

MORE

GOOD NEWS

‘This is my body’

**First Communion children meet
Jesus in a very personal way
for the first time**

PAGES 3-5



We are the body of Christ

Recently, a Eucharistic minister related this episode.

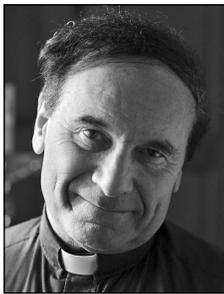
An older man who lived alone in an apartment near the church began to weep when given the Blessed Sacrament at Sunday Mass from the hand of the above-mentioned minister.

After Mass, the same minister asked the man if he was all right. The man responded that living alone, out of touch with everyone most of the time, he was moved by the gentle way and personal touch in the voice and eye contact when the Eucharist was given to him. Some weeks, he said, it was his only contact with another person.

In celebrating the First Holy Communion of children in our parish community this May, it affords all of us the opportunity to renew and refresh our appreciation in cherishing the Blessed Sacrament as the body and blood of the Risen Lord, Jesus.

Like the man who was moved by the encounter at the time of communion, so we are put in touch with one another — as well as with Christ — in the moment of our own “communion.”

It has been said that in the action and dynamism of the Catholic Mass, the priest and people make the Eucharist (the blessing and consecration) and the Eucharist makes the assembly the Body of Christ.



FATHER JIM

We must say, and even profess, that the Sacrament of the Eucharist is not something, but rather someone — the real presence of the Risen Lord and the real present gathering of the Lord's people, described as the Body of Christ, the assembly.

This is why we also say we are at our best and we look our best when many are gathered and present with each other, especially at weekend Mass. When someone is absent from Mass, then we are less than what we could be.

As with any cross one might gaze upon, the Eucharist has two dimensions, one vertical and one horizontal. A cross is made up of two pieces — the vertical wood bar pointing to heaven and the horizontal piece with the earth.

At each celebration of the Eucharist in which we participate, the vertical dimension puts us in touch with Jesus and the things of heaven — and also in touch with each other, the community of faithful gathered. The horizontal reflects the earth-bound.

The teaching about the Blessed Sacrament in the Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes St. Augustine saying, “If you are the body and members of Christ (the church), then it is yourself as well as Christ that is placed upon the altar table. For when you hear the words, ‘the body of Christ’ and respond ‘amen,’ be then a true member of the body of Christ and let your amen be always true.”

Our joy in celebrating the First Holy Communion children in this springtime surely is made even more joyful in the hope and trust that their good parents and families will be renewed in the gift of our faith and look forward to the weekend gatherings of the church.

CELEBRATING THE SAINTS

St. Joan of Arc

Feast Day May 30

Burned at the stake as a heretic after a politically motivated trial, Joan was beatified in 1909 and canonized in 1920.

Born of a fairly well-to-do peasant couple in Domremy-Greux southeast of Paris, Joan was only 12 when she experienced a vision and heard voices that she later identified as Sts. Michael the Archangel, Catherine of Alexandria and Margaret of Antioch.

During the Hundred Years War, Joan led French troops against the English and recaptured the cities of Orléans and Troyes. This enabled Charles VII to be crowned as king in Reims in 1429. Captured near Compiègne the following year, Joan was sold to the English and placed on trial for heresy and witchcraft.

Professors at the University of Paris supported Bishop Pierre Cauchon of Beauvais, the judge at her trial. Cardinal Henry Beaufort of



Winchester, England, participated in the questioning of Joan in prison. In the end, she was condemned for wearing men's clothes. The English resented France's military success — to which Joan contributed.

On May 30 1431, Joan was burned at the stake in Rouen, and her ashes were scattered in the Seine River. A second church trial 25 years later nullified the earlier verdict, which was reached under political pressure.

Remembered by most people for her military exploits, Joan had a great love for the sacraments, which strengthened her compassion toward the poor. Popular devotion to her increased greatly in 19th-century France and later among French soldiers during World War I. Theologian George Tavard writes that her life “offers a perfect example of the conjunction of contemplation and action” because her spiritual insight is that there should be a “unity of heaven and earth.”

Source: www.franciscanmedia.org

PARISH WEBSITE

Visit www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com for the latest parish news and announcements. There's even a mobile version for your smart phone. You can donate online and check out our social media sites and more.

PHOTO GALLERIES



BULLETIN

A Community on a Journey of Faith April 2, 2017

**St. Mary of Mt. Carmel
Blessed Sacrament Parish**

648 Jay St., Utica, NY 13501 • www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com





Weekend Masses
Saturday: 4:30 PM
Sunday: 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM
Reconciliation: Saturday 3-4:30 PM

Weekday Masses
Nov. 7:00 AM - 8:00 AM
Friday: 8:30 AM - Mass of Communion Service.
Rosary for the Immaculate and Divine Mercy Chaplet - Thursday after Mass.
Holy Days consult Bulletin.

PARISH STAFF
Pastor: Rev. Jim Cella
Parish Administrator: Terri Brancato, M.Ed.
Co-ordinator of Faith Formation: Anne Carlini, B.S. 7-10
Cleric: Rev. Fr. John C. O'Connell
Music Director: Peter Basso
Business Administrator: Jani Smith-Lalonde
Parish Publicist: Fran Ferraro

CONTACT:
PHONE: 315-442-1425
Fax: 315-442-1425
Cell: 315-442-1425
email: mtc@mtc.com

OFFICE HOURS:
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM Monday-Thursday
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Friday
6:45 AM - 9:00 AM Saturday
6:45 AM - 9:00 AM Sunday
All bulletin items are to be submitted in writing by 12:00 noon Friday two days before publication.

BAPTISM
Catechism level: Please call the parish office to arrange a baptism. We provide an opportunity to attend the parish class before the bath of your child.
WEDDING
All couples, 7 or older who have never been baptized or confirmed (or received the Sacrament) are invited to call the Parish Office for information about 1933 process.
WEDDING
Couples must make arrangements six months in advance.
NEW SUBSCRIBERS
Welcome to our parish family. We invite you to become an active participant of our parish community. Please be sure to register by calling the parish office.
Also listings are listed for having prepared.

... AND MORE

- Father Jim's "Wise and Otherwise"
- History of the parish
- Lector, minister, altar server schedules
- Mass schedules
- Parish news
- Ministries
- Event calendar
- Weekly reflection on Sunday's readings
- "More Good News" magazine
- Links to our social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.



Welcoming Jesus

Preparation crucial for Reconciliation, First Communion

By TERRI PIAZZA-PANUCCIO

In his homily of June 3, 1999, on the Feast of Corpus Christi, St. Pope John Paul II wrote, "God did not spare his Son, but gave him as the salvation of all, as the bread we must eat if we wish to have life. Christ's words are clear: to have life it is not enough to believe in God; it is necessary to dwell in him. This is why the Word was made flesh, died and rose and gave us his spirit; this is why he left us the Eucharist, so that we could live on him as he lives on the Father. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the gift Christ made of himself for us: he is the sacrament of love and peace, which is the fullness of life."

On May 5, 31 of our young parishioners will join us at the Eucharistic table for the first time to receive that special gift of himself that Christ gave to us almost 2,000 years ago in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Receiving First Communion is a big deal and should be treated as such. The children are receiving Jesus into their bodies and souls, becoming one with Him.

Preparing for the First Communion is a two-year process. Children are required, by the diocese and our parish, to attend a full year of

The children learn about belonging to a parish community and how they became a member through baptism. They learn how we celebrate Mass and how Jesus becomes present in gifts of bread and wine during the consecration.

Faith Formation classes or attend a parochial school as a first-grader before they can begin their formal preparation to receive the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion as a second-grader.

As a child prepares to receive his or her first sacraments, regular attendance to their Sunday morning Faith Formation classes and Monday evening sacramental preparation classes is extremely important. The catechetical program we use for grades K-6, the Pflaum Gospel Weeklies, are liturgically based using the Gospel reading of the week. This helps the

children grow and learn in their Catholic faith and its teachings. The sacramental preparation classes are to help the children have a greater understanding of the two sacraments they will receive.

For their Reconciliation preparation, they are taught about Jesus' love, mercy and forgiveness through scripture. Once they have received that sacrament, they begin preparing for First Communion.

The children learn about belonging to a parish community and how they became a member through Baptism. They learn how we celebrate Mass and how Jesus becomes present in gifts of bread and wine during the consecration. This is why we strongly encourage regular Mass attendance.

There also is a three-hour workshop the children attend with their parents where they make chalices, pew banners and participate in a church search.

Another very important part of preparation for the children is to attend our Holy Thursday Mass. It is a great teaching moment because it is the night we celebrate the institution of the

Please see EUCHARIST, Page 5

FIRST COMMUNION: CLASS OF 2018

**Michael Apel Jr.**

Age: 7
 Father: Michael
 Mother: Tamara
 Sister: Dionna
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 To always keep my
 family safe.

**Jayden Arabia**

Age: 8
 Mother: Danielle
 Brothers: Michael
 and Anthony
 Sister: Brooklyn
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 Do our angels watch
 us all the time?

**Luciana Baker**

Age: 8
 Father: James
 Mother: Alexandra
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 Do you know if I
 would like heaven?

**Jude Barres**

Father: Fran
 Mother: Kathryn
 Brother: Patrick
 Sisters: Faith and
 Louanna
 If you could ask Jesus
 one thing, what
 would it be? For help
 to do what's right.

**Joseph Bottini**

Age: 7
 Father: Kenneth
 Mother: Colleen
 Sister: Natalie
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 How can I be a bet-
 ter person?

**Georgiana
Butler**

Age: 8
 Father: Robert
 Mother: Nicole
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 How is my Poppie in
 heaven?

**Ella Carcone**

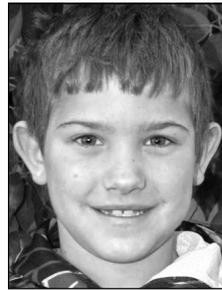
Age: 7
 Father: Paul
 Mother: Candace
 Sister: Tessa
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 How is my Nana's
 dog in heaven? Is
 she behaving?

**Sophia Cittadino**

Age: 8
 Father: Phillip
 Mother: Jennifer
 Brother: Phillip
 Sister: Gina
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 How did you become
 so special?

**Robert Conti**

Age: 8
 Father: Bob
 Mother: Julie
 Brother: Sam
 Sisters: Jaydyn and
 Gianna
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 To see my nonnie.

**James Crompt**

Age: 8
 Father: Bill
 Mother: Jennifer
 Sister: Ivy
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 Have I been good
 through my life?

**John Crompt**

Age: 8
 Father: Bill
 Mother: Jennifer
 Sister: Ivy
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 How good have I
 been?

**Abigail D'Accurzio**

Age: 7
 Father: Mike
 Mother: Carol Ann
 Brother: Michael
 Sister: Hannah
 If you could ask Jesus
 one thing, what
 would it be? How did
 you make the people
 before us?

**Kadence
Fernalld**

Age: 7
 Father: Stanley
 Mother: Dina
 Sister: Makenly
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 Do angels really
 exist?

**Andrew Galimo**

Age: 8
 Father: Sean
 Mother: Tracy
 Sister: Alexa
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 Do you like sports?

**Hae Nay Hso**

Age: 8
 Father: Oo Than Sho
 Mother: Bet Bet
 Brothers: Hey Ye Doh
 and Hey Nay Soe
 Sisters: Paw Lar Wah
 and Hay Nay Blu Doh
 If you could ask Jesus
 one thing? Bless the
 communion class.

**Lar Mare Htoo**

Age: 8
 Father: Tah Ku
 Mother: Hla Aye
 Brother: Bay Bee
 Sister: Nover Paw
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 Bless all the children
 in First Communion.

**Arianna Kernan**

Age: 7
 Father: Adam
 Mother: Kelly
 Brothers: Anthony
 and Matthew
 If you could ask
 Jesus one thing,
 what would it be?
 What does heaven
 look like?

**Richard Koe**

Age: 7
 Father: Mar Koe
 Mother: Rebelka
 Brother: Bas Kar Reh
 Sisters: Mary Koe
 and Nan Zar
 If you could ask Jesus
 one thing, what
 would it be? Help my
 family and watch
 over everyone.



Rumon Lahpai
 Age: 7
 Father: Dan Hkawng La
 Mother: Teresa Kaihtang Maran
 Brother: Wun Dan
 Sister: Shwe Zin
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? How are seeds made?



Luke Lallier
 Age: 8
 Father: Allan
 Mother: Maria
 Sister: Lia
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? Why can't everyone be nice?



Alivia Lopiccicolo
 Age: 8
 Father: Dave
 Mother: Johanna
 Sister: Gianna
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? Are unicorns real?



Nico Majka
 Age: 7
 Father: Edward
 Mother: Brenda
 Brothers: Dakota and Chaz
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? Please help me get through my life.



Lydia Moo
 Age: 7
 Father: Ta Pi
 Mother: Pa Saw Paw
 Brother: Nobel
 Sister: Hser Nay
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? Bless all the children in communion class.



Jacob Nash
 Age: 7
 Father: Jeremy
 Mother: Kelly
 Brother: Joseph
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? Will you forgive me for my sins?



Sophia Pelli
 Age: 7
 Father: Frank
 Mother: Roseanne
 Brother: Frank Jr.
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? Are Mema and Socs making friends in heaven?



Gia Piperata
 Age: 7
 Father: Robert II
 Mother: Yvonne
 Brother: Alex
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? What is heaven like?



Nathan Polovick
 Age: 8
 Father: Duane
 Mother: Melissa
 Brother: Noah
 Sister: Skylar
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? To help people who are sick.



Talia Post
 Age: 8
 Father: Daniel
 Mother: Maria
 Sister: Ava
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? Should I be a vet when I grow up?



Collin Scalise
 Age: 8
 Father: Christopher
 Mother: Vickey
 Brother: Jett
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? For a happy, healthy family.



Eh Theyou Soe
 Age: 7
 Mother: Marry Dee
 Brother: Ya Za Lay
 Sisters: Dragon Nae, Mya Sen da lin
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? How old was God when he died?



Addie Sullivan
 Age: 7
 Father: Dan
 Mother: Aubre
 Brother: Kiernan
 If you could ask Jesus one thing, what would it be? How do you love everyone?

EUCCHARIST

Continued from Page 3

Eucharist as the true body and blood of Jesus Christ and the institution of the sacrament of priesthood.

It also is an important Mass where we are called to serve one another. At the end of this Mass the children join in the solemn procession as the Blessed Sacrament is taken to the place of repose. This year, as Father Cesta carried our Lord to the tabernacle, the children joined together saying, "O sacrament most holy, O sacrament divine, all praise and all thanksgiving, be every moment thine."

There are times that I am met with some resistance from parents who are

overwhelmed with already busy schedules for their children, especially when they sometimes have to bring their children to class two days a week. As a mother of three, I remember how hectic and full our lives and schedules were, so I do understand how they feel.

It's important, however, to help parents and families know that these requirements are put in place to help us ensure that the children have a good knowledge of the importance of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.

When a child participates in sports, dance, gymnastics or other extracurricular activities, they never would be

allowed to participate in a game, recital or meet without having first attended classes or practiced, often-times for months.

The same goes when receiving the sacraments. In order for the child to receive these gifts of God's grace, they have to be prepared and have knowledge of what they are receiving so that when they do receive our Lord in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, they will truly become like him and be a blessing to others they meet along life's journey.

Terri Piazza-Panuccio is Faith Formation director for kindergarten through sixth grade.

Symbolism part of our history

Church has used iconography through the centuries to depict faith

During the Lent and Easter seasons, we have been bombarded with familiar images of Christianity.

We have seen the palms of the Sunday before Easter, the washing of the feet, the cross of Christ's martyrdom, the butter in the form of the "sacrificial lamb of God" and even Easter eggs on our tables.

In our time, American society is predominantly literate and we are able to grasp meaning from written words. In the past, written language was beyond the realm of comprehension of many. For that reason, the church through the centuries has used certain universally recognized images to tell the stories of the Bible and faith.



A.J. VALENTINI

Iconography — from the Greek words for "image" and "to write" — is a technique of communication developed since ancient times. Icons were used in early Christianity relatively soon after the death of Christ. If you visit the catacombs of Rome, where Christians worshiped clandestinely and buried their dead, you will see images of Christ

as "The Good Shepherd" and sarcophagus faces decorated with a wavy etched design borrowed from pagan tombs but, which for the Christians, represented the waters of Baptism.

In the Byzantine period there was a divide between the Eastern and Western attitude regarding images. The Eastern iconoclasts (breakers of icons) created two pushes to destroy images entirely (724-787 AD and 814-842 AD) because of the commandment forbidding the making and worship of graven images. Some people equate this movement to the growing influence of Islam in the East.

Though the use of holy images never was eliminated, the Eastern church tended to stick to a strict canon of depiction in reverence to honored traditions rather than evolve in the following centuries the way the practice did in the West.

This formulaic system of representation, because it didn't change, was easily recognizable to the faithful. Many churches from the Byzantine era depict Jesus as "Christ Pantokrator," that is the Lord most powerful. He is shown fixing his gaze on the viewer, often holding a page from scripture and bestowing a blessing. The background generally is in gold, because it is "pure and incorruptible," represents God, Jesus and heaven at the same time.



St. Peter receives the keys to the church. [Perugino-Sistine Chapel at the Vatican]

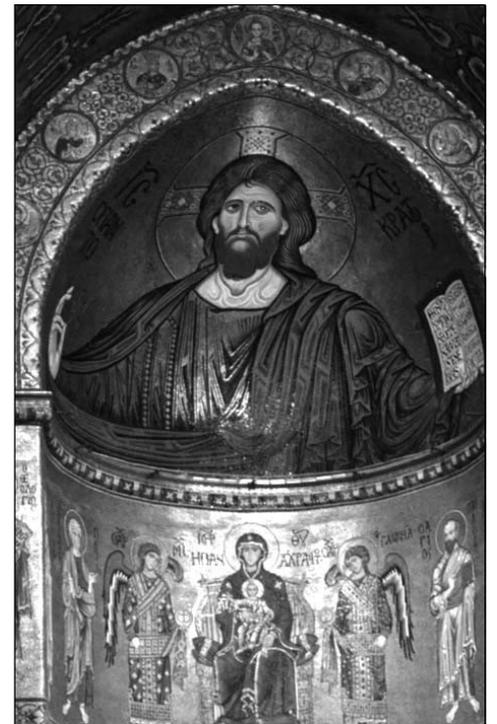
Mary is depicted as the "Virgin Hodegetria," she who shows the way. She is shown holding the child Jesus with her head inclined toward him (motherly love), and gestures to him as if to say, "He is your path to salvation." The child in her arms gestures in blessing to the viewer as a confirmation of this message.

As traditions evolved, the icons of saints were incorporated pictorially and in sculpture into sacred art. Symbols developed to identify each character to the illiterate viewer and to remind those who were literate of a particular saint's contribution. St. Peter, for example, always is portrayed with a key as he, as the first pope, was the one who received the keys to the church and salvation from Christ.

Each of the four evangelists of the New Testament has his own symbol. Often the icons, rather than their physical selves appear in the work of art. St. Mark is depicted with a winged lion that holds the Bible in one paw, symbolizing the gospel Mark wrote. The lion was believed to sleep with its eyes open, a comparison to Jesus, who though he lay in a tomb, never slept (died). The animal also is a symbol of royalty (Christ the King). The wings indicate a king not of this earth.

Matthew is symbolized by a winged angel. He is the one who traced Joseph's ancestors all the way back to Abraham, through David. This lineage points to the human connection of Jesus and the angel is the divine.

Luke is symbolized as the winged ox, a reference to ritual sacrifice, service and strength. This symbol not only captures Jesus' sacrifice but the call to the faithful to personal sacrifice in following Christ.



Christ Pantokrator, Cathedral of Monreale, Sicily.

John is represented by an eagle. The ancients believed eagles could look directly into the sun, which from antiquity was equated with the Almighty. The eagle is a creature of the sky and therefore the heavens. John's words flew across Christendom.

With all our book knowledge these days, it still can be said that a picture (or statue) remains worth a thousand words.

A CONVERSATION WITH ... SUZY BURNS

‘We are called to be more’

Suzy Burns comes from a large family and raised her own family of four children, along with her husband, Nick. She knows how to care for others, and does so in a very compassionate way by guiding those who have cancer through tough times of their lives.

You’re a native of Utica, the youngest of seven children. What was it like growing up with all those older brothers and sisters?

Chaos ... but it was great fun! We all had our assigned chores; we fought like so many siblings do, but woe to those outside our family who dared to pick on any one of us. We had Sunday dinner together without fail and, most week nights, too. As the youngest I was treated well most of the time, but if there was any sense I was being spoiled, my brothers and sisters would quickly correct that. I had a blessed childhood and am still aware of that on a daily basis.

You have a pretty big family yourself, with two sons and twin daughters, ranging in age from 27 to 29. How was it in your household, basically raising four children who were close in age?

Coming from a big family helped because I didn’t know life any other way. When our children were little, having a structured routine was critical. When Tess and Kate were born, Jack was only 14 months and Nick was two and a half. It was a wild time for sure. Four kids in braces at the same time, three AYSO soccer games each Sunday, endless graduations, four kids in college ... the list goes on. However, I can’t imagine life any other way and our children are still close to each other even though many miles separate them.

Your children now live out of town. How tough is it to be so far away?

Nick and I believe our job as parents is to raise decent people who will be good citizens of the world. All of our children lived abroad for a year as Rotary Exchange students so we became acclimated to long-distance relationships early on. If we had a choice, I know we would love to have all of our children closer to home, but we accept that each one of them is where they need to be, and so we adjust. And, the internet has certainly helped to close the gap.

You wanted to be a nurse from an early age. What drew you to that profession?

My oldest brother, Jack, died from complications of juvenile diabetes when I was 7 years old. That loss at such a young age made me want to care for others during difficult times. The only other job I ever considered was being a firefighter, but that was not an option for women at the time.

You are an oncology nurse navigator. Please describe what you do?

My role as a navigator is to serve as a single point of contact for my patients. Cancer care is complicated. Patients can have multiple providers



The Burnses and their extended family. “I know we would love to have all of our children closer to home, but we accept that each one of them is where they need to be, and so we adjust,” Suzy says.

SUZY BURNS

Age: 54.

Resides: Utica.

Education: Mohawk Valley Community College.

Occupation: Oncology nurse navigator for Oneida Health Cancer Care in affiliation with Roswell Park Comprehensive Care Center.

Family: Married to Nick 31 years; son Nick, 29, lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Amy; Jack, 28, lives in Vermont; Tess, 27, lives in Atlanta; Kate, 27, lives in Madison, Wisconsin, with her husband, Ashton.

Things you like to do in your spare time:

Cook, bake, read, teaching myself calligraphy, doing laundry, hanging clothes on the line and ironing.

from a surgeon, medical oncologist, radiation oncologists and additional specialists based on their diagnosis and treatment. I help to coordinate care, educate patients and families, provide seamless communication between patients and their physicians and between physicians, and most importantly, to be a patient advocate.

Is it difficult emotionally for you while you’re trying to help people during a difficult time of their lives?

Most days, I love what I do and consider this job one of great privilege. You are allowed to be a part of an individual’s life when they are often most vulnerable. I do not take that for granted. However, when building these relationships, you can form close bonds, and when a patient’s cancer no longer responds to treat-

ment and death is inevitable, this makes a work day difficult, to say the least.

How has faith and our parish played a role in your life?

Faith guides me like the North Star. My extended family has had its share of challenges and heartache, but knowing that I am never alone, that God is ever present in my life, this truth provides me with grace to move forward. Weekly Mass gives me the opportunity to regroup and set my compass for the week ahead. Seeing my “church family” each Sunday grounds me and reminds me to see beyond my own needs, pray for others, forgive, and consciously work to be “the face of God” to those we see throughout the week. We are called to be more, and this parish reminds me of this and it humbles me.

What advice can you give to young families today?

Actively participate in the Mass. Listen to the readings, sing whether you think you can or not, explain to your children the reason why weekly Mass is important to you and why you want to share that with them. Find a way to help the parish through a committee, serve as a Eucharistic minister or join the choir. Obligation is not enough to pass on the traditions of faith, it must be lived out in your daily life and fine-tuned with the help of the church. Your children are bright and can easily spot what is rooted in truth and what is a facade. Provide the foundations of faith; it will serve them well as they become adults. Even if they move away from the church as they grow older and question its tenets, you will have given them the tools they need to find their way back.



Kyaw Lay enjoys some time with his friends. The refugee from Thailand has a bit of advice for those who wish to close our borders to those who need refuge the most: "Immigrants are people who want to escape hardships so they are willing put in more work than people who grow up with the privilege because they don't know the hardships an immigrant may face."

From refugee to U.S. Marine

Born in a camp in Thailand, his family sought refuge and hope in United States

From a refugee camp in Thailand to Utica, N.Y., Kyaw Lay has traveled a long road in the last 18 years. He's now ready to graduate from high school and looks forward to his next step in life – becoming a U.S. Marine.

You were born in a refugee camp in Thailand. Do you remember what it was like there?

It's a bad place to grow up in because the condition is unsanitary and with little technologies or medicine to help people from disease.

Your family came to the United States in 2008. Was it a difficult decision to leave their native land?

It's was difficult because there are many things and food that are not in the United States (as they were in Thailand), and when we first came we didn't know what it would be like in the United States, what the language and the food will be like.

Your family settled in Utica. What do you think about our city and what are your thoughts about living in the United States?

I think the city of Utica is the best place to live

because it's diverse with many nationalities, cultures and foods. My thoughts of living in the United States is that it's a great place to live in because there's no civil war going on and you are given an opportunity to learn and start your own business or the careers you want to do.

Has it been a difficult transition for your family?

It was in the beginning, but as time goes by we got use to it.

Do you have any advice for those who wish to close our borders to different immigrant groups?

My advice is that immigrants are people who want to escape hardships so they are willing put in more work than people who grow up with the privilege because they don't know the hardships an immigrant may face.

You like to cook? How did you end up getting interested in that?

I like to cook because cooking is like art, and the taste of the food is amazing. I ended up getting interested in cooking by watching people cook and learning from them.

After you graduate in June from Thomas

R. Proctor High School, you are going to boot camp and become a U.S. Marine. Why did you decide to join the military?

I decided to join the military because I want to experience what it will be like and I want to serve the country. After the military, I will use the 9/11 GI bill to attend college.

What does your family think of that decision?

My parents approve of it because it's something I always wanted to do growing up.

You're a parishioner of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament and sometimes sing with a group in your native language. What does our parish mean to you?

The parish is a place where I can be close to God and pray.

How has faith affected your life?

Faith affects me by giving me an opportunity to help others and see and experience new places that I will never imagine I could see.

What are your plans for the future and what do you hope you can accomplish?

To become someone big in the future who could help the environment and the people.