

Magnifico Rettore Ubertini; President McRobbie; distinguished former directors and current director Ricci; valued students past and present; other esteemed guests.

To celebrate the fifty years of the Bologna program, we gather today in the *aula absidale* of the deconsecrated church of Santa Lucia that, in obvious memory of its titular saint, is still resplendent and overflowing with light, the light not unlike the illuminating power and presence of the *Alma Mater Studiorum*, the beacon of higher education worldwide. I am grateful to Kathy Sideli for her kind invitation to offer some remarks on behalf of all the thirty-five resident directors, and I do so with the knowledge that, while we all share a superficially common experience, each of us has unique memories of events, activities, problems, and pleasures from our particular year or years. Every year is special, and I am sure that each of us could write a sufficiently different book of “adventures.”

Many years ago I was a student – both undergraduate and graduate – at Indiana University and am now professor emeritus of Italian language and literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison – Indiana’s first partner institution in the Bologna program. Thus, I have been acquainted with the program since its inception in 1965 and have interested myself in its fortunes over the past half-century. In part, we are here today to pay tribute to Mark Musa (who was my thesis advisor) for his key role and keen vision in establishing the Bologna program, and, with these collective thanks, we also pay our respects to his widow Isabella, Mark’s constant companion and inspiration for more than fifty years.

Few, if any, of us were either specially trained or fully prepared to meet the challenges that the position of Director presents. There was no crash course for directors – or perhaps there was only a crash course, and we picked up the pieces as best we could. Still, the learning curve, though steep, was not impossible to master. On our home campuses we would teach classes in our particular disciplines, advise students, and perform various administrative functions in our departments, but we were hardly expert in this new role: helping students find apartments, navigating the often confounding waters of

Italian bureaucracy, resolving conflicts of a non-academic nature between students and their landlords, serving as a confidant on delicate matters, and, in my year at least, dealing with *scioperi* and protests of various sorts. Many times, I expect, we directors resolved some of these matters by simply (and more wisely than we knew), by simply handing them off to the program's assistant director, Nicoletta Bonafé, *a cui eravamo veramente grati*. The analytical skills we possess as academics can guide us only so far in actual events. But we all, evidently, survived! We might reflect with greater complacency on the richness of our "lived" experience in Bologna. Never a dull moment. *Sorprese a non finire*. Excitement, frustration, nostalgia, but generally a sense of accomplishment. All this working in us simultaneously with the inevitable, growing love for the city: its beauty, history, culture, civility, and – need I say it? – gastronomy.

On a personal note, the year my wife Marge and I spent in Bologna, 1970-71, was richly rewarding for many reasons. Our young children (Steven age 4 and Michael age 1) never forsook their early attachment to Italy. We were blessed with a wonderful group of students – our "kids," as we called them – most of whom – can it really be true? – are now near retirement age. Six years ago, in the fall of 2010, fourteen of us gathered here in Bologna to celebrate the 40th anniversary of our particular adventure, and many of them are here again today: Betsy, Christy, Michele, Becky, Martha, Mary Lynne, Laurel, Carolyn, and Mary. Their friendship has meant much to Marge and me over the years, as has our continuing relationship with Nicoletta and her husband, Gianni Mezzadri. For almost two-thirds of its history, Nicoletta was the constant element, the unchanging face of the program, supplying invaluable continuity and serving as the students' most sought-after source for practical information and advice.

In terms of professional development I benefitted, as I would imagine most directors did, by becoming acquainted with faculty colleagues in the various *facoltà* – in my day the program's principal

contacts in the *Magistero* were Ezio Raimondi and Mario Pazzaglia. And in the midst of our extensive directorial duties, we may even have found a few rare moments of free time to think about our own research. That year I published my first article in the journal *Studi e problemi di critica testuale*, edited by Raffaele Spongano, a professor in *Lettere e filosofia* with whom I subsequently enjoyed a long scholarly collaboration. In Bologna, the personal and professional aspects of a director's life coalesce. Indeed, as my wife knows all too well, the Bolognese bookshops provided many a volume towards my professional library, just as the restaurants added a few *kili* to my waistline. Ah, *Bologna la Dotta*, *Bologna la Grassa*!

For the past fifty years the Bologna Consortial Studies Program has played an important role in the life of its faculty directors. The year in Bologna allowed us a very different but most rewarding academic experience, deservedly cherished both at the time and in remembrance. We are grateful to have served as directors, for this unique opportunity immeasurably enriched our lives and those of our students. In meeting a variety of challenges and in preparing generations of outstanding, cosmopolitan students, the Program's fifty years of success warrant this occasion of mutual congratulation, and, indeed, they argue well for its continuing importance. It is commonly said that what we do as professors is not merely for the present, but for future generations, and that is the case also for directors of study-abroad programs. And so, as we celebrate this milestone with the festive cry "*Cinquant'anni*," "Fifty years," I, for one, would join the chorus by raising a glass of appropriately chilled Lambrusco or Asti Spumante and, optimistically and enthusiastically, shout: "*Cento anni*”!