

**When you are just about to get there you still don't see it, but you know that behind there is your village, which overlooks the river. You ascend a winding road and you think about whom you will find, about what will have changed. Then the waiting ends, and your fears disappear: whether now or in the past, you have arrived at Calitri, you have returned home.**

*Translated from the Italian by Benjamin De Maio Montalbano*

This is the dedication on the CD - ROM *Calitri*, and these were the thoughts of the Americans who arrived in Calitri on September 5, 2003. Some came to see their

grandparents have spoken. Some came last year, like the Cianci brothers, Benjamin De Maio Montalbano, and Roberto Margotta Bongo. It was the first time for

them welcomed them warmly and were willing to give them news or even to accompany them along the streets that they remembered.

The most important meeting



*From the left, Mr. Cianci, Vito Della Badia, Peggy Di Maio, Vincenzo Di Maio, Roberto bongo, Barbara Baker, Patricia Montalbano, Mrs. Della Badia, Mrs. Bongo.*

grandparents' village again and some came to see the village for the first time and to see the land of their roots, the land where their history begins.

They say that, today, almost all Americans who come from immigrant stock are searching for their own origins, to feel themselves a part of history or, in any case, a part of a family saga that may give them an identity and continuity of their own. This is the way our families came, so that they could discover something about themselves and so that they could become acquainted with the families of whom either their parents or

Peggy De Maio and her husband Paul as well as for Vito Della Badia and his wife, Sue. Everyone was very excited to see Calitri. It was exiting for both for those who had been here before and for those who came here for the first time. All had a chance to wander about the village, but, specifically, they had a chance to see the homes of their grandparents or at least the street from where their family came, and they also had a chance to imagine that it was from those streets that their people set off to immigrate to the United States. They knew that, in some way, they also set off from those streets. The people who met

with the Calitrani took place on September 6, 2003, when Tonino Cicoira, in his capacity as president of the Associazione Romana dei Calitrani, [Calitrani Association of Rome] welcomed them as guests of honor at the annual "Feast of the immigrants" to the sound of the tarantella and with the singing of folk songs. Dr. Frank Cianci and Benjamin DeMaio Montalbano thanked everyone in the name of the group for the friendship and congeniality with which they were welcomed and how in their minds and hearts they will always remember that joyful evening, an evening that will very probably prompt

them to return, because distance and difficulties will not present obstacles so great as to impede a new voyage back to the origin of their life.

The guests present listened with rapt attention, thanks to the simultaneous interpretation of Bruno Frucci and Franca Lucia DiMaio, who are man and wife, and residents of the United States. Some are touched because in the guests' history they saw some of their own history, a history that consisted of emigration, a traumatic uprooting from their own land and therefore from their own traditions, customs, and ways, even if then they are sweetened by the return and above all by the passing of time, which softens the bitterness and hardness of sacrifice, leaving only a sweet nostalgia.

Pro-Loco Calitri assisted this group of Calitranis-Americans, accompanying them and serving as guide in

viewing the city, the churches, and the Ceramic Museum.

Beniamino DeMaio Montalbano, having read the "History of Calitri" by Vito Acoella, also wanted to visit the

places where Crocco's brigands ranged and to see the Abbey of Santa Maria in Elce. But the most touching and most meaningful moment of these Americans in Calitri, took place on Sunday,



*Benjamin and Patricia Montalbano in the church of the Immaculate Conception on their 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.*

September 7, 2003, when, in the church of the Immaculate Conception, Benjamin DeMaio Montalbano with his wife Patricia and Frank Cianci with his wife Mary Ann renewed their marital vows on the occasion of their 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. They wanted to re-consecrate their marriage and renew the promise of love in the church of their fathers, before the image of the Immaculate Conception, who is the spiritual mother of all Calitranis, wherever they are. The faithful present, very numerous as always, silently followed the ceremony and were deeply moved. They understood the profound meaning of this gesture: a renewed pact of spiritual dependency on the Blessed Mother, just as their grandparents had done. Gazing up at that statue, they looked and saw the same thing that their grandparents had looked up and seen many years before. It was as if they had found them again, feeling them to be silent witnesses at their side, renewing the ties of blood and affection both in the church and in the land where their history began.

*Vincenzo Di Maio*



*The Bongo family with a cousin Nazareno Beltrami, former mayor of Calitri*