

Magliano dei Marsi

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On 23 May 2005, I began a journey from Rome by car into the region of the Abruzzi with Sr. Margaret Carney OSF, President of St. Bonaventure University, and Sr. Ann Bremmer OSF. Margaret had received an email from Laura Maria Pietrobattista, a descendant of the Founder of our Province, Panfilo Pietrobattista. After locating the tiny town of Magliano dei Marsi on our map, we headed down the A24 in search of this family. The email contained neither street address nor phone number. When we arrived in the town, the first person we saw was a postman. Margaret showed him her email with the name of the sender, and he told us to go to the next stop sign, turn left, the family lived up that street.

After parking the car, Margaret walked up the almost deserted street and encountered an elderly woman cleaning the entrance to her home. Showing her the email, Margaret asked if the woman knew the family. She answered: "That is my family." We found them! The woman invited us into her home. She thought that her daughter Laura was at work, but since it was Laura's birthday, she had stayed home that day and was in another part of the large house. When Laura heard voices in the house, she came in and a reunion with the Pietrobattista family had begun in earnest. Laura had heard from a Conventual friar in a nearby town that Sr. Margaret was searching for Panfilo's family. So Laura emailed Margaret who responded immediately, but her email never reached Laura. So when we showed up at the house, Laura knew her email reached its destination in the States.

The Pietrobattista family live in the home where Panfilo was born. Laura's Father Vincenzo is the great-grandson of Panfilo's brother, Carlo. The family has always revered the memory of their eminent forebear. There is a huge portrait of him as well as other pictures adorning their walls. They also have a collection of his personal books, including his own Bible. They had vague ideas of the University and Province that Panfilo had founded in the States. The conversation flowed like a river trying to fill them in on the reality and immensity of both entities with pictures and brochures. We were, of course, invited to stay for pranzo, and a mini-opera began to unfold. Vincenzo returned home to the surprise of guests awaiting him. We quickly filled him in on the reason for our visit. By the time we got to the table to eat, a nephew, Luigi Maria Pietrobattista arrived. (Because of the Founder's devotion to the Immaculate Conception, every member of the Pietrobattista family—male and female—take Maria as their middle name.) As the meal was being served,

relative after relative arrived until the house was full of 3 generations of Pietrobattistas. Sr. Margaret then announced to the family that in 2008-09, St. Bonaventure University was celebrating the 150th anniversary of its foundation and that the University wanted to bring the family to the States to participate in the celebration. Smiles abounded!

Following the delicious pranzo, photos were taken in the house and outside with the family. The town put a plaque on the front of the house announcing the fact that Panfilo, our Founder, was born there. Then Laura and her Mother walked us down to the local Franciscan church. Arriving at the church, on the front wall was a bronze bust of Panfilo with a copy of the original building at the University that was, it seems, put there by our Province in 1961. The inscription reads as follows: The Province of Friars Minor of Immaculate Conception of the United States of America remembering the Founder and first Minister P. Panfilo Pietrobattista in the first centenary 1861-1961.

Upon entering the church we saw a huge painting above the main altar of the Immaculate Conception with Pius IX on the lower left side and Panfilo on the lower right. Upon leaving the church, Laura walked us to the street named in honor of Panfilo. Before leaving Italy, we had the opportunity to see Laura one more time at pranzo with our pilgrims in Rieti. She brought us a CD of the photos as well as a DVD of the town of Magliano dei Marsi which her cousin Dr. Luigi Maria Pietrobattista—Assessore: Cultura, Ambiente e protezione civile—made himself.

Website information: [www. MaglianodeiMarsi.it](http://www.MaglianodeiMarsi.it)