

THE BLESSED VIRGIN "*NOLI ME TOLLERE*" IN AMERICA

Father Gianluca D'Achille

Daniela is a collaborator in the project of structural recovery of the Marian Shrine of the Blessed Virgin "*Noli me tollere*", (from the Latin, "Do not remove"), who has decided to live her life between her native Sardinia and Florida (USA). Just when we heard about this new journey, we asked Daniela (already accustomed to similar missionary works) to take a small statue of the Virgin of Sorso across the ocean. A brief search allowed us to find the nearest Capuchin fraternity to Miami and our missionary catapulted herself to deliver the unexpected gift to Fort Lauderdale, FL (located in the outskirts of Miami). This fraternity, dedicated to St. Pio of Pietrelcina was founded in 2019. The friars residing there, belong to the province of New Jersey.

Currently living in the convent are guardian Father Robert Williams, Father Nick Mormando, Brother Lombardo D'Auria, and theology student Brother Brian Sullivan. Daniela's arrival was perceived, as it really was, a "providential act." Indeed, when our Sardinian sister brought the small statuette as a gift, the friars confirmed their first impression, they comprehended that the Virgin herself was uniting the two ends of the world in a single embrace.

A video call immediately made the connection between Sorso and Fort Lauderdale, more than 8000 km away. What satisfaction in having sent Our Lady "*Noli me tollere*" to America! The fraternal chat allowed us to get to know each other and to acquire some important information. The friars, in fact, are moving to the center of Miami to establish a permanent Capuchin convent in the heart of the Archdiocese. The arrival of the Blessed Virgin "*Noli me tollere*" was therefore acclaimed as a further sign of blessing for the project underway. Brother Nick shared with us that precisely the gift of a picture of Our Lady of Loretto (another important Marian shrine run by Capuchin friars) had accompanied this journey from the very beginning. Daniela, in the meantime, asked for support: we immediately sent her a large package with small images of Our Lady, all "ready to remain" in the hearts and homes of the Americans. The mission of the friars in Florida is to strengthen the faith of many immigrants who bring a particular but precious Christian heritage to Florida from their countries of origin. It is a matter of strengthening and building up the faith in their hearts, so that they will continue to remain faithful to Jesus, to His Gospel, and the Church: this is what Our Lady is asking of our overseas brothers today!