

NYC Italian Community Remembers 9/11

Federico Ghelli (September 13, 2016)



The Italian General Consulate of New York hosts an event to commemorate the people of Italian descent who died during the attack at the World Trade Center.

A moment of silence, heads are bowed. The smiles of few minutes earlier turn into sorrow. Some



start praying; others drop a tear. Flowers decorate the two flaming towers incised in marble. Many came to commemorate what's no longer here, and not everyone can fit in the small atrium of the [Italian General Consulate of New York](#) [2].

Then, the soothing sound of a flute breaks the silence. "The lives lost will not be lost in vain," the priest declares solemnly. It sounds redundant at first – how many times did we hear that? – but in a moment like this, those words feel sturdier than ever.

Over one hundred eighty-six Italian Americans died on 9/11. Fifteen Septembers later we all still want to believe they aren't gone in vain.

"After 15 years there's a stronger sense of unity within the Italian community," Consul Francesco Genuardi says. "Because civilization is stronger than terrorism, freedom is stronger than fear."

A terrorist attack wounded the heart of New York and left a scar on those families. The pain never left them; you can see it in their weary eyes, the deafening mourns. [Daniel Nigro](#) [3], commissioner of the New York fire department, calls 9/11 an attack on a way of life, the life owned by people who love freedom.

Those same people "will continue to have freedom, to live, to rebuild," he says.

He also says that friendship has grown strong between the fire department and Italy since 9/11. On that day, Italians were one of the first to ask "What can we do to help?" Because of that, he calls every employee of the consulate a "good friend."

So those souls weren't really lost in vain.

A father, a mother, a son, read the names of those whom, 15 years later, still mean something. One hundred and eighty-six names. One by one. Slowly. The more they read, the heavier the room gets. It's been 15 years, but it doesn't seem to mean much.

"My son gave his life to help," says Giulio Picolli, president of [Associazione Italiana Ieri Oggi Domani](#) [4]. "He had the dream to share."

And while a singer (Elisa Bovi) rejoices the crowd by sharing an adaptation of the hymn [Ave Maris Stella](#) [5], a few words from the beginning of the event start resonating in my mind. Virgil said them first, but the occasion was perfect to bring them back to life.

"No day should erase you from the memory of time."

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[3] <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/fdny/about/overview/leadership/fire-commissioner.page>

[4] <http://iod-italianassociation.org/home.html>

[5] <http://www.themostholysary.com/appendix9.htm>