



# Italian Historical Society of America Newsletter

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BY JANICE THERESE MANCUSO

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## **Tutto Italiano Benvenuto a *Tutto Italiano***

The city of [Melegnano](#), about eight miles southeast from Milan, attracts thousands of visitors each year to [La Casa di Babbo Natale](#) – the home of Santa Claus. In 1998, Massimiliano Goglio added lights to his yard and each year since, the display has expanded, with over 300,000 lights in 2011. Hundreds of trees, assorted packages, shooting stars, Santas, a sleigh, and reindeer are some of the decorations. Goglio, a computer consultant, designs and creates them all by hand. The display is also energy efficient; last year Goglio switched to using LED lights.

La Casa di Babbo Natale is one of northern Italy's major holiday attractions. The lights are "on" every night from December 7th to Epiphany, January 6th.

[La Casa di Babbo Natale](#) (YouTube [Interview In Italian])

[La Casa di Babbo Natale](#) (YouTube Video Tour)

[La Casa di Babbo Natale 2006](#) (YouTube)

[Lights and Snow in Melegnano](#) (YouTube)

[Italian Christmas Card](#) (YouTube)

[Saks Fifth Avenue Snowflakes and Bubbles](#) (YouTube [Not Italian, but worth a look!])

## **The Christmas Tree on the Mountain**

The town of [Gubbio](#) (region of Umbria) celebrates Christmas in a grand way – the residents constructed a [tree of lights on Monte Ingino](#) to honor their Patron Saint, Bishop Ubaldo Baldassini. The Saint is buried in the Basilica di Sant'Ubaldo, located close to the top of the mountain.

The Christmas tree (Albero di Natale), first built in 1981, is assembled each year by hundreds of volunteers and takes about three months to complete. A tree lighting ceremony is held every year on December 7th, and the tree stays lit until a few days after Epiphany. Measuring a little over 2,100 feet high and almost 1,150 feet at the base, Albero di Natale earned the designation of The World's Largest Christmas Tree in the 1991 Guinness Book of Records. This year, Pope Benedict XVI turned on the tree lights from the Vatican using a tablet computer.

Saint Ubaldo is also honored each year in the [Festival of the Ceri](#), a celebration that has been held in May every year since his death in 1160. Originally, candles (ceri) were carried through the town and up the mountain, but over the years, wood figures were created depicting Saint Ubaldo and two other saints; and part of the celebration is a race up the mountain to the Basilica.

The tradition of the Festival of the Ceri was brought to Jessup (near Scranton), Pennsylvania with the immigrants of Gubbio who settled there. [St. Ubaldo Day](#) is celebrated on Saturday of Memorial Day weekend with races using wood statues made in Gubbio.

[Basilica di Sant'Ubaldo](#) (In Italian)

[Albero di Natale](#) (All about the Christmas Tree. Do not skip the Intro!)

[The World's Largest Christmas Tree](#)

[The Pope Lights the Tree](#) (Video)

[Ristorante La Cia](#) (On the mountain, not too far from the Basilica. Great photos.)

### **Beautiful Italy**

Visit the website of "photographer and amateur astronomer" [Stefano De Rosa](#) to view images of Italy. His photographs of the moon are exquisite.

### **The Legend of the Christmas Witch**

The twelve days of Christmas ends on January 6th, Epiphany, the day the Three Wise Men visited the infant Jesus. During their travels, they met an old woman and asked her to join them. The legend of [La Befana](#) has several versions, with the Three Wise Men stopping at the home of the elderly woman the most popular. Answering the door with broom in hand, she declines their invitation; but after they leave, she changes her mind and tries to find them.

Unsuccessful in her search, her tears of disappointment bring her broom to life; and each year on the night of January 5th, La Befana travels on her broom throughout Italy looking for the baby Jesus. Along the way, she leaves small gifts for the sleeping children, and partakes in the treats – typically wine and oranges, but varying according to the region – the children leave for her.

[La Storia della Befana](#) (In Italian)

*Buon anno, buon tutto, buona vita,*  
Janice Therese Mancuso  
Author of [Con Amore](#)

### **[Thirty-One Days of Italians](#)**

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