The icon’s eyes have moved
to guide a young man into spirit
to direct a poet from the smile of God
& give a new Father a mission
I am crossing Alps and ocean Philadelphia awaits
La Superba fades from view
from the parish windows around him
This new world is a world of faith in
what there is to become What is to become of
Montrose Street but to be rebuilt as a bridge between cultures
The church’s saint a mystical nun Her pastor a temporal shepherd
On the feast day her doors open to railroad workers
walking the picket for justice On Sunday he rails against
exploiting our children as slaves
You can still hear echoing whispers
Patria unita under tricolor

Unita via the feste Calabria Sicily Abruzzo-Molise
Unita before him in marriage
Monsignor on his deathbed says “What is the date What is the time”
I am crossing the plane of earth the Eternal City awaits
Today is a good day at a time like right now
to leave flowers on the bridges he left us

Father Antonio Isoleri was an Italian immigrant who became pastor of the first Italian parish in the United States, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi. His service as a spiritual and secular leader from 1870 to 1895 was instrumental in shaping the future of South Philadelphia’s Italian American community.