss and French border. It's the perfect place for a ski trip as there are always shuttles from nearby big cities like Milan and Turin during the winter.



This part of the Alps boasts incredibly scenic areas like Gran Paradiso National Park and world-class ski resorts like Breuil-Cervinia, Monterosa, and Courmayeur. Snowfall will be

high during December so it's a great time to hit the slopes.

The Bernina Express is also a fun train ride to do in December. It goes from Northern Italy and into Switzerland.

## 4. Venice

Venice is incredibly cold and wet in December but there's something magical about the city lit up with Christmas lights. It's still bustling with crowds but nothing like the cruise ship crowds of the summer.

Piazza San Marco boasts a huge Christmas tree with lots of other first-rate decorations. St. Mark's Basilica doesn't need any temporary nativity scenes because there is one carved on the north side of the upper part of The Porta Dei Fiori.



Venice hosts many Christmas concerts in December in churches as well as Teatro La Fenice. And if you take a boat to Murano and Burano, you'll be able to see a Christmas tree made from Murano glass.

## 5. Manarola in Cinque Terre

The small towns of Cinque Terre, and other resort towns such as those on the Amalfi Coast, aren't the best places to visit in Italy during December, however, Manarola is the exception. Across the small hills outside of the village is the 'World's Largest Luminous Nativity Scene.'



Granted, there probably aren't many luminous nativity scenes out there, but it's still a spectacular sight.

Small, colorful figures are dotted around the landscape complete with all the usual figures you'd expect to see. There is an array of animals, shepherds, angels, and a stunning barn at the top.

## 7. Naples

While most of the Amalfi Coast shuts down over December, Naples nearby comes alive. Located on the edge of the central and southern regions of Italy, Naples has mild temperatures and is a great option for some winter sun.



Although it doesn't have any luminous nativity scenes, the city has its own tradition. In December, Naples dedicates an entire road to the display of handcrafted nativity scenes and Christmas cribs/mangers.

Wander along Via San Gregorio Armeno to admire these beautiful structures. Don't forget to try Struffoli, a traditional Napoli sweet treat eaten at Christmas.

## 8. Rome and The Vatican

Since Vatican City is where the Pope gives his Christmas address, December is the perfect time for people of the Catholic faith or anyone interested in seeing a papal address to visit Rome. Plus, there are plenty of other things to do in the capital city in winter too.



Check out Rome's winter markets in Piazza Navona and the festive tree in Piazza Venezia. The Church of Santa Maria Maggiore and St. Peter's Square both have beautiful nativity scenes too.

You can still visit all the famous landmarks at any time of year as long as it's not a national holiday. Vatican Museums, the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, plus all the museums still stay open over the holiday period.

## 9. Tuscan Countryside

There really is no bad time of year to visit the Tuscan countryside. In winter, the small towns that nestle on the hilltops of the Tuscany region are much quieter than in summer. Staying in an old apartment up a winding staircase when there are no other international tourists around will make you feel like you live there.

Visiting the Tuscan countryside in December is an authentic, local experience. You'll see a few stalls selling Christmas ornaments in the main piazzas in the lead-up to Christmas Eve and will be able to taste seasonal Tuscan treats like *brigadini*, *befanini*, and *copate senesi*.



Pienza, Montepulciano, and San Quirico d'Orcia are beautiful places to visit in the Tuscan countryside during December. Drive through Val d'Orcia to see a side of this stunning cypress-lined valley that few get to witness in winter.

## 10. Sicily and Southern Regions

Want your side of holiday cheer served with a huge dash of winter sun? If you can't bear the cold weather, Sicily and other southern regions boast the warmest Italy weather in December.





Sicily has an average high temperature of 61°F in December and an average low temperature of 50°F. You won't be able to sip a lemonade or spritz outside on your apartment's terrace without a jacket, but at least you can leave the gloves and scarves at home.

Just because the weather is warmer, it doesn't mean there aren't lots of festive things to do in Sicily. Since people in Southern Italian regions are arguably more religious, you might find a more spiritual Christmas experience there.

Via Rome is always one of the best-dressed streets in Palermo at Christmastime and Corsa Italia is the best place to hang out in Catania.

*The above information was taken from [iheartitaly.co/italy-in-december](http://iheartitaly.co/italy-in-december)*

## NEW YEAR'S EVE TIMES SQUARE

Every December 31, one of the biggest parties of the year happens at Times Square in New York City. People all over the world fly in to attend the live event, and millions more tune in to watch on TV and count down as the famous ball drops.

**1904:** The first-ever celebration of New Year's Eve in Times Square took place in 1904. 200,000 people attended the event. Also at this time, New York opened the city's first subway line while The New York Times Magazine commemorated the official opening of their new headquarters.

**1907:** The very first ball was lowered in Times Square after a ban was made on fireworks for the celebration. The illuminated iron and wood ball was adorned with one hundred 25-watt light bulbs. It was 5 feet in diameter and weighed 700 pounds

**1920:** In 1920, the New Year's Eve ball was replaced with a 400 pound ball made of entirely wrought iron, making the ball 300 pounds lighter than the original.

**1942-43:** Due to wartime restrictions during World War II, the New Year's Eve ball was not lowered in 1942 or 1943. Instead, people partied but offered a moment of silence on New Year's Eve.

**1955:** In 1955, the iron New Year's Eve ball dropped some more weight when it was

replaced with an aluminum ball, weighing a mere 200 pounds.

**1972:** Dick Clark began his famous, live New Year's Rockin' Eve Special filmed in Times Square. The show was such a success that it became a New Year's Eve staple, airing every year afterward.

**1981:** In 1981, red light bulbs and a green stem converted the New Year's Eve ball into an apple for the "I Love New York" marketing campaign that referred to New York as "The Big Apple." In 1988, the ball returned to its classic look.

**1995:** In 1995, the ball was upgraded with aluminum skin, rhinestones, strobes, and computer controls.

**2000:** For New Year's Eve in 2000, the millennium celebration, the New Year's Eve ball was completely redesigned by Waterford Crystal. The new crystal ball combined the latest in technology with the most traditional of materials, reminding us of our past as we gazed into the future and the beginning of a new millennium. Approximately 2 million people attended the 2000 New Year's Eve Celebration.

**2001:** 7,000 police were on duty during the New Year's Eve Celebration that followed the attacks of September 11, 2001. Since then, security for New Year's Eve has been increased. From undercover officers, bomb sniffing dogs, and checkpoints to officers sealing manholes and carrying radiation detectors, the NYPD took every precaution to keep event goers safe.

**2008:** Forty-three billion text messages were sent globally during the 2008 New Year's Eve Celebration.

**2009:** NYC decides to keep the New Year's Eve ball up after the celebration as a year-round fixture.

**2011:** For 2011, Waterford Crystal has designed 288 new "Let There Be Love" crystal triangles featuring a romantic pattern that blends a modern cascade of hearts with diamond cutting. Another 288 triangles are emblazoned with last year's "Let There Be Courage" design of a ribbon medal symbolizing the triumph of courage over adversity; and 1,152 triangles sparkle with the "Let There Be Joy" design of an angel with arms uplifted welcoming the New Year. The remaining 960 triangles are the original "Let There Be Light" design of a stylized radiating sunburst.

*The above information was taken from [citypass.com/articles/new-york/history-of-new-years-eve-times-square](http://citypass.com/articles/new-york/history-of-new-years-eve-times-square)*

## MISSION STATEMENT

*dichiarazione di missione*

The purpose of this Association is to promote the moral, social, and civic advancement of its membership, and to perpetuate the customs and cultural aspects of Italian Heritage.

*Article II, Section 1 of the AIH Bylaws*

## AMERICANS OF ITALIAN HERITAGE

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

*1 July 2024 – 30 June 2026*

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## COMMENTS TO THE EDITOR

If you have any questions or comments about, or suggestions for this newsletter, please put your thoughts in an email and send them to me at [GPizzuti@GlennPizzutiArchitect.com](mailto:GPizzuti@GlennPizzutiArchitect.com)

## ATTACHMENTS

No. 1: Letter from President Paolucci  
No. 2: NFL Championship Game Pool Flyer  
No. 3: Reverse Raffle Flyer

## BUONE VACANZE HAPPY HOLIDAYS

All the Officers and Trustees of the AIH Executive Committee would like to wish Buone Vacanze to all our members and their families.

