



A paper sent free to all St Nicholas friends around the World
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FROM MONTEODORISIO

200 km OF PILGRIMAGE ON FOOT



IMAGES OF THE FEAST OF THE 7th – 8th – 9th OF MAY

The pilgrimage to saint Nicholas of Bari goes back to the time of the translation of his relics to this city (1087). From all the regions of Italy pilgrims came incessantly, and especially from Southern Italy. Little by little the pilgrimages, organized by company leaders, concentrated in the regions of Naples/Caserta and Chieti, Isernia,

Campobasso. From Abruzzo e Molise arrive still today pilgrimages on foot, as for example **Monteodorisio**, San Salvo and Lanciano. I want to dedicate this issue of the St Nicholas News to all the ancient pilgrims of Monteodorisio, and especially to the **pilgrimage of 333 years ago**, the first documented in the Archives of the Basilica.

333 YEARS AGO: THE FIRST DOCUMENTED PILGRIMAGE FROM MONTEODORISIO

The pilgrims arrived on foot this year from Monteodorisio has given me the idea of a little research in the Archives of the Basilica on the ancient pilgrimage from Abruzzo and Molise. On the origins we have no **documentation** because the Books of the Pilgrims start only **from** the year **1659**. On the other hand pilgrims, pushed by love and devotion to our Saint, did not worry to leave any written evidence about their trip. During the entire **Middle Age** the Basilica of St Nicholas preserved **no registers** from which one could draw news about the pilgrims movement. Even important pilgrimages, like the one of St **Brigitta of Sweden** (1366 and 1369), are completely ignored in these Archives (if wasn't she to write about it in her Book of Revelations, we would have known nothing).

Only after the exhortations by Antonio Beatillo, author of the most erudite Life of St Nicholas (Naples 1620), the Priests decided to do something, and from 1659 the names and the origin of the pilgrims to whom was given **bed and board** (from one to three days) were registered.



MONTEODORISIO AND ITS CASTLE

This custom stopped when in **1891** the entire administration was taken by functionaries of the **Italian government** and St Nicholas' **priests** became **salaried persons**. At beginning to the pilgrims were given an egg and a roll. After 1915 only **ring-shaped-breads** (taralli), through which the pilgrims used to slip e rope, and so they could carry on the shoulders 30 or forty of them linked together.

In the first decades these Books of the Pilgrims were more concerned with foreigners (by far more numerous are **French and Flemish people**, followed by **Polish** people, but slowly emerge people from Lecce (Southern Apulia), Calabria and Sicily. Pilgrims from Campania and Abruzzo are registered without specifying the town. The exceptions are very few as the case of John Benedict Locaviello from Campobasso (1665, f. 58).The various rectors of the Hospice or Hospital carefully noted all the expenses, because at the end of the year (that is August 31)

had to exhibit the annual account to the Chapter of the Canons.



**Monteodorisio.
Pilgrimage of the year 1927**

The end of the social year at **August 31** derived from the particular calendar Bari had adopted after the year 876, when the city fell under Byzantine domination. From that moment on **the year started September the first**, that means that when **in Naples** was September the first **1590**, in **Bari** was already **1591**. And this kind of administration in the Basilica went on even afterwards, due to the fact that the incomes of the church were land revenues and generally people in the fields draw conclusions with the feast of the Assumption (August 15).

All of them paid attention to expenses, but not all of them were expert in geography. Therefore at the beginning they preferred to give only general information about the origin (Neapolitans, Abruzzeses). An exception was exactly Monteodorisio, that is noted in the “Exit of expenses to give to eat to the Pilgrims”, compiled by Scipione Calco in the register 1671-1672.



In this **Register n. 16**, at the **page 41^v** (**November 5 1671**) are listed a group of four pilgrims **from Monteodorisio** (written Monteadorisio). Here are the names of the four pilgrims:

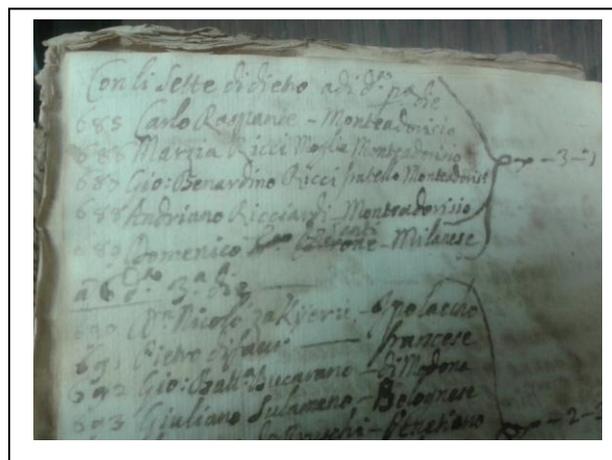
Carlo Raspante – Monteodorisio

Marzia Ricci, moglie – Monteodorisio

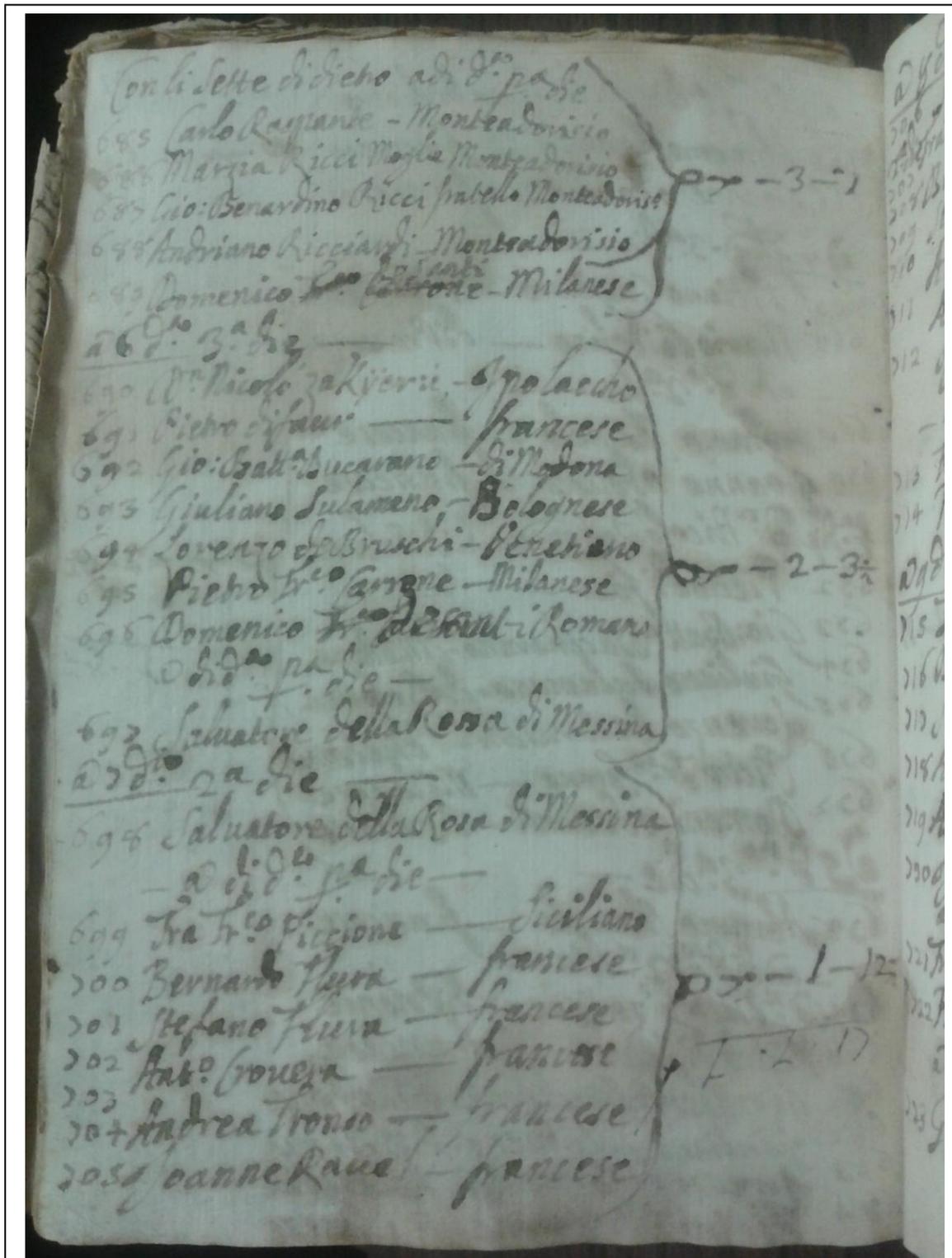
Gio Bernardino Ricci, fratello – Monteodorisio

Andriano Ricciardi – Monteodorisio.

From the date it is clear that they did not come in the occasion of the feasts of May or December. However this first mention, that occurs exactly 333 years ago, is very important to witness the ancient link of the people of Monteodorisio with St Nicholas Basilica.



The register 24 (1689/1690) notes Neapolitan and Aprussese pilgrims, without mentioning the village or town. More detailed was the rector Angiolo Simonelli, who in the register 1695 /1696 noted pilgrims from Aversa, while the following register 29 (1696/1697) mentions Nola, Tripaldo (Atripalda), Pomigliano, Marigliano, Venafro, Casandrina and Monteforte. Around the year 1700 the idea to be more precise became common enough. In the Register 31 (1700/1701) Bartolomeo Ferri mentioned Vallo di Diano, Frignano



Archives of the Basilica of St Nicholas.
Series Ospizio. Register 16, f. 41v.

Maggiore and Frignano Little (Caserta), Celenza, Lanciano, Vasto.

The register 33 (1702-1703) has again Lanciano with three pilgrims, Castelvetro, and Aversa, Casal di Principe and S. Cipriano. It is noted even Calitri, my birth place (written Calitro). In the following registers **Lanciano and Vasto** seem to have a primacy over the other towns.

The intensity of the pilgrimages from the area Abruzzo and Molise is attested by a very curious episode that took place in the year 1714.

A certain man set himself up as a canon of St Nicholas' church going around through those lands affirming that *the building of St Nicholas Hospice of the pilgrims had fallen*, and that he was

entrusted with the gathering of alms for the repairs.

For many days the fraud had success, but once in the Diocese of Boiano (Campobasso) he was **discovered**. From this episode it can be concluded that in those lands the Saint was very much venerated and his Hospice in Bari well known.

These are however fragmentary news and related to the Hospice and its accommodations. We have no idea of the real movement of those who used to come in May or in December.

Accustomed to sacrifices and difficulties they did not ask to the church anything. Some of them slept in poor houses of the Old city of Bari, others even in the open.





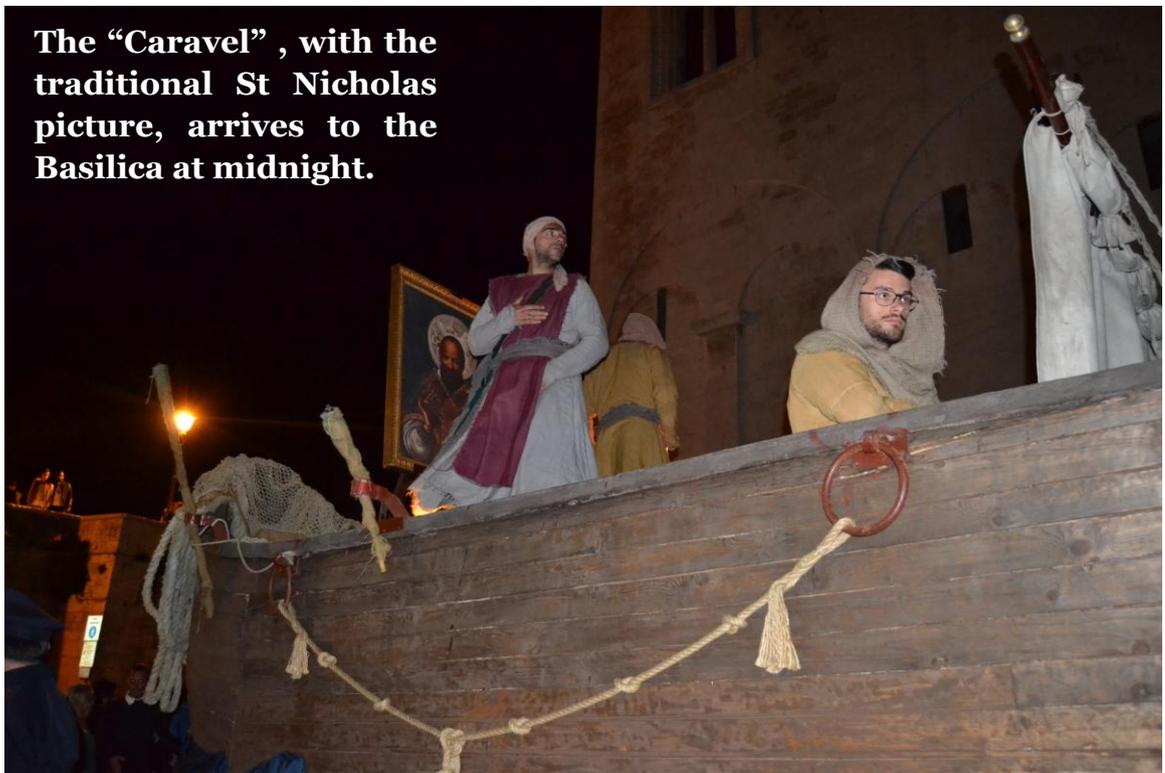
Montedodorisio pilgrims (here between the Castle and the Cathedral church, 200 meters before the Basilica of St Nicholas).

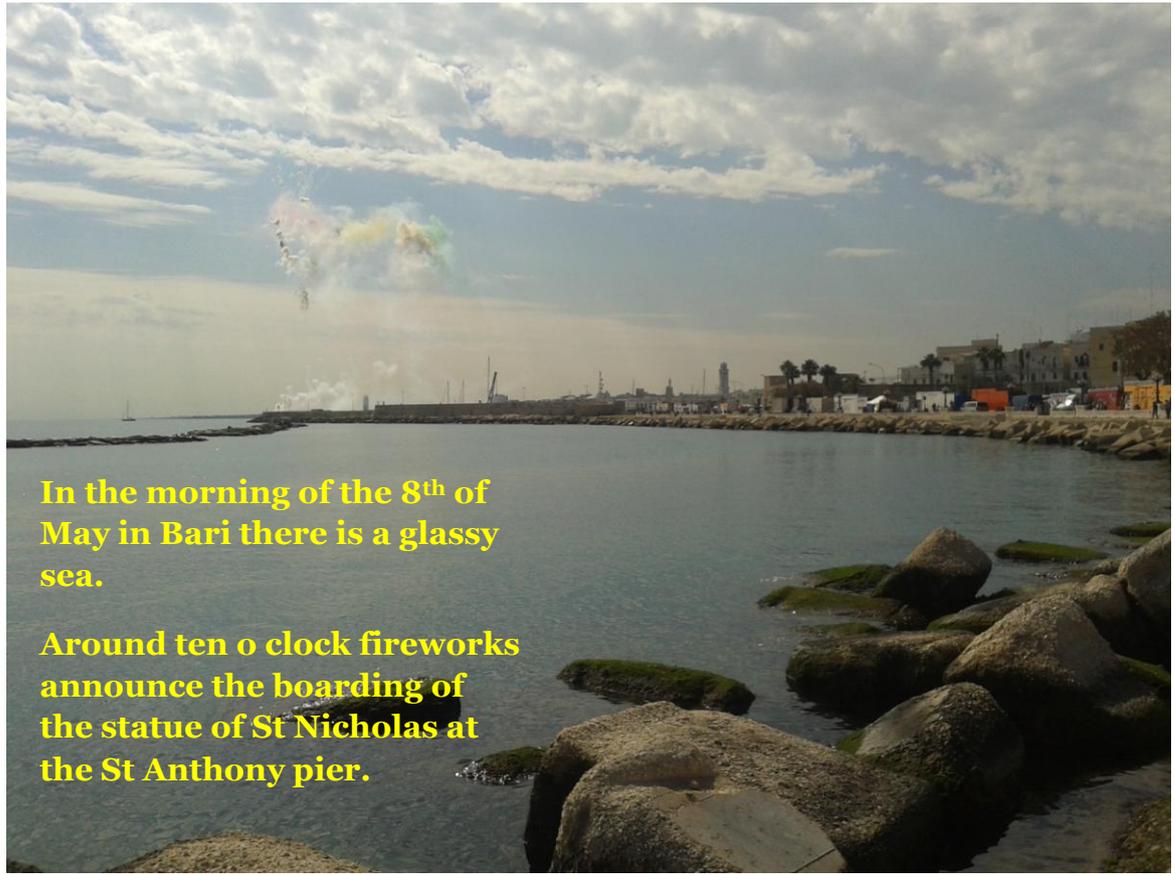


The historical procession (evening of May the 7th) begins its exhibition by going out of the Norman Swabian Castle.



The “Caravel” , with the traditional St Nicholas picture, arrives to the Basilica at midnight.





In the morning of the 8th of May in Bari there is a glassy sea.

Around ten o'clock fireworks announce the boarding of the statue of St Nicholas at the St Anthony pier.



**THE FEAST ENDS
WITH THE
TAKING OF THE
MANNA
THE EVENING
9TH OF MAY
AFTER THE
EUCHARISTIC
CELEBRATION.**

**In the photo:
The Archbishop of Bari
Francesco Cacucci
after the taking
of the Manna.**



**FROM BARI
THE BEST WISHES
TO ALL
ST NICHOLAS'
FRIENDS
IN THE WORLD**