OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL CHURCH OF YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO: THE EMBODIMENT OF VALUES

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the

History Program

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

August, 1996

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis examines the behavior of the Italian American parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church of Youngstown, Ohio. The central argument of the thesis illustrates that Mount Carmel's Italian American community ameliorated their lives in the United States without relinquishing the core beliefs of their predecessors from South Italy, specifically the *Mezzogiorno* region. Moreover, the formation and ensuing success of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church resulted from the parishioners' reliance on the cultural values of the Old Country as the cornerstone of a freshly built environment in *la Merica*.

The author analyzed several illuminating sources for this thesis. Primary sources included Parish Records, privately printed Parish Manuscripts, Diocesan Records and Correspondence, Oral Interviews, Newspapers, Tax Duplicates, Sanborn Maps, and Insurance Appraisals. Numerous secondary sources were also consulted which are listed appropriately in the bibliography of this thesis.

INTRODUCTION

Born in 1891 in the southern Italian village of Ferruzzano, Calabria, Antonio Margariti spent his childhood working to assist his widowed mother. Following a compulsory twenty-four month stint in the Italian army, Margariti hurried home and gained illegal passage on an English liner, the *Olympic,* bound for America. A farm laborer with no formal education, he arrived in the United States in 1913 determined to secure a bright future. He held a number of temporary immigrant jobs as a "pick-and-shovel" day laborer before settling in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Margariti eventually found employment at an automobile plant where he worked until his retirement in 1965. Following the death of his last family member in 1978, Antonio Margariti composed a forty-seven page autobiography written entirely in Italian.[1]

Margariti's story painted a familiar picture of the experience of the Italian immigrant. Between the years 1900-1914, greater than 3,000,000 Italians entered the United States. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the southern Italians established new roots in *La Merica* by resurrecting familiar familial and religious traditions. They introduced their culture to countless

American cities, towns, and neighborhoods, including those of Ohio's Mahoning Valley, the focus of this study.

The vast majority of these arrivals hailed from south Italy, also called *Il Mezzogiorno*.[2] The southern Italians were predominantly a propertyless, poor class of farmers (*contadini*) and day laborers (*giornalieri*). Commonly referred to as the *contadini*, they fled in droves to the fabled shores of the United States. Many ventured here with the hope of finding meaningful employment; others came to establish a geographical and economic foothold for their loved ones back home. The list of personal motivations for emigrating is endless. However, all southern Italian immigrants desired to escape *la Miseria*, the unforgiving world of economic, political, and cultural oppression.

This peasant class of southern Italians stubbornly maintained its existence despite daunting obstacles. They withstood northern prejudices, heavy taxation, natural disasters, widespread epidemics of disease, and a medieval economic system that relegated them to the level of serfdom. Following a millennia of oppression, millions of *contadini* emigrated to the United States to find reprieve from *la Miseria*.

The moral foundation upon which the *contadini* relied for generations was *la via vecchia*, a centuries old value

system predicated upon the two pillars of southern Italian culture, family and faith. *La via vecchia*, or "the old way," rested upon an amalgamation of familial and religious values. The *contadini* practiced a highly specialized form of Catholic worship, honeycombed with customs and rituals unique to their culture. Through these weekly observances, religious feast days, *festas*, secular holidays, and daily practices, the *contadini* reinforced the inherent connection between family and faith.

The primary transmitter of *la via vecchia* was what the scholar Luigi Barzini referred to as "the first source of power" for Italians, the family.[3] The power of *la famiglia* reigned supreme as the dependable rock of southern Italian culture. Individual families and their *compare* and *comare* (respected villagers, elders, or those accepted as family members though not blood relatives) built a complex system of familial/religious values, norms, and duties.

The family functioned as an independent, self-sufficient unit. Yet, they relied on a mutual dependence among family members to maintain survival. Although often viewed as unhealthy by American standards, Colleen Leahy Johnson in *Growing Up and Growing Old in Italian-American Families* (Rutgers University Press, 1985) countered, "When the mechanisms are culturally elaborated and given positive

significance, it is logical to assume that the dependency of individuals is considered a natural human condition to which the family can accommodate."[4] Thus, the *contadini* adapted the family system to accommodate for the harsh environment. Tough *Mezzogiorno* conditions mandated the creation of a cohesive, healthy intradependence which in turn enabled the family to survive. As this research paper illustrates, their ability to conform to external conditions while never sacrificing their core values would prove a valuable skill in America. The resilient Italian community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church of Youngstown, Ohio, the focal point of this study, typified this theme.

This intradependent, familial system of survival, free from potentially harmful outside influences, garnered little respect or recognition from early twentieth century researchers. Most immigrant studies of the time reflected the spurious presumptions (and hence conclusions) of John H. Mariano's *The Italian Contribution to American Democracy* (Christopher Publishing House, 1921).[5] Mariano lightly characterized *Mezzogiorno* existence as, "An active out-door life in an almost ideal climate."[6] The early twentieth century researchers' inability to fully understand the daily rigors of the harsh, *Mezzogiorno* life spawned harmful results. First, due to the absence of legitimate local

government in the *Mezzogiorno*, researchers failed to recognize the Southern Italian familial and religious value system as the predominant form of social organization at the familial and village levels. Mariano's work supported this notion:

> It has been said that the races making up our "new" immigration (and this includes the Italian) lack the innate capacity of self-government. If this is so, then the words of Sir Horace Plunkett are apropos namely "if any race is lacking in the powers of self-government than what that race needs most is self-government"[7]

Second, the inability to properly examine *Mezzogiorno* life helped foster a "pro-American" attitude put forth by Mariano and other early twentieth-century American researchers. Contrary to the contemporary findings of Herbert Gutman, Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, and other scholars, the Italian immigrant's departure from the mother country did not denote the total abandonment of old norms and mores. Certainly, survival in the United States required the adaptation to specific aspects of American society. Italian immigrants encountered an unfamiliar, fast paced, urban, industrial world fraught with perils. The horrible conditions of the *Mezzogiorno*, the mass migration of southern Italians from their homeland, and the challenges of the New World prompted the assumption that Italian immigrants abandoned virtually

every aspect of their former lives. Consequently, researchers concurred with Mariano's conclusion that, "These Americans of Italian extraction *are* Americans, first and last, tho in some cases a sub-normal type of American."[8] Similar to *The Italian Contribution to American Democracy*, research efforts were "...a study in **AMERICANISM**, because the people under *surveillance* [italics added] are AMERICANS."[9]

Due to revealing works by Colleen Leahy Johnson, Francis X. Femminella, Jill S. Quadagno, Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, Herbert Gutman, Robert A. Orsi, Jerre Mangione, Ben Morreale, and others, the more recent scholarship strayed away from the previously widely accepted notion of political scientist Edward C. Banfield who argued a sense of "amoral familism" dominated the Sicilian-southern Italian family.[10] In *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (The Free Press, 1958), Banfield asserted that peasants and gentry alike unable to act "for any end transcending the immediate material interest of the nuclear family."[11] Banfield's conclusion was correct in that family loyalty reigned supreme among Italians. However, he failed to properly define the scope of the Italian family. As articulated by Leahy Johnson, Femminella, Quadagno, Leonard Covello, Richard Gambino, and D. Ann Squier, the term

"family" encompassed much more than the nuclear family. Kinship ties often included extended family members (hence the existence of the *paesani* system in America for newly arrived immigrants), close friends of the family, and the residents of the village.

Also inaccurate but not entirely untrue were several conclusions of Humbert S. Nelli in *Italians in Chicago 1880-1930: A Study in Ethnic Mobility* (Oxford University Press, 1970). Nelli noted, "Ironically, the old-world community intimacy that Italians in America "recalled" so nostalgically originated in the New World as a response to urban surroundings."[12] Surely millions of second and third generation Italian Americans did not commit "ethnic conspiracy" by fabricating the existence of intimate, strong family ties in the Old Country. Contrary to Nelli's findings, southern Italians thrived on intimate family relationships to withstand centuries of tumultuous upheaval. "From this perspective," explained Richard Gambino, "we can understand why Italian Americans have a reputation for reliance upon themselves. Like most second generation Italian-Americans I know, my parents mouthed the American maxim to small children that "policemen and teachers are your best friends," but their behavior made it clear that the family will take care of you."[13] Contrary to popular

scholarship, Italian Americans found methods of gaining acceptance in the host culture while emphasizing the traditional values of their ancient culture.

As a late nineteenth and early twentieth century phenomenon, immigration to the United States opened the door to an unexplored realm of study. Moreover, as Colleen Leahy Johnson pointed out, "There are relatively few intensive studies of ethnic families themselves."[14] As evidenced earlier, Gambino, Covello, Squier, Femminella, and Quadagno provided illuminating insights to an underdeveloped field. They shed light on the relationships, duties, values, hierarchy, and religious practices of the Italian American family. Along with these central works, Luigi Barzini's *The Italians* (Atheneum, 1964) and Luigi Villari's *Italian Life in Town and Country* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903) contained excellent background information on the political, economic, cultural, and familial experiences of the *contadini*.

The historiography of Italian American women and their ties to the *Mezzogiorno* offered numerous beneficial sources. Three studies of note were Miriam Cohen's *Workshop to Office: Two Generations of Italian Women in New York City, 1900-1950* (Cornell University Press, 1992), Ann Cornelisen's *Women of the Shadows* (Little, Brown, and Company, 1976), and Mary Jane Capozzuli's "Mothers and Daughters: Nassau

County's Italian American Women," in *Immigrant America: European Ethnicity in the United States* (Garland Publishing, 1994), edited by Timothy Walch. These works examined the invaluable role played by women in Italian social, familial, and religious settings. Cornelisen's *Women of the Shadows* looked at the cultural pre-eminence of the female figure in the *Mezzogiorno* while Cohen and Capozzuli studied the lives of Italian American girls, wives, and mothers.

Concurrent with the cultural and ethnic focus of the present research project was a material culture methodology. This methodology, crucial in establishing the thrust of this study, turned on the object-centered vs. object-driven research method of artifactual analysis articulated in Bernard L. Herman's *The Stolen House* (The University Press of Virginia, 1992).[15] Allen G. Noble's *To Build A New Land: Ethnic Landscapes in North America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), Dell Upton's *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1986), Donna R. Gabaccia's *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change Among Italian Immigrants, 1880-1930,* and James Deetz's *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archeology of Early American Life* (Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977) held pertinent information regarding the material culture methodology and

its relevance to ethnic studies. In addition, Henry Glassie's *Folk Housing of Middle Virginia: A Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts* (University of Tennessee Press, 1975), and Ian Hodder's *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation In Archaeology* (Cambridge University Press, 1986) contained the groundwork methodology of material culture and artifactual study. On a cultural and social level, Robert Orsi's in-depth examination of the centrality of religious devotions in the New World in *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (Yale University Press, 1985) proved invaluable to this thesis.

Finally, several broad secondary works dealing with Italian emigration and ethnicity proved noteworthy. Works of particular interest were Michael A. La Sorte's *La Merica: Images of Italian Greenhorn Experience* (Temple University Press, 1985), Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers' *Ethnic Americans: A History of Immigration*, third edition (Harper & Row, 1988), and Sylvan F. Tomasi's *Perspectives in Italian Immigration: Proceedings of the Symposium Held at Casa Italiana, Columbia University, May 21-23, 1976* (Center For Migration Studies, 1976). Also helpful were Grazia Dore's "Some Social and Historical Aspects of Italian Immigration," in the Journal of Social History (Winter

1968), Thomas Kessner's *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City* (Oxford University Press, 1977), and Andrew Greeley's *Ethnicity in the U.S.* (John Wiley and Sons, 1974). Each study contained insights into several topics ranging from cultural assimilation to the inherent methodological problems of ethnic studies.

As *Growing Up and Growing Old In Italian American Families* illustrated, the field of ethnic studies brought a plethora of difficult obstacles for the responsible researcher. As Leahy Johnson noted, the study of ethnicity was inherently complex due to its interdisciplinary nature which encompasses psychological, sociocultural, economic, political, historical, and religious factors.[16] Ethnic studies offered little room for broad generalizations or concrete definitions since each ethnic group maintained its own subjective set of beliefs, values, and moral predilections. As Irving Howe aptly stated in "The Limits of Ethnicity", "No one quite knows what ethnicity means: That's why its a very useful term."[17]

However, as relatively recent research indicated, the ethnic families themselves provided the researcher an excellent source for deciphering these complex issues. Studying the family opened the door to the less institutionalized units of study such as expressions of

emotion, face-to-face interactions, and lifestyle.[18] Second, the family institution inculcated specific norms, behaviors, values, and attitudes in its young members, thereby making the family the first and most influential source of ethnic identity. Third, due to its interpersonal, intimate nature, the family setting revealed the degree to which ethnic background acted as an enhancement or as a constraint on the members of the group.[19] These issues became more prevalent when analyzing the characteristically self-reliant yet intradependent Italian American family.

It is the inculcation of Italian American religious and familial values in the social, cultural, physical, and spiritual environment of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Youngstown, Ohio that fueled this study. Throughout its existence, the predominantly southern Italian Mount Carmel community furthered the *Mezzogiorno* way of life while simultaneously entrenching themselves into American society. This entrenchment did not denote an *assimilation* into the host culture, however. This particular group of Italians refuted the popular scholarship of the early and mid-twentieth century which held that a pre-modern people who confront a modern world inevitably abandoned the old ways and adopted the common modern values of the host society such as personal autonomy and individualism.[20] The Italians

and future parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel reflected the ethnic patterns put forth by several historians of the 1960s and 70s, most notably Herbert Gutman and Virginia Yans-McLaughlin. This approach argued immigrants did not abandon the traditional modes of thought and behavior they carried to America. Rather, the immigrants used their orthodox traditions in adapting to modern industrial life.[21] Thus, ethnic groups carved a niche into American society while maintaining Old World values and traditions.

The formation and ensuing success of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church of Youngstown, Ohio stood as a shining example of this phenomenon. The past and present Italian American parishioners of this parish resonated with the beliefs and ideals of their southern Italian ancestors from the *Mezzogiorno*. Once again strangers in a harsh, competitive environment, these Italian Americans revitalized the religious, cultural, familial, and social practices of south Italy. Through documentational and artifactual analysis, and an examination of the parishioners of the Church, this thesis illustrates how the Italian Americans of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church created an Old Country environment while simultaneously achieving a high level of success amidst the American culture. They embodied the long-standing central

values of South Italy while embracing American notions of citizenship and success. Therefore, any responsible study of the Italian American people and culture must begin with the underpinnings of *la via vecchia* established long ago.

1.Michael A. La Sorte, La Merica: Images of Italian Greenhorn Experience (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985), xiii, 33.

2.Francis X. Femminella and Jill S. Quadagno, "The Italian-American Family," in Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variations, 2d. ed., eds. Charles H. Mindel and Robert W. Habenstein (New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1976), 68.

3.Luigi Barzini, The Italians (New York: Atheneum Co., 1964), 190.

4.Colleen Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old in Italian-American Families (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 11.

5.John H. Mariano, The Italian Contribution to American Democracy (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1921).

6.Ibid., 306.

7.Ibid., 132.

8.Ibid., 305.

9.Ibid., 304.

10.See endnotes or bibliography for full citations of these works.

11.Edward C. Banfield, The Moral Basis of a Backward Society (New York: The Free Press, 1958), 10.

12.Humbert S. Nelli, Italians In Chicago, 1880-1920: A Study in Ethnic Mobility (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 6. Also look T. Parsons, "Some Theoretical Considerations on the Nature of Change of Ethnicity," and D. Bell, "Ethnicity and Social Change," in N. Glazer and D. Moynihan, eds., Ethnicity: Theory and Experience (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

13.Richard Gambino, Blood of My Blood: The Dilemma of the Italian Americans (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1974), 52-53.

14.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 5.

15.Bernard L. Herman, The Stolen House (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 11.

16.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 5.

17.Irving Howe, "The Limits of Ethnicity," The New Republic, 25 June 1977, 68, reprinted in Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 5.

18.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 8.

19.Ibid.

20.See Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted, (Boston: Little, Brown Co.), 1951, and Paul Campisi, "Ethnic Family Patterns: The Italian Family in the United States," Journal of Sociology 53 (May 1948).

21.See Herbert Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America," American Historical Review 78 (June 1973), and Rudolph Vecoli, "Contadini Chicago: A Critique of the Uprooted," Journal of American History 51 (December 1964). Also look Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, Family and Community: Italians Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press), 1977.

PART I: *LA MISERIA* AND THE ROOTS OF *LA VIA VECCHIA*

The *contadini* sought refuge from centuries of political, social, economic, cultural, and natural disasters. These southern Italians, who constituted at least two-fifths of the population of Italy at the time of unification in 1861, maintained a meager existence under oppressive living conditions. As Richard Gambino explained in *Blood of My Blood: The Dilemma of the Italian Americans*, "Because of a concurrence of political and economic, social and natural disasters that defy the laws of probability, their [the *contadini*] condition was to deteriorate to fatal depths."[1]

The Romans were among the first groups to plunder the South. The destruction of some areas was so complete it eradicated almost all traces of their former cultures. Apulia, Basilicata, and even Sicily, a stronghold of Greek civilization for nearly eight centuries, crumbled under the might of the Romans. The exploitation was so exhaustive it spawned numerous large scale uprisings including the legendary slave rebellion of Spartacus.[2]

Following the decline of the Roman Empire, a series of foreign invaders traded control of south Italy. The conquerors included the Greeks, Arabs, Lombards, Byzantines,

Normans, Catholic Germans, French and Spanish.[3] During the middle ages, each power established roots in southern Italy while simultaneously ravaging it for personal gain.

Italy split gradually into small, "semi-feudal," political fragments. Through countless small skirmishes and bloody conflicts, these pockets of authority shrunk to as few as fifteen during the fifteenth century. The nationwide stratification of governments, cultures, and families, though, continued for hundreds of years.

Napoleon invaded the Italian peninsula in 1796. Northern Italians welcomed him as the magnificent prince called for by Machiavelli in the sixteenth century.[4] However, after Napoleon's fall, the reactionary Congress of Vienna (1814-15) restored much of the same political and social conditions prior to Napoleon's arrival. The southern Italians' condition remained unchanged as the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies once again seized power with a branch of the Bourbon family on the throne. Continually plagued by taxation and conscription, the *contadini* benefitted little from the political upheavals.[5]

Although the Bourbons attempted some efforts to enrich Italy, the improvements brought little joy to most northern Italians, and even less to the peasant class of the south. As Richard Gambino explained, "What commercial success there

was rested upon a decadent political system and a hopelessly outmoded economy in a Europe that was fast industrializing. For the most part ignoring the Industrial Revolution, the Bourbons sought to continue an amalgamation of renaissance mercantilism with medieval feudalism."[6] The infrastructure of southern Italy in 1860 stood as a salient example of this economic phenomenon. Out of 1,848 towns in the *Mezzogiorno*, 1,621 had no roads at all leading to them.[7] The little towns of South Italy represented economic and social anachronisms, cut off from a rapidly changing world. As a result, isolated villages weathered not only the consequences of political upheavals, but also the earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, and disease epidemics that plagued Italy during the nineteenth century.[8]

The abandoned *contadini* relied regrettably on corrupt, exploitative, local land barons (the *latifonditsi*) for support. The *latifundi*, or large estates, squeezed out all other pockets of land already so small they barely produced enough food to support a family. By 1900, the land barons owned 65% of all Italian acreage.[9] Their massive estates ranged in size from 3,000 to 18,000 acres.[10] The largest of these were located in the *Mezzogiorno* where duplicitous overseers ran them at the expense of the local peasants. The overseers employed *mafiosi*, tough, uncomprimising,

occasionally ruthless individuals called upon to collect unpaid debts and intimidate the peasant population.[11] As centers of local authority, the corrupt landed gentry worked closely with police and underworld elements. They eventually gained full control of local governments in ways that resembled the political bosses of the United States.[12]

Unable to rely on a legitimate government or centralized church, the *contadini* resembled medieval serfs locked in a world of rural squalor.[13] Corrupt priests, working in conjunction or at the mercy of the land barons, fattened their purses at the expense of the local poor. The people were denied schools, medical facilities, and any other social institution that even remotely threatened to change the status quo.

They lived in one-story, cubelike huts with dirt floors and a loft that held the beds. Due to a derth of plumbing and other amenities, waste was either left in the streets or dumped by the women in designated locations. Most homes contained a stove fueled by straw and twigs. The simple abode functioned as house and barn. Commonly, inhabitants shared the bottom floor with chickens, a mule, and an occasional pig.[14]

Every village had an open *chiazza,* or plaza, characterized most frequently by a church and a winehouse,

two staples of southern Italian culture. Men strolled the *chiazza* arm in arm and chatted about the latest news. As the central gathering place, villagers kept tabs on who looked the healthiest or whose clothes were in the best condition. Behind the scenes, wives toiled at home in order to send their husbands out with nice clothes and large bellies, thus sending a message to all the other families in the village.[15]

Victims of regional and cultural hegemony, they ardently maintained an inherent distrust of outsiders. Family and religion were the only reliable institutions. Unable to depend on any legitimate government, many overtly defied outside authority. As Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale noted:

> "The Sicilian's inclination to circumvent governmental authority when in need of assistance (and to rely instead on friends, relatives, and friends of friends) became more than ever, and instilled habit...But it was in the Mezzogiorno, where poverty and misgovernment were most deeply experienced, that the government was most deeply despised and defied. By the time the southerners began leaving their native provinces in great numbers, their distrust of all politicians had festered into a deep seated conviction, which they carried with them wherever they settled."[16]

Some villagers formed self-help and mutual-aid groups composed of family and friends to help ease the deplorable living conditions. Others joined brigand-led bands

(*brigandaggio*) to keep food on the table.[17] The government, paranoid of losing its power, often stifled any effort at organization by southerners. Government officials coined the term "mafia" to describe any group that appeared to threaten the government's authoritative control.[18]

Yet, the tough peasant class repeatedly struck back. *Contadini* guerrillas fought bravely under Giuseppe Garibaldi during the nineteenth century clashes for Italian unification, or *Risorgimento*. They did not fight for nationalism or any other ideology however. Rather, according to Gambino, "The contadini fought to protect *la famiglia* from life-draining oppression by the government, and in many cases because of specific outrages and insults to *l'onore della famiglia* by alien agents and soldiers. The Bourbons driven out of power, the *contadini* returned to their pursuit of *la via vecchia* [the old way] and a hope of land reform to sustain that life."[19]

In 1861, the Piedmont government seized power yet the southern Italian populace received no respite from their condition. The *contadini* lived under another outside authority that relied on a constitution which failed to account for any of the localized institutions of the several regions, particularly those of the *Mezzogiorno*. The *contadini* despised conscription laws that forced all males

into a seven year stint in the army.[20] The government subjected the *contadini* to heavy tax burdens. Many formerly untaxed southern Italians found themselves paying dues on all land and property, including livestock. Various interests on transactions ranged from 400 to 1,000 percent.[21] One source claimed only months after unification, Palermo alone claimed 15,000 unemployed Italians.[22]

As a result, the *contadini* rebelled again in 1862. This time, the conflict pitted southern Italians versus northern Italians. There was no love lost between these two culturally, geographically, and economically distinct regions. Northern Italians held a pervasive prejudice toward their southern counterparts. According to "The Italian American Family" by Francis X. Feminella and Jill S. Quadagno, northerners considered southerners an inferior "race" of people. Southerners were to be "disregarded, or worse, cheated, enslaved, spat upon, and generally treated without regard for basic human dignity."[23]

The despicable conditions persisted throughout the 1880s and 90s under the direction of local authorities who circumvented the meager attempts by a weak government to ameliorate the living conditions of the *Mezzogiorno* poor. Politicians increased taxes on livestock and land yet failed

to make a concerted effort at bettering the conditions of south Italy. Due to violent uprisings and constant unrest of the region, the Turin government ordered the military occupation of the *Mezzogiorno* for the next ten years. This display of discontent and distrust by their fellow Italians infuriated the *contadini* and exacerbated an already rampant problem.

During the late 1880s, Baron Sidney Somino informed the Italian parliament that during the last twenty years of its existence the government failed to enact a single plan to improve the living conditions of the southern *contadini*.[24] Their plight deteriorated to depths unknown even to the *contadini*. Finally, after centuries of exploitation and manipulation, millions of southern Italians turned their back on their homeland. As Italian emigration from Italy peaked at the turn of the century, author Luigi Villari stated, "The North has made a great advance in wealth, trade, and education, while the South is almost stationary.[25] Richard Gambino added, "By 1910, the people of the *Mezzogiorno* owned only twenty-seven percent of the national wealth, but paid thirty-two percent of the national taxes."[26]

Cultural survival under such despicable conditions called for an equally resilient set of norms and mores. As

a response to these conditions, the *contadini* relied on the two institutions over which they exercised the most control, the family and the specialized practice of the Catholic faith. Over the centuries, these farmers and day laborers molded their familial and religious values into a way of life known as *la via vecchia*.

The "practice" of family and faith emerged as the unwavering core of the *contadini's* survival. All other values, though important, were subordinated and categorized according to how they contributed to the survival of la *famiglia*. The southern Italians boasted a unique love and respect for family. They also practiced a highly specialized form of religious worship interwoven with family values. *La via vecchia* became their blueprint for daily life. As they faced new challenges to survival as immigrants in the United States, they inevitably turned to this age-old system of life. Hence, Italian American culture must be viewed and studied as a reflection of the Old World values. "An understanding of this pattern of family life," stated Richard Gambino, "is critical to any understanding of Italian-Americans of any generation, the most 'assimilated' third- and fourth-generation young people as well as wizened old immigrants. *La via vecchia*, cultivated for centuries, does not die quickly, and

certainly not easily."[27] As inhabitants of a politically and environmentally unforgiving land, the *contadini* relied on family for the maintenance of life and culture. As Gambino explained, "The family was the major transmitter of its own culture, and other institutions were welcomed only if they aided this goal."[28]

The deplorable social and political conditions of the *Mezzogiorno* (economic strife, governmental oppression, national disunion) contributed to the decline of nationalism and hoisted *la famiglia* to the epicenter of *Mezzogiorno* culture. Village isolation coupled with a consistent lack of legitimate, local governmental control resulted in an inevitable shift in loyalty to the family and village.

Despite Italian unification in 1861, centuries of separation did not disappear. *La via vecchia*, with familial and religious values at its center, firmly governed *contadini* life and culture. Neapolitans, Sicilians, Calabrians, and Barese were all southern Italians; however, each region deliberately maintained cultural distinctions. Italians identified themselves first by their parents and then their immediate neighbors, i.e. the family and then the village. Those few laws and regulations well promulgated in southern Italy supported this hierarchy of identification. The Italian citizenship of a new-born, for example, depended

upon the citizenship status of the parents.[29]

As governments, revolutionaries, and rebellions passed, only the indelible presence of *la via vecchia* fueled peasant life in the *Mezzogiorno*. "The unique family pattern of Southern Italy constituted the real sovereignty of that land," declared *Blood of My Blood*. "Governments and aliens came and went over the centuries. If they brought any customs that might strengthen the family system, they were gradually absorbed."[30] As the only consistently reliable force amidst an unstable world, the family emerged as the "the only true valued social group" of *Mezzogiorno* culture.[31]

All southern Italians agreed, "The most shameful condition of all...was to be without a family."[32] Illegitimate babies comprised only a scant fraction of *Mezzogiorno* children. These unfortunate few along with those who blatantly violated *l'ordine della famiglia* (the order of the family), quickly found themselves a pariahs or *scominicato*. A man without a family lived as an outcast, unable to claim membership among any accepted social group. "Last hired and first fired" became a common plight for these men. Women without family confronted an even bleaker reality. According to Ann Squier and Jill Quadagno, "For a woman without a family, the only options were to become a

beggar or a prostitute."[33]

The majority of southern Italians, however, belonged to the family system of *la via vecchia*. The southern Italian definition of family, and the individuals role within it, extended far beyond the nuclear household. "Family" included a hierarchy of individuals ranging from blood relatives to members of the local community. Colleen Leahy-Johnson described it as "an overlapping system where friends are also relatives rather than members of separate and distinguishable social units."[34] Naturally, primary loyalty went to direct relatives of the nuclear household, specifically the mother. Second in the hierarchy stood extended family, in particular those relatives on the maternal side. Third came the *compari and padrini* and their female counterparts, the *commare* and *madrine*. These were intimate friends and venerated elders. Next were the *amici di cappello* or friends whose family status demanded respect. Finally came the *stranieri*, or strangers, such as village merchants, artisans, fellow workers, or any village member in good social standing. *Mezzogiorno* society required the individual to give respect and loyalty to other individuals according to their strictly defined place within this "familial" hierarchy.[35]

Individualism was primarily non-existent among old-

world Italians. Only as a familial unit could survival be achieved in the tough *Mezzogiorno* conditions. As a result, individual wishes and goals were defined according to the overall interests of the family. "One treated a person according not so much to his individual characteristics as to the status of his family and his particular place in it."[36] "Of singular importance were family ties," noted Feminella and Quadagno, "One's personal identity was derived from his family, and family membership was essential in terms of defining one's place in society."[37] In return, family members built and maintained a value system that protected the individual from a predominantly hostile environment. These values permeated all areas of social life in and outside of the home including education, work, and interaction with peers and elders.

Conversely, family membership demanded active participation and full attention. Discussed earlier, southern Italian families practiced an intradependence or healthy dependence on one another to ensure individual and family survival. This dynamic relationship manifested itself in even the smallest of family interactions. Male children learned the value of hard work and contributed to the family income before age ten. Similarly, mothers inculcated in their daughters the paramount values of

childrearing, cooking, and household maintenance as early as age three. Parents stressed to all children the importance of patience and respect for elders. The elderly claimed a high hierarchical status and were closely attended to by younger family members. In times of sickness or death, a pool of available relatives, most frequently from the mother's extended family, assisted in caregiving, nursing, and childrearing.[38] As a respectable relative and devout Catholic, such charity and sacrifice became second nature.

Children properly raised in this value system of familial interdependence were considered *ben educato*, or well educated. The rules of *ben educato* mandated respect for familial and religious doctrines. In terms of the Italian family, well educated meant fully attuned to the customs and responsibilities of the surrounding family. "Ben educato," remarked Gambino, "meant raised with the core of one's personality woven of those values and attitudes, habits and skills that perpetuated *l'ordine della famiglia*, and thus was attuned to the welfare of the family."[39] Any influence deemed detrimental to the family and *la via vecchia* was quickly discarded, including formal avenues of education.

Anyone *ben educato* in *la via vecchia* by definition deserved varying degrees of *rispetto* (respect) from the

village community. A good more highly valued than money, *rispetto* represented the inherent pride that came from hard work and responsible membership in a respectable family. Hard work and family loyalty also fostered *rispetto* for oneself, another important concept to the *contadini*. Daily *Mezzogiorno* existence demanded hard work, thus they valued highly an honest day's effort. To the southern Italian, work was not something abstract; it was something tangible, a visible sign of maturity, loyalty, and inherent respectability--ben educato.[40] Gambino described hard work as, "moral training for the young," and believed it, "a moral wrong not to be productively occupied."[41] As with all other widely accepted norms, the primary benefit of hard work was the healthy perpetuation of *la famiglia*. Even the most simple and laborious task brought *rispetto* to the individual if it aided the family. Gambino explained:

> They have sought a proximate relation between the individual and the end result of his labor, whether it be digging a ditch, running a restaurant, nursing a patient, playing a musical instrument, filling a pharmaceutical prescription, or teaching a child.[42]

The benefit of family through hard work gave the individual a sense of full participation in *contadini* culture. As a direct result of working hard, family survival through *rispetto* and *ben educato* represented an essential ingredient

to gaining acceptance into *Mezzogiorno* society.

Intimate interaction according to such crystalline social norms inevitably led to high emotion and occasional conflict. However, the constant expression of emotion and occasional conflict between family members was not considered unhealthy. Closely related to the notion of *rispetto*, the value system of *contadini* families frowned upon neutrality when disagreements arose between two or more individuals. Colleen Leahy Johnson noted, "emotional neutrality to them...denoted noninvolvement or even the absence of affection."[43] *Mezzogiorno* culture, for example, viewed defiance to parental authority by male children as an act of *rispetto*. Gambino explained, "Boys had the boldness to disobey, to assert their developing ability to be *furbo* (foxy), because it was really expected that they should develop this ability to deal with the world outside."[44] Southerners considered such defiance as proper training for success in a difficult environment. A family's survival hinged upon the ability of its members to periodically defy or manipulate outside authority.

Despite an emotionally volatile environment, the vast majority of conflicts quickly dissipated. Although the intimate family interaction fostered frequent disagreement, family survival necessitated resolution. Colleen Leahy-

Johnson concurred, "Conflict is a regular feature of family life, but it is usually confined to periodic outbursts and does not usually cause open and permanent ruptures..."[45] The doctrines of *Mezzogiorno* culture and the basic tenets of Christianity called for forgiveness. These teachings, coupled with the inherent closeness of family amidst tough living conditions, resulted in fewer permanent disagreements. Hence, members generally did not reject another family member because of a disagreement or infraction. In most cases, they accepted a family member's shortcomings before rejecting the individual. Consequently, this dialectical process of showing unbounded anger followed by unbounded love via total forgiveness characterized Southern Italian society.

This connection between religious and familial values dominated *la via vecchia*. Much more than simple beliefs, the *contadini's* ceaseless reliance upon these foundations helped shape their physical and social environment. Deeply embedded into a peasant culture accustomed to inhospitable living conditions was an inherent affinity for lengthy celebrations that frequently coincided with the religious calendar. Entire villages conducted grand *festas* that lasted up to several days. Generally, these *festas* accompanied cultural, familial, or religious feast days and

varied in intensity depending on the specific holiday. Many cultural practices that exemplified the intertwining of family and religion flowered from these celebrations. Few, however, became as integral to *Mezzogiorno* culture as food and drink (*nutrimento*).

As inhabitants of the *Mezzogiorno*, the planting and harvesting of food proved a strenuous undertaking. As victims of *la miseria*, feeding the family took on even further significance. Natural resources necessary for a staple food supply, such as arable soil and fresh water, were precious possessions. Yet, just as they had for centuries, the *contadini* prevailed. As dependents on a stubborn land, their struggle engendered within their culture a deep respect for the earth. *Mezzogiorno* society expected every responsible household to keep a sizeable garden. The ability to cultivate a healthy food supply through hard work and determination symbolized the love, strength, and health of the family. This admiration for the earth carried with it a powerful affinity for its fruits. To this peasant class of farmers and day laborers, "...food is the symbol of life, of all that is good and nourishing...To the Italian-American, food is symbolic both of life and of life's chief medium for human beings, the family."[46]

Nutrimento became the constant companion of every gathering no matter how small or unexpected. As a cherished commodity and a cultural staple, food and drink took on a religious significance. Dinner time, or *pranzo* marked a sacred time reserved solely for family, godparents, and occasionally very close friends.

The *pranzo* represented a holy time which bound together the most prevalent themes of *Mezzogiorno* culture: family and faith. The most siginficant meal, the Sunday *pranzo*, fell on the most significant day of the week for the devout Catholic. The Sunday *pranzo* witnessed the greatest gathering of family intending to celebrate their familial driven faith. It began in the mid-afternoon and sometimes lasted until late in the evening.[47] Prayer, song, and games such as *bocce* customarily accompanied these gatherings.

The Sunday *pranzo* emerged as a weekly opportunity for family bonding at the social and religious level. "It [food] was in a very emotional sense a connection with my father and mother, and outreach by them toward me," recalled Richard Gambino.[48] "In a very real sense, meals were a "communion" of the family, and food was "sacred" because it was a tangible medium of that communion.[49] *Nutrimento* acted as the social conduit by which southern Italians celebrated the familial and religious underpinnings of their society.

In essence a "family mass," the Sunday *pranzo* embodied all that was necessary for a healthy life: family, food, and religion.

Similar to the Catholic mass, the Sunday *pranzo* culminated in the main course (the "bread") and always included a second major ingredient: wine. Catholics believed that the bread and wine of the mass transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. In addition, wine was a staple commodity of *Mezzogiorno* culture. Hence, the southern Italian love for *vino* emanated from religious and social foundations. To a Catholic, southern Italian family, the drinking of wine at every meal held great meaning on the social and spiritual levels. Simply stated by Gambino, "Of course all meals were taken with wine. A traditional saying has it that a day without wine is like a day without sun."[50]

All major holidays reflected the amalgamation of these religious and familial values. As the two pillars of cultural identification, these themes became interwoven into the milestones of individual lives. Families and individuals identified the passage of time according to periodic rituals that solidified familial intimacy through religious observances. Colleen Leahy-Johnson concluded that southern Italians successfully reinforced "family centeredness" through these "periodic rituals and

celebrations."[51] She found that, "life-cycle events are ritualized by the formal sacraments of the Catholic Church."[52] One second generation Italian remarked, "The immigrant remembered and tried to live in the cyclical rhythm of the seasonal and church calendar...He lived for the celebrations of Christmas Eve dinner, Christmas, *Carnevale*, Easter, the annual feast in honor of the patron divinity, and the christenings and weddings of family and *paesani*."[53] These included *Battesimo* (Baptism), *Communione* (Holy Communion), *Conferma* (Confirmation), and *Sposalizio* (Marriage).

Baptism represented the first major event in the familial and religious journey of a young *contadini* child. Baptism officially inducted the child into the Catholic faith as well as the "unofficial religion of family." A ceremony that combined "church doctrine, family ideology and some vestiges of old superstition," the preparation and celebration of Baptism demonstrated cultural as well as religious beliefs.[54] Devout Catholics, southern Italian families baptized the new born as soon as possible due to offset the demonic influence of original sin. Many believed that every time a baby smiled before baptism the child smiled at the devil and any illness before baptism was the devil's doing.[55] Thus, the sacrament of baptism pulled the

child away from the clutches of original sin and placed him into the protected realm of faith and family. A joyous occasion overflowing with familial and religious overtones, the sacrament of baptism was always followed by a "baptism party" for friends and relatives.

Aside from the baptism itself, the most important event of the sacrament was the selection of godparents. According to Catholic Church doctrine, a godparent must play a significant role in the religious maturation of the child. To the southern Italian community, the role of godparent represented much more. The responsibilities carried over into the social and familial realms. Viewed as an honor, godparenting required the individual to spend considerable time with the godchild, particularly during religious milestones. *Mezzogiorno* custom dictated that in the untimely death of the parents, the godparent assumed the primary responsibility of raising the child.

A delicate selection process, choosing a godparent meant accepting that individual into the holy sanctuary of family. The new godparent, then, entered into the most sacred of Italian institutions, the nuclear family. Once accepted, the godparents became integral parts of inner familial workings. Godparents were "consulted on important matters, treated with respectful courtesy, and their advice

heeded. They were chosen for their prestige, wisdom, and power."[56] Through the selection and integration of godparents, the *contadini* extended kinship ties, hardened family unity, and created social bonds with other village members. The sacrament of baptism and the ritual of godparenting perpetuated *la via vecchia* by strengthening its two main pillars, religion and family.

An identical phenomenon held true for the second major event in the familial and religious journey of the *contadini* child, First Holy Communion. An extremely popular event, family and friends flocked to the village church to witness the *Communione* of a young child. Southern Italian First Communicants looked forward with eager anticipation to receiving the Eucharist, or Body of Christ, for the first time. The boys wore suits with white ribbon arm bands while the girls donned white dresses with veils which symbolized virginity and foreshadowed marriage, the highest of family bonds. To the Southern Italian, the sacrament of First Communion represented an elevation in family as well as church membership.[57] The child took one step closer to acceptance into a *Mezzogiorno* society that stressed full participation in the religious and familial realms. Similar to Baptism, a large party with prepared food always followed the sacrament of First Holy Communion.

Confirmation, the third major event in the familial and religious journey, usually took place when the child reached twelve or thirteen years of age. Once confirmed, the Church recognized the young adult as a full member of Catholic society. Once again a holy ceremony, Confirmation brought with it significant social functions. Similar to Baptism, the adolescent received a sponsor, or *comare* or *compare*. The sacrament of Confirmation dictated however, that the adolescent choose his own sponsor, usually a young adult who served as a friend and confidant throughout the adolescents sacramental and social lifetime. Along with Baptism and godparenting, Confirmation and sponsoring forged close connections to other village members while simultaneously functioning as a religious milestone.[58]

The final and most monumental of religious and familial events was the sacrament of marriage. Parents ardently stressed the values of *ben educato*, hard work, and *rispetto* to prepare their children for the highest contribution to *Mezzogiorno* society, their own family. The union of a man and a woman and the birth of children symbolized the continuance of the familial and religious cycle at the heart of *contadini* culture. As a result, weddings were elaborate, magnificent celebrations of faith and family. Many families saved for years in order to provide a "fitting" wedding for

their child(ren). Prenuptial festivities began early with stag parties for the groom and showers for the bride. Following months of preparation, the traditional southern Italian wedding became an all day affair. A wedding started at 10 A.M. with a high mass followed by drinks served to as many as 1,000 people.[59] At 1 P.M., as many as two hundred family members attended an elaborate dinner. Following a short break, up to 1,000 friends arrived for food, music, dancing, and the open bar.[60]

Yet, weddings extended far beyond just the union of the bride and groom. Holy Matrimony brought together the families of the two individuals as well. As Colleen Leahy-Johnson noted, "The wedding ceremony transcends the recognition of union between man and wife because it functions to bring together the friends and relatives of both families."[61] Hence, *Mezzogiorno* culture relied on the sacrament of Marriage as the primary conduit through which familial and religious values survived. None of these sacramental celebrations came to fruition, however, without the structural home of the "village family," the church.

Central to each Italian village was the local church dedicated to a specific holy personage or symbol. Village boundaries were determined not by civil law or political leaders, but by the sound of the *campanalismo*, or church

bell. Thus, villages used the local church as a "physical utensil" with which to draw distinct religious, social, cultural and geographical lines. Villagers held no *rispetto* or trust for those "outsiders" who resided beyond the sound of the bell. The local church provided the inhabitants a communal sense of individuality, pride, and independence from potentially manipulative external forces. The ringing bells drew the boundaries that protected not just the village as a whole, but also the family units so cherished by *Mezzogiorno* culture.[62] Thus, small, physically and socially isolated communities developed unique variations of *la via vecchia* built upon family and faith. Richard Gambino aptly stated this notion:

> These village communities in their isolation developed manners and mores, nuances of language and dress, and human struggles and enmities that distinguished one village from another, regardless of geographical proximity. ...The centuries of defending against the exploitation by northern Italians and foreign governments...generated mechanisms of preservation closely bound up with patterns of authority and control within the family.[63]

The center of religious devotion, the church, contributed to the physical and cultural isolation of the village. In turn, this isolation stunted individualism and gave rise to the family as the dominant social group. As Clement L. Valletta's "Family Life: The Question of Independence"

poignantly added, "Individual independence was in actuality family participation in those activities sanctioned by traditions of the village and church as well as the social and economic system."[64]

Every village boasted a patron saint who showered graces upon the devout. They dedicated their town, their lives, and most importantly, their families to those spiritual patrons famous for an intimate spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ. Concurrent with their culture, they adored the Holy Family (St. Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the infant Jesus). The *contadini* worshipped Saints whose lives most resembled their own. *Mezzogiorno* society found reprieve by identifying with Saints who championed the poor, suffering, and oppressed. St. Anthony of Padua, patron Saint of the poor, St. Lucy, heralded for her suffering and sacrifice, and St. Francis, also patron Saint of the poor represented a few of the most popular choices.

As an economically and socially oppressed class, the *contadini* readily identified with the themes of suffering and mercy. As a result, their devotion to the major figures of Catholicism paralleled their plight. Many southern Italians enjoyed a close, spiritual relationship with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The symbol of Jesus Christ's

infinite compassion, mercy, and forgiveness, the Sacred Heart drew millions of *contadini* struggling through *la miseria*. Viewed as the eternal Savior and source of unbounded love and mercy, they naturally flocked to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.

The most enduring and culturally significant spiritual figure in the lives of the *contadini* was Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. Over the centuries, *contadini* culture built a close spiritual connection with the Virgin Mary. They related to her pain at losing her only son, Jesus, to crucifixion. Countless *Mezzogiorno* families felt the loss of a loved one to a local skirmish, regional rebellion, or a personal vendetta. Adored in Catholic tradition as a virgin, pure and without sin, *la Madonna* reigned supreme among all religious devotions. "Although strong in all Catholic countries," explained Richard Gambino, "the cult of *la Madonna* is especially powerful in Italy."[65] Defined by historian Ann Cornelisen as "the core of local belief," the "Marian cult" lay at the center of south Italian religious life.[66]

They elevated the Madonna to the highest echelons of religious and cultural life. As the most powerful mother in the universe, the Blessed Mother became a binding symbol at the familial, village, and regional levels. She represented

the mother of an entire culture; an immeasurably powerful position in a society governed by the health and status of the family. Children learned to adore their spiritual mother as much as their earthly one. Communal entertainment peaked at the village *festas* dedicated to *la Madonna*. These *festas* were so ingrained into the culture as a time of joyous celebration, Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale referred to them as the "Fourth of July, Bastille Day, and passion play all rolled into one."[67]

Similar to the accessibility and local power of the earthly mother, *la Madonna* represented their tangible, spiritual mother. As Morreale and Mangione noted, "None of the local legends make any mention of God the Father or the son. To the village worshippers, these figures seemed far less accessible than their local Madonna or patron saint, who could be dealt with within the boundaries of their own village."[68] In a society that drew all power from local authority, the image of God the father appeared a distant, chimerical figure. The Virgin Mary appealed to the Southern Italians, since "It is always better to deal directly with the one who has power, and local power is recognized as genuine power."[69]

The authoritative and unyielding perception of the male as *capo di famiglia* contributed to the abandonment of God

the Father as an intimate religious figure. Strict codes of public behavior that called for a tough, authoritative male made it difficult for Italian men to intimately identify with a compassionate, loving father figure. As a result, the poor but proud males of the *Mezzogiorno* felt uncomfortable praying to another male.[70] They identified much more readily with the maternal figure of *la Madonna*.

Conversely, southern Italian women strove to emulate the perfection of *la Madonna*. Mary represented the ideal mother and devotee of her son, Jesus Christ. Just as *la Madonna* guided and protected the entire cultural family, the tough yet compassionate women of Calabria, Basilicata, Sicily, and other provinces raised and protected their individual families. Over the centuries, a dynamic relationship developed between the religious and the earthly mother figure. Each entity fed off of the power of the other, thereby raising the ubiquitous maternal presence to the throne of *Mezzogiorno* culture.

Therefore, just as *la Madonna* stood at the center of the Catholic southern Italian's religious world, the mother stood at the center of the earthly world. The mother was the rock of the individual family in a society where non-familial relationships were secondary. In a world that judged family status according to the outward signs of

family health and not the occupation of the father, the mother ostensibly emerged as the major force. All significant kinship ties rested with the maternal relatives. Similarly, the female relatives assisted the mother in raising and nurturing the children.[71] Consequently, Richard Gambino boldly touted the mother as, "the center of the life of the entire ethnic group."[72] Hence, women quietly assumed the awesome responsibility of maintaining the most sacred and stable of southern Italian institutions, the family.

The respect attributed to the maternal presence began early and continued throughout her life. According to many regional customs, the groom cut the choicest part of the nuptial meal and served it to his bride. This act by the husband recognized the female as the center of the new family.[73] During times of tragedy or loss of a loved one, the mother mourned for the entire family. Dressed in all black to depict a "weeping Madonna," the mother bore the brunt of the loss. Her sorrow encompassed not just her own grief, but also the remorse of her family. Wakes lasted up to four days and always included an elaborate meal prepared by the women. Considered a sign of family health and prosperity, food was a major ingredient of the healing process.[74]

The family experienced no greater calamity than the death of the mother. Her passing triggered the stoppage of

household activities and the immediate commencement of a twenty-four hour vigil. As Gambino aptly explained, "A new family head could be found, but not a new center."[75] The extended and nuclear family, particularly the children, reeled at the loss.

As in most cultures, the southern Italian mother enjoyed an intimate relationship with her children. Mothers provided protection and comfort amidst a demanding and sometimes cruel society. "They create security for their children which no spanking or screaming rage will ever undermine," noted Ann Cornelisen, "Each has nursed her child, fondled him, rocked him to sleep, and cared for him when he was sick until he knows his mother loves him...He is hers."[76] As the focus of social and religious attention, *Mezzogiorno* women sternly yet benevolently guided their families.

The matricentral nature of the southern Italian family extended beyond the mother-child relationship. Analysis of maternal versus paternal roles within the family evidenced the emergence of the mother as a central decision maker. The father played a paramount part in specifically designated decisions. However, as the center of the clan, the mother emerged as the greater figure in the vast majority of family matters.

The paternal head of the household participated in two vital areas. As the male representative of *la via vecchia*, the father exercised a limited, reactionary role in finding suitable partners for his children. Establishing solid marriages helped ensure the child's physical and social survival in the *Mezzogiorno*. His primary responsibility, though, was to earn a living that substantially contributed to the betterment of *la famiglia*. This laborious task usually required travel and long hours which resulted in the separation from family for extended periods.[77]

Over the centuries, the father's absence in search of meaningful employment spurred the inevitable rise of the mother as the central decision maker of the home. Over and above the mystical bond between mother and child, the demands of *Mezzogiorno* life encouraged children to look to the mother as the sole authority figure. These circumstances also permitted the mother to cross into the traditionally paternal roles of planting and cultivating the fields, arranging the finances, taking outside jobs, the ownership of property, and the placing of children into Italian society through accepted modes of courtship and marriage.

The cultivation of arable land, the harvesting of crops, and the distribution of food represented possibly her

greatest contribution to family welfare. The dutiful mother maximized every inch of fertile land to grow *nutrimento* for the children. In a land of decrepit economic infrastructure and isolated villages, food emerged as the *Mezzogiorno's* prized resource. The mother took on all jobs related to meals and nutrition during the father's employment absence. Since the dispersing of *nutrimento* already lay within her domain, she easily assumed the role of producer. Southern Italian society, and mothers especially, realized "the quality and quantity of the food reflect on the quality of her maternal nurturance."[78]

The preventative powers of a sound food supply encompassed more than protection from starvation or sickness. The mother's daily dispersion of *nutrimento* which resulted in the tangible health of her children, demonstrated to the entire village the competency of that family's maternal influence. A child's excellent health shielded the mother from social derision and possible ostracization as a poor provider. Due to the scarce yet necessary nature of food, the *contadini* viewed plumpness as a familial status symbol.[79] *Mezzogiorno* mothers possessed no control over rebellions, economic strife, political manipulation, or corrupt authorities, but they controlled the primary resource for family survival, food. This

control, coupled with the religious homage paid to the mother figure in *la Madonna*, took on sacred proportions. "It is altogether fitting, then, that the mother would be the creator of all these meals, the daily *communions* [italics added], and the holiday celebrations. For her role as the family's center was celebrated by her culinary arts, and not limited to it as the stereotype would have it."[80] The economic, social, and religious living conditions of the *Mezzogiorno* granted holy significance to everyday practices which in turn elevated the mother to sacred significance.

Women slowly migrated further into traditionally male realms. Many women accepted one or more jobs outside the home. Incessantly tough economic conditions along with strict social codes of behavior demanded that the mother accept any work for which money was offered, except prostitution.[81] Typically, they earned scant amounts for any number of labor-intensive tasks, most commonly cooking or cleaning. These industrious females also swabbed down stairs, walls, and floors, cut and hauled wood, or unloaded sacks of feed, fertilizer or salt.[82]

Skilled economic opportunists, these mothers engaged in any activity that brought needed money into the household. Many raised small animals that were used for barter or sold at the market to the highest bidder. Familiar with the

peculiarities and loopholes of village economics and politics, southern Italian mothers often squeezed additional funds or supplies from an employer or business associate. Ann Cornelisen wrote of several women who became, "...entrepreneurs in a small way, buying bits of land and hiring men to work it at day wages."[83]

Due to constant exposure to the day-to-day interactions of the village, these females assumed almost complete control of the family's finances. "Despite the pre-eminence of her husband, the wife's role in the economics of the family was considerable, comprising both management and insurance," noted Richard Gambino.[84] The women took responsibility for the income and economic activities of the household as well as the funds sent home by their working husbands.

The matricentral nature of the nuclear family naturally overlapped into a larger community so predicated upon familial ties and prestige. As the centers of their respective households, mothers oversaw the continuation of the families through the arrangement of marriages. The inherent connection between mother and child, the pre-existing social and religious emphasis placed upon the maternal figure, and the economic necessities of *Mezzogiorno* life slowly allowed women to seize control of this delicate

yet extremely important cultural practice. Consequently, "Although he [the father] retained the right of veto over any proposed match, often the father was not the one who initiated arrangements for the marriages of his children," declared Gambino.[85] Ann Cornelisen agreed, "Ultimately, they [mothers] decide on the size of their daughters dowries and then collect the linens piece by piece..."[86]

As the epicenter of cultural and religious life, the maternal influence naturally affected the second cornerstone of southern Italian society, the Catholic faith. *Mezzogiorno* religious and social customs established the mother as the primary transmitter of religious values. They inculcated in their offspring the Catholic traditions as defined and practice according to *Mezzogiorno* tradition. Most expressed their belief through religious devotions to *la Madonna* and specific Saints or sacramental celebrations. According to Valentine R. Winsey, "Her Church provided her with a traditional religious social life characterized by innumerable annual *festas*, all of which were initiated by her village priest, and were almost always climaxed by a procession, the patron saint which every village had, leading the way."[87] Along with the village priest, women played a lead role in the village *festas* and other religious celebrations. their contribution received special

significance since they represented the source of the two basic ingredients to any *festa*, family and food.

Local church activities and Catholic holidays grounded in cultural tradition provided *Mezzogiorno* women a conduit through which to maintain their lead roles in faith and family. Through social gatherings of spiritual or social significance, women contributed actively to village life at the familial and religious levels.[88] Despite the image of the powerful male figurehead, the southern Italian wives and mothers quietly fueled the greatest institutions of *Mezzogiorno* culture, family and religion.

Upon their eventual return to the home, *contadini* men tacitly recognized the shift in authority to the female. The husband's sporadic absences coupled with the basic tenets of *Mezzogiorno* norms and mores caused the underlying deterioration of male authority. Concurring with this theme, Leonard Covello remarked, "...cultural tradition granted a prestige to the mother that contradicted her assumed subservience to her husband."[89] As *capo di famiglia*, the father continued to play a vital role in decisions that involved the public. However, despite conventional opinion, all decisions that directly affected the health and home ultimately rested with the mother. "The father was the formal chief executive of the family," wrote

Gambino, "but the actual power was shared with the mother in an intricate pattern of interactions in which the famous female tactic *pigghiami cu bonu* (stooping to conquer) played a major part."[90]

The *contadini* women quietly yet deliberately pulled the strings behind *Mezzogiorno* culture. Exalted by her culture as the divine source of life and family, the southern Italian female entrenched herself into the most critical decisions. She patiently rose to the pinnacle of social power due to her cultural pre-eminence and the economic necessities that forced the husband out of the home for extended periods. Her stature also resulted from the interplay of cultural and religious beliefs that exalted the maternal figure. The *contadini's* spiritual world, centered upon *la Madonna*, and their physical world, centered upon the mother, combined to form a mutually dependent relationship that transformed the maternal figure into a sacred entity. This timeless dialogue between the spiritual and earthly world elevated the mother to the silent directorship of the most beloved and dynamic *Mezzogiorno* institution, *la famiglia*. As Colleen Leahy Johnson poignantly stated:

> It is true that the father was the capo di famiglia...and in this role was responsible for arbitrating disputes and making decisions that affected the relations of la famiglia with the outside world...however, the mother, as the center of the family in a society in

> which nonfamilial relationships were not meaningful, had a great deal of power in terms of internal matters. The southern Italian wife and mother kept the home, which was the source of all that gave meaning to life, managed all financial affairs, and arranged the marriages of her children, which were critical for the survival of la via vecchia..."[91]

The traditional customs of village autonomy, familial intradependence, *ben educato*, *rispetto*, hard work, "specialized" Catholicism, and unbounded love for their spiritual and earthly mother protected the *contadini* for centuries. *La via vecchia*, the value system predicated upon interwoven familial and religious beliefs, shielded these peasants and day laborers from the unforgiving *Mezzogiorno* conditions. Isolated from a rapidly industrializing world, the southern Italians relied on this venerable way of life as a means of cultural survival and ethnic identity. A thorough understanding of *la via vecchia* represented the first step toward understanding why and how Italian immigrants revitalized the practices of the Old Country in *la Merica*.

1.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 39.

2.Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale, La Storia, Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience (New York, N.Y.: Harper Collins, 1992), 46.

3.Ibid.

4.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 40.

5.Ibid.

6.Ibid., 40-41.

7.Ibid., 62.

8.Ibid., 59-60.

9.Mangione and Morreale, La Storia, 51.

10.Ibid.

11.Ibid.

12.Ibid, 63.

13.Mangionne and Morreale, La Storia, 37.

14.Mangionne and Morreale, La Storia, 37.

15.Ann Cornelisen, Women of the Shadows (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1976), 22.

16.Mangione and Morreale, La Storia, 64.

17.Ibid., 61.

18.Ibid., 64.

19.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 48.

20.Mangione and Morreale, La Storia, 59.

21.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 49.

22.Ibid.

23.Femminella and Quadagno, "The Italian American Family," in Ethnic Families in America, 62. Also look Leonard Covello, The Social Background of the Italian American School Child (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 23-33.

24.Humbert S. Nelli, Italians in Chicago 1880-1930: A Study in Ethnic Mobility (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 4.

25.Luigi Villari, Italian Life in Town and Country (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 13.

26.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 54.

27.Ibid., 5.

28.Ibid., 7-8.

29.John H. Mariano, Italian Contribution to American Democracy, 68.

30.Ibid., 4.

31.Squier and Quadagno, "The Italian American Family," 109.

32.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 31.

33.Squier and Quadagno, "The Italian American Family," 111.

34.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 74.

35.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 18-19.

36.Ibid.

37.Feminella and Quadagno, "The Italian American Family," 68.

38.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 11.

39.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 225.

40.Squier and Quadagno, "The Italian American Family," 111.

41.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 80.

42.Ibid., 81.

43.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 84.

44.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 20.

45.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 84.

46.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 15.

47.Ibid., 20. Also look Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old.

48.Ibid., 15.

49.Ibid.

50.Ibid., 23.

51.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 90.

52.Ibid.

53.Clement L. Valletta, "Family Life: The Question of Independence," Studies in Italian American Social History: Essays in Honor of Leonard Covello, Francesco Cordasco, ed. (Totawa: Rowman and Littlefield), 154.

54.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 93.

55.Ibid.

56.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 27.

57.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 94.

58.Ibid., 96.

59.Ibid., 97.

60.Ibid.

61.Ibid., 96.

62.Look Leonard Covello, The Social Background of the Italian American School Child (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967) and Joseph Lopreato, Italian Americans (New York: Random House, 1970), 101.

63.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 63-64.

64.Valletta, "Family Life," 154.

65.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 150.

66.Cornelisen, Women of the Shadows, 26.

67.Mangione and Morreale, La Storia, 39.

68.Ibid, 39-40.

69.Ibid.

70.Ibid.

71.Covello, The Italian American School Child, 213.

72.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 146.

73.Ibid.

74.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 99-100.

75.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 24.

76.Cornelisen, Women of the Shadows, 26.

77.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 14.

78.Ibid., 91.

79.Ibid.

80.Ibid., 24.

81.Cornelisen, Women of the Shadows, 23-24.

82.Ibid.

83.Ibid., 29.

84.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 26.

85.Ibid., 7.

86.Cornelisen, Women of the Shadows, 26.

87.Valentine Rossilli Winsey, "The Italian Immigrant Women Who Arrived in the United States Before World War I," in Francesco Cordasco, ed., Studies in Italian American Social History (Totawa: Rowan and Littlefield, 1975), 200.

88.Mangione and Morreale, La Storia, 38.

89.Covello, The Social Background of the Italian American School Child, 213.

90.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 206.

91.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 65.

PART II: TRANSPLANTATION AND REBIRTH

The southern Italian newcomers, hardened by centuries of tumult, arrived in America only to face new challenges. They left the economically stagnant, rural world of south Italy and found themselves surrounded by the industrial, often confusing world of urban America. Despite the change in setting, the Italians confronted obstacles similar to those of the Old Country. The forces of nativism, ethnic prejudice, and economic oppression once again came to the forefront.

The southern Italian men and women who came to the United States in the 1880s and 1890s came to work hard. They travelled by steamship away from la miseria: the world of unemployment, disease, overtaxation, and political manipulation. While the future held a different outcome, initially the vast majority of immigrants only wanted to make enough money to return to Italy and better their families.

As in prior centuries, family welfare superseded all other concerns. The decision to emigrate was a family decision, taken as part of the primary goal of family survival.[1] The conditions of la miseria forced many southern Italians to emigrate on behalf of the family.

While population in Italy increased 25% from 1871 to 1905, the economic conditions of southern Italy steadily declined.[2] Wine, citrus fruits, and wheat, staple commodities of the Italian economy, plummeted in price on the world market.[3] Forced into action to maintain survival, one or several family members left home and travelled to the United States to earn money and send it back to the family. A Sicilian of Italian Harlem described his motivation for leaving his homeland:

> We young men used to hear about America from people who had been there. We used to get together and dream about the kind of life we could have, and compare it to the life we had. Some of us would talk it over with our families. They like the idea of emigrating and bettering ourselves and often made tremendous sacrifices in order to give us the chance to come to America. Of course, it was understood, that we should send money to them, and either come back to Italy to live with them or send for them.[4]

Immigration to America, therefore, served as much more than simply an escape from la miseria. Many southern Italian immigrants travelled to America to ensure the survival of family and culture.

First generation Italian immigrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were steadfastly loyal to their kin back home. An individuals worked to enhance the family's honor and ameliorate its economic

status, not his own. Referred to a as a "family-centered loyalty," the first generation Italian immigrants remained preoccupied with family members still living in the *Mezzogiorno*.[5] They toiled doggedly to earn enough money to bring their next of kin to the New World. Once all significant relatives arrived in the United States, virtually all ties to the Old Country were cut.[6] Clearly, as in prior centuries, the southern Italians' first loyalties went to the family, not to their native country. Due to an exploited and divided past, Italians also lacked an overall ethnic commitment.

First generation immigrants endured countless hardships to help facilitate a prompt reunion. Among these early arrivals, 78% were males, 47% of whom were illiterate.[7] In this largely male environment, the arduous process of finding adequate work became paramount. Strapped with little education and an inherent mistrust for anyone other than family, most reluctantly worked for textile mills, garment factories, or construction companies infested with discriminatory policies and undercutting bosses. They slept in horribly cramped, unsanitary living quarters provided by opportunistic employers who charged the workers for such conditions. In 1912, Dr. Antonio Stella conducted a study of Italian American housing conditions of lower New York

City. Dr. Stella discovered that in certain places on East 113th Street, as many as 1,231 people lived in as few as 120 rooms.[8] These figures represented an average of ten people to a room with less than 18 cubic meters of air for each individual.[9]

Italians ranked among the lowest wage earners of all ethnic groups in the United States. Prior to World War I, New York City residents required $876 per year to maintain a minimum standard of living. Those Italian immigrants fortunate enough to find steady work earned as much as $10 per week.[10] Many garment industry workers earned 8 cents an hour; others made $1.25 for a full week's work.[11]

As relative latecomers to the wave of immigration to the U.S., the Italians entered the undercutting and competitive world of "ethnic America." The previously established northern Italian population which arrived decades earlier maintained an inherent prejudice toward their southern counterparts.[12] The northerners resented the southern Italians competition for already hotly contested economic opportunities.

The scramble for meaningful employment evoked further censure from entrenched ethnic groups. One second generation Italian remembered:

> One would have thought they [the Italian immigrants] would have had a sympathetic welcome from the German and Irish immigrants,

> who had preceded them and knew from experience how difficult it was to make a new home in a new country. But these older immigrant groups had no love for the Sicilians or for any Italians, for that matter. As far as they were concerned, the new immigrants were intruders who represented a threat to their jobs and were deserving of nothing but scorn. The contempt they helped to generate with such terms as "Dago" and "Wop" spread throughout the country.[13]

The Irish immigrant population, 80% of whom arrived in America by 1914, represented one of the Italian immigrant's most significant adversaries.[14] As Italian immigration peaked at the turn of the century, the inveterate Irish fiercely defended their economic and social status. In 1904, John Mitchell, president of the heavily Irish and British-American United Mine Workers Association, spoke to his colleagues:

> No matter how decent and self-respecting and hard working the aliens who are flooding this country may be, they are invading the land of Americans, and whether they know it or not, are helping to take the bread out of American mouths. America for Americans should be the motto of every citizen whether he be a working man or a capitalist.[15]

Fifty years of prior exposure to American economic, social, and employment conditions resulted in a culturally defensive Irish contingent highly protective of its position in blue collar America.

Irish and Italian interests also clashed over religious

preferences. The Italian *contadini* brought to America a deeply cherished form of Catholic worship whose organization rarely extended beyond village boundaries. Southern Italian Catholicism represented a unique blend of orthodox Catholic teachings, myth, and occasionally extraordinary rituals characteristic of one geographic region or village. They thrived on family celebration on religious holidays and the fostering personal relationships with God through the intercession of the saints. Accustomed to a highly specialized form of religious worship built on the family and the home, the Southern Italians inevitably clashed with the centralized American Catholic Church saturated by an Irish clergy.

This contrast in religious philosophy and practice widened an already sizeable gap between the two cultures. As noted by Femminella and Quadagno, "Almost all Irish were dismayed by the religious style of the Italians, particularly with respect to liturgical observance, doctrinal matters, and the relationship between priest and people."[16] A church dominated by Irish nuns and clergy further agitated the southern Italian unwillingness to faithfully observe the liturgical celebrations not already prevalent in their own culture. This separation permeated all facets of Italian culture, including childrearing.

William V. D'Antonio, another second generation Italian, remarked, "We were Catholic, but not fanatics. So, we were not sent to parochial schools. My mother must have had some bad times with the Irish nuns who dominated the system; she didn't say much but she was not about to let us come under their control, at least not more than necessary."[17]

Religious differences along with economic competition and the language barrier served as the catalysts for dwindling communication between the two cultures. The second generation Sicilian Jerre Mangione stated flatly:

> Generally, there was little communication between my relatives and the non-Italian world. Nowhere was this more evident than at St. Bridget, a nearby Catholic Church where most of my relatives worshipped. The parish priest was a short-tempered Irishman, who deeply resented the fact that most of his congregation now consisted of Italians, many of whom could not understand a word he said... My brother and I deplored his obvious dislike of Sicilians in his congregation, particularly his habit of bullying them for not contributing enough money for support of the church.[18]

Such deep-rooted conflicts embedded into future generations promoted long-term cultural isolation and self-reliance. As sociologist and historian John Russo noted, "It took three generations for Italian Americans to "feel at home" in the American church."[19]

Concomitant with the age old problems of cultural discrimination and prejudicial attitudes, obstacles unique to the American experience confronted the southern Italian

people. The enticing pleasures of urban America threatened the solidarity of the Italian home and family. Parents, firm advocates of traditional values and practices, watched their children marvel at the dazzling American world of self-autonomy and individual expression. The resulting dilemma caused considerable consternation among second generation southern Italians. According to Jerre Mangione:

> For all their wisdom, they failed to understand the dilemma of the American-born children who were being pulled in two opposite directions, on the one hand by their parents with their insistence on old world traditions, on the other by their teachers, whose new world ideas were often at variance with those of their parents.[20]

Another second generation Italian American, Andrew Rolle, referred to these distinctly American obstacles as "disruptive changes...that could ravage the authority of the immigrant family unless a father or mother faced up to various crucial challenges...The stability of the home gave way to a sudden need for plasticity and adaptability."[21]

The "disruptive changes" of prejudice, the greater personal freedom of children, and the economic necessities of a undercutting urban environment represented only the most recent threats to Italian familial and cultural unity. Yet, the Italian immigrants, formerly the southern *contadini*, successfully maintained the ancient values of

family and religion despite centuries of a hostile social and political environment. The ability to adapt to outside conditions while fostering a traditional environment internally was a centuries old skill mastered long ago. Due to the re-emergence of the age old obstacles of economic, social, and cultural alienation and manipulation from outside authorities, the *contadini* logically turned to *la via vecchia* for survival. "In response to a lack of acceptance," explained Femminella and Quadagno, "Italian immigrants reestablished their village life here as far as possible. This meant the creation of a new kind of *campanilismo* along with the usual distrust of strangers that goes with it."[22] The former *contadini* readily built fresh environments centered upon the inherent distrust of outside authority, their unique practice of Catholicism, and most importantly, family.

As their numbers steadily grew, the culturally, socially, religiously, and linguistically foreign southern Italians re-constructed their former environment. Typical of late nineteenth and early twentieth century immigrant groups, the Italians resided in densely populated urban neighborhoods clearly demarcated by specific streets. Although ethnicity represented the defining demographic category of the neighborhood, Italian immigrants drew

distinct lines between groups possessing divergent backgrounds in Italy. Typical of the *Mezzogiorno*, the southern Italians further divided their new American neighborhoods according to former region, village, and family. As Femminella and Quadagno noted in "The Italian American Family," "It is not surprising that when Italian villagers gravitated to America, they sought out their *paesani* who had come ahead of them and as soon as possible began to re-establish many of the typical village customs and social relations..."[23] New arrivals to *la Merica* migrated quickly to friends and family, thus maintaining many Old Country commonalities and divisions.

These Italian neighborhoods represented elaborate microcosms of the villages of the *Mezzogiorno*. Residents constructed or manipulated the most important physical surroundings, their churches and homes, as reflections of the village originals. They spoke Italian in the home and throughout the neighborhood. A self-sufficient, village atmosphere emerged which met fully the needs of the individual, the family, and the larger ethnic group. "They shopped in Italian stores, and frequented Italian dentists, doctors, lawyers, shoemakers, and barbers," recalled Mangione.[24] Accustomed to self-reliance and village isolation, the southern Italians recreated an old-world

environment grounded in the familiar traditions practice in the *Mezzogiorno*. They lived on American soil, worked in American factories, and sought acceptance in the larger American society. Yet, this resilient culture, forever faithful to its foundations, simultaneously broadened the definition of "American" by impregnating the host American culture with a specialized set of values and traditions of *la via vecchia*.

The immigrants' tenacious hold on *la via vecchia*, with its stringent codes and total devotion to family and faith, gave rise to this "new form of campanilismo." A dialogue emerged between the old practices of the *contadini* and American values, attitudes, and ideals. The Italians responded by creating a semi-permeable society that gave entrance only to those influences deemed homogenous to their culture. As in the *Mezzogiorno*, they resisted stubbornly and outside entity that threatened *la via vecchia*, i.e. the family.

They frequently demonstrated their ability to uphold old world customs while slowly burrowing themselves into American society. For example, economic necessity forced some Italian American women to take jobs outside the home. The mother's occasional absence suggested to early twentieth century American researchers the deterioration of the family

intensive Italian culture. However, a clear understanding of the practices of the *Mezzogiorno* and *la via vecchia* illustrated otherwise. Discussed earlier, *contadini* women, who often worked outside of the home in the Old Country, managed the family finances, and engaged in the business and economic realms of the village. Moreover, Italian American women only accepted those jobs that did not threaten the stability of the family and the rules of *la via vecchia*.[25] Thus, the former *contadini* successfully acclimated themselves to the demands of American society while never compromising their inveterate beliefs.

This phenomenon continued through the recognition of weekly rituals and special gatherings based on the religious feast days and cultural holidays of the *Mezzogiorno*. These celebrations, which ranged in size from the nuclear family to hundreds of friends and relatives, connected the immigrants to the *Mezzogiorno*.[26] Conducted in America, these gatherings took on even greater significance. Large turnouts strengthened the Italians' dedication to their old ways and helped establish their identity among American culture. One second-generation Italian American recalled:

> The Sicilians were always having parties, mostly family affairs, not only for birthdays, saints days and anniversaries, but also when a child was baptized, when he received first Communion, when he was Christened, and when he was graduated

> from school. Being together engendered in them a feeling of emotional security.[27]

Gatherings centered upon faith and family became so ritualized, Colleen Leahy-Johnson commented, "It is a rare family that is not embedded in a system composed of spouse and children, parents, brothers and sisters, and their children. This system means frequent visits; and weekends, in particular Sundays, are devoted to some family social affair."[28] Symbolic of more than the ripples of a fading culture, these rituals meant as much to the immigrant population as they did to *Mezzogiorno* society. As Clement L. Valletta appropriately remarked, "Even in the New World, the immigrant proletariat in the construction or garment industries lived to celebrate in these traditional ways."[29]

The undying loyalty to the venerable customs spilled over into the most routine activities. Despite the sporadic demands of the industrial economic schedule, Italian Americans zealously set aside time for the *pranzo*. Richard Gambino noted that, "Although the routine of American life has altered the schedule, especially of daytime meals and weekly meals, Italian-Americans still cling to the ceremonies of the evening and Sunday pranzi."[30] These meals, replicas of their *Mezzogiorno* predecessors, usually included cheeses, salamis, a pasta dish along with fish or

poultry, and some form of dessert. Moreover, and in stark contrast to American culture, the Italian Americans consumed wine at virtually every meal. "Wine is quite properly considered a natural food," exclaimed Gambino, "and to the consternation of American school-teachers, social workers, and visiting nurses, immigrants regularly gave their children small quantities of wine from the age of two on up."[31] As before, the preparation and distribution of these meals came from the family's powerful center, the mother.

The Italian American immigrant's revitalization of the practices of *la via vecchia* benefited them in several ways. First, as their natural reaction to economic, social, and political adversities, *la via vecchia* gave the immigrants a sense of identity in America through the celebration of their unique past. Second, their reliance on the traditional value system allowed them to establish a foothold in the United States while learning to succeed at the American game. The persistence of *la via vecchia* also produced more concrete, tangible benefits. Despite their unfortunate position as the lowest wage earners among immigrant groups, Gambino argues the percentage of pauperism among Italian Americans was the lowest of all ethnic groups.[32] Similarly, Phyllis H. Williams' 1938 work, *South Italian Folkways In Europe and America*, found that during

the Great Depression, the percentage of Italian Americans in institutions of charity was remarkably low.[33]

As the mid-twentieth century approached, the dedication to the practices of the *Mezzogiorno* did not decline. In a series of oral interviews and questionnaires, Mary Jane Capozzoli Ingui found that 67% of second generation and 60% of third generation Italian American women married Italian men.[34] Furthermore, 85% of third generation women interviewed married Catholic men, an amazing testament to their unshakable devotion to their faith.[35] In his August 22, 1969 apostolic letter, *De Cora Pastoralis Migratorum*, Pope Paul VI reminded Italian immigrants not to become "pressure cooked" into mirroring their host culture. Rather, the Pope called for the traditional expressions of culture, language, and religion.[36] Thirty-one priests from the Diocese of Brooklyn enrolled in Italian language classes in 1972.[37]

Hence, the apotheosis of the beliefs and customs of *la via vecchia* thrived among Italian Americans of the twentieth-century. The newly arrived *contadini* naturally turned to what they knew best, family and faith, the building blocks of their former unforgiving environment. When the competitive and occasionally hostile environment of America's urban centers challenged their survival, the

Italian immigrants revitalized these old world values. Italian immigrants molded the malleable surface of *la via vecchia* to meet the demands of America without sacrificing the core values protected inside. Discussed by Femminella and Quadaqno:

> The pace of modern urban life and the pressures of our industrial society frequently militate against actively continuing these extended family relationships. However, when residential dispersion precludes daily visiting, kinship ties are maintained symbolically through such devices as regular gatherings at holidays or feasts, scrupulous attendance at wakes and weddings, the remembrance of the birthdays and anniversaries of at least the older members of the family, the casual felicity of occasional visits, and finally, the profound certainty of assistance if help is sought.[38]

Accustomed to the physical isolation of villages and families in the *Mezzogiorno*, the transplanted Italian Americans underwent geographical, social and cultural isolation in the New World. The familiar themes of village independence, religious devotion, and familial self-reliance quickly came to the forefront. Yet, this resilient culture brilliantly accomplished their goals as Americans while tenaciously clinging to *Mezzogiorno* customs. They built fresh physical, social, cultural, and religious environments with *la via vecchia* at the unshakable core. The Italian American community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

captured flawlessly this phenomena.

1.Robert Anthony Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 18. Also look Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 81-82.

2.Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, eds., Ethnic Americans: A History of Immigration, 3rd edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 44.

3.Ibid.

4."Personal Interview. Man, 58 years of age. Came to America about 1908, married here. Location: Girgenti, Sicily. Class: Landless Workers," interview by Leonard Covello, the Leonard Covello Papers, The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Philadelphia.

5.Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street, 19.

6.Ibid.

7.Dinnerstein and Reimers, eds., Ethnic Americans, 46.

8.Mariano, The Italian Contribution to American Democracy, 17.

9.Ibid.

10.Dinnerstein and Reimers, Ethnic Americans, 53.

11.Ibid.

12.Femminella and Quadagno, "The Italian-American Family," 62.

13.Jerre Mangione, "On Being a Sicilian American," in Italians in the United States: A Repository of Rare Tracts and Miscellanea, Salvatore Mondello, Humbert S. Nelli, Lydio F. Tomasi, and Sylvan F. Tomasi, eds., (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 40.

14.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 72.

15.Ibid.

16.Femminella and Quadagno, "The Italian-American Family," 68.

17.William V. D'Antonio, "Ethnicity and Assimilation: A Reconsideration," in Studies in Italian American Social History: Essays in Honor of Leonard Covello, Francesco Cordasco, ed. (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975), 12.

18.Mangione, "On Being a Sicilian American," 46-47.

19.Nicholas John Russo, "From Mezzogiorno to Metropolis: Brooklyn's New Italian Immigrants; A Sociological, Pastoral, Academic Approach," in Studies in Italian American Social History: Essays in Honor of Leonard Covello, Francesco Cordasco, ed. (Totowa: Rowan and Littlefield, 1975), 121.

20.Mangione, "On Being a Sicilian American," 49.

21.Andrew Rolle, "The American Italians: Psychological and Social Adjustments," in Studies in Italian American Social History: Essays in Honor of Leonard Covello, Francesco Cordasco, ed. (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975), 106-7.

22.Femminella and Quadagno, "The Italian-American Family," 69.

23.Ibid., 63-64.

24.Mangione, "On Being a Sicilian American," 47.

25.Femminella and Quadagno, "The Italian American Family," 70-71.

26.Look Robert A. Orsi, The Madonna of 115th St.

27.Mangione, "On Being a Sicilian American," 47.

28.Leahy Johnson, Growing Up and Growing Old, 80.

29.Clement L. Valletta, "Family Life," 154.

30.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 20.

31.Ibid., 23.

32.Ibid., 29.

33.Ibid.

34.Mary Jane Capozzoli Ingui, "Mothers and Daughters: Nassau County Italian American Women," in Immigrant America: European Ethnicity in the United States, Timothy Walch, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 104.

35.Ibid.

36.Pope Paul VI, "De Cora Pastoralis Migratorum," 22 August 1969, in Russo, "From Mezzogiorno to Metropolis," 127.

37.Russo, "From Mezzogiorno to Metropolis," 129.

38.Femminella and Quadagno, "The Italian American Family," 82.

PART III: THE EMBODIMENT

The formational years of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church of Youngstown, Ohio resonated with these fundamental values. The leadership of several key figures of the Italian community exemplified the tenets of *la via vecchia* while organizing the Church. The immigrants constructed a physical, social, and spiritual environment with the interwoven religious and familial values of the *Mezzogiorno* as the cornerstone.

Born near Naples in southern Italy and educated in Florence, Reverend Stabile was a professor of Greek, Latin, and philosophy. He worked as an Apostolic Missionary and arrived in *la Merica* around the turn of the century. He came to Younstown following several years of missionary work in the Diocese of Newark, New Jersey. In order to meet the needs of the rapidly growing Italian contingent flocking to Youngstown's expanding steel and manufacturing industries, Reverend Stabile began organizing Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, the second Italian parish of the area, in the Fall of 1908.[1]

Prior to official organizational efforts, the Italian faithful conducted services in the basement of St. Columba Church, also of Youngstown. On September 3, 1908, Father

Stabile and members of the Italian community of Brier Hill petitioned the Diocese, then based in Cleveland, for permission to receive a $10,000 loan and build a Church. They selected two lots on E. Wood St. "extending between parallel lines to Summit Ave., having a frontage of 86.46 feet on both streets and a depth of 237.6 feet."[2] The site was situated on top of a small hill which overlooked downtown Youngstown and the growing Italian population of Smoky Hollow directly below.

Since the $10,000 loan paid for only a portion of the construction costs, the Italian work ethic filled the economic and labor gaps. Concurrent with the *Mezzogiorno* values of independence, community self-reliance, and hard work, the future parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel shouldered the financial and physical burden of building the Church. By the time of the petition, the congregation already saved $4,000 which they used to purchase the Summit Ave. lot.[3] They met the financial demand through a $5,000 loan and the fund-raising efforts of Louis Adovasio, a local community leader who became an important "*membri*" of the parish administration shortly after its formation.[4] Moreover, as the petition noted, "The excavation work was donated as was the material of the foundation and the work, and this debt...will be taken care of by the congregation of

about one hundred paying families and as many more who may contribute something in the event of a Church being erected. The *annual income* [italics added] of the parish is estimated at $2,500."[5] Given these circumstances, the $4,000 previously collected and the amount of labor donated represented an astronomical amount of devotion and sacrifice. The Old World Italian values of self-reliance, hard work, and cultural independence came to the forefront. Similar to life in the *Mezzogiorno*, they believed in sacrificing all for the perpetuation of family and faith.

In the spirit of the *campanilismo*, in 1908 the future parishioners excavated a "79 foot-long basement rising about seven feet from the ground and roofed for Church use."[6] Parishioners drew the plans and laid the foundation without formal permission from Reverend J.P. Farrelly, the current Diocesan Bishop.[7] Such initiative was indicative of the Southern Italian values of village autonomy and the inherent mistrust of outside authority. As *contadini*, the southern Italians were frequently victimized by manipulative outside authorities. As newly arrived Americans, they naturally carried their centuries of mistrust with them. Regardless of Bishop Farrelly's intentions, *la via vecchia* dictated village and familial self-reliance, hard work, and sacrifice.

The death of Reverend Emmanuel Stabile in the spring of 1911 upset the local community and temporarily undermined the building progress. The new pastor, Father Vito Franco, came to Mount Carmel on May 11, 1911 also as an Apostolic Missionary. Father Franco hailed from the southern Italian town of Bella, in the province of Potenza. Only two years after his ordination in Naples, Father Franco travelled to Niles, Ohio and began building the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish there. Following a short stint in Niles, Father Franco arrived in Youngstown and embarked on a life long journey of building and guiding the *Chiesa Italiana Del Carmine*.[8]

Pastor Franco spent the first eighteen months of his new assignment as a cultural emissary of the local Italian community. He engaged in constant dialogue with Irish Reverend J.P. Farrelly, the current Bishop of the Diocese. As an Italian, Franco sympathized with the local community's devotion to their cultural practices. Yet, he also realized the necessity of recognizing the directives of the Catholic Church in the United States. Franco faced the unenviable task of reconciling the unwavering values of his native Italian culture and the requests and regulations of his Catholic Church superiors.

The Italian immigrants left their native land to escape

centuries of oppression and manipulation. They came to America to forge a better life for families, free from potentially dangerous external influences. The organizational efforts of Father Franco and the future parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church demonstrated this theme. Holding fast to their belief in village independence coupled with an ingrained mistrust of outside authority, the local Italian community controlled every aspect of the second pillar of their culture, the practice of Catholicism. Every individual of the society participated in the faith. "When I came to Youngstown," wrote Father Franco, "...the books of the administration of both churches were in the hands of the people...There was a kind of anarchy in Brier Hill because every man and woman was a president or kind of Deaconness in that church."[9] Behind Father Franco's sarcasm lay a profound insight into the Italian immigrants who settled in the Mahoning Valley. They hailed from a region in which they pulled the strings behind the two building blocks of their culture, faith and family. As Americans, the parishioners of Mt. Carmel remained intransigent on these issues. After all, they organized the members, raised the funds, owned the property, excavated the basement, and laid the foundation.

Displeased with the local Italian initiative and believing the basement too small to accommodate the

projected numbers, Bishop Farrelly ordered the basement enlarged. Franco maintained constant contact with the Bishop as he appeased his superiors and his native people. Early in 1913, Franco started organizing collective support. He informed Bishop Farrelly that by, "...calling the people to meetings, to lectures, and to this end, spiritual entertainments I have secured...subscriptions for the amount of over $11,000 and the work is not finished yet."[10] By July 15, 1913, the Church saved nearly $7,000 of the required $11,000 enlargement costs.[11] The Italian parishioners complied grudgingly with the Bishop's requests and enlarged the basement by twenty-six feet.

As the project ended, Father Franco entreated Bishop Farrelly to sanction the full construction of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. A revealing letter stated:

> I remark that we have several thousands of Italians here. It is very dangerous to go against their will. At the present they are very united in this matter of the Church and I would express my opinion that the matter should be cared very carefully. The leaders of the local societies are giving a great help. I appeal once more to your Lordship's indulgence, because, if a <u>current</u> of antipathy should be established between people and Church it would never be destroyed among the Italians. With the proposed addition over 500 people can be accommodated, and I think <u>for the Italians the Church is never small.</u> [12]

As an Italian, Reverend Franco instinctively sensed the cultural strength of his people. They reluctantly and

cautiously complied with the Bishop's request, thereby expediting the construction of the Church. The congregation balanced the demands of the American society at large while protecting their belief in faith and family. Although Bishop J.P. Farrelly did not attend the ceremony, the Italians parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church laid the cornerstone on October 12, 1913.[13]

During construction, Father Franco turned his attention to organizing the parish and guiding the flock. Bishop Farrelly, aided by Franco, wrested the abstract and the deed of the property from the hands of the parishioners by spring of 1916. Prior to the transfer, the deed remained in the hands of Frank Zarlenga, an active parishioner and ethnic leader.[14] Only three months following the arrival of the documentation, however, the Bishop initiated another crisis for Franco and the parish. Farrelly intimated plans to transfer Reverend Franco away from the Italians of Mount Carmel. A frantic urgency marked Franco's response of May 25, 1916:

> It would not be advisable to give an unexpected news of change to this unfortunate people of Youngstown while even persons who never liked the name of the Catholic Church are now working with a striking earnestness. These things must be considered abnormal amongst our emigrants... I have dealt here with people who had started things not according to the rules of the Diocese, buying property and administrating it their way.[15]

Franco exhibited no intention of leaving the religious institution he worked so hard to build. He defended adamantly his significant role in the community and he displayed an ardent desire to remain at "the beautiful Church which is going to be the standard of the Italian Churches of the Diocese."[16]

Father Franco's letter revealed more than simply his own intentions. As a fellow Italian, he knew that the parishioners of Mt. Carmel would stubbornly resist any change in leadership. As the occasional victims of the organized Church while living in the *Mezzogiorno*, southern Italians recently removed from the Old Country placed little trust in Church hierarchy or clergy. Centuries past taught them that even representatives of the Church occasionally exploited the *contadini*. Since his arrival, Father Franco toiled doggedly to earn the trust and dedication of the local Italian people. He realized a change in leadership undermined the delicate relationship between the parish and local officials of the Catholic Church. As the lynchpin of his community, Father Vito Franco's removal foreshadowed the deterioration of that fragile trust. Fortunately for Mount Carmel Church, Bishop Farrelly capitulated and allowed Franco to continue the organization of the new Church.

Dedicated on November 4, 1916, Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Church stood as the physical embodiment of southern Italian culture. Built of red brick in Romanesque design, with a Beaux Arts period mixtures of Italian Baroque and Georgian revival forms, the Church, in the words of former pastor Joseph Iati, "complimentary united Italian and Colonial cultures." [17] A relatively small, intimate structure, a 1952 property appraisal noted the building's "ordinary brick..with stone trim," rising "one high story."[18] A slate covered roof joisted on wooden trusses.[19] The builders imported the bell in the tower, a silver, brass, and bronze replica of the one used in the village Church of Bella, Potenza, Italy.[20] Dedicated to *la Madonna*, the front facade displayed a bas-relief lunnette of the Virgin Mary. The image depicted *la Madonna* with child, cloaked in the Italian colors of red, green, and white. The lunnette stood above the main entrance of the Church watching over her spiritual family who entered there.

Perhaps the greatest physical manifestation of the southern Italian values evident in the structure were the stained glass windows. Each window depicted an individual or theme central to the religious practices of *la via vecchia*. Upon entering the Church, "One begins a tour of Mt. Carmel's stained glass windows with, appropriately enough, a depiction of Our Lady of Mount Carmel appearing to

St. Simon Stock."[21] Typical of *Mezzogiorno* culture, all visitors first paid *rispetto* to the maternal figure of the spiritual and earthly home. The second window portrayed Jesus Christ and the Blessed Mother side by side. Fr. Gerald DeLucia, the author of a pamphlet describing the windows, aptly described the southern Italian connection to these timeless patrons: "He is the good shepherd of Psalm 23 who leads us safely through this life and home to heaven, She is the Queen of the Holy Rosary who calls us closer to her Son and offers us a Mother's Love."[22] The themes of maternal reliance and the attainment of heaven through the intercession of *la Madonna* came to the forefront. The third window, a depiction of the Archangel Gabriel informing *la Madonna* that she carried the infant Jesus in her womb, also celebrated the *contadini* emphasis on the mother-child relationship. Again, they believed through the maternal womb emerged the Savior of the World who put an end to all suffering.

The next window, an illumination of St. Lucy, symbolized their belief in unyielding loyalty to the faith. Catholic teaching held St. Lucy died in 304 C.E. rather than give up her faith in Christ. The *contadini* brought this devotion into the familial as well as the religious realms. "St. Lucy has always been both a courageous example and a

powerful intercessor for the Italian people," recorded Father DeLucia.[23] The practice of gaining heavenly favor through the intercession saints continued through St. Lucy. Window number five contained images of St. Pascal Baylon, a Franciscan Brother heralded for his intense love for the poor, and St. Mark the Evangelist. Fr. DeLucia remarked that Saint Mark wrote his gospel for the earliest Christians of Rome and thus, "Italians can see in St. Mark the origins of our Catholic Faith."[24] The last window on the left, an image of Jesus praying at the Garden of Gethsemane prior to the crucifixion, captured the *Mezzogiorno* belief in faith despite enormous suffering. Accustomed to oppressive living conditions, the *contadini* identified with unjust, prolonged suffering at the hands of manipulative outside authority.

Moving around the Church, window number seven of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, Patron Saint of Catholic young people, symbolized the Italian emphasis on youth participation in faith and family. The next window portrayed St. Stephen, patron saint of the town of Baiana, Campagna, and St. Vincent Ferrer, patron saint of the town of Pietrabbondante, Molise. According to Reverend DeLucia, "Both of these towns were points of origin for many early immigrants to Youngstown and many early parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel."[25] St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of Italy and

champion of the poor, adorned the next window. As a propertyless, poor class of farmers and day laborers, the *contadini* flocked to a saint renowned for abandoning wealth to devote his life to the poor. The next stop, an image of St. Margaret Mary of Alacoque, a seventeenth century nun who received a vision of Christ revealing to her, "and indeed to the entire world His Sacred Heart, a heart on fire with love for the world and a heart broken by the world's indifference."[26] The Sacred Heart of Jesus, a powerful symbol of Jesus' undying mercy and compassion for the suffering, remained embedded in the former *contadini* culture. St. Anthony of Padua, the "unofficial Patron Saint of the Italian people," filled the eleventh window. The window pictured Saint Anthony seeing a vision of the Christ Child while praying in his room. Fr. DeLucia, describing the parish devotion to St. Anthony, stated, "As tenderly as Anthony held Christ, so tenderly does he hold our prayers and petitions and presents them to Christ."[27] "Quite appropriately," wrote Reverend DeLucia, the final stained glass window displayed the Visitaion of Blessed Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizebeth. The fourth of twelve windows dedicated to *la Madonna*, the Italian fondness with the Mother of Christ clearly shone. The stained glass windows of Mount Carmel Church masterfully embodied the most

prevalent themes of a centuries old *Mezzogiorno* culture transplanted and reborn in Youngstown, Ohio. As Father DeLucia succinctly concluded, "We realize that we have surrounding us as we worship not only a priceless work of art but also our own story, the story of our Salvation, the story of our Catholic Tradition, the story of our Italian heritage, and the ongoing story of our living Faith."[28] Clearly, Mt. Carmel Church stood as a physical testament to its parishioners unique past.

Seven years after its formal dedication, the Church encountered its first major setback. A disastrous fire on June 12, 1923, destroyed the interior of the Church.[29] The blaze gutted the Holkamp Pipe Organ, several windows, pews, carpeting, the floor, a candelabra, a brass chandelier, ten statues, and three altars were either damaged or completely destroyed.[30] Officials estimated the overall damage at fifteen to twenty thousand dollars.[31]

Yet, as they had in centuries past, the Italians of Mt. Carmel banded together and overcame daunting obstacles. Work began immediately to rebuild the Church. Accordingly, "The work was made possible by parishioners and friends, who generously gave of their time and money to acquire funds for the project."[32] The industrious parishioners dedicated the restored Church on December 16 of the same year.

Once again on its feet, the Mt. Carmel parish family prospered. Already the architectural and structural reflection of its Italian people, the social atmosphere also thrived according to *la via vecchia*. Membership and participation grew steadily under the pastorate of Father Franco. A June 27, 1930 article of the Youngstown Vindicator entitled, "Mt. Carmel Parish Flourishes--Congregation Prospers Under Leadership of Father Franco--To Build School," commended the Reverend's Efforts.[33] Mt. Carmel planned to erect an eight room school expected to cost $100,000.[34] Once completed, it represented a perfect location of learning for the children of the parish. In compliance with the traditional practices of *ben educato* and *rispetto*, the over 400 Italian children of Mt. Carmel currently enrolled in Sunday school classes learned to adore faith and family.[35] According to Church regulation, Father Franco said all masses in Latin. Never abandoning their regional ethnicity, Franco gave all sermons only in Italian. The article also pointed to the bulging social organizations of the Church. The Society of the Crucifix and the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Sorority, both women's organizations, overflowed with new members whose purpose was to, "look after the social life of the young people."[36] As in the Old Country, the forever active southern Italian females assumed

the maternal roles among the nuclear and parish family.

The close knit community based on religious and familial values weathered the economically erratic 1930s. It survived the depression years and watched closely the turbulent events occurring in Europe during the latter half of the decade. At the United States' entrance into the Second World War, the majority of the Mt. Carmel parishioners declared allegiance to their relatively new American homeland. Although dedicated to the pursuance of *la via vecchia*, they maintained their fruitful role as Americans. A new start in the United Stated allowed them to ameliorate their lives while remaining faithful to the familial and religious values of *la via vecchia*. They worked in American factories, engaged in American politics, stimulated the American economy, and lived on American soil. Many sacrificed their lives to protect not only the American cause, but also to protect the improved lives of their families. They contributed wholeheartedly to the American war effort, yet they also conducted clothing drives and special collections for friends, family, and the Italian refugees liberated from Italy.

Father Franco continued to guide the parish during the post war years and into the 1950s. As the veterans returned, many left the Italian quarter to build new homes.

As veterans, homemakers, skilled workers, and now new home owners, these United States citizens demonstrated their adaptation to American culture. Unlike their ancestors, this group of Italian Americans enjoyed a higher standard of living by succeeding at the American game. The erection of new homes also helped ensure the protection and future prosperity of the most beloved Italian cultural institution, *la famiglia*. Thus, despite their positive strides as Americans, these sons and daughters of the *contadini* never abandoned the most fundamental tenet of *la via vecchia*. They did not live at the bottom of the hill anymore, but the protection and betterment of the family still reigned supreme.

Similarly, their devotion to the other pillar of *la via vecchia*, the Catholic faith, never wavered. Although the recently evacuated areas of Smoky Hollow fell into vacant decay, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, "forged on and blossomed, nourished by the strong loyalty of its members."[37] Once again, the cultural practices tied to faith and family, so stressed by *la via vecchia*, dominated this Italian parish during the 1940s and 50s. The Mt. Carmel community illustrated brilliantly Richard Gambino's assessment that Italian Americans based decisions on the welfare of the family and, "other institutions [such as the

pursuance of American ideals of societal and economic success] were welcomed only if they aided this goal."[38]

Throughout the 1950s, the aging Fr. Franco battled his failing health. Shortly after celebrating his fiftieth anniversary as a priest, the venerable Monsignor Franco died in the summer of 1961. An austere yet benign man, the dedicated Monsignor Franco spearheaded the formation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.

Bishop Emmit Walsh appointed Henry Fabrizio pastor of Mt. Carmel of Youngstown in September of 1961.[39] Born in Wilburton, Oklahoma, Henry Fabrizio was the son of Samuel and Pepina (Massaro) Fabrizio. The Fabrizio family moved to Youngstown, Ohio during Henry's youth. He attended Ursuline High School, St. Charles College in Maryland, and St. Mary's Seminary in Cleveland before returning to Youngstown for his ordination on April 29, 1956.[40]

Father Fabrizio quickly embarked on a campaign to socially fortify the Italian parish. His first pastoral sermon included an announcement that, "...the CCD Program of the Diocese would be immediately begun in the parish and it would become a matter of obligation for all grades to attend."[41] He also demanded that all Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) teachers of the parish faithfully attend the Diocesan Teacher-Training Program. CCD classes soon boasted hundreds of students, many from other parishes

and schools around the Youngstown area.[42]

To meet his call for increased participation from the community, Fabrizio initiated a massive building project for the Church. Similar to Mt. Carmel's inception fifty years earlier, the Italian parishioners shouldered the financial and administrative burden. According to former pastor Father Joseph Iati, and assistant pastor under Father Fabrizio, "...the new generation, along with the remainder of the older members, bought parcels of property in what was considered a dead, run-down, inner-city slum and resurrected it into a beautiful setting for its diamond--Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church."[43]

Rev. Fabrizio planned to renovate much of the existing Church, build a new catechetical/social center, and erect a brand new administrative residence. He launched the fundraising campaign by placing it in the hands of the Italian people. Shortly after breaking ground on June 16, 1963, Fabrizio and Iati composed a letter asking the community to "choose and pay on a personalized level for an item."[44] According to parish records, the request met with an overwhelmingly positive response. Donations ranged from a few dollars to a few thousand.[45] Mt. Carmel members came forward to support the physical and structural epicenter of their ethnic and religious beliefs. Among the one-hundred and sixteen donors listed according to family name in a

parish expense ledger, all but fifteen were of Italian origin.[46]

Exactly thirteen months after breaking ground, the Mt. Carmel faithful dedicated their new Catechetical and Social Hall on July 16, 1964 (also Our Lady of Mount Carmel Feast Day). The parish family celebrated in typical Italian fashion. Father Fabrizio worked with the solely Italian, sixty-nine member Building Fund Committee in planning the religious and social dedication ceremony.[47]

The 1964 dedication booklet and itinerary of events embraced the core ethnic values brought from the *Mezzogiorno*. Father Fabrizio's letter to the community, one written in Italian, another in English, pointed to the foundations of their culture. The pastor remarked, "Surely, the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel must smile with a nod of Maternal affection upon all benefactors who have labored with zealous effort to build this center to be used mainly for religious instructions for our youth and adults of the parish."[48] As proof of this goal, the booklet contained two revealing photographs. The first showed Father Fabrizio, surrounded by parishioners and various officials, breaking ground for the center in 1963. The second portrayed the "Very first First Holy Communion Class Instructed in Our New Center."[49] The children donned

the traditional dress worn by countless *contadini* first communicants before them. Demonstrating their cultural emphasis on the maternal figure, the parish celebrated First Holy Communion on Mother's Day of each year.

The dedication *festa* for the new center commenced with a religious ceremony. A myriad of clergy and parishioners proceeded from the new Parish House to the Catechetical Center, blessing each structure along the way. The procession continued into the Church where they conducted "Novena Prayer and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament."[50] A large Italian dinner, complete with a menu written only in Italian, followed the ceremony. Concurrent with *Mezzogiorno* traditions, this joyous event brought to light the familiar customs of *rispetto*, *ben educato*, family connectedness, village/neighborhood loyalty and self-reliance, *nutrimento*, and the matricentral nature of the southern Italian nuclear, extended, and parish families.

The completion of the catechetical center and rectory represented much more than the recognition of indelible ethnic values. It also symbolized the success of the Italian congregation in the United States since the inception of Mount Carmel. The dedication booklet opened with letters of congratulation and blessing from Bishop Emmit Walsh and Assistant Bishop James Malone.[51]

Congressman Michael J. Kirwan, 19th District Representative, included a congratulatory note.[52] John Palermo, Chairman of the all Italian Building Fund Committee, also served as a Mahoning County Commissioner.[53] The Retired Reverend Monsignor John J. Lettau, the Chancellor of the Diocese of Youngstown, lead the religious dedication ceremony.[54]

Thus, the construction, dedication, and immediate success of the Catechetical Center and the Administration Residence embodied the Mt. Carmel community's unique ability to excel at the American game while holding tightly to centuries old values. Yet, the planning committee required that the center and the residence connected structurally with the Church. The Church, the social center, and the administrative residence possessed various access points into the other. As a result, once one entered any of the three structures, one easily gained access to another. The new center and residence illustrated the financial success of the parish as American. Yet, the accessibility and openness of the three buildings connoted the interconnected nature of the southern Italian family.

As the artifactual capstone of the project, a 9x9 iron sculpture hung outside the center captured the duality of Italian American experience at Mount Carmel. Created by Father Franco and crafted by Armenio Arts of Buffalo, New York, the sculpture depicted "St. Joseph the worker

inspiring and directing labor."[55] The piece illustrated St. Joseph benevolently guiding a mill worker toiling over a cog-wheel superimposed by a cross.[56] Worshipped by Christians and adored by Italian Catholics, St. Joseph immortalized the values of hard work and unquestioning dedication to the family. The iron sculpture embodied their reliance on Old World values as a conduit for creating a better life in *la Merica*.

Armed with its new social center, the Church enjoyed quick returns. A short two years after its completion, parish administrators initiated construction plans to accommodate growing numbers of students. They hired Felix Pisa and Sons to build several new classrooms for the twelve levels of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine Classes.[57] As the parish entered into its third generation, the religious and cultural teachings of *ben educato* remained strong. The $35,000 addition, entirely funded by pledges, coincided with the unveiling of a 45x9 foot mural in the main hall of the social center.[58] Artist Al Rozzi painted the mural, an image of the six days of creation, as a memorial of the Golden Anniversary of the Mothers of the Crucifix Society at Mt. Carmel.[59]

The Annual Homecoming Dinner Dance, held each summer since the inception of the catechetical hall, epitomized the

thriving values of *la via vecchia*. The program of the fifth Annual Dinner Dance, held July 19, 1969, emphasized the Italian and American experiences of the parishioners. The inside flap of the program opened up to the American National Anthem accompanied by a picture of *la Madonna* honored by a small prayer written in Italian and English.[60] The program dutifully listed the numerous Italian names of those actively involved in parish administration and social clubs. Always emphasizing the role of the youth in the family and the Church, the program noted the young Italian members of the Carmelite Youth Club who contributed to the event.[61] Similar to the grand *festas* of the *Mezzogiorno*, the "Our Lady of Mount Carmel Annual Dinner Dance" stressed the key ingredients of any celebration, family, religion, and of course, food.

Father Fabrizio's final addition to the architectural and ethnic realms of the Church was a large outdoor shrine in honor of St. Anthony of Padua in 1971. Father Fabrizio directed the construction of the shrine designed to memorialize the deceased of the parish. As one of the most beloved and readily identifiable spiritual figures of the Italian community, St. Anthony's outdoor shrine again symbolized the cultural and religious themes of its designers.

Serious illness forced Father Fabrizio to retire from active ministry in 1973. The Assistant Pastor, Fr. Joseph Iati, willingly took the reins on July 9 of that year. Though born in North Bay, Ontario, Canada, Fr. Iati traced his roots to southern Italy. His parents immigrated to Canada from Reggio, Calabria not long before his birth. Young Joseph came to north east Ohio and continued his studies at Youngstown State University and John Carroll University in Cleveland.[62] He completed his education at St. Gregory's and St. Mary's of the West Seminaries in Cincinnati. Father arrived at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Youngstown shortly after his ordination on May 30, 1959.[63]

Like his pastorate predecessors, Father Iati initiated a sizeable restoration and building campaign designed to beautify the Church while re-enforcing its Italian heritage. During the three day celebration honoring their new leader, Church members officially changed the name of the street in front of the Church from Summit Ave. to Via Mt. Carmel.[64] Paul Yetty of Herkimer, New York, donated a plaque believed to be from the original Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Italy. Touted as the work of one of Michelangelo's students, the proud parishioners hung the plaque in the Church sacristy.[65]

Restoration and construction work started shortly after Fr. Iati's arrival. He called on members of the community

to implement the project. They stripped and restored the original altars of hand-carved wood from Italy, which still bore scars from the fire of 1923. A local artist of Italian descent, Steve Santha, stripped, re-glued, and set in place the hand-carved pews.[66] Albert Rozzi of Youngstown, "one of the last surviving artists of the Michelangelo school of painting," restored the frescos that adorned the interior walls.[67] The frescos depicted heavenly, childlike angels showering a statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel with flower petals. Above the scene, the guiding hand of God shed light upon *la Madonna*, her angels, and the faithful. Similar frescos surrounded the statues of the Sacred Heart and St. Anthony of Padua, both sacred devotions to the Italians. Another local artist and parish member, Rose (Monaco) Gaffney, restored the precious statues of the Church, several of which came from Italy.[68] Fr. Iati replaced the electric pipe organ with a Mellor Pipe Organ donated by William and John Cafaro, both devout members of the Church.[69] Finally, as a gesture of gratitude and admiration to their spiritual mother, they imported a statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel nurturing the infant Jesus and placed it in a freshly carved niche in the front facade of the Church.[70]

The restoration project drew to a close, setting off

customary dedications, religious observances, blessings, and *festas*. The dedication on November 26, 1978 brimmed with the Italian style of Catholic worship. The ceremony scintillated with the themes of *la via vecchia*. Parishioners entreated, "Our Lady of Mount Carmel, be our mother and pray for us."[71] Petitions asked God the Father, through the intercession of *la Madonna*, for the "sanctification" of the Mt. Carmel "family," the "guidance of childhood...sympathy and fellowship with the needy...the summoning of youth to a life of service," and most important, "For the people of this family of Mount Carmel that they may grow in their bonds and ties of unity and be an example to all."[72] As the restored physical symbol of their familial and religious centered culture, the congregation responded, "We dedicate this house."[73] Father Iati described the "parish family" as "totally energized with a special joy" by their "little village church, which is an active volcano of adoration and praise to a Mighty God through the patronage of Our Lady Of Mount Carmel."[74] As always, the Church emerged from the project without debt due to the efforts of the congregation.

This communal effort at restoration and revitalization received its crowning moment when the Church received a declaration and listing as an historic structure by the U.S.

Department of the Interior in May of 1979. As it approached its seventy-fifth anniversary, few honors surpassed this recognition of the distinctly Italian Church by the highest of American authorities. The long-lasting beliefs of *la via vecchia* which served as the cornerstone of their new physical and social environment in America received the highest recognition. The Church was nominated to the National Register, "...on the basis of its architectural significance and its social importance to the history of the Mahoning Valley."[75] Such high recognition by American authorities typified their ability to excel as Americans and Italians.

Father Joseph Iati announced the good news to the parish on the Feast Day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. They planned a grand *festa* to celebrate the honor. Members toiled in the 30x14 kitchen of the catechetical center organizing the feast. They prepared 170 gallons of wedding soup, 5,000 stuffed pasta shells, 1,500 meatballs, stuffed eggplant, baked white fish, *sufritto*, bowls of fresh fruit, and plenty of wine.[76] They busily decorated the Church and covered the tables and appointments in red, white, and green. They commemorated joyously Mount Carmel's "vital part in the religious and social life of Youngstown's Italian community," and its special status as, "the only

remaining ethnic parish in the six-county diocese."[77] A three day novena and three days of special masses kicked off the event. This grand *festa* represented more than the importance of a singular event, however. Festivities culminated with a grand dinner for 500 which celebrated the persistence of a centuries old set of values that still thrived as Mt. Carmel's source of ethnic strength. Parishioners realized fully that such high respect by American authorities indirectly honored *la via vecchia* as well as the social and architectural significance of the Church and its members.

Father Iati sagaciously guided the "little village Church" into the 1980s. Despite the dispersion of members into differing geographical and economic levels, Mt. Carmel relied on the tenacious persistence of faith and family. The parish flourished under Iati's direction as a focused ethnic community in a distinctly American setting. A deep seated faith in the matricentral nature of the family, the exaltation of family ties, and the specialized practice of Catholicism still fueled this community. Several years before his death, Fr. Iati wrote a brief history of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. The concluding paragraphs captured neatly the dominant themes of *Mezzogiorno* culture that permeated their lives in America:

> What a privilege it is for us, the children of America, to be able to live with and use today--to our great awe, joy, and pride--the monuments that memorialize our roots, which are rich in ethnic culture. May we always maintain our heritage of the past, and may God bless the people of this parish and this great nation...May we grow in awareness and our America. Otherwise we risk becoming a nation without roots, void of heritage, ignorant of traditions, and the valuable contributions of varied ethnic cultures that have made and continue to make us the great nation that we are...We commend to you, O Mary the Mother of God, our prayers and our love. Be an open refuge to all who come to partake in this holy family. Guide and protect us through our exiled journey of life, as you have led our forefathers, until we are all one before the vision of the Almighty. Yet, stay with us a while, "*O Gran Signora*." Here the cries of your people and all who come to this temple in joy...in sorrow ...in praise, in thanksgiving, in delusion, in frustration...and grant us our petitions. *Dalle prove vengono triumfi*...From Trials Come Triumphs...*Non c'e rosa senza spina*... There is no happiness or joy without some sorrow or frustration...*Per ogni aversita, Dio manda un angelo*...Whatever the adversity, God sends his ministering angel...*Nulla si fa senza volonta*...Without a strong will, nothing is accomplished.[78]

This excerpt from the spiritual leader of Mt. Carmel during the 1970s and the early 1980s encompassed the foundational values of *contadini* culture that dominated the Italian Americans of this revealing Church. Still devoted *contadini* at heart, the parish reflected *rispetto* toward important individuals and institutions, a demanding work ethic,

communal and familial independence through intradependence, village autonomy, faith in spite of suffering, and maternal protection via their earthly and spiritual mothers.

Once he arrived in 1986, Father Michael Cariglio inherited the leadership role of this powerful ethnic family. Born in Ravenna, Ohio, Michael Cariglio grew up in a traditional Italian home. He learned to respect deeply the traditions of his ethnic community. Ordained in 1970, Father Cariglio began his ministry at Mt. Carmel prepared to continue familiar practices. Similar to Franco, Fabrizio, and Iati, Father Cariglio spearheaded several programs of restoration, revitalization, and construction. Moreover, he intended to maintain those cultural and religious customs so ingrained in Italian, Mount Carmel history. A "mission statement" for visitors written in Father Cariglio's own words said it best:

> Our Lady of Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Parish Family is committed to giving witness to the life of Jesus in the world with the Blessed Mother as our model. We strive to live the Gospel of Jesus and His Church and exemplify the warmth, friendship and love of our Catholic faith. As a parish we are sensitive and actively involved in promoting the Italian culture and tradition.[79]

The construction of a large outdoor shrine to Our Lady of Mount Carmel in 1990 represented the new pastor's primary physical addition to the Church. Funded by parishioners,

the shrine stood at the crest of the hill overlooking the Smoky Hollow region where the Italian quarter once thrived. A forty-four foot garden ran parallel to Rayen Avenue and covered the hill at the foot of the statue. Plainly visible to passers by, the shrine gathered neatly the lasting southern Italian norms. Dedicated to *la Madonna*, it reflected the greatest spiritual devotion of the culture. The shrine's careful watch over the Smoky Hollow region expressed a parish recognition of its origins in Youngstown as well as the former *contadini* who first settled there.

A second addition to the physical environment under Cariglio during 1992, two *bocce* courts behind the Church, stressed the eternal mixture of family and faith. More than simply a place of ethnic worship, the Italian Church represented the home of the spiritual family. Mount Carmel represented more than simply a place of worship. It also served as a cultural gathering place for the families and friends of the Italian parish. As physical manifestations of this belief, the *bocce* courts illustrated the constant amalgamation of social, cultural, and religious values.

As testament to the contribution of the Church to the United States, Father Cariglio oversaw the erection of a memorial honoring the World War Two veterans of the parish. One American and one Italian flag flew over the 1992

memorial as a reminder of the Italian contribution to American democracy. The Church again recognized American ideals while emphasizing their ethnicity and culture.

The inherent connection between ethnicity and the fused religious and familial values functioned as the ideological underpinning of Mount Carmel Church through the 1980s and 1990s. The standard visitors brochure mentioned earlier testified to this phenomena. Parish Council, predominantly Italian collection of committees, continued its role as a representative of Church members and transmitter of Italian religious values grounded in *la via vecchia*. In typical southern Italian fashion, the Family Life Committee declared, "Since the future of the Church rests on Christian families, the focus of the family life ministry is to promote the family as the Church of the home."[80] The dialogue between the familial nature of the Church and the religious nature of the family clearly empowered this administrative group. The Social Justice Committee and the Religious Education Committee also pointed to the centrality and inherent sacredness of the parish family and the nuclear family. As a late twentieth century form of *ben educato*, the Religious Education Committee and Youth Ministry Programs upheld the Mt. Carmel tradition of guiding the young and old of the parish. Along similar lines, the

Evangelization Committee reached out to "The parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel family who have become marginal or lapsed Catholics."[81] In the Italian spirit of *rispetto* and love for elders, the Senior Citizens Committee administered faithfully to the older members of the parish. Finally, in congruence with the Italian devotion to *la Madonna*, the Legion of Mary Society sought the "personal sanctification of its members, spreading devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and performing apostolic works of the Church."[82] They accomplished this goal through the practice of *la visita* to the families of the parish. The Legion of Mary worked to comfort the elderly of the Church while indoctrinating new parish family members.[83]

Although functional entities of the 1990s, these committees reflected the indelible values of the *Mezzogiorno*. Not surprisingly, the female presence, more specifically the maternal influence, contributed to the very life-blood of the Church. Women filled eight of the twelve administrative committee positions, in particular those committees in direct contact with the "parish family."

The norms of *la via vecchia* so prevalent in the social atmosphere during the inception of Mt. Carmel still thrived under Father Cariglio. Various offshoots of *ben educato* prospered through Italian language classes, pre-school

classes, the youth ministry program, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine classes, and the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults. As a family-based community, Mount Carmel Church sponsored a Senior Citizens Club, a "special list" of altar servers reserved for retired men of the parish, and a Health Ministry Parish Nurse Program which administered to the infirm of the parish, especially the elderly.[84] The Mothers of the Crucifix Society, a women's organization established in 1917 under Father Franco, attained their goal to "support and contribute to the Church."[85] The Society held its "annual feast day" on the first Sunday in May, traditionally a month to honor mothers and *la Madonna*. The feast day included a special mass for the deceased members of the parish. A dinner party followed the service during which new members entered the women's organization. This annual ritual carried on several southern Italian cultural and religious customs. As one of the primary groups of the parish, the Mother's of the Crucifix Society provided a major avenue for women to remain actively involved in the parish. Also similar to centuries past, the special mass for deceased relatives and friends conducted by the women restored a long-standing tradition. Similar to the funerals of the *Mezzogiorno*, the strong Italian women shouldered the majority of the emotional

burden at the loss of a loved one. As the center of not only their individual families but also the entire parish family, the Mother's of the Crucifix Society mourned collectively for their fellow members.[86] The primary men's organization, the Vestibule Club, also worked to promote the cohesiveness of the nuclear and parish family. Organized in 1962 by a group of men who gathered every Sunday in the Church vestibule, the Vestibule Club sought the cultural, financial, spiritual, and familial amelioration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. The men's society sponsored the Parish Family Picnic, a annual raffle, dinner-dances, and other communal activities designed to strengthen ethnic and family ties.[87]

Father Cariglio, with the aid of these organizations and the entire parish, adhered loyally to the distinct style of Catholic worship practiced for decades at Mount Carmel Church. Forever mindful of this goal, Father Cariglio stated, "The spiritual life of the parish centers around the liturgical calendar."[88] Like the *contadini* and the immigrants before them, the Mount Carmel community under Pastor Cariglio held family and parish celebrations according to the seasons of the liturgical calendar. Special services, individual retreats for men and women, adult education classes, communal penance, Benediction,

Adoration, and devotion services occurred frequently during the liturgical seasons.[89]

Also congruent with *Mezzogiorno* traditions, the Italians of Mt. Carmel observed the Novena to St. Anthony of Padua. Each Tuesday for thirteen weeks, parishioners flocked to the parish for a twelve noon mass and a seven p.m. mass followed by the Novena.[90] The ceremony culminated on June 13, the Feast Day of St. Anthony. A highpoint of the Italian Catholic liturgical calendar, the Feast Day celebration included a mass in memory of the saint held at the outdoor shrine adjacent to the Church. Following the ceremony, parishioners conducted a street procession led by a statue of St. Anthony lofted by parishioners.[91] The faithful covered the statue with one-dollar bills, each one representing an individual or family petition. The event closed with a "special Italian-style festival in the Parish Center."[92]

Parish participation and communal festivities peaked one month later during the Feast Day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. As a tribute to their most enduring spiritual figure, each year they held a three-day celebration highlighted by a triduum mass, a novena, and a special parish banquet as a "sign of our fellowship in Christ and His Mother."[93] A second significant liturgical event

dedicated to *la Madonna*, the Feast Day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven marked another high water mark of parish involvement. The spiritual held a mass outdoors, a procession to the shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and a picnic supper.[94]

Finally, on March 19, the Italians of Mount Carmel honored another important spiritual and cultural figure, St. Joseph. Recognized by Catholics as the foster father of Jesus and the husband of Mary, St. Joseph received particular attention from the Italians for his familial loyalty. Following mass, parishioners adjourned downstairs to the "St. Joseph Table" for "Italian specialties and goodies, especially the cream puffs of St. Joseph."[95]

The most sacred time of the year, Holy Week, represented still another time of strong *Mezzogiorno* traditions. The faithful replaced the Sacred Heart of Jesus statue with a saturnine statue of the Weeping Madonna. Parishioners covered the statue in a long black shawl as a symbol of *la Madonna's* and the Mt. Carmel community's grief at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. As descendants of the *contadini* and former immigrants, these Italians identified with the suffering, frustration, and immense grief that life sometimes brought. Their adoration and close emotional connection to *la Madonna* culminated at the Good Friday

service. "Just as they do in the little towns of Italy from whence many of our families came from," remarked Father Cariglio, the youth of the parish carried the statues of the crucified Jesus and the Weeping Madonna around the Church.[96] Wearing the traditional black outfits to symbolize communal remorse, each year the youth of the parish re-enacted the entombment of Jesus. Holy Week concluded with Easter Sunday, at which time the parish replaced the statue of the Weeping Madonna with a luminous statue of the risen Christ. A time of joyous celebration for the Catholic tradition, Easter Sunday marked a particularly jubilant event for the emotionally charged Italians.

Their unique style of religious worship permeated much more that specific feast days or holidays. The Mt. Carmel community integrated Italian cultural practices into the most frequent of services and events. Occasionally, lectors gave Sunday readings in Italian and then English. Every Mother's Day the Church passed out corsages to the mothers of the parish. The entire congregation applauded the mothers who stood for recognition after mass. Following the Sunday noon mass, beaming parents seated in the front row of the Church stand and show their newborn to a congratulatory community. According to *Mezzogiorno* custom, the Godparents of the child also stand, symbolizing their key roles as

newly inducted family members and teachers of the infant. At the conclusion of each mass, Father Cariglio apprised the congregation of every baptism, first communion, confirmation, wedding, funeral, or noteworthy event that occurred during the past week. The faithful received a weekly bulletin that occasionally contained reflections of *la via vecchia*. The January 21, 1996 bulletin, for example, outlined the wedding policy practiced at Mt. Carmel. Fr. Cariglio stated, "Our Lady of Mount Carmel only accepts weddings from among our "active, registered parishioners."[97] Seeking to protect the interests of the Mt. Carmel faithful, Pastor Cariglio, "We're trying to be sensitive and fair to our good parishioners. Our people built and support and operate this parish. We feel if we allowed the choice wedding dates to be selected by whomever asks, then our parishioners would be unfairly limited when choosing a date for their wedding. I know you understand...Father Cariglio".[98] As the spiritual and ethnic leader of the parish, Father Cariglio, like his predecessors, upheld the religious, social and material interests of the Mount Carmel community.

The vigilant protection of these interests and the dogged inculcation of the venerable familial and religious values solidified the Mount Carmel parish since its

inception. The parishioners of the 1990s, many of whom hailed from Italy, embraced warmly the values of *la via vecchia* revived in America. They recalled the stories of faith and family which permeated all of Mount Carmel life.

Conversations overflowed with the values of *ben educato*, *rispetto*, and love for the mother and *la Madonna*. Through the devotion to *la Madonna*, Father Cariglio noted Mount Carmel's emphasis on the, "femininity of religion," and added there was "nothing better than a good Italian mother."[99] The Mount Carmel pastor characterized the Church as a place of "warmth, love, and family," and acknowledged the mother as the, "greatest key to all three of these."[100] Father Cariglio pointed to the Italian community which, "supported American values but never forgot their heritage."[101]

Dominic and Rita Varacalli, devout Mount Carmel Church members, agreed wholeheartedly with their pastor. The familiar practices of *la via vecchia* dominated their lives in south Italy and in America. Rita recalled daily catechism classes as a child and her dedicated mother who, "first of all made sure we had God in our life."[102] Rita's husband Dominic concluded, "You gotta' have faith; You gotta' believe in God. That's the most important thing. Then you gotta' have respect."[103]

The couple elaborated on the significance of the maternal figure within the Italian culture's spiritual and earthly realms. When asked to discuss the importance of *la Madonna* in their lives, Dominic chuckled and simply replied, "She is the mother of Christ and the mother of all of us, and that's it."[104] Rita likened the influence of the earthly mother to the power of *la Madonna*: "They say the way to heaven is the way of Christ, but to me, when you are young and young and you wanted something, you always go to the mother...I feel the *Madonna* is the most important, the mother of all of us...She is closer to her son than we are so you pray to her."[105]

Parishioner and Mount Carmel employee Dorina Canacci agreed it was, "important for the Church to venerate *la Madonna*...and you venerate your mother when you venerate *la Madonna*."[106] Similar to Rita and Dominic, Dorina believed, "The best way to get to him [Christ] was through *la Madonna*, the mama of mamas."[107] She characterized the devotion to *la Madonna* as the, "Italian style of prayer...she will listen to us because she knows suffering, she knows heartbreak because she lost her only son."[108]

A native of central Italy and a twenty-one year member of Mount Carmel Church, Dorina prepares the daily meals at the parish rectory. She cooks every day, avidly avoids

supermarkets, and despises fast food.[109] Dorina recalled standing on a stool at the tender age of three while her grandmother taught her to make sauce and macaroni.[110] She carried on these traditions throughout her life since, "If you don't know how to cook, you don't have a good family. A girl must cook and clean because someday she'll be a mother and that is what's important."[111]

Clearly, the Mount Carmel parishioners' lived and breathed the values of the Old Country. Joseph Sacchini, a life long member of Mount Carmel, remembered:

> As a child attending Italian classes at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, I recall Mr. Frank Zarlenga our language teacher of Italian telling the class that the closer the family is, the more traditions it is likely to have. Therefore it is our duty and our turn to pass on to our family Italian traditions of our feast days and religious days to our future generations. Our holiday traditions and customs are the most important aspects of the family's well being, as well as its essential happiness as a family unit.[112]

Mr. Sacchini proudly explained his family's similar adherence to the early Italians immigrants', "Pride in their village, commune, province, and region. Pride in their customs, language (dialects), food and traditions. Dignity, hard work, and self respect...respect for your family (parents), respect for your wife, respect for your children, and respect for your self."[113]

Armed with a thorough knowledge of *la via vecchia*, the values, customs, and attitudes of the Old Country embedded within the parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church quickly came into focus. *Ben educato, rispetto,* and countless other values grounded in the practices of the *Mezzogiorno*, persisted among the people of this intimate Church. Since its inception in 1908, the community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church willingly upheld the beliefs of their ancestors. Yet, this dynamic Church, culturally intransigent at its core yet able to adapt to external influences, remained open to the ideals and attitudes of American society. By striking the delicate balance between Italian and American values, the Mount Carmel community maintained their past culture without existing in an "ethnic vacuum," fearfully shielding itself from outside America. This parish opened itself to all that was American without relinquishing their cherished practices of the *Mezzogiorno*. Dorina Canacci's final statement captured brilliantly this concept: "If you remember one thing, remember this, put this in your paper...The Church is for everyone, the doors are open to everybody. When you come in you see *la Madonna* saying, "come to me.""[114]

1.Reverend Joseph Iati, The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, 1908-1983: Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Youngstown, Ohio (Youngstown: Privately Printed, 1983), 1.

2.Reverend Emmanuel Stabile, Youngstown, to "Diocesan Consultors," Youngstown, 3 September 1908, Transcript in the hand of the Diocese of Youngstown, Special Collections, Kent State University Library, Kent State University, Kent.

3.Ibid.

4.Reverent Vito Franco, Youngstown, to Bishop J. P. Farrelly, Cleveland, 14 July 1913. Transcript in the hand of the Diocese of Youngstown, Special Collections, Kent State University Library, Kent State University, Kent.

5.Rev. Stabile to Bishop J.P. Farrelly, 3 September 1908.

6.Iati, Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, 1.

7.Reverend Dr. Scullen, Secretary to J.P. Farrelly, Bishop of Diocese, Cleveland, to Reverend Vito Franco, Youngstown, August 1913. Transcript in the hand of the Diocese of Youngstown, Special Collections, Kent State University Library, Kent State University, Kent.

8.Ibid.

9.Reverend Vito Franco, Youngstown, to Bishop J.P. Farrelly, Cleveland, 20 January 1913, Transcript in the hand of the Diocese of Youngstown, Special Collections, Kent State University Library, Kent State University, Kent.

10.Reverend Vito Franco, Youngstown, to Bishop J.P. Farrelly, Cleveland, 7 July 1913, Transcript in the hand of the Diocese of Youngstown, Special Collections, Kent State University Library, Kent State University, Kent.

11.Ibid.

12.Reverend Vito Franco, Youngstown, to Bishop J.P. Farrelly, Cleveland, 17 July 1913, Transcript in the hand of the Diocese of Youngstown Special Collections, Kent State University Library, Kent State University, Kent.

13.Bishop J.P. Farrelly, Cleveland, to Reverend Vito Franco, Youngstown, 27 September 13, Transcript in the hand of the

Diocese of Youngstown, Special Collections, Kent State University Library, Kent State University, Kent.

14.Reverend Vito Franco, Youngstown, to Bishop J.P. Farrelly, Cleveland, 1 January 1916. Transcript in the hand of the Diocese of Youngstown, Special Collections, Kent State University Library, Kent State University, Kent. Also look Treasurer's Office of Mahoning County, Youngstown, Ohio, Auditor's Tax List and Treasurer's Duplicate of Real Property, Summit Ave., Lot #480, 53-023-339, for earliest mention of property in the hands of the Diocese.

15.Reverend Vito Franco, Youngstown, to Bishop J. P. Farrelly, Cleveland, 5 May 1916, Transcript at Kent State University Library, Special Collections, Diocesan Records, Box 16, Folder 26, Kent State University, Kent.

16.Ibid.

16.Reverend Joseph Iati, The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, 1908-1983: Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Youngstown, Ohio (Youngstown: Privately Printed, 1983), 2.

18.Stewart B. Foulke and Son, Inc., Property Insurance Evaluation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church (Youngstown: April 1952).

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21.Reverend Gerald M. DeLucia, Our Lady of Mount Carmel: A History of Our Stained Glass Windows (Youngstown: City Printing, 1989), 2.

22.Ibid., 3.

23.Ibid., 5.

24.Ibid., 6.

25.Ibid., 9.

26.Ibid., 11.

27.Ibid., 12.

28.Ibid., 13.

29.Iati, Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, 2.

30.Ibid.

31.Ibid.

32.Michael R. Pope, ed., Dedication: Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catechetical and Social Center: July 16, 1964 (Youngstown: City Printing, 1964), 3.

33."Mt. Carmel Parish Flourishes - Congregation Prospers Under Leadership of Father Franco - To Build New School," Youngstown Vindicator, 27 June 1930, p. 7, col. 4.

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38.Gambino, Blood of My Blood, 7-8.

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41.Pope, ed., Dedication: Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, 23.

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45.Reverend Henry Fabrizio, Account Ledger, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, 1963, Parish Records, Youngstown, 58-67.

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84.Ibid., "Sacraments/Programs."

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97.Reverend Michael Cariglio, Jr., Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church: January 21, 1996, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Weekly Bulletin (Youngstown: Privately Printed, 1996), 2.

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100.Ibid.

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103.Dominic Varacalli, interview with author, Poland, Ohio, 26 March 1996.

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106.Dorina Canacci, interview with author, Youngstown, Ohio, 29 November 1995.

107.Ibid.

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110.Ibid.

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112.Joseph Sacchini, interview with author, Youngstown, Ohio, 21 March 1996.

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CONCLUSION

Such tenacious devotion to religious and familial values by ethnic groups eluded historians during the first half of the twentieth century. The establishment and growth of Mount Carmel Church testified to this devotion and subsequently refuted much of the contemporary scholarship regarding the behavior and attitudes of immigrant groups.[1] South Italy's rural squalor, economic depression, and political morass, which prompted the mass migration of Italians to the United States, influenced many historians to discard the immigrants' former lives as unworthy of study. Researchers based their studies on the assumption that immigrants desired only to become full-fledged Americans, wholly detached from the daily intricacies of centuries of *Mezzogiorno* existence. Studies frequently highlighted the decrepit conditions of South Italy without stopping to consider how *contadini* culture survived under such circumstances. As a result, academic efforts such as Michael J. Parenti's 1962 work, "Ethnic and Political Attitudes: A Depth Study of Italian Americans," admitted, "No attempt has been made here to report on every aspect of the Old-World Italian or Italo-American life, nor has there been any effort to arrive at a full-scale systematic

comparison between the Italian and American cultures. Such endeavors are beyond the scope of this study."[2]

Historians' failure to account for *Mezzogiorno* life skewed their interpretation of Italian immigrant life in America. By default, researchers analyzed the immigrants through "Americanized lenses," ignoring the Italian half of Italian American. They left unaccounted the indelible values of *la via vecchia*. Consequently, studies portrayed first generation Italian immigrant culture as a "kind of compensatory form of behavior in an alien society," rather than as the deliberate revitalization of a centuries old value system.[3] Given these circumstances, even the most responsible historian brushed aside any outwardly visible manifestation of *contadini* culture in America as, "nostalgically originated in the new world as a response to urban surroundings."[4] Subsequent academic works, initially handicapped by this methodological albatross, reached conclusions similar to those of Michael Parenti:

> The dress, the foods, the smells, and sights, the housing and the streets, the pace and tempo were uncomfortably foreign, the people of incomprehensible behavior, frequently disdainful and hostile toward the newcomers. Even the Italian's religion suffered from alien adulteration. In architecture and ambiance, the church facade and interior bore little resemblance to the old village <u>chiesa</u>. Near the altar, where the immigrant might expect to be comforted by statues of Saint Lucia, Saint

> Antonio or other dearly loved celestial patrons, he would be startled by the presence of Saint Patrick stepping on snakes. The lay ceremonies, festas, and semi-pagan rituals and superstitions that were either doctrinally forbidden or peripheral to Catholicism but central to the peasant's way of religion were nowhere to be found. The priests were usually Irish or some other nationality other than Italian and rarely spoke the old tongue.[5]

Antithetical to Parenti's portrayal, Italian Americans constructed physical and social environments resplendent with the nuances of their culture. The immigrants' desperate desire to forget the former hardships through the amelioration of their lives in America remained an unquestionable fact. However, their revitalization of an Old World environment in the face of new challenges displayed brilliantly their loyalty to *la via vecchia*. As so aptly stated by Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, "Of course people in transition eventually relinquish many old practices and beliefs, but they do so hesitantly and painfully. Is it indeed so surprising that in the interim human beings should want to relate to the world in familiar ways, to respond to it with forms and meanings significant to them?"[6]

The emergence of Old World, *contadini* culture in the United States represented the Italian immigrant's natural response to economic, social, and political obstacles. As

contadini, they knew all to well the intractable problems of poverty, corruption, and the "disdainful and hostile" attitudes of other groups toward them. As immigrants, they encountered these and other cultural roadblocks unique to the American experience. They naturally looked to the intertwined familial and religious values which served them for centuries. They built fresh environments in America which relied on the traditional codes of *la via vecchia*. The immigrants augmented their standard of living through American avenues of success. Yet, forever loyal to their roots, they upheld the customs of their ancestors. This thesis project illustrates this phenomenon via the formation and ensuing success of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church of Youngstown, Ohio.

Contrary to many assimilationist theories, Mount Carmel Church remained totally submerged in the protective arms of la via vecchia. Parishioners revelled in their Italian and American realms. Though entrenched into American society for three generations, parishioners maintained their cultural and ethnic roots established long ago. In order to facilitate a proper understanding of Italian immigrant behavior, analysis began with an in-depth examination of life in the Old Country.

The *contadini* and *giornalieri* who dotted the dry

Mezzogiorno terrain centuries prior developed a flexible system of norms and mores in response to unforgiving external influences. The resilient compilation of specialized values dominated every facet of their lives. The daily rigors of south Italy coupled with the merciless exploitation by foreign and domestic powers locked the *contadini* in a world of rural poverty. Various rebellions, local skirmishes, political heroes, and so-called legitimate governments came and left while the conditions of the *Mezzogiorno* remained unchanged. They endured foreign invasions which destroyed their homes and nearly bankrupted their culture. They struggled under a deplorable economy that offered little room for economic mobilization or betterment. Opportunistic land barons, greedy politicians, corrupt pockets of local authority, and exploitative clergy far outweighed the positive influences thereby contributing to the steady decline and economic stagnation of the *contadini* class. Unable to rely on any legitimate institution for support, the *contadini* searched internally for the institutions required for cultural survival. Out of the ashes arose an indelible hierarchy of fundamental values predicated upon two central entities internally resistant to change.

This code of values rested upon a pair of institutions

over which the *contadini* exercised some degree of control, family and faith. These peasants and day laborers developed an intrinsically dependent yet externally independent way of life. Through a system of cultural survival, *la via vecchia*, southern Italian families relied solely on one another for daily existence. Loyalty began at the immediate family and rippled outward to include extended family, friends, and fellow village members. Each village represented a microcosm of *Mezzogiorno* culture, distinguished by its own specific nuances of *la via vecchia*. Such communal dependency necessitated constant, close interaction which in turn prompted higher levels of emotions such as love, friendship, loyalty, jealousy, hatred, and many more. *La via vecchia* demanded familial unity for survival however, thus most internal squabbles faded quickly.

The souther Italians' adherence to the Catholic faith represented the second pillar of *Mezzogiorno* society. They engaged in a highly specialized form of Catholicism which often differed from one village to the next. Village members regarded the local Church as the spiritual home of the entire village and the individual family home as the source of religious and spiritual values. They adored specific saints and spiritual figures who most reflected their lives. They sympathized with the suffering of the

Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Lucy, the compassion of St. Francis of Assisi, and the poverty of St. Anthony of Padua. Yet, no figure captured their undying love more than *la Madonna*. As a society that revolved around the maternal influence, Mary, the fabled mother of Jesus Christ, received special attention from the southern Italian people. They regarded *la Madonna* as the spiritual mother of their entire culture.

The amalgamation of the familial and religious beliefs comprised the heart of *la via vecchia*. A further analysis demonstrated that even the smallest customs mirrored the tenets of this code of life. Survival necessitated the full participation of every family member. Many males left the home for extended periods in search of employment; a pattern which continued through the immigration process of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As dutiful husbands and fathers, men often sent their earnings home to aid their loved ones. During the males absence, the industrious *Mezzogiorno* women governed the home and frequently crossed into economic, social, and cultural areas traditionally held by men. As a result, children viewed the accessible mother as a powerful source of familial authority. She became the inculcator of social, cultural, and religious values, thus assuming her pre-eminent role in

la via vecchia and all of southern Italian culture. Just as the maternal power of *la Madonna* silently governed the spiritual world, the familial mother wielded substantial influence in the earthly one.

The *contadini* believed passionately in familial self-rule, village autonomy, and the inherent distrust of potentially dangerous outsiders. As products of the turbulent centuries, they naturally questioned the intentions of any external influence. As fierce defenders of family and faith, the *contadini* fought stubbornly to maintain control of these institutions. Parents passed on these themes to their children via the practices of *ben educato, rispetto,* frequent celebrations containing religious and familial underpinnings, and a healthy food supply.

Centuries slipped by while the bleak *Mezzogiorno* world of *la miseria* persisted. Finally fed up with the incessant dearth of reforms to augment their standard of living, the *contadini* abandoned Italy and came to *la Merica* during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Once arrived, the Italian immigrant community unpacked much more than their meager material possessions. Out of their bags sprung the values, attitudes, rituals, and rules of their former lives. The only things left behind were the economic, political,

and geographical hardships unique to south Italy.

They arrived only to face new challenges thematically similar to those of the *Mezzogiorno* yet distinctly American. Familiar obstacles confronted the immigrants: cramped living quarters, discriminatory working conditions, prejudicial attitudes. American challenges to their culture such as the language barrier and the glitz of American society also came to the forefront. As before, this people survived these challenges through the reliance upon family and faith. They reacted naturally to these cultural roadblocks by revitalizing the traditions of the *Mezzogiorno*. Weathered by centuries of oppression, the undaunted Italian immigrants boldly unveiled their shields of family and faith and drew their singular weapon of cultural defense, la via vecchia.

As they fanned out across the United States, the Italians gradually improved their lives via American avenues of success. The rapid growth of American industry provided employment opportunities which the immigrants accepted readily. These former peasants clawed their way out of crowded urban surroundings into the upper echelons of American society. They owned American homes, drove American automobiles, entered American schools, fought and died in American conflicts, purchased American goods, and contributed to American business and politics.

Just below the surface, however, lay the omnipresent foundation of their society, *la via vecchia*. As *contadini*, immigrants, and Americans, they exalted family and faith as the lynch-pin of the culture. The reliance on these values translated into the resurrection of *Mezzogiorno* customs in the United States.

They observed diligently the religious and secular holidays of the Old Country. Thousands flocked to grand festas which reinforced their ethnic individuality as much as a specific spiritual or cultural figure or event. They honored the rituals begun by their predecessors despite exposure to American society. They strengthened the integrity and sanctity of faith and family through the *pranzo*, the celebration of the Sacraments according to Italian tradition, and a myriad of other beloved customs.

The formation and ensuing success of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church of Youngstown, Ohio personified this phenomenon. In the spirit of the campanilismo, the founders settled at the bottom of the hill below the Church. As products of the *Mezzogiorno*, these hard working, self reliant, Italian immigrants raised the funds and built the Church of their own accord. They even resisted the interposing hand of the bishop so as to preserve their image of the ideal place of worship.

Mount Carmel Church took shape as the symbol of its Italian owners. They recreated the physical and social environment of *contadini* religious culture. Dedicated to *la Madonna*, builders imported materials and other culturally symbolic artifacts from Italy and placed them in the new Church as reminders of a shared past. The architectural style, the intimate size, and the structural make-up of the Church mirrored the experiences of the founders. The statues, frescos, stained glass windows, and a plethora of other artifacts displayed the religious and cultural nuances of the Mount Carmel approach toward Catholicism. Each successive pastor organized large scale building projects which fortified the physical and social surroundings of the Church. A new catechetical and social center bulged with young students of the Catholic faith. Outdoor shrines to Saint Anthony of Padua, Jesus praying at the Garden of Gethsemane, and Our Lady of Mount Carmel adorned the landscape of 343 Via Mt. Carmel, formerly Summit Ave. Numerous restoration projects, conducted by fellow Italians often of local origin, beautified the Church without incurring debt due to parishioner efforts. At the social level, small clubs grew to populous societies that oversaw parish sponsored events designed to reinforce ethnic, familial, and religious ties. Festas, dinner-dances,

novenas, processions, specific feast day rituals of Italian origin, and countless other activities indicative of the Old Country belied their affinity for their traditional roots. Individual families of the parish community upheld faithfully the daily and Sunday *pranzo* despite the fast-paced American world outside. More importantly, through the timeless practices of *rispetto* and *ben educato*, children learned to adore faith and family just as their ancestors had for centuries.

Over the years, the malleable surface of *la via vecchia* adapted to external influences yet the core values still fueled the Mount Carmel "parish family." The growth of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church testified to their adherence to Old World values. As generations passed, this particular community excelled as citizens of the United States. They painstakingly achieved success and respect according to contemporary American standards as housewives, businessmen, politicians, veterans, and clergy. Always relying on the tenets of *la via vecchia*, however, they also triumphed as Italians. Their total dedication to the betterment of the family and the practice of the Catholic faith churned forward. The Mount Carmel community surrounded itself with the material and social manifestations of their interaction with American society, but underneath the cultural clothing

lay the indelible yet amazingly flexible tenets of *la via vecchia*.

Although an externally changing, semi-permeable environment, behind the elaborate curtain hid the foundational values of *Mezzogiorno* culture. Loyalty to these customs and practices persisted regardless of the surrounding social or geographical context. The interests of family and faith reigned supreme among the villages of the *Mezzogiorno*, the congested immigrant quarters of urban America, or the residential Italian neighborhood of Youngstown, Ohio. Mount Carmel Church acted as the physical, spiritual, social, and ethnic citadel of the culture their predecessors brought to America. Through the celebration of rituals intertwined with family and faith, the Italian parishioners established their own ethnic identity while living and working as Americans. Weekly masses, novenas, feast days, spaghetti dinners, and ethnic holidays connected them to their unique past and protected them from the dangers of a new environment. Just as it had for centuries, the "village church" functioned as the bulwark against the perils and inequities of merciless external powers. It provided a place of gathering where family and faith were fortified. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church of Youngstown, Ohio, represented the organic, working

symbol of the experiences of its Italian parishioners. The amalgamation of familial and religious beliefs which fueled the *contadini* and *giornalieri* of South Italy inspired the Mount Carmel community of 1996. As their spiritual and cultural leader, Father Michael Cariglio, poignantly remarked in a recent homily, "You see to us, the term family carries with it many important meanings...We actively proclaim the Kingdom of God when we stand up for our family as well as our Christian family."[7] Throughout the twentieth century, *la via vecchia* quietly governed every working detail of this "little village church...bursting with joy and pride."[8] As the new millennia approaches, the ringing bells of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church of Youngstown, Ohio still resonate with the values and customs of the *Mezzogiorno*.

1.Look John H. Mariano, The Italian Contribution to American Democracy, Edward C. Banfield, The Moral Basis of A Backward Society, Humbert S. Nelli, Italians in Chicago 1880-1930: A Study in Ethnic Mobility, and Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted.

2.Michael J. Parenti, "Ethnic and Political Attitudes: A Depth Study of Italian Americans" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1962), 25.

3.Ibid., 28.

4.Nelli, Italians in Chicago, 6.

5.Parenti, "Ethnic And Political Attitudes," 27-28.

6.Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1977), 23.

7.Reverend Michael Cariglio, Jr., Homily at Sunday Mass, March 1996.

8.Reverend Joseph Iati, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church: 15th Annual Sports Banquet, (Youngstown: Privately Printed, 1980), 1.

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