



**ITALIAN AMERICAN MUSEUM**

155 Mulberry Street, New York, NY 10013 · [www.italianamericanmuseum.org](http://www.italianamericanmuseum.org)

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## **RESTORED ITALIAN STATUE DESTROYED IN 2009 EARTHQUAKE TO BE EXHIBITED AT ITALIAN AMERICAN MUSEUM IN NEW YORK**

An iconic statue shattered to pieces in the Italian earthquake of April 6, 2009 will be on display at the Italian American Museum beginning April 7, 2011 following a complicated and meticulous two-year restoration. The restoration was funded by more than \$100,000 in public donations collected by the Italian American Museum after the devastating earthquake in L'Aquila, which killed 308 people and left thousands more injured and homeless.



Known as La Madonna di Pietranico, the statue will be available for public viewing at the Italian American Museum (155 Mulberry St.) until June 2. At that time, the statue will be returned to its rightful home in the town of Pietranico in the Abruzzo region.

“We were presently surprised and excited when we were told La Madonna would be sent to New York upon the restoration’s completion,” said Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa, Founder and President of the Italian American Museum. “We expect thousands to come see it and witness the fruits of their generous donations.”

In Italy, the statue has been the subject of some controversy. In 1932, it was removed from the church of San Michele and Santa Giusta in Pietranico and taken to the San Clemente Abbey for restoration. It ultimately wound up in a museum in L'Aquila, which was the earthquake’s epicenter two years ago. After the quake, local and national government officials decided that it would be returned to Pietranico after nearly 80 years.

But as a gesture of gratitude to supportive New Yorkers, officials decided to exhibit La Madonna di Pietranico at the Italian American Museum for two months. The Madonna once bore the baby Jesus in her arms, but it is not known what caused it to be removed.

A special invitation-only reception honoring Elisabetta Sonnino, who restored the sculpture, will take place at the Italian Cultural Institute at 6:00 pm on Wednesday, April 6. The following day, Thursday April 7, the restored work will be unveiled during a 12:00 pm news conference at the Museum. Italian government officials will attend the news conference. On Friday evening, an invitation-only reception hosted by the Italian American Museum, actor Chazz Palminteri and New York State and City officials will be held at the Museum.

Founded in 2001, the Italian American Museum is dedicated to exploring the rich cultural heritage of Italy and Italian Americans by presenting the individual and collective struggles and achievements of Italians and their heirs to the American way of life. More than 25 million Americans can trace their familial roots to Italy.

A video of the restoration can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzJiLv7eyl4>