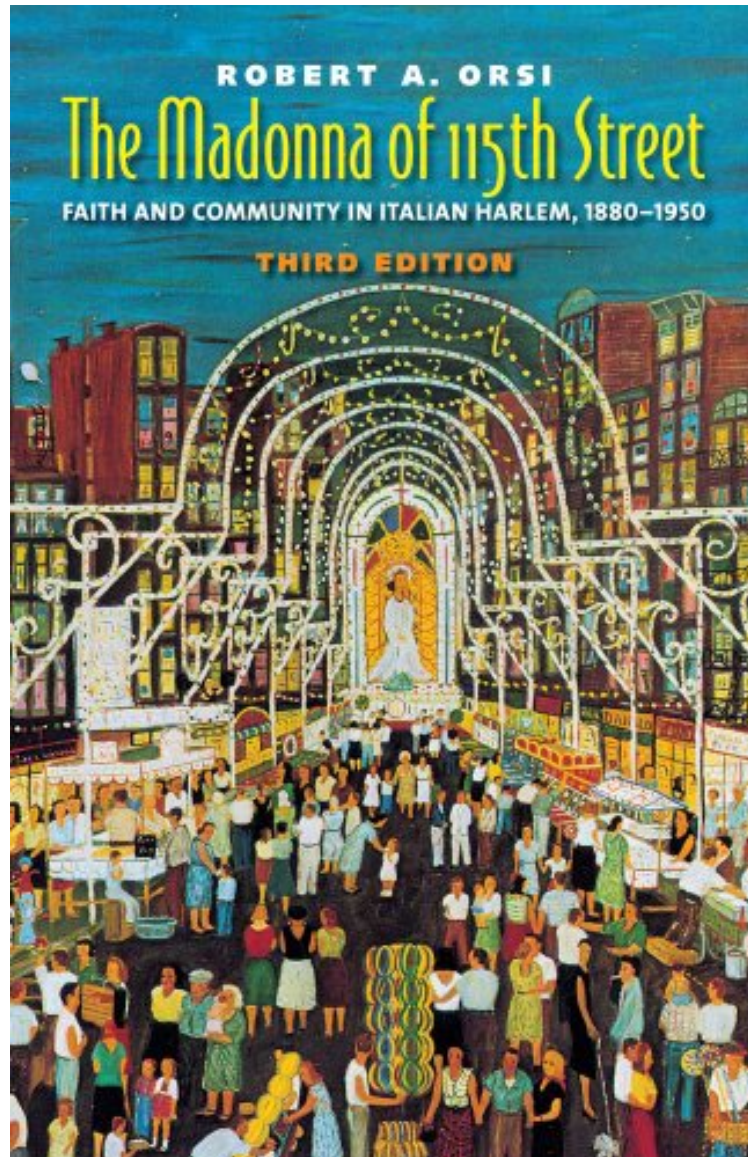


(Free) The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950, Third Edition

## The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950, Third Edition

Robert A. Orsi

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**Robert A. Orsi : The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950, Third Edition** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950, Third Edition:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A Landmark in the Historiography of American Religion By Frank

Bellizzi Take a look at any survey of recent literature on the history of American religion and you will encounter the title of this book. It's that significant. Why? Mainly because with this book Robert Orsi really opened up a new vista on the landscape of the past. Orsi begins by explaining, "This is a study of religion in the streets. It is the story of a religious celebration, the annual festa of the Madonna of Mount Carmel on East 115th Street in New York City, . . . " (xiii). He states that there are two senses of the word religion: (1) rituals, practices, symbols, prayers, statements of faith, creeds, etc., and (2) what really matters to people: their cosmology, the collection of their ultimate values, what they deeply care about. Naturally, this raises the question: So how does a historian get at (2)? Orsi says that there are basically two ways: (a) you talk with people and ask them questions, and (b) you observe, you watch people. His sources are not texts, but rather people. "The main subject of this study, then, is the history of the devotion to and the festa in honor of the Madonna of 115th Street and its place in the religious life of the people who lived in the tenements, shopped in the stores, courted in the parks, and walked the streets around la casa della Madonna in Italian Harlem" (xxi). Orsi says that when conducting his research, he had some secondary interests as well: 1. To analyze a modern, urban religious experience. How to do that? 2. To make a contribution to the understanding of Catholicism. Orsi notes that official spokesmen for Catholicism often speak of only a slice of what that religion actually does and is all about for the average person. Typically, there is a significant difference between the official religion of the clergy and the lived religion of the laity. 3. To offer a social history of a religious symbol. 4. To show how popular religion serves as the sacred theater of a community like Italian Harlem. These ideas from the book's Introduction are then explored in the chapters that follow. Bottom line: this is not the kind of religious history that previous generations wrote and read. This is much less about leaders and doctrine, and much more about culture and society. Personally, this approach is not my cup of tea. On the other hand, this book marked an unmistakable turning point. It put on display an alternative for how historians of American religion might conceive of and go about doing their work. For that reason, no serious scholar in the field should ignore it. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Study By Reader 47A pioneering and fascinating study of one former Little Italy. This book shows how this saint's day festival tells a lot about the early Italian immigrants to Harlem and discusses the conflicts and views many members of that community held. A must read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By sisterblackburn the stars are my review

In a masterful evocation of Italian Harlem and the men and women who lived there, Robert Orsi examines how the annual festa of the Madonna of 115th Street both influenced and reflected the lives of the celebrants. His prize-winning book offers a new perspective on lived religion, the place of religion in the everyday lives of men, women, and children, the experiences of immigration and community formation, and American Catholicism. This edition includes a new introduction by the author that outlines both the changes that Italian Harlem has undergone in recent years and significant shifts in the field of religious history. Reviews of the earlier edition: "A richly tapestried portrait-narrative. . . . Orsi is to be commended for a truly significant contribution to the annals of American social history."? Francesco Cordasco, USA Today "Orsi has fashioned an impressive fusion of the inner histories of immigrant social and religious life."? John W. Briggs, American Historical Review

"[Orsi] convey[s], at times movingly, the sense of loss that is part of the immigrant experience and the tensions that it produces in the immigrant family."—Vincent Crapanzano, Times Literary Supplement