



Sulmona, Italy

JUNE 2022

John & Cristina Inglese

MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER

“ I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness” —John 8:12

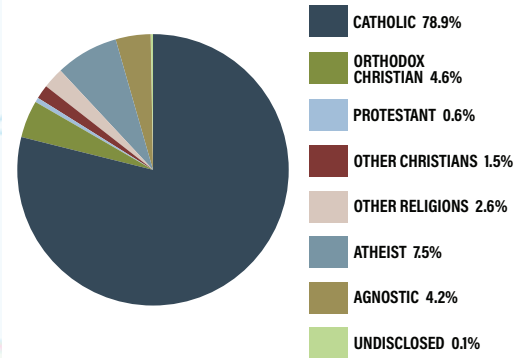
Why Italy?

by John Inglese

In the summer of 2013, we returned from six months of missionary training in Ghana, Africa. The door had closed for us to go to Columbia, which was where we were to be full-time missionaries upon finishing the training in Ghana. The Lord obviously had other plans because he closed that door abruptly. So we prayed “Where to now, Lord?” Since I spoke Spanish, I thought that He would send us to a Latin country. I took a week-long trip to Panama and spoke with a pastor there to see if that was where the Lord wanted us to go. But the Lord did not confirm Panama. Then we thought perhaps Peru, the country my mother was from. We met-up with a missionary pastor serving there who was back in the states for a couple of weeks. We spent some time talking with him and then prayed about it all together. The pastor even opened his doors to us and said that if we did go to Peru, we could stay with him for a time. However, again, the Lord did not confirm that for us. So, we decided that instead of trying to find a door that would open, we would wait for Him to let us know when and where it was time to go back onto the mission field. It’s been nine years since.

Then in January of 2020, my aunt mentioned that my Godfather’s sister had passed away in Italy and had left a house to him that no one was living in. Cristina and I thought, “Wow! Wouldn’t it be awesome to live in Italy!” That was the first thought we ever had of living in Italy. The following Saturday I went to the farmers market near my house, which was my usual Saturday morning routine, and which is how I had met a vendor there who is also a brother in Christ. That morning as we were talking, he told me that he had heard that there was an evangelist
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Italy POPULATION BY RELIGION†
[Italy’s Total Pop.: 59.55 million (2020)]*



†Eurostat’s Eurobarometer survey in 2018
*Source: WorldBank



SULMONA’S Sacred Easter Ritual

Running Madonna La Madonna Che Scappa in Piazza

“Running Madonna is one of the most important events in Sulmona”, according to Sulmona Live’s website. It takes place on Easter Sunday in Garibaldi Square, the largest and most picturesque square in Sulmona. The size of the crowd is huge, spilling into every possible space

in and around the piazza. It is considered a “holy performance ... of high religious value, ... an Italian ecclesiastical drama” with its roots dating back to the 1450’s. [1]

The liturgical drama is “connected to a
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Footnotes—
Running Madonna, [1] Sulmonalive.it

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speaking in San Diego, who shared what he believed God told him, “God is going to give Italy the boot and let

“*God is going to give Italy the boot and let the light shine in.*”

the light shine in.” What he meant by that, was that God was going to shake up Italy and then let the light in, because Italy has never experienced a reformation all through history. My thought was: “I want to be a part of that!” As I was walking home from the market, I sensed the Lord telling me that he wanted us to go to Italy. My heart was stirred and I got really excited, like I did when the Lord told us He wanted us to go to Ghana.

Years ago, in the 1950’s, my dad and his brothers had immigrated to the United States from Italy. My father had passed away when I was about five years old. All my uncles had become naturalized citizens of the U.S., so I assumed that my father had become an American citizen before he died. Remembering I had seen my dad’s green card in his wallet, I opened his wallet and saw that it did contain his green card. That led us to think that maybe my father never did become a citizen, that maybe he had passed away before he could. After a call to the Italian Consulate in Los Angeles, we found out that if my dad had passed away before becoming an American citizen, I would qualify

“*Seemingly, I was born into this situation to do this task.*”

for dual citizenship. Not just me, but my children and wife as well. As we delved into an investigation, we found out that, indeed, my father had passed away before he could complete the

process of becoming a U.S. citizen. This was very intriguing to us, as we could see the Lord’s hand in all this, how this must have been a part of His plan from the beginning; seemingly, I was born into this situation to do this task. The Italian citizenship process took a little over a year, because of COVID. I am blessed to say that everything went through, and I am now an Italian citizen, as well as my children. Cristina, because she is seeking dual citizenship through marriage, can apply for dual citizenship three years after I became

“*The Lord told me, I would adopt a country and the country would adopt me.*”

a citizen. She will, however, have to speak Italian with a B-1 fluency when she applies.

Becoming a citizen of the country I will be serving on the mission field was actually an answer to prayer! One of the things that I had always thought about was when I enter a country as a missionary, I really did not want to lie at the border as to why I was going to their country, I told the Lord that I didn’t want my first act as a missionary to be a lie – now I don’t have to say why I’m going to Italy, because I am an Italian citizen. He recently reminded me of this request I had prayed to Him—HE is so Good! Before I had gone to Ghana, the Lord had spoken to me and told me that “I would adopt a country and the country would adopt me.” I thought Ghana was going to be that country. When that door closed, I thought to myself that maybe it wasn’t the Lord, it was just a random thought. However, when I received my dual

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Running Madonna—cont. from pg. 1

series of religious manifestations diffused all over Italy and sharing common characteristics. However, the performance in Sulmona is different from all the others in one aspect – the Virgin Mary runs to Jesus, upon recognizing her Son.” [2]

According to tradition, the ritual is still organized by the local Sulmonesi Confraternities and performed with statues, which are held up high for the crowds to see. It starts out with Mary closed inside the 17th century church of San Filippo Neri on the eastern side of the square, praying in solitude. She is dressed in mourning clothes and weeps for her dead Son. Peter and John each go to her to announce the resurrection of her Son. At first she does not respond to their news, until John again knocks on the door. Still not entirely convinced her Son is alive, she slowly leaves the church



and makes her way to the big fountain in the center of the square, followed by the statues of Peter and John.

At the fountain Mary sees her risen Son at the other end of the square, between the arches of the aqueduct and runs to unite with Him. As Mary runs, her black cloak falls on the ground revealing green clothes (signifying life and good omen).

“Applause, shots, and flight of doves explode in an atmosphere of participation and high emotions, because this is a performance that pulls the strings of one’s soul, calling to the most authentic values, such as a deep bond between a mother and her son. Once they meet each other,

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Running Madonna —cont. from pg. 2
they seem to turn back to being simple statues and then become part of the city procession together with the local authorities and members of the Confraternity." [3]

According to superstition and popular belief, if the Madonna completes her run without accidents, the year will be prosperous for the town and the harvests abundant. Other elements are considered good omens, too: the flight of doves that should not fly low but go high in the sky, and the cloak of Mary's statue should free itself easily, fall to the ground, and reveal beautiful curls of the Virgin. [4]

Italy, with its beautiful land, beautiful quaint towns, and beautiful people, is steeped in traditions that go as deep as its history. It is odd how the Truth of scripture seems so close, woven into many of the traditions, yet is so far from being what it was meant to be: the very means to an intimate relationship with the Creator. The Lord God is awesome (as usual) and has a plan to reach the people in Italy, and we, as His vessels, are making ourselves available to Him.

"Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life." —John 8:12

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citizenship confirmation from the Italian consulate, the Lord spoke to me and reminded me that it was He who had spoken those words to me. How much more can I adopt a country and a country adopt me than becoming a citizen! He is so Amazing! And I am so humbled that the Lord would speak to me.

I have asked the Lord for several confirmations and the Lord has been so gracious that He keeps reaffirming His call for us to go to Italy "I am weak

— He is strong". We have no doubt that is where the Lord wants us. We don't know how he's going to get us there, but we know He will. He did it for us when we went to Ghana, and we see

“ He keeps reaffirming His call - so we set a date —March 2023!

the fruit from Ghana. So we are excited with much anticipation of what He is going to do for Italy. By faith we have set a date of March 2023! Since setting that date, the Lord has confirmed over and over that we are going —“I believe and He helps me with my unbelief.” We are going to a country that though they believe in God and have a bible, they have never accepted the finished work of Jesus and have never experienced a revival. We are not going with an agenda or with an expectation, just with anticipation of the work the Lord is going to do, and we know God only does good works.

We cannot express how moved and touched and humbled we feel that He would consider us. That He would use us to share Christ and His truths (the Bible) in Italy. He loves the Italian people and His desire is that they come into a personal relationship with Him through Christ. He wants them to know that they can have assurance of their salvation through Jesus, and

He loves the Italian people and wants them to have a relationship with Him through Christ.

that He completed the work, so salvation comes through Him alone, and not through the Catholic church and works —Jesus plus nothing is “The

Good News”!!!!

Pizza! Pizza! We're asking everyone to please keep us in prayer, and as a reminder, anytime you have pizza (everyone loves and eats pizza) remember to pray for us and for the Italian people, and all that the Lord wants to do there! This is not a temporary mission trip, this is going to be a permanent move for us, and we are excited! We would really appreciate your prayers especially as we get closer to the move date, and when we arrive in Italy and are getting situated.

We love this quote from Gladys Alyward, because we feel the same way as she. When asked why God sent her to China — she answered:

"I wasn't God's first choice for what I've done for China...I don't know who it was...It must have been a man...It must have been a man...a well-educated man. I don't know what happened. Perhaps he died. Perhaps he wasn't willing...and God looked down...and saw Gladys Alyward... And God said- "Well, she's willing, send her." —Gladys Alyward

In Cristo,

John and Cristina Inglese

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pray for the hearts of the people of Sulmona to be eager for the Lord and His Word
- Pray for our Italian language learning
- Pray for a hedge of protection from the enemy's schemes and interference
- Pray for our preparations, such as passports, securing affordable housing
- Pray for our kids to get situated financially in their own apartments or housing here in the states (unless they change their minds and come with us!)

Footnotes—
Running Madonna,
[3] Ibid.; [4] Ibid.

Please Note: For your convenience, should you feel led, you may send a tax-deductible donation by clicking on the "WorldOutreach" link, or by going to www.WorldOutreach.org/248. To Mail a Check: World Outreach Ministries, Inc., P.O. Box B, Marietta, GA 30061 (make it payable to: WOM and designate on the memo line: for Inglese #248)