

Celebrate Holy Ghost feast with Portuguese specialties

By Michaela Kennedy

The Holy Ghost Society of Jamestown is busy cooking and preparing for hundreds of guests expected to attend the Portuguese Feast of the Holy Ghost this weekend. The Holy Ghost Hall, in front of the Portuguese American Citizens' Club at 138 Narragansett Ave., is the venue for the feast from 9 a.m. to dusk on Saturday, Aug. 12.

"It's a very pleasant day. It's an opportunity to meet with people you don't see from one year to the next," said Barbara Morinho, publicity chairwoman for the gala. Morinho has been busy sending out announcements of the feast day all over the state. The celebration will include a morning procession, Mass at St. Mark Church, and the ceremony at the hall. Food, music, dancing, and many other activities will go on throughout the day.

The Feast of the Holy Ghost is typically connected with Pentecost, the Christian celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, on the seventh Sunday after Easter. The society holds the festival in August, however, to avoid scheduling conflicts with local churches, according to the society's publicist. The feast is a tradition of the adoration to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, called the Holy Ghost. The celebration was fashioned for Queen Isabella of Portugal and the example she set in her devotion to the Holy Spirit and works of charity for the poor. It was Isabella in the late 1400s

who started the tradition of placing a crown on a commoner at a festival to show that all people should have cause to celebrate on feast days. The Portuguese believed that the Holy Spirit, through the crown, had powerful and miraculous healing powers. Isabella was canonized a saint in 1626.

"The feast started in Jamestown in 1928 when the hall was built," remembered Ed Morinho, Barbara's husband and a native islander. From his boyhood eye, he shared the memories of the processions he saw, "and the old convertibles" that participated.

Morinho said the celebrations ceased when World War II arrived. "So many people went away," he said. He explained how the hall on Narragansett Avenue became a recreation center, and soldiers stationed on the island "all played basketball after the war started."

For decades, the Feast of the Holy Ghost was abandoned and forgotten. The hall remained in use as a gymnasium and basketball court. "The hall was the only place to play," Morinho recalled. He said the town had a basketball team that practiced there, and the schools used the hall for gym classes.

The festival was resurrected only in the last eight years, and coordinated in the same manner as was customary in the old days. "The old timers had it going in the beginning," Morinho said about the feast, implying that it was — and still is — up to the elders to remember and keep alive cultural traditions.

Using a clicker to count the number of people who attended the festival last year, Morinho said, he counted over 300 visitors. Morinho co-ordinates the procession every year. "We're getting larger each year," he observed. He also said that visitors come from

all over the state. "We see quite a few out-of-towners," he noted, adding that the Jamestown festival was a "great day-outing" for many who drive here from off island.

Barbara Morinho confirmed that members of the Holy Ghost Society would start Thursday to get the vegetables ready for the complimentary meal. "A certain group of men do the cooking," she added. The HGS would prepare for at least 200 guests for the "soupas." The hearty Portuguese meal will be accompanied by singer Manny Brando, "The Portuguese Entertainer." Dances by traditional Portuguese dancers from the Cranston Portuguese Club, crafts, and children's activities will be available to enjoy all afternoon. In addition, the original Holy Ghost Crown from Portugal, decorated with a dove to symbolize the Holy Spirit, will be on display in the hall throughout the day.

The morning procession to honor the Holy Ghost will leave at 9:30 a.m. from the Holy Ghost Hall to St. Mark Church, where a Mass dedicated to the deceased members of the society will be celebrated. A ceremony will be held at the hall at 11:30 a.m. Festivities will go on rain or shine.

No fee is charged for entry to the festival or for the "soupas" meal, but the silent auction and the food booths bring in some money to fund the event. Anyone who would like to donate items for the auction, should contact Donna Wood at 423-0568 or Laurie Dutra, 737-5051.



The procession from St. Mark Church to the Holy Ghost Hall will open the festivities of the annual Feast of the Holy Ghost on Saturday. Photo by Vic Richardson

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