



Cultural Italian American Organization  
 P.O. Box 1005  
 Auburn, NY 13021  
 www.CayugaCountyCIAO.org

**Newsletter, February, 2026**

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**Monthly Newsletter**

***Ciao a tutti! Hello everyone!***

***Next meeting - Wednesday, February 4, 6:30 PM,***

***Father Nacca Hall***

Meeting, dinner and the fun dice game LCR!

A brief meeting will begin at 6:30 pm sharp! A light meal will follow, compliments of CIAO. Then on to the fun game of LCR; be sure to bring one dollar bills; each game is \$3 to play. Enjoy the "buona compagnia" good friendship with a light dinner. Hope to see you there; no cost to attend the dinner and game night and this is always a fun evening! Feel free to bring a guest, and enjoy! A

reminder that annual dues are payable in January; if you have not already paid for 2026, you can either bring your dues of \$25/person, \$40/couple to the February meeting, or mail to CIAO, PO Box 1005, Auburn, NY 13021. Also CIAO has sent notices/reminders to members with an inclusion of a self-stamped return envelope to make it easier for the payment. Your continuous membership enables CIAO to remain strong and vital to our many projects assisting others in need.



***Benvenuto, Bishop John S. Bonnici***

CIAO is honored to welcome His Excellency, Bishop John S. Bonnici, newly appointed Bishop of the Rochester Diocese. It is a privilege to have him among us. Bishop Bonnici is the son of immigrants—his *papà* from the island of Malta and his *mamma* from Romania—bringing with him a rich heritage and deep faith. As Bishop Bonnici begins his pastoral journey in the Diocese of Rochester, we extend our heartfelt prayers for a long and blessed spiritual life. May his ministry be guided by wisdom, compassion, and grace, *con la benedizione del Signore*—with the blessing from above. *Buona fortuna!*

***Crow Cawcus Convention – February 21***

Mike "Pompieri" Vasco is making arrangements for CIAO to participate in the Crow Cawcus Convention in downtown Auburn. CIAO will be inside the old Key Bank building, corner of Genesee and State Street, on Saturday, February 21. It will benefit CIAO, as pasta fagioli, chicken riggies, pastries, cannoli and cream puffs will be served. If anyone is there for the occasion, please stop in, visit, and check out our food items. *Grazie!*



**Happy Valentinz's Day!**

*Il bacio chiede amore, il bacio concede amore*

The kiss demands love, the kiss grants love

## ***Pasticceria Fortunato 2026 Premio Eccellenza Nomination***

### ***Celebrating Italian pastry excellence and heritage***

Nominated in 2026 in celebration of their 50th anniversary (1976–2026), the Fortunato Brothers Café and Pasticceria was honored as one of the finest Italian pastry shops preserving tradition—bringing joy to tables everywhere with products proudly *Made in Italy, made by Italians*.

The award was presented to Michael Fortunato of Fortunato Brothers Café and Pasticceria in Brooklyn. CIAO extends its heartfelt congratulations to the Fortunato Brothers on this *grandioso* achievement, a true testament to their dedication and the pride they inspire in Italian heritage. *Bravissimi!*



CIAO is also fortunate to have Mario among our members, as he so generously shares their delicious specialties with us. *Grazie!*

### ***Carnevale di Venezia***

#### ***Pre-Lenten Mardi Gras Celebration***

Venice—*La Serenissima*, “the most serene”—may stand on stilts, but for centuries it has drawn millions of revelers from around the world. For more than 200 years, Venetians have celebrated Carnevale with lavish masked balls and festivities held throughout the city. In the week leading up to Lent, seven days and nights of celebrations take place in each of the *rioni* (neighborhoods), where participants don elegant and elaborate masks—most famously the *bauta*. These masks are often custom-made to reflect the personality or character the wearer wishes to portray.

The tradition of Carnevale dates back to 1420, originally marking a Venetian military victory, and reached its height in the 1700s during an era of extraordinary elegance and indulgence. The word *carnival* comes from the Latin *carne* (meat) and *vale* (farewell), meaning “goodbye to meat,” a nod to the fasting period of Lent that follows.

Other famous Italian carnivals are held in cities such as Viareggio and Lucca, with records showing celebrations as early as 1268. In Rome, under Cola di Rienzo, streets once filled with revelers enjoying music, dancing, and celebration, while confetti blanketed the ground and streamers and banners adorned balconies.

Historically, Venetian masks often reflected one’s social rank, though they also allowed wearers anonymity and freedom. During periods of foreign rule—such as under Napoleon and later Austrian control—and again during the Fascist era, Carnevale was forbidden. It was not until the late 20th century that the celebration was revived.

Today, Venetians proudly don exquisitely crafted costumes inspired by the 1700s and 1800s, strolling through St. Mark’s Square and delighting visitors in the piazza. Exclusive masked balls, held in grand palaces along the Grand Canal, continue the tradition of opulence, with tickets often costing over €1,000 per person.

***Dicevano I Nostri Nonni:***

*L’amore vince sempre*

Love conquers all