



St Nicholas News

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around the world

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PAULICELLI'S LIGHTS AND PAINTINGS FOR THE FEAST OF MAY THE 9TH

36

**THE CODE OF BATTLE ABBEY (SUSSEX):
THE FEAT OF THE BARIANS
IN A LATIN-ENGLISH POEM OF THE TIME**

**The city of Bari is preparing the Feast
of the Translation of St Nicholas
(May 9th 1087/2012).**

Thousands of lights along the streets and buildings as well as around the Basilica have been already placed . Next it shall be placed the little wooden temple in the Ferrarese square at the central crossroads of the city. This year the feast is inspired to the Barian identity. The main celebrant shall be the archbishop of Bari, mons. **Francesco Cacucci**, who this same year (june the 13th) celebrates the **25th** anniversary of his **episcopal consecration**.

As usually, the events can be distinguished into civil and religious. The most popular among the civil events is the "**Corteo Storico**" (May the 7th), that is the historical parade intended to reproduce today what happened that Sunday 9th of May of the year 1087, when the three ships entered the port of Bari, received by an enthusiastic crowd: departure from the Swabian Castle at 20,30, through Corso Vittorio Emanuele and Seafront, arrival to the Basilica around 11,00 pm. Tuesday May the 8th and Wednesday the 9th at 22,30 pm: great **show of fireworks**.





It is already many years that *Paulicelli International* has been entrusted with the task of setting the lights decorations for the feast of the Translation of St Nicholas (7-9 of May). Here in the photo is Dominic, Joseph Paulicelli's son, who with his workers places the large paintings on the façade of this building facing the Basilica.

The destination of this building (erroneously called "Portico dei Pellegrini") is unknown. It was part of the Catepan's Court, that is the residence of the Byzantine Governor of the Italian Province (Southern Italy), who from 968 to 1071 lived here. In the month of April 1071 the city was conquered by the Norman Robert Guiscard. When the Barian sailors took in Myra the bones of the Saint (April 20th 1087), the commanders Albert, Johannoccarus and Summissimus promised to the Saint to build for him a magnificent temple in the Catepan's Court. And so it happened. The Basilica of St Nicholas in Bari is a Romanesque masterpiece and one of the most beautiful churches in the world.



Bari. St Nicholas' Basilica
In close-up: The statue
donated by the Russian
people in the year 2003.

PROGRAMMA DELLE CELEBRAZIONI

Venerdì 27 aprile

Ore 17,45 *Basilica di San Nicola*
Santo Rosario
Esposizione della statua
del Santo.

Ore 18,30 Santa Messa presieduta
P. GIOVANNI DISTANTE O.P.
Sacrista della Basilica

Sabato 28 aprile

Ore 18,00 *Porto di Bari*
Santa Messa presieduta da
P. LORENZO LORUSSO O.P.
 Rettore della Basilica

*Sorteggio dei due motopescherecci che porteranno
la statua e il quadro di San Nicola a mare.
Processione con la statua del Santo.*

29 aprile – 7 maggio

Ore 18,00 *Basilica di San Nicola*
Solenne novenario:
Rosario, Santa Messa presieduta
da MONS. ANTONIO DE SANTIS,
 Rettore della Chiesa di San
Domenico (29-30 aprile; 1° maggio);

DON LINO LARocca, Rettore della
Chiesa di Santa Scolastica al
Porto (2-4 maggio);

MONS. ANTONIO PARISI, Rettore della
Chiesa di Sant'Anna (5-7 maggio).

Lunedì 7 maggio

Ore 18,00 *Baia S. Giorgio*
Processione con il quadro del Santo
Santa Messa
Imbarco del quadro.

Martedì 8 maggio

Ore 4,30 Apertura della Basilica.
Sante Messe ogni ora
dalle 5,00 alle 13,00.

Ore 6,45 Processione

Ore 10,00 *Molo San Nicola*
Santa Messa presieduta da
S. Ecc. MONS. FRANCESCO CACUCCI,
Arcivescovo di Bari-Bitonto e
Delegato Pontificio per la Basilica.

Seguirà l'imbarco della statua del Santo.

Ore 18,00 *Molo San Nicola*
Santa Messa presieduta da
MONS. FRANCO LANZOLLA,
Parroco della Cattedrale.

Ore 20,00 *Molo San Nicola*
Sbarco della statua – processione
fino a piazza del Ferrarese.

Mercoledì 9 maggio

925° ANNIVERSARIO DELLA TRASLAZIONE (1087-2012)

Ore 7,30; 9,30 *Basilica di San Nicola*
Sante Messe.

Ore 12,00 *Piazza del Ferrarese* – S. Messa.

Ore 18,30 *Basilica di San Nicola*
Solenne Concelebrazione Eucaristica
presieduta da
S. Ecc. MONS. FRANCESCO CACUCCI,
Arcivescovo di Bari-Bitonto e
Delegato Pontificio per la Basilica.
Prelievo della Manna.

Giovedì 10 maggio

Ore 17,00 *Piazza del Ferrarese*
Partenza della statua per la Cattedrale

Domenica 13 maggio

Ore 20,00 *Cattedrale* – Processione fino
alla Basilica di San Nicola

The Program of the events of the feast of the Translation of St Nicholas coincides with the first year of Fr. Lorenzo Lorusso as Rector of the Basilica. He is a native of Bari. And a native of Bari is equally the archbishop Francesco Cacucci. The celebrations of the feast of the Translation are characterized by this return of the Barian identity.

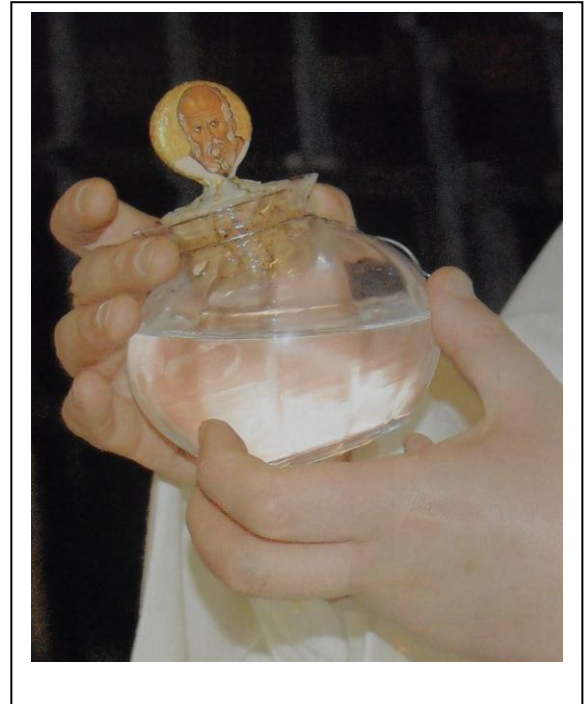
The archbishop of Bari is the “Pontifical Delegate” for the St Nicholas’ Basilica.

After the “Concordato” (1929), the agreement between Church and State, the Holy See took jurisdiction over St Nicholas’ clergy (up to that moment belonging to the King), and in 1951 entrusted the Basilica to the Dominican Fathers, appointing the archbishop as its Representative. In this way the ancient conflict between the (Royal) Basilica of St Nicholas and the Cathedral-church of St Sabinus was eliminated, and an era of promising churchly cooperation was opened.

It has to be noticed in this Program the **departure of St Nicholas' painting from St George seashore** (where the Barian sailors stopped the night of the 8/9 of May 1087), going to meet the sailors of the Corteo Storico. This year the director is Nicola Valenzano, he too born in Bari.

One of the most longed-for moments is the **taking of the holy "Manna" (or Myron) out of the Saint's urn**. With a crowd of people both in the Crypt and in the upper Church, present the Archbishop, the Rector enters the little doors of the altar and from inside the urn takes the water (collected in a hole at the centre of the place where are the Saint's bones) pouring it in an ampulla.

A part of it is reserved for exceptional requests (especially from the Orthodox Churches). The other part is poured into blessed water and given to Orthodox and Catholic faithful.



The *Paulicelli International* entrusted a young artist of Capurso (near Bari) with the task of painting the Saint's life on large panels that would be the choreography for the Corteo Storico and for the religious processions.





Above: The Paulicelli at work, while placing the panels with scenes of St Nicholas' life on the façade of the "Portico dei Pellegrini".
On the right: The Angevin Arch.

Below: Panels on the wall facing the church of St Gregory. *In the background:* the bell tower of the Cathedral Church of St Sabinus. *Below on the left:* the entrance to the Dominican Monastery.





Above and below: **The ancient “Hospice of the Pilgrims”**. In order to bypass the anticlerical laws of the new Reign of Italy, St Nicholas’ canons transformed many rooms of the Hospice in “Putignani Institute” (1861) and primary schools for poor families (1881). But, to no effect. In 1891 state authorities occupied not only the Putignani Institute, but all the rooms of the ancient hospice creating the “School of Arts and Crafts Umberto I”.

This was the end of Pilgrims reception in Bari. From that moment on the pilgrims could go to eat along the promenade near the sea. Later the School moved away and was substituted by the Scuola Trieste, and finally St Nicholas School.

Through this road “Urban II” walk the participants in the Corteo Storico, before entering the large square in front of the Basilica of St Nicholas.



BATTLE ABBEY

AND THE ST NICHOLAS' MANUSCRIPT

British Museum, Cotton Tiberius B. V.,
ff. 55r-56r, 73 r-v, 77r.

The most ancient writing on St Nicholas in England seems to be a poem of 374 lines today at the British Museum (London), but originally at the Battle Abbey, in Sussex. Often it is referred to as “Legendary Life”. It is a collection of three groups of writings (as three separated parchment sheets enter the Cotton Tiberius B. V., ff. 55r-56r, 73 r-v, 77r.) that do not observe the natural development of events, that is Life-Miracles-Translation, but it goes as follows:

The Christian perjurer and the Jew
(the *Broken stuff* of C. W. Jones)

The golden cup
(the *Substituted cup* of C.W. Jones).

The Vandal, the thieves and the icon
(the *Iconia 34* of C.W. Jones)

Lactation
Three daughters
Bishop,
Mariners,
Grainships,
Artemis
Stratilates

Translation to Bari

Scholars agree in dating the short poem to the XI century and, because it comes from Battle Abbey, everybody connect it in one way or another to William the Conqueror.

The presence of **53 lines** (321-374) **dedicated to the translation to Bari** of the year 1087 should not draw to the hasty conclusion that it was written after this date. In fact, as we have

seen above, the structure of the poem is not very natural with the Life in the middle (instead than at the beginning). Consequently the poem could be the result of the work of three hands (or the same hand, but writing in three moments). I would suppose that the Life is prior to the Norman conquest, especially because there is no contamination (no episode recurs from the *Vita Nicolai Sionitae* and it lacks *Three clerks*), a circumstance that would be unthinkable after the year 1100. The first three episodes and the Translation could be dated at the last two decades of the XI century.

The code contains two elements that permit some more information. On a leaf there is an agreement about an exchange of goods in Exeter (where there was a monastery depending on Battle Abbey); on another leaf there is a list of bishops and archbishops of Ravenna (f. 22b). Although it cannot be inferred with certainty, but from these two elements something can be said on the time of composition. Exeter was the city of the bishop Leofric (1046-1072), known for his work to establish a Library, therefore at his times can be dated the Life (the central part in the edition of Walter de Gray Birch) and possibly the three miracles.

On the other hand, the list of Ravenna's bishops can be connected with the pontificate of the antipope Clement III (1084-1100), that is Wibertus bishop of Ravenna, who had good relationships with several countries (among them England, as it is shown by the exiles of St Anselm, follower of the pope Urban II). In fact, his being antipope should not push into the error to think that the true pope was in Rome and the antipope somewhere else. The contrary was true. Popes Gregory VII, Victor III and Urban II had to live the longer time of their pontificate out of Rome, where Clement III acted as pope.

Therefore the most plausible dates are **1046-1072** for the **Life**, **1084-1100** for the **miracles**, **1087-1100** for the **Translation**.

Here it is my translation of the Latin verses on the arrival to Bari of St Nicholas' body:

Let's glorify God, whose providential decree brought Nicholas closer to us as he never was before. Let the Greeks mourn and equally the people of Asia, and particularly Myra, that has no more such a guest.

The offence caused to him deprived them forever of this Patron, source of graces and very influent, who during his earthly life loved peace and, after death, he continues loving peaceful people.

He doesn't care of Turks and Petchenegs, very bad people, who give no honor to the Creator of all things. Very much is loved by God the city of Bari, made worthy to welcome joyfully Nicholas as its guest.

Barians and Venetians with very solid ships often sail through the seas for commercial purposes. In our times too, with ships full of grain, they went beyond Lycia, reaching Antioch.

Having sold their cereals, divinely inspired, they took the decision according God's design, to break on the way back the Saint's marble tomb, with iron tools to this end prepared.

By God's will and with the Saint's help they entered the church carrying out what they had projected. Here they met four guardians in the court, who were extracting as usually the sacred liquid with a sponge.

Those, thinking they had come to give their offerings, had no difficulty to show what they wanted to see. Then one of the Barians, audacious and determined, with the hammer he had with him started to knock the covering slab.

Under his knocks the slab was blown to pieces, and a smelling fragrance from inside the urn came out. They felt like they

were in the Lord's paradise, and after this experience they desired no further glory.

Then they took that treasury, more precious than any price. Pushed the ships on the sea, unfurring the sails in the wind. A favorable sail led those joyful comrades, who were carrying the body of the venerable bishop.

Disigijs, one of the sailors, while dreaming, had a vision, that said: *Don't be afraid, you are sailing very well, and within twenty days you shall reach your destination. During this time you shall have no stormy sea.*

And so it happened. As the Saint reached the harbor, from all Apulia people joyfully runs to him. The abundance of miracles made through his merits, stirs the souls of the people from all around the world.

The rich and the poor runs to see the place where sick persons are healed by the oily liquid, counts and bishops, abbots and priests, and people of any kind come running to his tomb.

The summer heat, the hard winter and the sea do not stop the foreign pilgrims who run to it. Let the devotion of those who stay at home be equally profitable, because Christ wanted his servant be famous everywhere.

We pray to you o Nicholas,
let us, who cannot come to you,
share in all those graces who obtain
those who come to you.

**THE BEST GREETINGS
FROM BARI TO ALL
ST NICHOLAS' FRIENDS**