

# St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York 14202

**Traditionally Speaking** by *S. Casarotto* 8/2/09

## THE CATHEDRAL OF TRANI

A few weeks ago, while visiting the southern Italian region of Puglia, I was fortunate to celebrate mass in the Cathedral of Trani. Located at the end of the Trajan-Appian Way on the heel of the Italian boot, this city was a crossroads for Roman legions, merchants and Christian pilgrims toward the East. Called the “Pearl of Puglia”, Trani’s cathedral is indeed a jewel of architecture and endurance. The “modern” church, built with local white limestone, dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Underneath, we find a 10th century old church. Further down, there is a 7th century church built on top of the original 4<sup>th</sup> century chapel. All four churches are still used by hundred of visitors. The cathedral is dedicated to St. Nicholas, the Hermit. The stark, bare limestone walls of the building are contrasted by a very elaborate, golden ceiling. It quickly reminds the visitors of the trials of life and the glory waiting for us in heaven.

In the New World, 100 years take us back to prehistoric times and what is old is usually demolished. In Europe, it’s not uncommon to find centuries-old buildings and what is old is preserved, restored and put to good use.

A cousin of mine in Italy is an interior decorator and art restorer. He looks for old, handmade bricks, old timber and even old hand-made nails. This material is used either to restore old buildings or is incorporated into new ones. Business is very good. In more than 35 years, he never had to advertise his work.

Our pragmatic and utilitarian society has produced too many insignificant buildings. It needs to rediscover the arts and beauty. It is not by chance that the decadence of the spiritual life in our society coincided with the diminished appreciation of religious arts.

In this regard, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

“Sacred art is true and beautiful when its form corresponds to its particular vocation: evoking and glorifying, in faith and adoration, the transcendent mystery of God – the invisible beauty of truth and love visible in Christ, who reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of its nature’ in whom ‘the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.’ This spiritual beauty of God is reflected in the most holy Virgin Mother of God, the angels and saints. Genuine sacred art draws man to adoration, to prayer, and to the love of God, Creator and savior, the Holy One and Sanctifier.” (CCC, n. 2502).