

Celebrazioni Columbus Day
11 ottobre 2021, ore 11:00

Dear President (*James*) McCusker,
Ambassador Cabanas,
Honorable McBride,
Members of the Columbus Knights and of the Italian-
American organizations;
Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,

It is a great pleasure to be here today with all of you to commemorate and reflect on the meaning of Columbus's 1492 journey and its influence on world history. On this occasion, I bring to you Ambassador Mariangela Zappia's heartfelt greetings from Italy.

Cristopher Columbus's explorations laid the foundations for a bridge between the Old and the New World, changing the destiny of humankind forever and leading to what we now call a globalized world. However, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the arrival of Europeans to the Americas brought great suffering to the Native communities, and, as President Biden underscores in his proclamation of October 8th, it is important to acknowledge the painful aspect of our shared history.

Columbus was the first of many Italians who reached the Americas and today's commemoration also serves to pause and reflect on the enormous contribution that people of Italian descent have given - and continue to give - to this great country. As President Biden underlined, "millions of Italian-Americans continue to enrich our country's traditions and culture and make lasting contributions to our Nation – they are educators, health care workers, scientists, first responders, military service members, and public servants among so many other vital roles".

Since 1492, the histories of our Countries, and peoples, have been closely intertwined, nurtured by the shared values born of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, which so strongly inspired the building of our nations. The bond between our peoples is first and foremost a human one, based on shared values and principles, and is what defines our relations, which indeed span all aspects - be it economic, cultural, social or political. Alongside great historical figures, we pay tribute to the many nameless people of Italian descent who – through the centuries - followed Columbus, leaving their country for a distant and unknown world, where they built their new home. To this day, the descendants of this many courageous immigrants continue to be pivotal in shaping this society, economy, art, culture and the American *way of life*. The

Genoese navigator's hallmarks were entrepreneurship, commitment and bravery: the same qualities that distinguish our communities in America.

Let me say how proud we are of our fellow countrymen, of ***you***, both for your role in US society and for your appreciation of your ancestral home.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This day is an opportunity to recognize undeniable historical facts and, at the same time, to cherish and honor the unwavering dedication which Italian Americans have pledged to the Country they chose to call home.

A few months ago, on June 16th, Italy's Parliament overwhelmingly approved a resolution to honor and protect the memory of Christopher Columbus. The Resolution *“commits the government to take action, on the political and diplomatic level, so that the Italian cultural heritage in the USA and the symbolic figure of that heritage embodied by Christopher Columbus may be safeguarded”*.

Nothing speaks more clearly to the solidarity between Italy and its descendants in America who are engaged in the protection, preservation and promotion of Columbus's true legacy.

This year marks the 160th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Italy and the U.S., a milestone in the long-standing friendship that joins our countries, and peoples.

160 years later the world is very different - but our bonds are stronger than ever. They are based on shared values, principles and responsibilities, which underlie our democracies to this day, forming an intangible heritage that we are tasked to always protect.

(On Columbus Day we celebrate the outstanding contribution of Italian-Americans to this great Nation as well as the many American friends who nurture a sincere appreciation for Italy.) Thank you again to all of you for your contribution to this great Country but also to the excellent relations between the United States and Italy.

Grazie, e buona giornata di Cristoforo Colombo a tutti!