

Italian Americans in the USA

C: Hello Maria! Welcome back! How's your day today?

M: Hi Carla! I'm really good. And you?

C: I'm good, I'm good. I still keep thinking about your grandfather who did not speak Italian with his children. That must have been so hard for him and I suppose for many other Italian-Americans if they did the same.

M: Yeah, I mean, discrimination was high and they really felt that this was the way to handle it.

C: Yeah, I can understand that. But I also kind of thought, this must feel like losing part of your identity.

M: Yeah, I think that's true and it's especially true, probably, for my grandparents.

C: But then, I hope Italian-Americans have not lost all their identity. So, they might have kept some of the traditions?

M: Mhm.

C: So could you tell me a bit about the traditions. There is a lot I don't know about Italian-Americans.

M: Absolutely.

C: Thank you!

M: I think if you go to a place like New York or Colorado, where I live now, they have some Italian pockets. New York has a strong Italian town. There you're going to find the language. Although it's a different... I don't know if anyone listening to this has watched The Sopranos. That would be my family. You know, the families are quite tight. Most are Catholic. So if you walk into a house, you're going to see crucifixes up on the wall or pictures of Jesus and Mary. Our names are named after a lot of saints. So my full name would be Maria Francesca Teresa Anamolino. And that would be all the saints to protect me. I did the same thing with my kids. A lot of, you know, rosaries. I don't know if people know what that is, but praying and you will go to church. Even if you are not a good Catholic, you still go to church.

C: Regularly. Like every Sunday.

M: Every Sunday. And then we would go on every holiday.

C: That's so unlike Norway. I can't imagine walking into someone's house and seeing crucifixes and rosaries.

M: It's like that. Yeah, paintings of Jesus and Mary. Yeah, it's really common. In some of the art, the Catholic art is quite beautiful, or the Christian art, the Jesus art. And some of it's a little creepy. You're like, oh, he's watching me.

C: That must be really special. Kind of distinct from other homes maybe in New York.

M: So that's not just in New York. So, I think that's old Italian. Like that was my grandparents' home. And they grew up in the little, they moved to the little village to be next to us. And that's mostly what I remember from the home are all the pictures and the crucifixes. And then if my parents traveled, they would always buy, I don't, you know, at Christmas you put out the manger with Jesus and Joseph and Mary.

C: Oh, like a crib?

M: No, it's, what is the name of it? There's a name of it, but it's like my parents, everywhere they went, they would buy that.

C: Oh, like a nativity scene?

M: Yes, that's what the nativity, they would buy that from wherever they went. That's what they would bring home. Or they would bring home...

C: So they have loads at home?

M: Yeah, different ones. So at Christmas, you're putting out all the different ones. It's very important.

C: But when you as a child went to visit your school friends who were not Italian-Americans, was that a completely different experience?

M: So they weren't praying all the time or having to go to church, right? And much more liberal, not so conservative, usually not as loud as we are.

C: Well, I suppose there are many other cultures that are loud enough.

M: Absolutely.

C: Wow, this is really interesting. But you also talked about Italian-Americans not being the same everywhere.

M: It depends, again, on the state where you live. And if there's a big group around you. So I was it was interesting that in a town of a thousand people that the priest was Brooklyn Italian. And that, you know, then my uncles and my grandparents, you know, we lived there. And everybody else was not that. A lot of priests are from Italian (background).

C: Yeah, if religion is important for you, then yeah, of course, some people might become priests. Yeah, I understand. Wow! There is so much I didn't know about the Italian-Americans, thank you for telling me this!

M: You are welcome.

C: Can we talk about California next time?

M: Oh yeah. That's super interesting, definitely.

C: Super! Thank you!