

ITALIAN HERITAGE & CULTURE COMMITTEE OF NEW YORK, INC.



DANTE ALIGHIERI

Medieval Poet, Philosopher, Genius,
Author of the Epic Poem, *Divina Commedia*.

Commemorating the 700th Anniversary of His Death
and Identifying March 25 as “*Dantedì*” (*Dante Day*),
The Presumed Beginning of Dante the Pilgrim’s Voyage
through *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*.

- Born in Florence, Republic of Florence, c. 1265.
- Raised by parents and with two half siblings; mother died when Dante was 10 years old.
- Educated at home, vast knowledge of Tuscan and Sicilian poetry, Latin classics, mathematics, astronomy, theology, culture, politics, and philosophy.
- Immersed in the political strife of the time, supporter of the Papacy vs. the Holy Roman Empire.
- Held various political offices in Florence; enrolled in the Guild of Doctors and Pharmacists.
- Exiled from Florence in 1302, due to alleged corruption as Prior of Florence; would be burned at the stake if returned.
- Inspired by his idealized love, Beatrice, to write *La Vita Nuova*.
- “Father” of the Italian language and referred to as “*Il Sommo Poeta*” (“The Supreme Poet”).
- *Divina Commedia*, completed in 1320, considered the most important poem of the Middle Ages, the greatest literary work in the Italian language, and the greatest poem of all times.
- Set a precedent by writing in the vernacular Italian, not Latin, in *La Vita Nuova* and *Divina Commedia*; influenced Boccaccio and Petrarca, as well as others through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
- Enabled a wider audience among the populous by adopting the vernacular and not Latin.
- Established the Florentine vernacular as the basis for the national language, helping to unify Italians across diverse regions and dialects.
- Introduced the *terza rima*, the interlocking three-line rhyme scheme.
- Influenced great writers, such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Longfellow, Tennyson, etc.
- Died September 14, 1321; buried in the Church of San Pier Maggiore, Ravenna, cenotaph in Basilica of Santa Croce, Florence.
- Dante statue located in Dante Park, across from Lincoln Center, New York City; other dedicated statues at sites throughout the United States, Italy, and other parts of the world.

- ♦ Death sentence rescinded by Florence City Council in 2008!
- ♦ Italian Council of Ministers establish first annual national Dantedì, March 25, 2020.

Divina Commedia

Divina Commedia depicts Dante's journey through *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, guided first by Virgil, the ancient Roman poet, and then by Beatrice, his idealized love, taking the reader through his philosophical epic poem: a political, cultural, and religious commentary of Medieval Florence.

Dante's *Inferno* outlines the nine circles of Hell, with the increasing gravity of humanity's sins, commensurate with their punishment, all necessary to witness on the journey to *Purgatorio* and, eventually, *Paradiso*.

Some Well Known *Divina Commedia* Verses, quoted even in 2021!
"Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, ch  la diritta via era smarrita."

Midway upon the journey of our life I found myself within a forest dark, for the straightforward pathway had been lost.

"Il sentiero per il paradiso inizia all'inferno."

The path to paradise begins in hell.

"Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate."

Abandon all hope, ye who enter here. (*Inferno*).

"...senza infamia, senza lode"...

...without infamy or praise... (is a mediocre life.)

"Fatti non foste a viver come brutti ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza."

You were not made to live like brutes but to follow virtue and knowledge.

"Sequi il tuo corso e lasci dir le genti."

Follow your path, and let the people talk.

"Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa."

Do not pay attention to them, but look and continue on.

"Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda."

From a little spark, bursts a mighty flame.

"Questa montagna   tale, che sempre al cominciar di sotto   grave; e quant'om piu  va su , e men fa male."

This mountain's of such sort that climbing it is hardest at the start; but as we rise, the slope grows less unkind.

"Le genti del bel paese la  dove 'l si suona."

Of the fair land there where the 'Si' doth sound. (Bel Paese: Beautiful Italy).

"E quindi uscimmo a rivedere le stelle."

And thence, we came forth to see again the stars.

"L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle."

The love that moves the sun and the other stars.

Italian Heritage & Culture Committee of New York, Inc.

For more than forty-five years the IHCC has organized events, concerts, exhibits and lectures, celebrating Italian culture. Each year a theme representative of the history and culture of Italy and Italian Americans is highlighted. The IHCC promotes Italian culture by focusing on schools and taking a leadership role in promoting Italy and its cultural contributions.

www.italyculturemonth.org