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**Poggioreale in America**  
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**Essay**

No matter where we are in the world, our familial ties allow us to be connected and be a part of something bigger than ourselves. I've grown up in a large family that has taught me the importance of knowing and maintaining our heritage. Being an Italian American to me means educating myself on our family and keeping the traditions our ancestors brought with them all those years ago alive.

My grandmother has passed down many stories and family recipes down to me and my dad. For instance, the family fig and oatmeal cookie recipes that we make every year for the family Christmas get together. We even have the original paper recipes framed in our kitchen. One of my hobbies is bread making and I've even dabbled in making homemade pasta far pasta dishes. I greatly enjoy the process and it makes me feel connected to my ancestors because I know I'm making dishes that they took pride in creating and passing down.

My family practices our Catholic religion at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, I have received all the sacraments and was confirmed under Saint Gertrude of Nivelles. Attending the church has allowed me to make lifelong friends that I still talk to and see regularly. Being in the church has also allowed me to participate in bible camps throughout the summers where I get to see my friends and learn more about the religion. Last summer, my parents and I traveled to Italy and took a tour of the whole country. It was very exciting to see the beautiful Churches and artwork that they held. Overall, the trip was fantastic and I loved being able to get a better understanding of where my family members used to live. It definitely made me feel more grounded and connected to my family and I would love to return to Italy someday soon.

Another way that I've been able to see the importance of our heritage is through talking to my grandmother about our family history and being able to see photos of our family members. My mom and I have bonded with her over scanning the family photos we have onto a hard drive so we can fix them up and keep them safe from any more wear and tear for future generations.

Without being able to experience what it means to be an Italian American firsthand, I would not be who I am today. I am incredibly grateful to my ancestors for the bravery and determination they had in order to establish a new

community here in Texas. Our rich culture has taught me the importance of family and keeping traditions alive. I am proud to be a descendant of our family, and will continue to pass the history and traditions that we have fought to maintain over the years on.