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Baptism in Sannicandro 2004

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A BAPTISM IN SANNICANDRO

I’ve been going to church every night at 7:30 p.m. I like hearing the Italian of the young priest, Don Matteo. He speaks clearly and gives short sermons that are relatively easy to understand. I have a little trouble with the village “archpriest”, Don Vincenzino. Although he’s a cousin, his eighty years plus interferes with my comprehension. He seems to mix Italian with the local dialect.

Last night, however, neither of these priests said the Mass. It was a different priest who was filling in for the other two while one of them was on vacation. He was black, and from Africa. He speaks Italian like a native, and he was trained in Roma. Along with the African priest, there were four nuns singing the various missal responses. They were also from other countries. Two were from India and the other two were either Chinese or Korean from the looks of them. Interesting that this little village in the south of Italy should become mission territory and is being served in its spiritual needs by individuals from countries until recently mission territory themselves. Vocations in Italy are as bad off as those in the USA.

The church has a large painting over the main aisle of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. Masterovalario painted it. He is a local artist who made good during the last century and one of his paintings actually hangs in the Library of Congress. No Michelangelo, but the locals are very proud of him, especially Michele Bronda, his nephew. Michele is an art professor in Roma and is himself an artist and is responsible for the refurbishing of the paintings in the town’s Monastery church. We talk each day on the beach. He is a friend of Peppino of Roma, Francesca’s dad.
The Mass turned out to be a baptism as well. It was really quite exciting. The child was brought before the main alter for a blessing at the beginning of the Mass. Later, the black priest took the child up the main aisle to the baptistery. His entire family of maybe fifty people followed and surrounded the priest as he put the child in the font. Afterwards the entire family sang a chorus of “Alleluia” and then clapped very loudly while cheering the child’s name. It was fun to see people so closely gathered and in such agreement on the naming of this child. It was nothing like the sterile baptisms I have participated in over the years in the US. Real feelings were shown here and all the others in the Church, not members of the family, showed the same enthusiasm as if related to the newly consecrated Catholic.

michael vocino
Sannicandro Geo.,
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