

Fatti Maschi, Parole Femine....!!!

Marina Melchionda (August 06, 2008)



An Italian Motto representing the State of Maryland...and what a motto!

A visit to Annapolis, the capital of the State of Maryland, can really lead you to one of the most unexpected discoveries you could imagine making while touring the United States. In the land of modernity, modernism, democracy and equal opportunities you'll happen to find out that the motto of one of the founding States of the nation is not only written in Italian but it is also a demonstration of deep chauvinism.



In the picture attached – taken by the person who is writing a few months ago – you can read the following words “Fatti maschi, parole femine”, which literally means “Manly deeds, womanly words”. When I first read this phrase I thought that this certainly had to bother all the women passing by Annapolis or reading whatever document they get from the State government (which of course has this symbol printed on its top)! So I wondered what could be done about it. Changing a motto is more or less like changing the flag of a country... people are used to it... so very little can be done... Unless you change the meaning of those words...of course! Actually this is what I asked myself when I read it at first... am I sure it means what I think it means? So this is what I found: I was right.

Beginning way back to the 17th century (when the motto was first adopted) the phrase was translated in several ways, yes, but all had the same meaning. “Words are women; deeds are men”, “Manly deeds, womanly words”, “Deeds are manly, words are womanly” are some of the examples reported. Not even different words but different constructions are used to express what it appears to me resumes one single concept: women only talk, men do deeds. Of course my first reaction was to consider this phrase at least sexist. But why on earth has no woman in history ever complained? And then I got it: there is nothing to complain about. Fine, three centuries ago this phrase might have symbolized the prevalence of chauvinism in society. And maybe it still does. Every time it is mentioned (and I tested it, mainly in my Italian-American family) you can see men glowing all over the place. And women laugh. Why?

Because this is the era of communication, and talking is the art of women. People (and peoples) now communicate more than any time in history. And knowing how to do it is fundamental. So let's leave this symbol, let's love this motto! Let's consider it a compliment!

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