

## 2010 Giglio di Sant' Antonio Feast

East Harlem, once the largest Italian community in NYC is a pleasant memory for countless former inhabitants. To renew that memory, thousands of former residents along with their children and grandchildren will be returning to renew that bond and meet up with friends in the old neighborhood for the Feast of Giglio di Sant'Antonio sponsored by the Giglio Society of East Harlem.

The Giglio Society of East Harlem is a group of men who have dedicated their lives to honor Sant' Antonio, their beloved saint. Their love and devotion is on display each year during their Annual Festival held in East Harlem, New York. They honor their Patron Saint in very much the same fashion as their ancestry did and still do annually today in Brusciano, Italy by building a Giglio and dancing it in the streets of Manhattan, New York.

The origins of the Giglio Society trace their heritage back to the town of Brusciano, Italy approximately 20 miles outside of Naples. Here an annual Feast called the Dance of the Giglio takes place yearly in honor Sant' Antonio. The feast originally began back in the 1880's when Francisco Vivolo prayed to Sant' Antonio to help cure his deathly ill child.

In exchange for this cure, Francisco vowed to honor Sant' Antonio in the same manner the town's people of Nola, Italy, a nearby town honoring San Paolino di Nola, by constructing Gigli in honor of Sant' Antonio and dancing them in the streets of Brusciano. Francisco's prayers were answered and the dancing of the Gigli in Brusciano was born. It continues today where 6 Gigli are built for the Annual Festival during the latter part of August and danced on the shoulders of hundreds of men

For those unfamiliar with the Giglio (pronounced JEEL-YO)-it is a 75 to 85 foot tall wooden structure weighing approx 8,000 lbs with a papier-mâché face adorned with beloved saints and colorful flowers.

The face of the Giglio is one of the crucial components of the Giglio, each made from scratch each year to specification of the Maestro di Festa (or Master of Ceremonies) in Italy. Although the face changes yearly, one consistent fact remains and that is- the town's patron saint can be found somewhere on the face and more likely on the top. Giglios are built in honor of a town's patron saint and carried on the shoulders of approximately 120 men in a ritual that dates back to 409AD in the town of Nola Italy. Today, Giglio feasts are found throughout a number of towns in the surrounding area of Naples. Each town varies the tradition to meet the local town's tradition.

On the platform just above the base of the Giglio sits a multi-piece band along with several singers. The music is an instrumental part of the dancing of the Giglio as it inspires the Lifters (also known as the "Paranza" in Italian) to take on the burdening weight of the Giglio and band and dance it in harmony to the music being played. Additional historical Giglio information can be found at [www.giglio-usa.org](http://www.giglio-usa.org).

Around the turn of 1900's, Italian immigrants left Italy in search of a better life for their families. During this time, Southern Italy was a very desperate place holding little or no promise of a bright future for the many starving and hungry families. Many had no choice but to pack up their belongings and take a chance on moving to the promise of 'New World' – America!

Many families from the town of Brusciano, Italy migrated to East Harlem, NY to start anew with other families and friends that came before them. Although these Immigrants brought little with them on their 30-day long voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in the tight confines of the boat, what they did carry with them were their beloved traditions. For the people of Brusciano, this included the yearly Dance of the Giglio Festival in honor of Sant'Antonio.

Upon their arrival, the Italian immigrants of East 106th Street in East Harlem decided to initiate their beloved traditions by building a Giglio and dancing it in the 'New World'. The Festival on 106th Street grew for many years becoming one of the largest street fairs in America and remained that way until 1955. Then in 1957, the

Festival moved a few blocks uptown to 108th Street where the Dance of the Giglio continued until 1971.

After a 29-year hiatus, the Dance of the Giglio returned to East Harlem in 2000 as a Cooperative Feast with the Shrine Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel that resides on 115th Street between 1st and Pleasant Avenues. The Festival enjoyed several years dancing the Giglio during the Annual Feast of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel that takes place each year on July 16th, the Feast Date of the Madonna. Historical information on the Our Lady of Mount Carmel feast can be found at [www.mountcarmelofeastharlem.com](http://www.mountcarmelofeastharlem.com).

For the 2006 Feast, it was decided to hold the Dance of the Giglio Festival separate from the annual Our Lady of Mount Carmel Feast. The decision to move the Dancing of the Giglio dates made absolute sense in order to relieve the strain on the Giglio community. This strain was caused by the coinciding Giglio Feasts held in East Harlem and Williamsburg- Brooklyn ([www.olmcfest.com](http://www.olmcfest.com)) dancing their Giglio on the same weekend that fell around the July 16th, the feast date of the Madonna.

The Giglio Society of East Harlem continues as a Society under the auspices of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Shrine Church. Their beloved Pastor Father Peter J Rofrano, who they view as a legend in East Harlem and primarily responsible for the return of the Giglio, passed away on May 19th, 2007. Father Chris Salvatori who spent much of his early priesthood under Father Rofrano's guidance describes Father Rofrano as "the icon of East Harlem." Father returned to our Lord after almost 91 yrs here - 3/4s of them living and working in East Harlem.

At the moment of his death, Father Rofrano was the Pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Shrine Church on 115th Street between 1st and Pleasant Avenues. He was born on June 11, 1916. He grew up on East 109th street, was an altar boy at Saint Ann's church on E.110th Street. He grew up with the early 106th Giglio. On July 30,1939 Father was ordained to the Pallotine order of the priesthood in Rome, Italy. But East Harlem and the Giglio were in his blood. You knew this because he wanted the Giglio back in East Harlem. After an absence of nearly thirty years, his dream came true with the lift on July 16, 2000. The Giglio Society of East Harlem will always cherish the good Father for his total support and spiritual guidance. Father Rofrano Rest in Peace-

The 2010 Dance of the Giglio Feast is the 11th anniversary of its return to East Harlem. It will be held on Pleasant Avenue between 114th and 116th Streets. Opening Night is Thursday—August 5th <http://www.raos.com/raos-restaurant-new-york.aspx> at 7PM with Sant'Antonio carried into the feast by our ladies division, the Giglio Girls, followed by entertainment at 8pm by the Brooklyn Keys. Friday night, August 6th there will be entertainment at 8pm by Tony Sal and his Doo Wop Revue. Saturday, August 7th will start with a Procession in honor of Sant' Antonio at Noon. 7 PM will be the Dancing of the Children's Giglio followed by DJ entertainment by Megan Z.

Giglio Sunday August 8th will start with a mass for the Paranza at Our Lady of Mount Carmel at 12:30 pm. The Dance of the Giglio di Sant'Antonio will begin at 2:00pm with additional lifts and music by Danny Vecchiano and his Giglio Band, accompanied by Jimmy Alleva, the Giglio Singer. Danny and his band along with Jimmy Alleva have been an integral part of the East Harlem Giglio, Long Island Sons of San Paolino as well as the Brooklyn Giglio in Williamsburg for many years.

Food vendors will be on hand offering beverages, sausage and peppers, zeppole, steak, shish kabob, seafood and other food items. In addition, Souvenir T-shirts will also be sold (get there early for the shirts go fast). Rides and Games of Chance will also be available for everyone's enjoyment.

Have you wanted to eat at Rao's Restaurant ([www.raos.com](http://www.raos.com)) and can't get a reservation? Here is your chance. The famous restaurant, a long time Giglio supporter, will provide Dinner for 4 on Tuesday September 14, 2010 to the lucky winner of The Giglio Society's Annual Raffle. Tickets are \$10 each. The drawing will be held on Giglio Sunday night. Winner does not have to be present. All proceeds from the Raffle go directly towards the continuation of the Giglio tradition.

Regarding updates on events sponsored by The Giglio Society of East Harlem go to [www.eastharlemgiglio.com](http://www.eastharlemgiglio.com). For additional feast info call Bob Maida (914) 787 0692 or email [bob631@aol.com](mailto:bob631@aol.com).

# Giglio di Sant' Antonio Feast

## 2010 Schedule of Events

Thursday July 1st	8 PM	General Members Meeting, Deadline for the Annual Dues. Hats & Shirts will be given out to Members who have paid their Dues. Posters will be available.
Friday July 23rd	All Day	We begin to build the Giglio and complete the building on Saturday July 24th.
Saturday July 31st	All Day	The Annual Barbecue with the Giglio Band & the Dressing of the Giglio di Sant' Antonio.
Thursday August 5th	7 PM	Opening Night Procession with Sant' Antonio carried into the Feast by The Giglio Girls.
	8 PM	Entertainment by The Brooklyn Keys.
Friday August 6th	8PM	Entertainment by Tony Sal & his Doo Wop Revue.
Saturday August 7th	12 PM	Sant' Antonio Procession throughout the Neighborhood.
	6 PM	Hats & Shirts will be distributed to the Children in attendance who will be lifting the Children's Giglio.
	7 PM	Dancing of the Children's Giglio.
	9 PM	Entertainment by Dee Jay Megan Z.
Sunday August 8th	12:30 PM	Paranza Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Shrine Church.
	2 PM	First Lift and Dancing of the Giglio di Sant' Antonio.
Monday August 9th	9 AM	The Giglio is taken down. Members are urged to attend to help take down the Giglio.