



Monthly  
**Newsletter**

December 2023 | Maria Santissima Lauretana Society – Arizona Chapter

*Buon Natale!*



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# Mother that Came from the Sea...

## Article 1: The History of the Sanctuary (now Basilica) of Altavilla Milicia

The sanctuary, dedicated to our Lady of Altavilla Milicia started out as a small chapel at the end of the fifteenth century. The chapel was built by a known sugar cane businessman by the name of Anfuso Bellacera. The small chapel served to provide spiritual assistance to the several hundred workers of the sugar cane plantation; which was located in Altavilla Milicia.



The first documented renovations of the chapel were made between 1572 and 1578 by a Mr. Lorenzo Galletti. Then, in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, after the image of our Lady arrived miraculously on the shores of Altavilla Milicia, Francesco Maria Bologna, a prominent member of the Palermitan aristocracy, expanded the chapel into a Church to house the sacred image. On October 19<sup>th</sup> 1623, the sanctuary was officially converted to a parish by the Archbishop of



Palermo, Cardinal Giannettino Doria and it was dedicated to the “Blessed Virgin and Saint Francis.”

The church not only served as a parish for the community of Altavilla Milicia but due to the increased devotion to our



Lady, by the villagers, and the documented increase in miracles connected to the intercession of the Blessed Mother, the church began to serve as a holy sanctuary not only for Altavilla Milicia but for the entire province of Palermo. Faithful people from all over Sicily began to go on pilgrimage to this little Church on the hill, to pray and venerate our Blessed Mother.



On October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, on the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Church of Altavilla Milicia,

the Sanctuary received elevation to Basilica Minor by the Holy See. A high mass was celebrated with various ceremonies initiated; such as the unveiling of the Basilica Minor emblem both above the main entry of the Church and on pavement just outside the entrance.



It was a day of great honor and pride not only for Altavilla Milicia but for devotees of Maria SS Lauretana around the globe. We wish to extend our fondest congratulations to our brothers and sisters in Altavilla Milicia.

May our Blessed Mother continue to bless and watch over Altavilla Milicia and may She watch all Her children throughout the world.



# Our Lady of Loreto?



December 10<sup>th</sup> is the Feast of our Lady of Loreto. In Loreto Italy resides the original house of Mary. It is the place of Her birth and the place of the Annunciation by the angel Gabriel.

This holy house was miraculously transported on the night of December 10<sup>th</sup> 1294 to Loreto,



Italy. *“a light from heaven became visible to several inhabitants of the shores of the Adriatic Sea, and a divine harmony woke them that they might contemplate a marvel exceeding all the forces of nature. They saw and contemplated a house, surrounded by heavenly splendor, transported through the air. The angelic burden was brought to rest in a forest, where*

*again the local residents were able to contemplate the relics which it contained.”* The episodes concerning the Translation of the Holy House, all duly verified, were consigned in documents borne to Rome to the Sovereign Pontiffs at various epochs. Pope Sixtus IV declared that the house was the property of the Holy See and assigned duties to specified personnel named to be its custodians. By Pope Leo X the indulgence applicable to the visit of several churches of Rome was accorded also to a pilgrimage to Loreto.



Eventually a magnificent basilica was built around the house, which within the basilica was itself enhanced by a white marble edicule. Pope Clement IX in 1667, placed the story of the House in the Roman Martyrology for the 10th of December under the title: *“At Loreto, in the territory of Ancona, translation of the Holy House of Mary, Mother of God, in which the Word was made flesh.”* Pope Benedict XIV, a prodigious scholar before he became Pope, established the identity of the house with that of Nazareth, against its detractors, and later worked for the embellishment of the sanctuary. The feast of Our Lady of Loreto is observed in many provinces of the Church, inscribed in the Proper of their dioceses by their bishops.



Maria SS Lauretana (Our Lady of Altavilla Milicia) has an affiliation as well. The image of our Lady depicts the Blessed Mother holding the infant child Jesus, with his arm stretched out in blessing and holding the world in his other hand. The image was adorned with gold and silver overlay in 1853 further resembling Our Lady of Loreto and the gold and silver overlay remained until 1990 when the gold and silver overlay was removed to allow for



restoration of the image underneath. Another affiliation to Our Lady of Loreto is that the brotherhood of Maria SS Lauretana of Altavilla Milicia which was founded in 1870. This fraternity’s main objective is to protect the sacred image and to carry our Lady in procession each year on Her feast day. Last, but not least, the ceiling above the sanctuary in Altavilla Milicia has a beautiful painting depicting the transportation of the Holy House to Loreto.



Our Blessed Mother continues to be a beacon of hope for Catholics around the world. She is venerated and celebrated by countless devotees on her various feast days. She is our advocate and our hope. May she continue to guide us towards the teachings of Her

Son Jesus; each day of our lives.

VIVA MARIA!

**NEXT GET-TOGETHER  
IS OUR CHRISTMAS DINNER  
December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**6:00 PM to 10:00 PM**

at

**St. Joseph Church – St. Joseph Hall**

**MENU**

**Pasta**

**Roast Beef Tenderloin, Broccoli Rabe, Baked Potato**

**Bread & Butter**

**Water, Coffee & Dessert**

**PRICE**

**\$35.00**

**PLEASE RSVP TO**

**Lina Davi > 602-418-5679**

**Board Meeting**

**December 20<sup>th</sup> 2023**

**7:00 PM**

**St. Joseph Catholic Church**

**St. Joseph Hall**

**11001 N. 40<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Phoenix, AZ. 85028**

**ALL MEMBERS WELCOME**

**If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any board member. Contact information is just below. Also, if you wish to email our general email, you may send it to [mariasslauretanaaz@gmail.com](mailto:mariasslauretanaaz@gmail.com)**



To the left is a picture of the rosaries that our Society received from St. Joseph Catholic Church for the donation we made. (see *highlights to July 19<sup>th</sup> meeting on page 2*)

**If you are a member and have not yet received a rosary, please contact Lina Davi.**

**FUTURE NEWSLETTER MAILINGS > PLEASE READ BELOW**

Please note that that if you provided an email, all future newsletter editions will be sent to your email. If you wish to have all newsletters go directly to your email,

please email us at [mariasslauretanaaz@gmail.com](mailto:mariasslauretanaaz@gmail.com)

In addition, each monthly newsletter can also be accessed from our website at:

**[www.mariasslauretanaaz.com](http://www.mariasslauretanaaz.com)**

**If you are on our email list and have not received the newsletter, please check your SPAM folder.**

## President's Message

I cannot believe that another year has passed. I wanted to thank the Board members and our members for another successful year. If it wasn't for your hard work, commitment and dedication this Society could not move forward.

I'm not sure if you know that every color that is prominently used during Christmas have their own special meaning. Christmas decoration is incomplete without the color's red, green and gold. These Colors of Christmas are symbolically attached to the festival and each one of them have a deep meaning. Colors of Christmas red, green and gold symbolize the three teachings of Jesus Christ. Let's understand the colors of Christmas and their meaning -

**Red** – The color red symbolizes the blood of Jesus when he was crucified. Red also symbolizes his teaching of the art of love. Red also symbolizes the Jesus teaching of humanity among people. The red talks widely about the love which should prevail in relationships, in integrity and trust. Red is a bright color, which also means joy. When unconditional love prevails among people joy is bound to come. Thus, red is one of the most important colors of Christmas. Green is the color of holly plants which maintain their color even in severe winters. In Christianity it is believed that green signifies the eternal life of Jesus. Christmas heralds the birth of Christ in a very difficult circumstance. Jesus was born to a virgin poor girl, who suddenly got into a wedlock with Joseph. The king wanted to kill the child, when Mother Mary and Joseph took refuge in Egypt and then reached Nazareth. After all the hardship, Jesus still survived. It was the blessing of God that Though Jesus was forced to take death, he continued living in the hearts of many. Green, thus, teaches us the true meaning and worth of life. The art of living is all about living with the sense of gratefulness and love. The green Christmas tree is a symbolic representation of immortality. The pointy needles symbolize the pain which each one of us have to bear and the pointed edges that point towards heaven tells us that we should be grateful to God for the life we are living. Gold is the color of giving. The third king who came on the birth of Christ, gave gold as a gift. The use of the gold color in Christmas depicts the incident of the Magi. The color gold, the color of giving. God chose Virgin Mary, a poor, peasant woman to give birth to the son of God. Mary and Joseph on the other hand are ready to face all the odds, to save Jesus. This was a gift that he gave humankind for a better life. Christmas spirit is to understand the meaning of the colors of Christmas and practice it not only during Christmas but make it the principle of living.



Wishing you the Happiest and merriest Christmas to you and your families.

President

Apollonia Scianna

