

2010

The expansion of the St. Joseph Altar in south Louisiana

Nara Maria Ersilia Crowley

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Crowley, Nara Maria Ersilia, "The expansion of the St. Joseph Altar in south Louisiana" (2010). *LSU Master's Theses*. 2196.

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/2196

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.

THE EXPANSION OF THE ST. JOSEPH ALTAR IN SOUTH LOUISIANA

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Liberal Arts

in

The Interdepartmental Program in Liberal Arts

by
Nara Maria Ersilia Crowley
B.A. University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2001
May, 2010

DEDICATION

There are not enough words to express how grateful I am to my husband, Bill, who encouraged me to complete my undergraduate degree, and to move forward with my endeavors to pursue my master's. I don't think he bargained for the timeless hours spent to research and complete my thesis; however, Bill repeated many times, "Do not to give up." He also added much perspective from his family's Italian heritage.

My nuclear family – mom, dad, my children, Dee, Lara, Todd, and their other halves – Jim, Mike, and Crissy – all cheered me on when my spirits were low. Crissy contributed much of her own Italian traditions. Bill III and Iona gave me encouraging words while having the same challenges.

My Italian family – Nonna, Zia Lina, Zio Ennio, Zia Libera, and many others – taught me all about what it means to be Italian. My brother Jerry and sister-in-law Patty provided added perspectives, and my brother Jeff and sister-in-law Nancy were part of the cheering squad. My mom-in-law, Jeanette, and my sister-in-law Cindy all were part of the pillars of strength that held me up.

My extended family and friends not only encouraged me but shared their life stories for my research. Each contributed to encouraging my perseverance and providing information—Aunt Norina, Aunt Julie, Leanora, Yankee and Southern Judys, Joanna, Lauletta, Maria, Dinah, Rachel, Verlie, and many of my friends from Save Lake Peigneur.

Lastly, I cannot forget my *cari canini*, KC and Auggie. They sat with me while I wrote, and they stayed by my side and licked my toes when they were tired and wanted to go for a walk.

Normally, the “Acknowledgement” section recognizes those who counseled the writer of the thesis. My three mentors went beyond the call of duty in every aspect of my lengthy process. Dr. Jill Brody, the Chair, devoted a seemingly never-ending task of advice and editing to produce a very worthy document. Dr. William Clark opened my eyes to a new world of political science in liberal arts. He cheered me on and his immediate attention to bureaucratic issues paved a smooth path toward the ultimate goal. Last but not least, is Dr. Joseph Rikapito, my friend and mentor who has guided me from my first Italian American history class through the very turbulent task of completing my thesis. Dr. Rikapito opened the doors to the story of the Italian ethnic growth in the United States thus the birth of my interest in the St. Joseph Altar. His continuous encouragement gave me the strength to see my project through.

The three-year project turned into a five-year project, but I learned a great deal, not only about the wonderful St. Joseph Altar, but about my wonderful husband, family, friends, and poochie babies, that without all their support, I never would have fulfilled my objective.

Nara Maria Ersilia Crowley

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to my friend and former student, Father Curtis Mallet who scrupulously studied Italian in preparation for his studies in Rome. He provided me with contemporary insight of the existing practices in Italy as well as continuous encouragement.

Father Michael Joseph Russo and the parishioners of Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Franklin extended a warm welcome and numerous hours of information of the wonderful St. Joseph Altar.

A special thanks to Mary Faella and the Piccone family of Lafayette for sharing with me the history of the St. Joseph Altar in their family.

Many thanks go to the late Joseph Maselli of New Orleans who welcomed me to the Italian American Museum. He not only permitted me complete access to the records but gave me the scores of Italian American journals dating back to the early 1970's.

My student and friend RoRisa Reina spent many hours with me visiting St. Joseph Altars as well as my friend Rosalie Lampone who hand delivered me to the St. Joseph Altars and celebrations in New Orleans.

My numerous Sicilian Italian students and friends as well the Amici, from Abbeville, particularly Janice, were so kind to not only provide me with information but include Bill and me in their festivities.

The Triestine Girls, particularly Clara Steele, were a foundation for my research of Italian war brides and provided me with insight regarding religious practice.

The friends from the American Italian Historical Association and the documentation that emanated from the organization provided infinite resources.

I am extremely grateful for all the information provided by; Mrs. Minvielle, Dr. Fred Gadarphe, Nola, Dr. Salvatore Primeggio, Dr. Scarparo, Dr. Ilaria Vanni, Dr. Paolo Bartoloni, the Maddie Family, Carolyn Ricapito for her help in time of need, and the many people who spent the time to respond to the questionnaire.

A special thanks to Dr. Roger Payne for his extensive help at the onset of my research of this thesis.

I began my research with a quest to discover what made the St. Joseph Altar such a wonderful tradition in Louisiana. Ethelyn Orso, Peggy Kaveski, Roslynn Plemmer, and Pamela Quaggiotto gave me an excellent foundation as well as other literature, but the wonderful individuals that provided the oral history of the St. Joseph Altar quenched my thirst for answers for the Expansion of the St. Joseph Altar in South Louisiana.

PREFACE

Relocating to Louisiana from the Northeast brought me new and wonderful experiences. My Italian language students surprised and enlightened me to the significant Italian Sicilian population. Through them I learned of the annual celebration that honored St. Joseph in a manner completely different than my Italian heritage. What initially began as a curiosity developed into a passionate cultural pursuit of a distinctive tradition that has swept throughout South Louisiana since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries known as the First Wave of immigration.

Throughout this study I will refer various ethnic groups as Italian-Americans, Sicilian-Americans, Polish-Americans, etc. as popular culture dictates.

Millions of Italian American religious and cultural festivities occur in the United States yearly. Some of these festivities integrate ethnic and religious traditions. My interest to research the St. Joseph Altar Catholic celebration emanated from the fact that throughout my global travels, I never encountered the public and popular St. Joseph Altar celebrations as those of South Louisiana. Only a marginal Italian Catholic population outside of Louisiana maintains the spiritual commitment to the St. Joseph Altar day festivity.

Controversy exists regarding the exact location of origin of the St. Joseph Altar, but no dispute exists about the elaborate Sicilian tradition. Worldwide immigration disseminated the tradition. This thesis studies the St. Joseph Altar from immigrant to current traditions particularly in South Louisiana.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
PREFACE.....	vi
LIST of TABLES.....	viii
LIST of FIGURES.....	ix
ABSTRACT.....	xi
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
2 REVIEW of LITERATURE.....	9
3 METHODS and HISTORY.....	14
Methods.....	14
History, Italian History and Immigration.....	16
The Italian Schism.....	22
Diasporic Celebrations.....	24
4 ST. JOSEPH'S ALTAR	34
St. Joseph's History in Italy.....	34
Ethnic Celebrations and St. Joseph's Day in the United States.....	37
St. Joseph Altar Traditions in South Louisiana, the Beginning.....	46
5 THE ST. JOSEPH ALTAR EXPANSION IN SOUTH LOUISIANA.....	55
6 CONCLUSION.....	75
REFERENCES.....	89
APPENDIX A: CULTURAL TRADITIONS SURVEY.....	97
APPENDIX B: SURVEY IMMIGRANT STUDIES.....	99
APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL	100
VITA.....	102

LIST of TABLES

Table 1:	Timeline of St. Joseph Altar in South Louisiana.....	88
----------	--	----

LIST of FIGURES

Figure 1:	Map of Sicily, St. Joseph Altar locations.....	8
Figure 2:	Cherubs in Cupola by Clara Steele.....	42
Figure 3:	St. Louis Cathedral, St. Joseph Altar, New Orleans 2007.....	52
Figure 4:	St. Joseph Altar Parade, New Orleans, LA.....	53
Figure 5:	St. Joseph Altar Parade, New Orleans, LA	54
Figure 6:	Fr. Joseph Russo Family Tree – Descendants from Corleone, Italy Franklin, LA.....	57
Figure 7:	Four-tiered St. Joseph Altar, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Franklin, LA.....	58
Figure 8:	Various shaped breads, animals and fish typical of Acadiana; crawfish, turtles, traditional Sicilian mementoes, Franklin, LA.....	59
Figure 9:	Cookies in shape of St. Joseph Sandals and Monstrance, Statue of St. Rosalie from Palermo, Sicily. Franklin, LA.	60
Figure 10:	<i>Scatollini</i> cookies.....	61
Figure 11:	Fava Bean Tree.....	61
Figure 12:	St. Joseph and Baby Jesus, bread shaped as various carpenter tools. Virgin Mary & Baby Jesus, the Crucifixion. Franklin, LA.....	62
Figure 13:	St. Joseph Prayer Cake and various designed cakes. Franklin, LA..	63
Figure 14:	St. Lucy – Saint of Lights and Eyes. Franklin, LA.....	64
Figure 15:	Crucifix and miscellaneous cakes. Franklin, LA.....	64
Figure 16:	St. Joseph Altar, Catholic High School, New Iberia, LA.....	68
Figure 17:	St. Joseph Altar, Catholic High School, Crown of Thorns representing Jesus’ death. New Iberia, LA.....	68

Figure 18:	St. Joseph Altar, Catholic High School, white doves representing peace. New Iberia, LA.....	69
Figure 19:	St. Joseph Altar, Catholic High School, relic cloth of St. Francis Xavier Seelos. New Iberia, LA.....	69
Figure 20	St. Joseph Altar, Catholic High School, St. Joseph Prayer Cards and Petition Box. New Iberia, LA.....	70
Figure 21:	Map – Louisiana, Identifying areas of St. Joseph Altar Celebrations.....	87

All photos except otherwise noted by the author, Nara Crowley.

ABSTRACT

According to folklore, the Catholic St. Joseph Altar tradition dates back to the Fifteenth century droughts in Sicily. The famine that ensued resulted in prayers to the patron saint of protection, St. Joseph. Two legends evolved from the cessation of the drought - one of thanks for ending the famine, the other for protecting one vital source of nutrition, the fava bean. Two parables influenced the development of permanent traditions known today as the St. Joseph Altar. The two ideals remain intact – one of gratitude, the other of petition.

The Italian Sicilian diaspora of the mid-nineteenth century sprinkled the St. Joseph Altar tradition globally. Sparsely scattered throughout the United States and internationally, South Louisiana offers more celebrations of the St. Joseph Altar than in all of North America. This comparative study explores the impetus that perpetuates and inflates the St. Joseph Altar celebration in South Louisiana.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Bursts of laughter emanated from the jovial crowds that waited expectantly for the Shriners to angle their mini-vehicles down the narrow Vieux Royal. Drinks in hand, tourists mingled with locals, asking what parade was coming. New Orleans had already celebrated Mardi Gras and St. Patrick's Day. Green, white and red Italian flags fluttered in the breeze. The date was March nineteenth, St. Joseph's Day.

Honoring St. Joseph through a set of special customs has become the norm for the community of Italian-Americans who have lived in New Orleans for more than a century. Those familiar with the tradition wait eagerly for the parade of police on motorcycles, the St. Joseph's float with his statue surrounded by young females in elaborate white gowns, and an array of Mardi Gras-style parade floats weighted with beads of red, green and white that identify the Italian ethnicity. The fulfillment of expectations, particularly for women, arrives with the last parade group that consist of tuxedo-clad males of all ages carrying roses, beads and kisses for willing women spectators. The parade and the private ball that follow culminate the annual religious celebration of St. Joseph.

Italian-Americans constitute the fifth-largest ethnic population in the United States.¹ Originally described according to their ethnic group of origin, such as Polish or Irish, Italians later re-identified themselves as "Italian-Americans" in the second generation. Second-generation Italians are also first-generation Americans; many have maintained continuity of their Italian-American ethnic identity through their distinctive

¹ United States Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov>

practices.² The accepted characterization of Italian-American changed again in the third, more Americanized generation. The cultural identification of “American-Italian” as in the title “American Italian Historical Association,” reflects this current trend.³ General media, however, primarily refer to Americans associated with post-colonization immigration with their immigrant ethnicities, i.e., Italian-Americans, African-Americans, Polish-Americans.

Italians from mainland Italy often identify themselves by their city or region of origin, such as Milanese, from city of Milano or Calabrese, from the region Calabria. Throughout this paper “Italian-Americans” identify the Italian descendants from mainland Italy born in the United States. Italians from Sicily take great pride in their regional heritage; therefore, in this paper I will refer to the descendants from that region the way they refer to themselves, as Sicilians.

An invisible line beginning in Rome distinguishes Northern and Southern Italy both geographically and culturally. In this paper I will use the popular term, *Mezzogiorno* when referring to mainland Southern Italy and Sicily. Sicily, an island which attracted mariners from all corners of the world faced continuous invasion for centuries. The multi-ethnic, multi-religious influence gave birth to a harmony of culture.

Louisiana has the distinction of having the largest percentage of Italians of Sicilian descent in the United States (Margavio, Salomone, 2002:43). South Louisiana also has a strong Catholic tradition, in part reflected by the official identity of subsections known as “parishes,” rather than “counties” as in the rest of the United States. Most Italian immigrants to the United States were Catholic and the majority of

² Personal experience and interviews.

³ American Italian Historical Association, Chicago, IL.

subsequent generations throughout the United States have perpetuated this religious tradition.

The arrival of European immigrants to Louisiana in the post Civil War period brought a new dimension to the local cultures and historical milieu of the period. Irish, German, Italian, and other ethnic groups added to the cultural blend already established in Louisiana. Most of the European immigrants shared Catholicism with the established French and Spanish, which contributed to South Louisiana's distinctiveness.

One part of traditional Catholic devotional festivities is the annual parish event honoring the patron saint of their church, also known as "feast day." Parishioners usually attend a special Mass in honor of the patron. A procession of the statue of the saint followed by parishioners may be part of the celebration. Following these devotional practices participants partake in a meal contributed by the parishioners.

Some feast day festivities in the United States incorporate ethnic and religious traditions. Throughout the United States many Catholic churches formed in immigrant neighborhoods inspired ethnic-related festivities. Irish, Polish, Italian, Vietnamese and other ethnicities perpetuate their heritage within many Catholic devotional events.

The earliest expression of devotion to St. Joseph occurred in Eastern Europe during the fourth century.⁴ The people of Bologna, Italy honored St. Joseph in 1129 by erecting a church. His popularity increased during the seventeenth century, and the Reformed Carmelite Order of nuns adopted St. Joseph as their patron saint. The Church then decreed the third Sunday after Easter as St. Joseph's feast day. In 1726, Pope Benedict XIII included St. Joseph in the Litany of Saints. Pope Pius IX proclaimed

⁴ "St. Joseph". *Catholic Encyclopedia*. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08504a.htm>

St. Joseph patron saint of the universal Church in 1847 and designated March 19 his Feast Day in 1870. Since then the Church has proclaimed St. Joseph to be the patron saint of numerous entities including fathers, families, carpenters, laborers, social justice, the dying, unwed mothers, a multitude of countries, cities, villages and the universal Catholic Church which includes the Roman Catholic and approximately thirteen eastern denomination Catholic churches.⁵

Many Italian Americans accept the Sicilian ownership of the St. Joseph Altar devotional tradition. Italian immigrants of the late nineteenth century traditionally honored St. Joseph on his feast day, but inclusion of the custom of constructing an altar symbolically laden with food follows Sicilian tradition. Numerous rituals associated with the Altar, as well as the private and public celebrations, have through time undergone limited expansion in various parts of the United States.

The Sicilian community entered a distinctive regional mix of cultures when they emigrated into Louisiana. In harmony with the extant dominantly Catholic culture, the unique devotional practice of Sicilians found acceptance of the St. Joseph Altar in Louisiana unlike anywhere else in the world.

One touchstone theoretical approach I use here is from Tweed (1997). His analysis of religious practices engaged by the Cuban diasporic community in Miami gave rise to an innovative approach called "translocative" and "transtemporal" theory (1997:92) to contrast with Smith's characterization of diasporic religion as "locative" and "supra-locative" (Smith, 1998). Tweed argued the passage of time and movement through space creates circumstances within which social groups forge a "constructed

⁵ "St. Joseph" Catholic Encyclopedia. <http://www.newadvent.org.cathen/08504a.htm>

past” (1995:92) Tweed’s innovation emphasizes the continual flow of actual and imagined experiences of past and present, and between the homeland and the new land.

Tweed detailed the historical and political connection of Our Lady of Charity, the patron saint of Cuba, and the exiled Cuban nationals in Miami. Cuban nationalism found a home in Miami through the blending of Roman Catholicism and Santeria worship. Although the Santeria and Roman Catholic observed different religious practices the Cuban nationals unified in the new homeland under the Roman Catholic umbrella by establishing Our Lady of Charity Cathedral.

Tweed traces history of devotions to Our Lady of Charity to Illescas, Spain in the late fifteenth century (1997:20). The specifics of the arrival Our Lady of Charity’s arrival in Cuba remain unknown, but a variety of legends arose that provided a shared Cuban identity for Our Lady of charity also known as *La Virgen del Cobre (the Virgin of Copper)*. Two primary versions express two religious perspectives. Tweed provides the traditional account, documented from the early seventeenth century, that three laborers found the statue of Our Lady of Charity floating from the sea off the coast of Cuba (1997:166).

From an Afro-Cuban religious perspective, Our Lady of Charity is Oshan, a goddess who shared many similar characteristics with Our Lady of Charity. One country, two legends, several cultural influences, political unrest (including an association with Copper), and the Roman Catholic Church cast the framework for the future in the United States.

The Cuban nationalistic identification with the Virgin of Copper emerged during the nineteenth century war for independence from Spain (1997:23). The populace of Cuba petitioned Our Lady of Charity for her aid in their struggle. When they succeeded in winning independence, the foundation was set for establishing Our Lady of Charity a national symbol of liberty. Impassioned with gratitude, the people and clergy sought papal confirmation to establish Our Lady of Charity as patron saint of Cuba and to create a national shrine.

The Cuban government experienced reorganization during the years between the consecration of the shrine and the establishment of the Castro government. During this time, Our Lady of Charity served primarily as a national spiritual representation of Cuba. As Castro's ruling Communist government took effect, conflict with the clergy erupted. Castro banned religious processions expelled clergy from Cuba, and many anti-Castro Catholics that escaped the island at this time (Tweed, 1997:26).

In 1961, a replica of Our Lady of Charity used in processions in Cuba prior to the exile was smuggled to Florida to join the large diaspora that found refuge in Miami (1997:15). The original statue located in El Cobre, Cuba, remained at the national shrine that continues to draw visitors, including Pope John Paul II in 1998.⁶ The replica in Miami became a foundation for exiled Cubans. Cuban exiles appealing to Roman Catholic clergy to create a new shrine in Miami unified and solidified dislocated Cuban's spiritual-nationalistic sentiment in the United States through space and time, "translocative" and "transtemporal" (1997:92) worship of Our Lady of Charity transported into a new location. Memories renewed a tradition.

⁶ Knights of Columbus website. <http://www.kofc.org/un/eb/en/publications/columbia/detail/458998.html>

Orsi (1985) accomplishes a similar analysis of Italian translocation of religious practice to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He examined the “*domus* centered society” (1985:xiii) within “popular religion” (1985:xiv). *Domus* meaning “family” (1985:xx) and “popular religion,” finding that they reflected diverse contemporary religious practices (1985:xviii).

Orsi thoroughly analyzed the synthesis of Italian identity into the American culture over seventy years of the first Italian immigrant religious *fiesta*, (party) in New York City, at the church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. The term *fiesta* represents festive events large or small that include food and usually music. The *domus* concept expressed the core of the *fiesta*, a family-centered celebration. Orsi examines Catholicism as not limited to theology but personal and profound methods of devotion (1985:xxii). Ultimately Italian ethnicity expressed through the *fiesta* merges with religious identity.

My research of St. Joseph Altar practices includes worldwide historical and contemporary practices with particular attention to current traditions in Sicily and South Louisiana. Chapters relating to historical and current tradition will reflect my analysis of the relationship between St. Joseph Altar devotional practices and theories introduced by Tweed and Orsi. The conclusion will illustrate the St. Joseph Altar expansion from its inception in New Orleans throughout South Louisiana.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One of the earliest reports on the St. Joseph Altar in New Orleans is Plemmer's short paper in Louisiana Folklore Miscellany (1968). This article is the first of several that investigate the St. Joseph Altar in South Louisiana. The author briefly specifies the motivation for the continuity of the St. Joseph Altar tradition from Sicily to Louisiana.

"An important point to remember in the transfer of the feast-day celebration from Sicily to America is that the incentive is spiritual. Today, a strong devotion to St. Joseph still remains as an essential part of the traditional festivities" (1968:86).

Two years later, McColloster confronts four issues of Plemmer's thesis in a paper in the same journal (1970). Her argument focuses on the religious and ethnic origins, rituals, and symbolism of the Altar tradition. She observes, "St. Joseph Day is a feast of thanksgiving in Sicily, of which he is the patron saint" (McColloster, 1970:41).

McColloster views the St. Joseph Altar tradition as "closed" in that the custom is of Sicilian origin, and is "territorially closed and culturally restricted" (1970:38). "Closed" represented the identity containment and exclusion of outside groups that characterized the behavior in the enclaves of various immigrant ethnic groups. South Louisiana Italians maintained the St. Joseph Altar as an identifying facet of their ethnicity. My research contests McColloster's conclusion and demonstrates that in the twenty-first century the St. Joseph Altar in Southwest, Louisiana, is neither confined to particular locations nor limited to participation by ethnicity.

Although McColloster does not discuss the expansion of the tradition within Louisiana, she introduces the observation of divergence from the original tradition in

Sicily. The author interviewed several followers of the devotion who were born in Sicily or whose ancestors had arrived from different areas of Sicily.

Orso and Kaveski (1975) refute previous assertions by Plemmer (1968) and McColloster (1970) regarding symbolic rituals associated with the St. Joseph Altar in Undisclosed Aspects of St. Joseph Altars. Their symbolic interpretation of the practices in the St. Joseph Altar references folklore tradition.

Orso (1970) subsequently documents in the same journal the tradition of the first public altar in New Orleans and the evolving rituals. She presents insights regarding gender influence in both the original and current St. Joseph Altar rituals and celebrations. A new development of the St. Joseph Altar tradition is the participation in the preparation of individuals from various religions and ethnic groups. Orso skillfully illustrates the subtle transformations of the Altar and associated celebrations as immigrants adapted to their new homeland. This article opens the door to new perspectives that reflect the distinctive development of the St. Joseph Altar tradition in New Orleans.

Orso (1990) presents a well-documented perspective, identifying the Sicilian culture as the predominant Italian population in New Orleans noting, “the only American city whose Italian population is almost exclusively of Sicilian origin” (1990:2). She focuses on history, tradition, rituals, and the diasporic transference to South Louisiana and other Sicilian diasporic enclaves in the United States. She also identifies the “theological strength of the cult of St. Joseph in Southern Louisiana” (1990:8) as a factor that intensifies the strength of participation.

More than twenty years have passed since Orso documented the devotional celebrations of St. Joseph in the New Orleans area. She noted that the “Sicilian American” (1990: 53) population was the regional ethnic group from Italy responsible for bringing the St. Joseph Altar celebration to Louisiana. At the time of her writing the celebration was mostly concentrated in New Orleans and she observed a modest expansion in South Louisiana. Orso observed that the regional character of South Louisiana was favorable to the future growth of the St. Joseph’s festivities in the region.

The complex, colorful, and delicious Feast of St. Joseph in south Louisiana and New Orleans is a major spectacle in the state’s annual cycle of fairs and festivities. Occurring in the middle of Lent, between Mardi Gras and Easter, it contains elements of both these rituals plus many unique aspects. Originally a closed tradition of Sicilian Americans, it has expanded in unexpected ways and changed from a private indoor celebration to private and public outdoor festivity (1990: 53).

My research documents that the St. Joseph Altar continued to increase over time not only in New Orleans and its metropolitan area, but throughout South Louisiana. I will also discuss the changes of the St. Joseph Altar celebration following the several recent devastating hurricanes in South Louisiana.

The elements that shape current St. Joseph Altar traditions involve understanding the political, religious, and cultural history both in Italy and the United States. Carroll (1996) thoroughly examines historical and current Italian Catholic devotional practice. His investigation provides insight into cultural and regional influence in Italian Catholicism, as well as documenting devotional practices. Carroll indicates that for Italian Catholics, saints are understood to have two types of power - the ability to protect and the ability to intercede, or improve a situation. He also states that the majority of Italian Catholics seek divine help for miraculous cures and protection.

The first wave of Catholic immigrants in the United States honored their country's patron saints; however, the devotional practices of the Italian immigrants extended to particular patrons of their villages, such as Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, St. Rocco, St. Anthony, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Rosalie. Devotion to these entities of origin distinguished Italians' worship practices in other Catholic immigrant communities.

Italian women also brought distinctive religious practices, for example, crawling on their hands and knees, kissing the ground or church floor, and wailing. Their designation as "wailers" distinguished them as women of honor and privilege within the Catholic community (Maria M: 2006).

Orsi (1985) investigates the investigation of the southern Italian influence on Catholic devotion in the East Harlem area of New York City. The social and religious blend of the Southern Italian and urban culture in the United States constructed this current local religious practice. While Orsi focused on one church in New York City, a parallel process to the St. Joseph Altar celebration occurred in Italian enclaves in the United States.

Tweed (1997) develops a theory of translocative and transtemporal diaspora that accounts for changes in immigrants' religious traditions. Tweed concludes that space and time determines the transference of diasporic religious traditions to the new land. Memories perpetuate the customs and experiences and cannot be shared simultaneously with relatives from the homeland. This thesis reinforces Tweed's concept and illustrates the change from translocative diaspora to descendant folklore tradition.

Mangione and Morreale (1992) and Margavio and Salomone (2002) provide invaluable historical documentation from Sicily and Italy, and United States immigrant data. Both sources provided invaluable research data of Italian and Sicilian history and immigrant adaptation of cultural and religious influences effecting the establishment and perpetuation of traditions.

Quaggiotto (1988) reports on three years of fieldwork in Sicily on women's roles in the celebration of St. Joseph Altars. This document equipped me with data necessary for understanding the woman's role in the perpetuation of the St. Joseph Altar.

Quaggiotto's research of Italian immigrant religious tradition provided the necessary support for comparing customs occurring elsewhere in the United States. All sources listed in this chapter enhanced by the scores of articles and Internet sources provided me with the comprehensive tools necessary for an appropriate conclusion for the expansion of the St. Joseph Altar in South Louisiana.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND HISTORY

Methods

The methods I used to develop this thesis included considerations review of pertinent literature, consideration of responses to questionnaires.⁷ The respondents included Italian studies students, friends and family of various ages and ethnic backgrounds, and St. Joseph Altar participants. Visits to St. Joseph altars and interviews with Italian Catholics within South Louisiana and other states and countries provided a basis from which to compare local religious ethnic celebrations.

My research included the completion of survey questionnaires by 179 individuals. Participants in the survey represent a convenience sample that included Italian study students, Italian War brides, friends, family, and colleagues. The majority of the respondents to the survey were descendants of First Wave of the “great migration” (Mangione, Morreale, 1992:460) immigrants of the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century and those of the post World War II era.

Some 149 respondents of the survey are Italian descendants. Eighty percent of the survey respondents from Louisiana were from Sicily. Approximately twenty percent of the total respondents of Italian descent were Northern Italian extraction. A total of 138 respondents were over fifty years old.

The questionnaire requested the age of the participant, the country of origin of the immigrant, and the level of their current participation in family ethnic traditions and ethnic organizations. Many participants included optional personal information such as

⁷ Appendix A

types of ethnic organizations. Many participants volunteered additional personal information regarding ethnic organizations or specific family practices. The majority of the participants live in Louisiana.

I interviewed thirty-seven individuals, primarily of Italian ancestry and/or Roman Catholic faith. Seventeen individuals were from Louisiana, fourteen were from other areas of the United States, and six were from Italy. Six participants were native born Italians, nineteen were of Sicilian descent, eleven were Italian descendants from other regions of Italy, and one was French-Acadian.

My international observations of immigrant Italian traditional practices raised a number of questions. How is St. Joseph currently honored in Italy, particularly the *Mezzogiorno*? Did Italian immigrants in Canada and Australia experience the same desire to perpetuate religious *feste* in their new homeland? What dynamics make the expansion of the St. Joseph Altar in Louisiana differ from practices in other major Sicilian immigrant settlements? What factors have contributed to the energetic expansion of the St. Joseph worship tradition in South Louisiana?

From these general questions, I derived the following questions of research focus on:

1. What propels the perpetuation and expansion of the St. Joseph Altar and festivity in Southwest Louisiana?
2. Is the predominating influence perpetuating and expanding the Altar - religious, ethnic, or both?

3. What differentiates the Louisiana celebration of St. Joseph Day from other St. Joseph celebrations in Italy, the United States and other countries where Italians migrated?
4. What changes in practice have occurred with expansion?

Hundreds of Italian-American religious and cultural festivities occur in the United States yearly.⁸ A small percentage of festivities integrate ethnic with religious traditions. Few Italian Catholic communities outside of South Louisiana maintain the active spiritual commitment to the St. Joseph Day Altar festivity.

Interviews with Italian-Catholics within South Louisiana and from other states and countries illustrated a comparison of religious ethnic celebrations, and the growth within South Louisiana of the celebration of the St. Joseph Altar.

History, Italian History and Immigration

As discussed in Chapter 1, the first major Italian migration, known as the First Wave immigration, occurred during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Italian influence in the United States dates back to the discovery of America. Noted for exploration, agricultural, religious, and artistic contributions early visitors and emigrants from Italy such as Amerigo Vespucci, Christopher Columbus, Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot), and Giovanni da Verrazzano are the most distinguished Italian explorers. A less notable Italian explorer Enrico de Tonti worked alongside Robert Cavalier de LaSalle of the French military in the discovery of many areas along the Mississippi. His participation with the French military both in Italy and in America likely affected his connection with Italian heritage until the mass migration of Italian immigrants realized he

⁸ Sons of Italy website, Italian Festivals, <http://www.osia.org/culture/italian-festivals.php>.

was the first Italian citizen to arrive in Arkansas and subsequently naming their town, Tontitown (Mangione, Morreale,1992:10).

Catholic missionaries (Jesuits from Southern Italy) and a small Protestant group, the Waldensians (who faced religious persecution in Italy) joined thousands of Italians in colonial America and the early United States, introducing educational and agricultural skills, artisanship, music, and winemaking (Mangione and Morreale,1992:10).

Italians contributed to the development of the United States before and during the American Revolution. Filippo Mazzei, a Tuscan physician and agronomist noted for his political theories worked with Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Adams to encourage the secession of the colonies from England. In addition to his talents of agricultural experimentation, he also contributed to the political movement. Unknown to many, the origin of the words, “all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence came from an article written by Mazzei in the Virginia Gazette translated by Thomas Jefferson (1992:12).

Between the founding of America and the Civil War, Italians delivered artistic contributions as early as the 1600s. Venetian bead-makers manufactured glass beads for trade with Native Americans, artisans brought skills of sculpting and marble cutting, and musicians brought opera. Italians brought a cultural array of long-established talents to a country that was in its formative years.

Although early Italian immigrants settled in the New World the number of immigrants was not as significant as the wave of immigrants of the nineteenth and twentieth century. The primary antecedent for adaptation of early Italian immigrants focuses on the skills that they brought to the American culture. It appears that any

Italian devotional celebrative traditions from the original immigrants of colonial America it blended with the American fabric. There does not appear to be any traditions carried forth from that period.

While the United States was in the process of developing and undergoing massive historical conflict, Italy was experiencing the same. Italy, a country long since affected by incessant invasions and ownership was involved in its own fight for Italian Unity, known as *Il Risorgimento* (1992:26).

Southern Italians historically faced continuous invasion. As the portal avenue for the maritime, South Italy and Sicily sheltered Romans, Arabs, Normans, Spaniards, Greeks, Albanians, French, and the mariners of the world. The influence of the multi-cultured ethnic groups created enigmatic, colorful allies in the Southern Italian, particularly the Sicilians. They endured severe hardships: domination by numerous empires, starvation, and ultimately, betrayal by the controlling Italian government (Mangione, Morreale, 1992:46).

Italy was enduring its own problems during the nineteenth century. *Il Risorgimento*, “The Revolution,” had multiple causes. One of the most significant issues, poverty, prevailed in Southern Italy and Sicily (Mangione, Morreale, 1992:55). The economic disequilibrium between North and South Italy set a foundation of lingering cultural conflict in Italy.

According to the Italian website, *Altre Italie*,⁹ between 1871 and 1920 more than 15 million Italians expatriated to European countries, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Australia, and the United States. No specific figures are available for the national

⁹ Altre Italie, <http://www.altreitalie.org>

distribution of that period, except 3 million expatriates returned. Approximately eight percent of the emigrants were male laborers.¹⁰

The need for an increased labor force in the United States due to the economic recovery following the Civil War provided a source of release for the impoverished and starving Italians. The mass exodus that followed also brought corruption that existed in Italy. The *padrone*, literally meaning “owner” had a powerful effect in Italy and the role extended its power within the United States. The *padrone* served in multiple capacities. One type recruited prospective Italian emigrants for a significant fee with promises of golden futures in new lands such as Australia, Argentina, Brazil, and the United States. Once the new immigrants arrived in the new land a new *padrone* system developed. Negotiating employment or creating a business involved paying exorbitant fees. Anyone not complying with *padroni* rules became prey of the *Mano Nera* or Black Hand (Mangione, Morreale, 1992:166,169). This band of Italian criminals used extortion, blackmail and kidnapping to control prospering immigrants from gaining power. The name of the group reflected the method in which the fearful message arrived - a coal imprint of a hand on the targets’ home door (1992:71).

Various major ports such as New York, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New Orleans disseminated Italians throughout the United States during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century. Eighty percent came from the *Mezzogiorno*, and of this figure a large percentage derived from Sicily. The largest Italian immigrant settlement in the United States included the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana.¹¹ Smaller groups scattered throughout

¹⁰ Altre Italie, <http://www.altreitalie.org>

¹¹ “Italians in the United States,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org>

the country and created settlements in areas of Florida, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and California. The earliest Italian settlement areas established during the Colonial era, California, enjoys a significant Italian descendant population today. Mid-nineteenth Italian immigrants to California arrived primarily from Liguria, a region of Italy, the second larger migration of Italians to California arrived from the *Mezzogiorno* during the First Wave period in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Today, according to the United States Census Bureau, the states with the highest Italian ancestry include Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island. The United States Census Bureau ancestry map¹² records the concentration of ethnic groups within each county or parish. Identifying specific Italian communities offer an excellent opportunity for analysis of the celebration of the St. Joseph Altar in other communities in the United States. Although relatively few Italian descendants are represented for Louisiana, their enthusiasm for perpetuating traditions is unsurpassed.

The Sicilians in New Orleans numbered approximately ninety percent of the Italian regional migration of Louisiana (Margavio, Salomone, 1992:43). Before Hurricane Katrina in 2005, approximately fifty percent of Italian descendants living in Louisiana lived in New Orleans. The analysis offered in this paper considers the large Sicilian populations in various regions throughout the United States who honor St. Joseph and the uniqueness of the expansion of St. Joseph Altar tradition in South Louisiana since the Second Wave of immigration.

The earlier immigrants opened the door for the future arrivals of family and friends. All ports, except for New Orleans, received an equal distribution of immigrants

¹² United States Census Bureau, United States Ancestry Map, <http://www.census.gov>

from the *Mezzogiorno* and a small percentage from Italy. The ninety percent Sicilian arriving in New Orleans found two similarities to their native land a warm climate and agricultural work.

The end of slavery in the United States brought a shortage of labor for Southern plantation owners. The Sicilians eager for employment and accustomed to farm labor quickly filled the shortage on the plantations for meager wages. The Sicilian immigrants arriving in New Orleans ultimately became the primary Italian regional influence in Louisiana. Although certain cities in the United States such as Buffalo and Pittsburgh had a higher ratio of Sicilian immigrants compared to other *Mezzogiorno* Italians, regional favoritism did not appear to have any significance. Sicilian regional pride had the opportunity to thrive in Louisiana.

The experiences and assimilation of Italian immigrants throughout the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth century had few differences. Immigrants of various nationalities established enclaves that ethnically divided their communities. Camaraderie among culturally specific groups intensified native traditions while brief intermingling with other immigrants through work, school, or church aided in the assimilation (Claghorn, 1901:465).

The Italians, one of the many diasporic groups to arrive in the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, through time became subordinate to other immigrant groups. Irish immigrants of the early nineteenth century endured mockery by established British Americans of the period. Harpers Weekly,¹³ a popular journal of the nineteenth century, periodically contained articles and illustrations depicting Irish as a racial group of African origin. The arrival of new ethnic groups in the late nineteenth

¹³ "Scientific Racism" New York. Harpers Weekly. 1871, www.nde.state.ne.us/SS/irish/unit_2.html

century, created a new order of ethnic inferiority, and the Italians became a primary target.¹⁴

Although members of many ethnic groups such as the Poles, Germans, Russians, emigrated to the United States, the Irish felt a strong clash with the customs of the Italian culture. The early American perception of Italians suddenly evolved from cultural admiration to disdain. The early nineteenth century Italians brought craftsmanship, fine art, and industrious labor; however the late nineteenth century brought a different Italian according to the thought of the period. Social behavior, skin coloring, and manner of dress, gave cause for creating a scapegoat for the former Irish subordinate. Signs for jobseekers or those seeking to purchase property, formerly stated, "No Irish Need Apply",¹⁵ with the arrival of the Italians the signs became "No Italians Need Apply" (Vitullo, Martin, 2006:29).

The Italian Schism

Margavio and Salomone noted the first major wave of Italian immigrants to Louisiana consisted of approximately ninety percent Sicilian background (1992:43). Centuries of actual and perceived differences polarize Southern and Northern Italians to this day. The Italian schism minimally affects the Italian subcultures of Italian Americans today; however, industrialization, affluence, and perpetual favoritism of the Italian government towards the north has understandably provoked, envy and animosity from Southern Italy, the *Mezzogiorno*. Northern Italians perceive Southern Italians, anyone below Rome, with disdain and condescension and consider them peasants and thieves

¹⁴ Claghorn Kate Holaday, Ph.D. The Foreign Immigrant in New York City, Reports of the Industrial Commission. Volume XV. Washington D.C. United States Government Printing Office. 1901. 465-492.

¹⁵ Kinsella. "Irish Immigrants in America During the Nineteenth Century"
www.kinsella.org/history/histira.htm

- children of the Mafia (Barzini,1990:22). The Southerners regard Northerners as rich, stuffy, hypocritical snobs who have prospered from the labors of the South. Historically, vile epithets such as “Pollentron” (relating to polenta-corn meal eaters) for Northerners, or “Terrum” (relating to earth or ground) Southerners expressed the depth of the animosity.¹⁶

Giuseppe Tomatore’s movie, *Cinema Paradiso*, (1990) metaphorically addresses the North-South issue when a Neapolitan wins a fight with a Sicilian. The Neapolitan, considered by Northerners to be equally Southern Italian as a Sicilian, understands the true significance of the Sicilian’s statement, “It’s always the Northerners who are lucky!” Although industrialization, education, and growth breathe new life into the South, factions seek to divide Italy through legal process.¹⁷

What is the relationship between the *problema* (Hoffmann,1990:234) - the disharmony between Southern and Northern Italians - and the expansion of the St. Joseph Altar in South Louisiana? In recent years, Sicilians have sought to sever ties with Italy and become a state of the United States.¹⁸ Recently, personal encounters with Sicilians in South Louisiana illustrated Sicilian pride predominating Italian nationalism.

Italian regional heritage has less significance in other areas of the United States. *Campanilismo* (Orsi,1985:34), an Italian term that identifies the connection to one’s hometown and traditions such as *Napoletano* (from Naples), *Calabrese* (from Calabria), *Triestina* (from Trieste), *Milanese* (from Milano) generally distinguish the Italian and their

¹⁶ Interview, Ricapito, Joseph., Romanin, Libera

¹⁷ Salverio, Lodato. “Se Lombardo “separa” la Sicilia”. *L’Unita*. March 28, 2008.

¹⁸ Interviews with Italians and immigrant Italians.

descendants. Italian descendants from mainland Italy identify themselves as Italian-Americans and American-Italians of diverse regional origins.

Sicilians contribute significantly to Italian ancestry throughout the country, and in some cities prevail as the dominant regional Italian ethnicity. Recognition of Sicilian ancestry outweighs Italian national identification. The escalating interest in Sicilian heritage in Louisiana in many second- and third-generation groups has brought about an expansion of regional ethnic pride. The perpetuation of ethnic traditions, particularly the St. Joseph Altar, is a significant declaration of their heritage.

Diasporic Celebrations

The Catholic Church, to this day, honors individuals through sainthood. A rigorous investigation including confirmation of supernatural experiences, Spartan lifestyle, performing miracles, and martyrdom are some of the elements delineating a saint. Throughout Italy, and particularly the Southern region, the creation of churches honoring the Madonna and numerous saints of unusual origins was customary. Catholics in Ireland primarily honored the county's patron saint, St. Patrick.

While living in Italy Southern Italians forged their beliefs into symbols which included Madonna and saints of the Catholic Church. A history of political animosity toward the Vatican due to the Vatican's affiliation with nobility created a path of antipathy toward the customary activities of the Church (Mangione and Morreale. 1992:64).

Robert Orsi's, Madonna of 115th Street, Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950, focused on the ethnic and religious connection of Italian immigrants. Father Louis Giambastiani, an Italian American priest, characterized the immigrant Italian

concept of religion as primarily domestic: “whatever religion they possessed is narrowed within the walls of the home” (1985: 75).

Giambastiani understood that Italians were not irreligious but that home and family were the center of their lives, and that their religion was an integral part of that nucleus. Orsi expressed the concept through the term, *domus*, meaning home. The Italians often combined devotional practice with their *domus* in religious *feste*.

Throughout the country repeated patterns of discrimination and adaptation became the fate of Italian immigrants. The settlers from the *Mezzogiorno*, though ostensibly Roman Catholic, did not practice devotion to the Church in the same fashion as the Irish Catholic (Mangione, Morreale, 1992:326). The distinction became an added wedge to the divisiveness. A large representation of Irish clergy in the American Church did not understand the emotional displays of worship or the indifference to Mass attendance. Competition for employment, with the Italians willingness to work for lower wages, added to the increasing hostility.

The Irish-American clergy realized that Roman Catholicism united the immigrants; however, it did so in name only. Irish pride reflected through their homeland’s patron saint, St. Patrick. To the Irish, the Italian’s religious habits which included honoring several saints, the use of statues and other icons, disinterest in church attendance, and folk religious superstitions appeared irreverent. The numerous Italian religious *feste*, with music, dancing, food, and wine celebrating many saints, created a cultural barrier between the two groups.

The lack of cultural understanding resulted in appeals from the Irish clergy to the Vatican for assistance. (Mangione and Morreale.(1992: 329). The arrival of Italian

priests aided the immigrants with communication, facilitated a basic understanding of the culture of their new land, and generally helped the new immigrants to secure a cultural and religious identity. The Italians' recreation of religious-oriented *feste* from their mother country became a way to illustrate ethnic pride in their new homeland or the one they left.

The earliest ethnic Catholic centered festivity in the United States dates back to the original St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York City in 1762.¹⁹ More than one hundred years lapsed before a new Catholic ethnic festival was established - the Italian, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, also in New York City.²⁰

Throughout the United States the Catholic Church supported naming churches in honor of patron saints from diverse diaspora: St. Patrick's Day for the Irish, St. Stanislaus for the Poles. Italian immigrants linked their new land with their homeland through various saints representing their native villages. The most populated Italian regional group within a settlement area influenced the naming of the new church in their area.

The predominantly Catholic Spaniards and French were among the earliest settlers in America; however, the oldest Catholic ethnic celebration emanated from the Irish. In 1866, before the second immigrant wave arrived, the Franciscans, an Italian order from Umbria in Northern Italy, established the first Italian church of the Archdiocese of New York, St Anthony of Padua Church.²¹ However, the *Napoletani* from the Mezzogiorno, the prevailing Italian regional immigrants in New York, became the

¹⁹ "St. Patrick's Day Parade in NYC", <http://nyc-st-patrick-day-parade.org/paradehistory.aspx>

²⁰ "Our Lady of Mt. Carmel". <http://www.mountcarmelofeastharlem.com/history.html>

²¹ St. Anthony of Padua Church, <http://www.stanthonynyc.org/id10.html>

influential entity that established the first church of the First Wave immigrants at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. In 1882 the first Catholic Italian *fešta* took place (Orsi:1985:54).

The Order of Scalabrini Fathers established the second ethnic Italian church in New York City. San Gennaro, another patron saint from Naples was the honored saint for the parish of the Most Precious Blood Church in 1888.²² In 1926 the second Catholic Italian *fešta* took place for the feast of San Gennaro.²³

Southern Italians, comprising numerous regional groups and various religious environments, created a mode of worship within the Catholic Church that became distinctive to their local areas, widely known by scholars as popular religion (Carroll: 5). As immigrants filtered into the United States, churches or celebrations of saints once honored in Italy took root in the new land.

Some Italian immigrants settled in the Midwest, where the population was predominantly Protestant. That fact weighed significantly in swaying Italian Catholics to convert to Protestantism.²⁴ The article in the 1932 Wisconsin State Journal, "This Was Home to Local Italians" relates to a group of Sicilians from the town of Contessa Entellina, who emigrated near Madison, Wisconsin. The religious origins of this Sicilian group known as Arboresh, combined Roman Catholicism with Greek Orthodox.

A picture in the article of the "*Chiesa Italiana*," Italian Church, depicts a Methodist Episcopal church illustrating the evolution from Catholicism to Protestantism. The *feste* in Madison became "Italian Day" featuring Italian food, music and dance and had no connection with St. Joseph or any other saints. Interestingly, numerous immigrants from Contessa Entellina also settled in Louisiana and established a social club in New

²² Most Precious Blood Church,, <http://www.mostpreciousbloodchurch.net/>

²³ Feast of San Gennaro, <http://www.sangennaro.org/about.htm>

²⁴ Linda M: Ohio

Orleans. South Louisiana's Contessa Entellina immigrants ensconced in a primarily Catholic environment remembered St. Joseph saving Sicilians from starvation and became one of the leaders of the St. Joseph Altar festivity.

Literature and personal research indicate that throughout the United States, most Italian immigrants maintain Catholicism and perpetuate ethnic traditions. The Contessa Entellina descendants that converted to Protestantism in Madison, Wisconsin, preserve their ethnic customs by celebrating with other ethnic groups an annual multi-ethnic celebration. In Louisiana, the descendants of Contessa Entellina remain actively involved in their ethnicity and Catholicism and are a significant influence in the expansion of the St. Joseph Altar.

In the New York City area three large *feste* draw thousands of visitors each year – the oldest Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, the subsequent San Gennaro, and New Jersey's St. Lucy's Festival.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and San Gennaro have Neapolitan roots, and St. Lucy has Sicilian origins. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, San Gennaro and St. Lucy festivals represent to the public an ethnic festivity. The San Gennaro feast is not limited to one all-day festival. The week-long carnival includes endless Italian food, all types of beverages, music, dancing, games, and rides.

Prior to the public celebration, local residents attend devotional celebrations including a procession with symbolic articles such as three-tiered towers carrying candles, and Mass. A tradition that appears in numerous of the various religious festivities in the United States, Sicily, and Canada is the pinning of money on the statue or tower for the honored saint.

Orsi's study of the evolution of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel during 1880 and 1950 illustrated changes that resulted from an influx of a new wave of immigrants. Typical of the ever-changing neighborhoods in New York, many of the original Italian immigrants and their descendants relocated over the years. The established church, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, had firmly implanted the annual *fešta*, and to this day, the tradition continues. Many of the former residents continue to return to perpetuate the ethnic traditions, although the Harlem community now is primarily Haitian.²⁵

One of the lost traditions for Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Harlem and not in the expanded celebrations is the participation of "wailers."²⁶ Orsi characterized the practice of women crawling down the church aisle while touching the stone floor with their tongues as they were "borne to the Madonna" (Orsi,1985:xiv). Maria, a witness to the ritual, explained the once-honored position in Italy and during a half of a century of immigrant assimilation, women crawled and kissed the church floor during any major religious holiday, particularly the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. According to Orsi, the dragging practice discontinued during the 1920s (1985:11); however, Maria stated the crawling and kissing continued into the 1950s. As the wailers aged and relocated to other areas the practice was eventually abandoned.

The *domus* of the Italian culture never wavered. Gradual transitions, loss of traditions considered unfavorable by Irish priests, such as the practice of the "wailers," (Orsi.1985:56) and the arrival of new generations allowed the assimilation of the American culture and Italian culture to thrive.

²⁵ "Neighborhood Report: Harlem; Sharing a Saint: The 2 Worlds of Our Lady of Mount Carmel" New York Times, Maria Laurino, July 23, 1995, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/07/23/nyregion/neighborhood-report-harlem-sharing-saint-2-worlds-our-lady-mount-carmel.html>.

²⁶ Interview Maria M.

The popular feast of Saint Rocco in Malden, Massachusetts, originated from Venetian immigrants, and Boston's Italian Americans celebrate grand feasts that encompass descendants from all regions of Italy. Celebrations for saints – Anthony of Padova, Madonna del Soccorso, and three brothers from Sicily (Alfio, Filadelfo, and Cirino) – are some of the Italian Catholic ethnic celebrations.²⁷ In Illinois, another sizable Sicilian population established Our Lady of Laurentana in Berwyn, a suburb of Chicago. The annual celebration honoring the saint does not reflect ethnicity. Although the saint has Sicilian roots, the celebration of the feast day does not focus on any cultural traditions. Chicago celebrates one ethnic Catholic festival, St. Patrick. Italians in Illinois primarily celebrate their heritage through ethnic festivals that have no connection to religion.

The nonreligious ethnic festivals are the primary source for celebrating heritage in the United States. The religious ethnic festivals that have survived centuries continue to thrive, but with more attention to the ethnic aspect.

Another popular Catholic Italian Canadian festival revolves around a Sicilian saint, San Francesco di Paola, or St. Francis. The annual *fešta*, celebrated in Toronto attracts thousands of participants typical of large Catholic Italian American festivals in the United States. The descendants from Salemi perpetuate the ancestral tradition of utilizing citrus fruit in the *fešta*. An elemental product in Sicily and available in Toronto citrus defines the uniqueness of this celebration. A gazebo-type chapel constructed

²⁷ Sons of Italy, St. Anthony's Society of Boston's North End, www.stanthony'sfeast.com

primarily of citrus on a metal frame denotes the Sicilian identity of the San Francesco di Paolo celebration.²⁸

The current residents of Salemi, the small town in Sicily that brought the immigrant tradition of the San Francesco di Paola celebration to Toronto pay tribute to St. Joseph simultaneously on March 19. Although the celebration is publicized as the San Francesco di Paola festival in recognition of St. Joseph he is included in the commemoration. The Italian Canadian traditions celebrate with the *feste* and similar religious rituals.²⁹

A significant number of Italians emigrated to Canada, in the city of Toronto and province of Alberta. A few thousand arrived during the early twentieth century; however, the majority of post-World War II immigrants were a composition of regional Italians. Canadians did not perceive a threat to their status by Italians in the first or second arrival of immigrants. Issues of prejudice, as in the United States, were absent.

Italian customs particularly the *feste*, perpetuated in the new Canadian settlements. Edmonton in Alberta has two festivals one is *Giovanni Caboto Day* (John Cabot Day); the other is the feast of Santa Maria Goretti, a saint from an area just South of Rome, the invisible boundary between Northern Italy and the *Mezzogiorno*. Both summer events celebrate Italian heritage, although the Feast of Santa Maria Goretti honors the patron saint of the Italian parish with a procession, games, dancing, and as is in any Italian feast, food. Italian language programs and the perpetuation of Italian

²⁸ "Material History of American Religion Project: La Festa del Pane: Food, Devotion, and Ethnic Identity, The Feast of San Francesca di Paola, Toronto," <http://www.materialreligion.org/journal/festa.html>

²⁹ Material History of American Religion Project: La Festa del Pane: Food, Devotion, and Ethnic Identity, The Feast of San Francesca di Paola, Toronto," <http://www.materialreligion.org/journal/festa.html>

traditions are essential for the Italian Canadians in Edmonton; however, the celebrations remain contained within the local Italian community.³⁰

Australia, another nation with large Italian immigration wave of the late nineteenth century had some minor discriminatory encounters with the local residents; however, Italians often blended well with the Australians. In reviewing records and discussing the issue with an immigrant Italian of the post-World War II era, Catholic ethnic traditions and festivals do not play a large role in Australia. Primarily, traditional feasts of the Madonna and saints specifically relate to the Church, rather than a combined religious ethnic relationship. Although a large population of Italian-Australians emigrated from all regions of Italy, conventional festivities are ethnic centered.³¹

Both Canada and Australia illustrated that the magnitude of prejudice that prevailed in the United States toward Italians did not exist in those countries. There were prejudices, but the history of lynching and extreme discrimination in those countries did not appear in any literature or discussion reviewed for this thesis.

Tweed's *translocative* and *transtemporal* theories illustrate the transition of diasporic tradition. First Wave European immigrants initiated the process of the necessity to preserve ties to the birthland while establishing connection to the new homeland. Tweed discusses differences between exiled diaspora versus immigrants that chose to leave their homeland to improve their lives. He separately examines specific diasporic conditions such as, diasporic nationalism, diasporic religion, and

³⁰ "Family Unification and Settlement," *Italian Community*,
http://www.albertasource.ca/abitainian/background/can_family.html

³¹ "New Italy Its History. Italian Community," *The New South Wales Gazette*. August, 1899
"Australian Communities: Italian Australians," *Racism No Way*,

<http://www.racismnoway.com.au/classroom/Factsheet/58.html>.

"Italy Down Under – Italy Global Nation," <http://www.italydownunder.com.au/issuefour/conference.html>
Interview -Teresa C. Melbourne, Australian.

diasporic identity (1997: 83). Ultimately, the application of the term diaspora refers to the “collective identity” (1997: 84) of immigrants in a new land. The method of relocation, choice or forced does not significantly alter the bond of the displaced to perpetuate inherent traits of their native land.

As exemplified by the immigrants that established Our Lady of Charity, the diasporic traditions developed by the First Wave immigrants expressed a unilateral symbol from the country or region of origin. St. Patrick, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, San Francesco di Paolo, Giovanni Caboto Day, all created by immigrants that through space and time reconstructed their past into a new life.

CHAPTER 4

ST. JOSEPH'S ALTAR

St. Joseph's History in Italy

In Italy, St. Joseph is popular for fatherhood. The Italians once celebrated Father's Day in June as we do here in the United States. In recent years, they changed the date to coincide with St. Joseph's Day on March 19. Primarily, mainland Italy considers the day as a celebration of fatherhood. The religious attend church in honor of St. Joseph and their own fathers followed by personal celebrations as done in the United States.

An Italian website indicates that the Eastern Catholic rite imported the March 19 St. Joseph feast to the Roman Catholic Church during the fifteenth century. After Pope Paul IX declared St. Joseph patron saint of the universal Catholic Church in 1870 St. Joseph became more meaningful to Italians and other nationalities.³²

The influence of the several ethnicities and the predominant Eastern Catholic rite that prevailed in Sicily over the centuries likely contributes to the significance of St. Joseph feast in Sicily. The established Sicilian legend of St. Joseph existed numerous years prior to the pope granting St. Joseph the honor of patron saint.

Three individuals interviewed living in three separate sites in Northern Italy (Rome, Florence and Trieste), including one priest working at the Vatican, concurred that the Catholic tradition of St. Joseph Feast Day is celebrated with Mass, possibly a small procession, and a private celebration at home honoring all fathers.³³

³² "Festa di San Giuseppe, origini e tradizioni" KataWeb,
http://www.kataweb.it/spec/articolo_speciale.jsp?ids

³³ Interview Romanin. L.Trieste, Carmella P. Florence, Father Mallet Curtis, Rome.

The St. Joseph Altar celebrations throughout the world share a few fundamental traditions. The Altar, Mass, St. Joseph statue, sharing of meatless food with family and friends, special desserts, and prayer constitute the very basic tradition. The re-enactment of the Holy Family in search of lodging, the priest's blessing of the food, the elaborate breads, the Fava bean, "Petition"³⁴ of thanks or requests, parades and large *feste* illustrate the celebration's embellishments.

Herbert Kubly, an American author visiting Sicily noted in his book, Easter in Sicily, that St. Joseph's Day "was a minor occasion for Sicilians" (1956: 213). In 2005, however, approximately thirty celebrations were noted in the media recognizing St. Joseph Day throughout Italy; at least twenty were located in Sicily.

The recovery from famine in Sicily is a primary source for the development of the St. Joseph Altar, but tribute to St. Joseph as the human father of Jesus Christ established the basis for the celebration.

To date, one source of the legend of St. Joseph's Day in Sicily not involving the drought involves a small town, Scicli, located in Southwest Sicily. Scicli began celebrating St. Joseph in the early 1800s in honor of the Holy Family's search for refuge when fleeing from Egypt. A nobleman from another town wishing to populate his lands at Santa Croce Camerina offered his fields to grow crops for the festivities. Eventually, many people from the village of Scicli relocated to Santa Croce Camerina and today both villages celebrate St. Joseph Day.³⁵

³⁴ Common term for requests from St. Joseph.

³⁵ "Feste di Sicilia" <http://www.festedisicilia.it/marzo.htm>

Pamela Quagiotto's 1981 research in a central western Sicilian village "Rosaforte"³⁶ (fabricated name) indicates that primary objectives of the Altar were for thanking and petitioning St. Joseph (1981: 32). One could not petition or make an altar unless a previous request was granted by St. Joseph.

Women were the major organizers of the St. Joseph Altar with one woman in a leadership role. The rationale that St. Joseph could only respond to the petition of the woman in the leadership role created competitiveness. The women recognized the value of providing an exceptional St. Joseph Altar, but leadership carried more merit in terms of receiving a positive response to the petition (1981:78).

In Ribera, Sicily, the festivities commence the Sunday before St. Joseph's Day. Three consecutive events begin with a procession consisting of the grand marshals that arrive on horseback, musicians with instruments including tambourines, and fireworks. The second event constructs a three- to four-foot tower. After the tower is completed villagers place a painting of St. Joseph in the center and hang an abundant variety of shaped breads around the tower. The concluding event of the festival is the construction of the three-tiered St. Joseph Altar laden with food. Three *Santi*, saints, consisting of parishioners, represent the Holy Family who then consume the food on the altar that devotees of St. Joseph contributed and blessed by a priest.³⁷

³⁶ Dissertation abstract.

³⁷ Feste di Sicilia" <http://www.festedisicilia.it/marzo.htm>.

Ethnic Celebrations and St. Joseph's Day in the United States

Two traditional practices honoring St. Joseph include the church parish celebration and the ethnic religious celebration of the St. Joseph Altar. The latter is primarily practiced in a few regions of Italy and various areas of the United States.

In the earlier chapter relating to diasporic celebrations a brief reference to Polish diaspora celebration involved mention of St. Stanislaus. The development of the St. Joseph Altar in the United States had a parallel beginning throughout the country with Italian immigrants honoring St. Joseph. Polish immigrants were accustomed to quiet celebration of their patron saint, St. Stanislaus, and also honored St. Joseph, as Jesus' father on March 19. The Poles and Italians shared challenges of assimilation and established camaraderie with fellow Catholic immigrants of diverse nationalities in adopting one particular Italian Catholic custom, the St. Joseph Altar. The reverence for St. Joseph did not conflict in any form with their Polish identity.

The Poles established numerous Polish language churches named after their patron saint, St. Stanislaus Kostka, throughout the United States. The Polish immigrants had their own issues to overcome in the United States. St. Patrick's Day, the Roman Catholic celebration for the Irish, left other ethnic groups isolated. Mutual devotion of St. Joseph linked the Polish and Italians in a religious and ethnic celebration. Traditionally, the Poles and Italians celebrated with a meatless dinner and a simple altar in honor of St. Joseph. The Polish altar consisted of a small table covered with two cloths, white overlaid with red, and two candles on each side of a small statue of St. Joseph. This quiet family celebration continues to this day.³⁸

³⁸ "Dzien Swietego Jozefa "St. Joseph'sDay"
<http://acweb.column.edu/users/agunkel/homepage/easter/swjozef.html>

The Italian and Polish immigrants of late-nineteenth-century Chicago united on March 19, two days after the popular Irish, St. Patrick's Day Parade, to celebrate St. Joseph's Day. During this early period the Italians and Polish wore red, a mutual color of their flag, and marched to celebrate St. Joseph's Day. The St. Joseph Day parade in Chicago has now evolved into a celebration of the Polish heritage with the Polish Constitution Day Parade in May.

In Buffalo, New York, the settlement of Northern Italian missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century had little Italian regional influence on the predominantly Southern Italian settlers. Secondo Casarotto (1991:76) noted that a predominantly Protestant population motivated a major conversion by Southern Italians from Catholicism to Protestantism. Lack of understanding of the *Mezzogiorno* mentality by Northern Italian priests and nuns, and an abundance of Protestant ministers that were more accepting of the cultural differences influenced the conversion.

Although many Italians in Buffalo converted during the late nineteenth century, the majority remained Catholic. St. Joseph's Feast Day became a significant celebration with traditional Sicilian altar, procession, and Mass. The celebration, still considered a religious and ethnic feast, focuses on parishioner participation and the donating of food to the poor.³⁹ Many of the Italian diaspora celebrated feast days of other patron saints which took hold in settlement areas and influenced the development of the celebrations.

Lauretta from Long Island, New York, nostalgically remembers her Brooklyn celebration of St. Joseph Feast Day as a festive occasion celebrated with family and friends at home. Her mother's family arrived from Bari, a southern city on mainland Italy, and her father's family from an unknown location in Sicily. She states, "St. Joseph was

³⁹ Interview, Maria C. November 2005

always a big day in our family. My father's name was Joseph and everyone came to our house for St. Joseph pastries, no altar in our house. It feels strange not to celebrate St. Joseph anymore....I understand in Italy name days are big but St. Joseph was the only one we celebrated."⁴⁰

The Italians from New York originally perpetuated homeland traditions of St. Joseph at friends' and family's homes. New York is home to higher percentage of descendants from Naples than from Sicily.⁴¹ *Napoletani* celebrate the feast days of San Gennaro [St. Janus] and Sant'Antonio [St. Anthony] during summer months. These elaborate celebrations are equal to Louisiana's St. Joseph Day. One tradition practiced in many areas but not in Louisiana involves parishioners placing dollar bills on the saint's statue during the procession.

American-Italian New Yorkers celebrate St. Joseph on March 19 with a "table" as an altar. Priests' blessings are not required. The custom involves private worship with family and friends, and some attend church the morning of the feast day. Unlike the blessing by a priest of the altar prior to the consumption of food in Louisiana, prayer by the attendees precedes the minestrone appetizer, spaghetti with breadcrumbs or anchovies, breads, cakes, and cookies.

A New York website welcomes family recipes from St. Joseph celebrants. Recipes from descendants of Sicily, Naples, and Bologna define the regional Italian varieties of food served.⁴²

⁴⁰ Interview, Laretta Long Island, New York

⁴¹ United States Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov>

⁴² "Non-Stop New York's Italianissimo: La Festa di San Giuseppe NYC-Style"
<http://www.members.aol.com/nonstopny/italiano/lacucina.htm>

Many Italian immigrants and second generation Italians create personal altars in their home. Individuals may pray at the altar, depending how the altar is constructed. For example, a table or cabinet may prominently displays religious articles such as statues, holy water, and saints' pictures. Prayer may take place wherever the individual chooses – a quiet room, in bed, in the garden. While symbolic icons are not an absolute necessity for prayer, symbols on the altar represent reverence to Jesus, Mary, St. Joseph, and saints of the individual's preference.

Clara Steele, an Italian immigrant originally from Trieste, Italy, married her American husband after World War II and became interested in religious art. The two traveled throughout the world during his military years.⁴³ After settling in New York following her husband's retirement several years ago, Clara constructed a religious environment in her home. She converted a room into a chapel for private prayer, built a cupola decorated with cherubic angels with faces of her grandchildren, and lavishly adorned clay statues of the Virgin Mary. Prior to her death, Clara annually constructed a twenty- by ten-foot crèche of her original design each Christmas as a form of devotional practice.

Clara received personal satisfaction from her creations, and believed her work showed gratitude to God for the gift of her talent. She received numerous accolades for her work, and her home is now a museum operated by the Long Beach Historical Society in Long Beach, New York. As evidenced by her artwork, Clara was a deeply religious woman. I never asked Clara if she honored any saint with particular devotional practices. St. Joseph however, received prayers and thanks on his feast day.

⁴³ Personal Interview, Clara Steele. 2005.

Currently, March 17, St. Patrick Day, two days prior to St. Joseph Day, identifies the Irish with their heritage and links their nationality with the Church in New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Boston, and other areas of the United States. The American Italians of New York and Chicago and elsewhere publicly display their secular cultural heritage on Columbus Day, October 12. New Yorkers also merge their ethnicity with Catholicism during various saints' feast days.

The Boston-Italian community celebrates Columbus Day, but without emphasis on Italian culture. In Boston the focus is the discovery of America. St. Joseph Day, does however, have significance to Italian descendants in Boston, and they celebrate the feast day and their heritage in July.⁴⁴ American Italians from all states reinforce their heritage throughout the year through celebrations of saints, the Madonna, and through ethnic festivals.⁴⁵

The St. Joseph Society in Boston celebrates the feast day based on the tradition initiated by an immigrant family from Riesi, Sicily. The annual feast day conforms to the typical Italian Catholic festival with a blessing, procession, and *fešta*. Neither Boston nor Riesi create a public three tiered altar. The original Riesi tradition emanated from the community's respect for St. Joseph's humility and caretaking of Mary and Jesus.

⁴⁴ *Societa San Giuseppe DiRiesi*. <http://www.northendboston.com/news-religious.htm>.

⁴⁵ Interview, Alissa Z., Boston, MA.



Figure 2: Cherubs in Cupola by Clara Steele

In 1837, prior to the establishment of the March 19 feast day, the devotees of St. Joseph in the Italian community in Rieti erected a church in his honor and continue to celebrate the festivity annually in June.

The Rieti Boston descendants sustain the tradition, but carry it out one month later. Over the years, descendants maintained commitment to the celebration but modernized original traditions to meet their needs such as using different foods available in Boston. The Boston celebration illustrates Tweed's translocative/ transtemporal theory and reflects the concept that memory carried through space and

time involves change; practices in Boston cannot be bilocative or simultaneous to what occurs in Riesi. They may share similarities of continuity but cannot be identical.⁴⁶

New Jersey's St. Lucy's Festival grew from transplanted Sicilian origins. This celebration, not to be outdone by the New York City's celebrations of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and *San Gennaro*, is equally elaborate.⁴⁷

Tampa, Florida's large Sicilian population harmoniously resides with descendants from Spain, Cuba, Romania, and Russia. Ybor City, a homogenized neighborhood of Tampa, surrounds a vital Sicilian community.⁴⁸ Their celebration of St. Joseph occurs on March 19. The blending of the various nationalities contributes to a unique combination of food. Italian families honor St. Joseph with private altars; public altars are not part of the festivity (Capistrano, 2005: 231).

In Illinois, another sizable Sicilian population established Our Lady of Laurentana in Berwyn, a suburb of Chicago. The annual celebration honoring the saint does not reflect ethnicity. Although the saint has Sicilian roots, the celebration of the feast day does not focus on any specific cultural traditions. Italians in Illinois primarily celebrate their heritage through ethnic festivals that have no connection to religion.

Mid-nineteenth Italian immigrants in California arrived primarily from Liguria, a northern region of Italy.⁴⁹ Subsequently, a large migration of Sicilians arrived; however, like Illinois, the majority of festivals are ethnic rather than religious. St. Joseph Day in

⁴⁶ *Societa San Giuseppe DiRiesi*. <http://www.northendboston.com/news-religious.htm>

⁴⁷ Interview, Nancy. New Jersey. Son's of Italy, Saint Lucy of Syracuse, <http://magnificat.ca/cal/engl/12-Santa-Lucia-the-Queen-of-Lights>, www.serve.com/shear/germusa/lucia.htm.

⁴⁸ Interview Rosalie. Tampa, Florida.

⁴⁹ "Italian Legacy In the Mother Lode," Italian Legacy Entry, Amador County, California, <http://amadornet.safepages.com/directory/travelers/italian>.

the Imperial Valley of California combines ethnic and religious traditions of Italian ancestors, but the customs as presented in Louisiana are not part of their celebration.⁵⁰

San Juan Capistrano [St. John Capistrano] California includes within its celebration of St. Joseph Day on March 19 the famous annual migratory return of the swallows. This observance of St. Joseph connects spirituality with local ecology without making ethnic association with bird migration in a community is primarily Northern Italian ancestry.⁵¹

The Italians provide the third largest ancestral group in Pennsylvania.⁵² Gravitation to opportunities offered in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh brought all major immigrant groups which sparked the recurrence of conflict with the Irish that occurring throughout the United States. The perpetuation of churches and feasts by expanding settlers carried the traditions to their new cities. The St. Joseph Feast Day a tradition that developed in Pittsburgh continues today. Similar to Buffalo and Chicago, a food altar is constructed; procession and Mass follow. Traditional cookies sold in bakeries help celebrate the day with subdued fanfare that recognizes St. Joseph and the ethnic group.⁵³

According to the United States Ancestry Map - 2000, Rhode Island, the smallest state in our country has the largest number of Italian descendants in the United

⁵⁰ "Italian-American Pioneers of the Imperial Valley," Imperial Valley Historical Society, <http://www.imperial.cc.ca/pioneers/italian.htm>

Worral, Janet, Carol Bonomo Albright, and Elvira DiFabio. Go West Paesani! Italian Americans and the West. New York. American Italian Historical Association. 2004.

⁵¹ Mission of San Juan Capistrano, <http://www.missionsjc.com/swallowsfest.html>
Interview Dina Aug. 2005

⁵² United States Census Bureau, United States Ancestry Map, <http://www.census.gov>

⁵³ Krase, Jerome, "America's Little Italies: Past, Present and Future." Italian Ethics: Their Languages, Literature, and Lives. American Italian Historical Association. 1980.

States.⁵⁴ This state offers more than ten Italian festivals a year according the Sons of Italy list of celebrations. There are no specific notations regarding how many of these festivals are religiously oriented. However, a website referencing St. Joseph Day celebration by Italian descendants of Rhode Island documents the subdued but respectful honoring of St. Joseph.⁵⁵ Interviews with a few Rhode Island residents of Italian-American descent indicated celebrations of similar magnitude to those in New York.

Texas shares a significant Italian ancestry. Italian influence has found a home through several organizations in Dallas, Austin, Houston, and some smaller communities in Texas. Several Houston area organizations host St. Joseph Altar celebrations annually.⁵⁶

Typically, the original elements of the Italian *festa* appear to be similar throughout the United States, with the exception of Tampa; current ritual traditions have changed little. Throughout the United States ethnic festivals are the primary source for honoring heritage. The New York American Polish community celebrates its secular heritage via the Pulaski Day Parade in October. In Boston, an annual multi-cultural festival honors all ethnicities. There are also numerous Catholic ethnic festivals; however, few have participation that extend outside the community or have expanded beyond the parishes or neighborhoods where they originated.

In New Orleans and other Louisiana locations where St. Joseph's Day festivals occur, participation has been re-energized following hurricanes Katrina and Rita in

⁵⁴ United States Census Bureau, United States Ancestry Map, <http://www.census.gov>

⁵⁵ Interview, Crissy, "St. Joseph's Day in Rhode Island", <http://riroads.com/members/stjosephsday.htm>.

⁵⁶ Houston Institute for Culture, <http://www.houstonculture.org>

2005. Immediately following the hurricanes, a few small celebrations were continued, but subsequently the St. Joseph Day Altar and festivities resumed with more enthusiasm which is detailed in the Expansion chapter.

St. Joseph Altar Traditions in South Louisiana, the Beginning

As detailed to me via interviews and literature the St. Joseph celebration began as a private, home altar ritual. Typifying Orsi's *domus*-centered theory, family and friends gathered sharing specific food specialties dedicated to St. Joseph. The conclusion of this thesis will illustrate the evolution and expansion of the once private altar celebration to the large festivities currently formed throughout South Louisiana.

The blend of Italian immigrants from various regions of Italy established major St. Joseph altars in a handful of areas in the United States. Sicilian immigrants founded the St. Joseph Altar practice in New Orleans. Descendants from different villages in Sicily brought assorted traditions. A devotee held the belief that creating a St. Joseph Altar and providing food for the poor was either part of a specific request to St. Joseph or thanks for having granted specific blessings or favors, particularly recovery from an illness.

The early rituals of St. Joseph Day in South Louisiana were relatively similar to the practices throughout the country. Based on personal interviews and the 1974 "St. Joseph's Day Issue" of the Italian-American Digest⁵⁷ the symbolic rituals consistent with traditions of First Wave Italian immigrants included a specially prepared meal of vegetables, soup, fish, pasta, a variety of meatless sauces, fruit, and baked goods. The breads, cakes, and cookies have specific designs and ingredients that have symbolic

⁵⁷ "St. Joseph's Day-The Spirit of Giving," Italian-American Digest, St. Joseph's Day Issue, Vol 4, 1975 New Orleans.

relations to the event. The breads, cakes and cookies listed below represent the tradition used from the inception of the festivity in New Orleans through 1983 (Orso, 1990:2). Later a comparison with the current expanding traditions will illustrate changes that have occurred over the years.

Cuchidati (bread loaves).

The largest is rolled and shaped to resemble the crown of thorns worn by Jesus prior to the Crucifixion.

Smaller loaves are made into symbolic shapes such as:

A heart representing the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary;

A cross representing the crucifixion;

A chalice for water and wine;

A monstrance to hold the Host;

St. Joseph's staff and beard;

Palms representing those laid in Jesus' path to Jerusalem;

Birds, doves (in particular, fish, flowers) or whatever the artistic temperament dictates.

Pupacoulova (baskets) containing:

Dyed eggs announcing the coming of Easter;

Cookies;

Fig cakes;

Various flavored and colored *biscotti Pignolati* or Gigi's (pastry kernels) molded into pyramids representing pinecone toys from Jesus' childhood;

Fluffy coconut bars and lambs;

Cannoli (pastry desserts);

Sfingi (Italian-style beignet)[

Cakes shaped as Bibles (Orso, 1990:3-4)

Numerous symbolic rituals and food items play important roles in the delivery of the celebration. The 1974 article (author unknown) tells of the tradition of three children, representing the Holy Family, knocking on the door of the house where the altar is being prepared. The children received the meatless meal first, and required tasting all the preparations. Later, the food was shared by family, friends, and distributed to the poor and local orphanages.

In Italian American Digest, (Mar.1974) “St. Joseph’s Day: The Spirit of Giving” the weeks of preparation by devotees [are reported to have] included making particular food; in addition, attendees received holy pictures or medals of St. Joseph, and at least one fava bean for good luck. Oral history of New Orleans Sicilian immigrants⁵⁸ related a traditional departure gift from relatives of a fava bean to bring good luck. Symbolically the fava bean represented good fortune over the centuries because it was thought to have ended drought periods or maintained sustenance for survival.

The New Orleans immigrants’ St. Joseph Altar required a priest’s blessing before consumption. In particular, the blessed fava bean’s role represented financial security; one carrying a blessed fava bean would never be poor. In some villages of Sicily the fava had mystical good fortune in New Orleans the blessed fava bean became sacred; an unblessed fava bean provides nutritional value, a blessed fava bean brings good fortune.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Interviews Mary F. April 2005, Maselli J. Feb. 2006,

⁵⁹ Oral History, Mary F. , RoRisa, Fr. Russo

The origin of the fava bean tradition remains somewhat obscure. The tradition of the fava bean differs significantly from various regions of Sicily and descendants living in different regions of the United States. Of the approximately thirty published celebrations of the St. Joseph Altars in Sicily, none mentioned the ritual of the fava bean.

Quaggioto's research indicated the fava bean had equal nutritional and spiritual value as any other bean in the expression of the Altar in Rosaforte (1988:82). Rituals of preparation and presentation of the Altar for the supernatural connection defined the spiritual validity of the St. Joseph Altar. Food preparation, altar presentation, blessing by the priest, attendance by the Holy Family, public participation and sharing of food appears to be consistent with all the immigrant and existing Sicilian traditions. Food preparation and staffing clearly represent commitment. When descendants of immigrants to the United States visited fellow descendants in Corleone, Sicily they observed their shared practices consistent in Louisiana including the tradition of the fava bean.⁶⁰

The blending of the Sicilian traditions from the past century contributed to a modern modification of the tradition in New Orleans. A combined effort of prayers to St. Joseph to end the drought in Sicily help people survive, and the use the mystical fava became the symbolic foundation for today's St. Joseph Altar tradition in South Louisiana. This lore reflects petition for survival.

Records indicate that Sicily has endured periods of drought (Piervitali, Colacino. 2001: Abstract). There are two origin stories of survival during droughts. In one, while other produce dried up and died the power of St. Joseph gave survival to the fava bean,

⁶⁰ Interview RoRisa

which provided sustenance to the cows that gave milk for children's survival; in the other tradition St. Joseph ended the drought with rain, which brought flourishing crops.⁶¹

Beliefs that these miraculous events took place resulted in gratitude to St. Joseph, "the protector of the Holy Family."⁶² This gratitude is expressed by construction of an altar constructed in honor of St. Joseph and thanks is offered by supplying the most treasured gift, food. Food shared with those less fortunate becomes sustenance for the community.

The majority of immigrant Sicilians who arrived in New Orleans arrived primarily from the Palermo region of Northwest Sicily (Margavio, Salomone. 2002:32). Although the precise origin of the enactment of the St. Joseph customs remains ambiguous, descendants have homogenized and diffused the practice across south Louisiana.

Orso briefly discussed the sociological aspect of women-centered activities in the St. Joseph Altar celebration in New Orleans. The initial role of women, as once took place in their native land, involved the complete preparation for the *festa*, culminating with the blessing by the priest. Men played a secondary role until the development of male-oriented parades in New Orleans in 1967. Pamela Quaggiotto substantiated this theory in her 1988 research, and as mentioned earlier noted the secondary value of the leadership role of women in the St. Joseph Altar in Sicily. In the Rosaforte study the women believed a leadership role in the St. Joseph Altar would guarantee their petition would be answered favorably.

Women's role in current festivities continues to center on the preparation of food and the organizing of the Altar. Women remain the central figures in the religious

⁶¹ Oral history numerous interviews

⁶² Interviews, common belief.

preparations, while the men's participation involves the culminating festivities of St. Joseph Day in New Orleans.⁶³

The New Orleans tradition has expanded throughout the surrounding areas of New Orleans including Kenner, Metairie, Slidell, and Gretna; virtually all the surrounding towns celebrate St. Joseph altars. The Italian Marching Band of New Orleans sponsors the massive in various events culminating with the parade and ball. Italian organizations and media throughout the United States advertise the event.⁶⁴

Diverse traditions emanating from the various villages in Sicily effected homogenization of old traditions plus creating new ones in South Louisiana.

⁶³ "The Immigration Experience." "Italian Heritage in the United States." "Ethnic Festivals: Celebrations of Identity." "The Italian American Woman: The Family and Society." The University of the State of New York, State Education Department. [n.d.]

⁶⁴ Italian American Marching Band, New Orleans,
<http://www.italianamericanmarchingclub.org/html/benefits.html>



Figure 3: St. Louis Cathedral, St. Joseph Altar, New Orleans 2007



Figure 4: St. Joseph Altar Parade, New Orleans, LA.
(Photo credit New Orleans Italian Marching Band)
(First parade 1970, Italian American Digest, 1975)



Figure 5: St. Joseph Altar Parade, New Orleans, LA.
(Photo credit New Orleans Italian Marching Band)

CHAPTER 5

THE ST. JOSEPH ALTAR EXPANSION IN SOUTH LOUISIANA

Orso's 1990 publication noted an expansion of the St. Joseph Altar tradition in Louisiana. "St. Joseph altar traditions have diffused well outside of the Sicilian-American community in Louisiana. Altars are now built by members of other ethnic, racial, and even religious groups" (1990:47).

The expansion spread north in the early years following the first wave immigration. Orso writes in her 1990 publication the earliest written account of the St. Joseph Altar appeared in the 1928 Fabulous New Orleans (11). The descendants of Sicilian immigrants of Hammond and Independence also consider their communities among the earliest St. Joseph Altars in Louisiana. Although the Italian population has diminished considerably, the Catholic community maintains the tradition, and the elaborate St. Joseph Altars continue to this day with significant enthusiasm.⁶⁵

As the Sicilian immigrants disseminated to the surrounding areas of New Orleans, the St. Joseph Altar tradition followed. A few communities in Mississippi also celebrate the St. Joseph Altar. Westward the celebration has expanded to the Texas border and beyond which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The process from immigrant to descendant to community took various forms in the expansion. The development of the Sicilian St. Joseph Altar tradition in Louisiana initially shared the same characteristics as in Sicily, home altars. The fundamental concept of expression of gratitude for ending the drought and providing nutrition blended with request for intercession and protection. Identical conditions were not

⁶⁵ Interview, Mae, New Orleans, LA, February 2009

possible due changes resulting from distance and time, translocative and transtemporal. Climates of South Louisiana and Sicily were similar but not identical. Food was different, and the substitution of different foods did not alter the basic ideology of the St. Joseph *festa*.

Carroll's (1996) Veiled Threats proposed that many Catholics believe that saints have the power to protect, the ability to intercede, or improve a situation, all conditions indicative in the development of the St. Joseph Altar. Catholic doctrine encourages prayer to the Madonna and saints for intercession in times of need. Although all religions advocate prayer to a supreme being for strength, aid, direction, the difference in Catholicism is prayers are often to God's delegates, the Madonna and saints (1996: 170).

Father Michael Joseph Russo is the grandson of Sicilian immigrants who arrived in Louisiana in the late nineteenth century. His family originally celebrated the St. Joseph Altar in their home with family and friends. Father Russo also sought intercession. Several generations carried the name Joseph, and his middle name was in honor of St. Joseph. His strong connection to the name Joseph and his desire to become a priest led to a promise that if he were able to achieve priesthood, he would continue to honor St. Joseph and perpetuate the St. Joseph celebration to the best of his ability.

Father Russo's commitment also aided the interesting evolutionary facets of the westward expansion of the St. Joseph Day celebration. The Lenten celebration offers a meatless, lavish display and bread a primary nutritional provision. Two aspects

delineate Catholicism in the food: the shape of the breads and blessings of the food. The earliest New Orleans St. Joseph Altar traditions included symbolically shaped



Figure 6: Fr. Joseph Russo Family Tree – Descendants from Corleone, Italy. Franklin, LA.

bread such as the chalice, cross, monstrance, St. Joseph's sandals, tools of a carpenter, birds, butterflies, flowers, staff, and various symbols of life. As the expansion moved westward shapes identifying life in Acadiana were added such as; crawfish, shrimp, turtles, and alligators.

Another popular tradition of the St. Joseph Altar includes the priest's blessing preceding the re-enactment of the Holy Family's journey to Bethlehem, called, "*tupa tupa*" or "tap, tap" or "knock, knock" in Sicilian dialect. The re-enactment presented to the public by children represents the Holy Family's knocking on three doors seeking shelter and food. Following refusal for entry at the first two doors, the third hosts invite

the Holy Family to dine at the Altar. The public partakes in the meal after the Holy Family has completed their meal.⁶⁶

Father Russo while pastor of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Franklin, offered new concepts of the St. Joseph Altar in effort to extend invitation to non-Italian parishioners. Father Russo introduced new religiously inspired shaped breads, such as the rooster symbolizing the crowing after Peter's denial of Jesus, and a fourth tier on the altar representing other honored saints.



Figure 7: Four-tiered St. Joseph Altar, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church. Franklin, LA.

⁶⁶ Interview, Father Russo, Michael Joseph. Feb. 2005.



Figure 8: Various shaped breads, animals and fish typical of Acadiana; crawfish, turtles, traditional Sicilian mementoes, Franklin, LA.



Figure 9: Cookies in shape of St. Joseph Sandals and Monstrance, Statue of St. Rosalie from Palermo, Sicily. Franklin, LA.

Father Russo inclusion of a new aspect to the St. Joseph altar tradition such as the duplication all food contributions symbolizes balance and harmony of Catholic and Italian.

An interesting tradition incorporated into many of the celebrations includes the sprinkling of bread crumbs over pasta. This practice symbolizes the sawdust from St.

Joseph's carpentry work. Cookies, as Orso indicated, play a significant role in religious symbolism of this grand feast day, particularly the *Pignolatti* and *Scatollini*. There are various versions of the cookies.

One characterization of the *Scatollini* symbolically includes the blood of Jesus inside the cookie. A red substance in the center "erupts" before the cookie is fully baked.



Figure 10: *Scatollini* cookies. Franklin, LA.



Figure 11: Fava Bean tree. Franklin, LA.



Figure 12: St. Joseph and Baby Jesus, bread shaped as various carpenter tools. Virgin Mary & Baby Jesus, the Crucifixion. Franklin, LA.

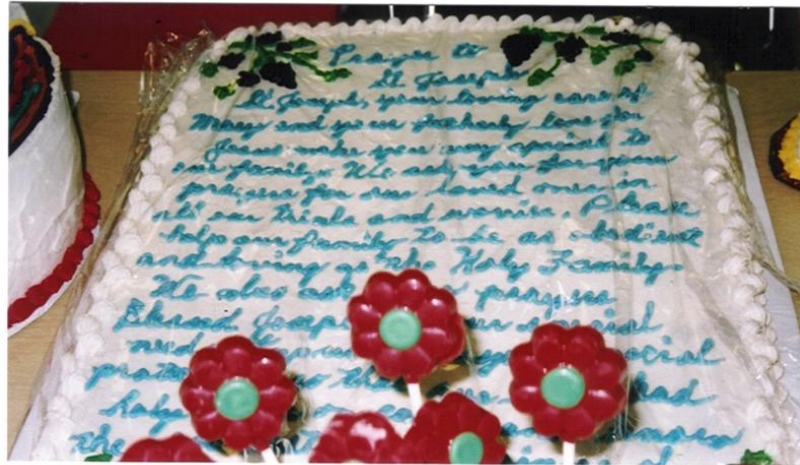


Figure 13: St. Joseph Prayer Cake and various designed cakes. Franklin, LA.

An intertwining of cultures and Catholicism has given a new life to the St. Joseph Altar tradition in South Louisiana. The initiating energy at each site propels the expansion. Father Russo brought symbolic religious perspectives to the altar, as interest grew among non-Italian parishioners, new symbolism evolved altar traditions.



Figure 14: St. Lucy – Saint of Lights and Eyes. Franklin, LA.



Figure 15: Crucifix and miscellaneous cakes. Franklin, LA.

Father Russo contributed to the development of the celebration in Opelousas and Rayne. The establishment of this tradition in communities that have negligible Sicilian ancestry indicates the energy of the influence of Father Russo. The name of the

church, St. Joseph, in Rayne simplified establishing the St. Joseph Altar tradition. Numerous churches in South Louisiana named St. Joseph do not celebrate the St. Joseph Altar. Developing the tradition requires the impetus of individuals desiring the Altar.

A predominantly Black Creole Catholic church in Opelousas, the Holy Ghost Catholic Church, created a different challenge for Father Russo. A group of Sicilian residents in Opelousas offered a small outdoor St. Joseph's Altar numerous years prior to Father Russo's arrival. His enthusiasm to create a traditional Altar similar to those in New Orleans precipitated community effort. Father Russo, the original group of women, and the women of the St. Joseph Society created an Altar that exemplified a blending of Sicilian and Creole traditions.

Engaged in the St. Joseph Altar practice, Father Russo's reassignment to a new parish, the aged Italian women that created the Altar were unable to continue the tradition. The commitment by the women in the Holy Ghost St. Joseph Society sustained the St. Joseph Day celebration following Father Russo's departure. The Sicilian traditions involving the fava bean, symbolic breads and cakes, and the meatless supper now include the Creole influence in Opelousas. Red beans and rice, seafood casseroles, and meatless Italian traditional spaghetti magnificently weave together the two cultures through one religion.⁶⁷

Father Russo initiated three major St. Joseph Altar celebrations in Rayne, Opelousas, and Franklin that have continued although he is no longer with those parishes. His relocation in 2008 to a parish in Lafayette with an established St. Joseph

⁶⁷ Interview, Father Russo, Michael Joseph, Feb. 2005

Altar festivity offered a new opportunity to incorporate the inclusive traditions he established in three other parishes.

Ninety-three year old Mary,⁶⁸ whose parents arrived in New Orleans from Sicily at the beginning of the twentieth century, celebrated St. Joseph during her childhood. She remembers a small altar erected in their living room where the family would pray to St. Joseph, and the advance preparations for the food feast celebrated in their home with family and friends.

The expansion of the St. Joseph altar in South Louisiana took on many different forms. In the Baton Rouge Advocate, Bishop Robert Muench is quoted regarding the Louisiana St. Joseph Day tradition: "I'm German and Irish, but in our country I don't think it should only be celebrated by the Italian community. It should be celebrated by the whole community because we are a human family."⁶⁹ This sentiment is shared by many non-Italians and has provided impetus for the expansion of the practice.⁷⁰

Another advocate of the St. Joseph Altar tradition is an enterprising young chef who fell in love with Sicily after living there for several years, now teaches conversational Italian and cooking. Realizing the value of the St. Joseph Altar, in South Louisiana he established a new program for members of the Houma community. Each year he charts a bus tour to view the St. Joseph Altars in Houma, Thibodaux, Morgan City, and Donaldsonville. Many participants seek to connect with their ancestral cultural ties, while others are curious about the popular tradition.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Interview Mary F. 2006

⁶⁹ "BR Celebrates St. Joseph". The Advocate. Bonner, Mark F. 20 Mar. 2006.

⁷⁰ Ware, Carolyn. "Ritual Spaces in Traditional Louisiana Communities: Italian, Nicaraguan, and Vietnamese Altars." http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/creole_art_ritual_spaces.html

⁷¹ Interview , Nick T. Houma, March 2006.

New Iberia Catholic High School celebrated St. Joseph Day for eighteen years. The program was developed by Religion Director Mrs. Minivielle. More than 1,000 attendees participated in the annual event held in the school gym. Students provided offerings and displays for the enormous three-tiered altar and banquet table. The traditional three-tiered altar contained food, flowers, religious candles, pictures, and statues of Jesus and saints, particularly St. Joseph and the Virgin Mary. Priests offered Mass and banquet table arrangements outlined the periphery of the gym. All the tables featured the same items found on the St. Joseph Altar. The exit area included St. Joseph petition boxes, prayer cards, medals, and fava beans.

Mrs. Minvielle reflected on the sentiments of the growing community interest in South Louisiana for St. Joseph Altars. "Today, the tradition knows no boundaries. Anyone can enjoy the opportunity to pray and celebrate. Indeed, the altar can be a community-building event with each individual or family, contributing labor, food, flowers, and statues for any personal reason."⁷²

Since the feast day did not always fall on a school day, the school celebrated the occasion as near to St. Joseph's Day as possible. The festivity was divided over two days: on the first day, the priest blessed the Altar and said Mass; on the second day, the student body and their families extended a public invitation to attend Mass and join in the celebration. Mrs. Minvielle retired after this interview in 2006. Her departure ended the the eighteen years of the St. Joseph Altar celebration at New Iberia Catholic High School. However, the end of one St. Joseph Altar festivity did not interrupt the continuity of this wonderful celebration elsewhere.

⁷² Interview, Minvielle, Anne. New Iberia, March 2005



Figure 16: St. Joseph Altar, Catholic High School, New Iberia, LA.



Figure 17: St. Joseph Altar, Catholic High School Crown of Thorns representing Jesus' death. New Iberia, LA.



Figure 18: St. Joseph Altar, Catholic High School,
white doves representing peace. New Iberia, LA.

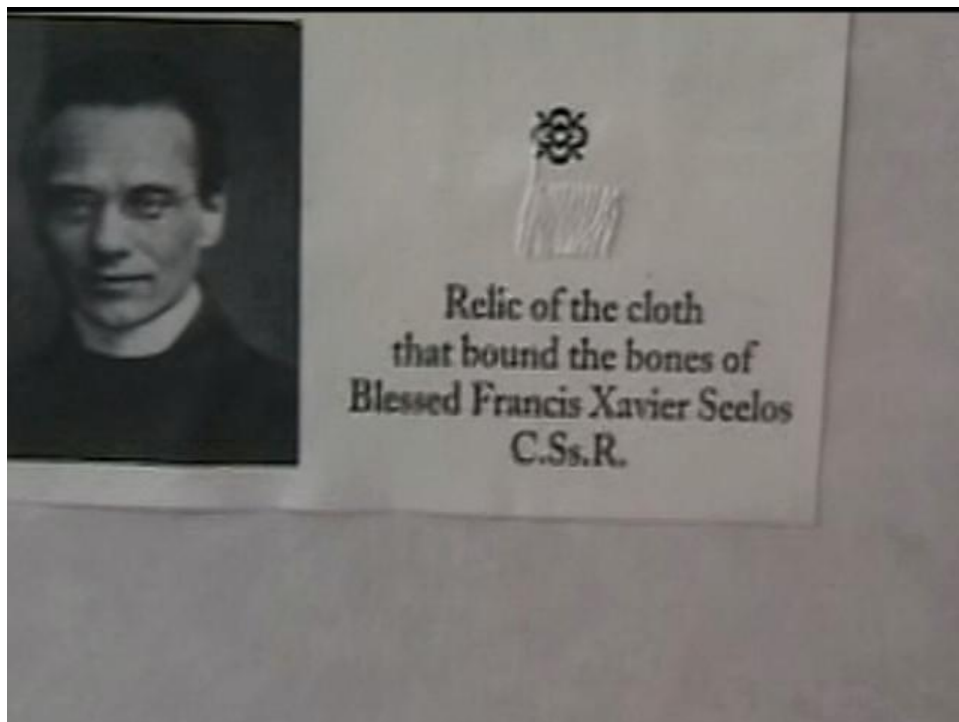


Figure 19: St. Joseph Altar, Catholic High School,
relic cloth of St. Francis Xavier Seelos. New Iberia, LA.



Figure 20: St. Joseph Altar, Catholic High School,
St. Joseph Prayer Cards and Petition Box. New Iberia, LA.

Activity Director Shirley Francois of the New Iberia Manor Nursing Home North has celebrated St. Joseph Day at that institution for at least twenty years. The celebration was initiated by a nursing home resident and her family, who encouraged the perpetuation of the festivity. Presentation of traditional breads and cookies, holding Mass, blessing of the Altar followed by consumption of a meatless meal by all in attendance has become an annual festivity for all nursing home residents.

Janet M. from Abbeville, who is distantly related to Father Russo, initiated a St. Joseph Altar at St. Mary Magdalen Church in Abbeville. Janet's original intention resulted from her interest to unify relatives within that community. Many cousins had drifted apart, but her invitation to approximately thirty cousins to her home broke ground for a monthly gathering hosted by different cousins each month. Initially they gathered

and pooled together their genealogy. As enthusiasm for the gatherings grew, family members realized their mutual family tradition of honoring St. Joseph on his feast day. Janet suggested establishing an altar in Abbeville like those in New Orleans. The St. Joseph Altar has now become an annual Abbeville tradition.

The Abbeville family presents an annual exhibit at the local museum as well as a St. Joseph Altar at St. Mary Magdalen Church. The popular tradition formerly involving family members now extends to anyone wishing to partake in any of the activities. Family heirlooms and treasures tell the story of the development of the Sicilian communities in this Acadiana region.

The exhibit usually lasts a few weeks to coincide with St. Joseph's Day. A small altar may be included in the exhibit. Businessman and philanthropist, Joseph Maselli, founder of the Italian Renaissance Museum of New Orleans and the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) frequently contributes collectibles and books for the exhibit. Midway through the exhibit the Abbeville sponsors invite the public for a wine and cheese party to celebrate the event. Approximately 1500 attend the altar and/or museum exhibit. The Abbeville event illustrates two objectives: the event at the cultural center incorporates an annual religious function into a primarily secular cultural function.

The inspiration in the City of Lafayette's celebration of St. Joseph arose from the founder of the Italian American Club of Lafayette, Joseph P. He is a Sicilian descendant, and he initiated the public tradition following the safe return of his son from the Vietnam War. He has kept the ancestral custom alive for thirty years at the Cathedral Carmel School cafeteria; this practice highlights the spiritual aspect of gratitude.

Mr. P. shares similarities with Father Russo – the name Joseph and a family and religious tradition that emanated from Sicilian villages in northwestern Sicily. Their shared profound devotion to St. Joseph served to promote the development of noted St. Joseph Altar celebrations west of New Orleans.

The vitality of the celebration at Cathedral Carmel School stimulated the development of a small annual St. Joseph Altar at Vermillionville, the Acadiana cultural village. Vermillionville offers guided tours of the St. Joseph Altar display at La Chapelle des Attakapas, and a gift packet of the typical St. Joseph Day goodies. The promotion of the Sicilian St. Joseph tradition within the walls of a French Acadian institution illustrates the homogenization of the two cultures in Acadiana.⁷³

A major festivity for St. Joseph occurs annually in Lake Charles in Calcasieu parish. Although I have not attended the celebration, the event receives notable media attention yearly.⁷⁴

Creole, a small Acadiana community in Cameron Parish had its first St. Joseph Altar in 2005. The R family, descendants from Corleone, requested that their pastor initiate a St. Joseph Altar for the congregation. The parishioners of the Sacred Heart Church in Creole are primarily of Cajun origin and responded enthusiastically to the call. The fusion of the traditional Sicilian custom along with Acadian delights of crawfish and gumbo in Creole created a harmonious communal ethnic and religious celebration. Sadly, a few months later, Hurricane Rita completely destroyed the church and community. Families relocated, but as time passed some returned, including the R family. Two years after Rita's devastation, Creole established a new church and

⁷³ Vermillionville, Lafayette, LA. <http://www.vermillionville.org>

⁷⁴ The Times of Southwest Louisiana, Annual St. Joseph articles in March. <http://www.thetimesw.com>

succeeded in celebrating St. Joseph Day in 2006. Hurricane Ike arrived in 2008 and again tragically destroyed the church and community.

In 2007 at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Morrow, - a community near Alexandria- made their first St. Joseph Altar. A parishioner, Mr. Maddie traditionally celebrated the St. Joseph Altar at his New Orleans home since his childhood. The home Altar celebration evolved into a church celebration. As post-Katrina evacuees, the Maddie's relocated to Morrow and wanted to re-establish the tradition that carried great significance in their new life. They arranged the entire program, including publication of the festivity. The announcement included an invitation to submit petitions to St. Joseph.

The festivity in Morrow continued over two days. The first day included the blessing of the Altar followed by Mass. The Litany, which commonly includes a reading from the Bible was sung in Italian. The second day, the actual day of the celebration, began with Mass and the Litany sung again in Italian. The celebration included an enactment of serving a meal to the Holy Family at the Altar followed by a public spaghetti meal prepared by chef Paul "Bubby" Dicapo. All elements of this event could be traced to generations of Sicilian traditions.⁷⁵

Agents of growth of the expansion of the St. Joseph Altar in South Louisiana included many individuals. Father Russo, Mrs. Minvielle, Joe P., the Maddie's, and the family from Creole brought the tradition to the communities. Continuity of the St. Joseph Altars depended primarily upon interest which could only be interrupted by removal of a figurehead like Mrs. Minvielle, or by a natural disaster suffered by the community.

The passion of the Sicilians stimulated the development, and expansion of the St. Joseph Altar in Louisiana. Even though the origin of the celebration remains

⁷⁵ Interview. Mr. Maddie March 2007.

obscured in the past of oral tradition, the energy of this festivity continues to diffuse into other ethnic and religious groups.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The results of my three-year research project support my thesis that the expansion of the St. Joseph Altar celebration in South Louisiana was unique in its incorporation of other ethnic Catholic religious celebrations both within and outside the United States.

Since Orso's first publication (1975), numerous new St. Joseph Altar practices have come to be observed in Morgan City, Houma, Thibodaux, New Iberia, Jeanerette, Rayne, Opelousas, Abbeville, Franklin, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Morrow and Creole. In 2003 Kerri McCaffety published St. Joseph Altars that includes recipes and pictures from various altars in the New Orleans area.⁷⁶ The sites of the St. Joseph Altars in this thesis do not represent all the St. Joseph Altars practiced in South Louisiana or elsewhere. In 2010, fifty-three announcements of St. Joseph Altar celebrations throughout South Louisiana were published in numerous publications - more than in Sicily and, in fact, than all of Italy.

This research has revealed the singular character of the expansion of the St. Joseph Altar in South Louisiana; namely that it is unique. The ongoing expansion of the St. Joseph tradition has not wavered since its relocation to New Orleans during the First Wave of immigration.

Orsi's concept of the *domus* in ethnic practice and Tweed's translocative and transtemporal theories provide interpretation for the transplantation of the St. Joseph Altar tradition by the immigrants and second-generation descendants. The nuclear

⁷⁶ McCaffety, Kerri, St. Joseph Altars, Gretna, Louisiana, Pelican Publishing Company, 2003.

familial relationship that created a basis for the immigrant changed over time as Italian immigrant families adapted to their situation in the United States.

In Orsi's (1985) analysis of popular Catholic religious practice in the United States following the arrival of Italian immigrants he observed that culturally different values attached to particular Catholic religious practice created a serious wedge between the Irish and Italian immigrant. Unlike immigrant Italians, the Irish immigrant believed that regular church attendance was a requirement of appropriate worship practice. The Italians practice separated church from religion. As manifested by their cultural religious interpretation spiritual connection was not necessarily tied to Catholic regular church attendance. In contrast, the Irish believed that church attendance was the primary connection with God (Orsi,1985:56).

Cultural differences in the practice of Catholicism by Irish and Italian immigrants in the United States resulted in decades of misunderstanding. One example of this difference is the relative importance for Italians home altar practice in contrast to Irish emphasis on regular attendance at Mass. The Italian's belief that special devotional practices such as a home or *festa* versus attending church inspired a conflict that permeated into the daily lives of the two cultures.

Changes in devotional practice by Catholic Italian immigrants to the United States did not occur rapidly. The Catholic Church closed an eye at home altars and emotional worship (198:56). Irish clergy celebrated St. Patrick's Day for numerous years with Mass, parades, and parties in most urban areas of the United States and honored the practice of combining ethnicity, religion and festivities. The Church accepted the

symbolism of a saint's national representation of a native land as with St. Stanislaus from Poland and St. Patrick of Ireland.

Orso (1990) noted that the shared Catholic faith practice united the French Acadian and Italian cultures despite their cultural differences

McColloster (1970) theorized that Italian Catholics believe in the "power of the lucky bean," and "blessed beans possess no magical powers of good luck" (1970:39) signifying that although some practitioners of the St. Joseph Altar might believe the McColloster bean brings good luck this is simply folklore. Plemmer contended "Catholics do not believe that fava beans are lucky, but more that they are sacred due to the special blessing given them the night before" (1968:88).

Orso's and Kaveski (1975), disputed previous assertions by Plemmer (1968) and McColloster (1970) of non-mystical beliefs of the symbolic fava bean and other symbols and rituals of the references folklore tradition (1975:15). Their thesis is that

diverse religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, keep the lucky beans.... the logic underlying these practices conforms with the analysis made by Sir James Frazer of magical practices throughout the world, (Frazer, 1968)... The logic of "homeopathic" magic... (often expressed as "like produces like") is present because the bean is the symbol of fertility (1975:15).

McColloster (1970) expresses that participants of the St. Joseph Altar traditionally receive at least one fava bean and carry it in their pocket or purse for good luck. The South Louisiana tradition assures that all attendees of the St. Joseph receive a blessed fava bean which they may carry for good luck. According to current custom the blessing symbolizes good fortune in the fava bean indefinitely.

Orso and Kaveski (1975) discuss the ambiguity of the symbolism of the fava bean. They note the tradition of dispersing the fava bean may have complex origins:

(...) beans were thought to have mystical powers(...) Greek philosophers held that the bean possessed a soul” (1975:15)
(...) Ingestion of fava beans is associated with the lethal condition of a Mediterranean anemia called Favism or Cooley’s Anemia. [The fava bean] originally grown in the Mediterranean region and recognized prior to the Christian era (...) presents a paradox of luck, nourishment or death. Orso, Kaveski (1975:15-16).

The contrary perspectives of Plemmer, McColloster, and Orso and Kaveski provide three valid views of the fava bean. Religious and ethnic tradition contributes to the mystical element that propagates the folklore of the fava bean ritual. The majority of interviewees contended the fava bean was traditional, indicating the strength in folklore. A few took the symbolism more seriously in reference to the blessing given. All of the participants of the St. Joseph Altar interviewed carry the fava bean as a token of good luck. The fava bean is an essential component in the South Louisiana St. Joseph Altar celebration.

Orso and Kaveski (1975) briefly review the significance of folklore in the expansion of the tradition.

“The custom of giving St. Joseph Altars is reportedly practiced in Slidell, Louisiana, Houston, Texas, and in Buffalo, New York. The tradition is widely practiced in New Orleans and surrounding metropolitan areas and seems to be increasing in number of participants every year” (1975:18).

The symbolism of the three-tiered construction represents two trends of tradition depending on the village the immigrant emanated. One representation involves the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The other concept depicts the three members of

the Holy Family – St. Joseph, the Virgin Mary and Jesus. The participants' involvement in the preparation of the St. Joseph Altar contributing meatless food, beverages, flowers, candles, pictures, prayer cards, money, etc., as well as the symbolic designs of the breads and cookies, represent the significance of the expanding folklore of all ethnicities in South Louisiana.

The creation of the four-tiered by Father Russo maintained the symbolism of the traditional three-tiered representing Trinity in his family custom, but the fourth tier added a new dimension of honoring additional saints.

Orsi related, "Religion in the first sense, the rituals, the symbols, the prayers, and practices of the celebration, is unintelligible apart from religion in the second sense, as the people's deepest values and perception of reality. This integration is what I mean by popular religion" (1985: xviii). In this perception, Father Russo's integrated profound religious commitment with family and ethnic heritage effected a tradition that encompassed an area more than one hundred miles.

The religious ethnic festivities of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, San Gennaro, St. Lucy, and the St. Joseph Altar illustrate the devotional aspect of popular religious tradition. The expansion of the St. Joseph Altar in South Louisiana represents incorporation of historical ethnic devotional practices into the popular religious practices in the United States. At the time of Orso and Kaveski's (1975) writing the St. Joseph Altar celebration expansion within Louisiana was restricted to the surrounding metropolitan areas of New Orleans.

Catholic parishioners in South Louisiana honor their church's patron saint in the same manner as earlier immigrants. Within this tradition inviting the community is an

essential aspect of the St. Joseph Altar, specifically pertaining to the sharing of food. In recent years, following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina (2004), New Orleans residents have extended invitations to guests nationally to celebrate St. Joseph's Day. Since 2007 radio stations across the United States have aired invitations to attend a three-day celebration of St. Joseph in New Orleans. The expansion of the St. Joseph Altar throughout South Louisiana includes an expansion within New Orleans by inviting guests outside of Louisiana.

One of the central themes in Orsi's (1985) was the the *domus* as a focus on the life force of the Italian immigrant ethnicity in East Harlem (1985:75). The support system within the community included the nuclear and extended family, as well as intimate friends (1985:78). The alliances of Italian immigrants were not very different from the Irish and the Polish support system. All ethnic groups shared the community as their *domus*. Regarding the Polish and Italians in Chicago, unification was necessary to energize the strength in their community. The nuclear family and the peripheral community established a microcosm within immigrant cities. Ultimately, the blending of different ethnic groups modified cultural traditions.

Concepts that delineate the Italian *fiesta* tradition include symbolic connections of spirituality, food, and celebration. Orsi assesses religious experience as an evocation of memories of the homeland. Heightened senses of the *fiesta* connect immigrants with their *domus*, the core of their culture. The study of the festivity at Our Lady of Carmel Church in East Harlem identifies the protective unity that exudes power and ethnic community of the Italian immigrant. However, as new ethnic groups join the celebration with the fervor of Italian descendants, the *domus* as expressed by Orsi remains with the

Italian descendants. Reflecting the Italian and Polish unification in Chicago, the Haitian and Italian combination represents both countries with music and flags from their homelands, and the celebration of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel continues to this day in East Harlem.

The celebration of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in East Harlem expanded to suburbs of New York as families relocated. The original *festa* in East Harlem evolved to include new and different ethnic groups; the new residents, primarily Haitians maintained continuity with some Italian descendants that did not live in East Harlem. Other descendants relocated and some perpetuated the tradition elsewhere. The original immigrant custom took new shape at varied locations. In New York, the loss of immigrant religious traditions such as the women known as “wailers”⁷⁷ evolved into contemporary traditions in East Harlem and in the new locations. Those who wept and kissed the church floor, the “wailers,” who represented a place of value among the immigrants, were lost in history.⁷⁸

One of the earliest expansions of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel occurred in Brooklyn and moved eastward to Long Island. The introduction of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel churches and celebrations in Long Island City, Massapequa, and several other churches throughout Long Island continue to honor Our Lady of Mt. Carmel with a procession, Mass and perhaps a *festa* or non-ethnic celebration. The expansion and development of numerous churches named Our Lady of Mt. Carmel throughout New York, New Jersey and Connecticut and annual parish festivities continue to this day.

⁷⁷ Interview Maria M., New York April 2005.

⁷⁸ Interview, Maria M.

Original traditions and religious practices, once brought to America, have evolved into public *feste*.

In South Louisiana, however there does not appear to be a relationship between developing new churches named St. Joseph and the establishment of the St. Joseph Altar traditions. As immigrants relocated in suburbs of New Orleans Sicilian immigrants rapidly developed new St. Joseph Altar celebrations. The primary promoters of the New Orleans and majority of the expanded St. Joseph Altar tradition are Sicilian descendants.

Tweed's (1997) thesis of locative, bilocative, translocative, and transtemporal diaspora suggests that a dual experience cannot occur simultaneously. Physically, one person cannot be in two places at the same time; however, the same experience may be shared at two different locations – space and time create translocative and transtemporal experience.

Tweed (1997) suggests that numerous processes contributed to the diasporic religious experience. The explanation for translocative place and transtemporal experiences takes form in the continual flow of actual and imagined experiences of the past and present, and between the homeland and new land. For Tweed, the exile of the Jews serves as a basis for the paradigm thesis, diaspora. He also expresses that diaspora requires the necessity to leave one's homeland, length of displacement, environment in adopted land, and different homeland traditions, and, therefore some, but not all major migratory movements, are diasporic groups. He notes that diasporic groups share a cultural history; but in diaspora, "they symbolically construct a common

past and future, and their shared symbols bridge their homeland and the new land” (1997:138).

The original immigrants responsible for the creation of the Florida celebration of Our Lady of Exile reconnected with their families and nationality in this worship practice. Today, current political changes and technology offer a greater possibility for descendants to share in their ancestral traditions. For example, Sicilian descendants may travel to Sicily and reconnect with relatives and share information about the St. Joseph Altar custom. Time may obscure memories, but photographs, journals, computers, and new technology chronicle events that enhance a more accurate perception of a memory. The third and fourth generations are no longer diasporic, but through technology they can reconnect their ancestral traditions.

The highly popular San Gennaro *Festa* in Little Italy, New York City, is the second-oldest Italian feast in New York and continues this day with Italian descendants perpetuating it. Unlike East Harlem, Little Italy preserves the Italian culture within a small area in the city. The regeneration of the San Gennaro *Festa* embedded itself within Little Italy, and many of the Italians that maintain the continuity of the *fešta* also communicate with their Italian relatives in Italy regularly.⁷⁹

The spread of the St. Joseph in South Louisiana demonstrates facets that interlace the Catholic Creole and Cajun culture with Sicilian tradition to create a blend of distinctive identity. Supporting documentation of personal histories illustrate the differences across various regions, and the growth within South Louisiana of the celebration of St. Joseph.

⁷⁹ Interview Maria M.

The citizens throughout South Louisiana embraced the St. Joseph feast following hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Many participants lost homes, but the spirit of St. Joseph the Protector continued, and many believed that his protection saved their lives.⁸⁰ In New Orleans and the surrounding areas, most of the celebrations continued following Hurricane Katrina; west of New Orleans, all celebrations took place except in Creole following Hurricane Rita.

Many factors contributed to the expansion and evolution of the St. Joseph Altar tradition in South Louisiana. Third- and fourth-generation descendants from the First Wave immigrants enter the new millennia with perpetuating ethnic pride. Many traditions continue with family and friends. The catalyst of the St. Joseph Altar in South Louisiana primarily arises from Sicilian descendants.

Dispersion of Sicilians in South Louisiana has a direct relationship to the continuity and expansion of St. Joseph Day celebration. The profound dedication and devotion by celebrants illustrates a bond between religion and ethnic heritage. Today, the majority of St. Joseph Altars emanate from Sicilian descendants, but the cultural traditions of the St. Joseph Altar contribute to the expansion from other ethnicities.

The original Sicilian tradition found a new home throughout the world. As we have seen, the propellant need not be ethnic in origin, or Roman Catholic; however, the key component of spirituality appears to be the link.

In the course of my research, I visited a church in Rhode Island named St. Joseph and asked the pastor if they celebrated St. Joseph Day with any special activities or traditions. Raising his eyebrows, he answered, "We celebrate St. Joseph's feast day, but this is an Irish church; there are no ethnic traditions associated with St.

⁸⁰ Interview, Arnaud B., New Orleans.

Joseph's feast."⁸¹ I later researched several churches in South Louisiana named for St. Joseph and found few celebrated the St. Joseph Altar.

We have seen in other states offer numerous ethnic festivals, some religiously oriented such as San Gennaro and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Continuity of American Italian religious feasts largely rely on an individual or group. Primeggio and Varacalli (1996:444) concluded that Monsignor Cassato, a Southern Italian and dynamic organizer, was the impetus for the Brooklyn, New York Italian religious celebration of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel known as the Giglio feast.

The influence of Sicilian descendants in other areas of the United States does not have the impetus to perpetuate this festivity that exists in Louisiana. Several St. Joseph Altar celebrations do exist outside of Louisiana. The St. Joseph Altar celebration has expanded from East to West in South Louisiana. One catalyst of the expansion, Father Russo, established four St. Joseph Altar celebrations. In a multitude of parishes in South Louisiana individuals and groups such as the Society of St. Joseph in Opelousas or the "*Cugini*"⁸² of Abbeville developed new St. Joseph Altars.

The rich cultural history of Louisiana incorporates the Creole and Cajun, French and Spanish. Today Italians have become a valuable presence in Louisiana's developing history and culture.

I predict on the basis of my research findings that St. Joseph Altars will likely continue to represent the Sicilian culture and Catholicism but as a smaller Sicilian descendant population diffuses with other ethnicities in South Louisiana customs may dilute and renovate as illustrated in Creole, Louisiana. The St. Joseph Altar in South

⁸¹ Interview Fr. H.

⁸² Interview, Janice.

Louisiana interlaces the Catholic, Creole, and Cajun culture with Sicilian tradition and creates a distinctive identity blend.

On the following pages are a map of Louisiana and timeline in decades of the expansion in South Louisiana of the St. Joseph Altar celebration. Oral history, the primary source for most of the *feste*, provided the majority of the data about pre-millennium St. Joseph Altar celebrations. Many Italian immigrants celebrated through their private s in the early years. The timeline illustrates as the St. Joseph Altar became a public celebration.

The Sicilian diaspora retained a connection between their native land and their new homeland through memories. The St. Joseph Altar has found a perfect home in South Louisiana, already rich in cultural tradition.

Louisiana abounds with festivals and parades expounding the blend of cultural history. No other state has Napoleonic Law, or intense Western European influence as Louisiana. The St. Joseph Altar in Louisiana is not simply a memorable experience – it is a distinctive cultural branch of a tree that is sturdy and blooming, much like the traditional Live Oak of Louisiana. Momentum regenerates this wonderful Sicilian custom throughout South Louisiana, and the trail of the St. Joseph Altar continues to expand.



Figure 21: Map – Louisiana, Identifying areas of St. Joseph Altar Celebrations
 Map: <http://www.louisiana-map.org/Louisiana-road-map.gif>

2010 Parish Celebrations: Acadia, Bossier, Caddo, Calcasieu, Concordia, East Baton Rouge, Iberia, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Point Coupee, Rapides, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Vermilion, Washington.⁸³

⁸³ (http://www.italianamericanmarchingclub.org/html/st_joseph_altar)

Ricapito, Joseph

TABLE 1: Timeline of St. Joseph Altar Expansion in South Louisiana

Location	1930-1949	1950-1969	1970-1989	1990-2009
New Orleans	1928	yes	First parade/yes	yes
Hammond	1928	yes	yes	yes
Independence	1928	yes	yes	yes
Metairie		yes	yes	yes
Slidell		yes	yes	yes
Thibodaux		yes	yes	yes
Houma		yes	yes	yes
Morgan City		yes	yes	yes
Franklin				yes
Jeanerette				yes
(Catholic H.S) New Iberia (N.I.Manor)			c.1985	2007 yes
Abbeville				yes
Lafayette		yes	yes	yes
Opelousas				yes
Rayne				yes
Baton Rouge				yes
Lake Charles			yes	yes
Creole				*2003, *2005, *2007, *2008
Morrow				2007

Note: selected cities are listed in 20-year intervals.

Celebrations terminated during my research are highlighted in red.

* Oral history data.

REFERENCES

- Albi Davies, Adriana Ph.D. "Family Unification and Settlement." Italian Community. http://www.albertasource.ca/abitalian/background/can_family.html
- Alio, Laretta. Interview. 2006.
- Alissa. Interview. Nov. 2007.
- "Altreitalie." <http://www.altreitalie.org>
- Angelo. Interview. 2007.
- Anna. Interview 2007.
- Arnaud. Interview 2005.
- Badeaux, Travis R. "Altar Legacy." The Daily Advertiser. Mar. 2005.
- Ball, Lee. "Honoring St. Joseph with Altar." The Daily Iberian. 18 Mar. 2005.
- Bartoloni, Paolo. Email interview. 2006.
- Barzini, Luigi. The Italians. New York. Simon & Schuster, 1990.
- Becnel, Harry P. Jr. "Customs, Traditions, and Folklore of Rural southern Italian-American Community." Folklife in the Florida Parishes: Italian –American Folklife, Louisiana Living Traditions.
www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Virtual_Books/Fla_Parishes/book_florida_italian.html
- Bonner, Mark F. "BR Celebrates St. Joseph". The Advocate. 20 Mar. 2006.
- Broussard-Russo. Edith, I Cugini Della Sicilia. Louisiana, 2005., interview
- Capitano, Gilda Ferlita, "The Neighborhood of Chiaroscuro (Ybor city – Paradise Lost)." Tampa Bays Cigar City Magazine. Nov.-Dec. 2005. 36-41.
- Carmella. Interview. Nov. 2007.
- Carroll, Michael P. Veiled Threats. The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1996.
- Casarotto, Secondo. "Italian Protestants and the Catholic Church in Buffalo, New York." Italian Americans and their Public and Private Life. American Italian Historical Association. 1991.

Chupa, Anna Maria, "St. Joseph's Altars, Louisiana Projects."
<http://www.houstonculture.org/laproject/stjo.html>

Cinema Paradiso. Dir. Giuseppe Tomatore. A comedy based on love, friendship and the magic of movies. Perf. Antonella Attili, Enzo Cannavale. Cristaldfilm. 1990.

Claghorn Kate Holaday, Ph.D. The Foreign Immigrant in New York City, Reports of the Industrial Commission. Volume XV. Washington D.C. United States Government Printing Office. 1901. 465-492.

"Comune di Rieti." <http://www.comuni-italiani.it>

Conkling, Julia. Interview. April 2006.

Crowley, William. Interview

Cumbo, Enrico Carlson. "Material History of American Religion Project: La Festa del Pane: Food, Devotion, and Ethnic Identity, The Feast of San Francesca di Paola, Toronto." <http://www.materialreligion.org/journal/festa.html>

Elena. Interview. Nov. 2007.

Fallows, C Interview 2006

"Family Unification and Settlement," Italian Community,
http://www.albertasource.ca/abitainian/background/can_family.html

Father Mallet, Curtis. Interview.

Father Russo, Michael Joseph. Interview. Feb. 2005.

Father Kelly. Interview. Oct. 2007.

"Feast of San Gennaro, Little Italy, New York." <http://www.sangennaro.org/about.htm>

"Festa del papa." http://www.trieste.com/citta/news/festa_papa.html

"Festa di San Giuseppe, origini e tradizioni." http://kataweb.it/spec/articolo_speciale.jsp

"Feste di Sicilia." <http://www.festedisicilia.it/marzo.htm>

"Feste, ricorrenze, e tradizioni romane. Festa di San Giuseppe."
<http://www.morelli.it/foglio/giulia/ricorrenze.htm>

Gardaphe, Fred. Email interview

Guy. Interview

Hite, Cindy. "Procession organizer is 'lucky' man" Clarion Herald. New Orleans, 1984

Hoffman, Paul. That Fine Italian Hand. New York. Henry Holt & Company. 1990.

"Hurricane Katrina & parade Information The St. Joseph Altar." Italian American Marching Club.

http://www.italianamericanmarchinclub.org/html/the_st_joseph_alter.html

"IARP, Italian Australian Records Project."

<http://www.vu.edu.au/iarp/Publications/italianpioneers.html>

"The Immigration Experience." "Italian Heritage in the United States." "Ethnic Festivals: Celebrations of Identity." "The Italian American Woman: The Family and Society." The University of the State of New York, State Education Department. [n.d.]

Imperial Valley Historical Society, <http://www.imperial.cc.ca.us/pioneers/italian.htm>

Italian American Marching Band, New Orleans,

<http://www.italianamericanmarchingclub.org/html/benefits.html>

"Italians in the United States," Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org>.

"Italy Down Under – Italy Global Nation,"

<http://www.italydownunder.com.au/issuefour/conference.html>

Jackson, Joy J. "The Louisiana Folklife Survey in Retrospect." Louisiana Living Traditions.

<http://www.louisianafolklife.org/lt/virtual%5Fbooks/fla%parishes/book%Fflorida>

Janet. Interview

Janice. Interview

Joe. Interview.

Johnson, Mae. Interview

Juliano, Susanna. Email interview.

Kinsella. "Irish Immigrants in America During the Nineteenth Century"

www.kinsella.org/history/histira.htm

Krase, Jerome, "America's Little Italies: Past, Present and Future." Italian Ethics: Their Languages, Literature, and Lives. American Italian Historical Association. 1980.

Kubly, Herbert. American in Italy. New York. Simon & Schuster. 1955.

Kubly, Herbert. Easter in Sicily. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956.

"La Festa Di San Giuseppe"

<http://www.members.aol.com/nonstopny/italiano/stjoseph.htm>

"La devozione di San Giuseppe." http://www.morronedelsannio.com/san_giuseppe.htm

"La Festa di San Giuseppe." http://www.finesettimana.it/speciali/spec_sangiu_05.html

Louisiana. Map. <http://www.louisiana-map.org/louisiana-road-map.gif>

Maddie, Ronnie. Telephone Interview. Feb. 2007

Mangione, Jerre, and Ben Morreale. La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience. New York. Harper Collins. 1992.

Margavio, A.V., and Jerome J. SalOmone. Bread and Respect, The Italians of Louisiana. Louisiana: Pelican Publishing. 2002.

Marie. Interview. Nov. 2007.

Mary F. Interview. April 2005.

Maselli, Joseph, and Domenic Candeloro. Italians in New Orleans. South Carolina. Arcadia. 2004.

Maselli, Joseph. Interview. Feb. 2006.

"Material History of American Religion Project: La Festa del Pane: Food, Devotion, and Ethnic Identity, The Feast of San Francesca di Paola, Toronto,"

<http://www.materialreligion.org/journal/festa.html>

McColloster-Tusa, MaryAnn. "New Light On The New Orleans St. Joseph Altar." Louisiana Folklore Miscellany. (1970) Vol. 3 38-45

McCaffety, Kerri, St. Joseph Altars, Gretna, Louisiana, Pelican Publishing Company, 2003.

Miller. Maria. Interview. Sept. 2005.

Miniville, Anne B. "A Labor of Love – The Tradition of St. Joseph Altars." Acadiana Lifestyle, Mar. 2005.

Miniville, Anna, Interview. Feb. 2005.

Most Precious Blood Church, <http://www.mostpreciousbloodchurch.net/>

Nancy. Interview. Nov. 2007.

Napora, James, "Sicilians and the Lower West Side," *Houses of Worship: A Guide to the Religious Architecture of Buffalo, New York*. <http://ah.bfn.org/h/ital>

"NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT: HARLEM; Sharing a Saint: The 2 Worlds of Our Lady of Mount Carmel", *New York Times*, Maria Laurino, July 23, 1995, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/07/23/nyregion/neighborhood-report-harlem-sharing-saint-2-worlds-our-lady-mount-carmel.html>

"New Italy Its History. Italian Community." *The New South Wales Gazette*. August. 1899
"Australian Communities: Italian Australians," *Racism No Way*, <http://www.racismnoway.com.au/classroom/Factsheet/58.html>

Nicholas. Interview.

Nickell, Paul. "New Orleans' Irish & Italian Culture" *New Orleans On Parade*. 1996.

Nickell, Paul. "St. Joseph Altars planned across archdiocese." *Clarion Herald*. 1995.

"No Corned Beef for Catholics on St. Pat's." *The Daily Advertiser*. 16 Mar. 2006

Nola. Interview. April. 2007.

"Non-stop New York's *Italianissimo: La Festa di San Giuseppe* NYC-Style." <http://members.aol.com/nonstopny/italiano/stjoseph.htm>

Orsi, Robert Anthony, *The Madonna of 115th Street, Faith and Community in Italian Harlem. 1880-1950*. New Haven and London. Yale University Press. 1985.

Orso, Ethelyn, and Peggy Kaveski. "Undisclosed Aspects of St. Joseph Altars." *Louisiana Folklore Miscellany*. 1975. 14-18.

Orso, Ethelyn, and Peggy Kaveski. "The St. Joseph Altar Traditions of South Louisiana." *Louisiana Life Series*. 1990.

Orso, Ethelyn, and Peggy Kaveski. "The Feast of St. Joseph as Public Spectacle." *Louisiana Folklore Miscellany*. [n.d.]

Osborne, Eleanor. Interview.

"Our Lady of Mt. Carmel." <http://www.mountcarmelofeastharlem.com/history.html>

Piervitali, E., and Colacino, M., "Evidence of Drought in Western Sicily During Period of 1565-1915." Earth and Environmental Science. Vol.1 &2. Springer, Netherland. April. 2001

Plemmer, Roslynn. "The Feast of St. Joseph." Louisiana Folklore Miscellany. 1968. 85-90.

Primeggio, Salvatore. Email interview,

Quaggiotto, Pamela K. Altars of Food to Saint Joseph: Women's Ritual in Sicily. Diss. Columbia University, 1988.

Ricapito, Joseph. Interview

Robyn. Interview. Nov. 2007.

Romanin, Libera. Interview.

RoRisa. Interview. Feb. 2005.

Rosalie. Interview. Feb. 2005.

Rose. Interview. March. 2005.

Rubino, Antonia. Email interview

Ruiz de Lourdes Scaperlanda, Maria. "Our Lady of Charity" Knights of Columbus, The Columbia Online Edition,
<http://www.kofc.org/un/eb/en/publications/columbia/detail/458998.html>

Russo, Anthony G., "St. Joseph Altars." American Italian Renaissance Foundation. [n.d.]

"Saint Alfio Society Inc." www.threesaintsinc.org/hist_feast.htm

"Saint Joseph's Day in Rhode Island." <http://riroads.com/members/stjosephsday.htm>

Salverio, Lodato. "Se Lombardo "separa" la Sicilia". L'Unita. March 28, 2008.

Scarpato, Susanna. Interview. Nov. 2007

"Scientific Racism" New York. Harpers Weekly. 1871,
www.nde.state.ne.us/SS/irish/unit_2.html

Seller, Maxine, S., "Protestant Evangelism and The Italian Immigrant Woman." The Italian Immigrant Woman of North America. American Italian Historical Association. 1977.

Shukert, Elfieda, and Barbara Scibetta. War Brides of World War II. New York. Penguin Books. 1989.

Sicily. Map. <http://www.bestofsicily.com/roadmap.htm>

Slifka, Crissy. Interview. 2007.

Smith, Jonathan Z. Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions. Leiden: E.J. Brill 1978

"*Societa San Giuseppe DiRiesi*." <http://www.northendboston.com/news-religious.htm>

"Solemnity of St. Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary."
<http://www.catholicculture.org/lit/calendar/day>.

Sons of Italy website, Italian Festivals, <http://www.osia.org/culture/italian-festivals.php>

Sons of Italy, St. Anthony's Society of Boston's North End." www.stanthony'sfeast.com,

Starr, Dennis. "La Festa: Survival or Extinction?" To See The Past More Clearly: The Enrichment of the Italian Heritage, 1890-1990. American Italian Historical Association. 1994.

Steele, Clara. Interview. Aug. 2005.

St, Anthony of Padua Church, <http://www.stanthonynyc.org/id10.html>

"St. Joseph Altars." The Times-Picayune, 2001.

"St. Joseph's Day Altars." www.erc.msstate.edu/~achupa/St.Jo_sj_stand.html

"St. Joseph's Day: the Spirit of Giving." Italian American Digest. St. Joseph's Day Issue. Mar. 1974.

"St. Joseph Day Activity Schedules." Italian American Digest. Spring 2006.

"St. Joseph, husband of Our Lady Feast Day – March 19." <http://www.bulin.com/stjoe/>

"St. Joseph's Night in New Orleans: Out After Dark with the Wild Indians."
<http://www.satchmo.com/ikoiko/js9703b.html>

"St. Joseph." Catholic Encyclopedia. <http://www.newadvent.org.cathen/08504a.htm>

“St. Joseph.”Father Pat’s Place. <http://frpat.com/joseph.htm>

“St. Patrick’s Day Parade in NYC”, <http://nyc-st-patrick-day-parade.org/paradehistory.aspx>

Sullivan, Nabi. Interview.

Teresa. Interview. Nov. 2007.

Tessa. Interview. Feb. 2006.

“This Was Home to Local Italians” Wisconsin State Journal, 2. Oct. 1932.

Tirabassi, Maddalena. “International Institute of Boston and The Americanization of Italian Immigrant Women.” Italian Americans in Transition. American Italian Historical Association.1988. Print.

“Tradition Steeped in Thanksgiving.” The Daily Advertiser. 17 Mar. 2006.

Tweed, Thomas A. Our Lady of the Exile. New York. Oxford University Press. 1997.

Underwood,Dina. Interview. Aug. 2005.

United States Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov>

United States Census Bureau, United States Ancestry Map, <http://www.census.gov>

Vanni, Ilaria. Email interview.

“Visiting St. Joseph’s Altar” The Daily Iberian. 15. Mar. 2006.

“Viva San Giuseppe – Italians Celebrate St. Joseph Day on March 19th.” Italian American Digest. Spring. 2005.

Ware, Carolyn. “Ritual Spaces in Traditional Louisiana Communities: Italian, Nicaraguan, and Vietnamese Altars.”
http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/creole_art_ritual_spaces.html

“Woman presents altar every year at her home.” The Picayune. 1998.

“We are a country of immigrants.” Immigrant Journeys,
www.immigrantjourneys.com/stories/slwason_italy.html

Worral, Janet, Carol Bonomo Albright, and Elvira DiFabio. Go West Paesani! Italian Americans and the West. New York. American Italian Historical Association. 2004.

APPENDIX A : CULTURAL TRADITIONS SURVEY

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. I am doing post-graduate research pertaining to family and community cultural traditions. Please circle your responses and use back of paper for additional space for comments. If you are writing in reference to several emigrants please write the number of the question , the title of the individual and the appropriate response on the back of the paper.

Is your gender: **MALE**

FEMALE

Circle below your age group:

10- 20

21- 30

31- 40

41-50

51-60

61-70

70+

EMIGRANT INFORMATION: Please specify in the table whom you are writing about. Is the emigrant yourself, your mother , father, grandmother, great grandfather, other, specify. Also please enter the city, region, country, age of emigrant and year of emigration for each individual.

<u>Title</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Age (at time of entry)</u>	<u>Year of entry</u>

2. Purpose of emigration: Marriage Work Emigrated with parent(s) Other
(please specify)

3. Did other family members from the same locale move within **daily** visiting distance?
Yes No

4. Did other family members from the same locale move within **weekly** visiting distance?
Yes No

5. Did other family members from the same locale move within **monthly** visiting distance?
Yes No

6. Were there **community** members of the same culture within **daily** meeting distance?
Yes No

7. Were there **community** members of the same culture within **weekly** meeting distance?
Yes No
8. Were there **community** members of the same culture within **monthly** meeting distance?
Yes No
9. Did you or your family member experience any ethnic prejudices? Yes No
10. Have you/(emigrant family member)ever returned to the country of origin? Yes No
11. If yes how often? 1-5 x 5-10x 10+
12. Does your family practice personal heritage traditions? Yes No
- a. Which ethnicity (s)?
12. How often do you practice family ethnic traditions? Daily Weekly Monthly Yearly
13. What type of traditions do you follow? Example: Language, Food & Drink, Mealtimes, Weekly gatherings, Music, games, stories, etc. Complete immersion. Please specify, i.e., some language, dialect, old/current cultural music, names of games, family stories, legends, whatever you feel is part of your heritage.

Ethnicity	Language	Food/Drink	Family Gatherings (frequency)	Music/ Games	Stories/ Legends	Complete immersion	Other

14. Does your community offer your ethnicity(s) cultural festivities? Yes No
15. Please specify which ethnicity & name(s) of festival(s).
16. Are you a leader or participant in community cultural festivities? Leader Participant
17. Which ethnicity (s)?
18. **NON-EMIGRANT:** Do you plan to carry on ethnic family traditions? Yes No
19. Have you traveled to the country of origin of your emigrant family member? Yes No
20. Do you know and/or communicate with foreign relatives? Yes No
21. Do you feel a stronger ethnic connection to one family member over others? Yes No
- a. The reason you feel a closer ethnic connection to this family member is:
22. Which ethnicity?
23. Do you participate in any ethnic organized groups? Yes No
- Please enter in table below information.

Ethnicity	Name of Group	Meeting frequency	Regional/professional

22. What are the organizational/group goals?

Thank you!

APPENDIX B: SURVEY IMMIGRANT STUDIES

SURVEY IMMIGRANT STUDIES		FIRST WAVE IMMIGRATION					
AGE of participant		21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	70+
Country of Origin							
	Ireland	4	1	0	8	3	5
	Scotland	1	0	0	2	1	1
	Italy South	5	5	5	17	7	12
	Italy North	0	0	0	2	0	0
	England	1	0	0	1	0	1
	Germany	1	0	0	5	0	0
	France	6	5	4	2	8	0
	Russia	1	0	0	1	0	2
	Hebrew	1	1	0	2	0	1
		7	4	0	14	4	7
Family Traditions No							
						17	15
Family Traditions Yes		13	7	9	25		
Ethnic Organizations No							
		18	8	0	33	16	18
Ethnic Organizations Yes		2	2	4	6	5	4
TOTAL		20	11	9	39	19	22
Total Respondents				120			

APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL

A

LSU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) 04/15/2005

IRB APPLICATION: APPROVAL OF PROJECTS WHICH USE HUMAN SUBJECTS

The IRB uses this form to obtain succinct answers to questions it must consider. If incomplete, your application will be returned! You can download this form and all other IRB documents from [http://appl022.lsu.edu/osp/osp.nsf/\\$Content/LSU%20IRB%20Documents](http://appl022.lsu.edu/osp/osp.nsf/$Content/LSU%20IRB%20Documents)) & complete it with your word processor. Call Robert Mathews for assistance, 225-578-8692, or e-mail him at: irb@lsu.edu. MATT EDWARDS

When this application is submitted to the IRB please include:

- Two copies of this completed form.
- A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects)
- Copies of all instruments to be used. If this proposal is a part of a grant application include a copy of the grant proposal, the investigative brochure (if one exists) and any recruitment materials including advertisements intended to be seen or heard by potential subjects.
- The consent form that you will be using. A copy of the Waiver of Written Informed Consent is attached and must be completed only if you do not intend to use a signed consent form.
- Copies of your IRB stamped consent form must be used in obtaining consent.
- Certificate of Completion for Human Protection Training at <http://cme.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/learning/humanparticipant-protections.asp> (Unless already on file with the IRB.)

(IRB Use: IRB# _____ Review Type: Expedited _____ Full _____)

Part 1: General Information

1. **Principal Investigator:** Roger Payne Ph.D. Rank: Chairman
(PI Must be an LSU Faculty member)

Dept.: Religious Studies Ph: 224-578-2278

E-mail: rmpayne@lsu.edu

Co-investigators*: Nara Crowley

*Student? Y/N Y Thesis/dissertation/class project? Y/N Y

Dept.: MALA Ph: 337-367-7408

E-mail: sossullivan@classicnet.net

2. **Project Title:** Distinctive Italian Catholic Devotional Traditions of Louisiana

3. **Proposed duration** (months): 5 **Start date:** 1/06

4. **Funding sought from:** none sought

5. **LSU Proposal #:** _____ 6. **Number of subjects requested:** _____



Institutional Review Board
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
Louisiana State University and A&M College
Baton Rouge LA 70803

irb@lsu.edu

LSU IRB
REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF INFORMED CONSENT

FROM: Name: Nara Crowley

Department MALA

TO: Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board for Research with Human Subjects

DATE: 1/23/2006

RE: IRB# _____

TITLE: Distinctive Italian Catholic Devotional Traditions of Louisiana

I am requesting waiver of written Informed Consent because:

☐

(a) The consent document would create the *principal risk* of participating in the study.

Or

☒

(b) The research presents *no more than minimal risk* of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

*** A copy of the script you will use for oral consent should be included with this form. This script should contain the necessary elements for written informed consent (see [http://app1022.lsu.edu/osp/osp.nsf/\\$content/LSU%20IRB%20Documents/\\$File/chklist.txt](http://app1022.lsu.edu/osp/osp.nsf/$content/LSU%20IRB%20Documents/$File/chklist.txt))

VITA

Nara Maria Ersilia Crowley received her Bachelor of Arts in the fields of social diversity/justice from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 2001. A full-time wife, mother, grandmother, and part-time advocate in the political field, as well as a language instructor of Italian, Ms. Crowley enrolled at Louisiana State University to obtain a Master of Arts in Liberal Arts. The five-year research project included studies of World War II immigrant war brides. Mrs. Crowley plans to continue with her research and publish a book on this subject.