

ST. MARY OF MOUNT CARMEL / BLESSED SACRAMENT PARISH – WINTER 2014

MORE
**GOOD
NEWS**



**ARTIST
IN
RESIDENCE**

PAGE 3

THIS ISSUE IS A GIFT FROM GEORGIO'S VILLAGE CAFE

Consider this: God acts more like a young adult than an 'old man'

No one has yet seen God, but we still want to.

But when one thinks about it strolling through the scriptures, it's obvious that God has given images and suggestions of how God is. And it's not always the "old man" with the white beard. In many ways God comes across as a young adult.



FATHER JIM

The creator in Genesis seems like a young man who hung the heavens and flung the planets in their courses, bright-eyed, alert, edgy at the peak of His powers.

What did God cause at the first Pentecost?

The bystanders thought everyone had drunk too much, some of the furniture got tossed about the room; they, the first church, began to shake, rattle and roll like when college kids have a party.

God, in many places of the Word, marvels and takes delight in what is new and awesome with crops and seeds and figs germinating —

God, in Christ, always is inviting, embracing traveling with his "buddies" called Apostles. You might say that God is slow to take revenge, idealistic about finding some good in each person, with the gift of pardon and peace, not dwelling on the past but pushing the envelope on what could be in the future. Young people think like that.

young ones are like that.

How about all the parties we find — after the prodigal son comes home, when the shepherd finds the lost sheep, when the wedding party grew thirsty and wine was called for. Our God, in Jesus, often does what vibrant young people do, calling attention to more mature folks who have grown too pompous, self-important or blind to injustices. He once called the King Herod a fox.

God is like a young adult who spends more time with the crowd, a gang, out and about, than being alone. Friends are everything.

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Perhaps this reflection and guessing what God is like might not appeal to you, but one thing is for sure, our God likes to make friends and keep them for all eternity.

That much we really like, right?

Spirit moves Confirmation Class of 2013



Bishop Thomas Costello confirmed 23 young people from our parish on Sunday, Oct. 20, 2013. Those confirmed were: Gianna Teresa Amerosa, Francis Xavier Bianco, Sarah Elizabeth Calenzo, Katherine Cecilia Elacqua, Rocco Joseph Femia, Daniel Thomas Geary, Dante Michael Lacy, Angelina Kathleen Mancuso, Isabella Genoveffa Mancuso, Francis Marip, Maria Mary Rosalie Morrissey, John Joseph Mundrie, Francesca Cosimina Orsomaso, Gay Nay Christina Paw, Kendall Anne Salatino, John Joseph Siniscarco, Gabrielle Teresa Spinelli, Joseph John Sullivan, Juliana Thomasina Suppa, Dominick Joseph Taurisano, Luzeya Angela Thin, Vito Valentino Valenzi and PaPa Cecilia Win



A PRIESTLY PALETTE



Father Jim sometimes takes off his collar, picks up a brush and creates his own artistic world

By FRAN PERRITANO

There's something very special inside the rectory at St. Mary of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament Parish.

Yes, there are the usual things one might expect to find. As you walk through the front door and entranceway into the vestibule, there's the business end of the parish. The office of the secretary and business administrator is to the left; down the hallway at the right are offices, one of which the pastor occupies.

As you continue forward through another doorway, there's the personal side of the quarters: a living room, dining room and kitchen. Upstairs, a number of bedrooms.

If you explore a little closer, however, there's a hidden treasure. As you exit the business side of the rectory and enter the living quarters and turn to the left, there's a wall on which many paintings hang, all in ornate frames.

Large and small they jump out: a table laden with fruit, a sailboat on tranquil water, a winding road leading to someplace in the distance, and a chilly winter-in-the-city scene.

Explore a little further into the dining and living rooms, more artistry beckons. The walls are covered with more paintings, including another peaceful water scene displayed over the fireplace.

They're not Picasso, da Vinci, Rembrandt or Michelangelo.

They're Cesta.

Father Jim, in addition to being a priest and a comedian, is a painter. He has been "from my earliest memory."

He's so good, he is the liturgical designer for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse. He's taken courses in Chicago and

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Father Jim has been a painter since he was a young boy. Here, he stands in front of a wall in the rectory on which hang several of his creations.

SEE MORE OF FATHER JIM'S ARTWORK ON PAGE 8

'A powerful bond'

John Siniscarco's relationship with God guiding force in his life

John Siniscarco might be a teen in age, but he has the maturity of an adult when it comes to his faith. He says he has a special relationship with God, isn't afraid to tell you about it and is very proud to be a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

Your family has been involved at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament for a long time. What does this parish mean to you?

This parish is like a second home to me. I've been involved with religion at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament for as long as I can remember. My spiritual belief was built from this parish. Although I have always been a member of Mount Carmel, I have been to a few other parishes for Mass from time to time. I really feel connected to Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament Parish and to God and I am thankful for that.

What is the first thing you remember about coming to church?

Completing my First Communion with my religion class. That was the first time that I actually felt God's presence in my life and when my spiritual journey began.

You were an altar server for a number of years and moved on to become a lector. What did you like most about serving Mass?

It was the first time I was given responsibility to help out with the Mass. I also enjoyed meeting and getting to know some of the other altar servers in our parish. Through altar serving, I made a lot of friends that I will remember for the rest of my life.

Why did you want to become a lector?

I wanted to continue serving the Lord after I was finished with altar serving. I am not afraid to speak in front of people and I like to read, so I thought that lectoring would be a great way to utilize those gifts that God gave me.

In the fall issue of "More Good News" you were part of a story about parish teens who attended Notre Dame Vision 2013. In that article, you mentioned you had a good relationship with God even before you went. What is that relationship like?

My relationship with God is a powerful bond that will never be broken no matter what comes my way. God has always been there for me when I needed him. God helps me gets me through any problems that I may have in my life. Without God in my life, I wouldn't be the person that I am today.

Is there anyone who has helped you the most in that relationship?

My mom. Without her encouraging me to participate in church activities I may have missed out on a lot of really great opportunities. I am very thankful for what my mom has done for me.

Most young people generally don't like to



JOHN SINISCARCO

Age: 16

School: Junior at New Hartford High School.

Family: Parents John and Mary, sisters Shaelin and Fallon, grandmother Jessie.

Favorite movie: "Forrest Gump."

Favorite TV show: "The Walking Dead."

Favorite music artist: Eminem.

Things you like to do in your spare time:

Hang out with my friends, play soccer and run track.

talk about their faith with their friends. Do you ever have the opportunity to talk to your friends about faith?

Yes, I have talked to many of my friends about my faith. Many of my friends support my belief in God, but some of them do not. I tell my atheistic friends that they're missing out on so much. With God in your life you can conquer anything. When you don't believe in God, you may feel hopeless.

I know you're only a teenager, but how do you cope with life's disappointments?

I try not to look at disappointment that much. I focus on the good things that happen to me and use that to block out the disappointments. Many times I pray to God for guidance to help me through the tough times. Praying to God always makes me feel better in times of disappointment.

Do you have a hero?

My father is my hero. He works some crazy shifts at work and sometimes he works all night. My dad made that choice because he wanted to be there for all of my sporting events as well as my sisters'. Until I get my driver's license, he has been the main person to drive me to my friends' houses and to all of my sporting events. He's always has a good attitude and cooks the best food, too. His meatballs are the BEST. My father is really into tradition, too. Every Sunday my family and I go to Café Caruso. My father

loved Caruso's as a kid and now we enjoy it as a family. My father has also shown me how to be a man and to always stand up for what I believe in. He has taught me to be responsible and to live by my word. I am very thankful and will always look up to my father as my hero in life.

What is the best advice anyone has ever given to you?

Never give up. Even when things are hard, never stop trying, because one day when you complete your goal, it will be the best feeling in the world.

What is the best piece of advice you have ever given to anyone?

Believe in yourself. Believing in yourself is one of the most important things one could have. If you believe in yourself, then anything is possible.

What do you hope the future holds for you?

I hope that in the future I will get accepted into a good program in a good college, and then get a good job. Also, I hope that someday I can settle down with a family of my own and live a life that I have always dreamt of living. That dream life consists of helping people and traveling the world. Right now, I am thinking about getting into something in the health care field. I am going to be doing some job-shadowing over the summer and I hope to get a better idea as to what profession I would like to pursue.

A CONVERSATION WITH ...

Mary Beth LaNeve

Have you ever noticed the lights in the two windows to the left of the front door in the rectory? If they're on, there's a good chance Mary Beth LaNeve is there – it's her home away from home. Mary Beth has been the secretary / business administrator of the parish for 28 years. Her tasks are numerous from producing the weekly bulletin, to making all sorts of arrangements, to taking care of the books. She does it all with professionalism and love.

You've been business administrator of the parish for years. What does the job entail?

Oversee the general workings of the parish – handle correspondence and phone inquiries, purchasing and bill payments, prepare certificates, schedule and record weddings and funerals, prepare the weekly bulletin, oversee the Prayer Remembrance and envelope systems, maintain parish activity calendar, record payroll, prepare financial reports and bank reconciliations, coordinate office volunteers and money counters, work with the pastor and various committees – just to name a few things.

What do you like about the position?

The wonderful people of this parish.

Is there anything you don't like?

I love my job, but of all my tasks, the book-keeping is my least favorite

Your aunt had your position many years ago. What can you tell me about her and do you feel an obligation to carry on the family tradition?

My aunt Theresa DeSarro was a devoted volunteer bookkeeper who spent a great deal of her spare time for many years doing book-keeping for the church. She was a very active parishioner until her illness and death from cancer. I was asked by Father Henry Benin if I would be willing to work here during the hours that my son was in school. So, unlike my aunt, who volunteered, I was the first paid secretary. No, I don't feel an obligation, but it is a nice feeling to follow in her footsteps and a privilege to work for my parish. I have worked for five pastors – they are all wonderful priests who have become family friends – all so different from each other!

You graduated from Mount Carmel School in 1967. What are your fondest memories of that time?

Cheerleading and the many friends.

There is a special connection to this parish that those of us who have grown up here feel. Why is our church special for you?

My parents and grandparents were all very dedicated to volunteering in the parish here. When I was young, I would be with my parents



Mary Beth LaNeve met her husband, Rick, while she was a student at Mount Carmel School. In this family photo taken at her daughter Margie's wedding are, from left: Rick, Mary Beth, Margie and her husband, Mike Hammell, and son Rick and his wife, Kit.

MARY BETH LaNEVE

Age: 60.

Position: Secretary / business administrator.

Years on the job: 28.

Education: Mount Carmel School, Utica Catholic Academy.

Family: Husband Rick, son and daughter-in-law Rick and Kit, daughter and son-in-law Margie and Mike, dog Tiki.

What do you like to do in your spare time: Cook, read, be with family.

here working on the festival or helping out with the school PTA. When I was in seventh or eighth grade, my father along with Father Ludwig and Father Mario renovated the church basement – it was a project we all did together. When you are so involved, it becomes a part of you. And, this is where I met my husband!

Like many people, you've had your good times and no-so-good times during your life. What has gotten you through it all?

There is a special support system when you work for a parish. You become like family with your co-workers and so many of the parishioners. When my parents or my husband were sick, there was always someone who gave their shoulder to cry on, or a hug. Working here, there is always a reminder that God will see you through.

If you met a newcomer to Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament and he or she asked you why you're here nearly every day either in the rectory or church, what would your answer be?

It is a great place to be. People full of love, understanding and compassion – and laughter, too.

Finally, any advice for our beloved Yankees this season?

It is going to be a tough season without my favorite Mariano Rivera, but if they each do their job and work together as a team, they will win games.



Behind scenes of Nativity scene

Certainly, during the holidays, you probably stopped to admire the beautiful Nativity representation (presepio or presepe in Italian) of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament.

If you have small children you might have used it as an instructional tool in showing what Christmas is really about. If that is so, then you are doing exactly what St. Francis of Assisi intended when he created the first presepio with live animals and people in the town of Greccio in 1223.

Tomasso da Celano, an early biographer of Francis, described it as “honoring the simplicity, exalting poverty, praising humility” changing Greccio into a “new Bethlehem.”

In his last book, Pope John Paul II insisted that the animals were not mentioned in the actual gospel. Nonetheless, they are forever members of the cast of characters we now associate with the scene. In fact, the oldest sculpted in-the-round presepio can be found in the church of Santo Stefano (end of the 13th century) in Bologna. Originally created without color, the figures were later painted vividly in 1370 by Simone dei Crocefissi. Those colors and the

individual characters and elements have unique meaning.

Mary’s blue mantle represents the sky and, therefore, the heavenly origin of her child. Joseph is in the browns of the Earth, representing humility. In Isaiah 1:3 the verses say: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” Perhaps from this foreshadowing of Christ’s birth and the Jews not accepting him was born the tradition of the animals. Other sources say the ox represents the Jews and the donkey represents the pagans, all of whom will one day come to recognize the Christ.

The stable, or grotto, in which the characters are placed are not explicitly mentioned by any of the four evangelists. There were, however, in eastern cultures particular attachments to caves as the birthplaces of pagan gods. In fact, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is built over a small grotto that is the traditional birthplace of Jesus.

The three kings are in the gospel according to Matthew. If you look at the characters closely you will see that they represent the three known races at the time. There is a Persian carrying gold (wealth), representing the Indo-Europeans. There is an Arab bearing incense (which still is burned today as a symbol of ris-

ing to heaven), representing the East. And the black wise man bearing myrrh (used in rituals of death), represents the African race. All come to bear witness and pay homage to the Son of God.

It was Pope Leo I (pope from 440 to 461) who officially declared that there were three wise men. Previously, there had been versions of the story which included from two to 12. Their journey from the East traces the path of the sun, as Christ represented a new day for mankind.

The shepherds represent the great masses of the common folk who would one day follow Jesus. They are humble, work hard and care for their flocks as Jesus would grow to care for them. Often, there is a shepherd asleep on the hay who represents the esoteric search for the dream of salvation.

It was the Neapolitans in the 1700s who defined the Nativity scenes found in most of Italy and elsewhere today. Wealthy families competed with each other to have the very best presepio. The nobility dedicated entire rooms of their palaces to their creations, clothing the figures in sumptuous fabrics and having the very best craftsmen create minute details of everyday life in their miniature villages.

In the 1800s, common folk got into the tradi-

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A.J. VALENTINI

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

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Rome, Italy.

The formal courses just add to a talent Father Jim says is “just natural. Like a gift.”

He calls painting “diversion therapy” that involves a lot of effort that doesn’t feel like work.

“All painting involves work,” Father Jim said. “But when you enjoy it, it’s never work.”

And like a true artist, he sometimes never is satisfied with his creations.

“Some days I don’t like any,” he said. “Other days I like them all.”

Despite his deep Italian heritage, Father Jim’s favorite kind of art is French Impression from the late 1800s. His favorite artist is Monet, the founder of French Impressionist painting.

“I love the light effect of sunshine,” he said of Monet, noting his paintings were quick and impulsive.

While most parishioners have not had the privilege of seeing Father Jim’s artwork, they have seen his creativity in church.

All those banners that hang on the pillars and are displayed in the sanctuary during special celebrations are Father Jim’s creations.

His inspiration for those comes from “the scripture lessons of the season or event or Holy Day, and the colors of the season.”

We all know Father’s Jim’s main calling is to God and serving His people, but if he didn’t choose the priesthood, his career choice would have been in the creative end of the spectrum.

“Perhaps an architect or designer or symphony orchestra player,” he said. (He’s an accomplished pianist, too.)

So, as Father Jim continues his work in the parish, he’ll continue to make people laugh and always keep drawing from his creative genes.

But before he’s called to the great gallery in the sky, he might like to create one piece that suits his personality and love of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament.

“Perhaps the piece that would fetch \$50,000 for the church, of course!”

NATIVITY

Continued from Page 6

tion. Still today, if you go to via San Gregorio Armeno in downtown Naples, you will find a street lined with boutiques that do nothing but create and sell “i pastori,” literally, “the shepherds.” But they create oh so much more!

On the shelves among the traditional characters one can find miniatures of popular saints such as Padre Pio, Mother Teresa, pop icons such as Totò, Princess Diana and Ghandi, prominent politicians, even including Barack and Michelle Obama. There are houses and backgrounds, vegetation and all kinds of vehicles.

Here are some of the more established characters and decorations of the Neapolitan style nativity and what they represent:

The washerwoman: An old story tells of Salomè, a washerwoman who would not believe a virgin could bear a child until she examined the girl’s “nature” herself. In daring to touch Mary, her hand was incinerated only to be restored after touching the Divine Child.

The gypsy: The gypsy is a more modern take on the ancient sibyls, who predicted the future. Legend has it that the Cumean sibyl, who lived not far from the present city of Naples, predicted the birth of Christ. She supposed that she would be the mother of the child, but when the angels announced the birth of Jesus she realized her hubris and was turned into an owl. A gypsy holding a child is a reminder of Mary when she had to wander into Egypt to save her child.

The hunter: A hunter with a rifle seems like he has no place in this scene, but to the

Neapolitans he represents the arrogance of the class of people who interpret signs for their own selfish ends.

The fisherman: Remember Jesus said to the apostles that they would become “fishers of men.”

The well: An ill omen, water drawn from a well on Christmas was filled with diabolical spirits; perhaps a legend created to keep curious children away from them and the danger of falling in. They also are an ancient pagan reference to beliefs they were a connection to the underworld.

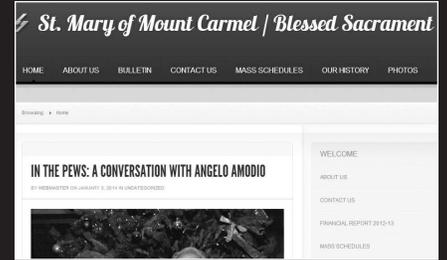
The fountain: In popular lore the fountain was a place for apparitions and romantic encounters. It also might be a reference to the belief that Mary received the Annunciation while drawing water from a fountain.

The bridge: Is a symbol of connecting the living to the dead much like Christ is the symbol of the bridge to everlasting life.

The shops: Represent the teaming life of the town, though not so much of Bethlehem as the bustling town of Naples as the people knew it.

The mill: Multiple meanings here. The continuous movement of its sails represents the march of time. The grinding of the wheat is mentioned in the Bible in separating the wheat (the saved) from the chaff (the damned). The “bread of life” begins to take its shape here.

The inn: A clear reference to the inns with no room in the Christmas story. In Neapolitan lore, St. Nicholas revived three children murdered in an inn.



Check out our parish website

If you’ve never been to our parish website at www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com, you don’t know what you’re missing. It’s constantly updated with the latest parish news and announcements. There’s even a mobile version for your smart phone. Here is some of what you will find on the site:

PHOTO GALLERIES



PARISH BULLETIN



... AND MORE

- > Father Jim’s “Wise and Otherwise”
- > History of the parish
- > Lector, minister, altar server schedules
- > Links to Faith Formation website and Facebook page, parish Facebook page, Daily Readings, Catholic Sun
- > Mass schedules
- > Parish news
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Father Jim's creative side

