He will bring some wines for tasting. Be sure to come to a virtual tour and history of viticulture in our own area. The meeting will bring a well-known winemaker from Barboursville Winery near our vineyard. He will also show a video and conduct a wine tasting. See http://www.barboursvillewine.com. More on page 7.

Sunday, March 17: Luca Paschina, of Barboursville Winery will speak about the history of the Zonin family’s vineyards in Italy and the vineyard in Virginia and its wine varieties. He will also show a video and conduct a wine tasting. See http://www.barboursvillewine.com. More on page 7.

Sunday, April 21: Dr. Davide Pirrera Rosso di Cerami will present “La Sicilia di Demetra e Kore”, as well as his efforts at restoring his family’s ancestral home in Sicily.

Sunday, May 19: Alison Luchs, Curator of Early European Sculpture will present the movie La Sicilia di Demetra e Kore.

More on page 7.

Movie of the Month at 1:00 PM: “THE ORGANIZER”, with Marcello Mastroianni (see page 7)

Italian Lesson and Conversation on March 17 at 2:00 PM

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

More than 50 people showed up on a Friday evening for Canzone della Lombardia at Pizzeria Da Marco where members and students (and other friends) were treated to a musical tour by Tonino Tosto and company not only of Lombardia but of all Italy with tunes from the 60’s, 70’s through the modern period. Many stayed on for delicious dinners. In the spring quarter we are planning a language course at Pizz. Da Marco which will use the topic of Italian foods (regions, history, etc.) as its medium. Should be fun! Think about taking it. If you missed the Festa di Carnevale on Saturday, Feb. 16 you missed a great party. We co-hosted this at Friendship Heights with our friends from AMHS and more than 100 people were in attendance for the costumed festivities which featured a catered dinner and a fabulous DJ. You can see some pictures in this issue and watch a video on our website. Our March meeting will bring a well-known vintner Luca Paschina from Barboursville Winery near Charlottesville, VA, to give us a virtual tour and history of viticulture in our own area. He will bring some wines for tasting. Be sure to come to enjoy his presentation. Our April social meeting will feature Davide Pirrera Rosso di Cerami, visiting from his family estate near Enna Sicilia. Davide is a practicing archeologist and has published several books on Sicilian history and mythology. He will also tell us about plans to increase tourism to the family’s historic castle and estate which played a prominent role during the French occupation at the time of the Sicilian Vespers.

Ron Cappelletti, president

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THE ADULT LANGUAGE PROGRAM OF THE ITALIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY IS FOR YOU!

Many of you have taken Italian language classes at one time or another with the Society, but you may be thinking about exercising your language skills again by taking another class. We all know well that learning a language is an ongoing experience if it is to be useful to enhancing your life. This little article is to remind you what the program is all about.

The Italian Language Program began in 1974 as the brainchild of Dr. Maria Wilmeth and has been going strong ever since. Our adult classes range from introductory courses to meet the needs of beginners and of those wishing to improve their language skills, to advanced courses for those who know the basics but are looking for a way to keep up their skills through conversation, making presentations, reading literature and watching films, etc. We offer evening classes which meet for ten weeks in two hour sessions. Typically there are 6-12 students in each class, and our teachers (all experienced and native Italian speakers) make an effort to work with students whom we know lead busy lives and can devote only so much time to the project of learning Italian. We also offer accelerated classes for the many people in our area who speak another Latin-based language (Spanish, French, Portuguese) which share a similar grammar. In addition, we offer day classes taught twice week in two hour sessions which cover the same materials as an evening class but in 5 weeks rather than 10. When we can, we offer classes in other locales (e.g., at Friendship Heights). When there are not enough students to open a class, we can arrange tutorials (1 on 1) or semi-tutorials (1 on 3 or 1 on 4) at different prices, depending on the number of students. We also offer tutorials to younger students who want to supplement the knowledge they are gaining from HS or college classes.

The Spring Schedule of classes and tuitions will soon be posted on our website along with a registration form, all available from the front page. Detailed course descriptions, books, etc. can be found there as well. Classes start April 2 and end in June. New offerings are Friday evening classes for Introductory 1 and Advanced 1. We are also offering a Tuesday evening language class at Pizzeria Da Marco on Woodmont Ave., just around the corner from the ICS office on Rugby Ave. This advanced class entitled “Language through Food” provides a tour of the different regional Italian foods and their histories, and will feature occasional contributions from owner Stefano Ferrara.

Unlike college courses, the Italian Language Program courses are not graded and offer no academic credit. However, they do provide homework exercises and opportunities in class to have homework checked and to respond to questions based on the homework. And although there are no tests, students are called upon to speak, make presentations, write and converse, so there is sufficient “peer pressure” to keep you on task, but in a comfortable environment with encouraging student-friends you inevitably make in such a setting. We can also provide a certification of attendance.

In addition, we offer Immersion Courses four times a year for those preparing to travel to Italy and need to know some basics in order to get around. These occur in two 8 hour “immersion” sessions packed into a weekend and provide useful written material as well as spoken exercises. Please check the website for the scheduled dates.

We are always ready to entertain suggestions for language classes based on subjects of interest to our membership. For example, some members have suggested that a class which focused on the wonderful Italian ceramic traditions (e.g., tableware from Deruta and other Umbrian sites) would be interesting. Others have suggested classes that would be connected to the marvelous museum tour opportunities we have here in Washington, and still others would like classes that feature music or opera. We are looking into how to prepare offerings that will be practical and attractive in these areas. If you have a group of friends that would like to learn something together, we would be happy to work with you. So please let us know. You may reach me at ron.cappelletti@qmail.com or Danielle Ehrman at ilp@italiancultursociety.org with your suggestions.

Let me add a personal “testimonial”. I learned to speak and understand Italian spending two months as a child with my grandfather travelling to his home village (San Marco la Catola, Prov. di Foggia) and then touring around Italy. It was 1952, and there was still evidence of the war to be seen. Apart from my grandfather, no one spoke English to me (and even he not much!), so I just had to learn both some of the dialect of the village and some “proper” Italian. That was 1952. I never really studied the language (took French and Latin in HS and German in college) until I moved here in 1999 to work at NIST. I found the ICS online and began taking classes in the early 2000’s. My grammar was pitiful (and it is still a problem for me), but those classes opened up a whole world of language, history, community and culture which has added enormously to my life, and that is the main reason why I have given so much of my time and effort to keep the Language Program running as we passed into this new era which has been described in previous issues. It is my wish and hope that everyone can have this beautiful experience.

Ronald Cappelletti

3
I Siculi praticavano certamente la caccia e la pesca, tra le specie più cacciate e utilizzate per il consumo umano gli archeologi hanno ritrovato resti di cinghiali e cervi; la pastorizia era molto diffusa specialmente pecore, capre, bovini e maiali, i Siculi conoscevano la lavorazione della lana e utilizzavano utensili ricavati dalle ossa e dalle corna degli animali, conoscevano la concia e la lavorazione della pelle e del cuoio e producevano anche i formaggi. Quasi certamente furono i Siculi a introdurre il cavallo in Sicilia.

La società sicula era divisa in diversi livelli sociali tra grandi famiglie agiate e gli altri membri della comunità, gli archeologi hanno ritrovato delle speciali tombe a grotticella di intere famiglie, riservate probabilmente alle famiglie più ricche e potenti. All'interno di alcune tombe sono stati ritrovati oggetti di corredo in bronzo e ferro (gioielli, utensili, armi, vasi e terrecotte, ecc) che rispecchiavano lo status sociale del defunto. Interessante è anche il ritrovamento di due tipi completamente diversi di utensili in terracotta, un tipo più elegante ed elaborato prodotto di importazione dall'oriente e un secondo tipo più grezzo e meno rifinito, prodotto localmente dagli artigiani Siculi che cercavano di imitare i prodotti provenienti da civiltà molto più avanzate come quella Cretese e Micenea.

Certamente i guerrieri avevano un'alta considerazione sociale e Diodoro Siculo ci informa che ogni città aveva un capo locale che governava. Di speciale interesse è il Palazzo del Principe (o Anàktoron) ritrovato a Pantalica, in provincia di Siracusa, dichiarato patrimonio mondiale dell’UNESCO è finora l'unico esempio accertato di architettura Sicula del suo genere, sicuramente doveva essere la residenza di un capo locale e al suo interno conteneva anche una cucina per le armi e gli utensili, probabilmente perché la lavorazione dei metalli era una prerogativa del solo capo locale.

La tipica abitazione sicula era una capanna di pietre (quasi sempre di forma circolare) con l'interno intonacato e un tetto conico sostenuto da grossi pali di legno, al centro del tetto vi era un buco in corrispondenza del bracere che era posizionato al centro della capanna, il buco aveva la funzione di far uscire i fumi del bracere.

Non abbiamo molte notizie riguardo alla lingua sicula.
sappiamo tuttavia che conoscevano la scrittura perché sono stati rinvenuti dei testi in siculo su alcune tavolette e un’importante iscrizione su un’anfora del V secolo a.C. (attualmente conservata al museo di Karlsruhe in Germania). L’unica iscrizione monumentale finora rinvenuta è stata scoperta nel 1963 sulla porta cittadina delle mura del sito archeologico del Mendolito nel comune di Adrano, il blocco che contiene l’iscrizione è conservato al museo archeologico Paolo Orsi di Siracusa. In tutti i casi la scrittura va da destra a sinistra senza spazi tra le parole e senza puntellatura, sono utilizzati i caratteri greci ma le parole non sono greche e risultano molto simili al latino arcaico (questo potrebbe essere un ulteriore indizio dell’origine centro-italica dei Siculi come descrive l’autore romano Marco Terenzio Varrone). La scrittura sicula non è stata ancora interamente decifrata.

I Siculi avevano una loro religione con il principale centro religioso situato nella città di Palikè (oggi Palagonia in provincia di Catania), molti Autori parlano di questo sito: Virgilio, Macrobius, Ravisio, Diodoro Siculo, Ovidio e altri. Il mito è legato a due laghetti (ancora esistenti) che nell’antichità esalavano vapori di anidride carbonica/solforosa e gli uccelli volando sui laghetti vi cadevano morti. Oggi sappiamo che i vapor era legati a fenomeni vulcanici (oggi scomparsi). In Siculo si trovava presso Messina mantiene il mito di Zankle (oggi Catania) in Siculo interamente decifrata. La scrittura sicula non è stata ancora interamente decifrata.

Il Palazzo del Principe (or Anaktoron) found at Pantalica, province of Siracusa, declared a world heritage site of UNESCO.

We do not have many reports about the Siculo language, however we do know that they knew about writing, because some texts in Siculo were discovered on some tablets, as well as an important inscription on a 5th century BCE amphora (currently preserved at the Karlsruhe Museum).

The only monumental description found to date was discovered in 1963 on the city gate in the walls of the archeological site of Mendolito in the town of Adrano. The block that contains the inscription is preserved at the Paolo Orsi archeological museum of Siracusa. In any case the inscription goes from right to left without spacing between words, and without punctuation. Greek characters were used but the words are not Greek and are very similar to archaic Latin (This could be another clue to the central Italy origin of the Siculi, as described by the Roman author Marcus Terenzius Varro). Siculo script has not yet been entirely deciphered.

The Siculi had their own religion, with the principal religious center situated in the city of Palikè (today, Palagonia, in the province of Catania). Many authors speak of this site: Virgil, Macrobius, Ravisius, Diodorus Siculo, Ovid and others. The myth is tied to two small lakes (still in existence) that in antiquity gave off vapors of anhydrous sulfurous carbonate and the birds flying over the lakes would fall dead. Today we know that the vapors were tied to volcanic phenomena (no longer active today). In Siculo society, whoever swore falsely was exposed to the vapors of the lakes, that would blind him immediately, and still today in Sicilian, when one wants to swear as to the truth of something, one says I swear it by the sight of my eyes.

The other large religious sanctuary was located in Adrano (in Catania province) where the Siculi constructed the great temple of the warrior Adrano that was protected by a thousand dogs, the famous Cirmechi of Etna. The Siculi punished people who swore falsely, having them torn apart by the dogs. Still today in Sicilian they say The dogs should eat you! (in Sicilian t’avissiru a mangiarì i canì) to people who do things that are not very good.

The most important Siculo cities were Abacamo, Alesa Arconidea, Erbesso, Hybla, Inessa (or Aitna or Aetna or Etna), Kalè Atkè (today Caronia in the province of Messina), Menai (now Mineo in the province of Catania), Morgantina, Pantalica (initially a Sicano city later occupied and enlarged by the Siculi), Paropo, Sabucina and finally Palikè mythical capital of the new unified Siculo kingdom.

Even the names of the most important cities of Sicily have Siculo origins, and in fact Zankle (now Messina) in Siculo means sickle. Still today the adjective zancléo means of Messina and a small city in the province of Messina has the name Scalaetza Zanclea. Katane (today Catania) in Siculo means greater, referring to the lava stone on which the city was built (as confirmed by the historian Plutarch and the comedy writer Aristophanes) and Sùraka (today Siracusa) in Siculo means abundance of water, with reference to the two rivers and other waterways that run in its territory.

The most important Siculo persons handed down to us by history are the legendary king Sikelòs, that would have given
cui è stata costruita la città (come ci confermano lo storico Plutarco e il commediografo Aristofane) e Sūraka (oggi Siracusa) in sicula significa abbondanza d’acqua con riferimento ai due fiumi e altri corsi d’acqua che scorrono nel suo territorio.

I più importanti personaggi siculi tramandatemi dalla storia sono il leggendario re Siculo (Sikelòs) che avrebbe dato il nome al popolo Siculo e avrebbe condotto il suo popolo in Sicilia cambiando anche il nome dell’isola. Il re Hyblon che Tucidide ricorda nel VI libro del suo La Guerra nel Peloponneso per aver concesso ai coloni greci provenienti da Mègara in Grecia un appezzamento di terreno per fondare la loro colonia, così la colonia prese il nome di Mègara Hyblaea (in greco Μήγαρα Ὕβλαια), in onore del re Hyblon che concesse la terra e in ricordo della madre patria greca Mègara; ancora oggi gli abitanti di Augusta in provincia di Siracusa si chiamano Mègaresi.

Ducezio di Nea (oggi Noto in provincia di Siracusa) fu un grande personaggio che cercò di difendere l’identità dei Siculi dalla colonizzazione greca, potremmo dire che fu il primo vero re dei Siculi e anche l’ultimo. Dopo l’arrivo in Sicilia dei coloni greci nel VII secolo a. C. (la Sicilia greca sarà una delle prossime puntate di questa storia), tutti i centri Siculi e Sicani sono stati molto influenzati dalla cultura greca (i greci consideravano come barbari e incivili le popolazioni locali). Ducezio tra il 460 a. C. e il 440 a. C. ha riunito, per la prima volta, molte città sicule sotto uno stesso re ed ha combattuto valorosamente per liberare la Sicilia dall’oppressione degli invasori greci. Per circa 20 anni ha unificato il popolo siculo contro l’invasore ed ha posto la capitale del nuovo regno siculo a Palikè (oggi Palagonia in provincia di Catania) riunendo la capitale politica e religiosa del popolo siculo nella stessa città. Dopo molte vittorie Ducezio fu sconfitto a Nomai (probabilmente in provincia di Agrigento) e successivamente a Moyton (località vicino San Cataldo in provincia di Caltanissetta) e fu esiliato a Corinto in Grecia. Tornato in Sicilia nel 444 a. C. fondò la città di Kalè Atkè (attualmente Caronia in provincia di Messina) dove morì quattro anni dopo.

Come per i Sicani il popolo dei Siculi è scomparso lentamente a causa di due fattori principali: la violenta distruzione delle sue città da parte dei nuovi popoli arrivati in Sicilia ma anche la lenta assimilazione culturale nelle nuove civiltà (specialmente greca e romana) che si sono succedute nell’isola nei secoli successivi.

L’ultima notizia relativa a questo popolo ci è riferita dallo storico romano Tito Livio nella sua opera Ab Urbe Condita, Livio riporta come durante la seconda guerra punica, ad Enna il comandante romano Lucio Pinaro diede ordine di sorprendere ed uccidere tutti i Siculo riuniti in assemblea perché aveva avuto notizia che le città sicule confederate stavano per schierarsi dalla parte dei cartaginesi. Lo stesso console romano Marcello non disapprovò la strage ed anzi concesse ai soldati romani tutto il bottino raccolto ad Enna. Da questo momento non abbiamo più nessuna notizia riportata dagli autori antichi su questo popolo.

Così secondo la tradizione i romani avrebbero distrutto la capitale Sicana Inycon-Camico-Trikalà durante la prima guerra punica e quanto restava della civiltà Sicula durante la seconda guerra punica mettendo fine per sempre a quello che restava degli antichi popoli della Sicilia the name to the Siculo people and would have led his people to Sicily, changing even the name of the island. King Hyblon that Thucydides memorializes in his sixth book of The War in the Peloponnesus for having conceded to the Greek colonists from Μήγαρα in Greece a piece of land for founding their colony. Thus the colony took the name Mègara Hyblaea (in Greek Μήγαρα Ὕβλαια), in honor of king Hyblon, who conceded the land and in memory of the Greek motherland Mègara; Still today, the inhabitants of Augusta, in the province of Siracusa are called Mègaresi.

Ducezio di Nea (today Noto in the province of Siracusa) was a great personage who tried to defend the identity of the Siculi from Greek colonization. We could say he was the first real king of the Siculi, and also the last. After the arrival in Sicily of the Greek colonists in the VII century BCE (Greek Sicily will be another chapter in this history) all the Siculo and Sicano centers were very much influenced by Greek culture (the Greeks considered the local population to be uncivilized barbarians). Ducezio between 460 and 440 BCE reunited for the first time many Siculo cities under one king and combated bravely to free Sicily from the oppression of the invading Greeks. For about 20 years he unified the Siculi against the invaders and placed the capital of the new Siculo kingdom at Palikè (today Palagonia in the province of Catania) reuniting the political and religious capital of the Siculi in the same city. After many victories, Ducezio was defeated at Nomai (probably in the province of Agrigento) and later at Moyton (a locality near San Cataldo in the province of Caltanissetta) and was exiled to Corinthus in Greece. After returning to Sicily in 444 BCE he founded the city of Kalè Atkè (now Caronia in the province of Messina) where he died four years later.

As with the Sicani, the Siculo people gradually disappeared because of two principal factors: the violent destruction of their cities by the new people arriving in Sicily but also by the slow cultural assimilation into the new societies (especially Greek and Roman) that followed them on the island in successive centuries.

The last information relative to these people has been referred to us by the Roman historian Titus Livy in his work Ab Urbe Condita. Livy relates how during the second punic war at Enna, the Roman commander Lucius Pinarius gave the order to ambush and kill all the assembled Siculi because he had gotten news that the confederated Siculo states were about to go over to the Carthaginian side. The same Roman consul, Marcellus did not disapprove of the slaughter and even allowed the Roman soldiers to take all the booty gathered at Enna. From this moment onward we do not have any report written by the ancient authors about these people.

Thus, according to tradition the Romans had destroyed the Sicano capital Inycon-Camico-Trikalà during the first punic war and what was left of the Siculo civilization during the second punic war, putting a final ending to what was left of the ancient peoples of Sicily.

Riccardo R.G. Cannavo is a member of the board of directors of the Italian Cultural Society.
MARCH 17 PROGRAM

Luca Paschina produced his first wine at the age of 14. A 2nd-generation graduate of Italy's "viticultural Harvard", Istituto Umberto I, Luca worked in the Napa Valley, the Finger Lakes, and Switzerland, before joining his father Armando and uncle Francesco full time in winegrowing in Piemonte. Asked by Gianni Zonin to study his winery operations in a year's consultancy at Barboursville in 1990, he returned to Zonin's headquarters north of Venice with a suggestion - if you will systematically re-invest in ideal trellising systems and techniques for this terroir, you will have the finest wines that can be grown on the East Coast. Since then the various vintages produced at Barboursville have won numerous prestigious awards at tasting competitions across the US, including 30 gold medals for the "Octagon" blend alone.

LOCAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

National Gallery of Art:
Guided tours of the Italian Renaissance collection, West Building, main floor rotunda Mon., Fri. and Sat. 2:30, Sun. 1:30
Italian Language guided tours Tues. Feb 12 and Sat. Feb 16, West Building main floor rotunda at 12:00 and East Building, ground level info. desk at 2:00. RSVP 202-842-6247

Michelangelo's David-Apollo: the sculpture, sponsored in part by Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on exhibit through March 3, 2013 in the West Building, Main Floor, Gallery 11. SEE ALSO AT BOTTOM OF PAGE 9

Italian Cultural Institute:
Norma a program of discussion and music from the opera, Tuesday, March 5, RSVP required, see http://www.iicwashington.esteri.it/IIC_Washington/webform/SchedaEvento.aspx?id=452&citta=Washington
Machiavelli's Prince Throughout the Centuries: a symposium Friday, March 15, 3:00 to 6:00 PM at ICC Auditorium, Georgetown University, no reservation, free, see http://www.iicwashington.esteri.it/IIC_Washington/webform/SchedaEvento.aspx?id=456&citta=Washington
Pinocchio, the Story of a Puppet: a theatrical performance based on Collodi's fairy tale, Tuesday, March 18. 7:30 PM. Tickets $30 at Terrace Theater, Kennedy Center, call 202-467-4600 mention code "Italy 2013" for 20% discount

Washington Stage Guild:
Inferno: by Dante, directed by Laura Giannarelli "A strikingly theatrical performance of a Hell of a story, last seen in DC over a decade ago" thru March 17 Performances Thur. 7:30 PM; Fri and Sat. 8 PM; Sat and Sun matinees 2:30 PM, 4018 Argyle Terrace, NW, Washington DC for tickets, www.stageguild.org

MOVIE OF THE MONTH
The ICS March movie of the month is The Organizer (1963). In turn-of-the-century Turin, an accident in a textile factory incites workers to stage a walk out. It's not until they receive unexpected aid from a travelling professor (Marcello Mastroianni) that they find their voice. This historical drama by Mario Monicelli, brimming with humor and honesty, is a beautiful and moving ode to the power of the people. In Italian with English subtitles.
The recent resignation of Pope Benedict XVI from office has brought back to the fore the search for historical precedents to this unusual event. While U.S. media has kept saying that the last time a pope resigned was six centuries ago, that instance was not analogous to the present situation since that pope was not the only one claiming the title and he resigned under pressure. In fact, the only true resignation followed by the election of another pope occurred in December 1294 in Naples, when Pope Celestine V resigned his office after holding it only a little more than five months.

This article reviews first the Papal muddle lasting from 1378 to 1419, which led to the abdication of one of the popes, and then, in the nest issue narrates the story of Celestine V, the only pope who did indeed resign from office.

In 1309, Pope Clement V, to avoid the pressure being exerted on the Papacy by powerful Roman nobles, moved the Papacy and his residence to Avignon, a city just outside French territory on the Rhone River. While this ended the influence of Roman nobles on the pope, it allowed the king of France to exert his influence on church affairs.

In January 1377, Pope Gregory XI, partly stirred to action by the exhortations of Saint Catherine of Siena, returned to Rome, where he died the following year on March 27, 1378.

The concclave to elect a successor met quickly in Rome. Of the 23 cardinals, six had remained in Avignon and another was away attending a conference. Amid continuing conflict between French and Italian cardinals, and threats from the roman people demanding a Roman, or at least Italian, pope, the concclave, in a compromise, elected the Archbishop of Bari, who became Urban VI.

Pope Urban’s first announcement was that he intended to reform the College of Cardinals, then dominated by French prelates, partially by appointing many new Italian cardinals. He also started to enforce strict rules concerning sumptuous meals, the taking of bribes, selling of offices, and the like. Urban VI was irascible and probably a touch mad, “furiosus et melancholicus” as he was dubbed, and he publicly berated the cardinals, telling one to shut up, another that he was a half-wit, and coming to blows with a third.

Urban became extremely unpopular among most of the cardinals, and the French cardinals held another concclave and elected Robert of Geneva, who took the name Clement VII. But Urban would not resign, hired mercenaries to help him remain in power, and defeated the forces of Clement VII, who left for Avignon.

Urban VI, a Neapolitan, now thought of himself as a kingmaker and upset with the Queen of Naples, Joanne I, who had backed Clement VII (Antipope), invited Charles of Durazzo to invade Naples and eject Joanne from power. Charles not only did so, but had Joanne strangled.

Unable to make any progress, Urban then moved away from Naples and set himself up at Nocera, hopeful that a French Duke, whom he had enlisted as an ally to replace Charles Durazzo, would help him succeed and once in power be more amenable to his requests. Many of the cardinals,

Le recenti dimissioni di Benedetto XVI dal trono pontificio hanno riportato all’attenzione i precedenti storici di questo raro evento. Sebbene negli Stati Uniti i mezzi d’informazione ripetano che l’ultima volta che un Papa rassegnò le dimissioni risale a sei secoli fa, quel caso non è simile alla situazione odierna, giacché il Papa di allora non era l’unico ad arrossarsi il titolo e fosse costretto a dare le dimissioni. In realtà la uniche vere dimissioni di un Papa eletto avvennero nel dicembre 1294 a Napoli quando Celestino V diede le dimissioni poco più di cinque mesi dopo essere stato eletto al soglio pontificio.

Questo primo articolo commenta il pasticcio che duro’ dal 1378 al 1419 e portò all’abdicazione di uno dei papi mentre nel secondo articolo, nel prossimo numero, si esaminerà la storia di Celestino V, l’unico Papa ad effettivamente rassegnare le dimissioni dall’incarico.

Nel 1309 Papa Clemente V, per evitare le pressioni esercitate dai potenti nobili romani, trasferì il papato e la sua residenza ad Avignone, una città sul fiume Rodano nel territorio francese. Questo pose fine all’influenza dei nobili romani sul papato, però diede al re di Francia la possibilità di influenzare gli affari della chiesa.

Nel gennaio 1377 Papa Gregorio XI, in parte spinto all’azione dall’insistenza di Caterina di Siena, ritornò a Roma dove morì l’anno seguente, il 27 marzo 1378.

Il concclave per eleggere il successore si riunì prontamente a Roma. Dei 23 cardinali sei rimasero ad Avignone ed uno era assente per una conferenza. Tra continue lotte fra cardinali italiani e francesi e minacce da parte del popolo romano che chiedeva un Papa romano, o almeno italiano, il concclave raggiunse un compromesso eleggendo l’arcivescovo di Bari che prese il nome di Urbano VI.

Per prima cosa Papa Urbano annunciò la sua intenzione di riformare il collegio cardinalizio, allora dominato da prelati francesi, in parte nominando molti cardinali italiani. Inizò inoltre ad imporre regolamenti rigorosi che riguardavano banchetti suntuosi, pagamenti di tangenti, vendita di incarichi e simili. Urbano VI era irascibile e probabilmente un poco squilibrato. Lo tacciavano di essere “furioso e melanconico” e lui si le prendeva pubblicamente con i cardinali, dicendo ad uno di stare zitto, ad un altro che era una mezza cartuccia e venire alle mani con un terzo.

Urbano divenne estremamente mal visto dalla maggior parte dei cardinali ed i cardinali francesi tennero un altro concclave che elesse Roberto di Ginevra che prese il nome di Clemente VII (Antipapa). Ma Urbano non intendeva dimettersi e assoldò dei mercenari che lo aiutarono a mantenere il potere sconfiggendo le forze di Clemente VII che parti’ per Avignone.

Urbano VI, napoletano, era convinto di avere il potere di nominare i re e, irato con la regina di Napoli, Giovanna I perché aveva dato il suo sostegno a Clemente VII, invitò Carlo di Durazzo ad invadere Napoli ed a rimuovere dal potere Giovanna. Carlo, non solo fece come richiesto ma fece anche strangolare Giovanna.
disaffected, planned to bring the pope back to Rome forcibly but he discovered the plot and had them arrested and tortured.

Charles III, who wished to be rid of the troublesome pope, then sent an army to lay siege to Nocera. The town fell in July 1385, but the pope with the remaining seven cardinals in chains fled and made his way across the lower Apennines to the Adriatic, where he boarded a Genoese ship. During the trip one of the rebellious cardinals was executed at the pope’s bidding and his body dumped in the sea. Another five cardinals were then put to death in Genoa; the sole survivor of the pope’s fury was Adam Easton, an English Benedictine abbot who had been made cardinal. His life was spared through the intercession of English King Richard II and he lived until 1397, dying in Rome, where he is buried in the Church of St. Cecilia in Trastevere. Urban VI then remained in Genoa for months, moved on to Lucca, and finally returned to Rome. His feud with Charles III, and after Charles died, with his successor, King Ladislas, continued inconclusively until the pope died in 1389.

The adversary relationship between Italian and French cardinals, resulting in the election of two popes, Urban VI and Clement VII, had started the “Great Western Schism”, an anomalous state of affairs that lasted until 1423 and saw two popes, and at one time three, fighting each other and vying for the faithful’s allegiance.

An attempt to settle the issue was made at the Church Council of Pisa in 1409. Over five hundred prelates and delegates from the various Christian states met for months, finally deciding to depose both current popes, one in Rome and one in Avignon, and chose a third pope, Alexander V (1409-10) (Antipope). Alexander V, however died while the council was still in session and a replacement, John XXIII (1410-1415) (Antipope) was selected at once. The other two popes failed to resign and to recognize John XXIII authority and Christendom was treated to the unseemly scene of three “popes”: Benedict XIII (1394-1423) (Antipope) in Avignon, Gregory XII (1406-15) in Rome, and John XXIII in Pisa, all three claiming to be the true heirs of St. Peter.

Another attempt to end the schism was then made at the Council of Costanza (1414-1417). All three popes attended this three years meeting to plead their cases, but the end result was that the Council asked all three to resign and selected a fourth one as the new pope, Martin V (1417-1431), a member of the Roman Colonna family. One of the three other popes, Gregory XII, resigned, John XXIII fled, was caught, tried, and deposed, while the third, Benedict XIII, isolated politically and ignored continued to claim until 1423 that he, not Martin V, was the true pope. However, with Martin V election, the schism had, for all practical purposes, ended.

Impossibilità a fare alcun progresso, Urbano lasciò Napoli e si sistemò a Nocera, con la speranza che un duca francese, con il quale si era alleato in sostituzione di Carlo di Durazzo, lo aiutasse nei suoi piani e, una volta raggiunto il potere, fosse più accomodante alle sue richieste. Molti cardinali ribelli congiuravano per riportare il Papa a Roma con la forza, ma lui scopri il complotto e li fece arrestare e torturare.

Carlo III, che voleva liberarsi del Papa ostile, mando` un esercito ad assediare Nocera. La citt` cadde nel luglio 1385 ma il Papa, con i restanti sette cardinali in catene, fugger`, attraverso` gli Appennini raggiungendo il Tirreno dove si imbarco` su una nave genovese. Durante la traversata uno dei cardinali ribelli fu giustiziato per ordine del Papa ed il suo corpo gettato in mare. Altri cinque cardinali vennero uccisi a Genova; l’unico sopravvissuto alla furia del Papa era Adam Easton, un abate benedettino inglese che era stato fatto cardinale. La sua vita fu risparmiata per intercessione del re inglese Riccardo II e visse fino al 1397. Morì` a Roma ed e` sepolto nella chiesa di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere. Urbano VI rimase a Genova per vari mesi , si spostò` a Lucca e infine ritornò` a Roma. La sua rivalità` con Carlo III e , dopo la morte di Carlo, con il suo successore re Ladislao, continuò` senza risultati fino alla morte del Papa nel 1389.

I contrasti tra i cardinali italiani e quelli francesi che risultarono nell’elezione di due papi, Urbano VI e Clemente VII, diedero inizio al “Grande Scisma d’Occidente” uno stato anomalo che durò` fino al 1423 e vide due e per un periodo tre papi che combattevano tra di loro e rivaleggiavano per il supporto dei fedeli.


Un altro tentativo di porre fine allo scisma fu fatto al Concilio di Costanza (1414-1417). Tutti e tre i papi presenziarono a questo incontro durato tre anni, per perorare ciascuno il proprio caso ma il risultato finale fu che il Concilio chese a tutti e tre di dimettersi decidendo di eleggere un quarto Papa, Martino V (1417-1431) un membro della famiglia romana dei Colonna. Uno degli altri tre papi, Gregorio XII, diede le dimissioni, Giovanni XXIII fugger`, fu ripreso, processato e deposto mentre il terzo, Benedetto XIII, isolato politicamente e ignorato, continuò` a dichiarare che lui, e non Martino V, era il vero Papa. Comunque, con l’elezione di Martino V, lo scisma si concluse a tutti gli effetti.

Our May 19 program will feature Alison Luchs, curator of early European Sculpture, speaking about Michelangelo’s David-Apollo which is on display at the National Gallery of Art, but only until March 3. “The unfinished statue, a study in ambiguity last here in 1949, has been puzzling scholars for centuries.” (Washington Post, Dec. 20, 2012) . Ms. Luchs will tell us about the historical background of this rare work by Michelangelo in the context of his relationship to the Medici.

Be sure to view the sculpture before it leaves town.
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