

## La Dolce Vita of The De Blasios

Giulia Madron (July 21, 2014)



First stop - Rome for Mayor Bill De Blasio. In the Eternal City he met his colleague Ignazio Marino, Minister of Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini and the Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Parolin. Now, two days of relaxing with his family in the beautiful island of Capri. "Italy is a wonderful place!," he said.

Nine days in the country of his ancestors. On July 20th, Mayor of New York City Bill De Blasio landed in the Italian capital, Rome, a first stop of the nine-day holiday with his whole family: his wife Chirlane, son Dante and daughter Chiara. "I am very happy to be here with my family," said De Blasio. "Italy is a wonderful place!," exclaimed, in perfect Italian.

De Blasio travelled on a Delta Airlines flight. He disembarked as an ordinary passenger. Dressed very casually, in a blue shirt, a pair of beige colonial style trousers and sneakers, the Mayor of New York was escorted by the border police and American security agents, to Terminal 3 where a great number of photographers and television crews, mostly American, were waiting for his arrival at the



Fiumicino airport of Roma.

Once he exited the Terminal, a van was awaiting to bring the De Blasios into the heart of the Eternal City. Before leaving the airport, De Blasio returned the big smiles and greetings of the other passengers, Italian and American, who recognized him on their way out of the airport.

This is quite a long holiday for the first citizen of the Big Apple, even though his agenda is full of official meetings with many representatives of various Italian Institutions. On Monday, July 21st Mr. De Blasio met Mayor of Rome Ignazio Marino. The meeting was followed by an appointment with the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini, whom he already met in New York last May. De Blasio said that Italy is an example of leadership within the EU due to its anti-austerity stance, which the US shares in the battle for growth and job creation.

"I feel at home," said De Blasio, enthusiastically after meeting his Roman colleague. "I feel close to my family. Mayor Marino and I hit it off right away."

Among the Roman meetings, also one with the Vatican Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin.

"We love this pope in New York: his is an important voice, and he is very focused on the challenges of a world in crisis," said Mayor De Blasio. "He reminds us that we all, always, have to be like brothers," he affirmed, saying also that he hopes Pope Francis will visit New York soon.

After the very busy stop in the Italian capital, the De Blasios left Rome to get on their way to the beautiful island of Capri, where they will be spending two days relaxing.

While the Mayor of New York is enjoying his vacation, in New York the polemics do not stop. De Blasio's trip is the longest one ever taken by a New York mayor in more than 25 years.

"You can't run a city while you are not in the city. A Mayor should be always there," said one of his predecessors Rudy Giuliani during a radio interview. However, even if his co-citizens do not look kindly upon him, Italians seem to love him. Especially in the hometown of his grandparents: Sant'Agata Dei Goti which he plans to visit on July 23rd.

Right now, pictures and posters of De Blasio are all over the town. Everyone is ready to welcome the Mayor of New York who will be proclaimed honorary citizen of the Italian town.

Moreover, a Neapolitan artisan fashioned a terra cotta figurine of Mr. de Blasio, with tricolor sash, a pizza-maker wrote "Napoli Love de Blasio" in mozzarella on a pizza. He is a real sensation in Italy not only because of his Italian origins, but also because he always stated the importance of Italy in his life as a young child as well as today.

Indeed, in the Big Apple, candidate Bill De Blasio gave interviews in Italian. His campaign staff jokingly designated a press aide who spoke a bit of the language as the "Italian desk," and during the night of his election, more than 15 Italian journalists attended the celebrations at Park Slope.

Furthermore, De Blasio said that his connection to the country became very strong when he was a teenager and that it has been a big source of strength and support during a very difficult period of his life.

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