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Nutley Priest Concelebrates Canonization Mass with Pope

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Rev. Joseph Ferraro, Pastor at Holy Family Roman Catholic Church.

A large handmade mosaic of Saint Angelo d'Acri on display at Holy Cross Cemetery in North Arlington.

Fr. Joseph Ferraro and his cousin, Donatella Chimento of Acri, at the canonization Mass of St. Angelo of Acri at St. Peter's Basilica.

A priest from Nutley, NJ recently concelebrated Mass in St. Peter's Square with Pope Francis to canonize 35 new saints, as more than 35,000 pilgrims watched from the square and many thousands more viewed the Mass online and on television worldwide.

Rev. Joseph Ferraro, pastor of the Holy Family Roman Catholic Church in Nutley, traveled to the Vatican especially to celebrate the canonization of Saint Angelo d'Acri, an Italian Capuchin

priest known for his defense of the poor. Fr. Ferraro has a special affection for Saint Angelo because of their shared origin and roots in Acri, Calabria, the area in Italy where many of Fr. Joe's family members still reside.

"Growing up from a very early age, I remember my parents and grandparents speaking of Blessed Angelo of Acri," said Fr. Joe. "They all had pictures, calendars and various religious articles at home and spoke of the life of this great saint and the

hope and prayers for his canonization as a Saint. In fact, all of my male cousins and I were dedicated to the protection of Blessed Angelo."

Saint Angelo was born Luca Antonio Falcone on October 19, 1669. He became a Capuchin Franciscan at the age of 18. Twice refused admission to the Capuchins, he was finally accepted in 1690. He professed vows in 1691, took the name "Angelo," and dedicated himself to preaching.

Saint Angelo became a famous preacher following a series of extraordinary sermons in Naples during Lenten period in 1711. He continued to preach missions in Calabria and Naples and converted thousands while performing numerous healing miracles. He was known

as both the "Angel of Peace" and the "Apostle of the South." St. Angelo was also believed to have the gifts of prophecy and bilocation, the simultaneous presence of a person in two different places, similar to that of Padre Pio. He also was known to experience visions and ecstasies and was believed to have the ability to see into men's souls.

Saint Angelo died in the friary in Acri on October 30, 1739 and was beatified by Pope Leo XII in 1825. His feast day is October 30th.

"Our moms made Franciscan Monk habits for us to wear on the feast day of St. Angelo," said Fr. Joe. "The tradition still continues today (as seen in the photo of Vincenzo, the 6-month-old grandson of Fr. Joe's cousin,

Lidia). Each year, the children are dressed and brought to the St. Angelo Chapel dressed in their robe for a special blessing on the Saint's birthday on October 19."

Fr. Joe said he thinks about "how many members of my family and extended family bear the name 'Angelo' or 'Angela' as a first or middle name, including my own brother, uncles, cousins and grandmother. It just proves more and more of the faith and love that not only my family has, but that the people of Acri have, for this great Saint."

The Canonization Mass procession began at 10:00 am in Saint Peter's Square. Fr. Joe's cousin, Stefania Chimento, a choir member and soloist of St. Angelo

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Basilica, sang a pre-Mass solo. "I was so proud and honored to hear the beautiful gift of her voice and her sharing this her talent with us," said Fr. Joe.

He recounts how the pilgrims who had visited the Mass especially for St. Angelo wore yellow caps depicting the Saint and the Basilica in Acri. As the Saint's name was mentioned, the pilgrims waved banners with his picture and printed messages to Pope Francis, "Calabria loves you," while they changed, "Evviva Sant'Angelo d'Acri!"

"The square was full of joy and life," described Fr. Joe. "There were many tears of joy, as the people of Acri have waited so long for this moment. I thought about my grandparents and other extended family members who waited for this day but now are home with the Lord as they joyfully celebrated with

us at this Mass. Lots of thoughts raced through my mind... I was truly part of this great event, which became a reality for my family's roots. The connection with my family's ancestries was strengthened."

During the canonization Mass in St. Peter's Square on October 15, Pope Francis stated, "...we declare and define Andre de Soveral, Ambrosio Francisco Ferro, Mateo Moreira and 27 companions; Cristobal, Antonio and Juan; Faustino Miguez; and Angelo of Acri to be Saints..."

Tapestries bearing images of the martyrs, priests and laypersons, including St. Angelo, hung from the facade of St. Peter's Basilica. "...we enroll them among the Saints, decreeing that they are to be venerated as such by the whole Church," stated the Holy Father. He pointed out that the newly canonized saints and especially the many martyrs ex-



In the Basilica of St. Angelo in front of the St. Angelo crypt are (from left) Pietroangelo Straface, his niece, Maria Straface and her father, Giorgio Straface; who are parishioners of Holy Family in Nutley, NJ. The family went to Italy to watch the canonization of St. Angelo of Acri.

emplify the daily habit of choosing to love God and choosing to do His will. "They did not say a fleeting 'yes' to love, they said 'yes' with their lives and to the very end."

"The best feeling I experienced was that all present at the Canonization Mass treated each other as family and friends even if we didn't know each other," recounted Fr. Joe. "People hugged and bonded. I was introduced to people whose parents were friends of my grandparents and started sharing stories that I had heard originally from my grandparents. This made it even more worthwhile... memories so wonderfully important to be shared from the heart."

Upon his return to New Jersey, Father Joe will celebrate a Mass of Remembrance on November 8th starting at 9:30 a.m. located at Holy Cross Cemetery in North Arlington, with a special blessing of a handcrafted mosaic of Saint Angelo of Acri in honor of the canonization.



Fr. Joe Ferraro with his cousins, Lidia Godino-Chimento of Acri, and Dr. Aldo Toscano, of Rome.



Fr. Joe Ferraro (center) with cousins, Pasquale Caruso and Stefania Chimento, both members of the St. Angelo Basilica Choir, which sang at the canonization Mass in the Vatican on October 15th.



This is a photo from October 30, 1900 of the procession and beatification of St. Angelo. In the background the basilica that was built two years earlier is visible.