In my October message I dwelled on the importance of the Week of Italian Language in the World, as an initiative taken some 19 years ago by the Accademia della Crusca (The Academy of the Bran), whose symbol, the winnow, indicates the academic activity undertaken by this prestigious organization to separate good from bad language. November has offered the participation of the ATI (The Association of Teachers of Italian) to the meeting of The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) which has taken place this week (November at the Washington Convention Center. ACTFL is dedicated to the improvement and expansion of the teaching and learning of all languages at all levels of instruction which boasts an individual membership of more than 12,500 between educators, students, and administrators. Once again our Embassy has initiated the ACTFL activities with a meeting of ATI representatives organized by Professor Maria Fusco and Consigliere Domenico Bellantone and introduced by them as well as by Ambassador Varricchio. Speakers from all over the United States have contributed to this meeting making for a full day of useful information and good suggestions for future Italian linguistic activities at all levels from primary to secondary, college and University levels. Our own Executive Director as well as key personnel of the ICS’ Italian Language Program participated and additional information is presented on the subject within this issue of Poche Parole.

Donna Kirk, senior architect and designer, was our speaker for the November 17 social. She was introduced by our Board member David Flaxman, who organized the event. The subject was of unusual interest in that it covered the work that goes on behind the scenes to prepare for any installation of art work at the Smithsonian as well as other museums in the Washington Metropolitan area. A full house attendance rewarded the efforts of the speaker and of the organizer.

At our social meeting for December the Society celebrates the Christmas Holidays with a musical program and pot-luck dinner featuring traditional Italian dishes. The Festa begins with a vocal (or piano) performance of Italian music, the singing performance of the kids (students of the ILP + other little friends); then, a sing-along of carols, followed by the appearance of Babbo Natale, his elves and La Befana. Decorations include a tree and an elaborate Presepio of the Nativity scene. More details on this event are specified at our web site and at page 3 of this Poche Parole.

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS
Couples & Family: Mary & Gary Jones and family; Nicolette Romano and family

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ERRATA CORRIGE FROM THE NOVEMBER POCHE PAROLE:
The article on page 10 and 11 “Il Nobel per la letteratura italiana Eugenio Montale e Salvatore Quasimodo” was written by author Camilla Bozzoli.

In the article “October social meeting - l’italiano e il palcoscenico”, on page 4, Isabella was the mother, not the daughter, therefore it should read <His mother Isabella was a main character in his comedies, including in “La pazzia dilsabella”>.

WE ARE SOCIAL!
Follow us on Instagram: @italian.cultural.society
Like our page on Facebook: The Italian Cultural Society of Washington D.C.
SPECIAL EVENT - FESTA DI NATALE

Our traditional Festa di Natale, with musical programs, Babbo Natale, entertainment for children and adults and potluck dinner will be hosted December 14th, at 3:00 pm at the Chevy Chase Village Hall, in collaboration with Le D.I.V.E.

The entertainment for children consists of a Christmas workshop coordinated by Maestra Fiorenza Castelli, a brief recital and a song performed by our students and a brief performance by Laboratorio Musicale’s group, directed by Maestra Felicia Toscano. The arrival of Babbo Natale, Befana and the Elves brings excitement and joy to everyone! More information and RSVP are on our website.
On Sunday, November 17, 2019, at 3pm, the monthly social event of the Italian Cultural Society centered around a presentation by Senior Architect at the National Gallery of Art, Donna Kirk. The presentation was entitled “Designing for Leonardo: Exhibition Design at the National Gallery of Art.” 2019 is a “Year of Leonardo” celebrating the 500th anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci.

Leonardo was an Italian polymath of the Renaissance whose areas of interest included invention, drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, science, music, mathematics, engineering, literature, anatomy, geology, astronomy, botany, paleontology, and cartography. He is perhaps best known for his painting of the “Mona Lisa” as well as for a fresco of “The Last Supper” and his painting of Ginevra d’Amerigo Benci. The National Gallery is currently offering an exhibition of Verrocchio entitled “Verrocchio: Sculptor and Painter of Renaissance Florence”. Verrocchio is perhaps best known as the teacher of Leonardo as well as for his painting “Madonna and Child with Two Angels” and for his sculpture “David”. The Verrocchio exhibition is the first-ever monographic exhibition in the United States on Andrea del Verrocchio (c. 1435–1488), the innovative artist, painter, sculptor, and teacher whose pupils included, in addition to Leonardo, Pietro Perugino and likely Sandro Botticelli, the painter of “La Primavera”, as well.
Ms. Kirk offered the overflow crowd of fans of Italian culture, a fascinating tour through a great deal of the exhibition design activities at the National Gallery of Art, many of which she has been personally involved in.

She showed photos of the appearance of the Mona Lisa at the National Gallery in one of the few times this masterpiece has ever left the Louvre. She offered insights into the process of designing an exhibition and showed how the design changes in a series of photos of exhibitions ranging from Joan Miro and Mark Rothko to Gauguin and now Verrochio. She explained that Leonardo may in fact have been the model for the great “David” of Verrocchio and how it was that Leonardo may have helped finish some of Verrocchio’s better known paintings.

Finally Ms. Kirk offered a look at the current Verrocchio exhibition which we hope everyone will take the opportunity to see before it leaves on January 12, 2020.
REPORT OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM
BY FRANCESCA CASAZZA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On Sunday November 15th, the ILP organized an afternoon training for our teachers, to share ideas, materials and methodologies. In October we attended a full day of training at Georgetown University, and last month, from Nov. 21st to the 24th, we attended the ACTFL, the annual convention of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Besides attending interesting conferences, we had the opportunity to bond and partner with other language schools in Italy, that we are pleased to add to our recommendations on our webpage Study Abroad. We will organize a day in January to present all of our recommendations of studying and travelling to Italy. We want you to live the best and most authentic experience while you are in Italy!

The Winter schedule is online and registration is open. New beginners classes start both in the evening and during the day. Intermediate and advanced levels can choose from History and Archeology, Cinema, Literature, Literature of the Renaissance, Virtual Tours, Storia e Sapori d’Italia, Italy Today or Live from Italy, to discuss the Italian news of the week and practice journalist style writing. Different levels of “Book Club” reading classes will introduce you to authors like Andrea Camilleri, Marco Balzano and others. New courses include: How to read and critique a novel, Listening to Music in Italiano, Italiano per Buongustai, L’Italia degli anni di piombo, Laboratorio di scrittura and L’Italiano vien leggendo, and a new course on Italian stylists and fashion. In English, Annelise Brody Morani will offer the course The Art and History of Italian Renaissance.

For the children, Maestra Fiorenza is planning our next Themed workshop-parents night out, on January 4th, from 6:00-9:00pm, with pizza and dessert. After the successful “Discover Leonardo Da Vinci”, this coming one will be dedicated to “La Befana e l’Epifania.”

Latin for Italian middle and High school students is starting in January, on Sundays, and Beginners and Advanced Latin continues on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Our new after school programs at the Bethesda Montessori and Our Lady of Lourdes are being appreciated very much, and all the kids are getting ready for the Christmas party, on Dec. 14th.

On our website you will find information about these new courses and the Fall ones, ending next week with the Special December Drop-ins program.

See you at the Festa di Natale on December 14th.
Buone Feste!
We are honored to have had the opportunity to co-sponsor two magical evenings with Sophia Loren! On November 20th and 21st, the Italian Cultural Society welcomed a large audience to the Montgomery College Performing Arts Center with a glass of Prosecco, to help promote Italian language and culture. The events starred Sophia Loren, who gave an interesting interview about her life and brilliant career. She spoke mainly in English, and at times poked fun at the host by speaking in Italian, generating a laugh among those in the audience who understood her native language. After the interview, we had the pleasure to meet and greet Sophia Loren backstage. She was warm and gracious; it’s a moment I will never forget!
Our trip to Puglia and Basilicata from August 13 to September 12, started in Bari (with side trips to Trani and Monopoli), and included a week of Italian language studies in Lecce, and two week tour by car of Taranto, Metaponto, Potenza, Alberobello, and Matera. Here are a few highlights of Lecce, Taranto, Alberobello, and Matera.

**Lecce**

Our week long Italian studies in the advanced class in Lecce went well. Maria Rossini, our teacher, was good at finding our weak areas, so the lessons were tailored well to our needs. We were a class of three...Virginia & me, and a Swiss girl, Larissa. Another class had several students who we got to know during the “pausa”, the 20 minute break in our 4 hour per day classes. It was a good group...students from Spain, France, Germany, U.K., and Belgium. Lecce was an interesting city to visit for the week; not too big and not too small, with enough attractions to keep us busy. And of course, the Baroque architecture is among the best in Italy.

**Taranto**

A Spartan Colony So why are we here? Taranto, in 500 BCE was one of the largest cities in the world, with a population of around 300,000. Who knew? The National Archeological Museum’s Collection is among the best in the country, drawing on Taranto’s rich history. Taranto had a major pottery industry during the Greek episode, and issued its own coins. And around 272 BCE, Taranto became a Roman City (only after it had taken the wrong side with Hannibal during the Phoenician/Roman wars for domination of the peninsula). And the Aragonese Castello is another draw to the city. And Taranto is perhaps the second most important naval base in Italia today. The Italian Navy occupies the Castello St. Angelo.

**Alberobello**

Alberobello is a UNESCO World Heritage site because of its uniquely shaped and constructed houses, the trulli. The count who owned the land allowed people to build only temporary houses; building permanent houses would have required the count to pay taxes to the Spanish rulers in the Kingdom of Naples. The local folks developed a round design for the houses that would be stable without using mortar. Many of the trulli in Alberobello are centuries old, but now the walls are strengthened with mortar, and the exterior and interior walls and ceilings are finished with plaster. The roofs still appear to be dry layed without mortar. Our trullo has modern plumbing, electricity, and air conditioning.
Matera, One of the Oldest Continuously Occupied Cities in the World

Matera has a timeless quality about it...it’s literally and figuratively as old as the hills. From Neolithic settlements until the present, this area has lasted for the past 10,000 years. It’s pretty hard to beat the durability of rock, in this case, the tufo of Matera, as a building material. And as they tell you here, it is a kind of negative construction; the houses (caves) are dug out of the rock. We have the good fortune to be staying in a sasso (literally meaning stone) cave dwelling in the Caveoso area of Matera. It’s very cool, even during the hot late August/early September days. It’s light years away from the original sasso (Sassi is the plural); we have modern plumbing and electricity.

Matera is built on the sides and top of a few ravines/canyons, so it can be difficult to go from one part of the town to another. Everything is made of stone, the houses, the roads, the sidewalks...everything. Early settlers transitioned from hunter/gatherers to an agriculture economy, and as other settlements in the Salento peninsula, were later Greek, Norman, Saracen, Roman, etc. areas, and became Christianized, as can be seen by the “rupestri” (cave churches) cut into the stone. Some of these old churches still have some fresco paintings.

Matera is the kind of city where you wander around the narrow streets...up...up...up...and then you reach a plateau of the newer part of the city, than you wend your way down back to the sassi. It doesn’t matter if you are lost for a while, because eventually you will find landmark church or a main street to get your bearings again. A bonus for us was to see the filming of scenes of a new James Bond 007 movie, “No Time to Die”!

007’s Aston Martin DB5
Il nostro viaggio in Puglia e Basilicata dal 13 agosto al 12 settembre è iniziato a Bari (con mete secondarie a Trani e a Monopoli) e ha incluso una settimana di studi di lingua italiana a Lecce e un tour di due settimane in macchina a Otranto, Taranto, Metaponto, Craco, Potenza, Alberobello, e Matera. Di seguito vi racconto alcuni punti salienti di Lecce, Taranto, Alberobello e Matera.

**Lecce**

La nostra settimana di studio dell’italiano nella classe avanzata a Lecce è andata bene. Maria Rossini, la nostra insegnante, è stata brava a trovare le nostre aree deboli, quindi le lezioni sono state ben adattate alle nostre esigenze. Eravamo in una classe di tre persone: io, Virginia e una ragazza svizzera, Larissa. Un’altra classe aveva diversi studenti che abbiamo conosciuto durante la “pausa”, la pausa di 20 minuti nelle nostre lezioni di 4 ore al giorno. Era un buon gruppo, con studenti provenienti dalla Spagna, Francia, Germania, Regno Unito e Belgio. Lecce è stata una città interessante da visitare in una settimana; non troppo grande e non troppo piccola, con abbastanza attrazioni per tenerci occupati. E, naturalmente, l’architettura barocca è tra le migliori in Italia.

**Taranto, una colonia spartana**

Allora perché siamo qui? Taranto, nel 500 a.C. era una delle più grandi città al mondo, con una popolazione di circa 300.000 abitanti. Lo sapevate? La Collezione del Museo Archeologico Nazionale è tra le migliori del paese, della storia profonda di Taranto. Taranto sviluppò un’importante industria di ceramica durante il periodo greco ed emise la propria moneta. Intorno al 272 a.C., Taranto divenne una città romana (solo dopo che si era schierata con l’avversario Annibale durante le guerre fenicio-romane per il dominio della penisola), il Castello Aragonese è un’altra attrazione della città. Taranto è forse la seconda base navale più importante d’Italia oggi e la Marina italiana occupa il Castello di Sant’Angelo.

**Alberobello**

Alberobello è un patrimonio mondiale dell’UNESCO perché la forma e la costruzione dei trulli sono uniche. Il conte che possedeva la terra permise agli abitanti di costruire solo case temporanee; la costruzione di case permanenti avrebbe richiesto il conteggio per pagare le tasse ai sovrani spagnoli del Regno di Napoli. La gente del posto ha sviluppato quindi un disegno circolare per costruire case stabili anche senza l’uso della calce. Molti dei trulli di Alberobello risalgono a secoli fa, ma adesso le pareti sono rinforzate con cemento e i muri esterni, interni e i soffitti sono rifiniti con lo stucco. I tetti sembrano ancora essere posati a secco senza cemento. Il nostro trullo aveva impianti idraulici moderni, elettricità e aria condizionata.
Matera, una delle più antiche città del mondo continuamente occupate

Matera ha una bellezza senza tempo ed è letteralmente e figurativamente vecchia come le colline su cui si trova. Dagli insediamenti neolitici fino ad oggi, questa città ha resistito per oltre 10.000 anni. Non esiste materiale da costruzione più resistente della roccia; in questo caso, il tufo di Matera. E come vi raccontano qui, è una specie di costruzione inversa; le case (grotte) sono scavate nella roccia. Abbiamo avuto la fortuna di alloggiare in una grotta di sasso (letteralmente significa pietra) nella zona Caveoso di Matera. I sassi sono freschi, anche durante i giorni caldi di fine agosto / inizio settembre. Sono molto diversi dai sassi originali (Sassi è il plurale) e abbiamo impianti idraulici moderni ed elettricità.

Matera è costruita sui lati e in cima ad alcuni burroni/canyon, quindi può essere difficile spostarsi da una parte all’altra della città. Tutto è fatto di pietra, le case, le strade, i marciapiedi ... tutto. I primi coloni passarono da cacciatori / raccoglitori ad un’economia agricola, e come anche altre popolazioni della Penisola salentina, furono in seguito dominate dai greci, normanni, saraceni, romani, ecc. Successivamente divennero cristiani, come si può vedere dai “rupestri” (chiese rupestri) scavate nella pietra. Alcune di queste vecchie chiese hanno ancora alcuni affreschi.

Matera è il tipo di città in cui vaghi per le strette stradine ... su ... su e poi raggiungi un altopiano della parte più nuova della città, da cui scendi verso i sassi. Non importa se ti perdi per un po’, perché alla fine trovi sempre una chiesa storica o una strada principale per orientarti di nuovo. Un vantaggio per noi è stato vedere le riprese del nuovo film di 007, “No Time to Die”!

Aston Martin DB5 di 007

Chiesa rupestre
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