

FOXWOOD'S FIRST FEAST OF SAN GENNARO



The Story of San Gennaro

The story of San Gennaro begins in the early fourth century, during the Great Persecution under the emperor Diocletian. Bishop of Benevento, Italy, Gennaro was imprisoned for visiting other Christians imprisoned in the early years of the persecution. As legend has it, Gennaro was tortured and thrown into a fiery furnace, yet emerged unharmed. At the end of his tortures, he was publicly beheaded. An old man wrapped his body and head in a burial cloth, while the women of Naples soaked up his blood with a sponge, enough to fill two glass phials. Four decades later, a slave woman named Eusebia, who had been Gennaro's wet nurse, carried the phials in a procession as the faithful transferred the martyr's remains to the catacombs of Naples. It was during this procession that the liquification first occurred. Since that time, the miracle is said to have occurred three times each year: on the first Sunday in May, on September 19 (the saint's feast day), and on December 16 (to commemorate the saint's protection against the threatened eruption of the volcano at Vesuvius).

Blood of San Gennaro is preserved in a crystal phial. It miraculously re-liquefies three times a year. First, on the anniversary of the saint's martyrdom, September 19th, next on the 16th of December, the anniversary of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 1631 which was halted by the intervention of the saint, and also on the Saturday before the first Sunday in May. The first historical reference to the miracle is from 1389.

The event is a HUGE deal in Naples. When the martyr's blood does not re-liquefy, bad things happen. On one occasion, in 1527, plague killed tens of thousands of people. In 1980, 3,000 were killed in an earthquake.