



IL GAZZETTINO

Message from the Board

The Friends of Italy Society of Hawaii sends lots of amore and aloha to everyone—in Italy, Hawaii, and beyond—as we all face this challenging time together.

In Italy, fashion designers are now creating masks and scrubs; luxury carmakers are producing ventilators; soccer players and famous singers are donating disinfectants; doctors are adapting scuba gears into ventilators; and alpine guides are building mobile hospitals within days. Our Italian families and friends inspire us with their resilience, as they sing and play music on their balconies, dine together on Skype, and express their creativity in new ways.

In Hawaii, we are also expanding our Ho'okipa—giving the best that we have with aloha. In our association, members are hosting friends who have lost their jobs, preparing free "grab and go" meals for keiki, donating to kupuna organizations, ordering from our local restaurants, and even sharing their musical talents online. As a board of volunteers, we are grateful too for your trust in patiently waiting for the situation to clear up so we can announce our new event dates.

When all of this will have passed, we will come together in Italian and Hawaiian style again, with fuller friendship for each other, appreciation for our planet, and love for life.

We cannot wait to see each of you and hold you tight. Vi vogliamo tanto bene! Un abbraccio grandissimo!

Sincerely,

Friends of Italy Society of Hawaii Board of Directors



One of our Hawaii members who lives in Tuscany half of the year sent us this drawing given to her by one of the children next door. They are all inside, trying to stay healthy, optimistic, and kind in their lives. "Andra' tutto bene, Everything will go well."

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A message from our friend, Luigi "Gigi" Cocquio

italiano

Carissimi,

In queste settimane, giorni, ore e minuti il mio cuore e' inondato di notizie, emozioni, paure, timori, dolore e speranza. Sembra tutta una realta' irrazionale ma vera. Qui in mezzo alla campagna c'e' un grande silenzio. Non ci sono piu' bambini, persone, amici che vengono a visitare, non abbiamo attivita' di comunita' e anche quando distribuiamo viveri e verdura a centinaia di persone, c'e' un gran silenzio. Ho pensato spesso di scrivere a tutti voi per dirvi che vi sono vicino. Mi sono accorto che pero' non ho parole sagge da condividere, le parole sembrano vuote.

Allora mi raccolgo in silenzio.

Una preghiera.... in silenzio

Una lacrima....in silenzio

Un sentimento di amicizia e amore....in silenzio

Una emozione di fronte a tanto dolore....in silenzio

Pensando ad ognuno di voi....in silenzio

Farmi vivo per dirvi che vi sono vicino....in silenzio

Sentire la mancanza di un abbraccio....in silenzio

Accendo con Judy una candela, una piccola, forte luce....in silenzio

Se desidero mandare un sorriso.....in silenzio

Mentre curo la terra ho sempre una canzone in testa che canto....in silenzio: Amici miei

Alzo gli occhi al cielo per dire grazie....in silenzio

Mi sento voluto bene.....in silenzio

Ho scoperto che il silenzio ha una grande forza che ci guida e ci rende piu' buoni. E' una carezza tenera che riempie il cuore di dolcezza e di speranza.

Carissimi, volevo solo dirvi che vi penso e che vi tengo vicino al cuore.

Un abbraccio.... in barba al virus.

Aloha,

Gigi Cocquio

Hoa 'Aina O Makaha

English

Dear ones,

In these weeks, days, hours and minutes, my heart is flooded with news, emotions, fear, dread, pain and hope. It all seems an irrational but true reality. Here in the middle of the countryside, there is a great silence. There are no more children, people, or friends who come to visit, we don't have community activities, and when we distribute food and vegetables to hundreds of people, there is a great silence. I thought often about writing to all of you to tell you that you are close to me. I realized, however, that I have no wise words to share; words seem empty.

So, I gather in silence

A prayer...in silence

A tear...in silence

A feeling of friendship and love...in silence

An emotion in the face of so much pain...in silence

Thinking about each of you...in silence

Allow me to tell you that I am close to you...in silence

To miss a hug...in silence

I light a candle with Judy, a small, strong light...in silence

If I want to send a smile...in silence

While I tend the earth I always have a song in mind that

I sing...in silence: My friends

I look up to the sky to give thanks...in silence

I feel loved...in silence

I discovered that silence has a great strength that guides us and makes us better. There is a tender caress that fills the heart with sweetness and hope.

Dear ones, I just wanted to tell you that I am thinking of you and that I have you close to my heart.

A hug...in spite of the virus.

Aloha,

Gigi Cocquio

Hoa 'Aina O Makaha

Ways to Stay Involved

Attend our Circolo italiano

Join us Thursday, April 9 from 7 - 8 p.m. for a virtual Circolo italiano on Zoom. All who are comfortable with an all-Italian/no-English platform are welcome to join, members and non-members. Check our Facebook page the day of for the Meeting ID. Non vediamo l'ora di vedervi!

Don't forget to follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for the latest updates on virtual opportunities like this and more!

Support our Community Partners

Our local community needs your aloha more than ever. Consider supporting the businesses and organizations that support our club. The [Honolulu Museum of Art](#) and [Art Explorium](#) offer fantastic virtual activities for children, family, and all art lovers. [Da Shop](#) has an online store that is open and where you can get anything you're looking for. [Hawaiian Style Rentals](#) is open by appointment. [Hawaii Symphony Orchestra](#) concerts are being streamed through Hawaii Public Radio. Many [restaurants](#) are offering various takeout and delivery options. Visit friendsofitalyhawaii.org to see our full list of community partners and please inquire with each organization directly for further details.



Support our Friends in Italy

Some of you have inquired about donations to Italy. After you have contributed locally, there are many GoFundMe initiatives, as well as the usual formal channels for emergencies in Italy:

- [Croce Rossa](#) (Red Cross)
- [Protezione Civile](#) (Civil Protection)
- [Emergency](#) (UN-recognized, non-governmental organization founded in 1994 by Italian surgeon Dr. Gino Strada)
- [Hospital of your choice](#) (perhaps in the city that you feel closest to. Lombardia is facing the highest death roll, but other regions, like Sardegna, are also suffering, and all regions ultimately can benefit from your donation).

READ THIS ARTICLE ON
COVID-19 FROM OUR
HONORARY CONSUL,
DR. MICHELE CARBONE

CLICK [HERE](#)

Organization Updates

Presenting our New Logo

For the past 30 years, Friends of Italy has been dedicated to fostering friendship among the residents of Hawaii with an Italian background or with a special interest in Italian culture. Since 1990, community members like you have made our organization possible by attending cooking classes and cultural events, learning Italian with us, and so much more. We are so grateful for your continued support, and are pleased to announce a brand new logo for our organization. The hibiscus is the state flower of Hawaii, and the composition comes in Italian colors. While our look is new, our heart, our culture, and our sense of community remains constant.



Event Updates

For the health and safety of our members and community partners, we are currently pausing all event registrations until further notice. We look forward to sharing rescheduled dates for events like our fundraising dinner and our Venetian-themed 30th anniversary celebration with you soon. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at info@friendsofitalyhawaii.org. Grazie for your understanding- we look forward to seeing you all again soon! In the meantime, please check our website and social media for online events like Circoli italiani and virtual Italian lessons.

Join our Board

If you have a passion for Italy and Hawaii, please consider applying for a leadership position on our Board. We are currently seeking candidates for the treasury, ideally those with an accounting background and experience with QuickBooks and filing taxes. If you are interested in this role, or in joining the Board in another capacity, please submit a brief bio to info@friendsofitalyhawaii.org. Learn more about our current Board [here](#). Grazie!

Feature Story

REFLECTIONS ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC & ALESSANDRO MANZONI'S *I PROMESSI SPOSI*

by Mark Ethridge



The ongoing terrible COVID-19 epidemic in Italy recalls to my mind some of the dramatic events in *I Promessi Sposi*, Alessandro Manzoni's masterpiece of 19th century Italian literature. Although the current pandemic is severe, the events occurring in 17th century Milan were in fact far worse. A central part of the novel's plot is based on actual historic events surrounding a severe plague that struck Milan and northern Italy in the years 1629-1631.

The Italian Plague of 1629-1631, also known as the Great Plague of Milan, was carried into Italy by invading armies during the chaos of the Thirty Years War. German and French troops carried the disease into the city of Mantua during troop movements associated with the war. It was another recurring outbreak of bubonic plague and killed over 280,000 people and in a sad irony, was most pronounced in the areas of Italy suffering today: Milan, the province of Lombardy, and city state of Venice. In October 1629, the plague reached Milan, Lombardy's major commercial center.

Although the city initiated effective public health measures, including quarantine and limiting the access of German soldiers and trade goods, the plague smoldered. A major outbreak in March 1630 was due to relaxed health measures during the carnival season. This was followed by a second wave in the spring and summer of 1631. Overall, Milan suffered approximately 60,000 fatalities out of a total population of 130,000. Other cities also suffered high death tolls. Venice lost 33% of its population, and Verona, 61%.

It is this same plague that forms a central thread of the plot in *I Promessi Sposi*. One of the main characters, Renzo, is separated from his betrothed Lucia and finds himself in Milan at the height of the plague. He is searching for Lucia who he has been told is sick with the disease in the lazaretto of Milan, a vast enclosure where over 16,000 sick and dying have been placed.

Feature Story, cont.

As health care workers struggle to contain the current pandemic, priests and other church officials risked their lives caring for the sick and dying in 17th century Italy. Manzoni describes some of these efforts in Chapter XXXI of his novel: “The most entire self-devotion was especially conspicuous among the clergy; at the lazarettos, in the city, their assistance was always at hand; they were found, wherever there was suffering, always in attendance on the sick and the dying; very often languishing and dying themselves: with spiritual, they bestowed, as far as they could, temporal succour. More than sixty clergymen in the city alone died from the contagion, which was nearly eight out of nine.”

A central figure in the story is a priest named Fra Cristoforo (Friar Christopher). Fra Cristoforo was the son of a wealthy family who joined the Capuchin order after killing a man. A heroic figure and a moral compass in the story, he helps Renzo find Lucia in the lazaretto, and tends selflessly to plague victims there. He eventually becomes infected there and dies from the plague.



Fra Cristoforo and the betrothed, Lucia and Renzo

His character was probably based on a capuchin father Cristoforo Picenardi da Cremona who died in the plague while caring for victims in early 1630s. There were certainly many more priests and friars who risked their lives as the figure below shows.



Entitled: "P.D. Jacobus Del Verme C.R." Plague broadsides: Engravings attached to memorials for priests who died tending plague victims throughout Italy.

The current COVID-19 epidemic is concentrated in some of the same areas in northern Italy described in Manzoni's novel. The extraordinary efforts and sacrifices of Italian doctors, nurses, and other health care officials remind me of the desperate efforts of priests and others to administer to the sick and dying in Manzoni's historical epic. They are the heroes of this modern drama. They are the Friar Christophers of the year 2020, risking their lives to attend to the overwhelming crush of patients, stressing them and their resources to the breaking point, staying on their feet only through waves of adrenaline. Sadly, many like Fra Cristoforo have lost their lives in battle to save the lives of others. As of March 26, nearly 6,205 health care workers have tested positive for the Coronavirus, and 41 have died.

Feature Story, cont.

We thank them as well as health care workers in the United States and throughout the world for their courage, dedication, and care.

We will get through this horrible ordeal, and someday all will be well (andra' tutto bene). And we will never forget those who gave their lives so others might live. Stay well.

