

**Poggioreale in America
2022 Student Scholarship Essay**

by

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I come from a long line of Italians that we have traced to the mid to late 1800's. When looking into my family line and hearing stories that my late great grandmother told my Mom, my family came to America on a boat. They completely left Italy and most of their belongings to come to America for a better life. My great grandmother told my mom that her Dad had to leave one of his siblings in Italy as he was not able to get on the boat due to an eye infection. He watched the whole family leave him behind. Sadly, they were never reunited with him again.

From the stories that I have been told, it was hard for my ancestors as they were coming to America without knowing English or anything about America. But everyone stuck together and established a life and pushed through as they settled in the Bryan and the Houston area. Eventually, all of my great grandparents ended up in Bryan and here we are generations later. Without the decisions made by ancestors, I probably would not be here today.

My family has worked hard to keep up many Italian traditions and pass them down to my generation. There are many recipes and my Mom has mastered making sfincione at Christmas. We try to make as many of the traditional foods as possible. My parents make authentic Italian meals, and we even watch soccer (specifically Juventus and the Italian National Team).

My Dad has learned to speak Italian and I have learned many words/ phases myself as I am trying to learn the language. We still celebrate Italian Catholic culture at Saint Anthony's Catholic Church, which was built with my great grandparents and great great grandparents. I have received all my sacraments at St. Anthony's, our Italian Catholic community in America. Actually this year, I was given the opportunity to take part in a Sicilian St. Joseph Altar and I represented the Blessed Virgin Mary! It was such an amazing experience from learning to make the fig cookies on the altar, to hearing the rosary in Italian. It was so cool and breathtaking to experience!

I am also very lucky to have family and friends that live all over Sicily and Italy. Since I have been born, we visited Italy five times and Sicily twice. I've been given the opportunity to travel all over Italy. It is so beautiful and rich in culture. Without all of this and my Italian heritage, I would not be who I am today. To my name, the people, the traditions, everything in my life involves my Italian culture. I am so grateful for it and I am proud to be an American-Italian woman.