

MORE GOOD NEWS

***'The hand of God
shall hold you'***

**Funeral Mass honors deceased,
comforts family and friends**

PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Dispelling some myths about death and grief

This issue of "More Good News" explores the topic of funerals in our Catholic tradition.

I'd like to add some thoughts about common myths that sometimes accompany death.

When someone says, "When are you going to get over it, the loss?" — they're really saying your pain makes them feel uncomfortable. The myth that we "get over" a genuine loss is false because for many there's no getting over it — we absorb it, learn from it and carry it always.

Another myth is that our relationship ends with the passing of a loved one. Our relationship changes and the bond of love or friendship continues. Sometimes we experience that person in even closer ways.

It is not true that there is one way to express our grief — a person's grief is as unique as his or her fingerprints. Grief is not something to be cured; it is a process to journey through.

There are other myths about grief — time heals all wounds is not real for some people. That expressing deep sorrow or grief is a sign



FATHER JIM CESTA

of weakness is not true.

Another myth is that religion and spiritual beliefs always bring comfort. This can be of great help; however, it's not for everyone. The grieving person needs a heart open to God to begin with. When someone says, "It's God's will," how do they know? Did they get an email from God?

You know God's ways are not always our ways.

CELEBRATING THE SAINTS

St. Pope John XXIII

Feast day Oct. 11

Although few people had as great an impact on the 20th century as Pope John XXIII, he avoided the limelight as much as possible. Indeed, one writer has noted that his "ordinariness" seems one of his most remarkable qualities.

The firstborn son of a farming family in Sotto il Monte, near Bergamo in northern Italy, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was always proud of his down-to-earth roots. In Bergamo's diocesan seminary, he joined the Secular Franciscan Order.

After his ordination in 1904, Roncalli returned to Rome for canon law studies. He soon worked as his bishop's secretary, church history teacher in the seminary, and as publisher of the diocesan paper.

His service as a stretcher-bearer for the Italian army during World War I gave him a firsthand knowledge of war. In 1921, Roncalli was made national director in Italy of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. He also found time to teach patristics at a seminary in the Eternal City.

In 1925, he became a papal diplomat, serving first in Bulgaria, then in Turkey, and finally in France. During World War II, he became well acquainted with Orthodox Church leaders. With the help of Germany's ambassador

to Turkey, Archbishop Roncalli helped save an estimated 24,000 Jewish people.

Named a cardinal and appointed patriarch of Venice in 1953, he was a residential bishop. A month short of entering his 78th year, Cardinal Roncalli was elected pope, taking the name John after his father and the two patrons of Rome's cathedral, St. John Lateran. Pope John took his work very seriously but not himself. His wit soon became proverbial, and he began meeting with political and religious leaders from around the world.

His most famous encyclicals were *Mother and Teacher* (1961) and *Peace on Earth* (1963). Pope John XXIII enlarged the membership in the College of Cardinals and made it more international. At his address at the opening of the Second Vatican Council, he criticized the "prophets of doom" who "in these modern times see nothing but prevarication and ruin." Pope John XXIII set a tone for the Council when he said, "The Church has always opposed ... errors. Nowadays, however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity."

On his deathbed, Pope John said: "It is not that the gospel has changed; it is that we have begun to understand it better. Those who have lived as long as I have...were enabled to compare different cultures and traditions and know that the moment has come to discern the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and to look far ahead."

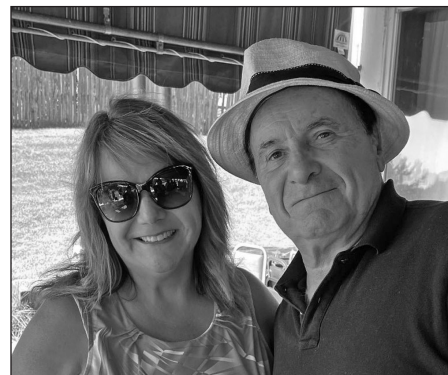
"Good Pope John" died on June 3, 1963. St. John Paul II beatified him in 2000, and Pope Francis canonized him in 2014.



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



St. Mary of Mount Carmel Blessed Sacrament Parish

www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com and www.facebook.com/mountcarmelblessedsacrament

ABOUT THE PARISH
Address: 648 Jay St., Utica, NY 13501.
Telephone: 315-735-1482; Fax: 315-735-9806.
Office hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday.
Closed on Friday and national holidays.
Faith Formation and Sacraments Center: 315-724-3950.
Email: stmaryutic@nydia.org
Hearing impaired: Listening devices available in the sacristy.

MASS SCHEDULES
Weekend
Saturday: 6:00 p.m. (livestream on parish YouTube channel)
Sunday: 8 and 10:30 a.m.
Weekday
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 8:30 a.m.
Rosary for the unborn and Divine Mercy Chaplet: Thursday after Mass.
Holy Days
Consult the bulletin and website.
RECONCILIATION
Saturday: 3:45 p.m.
MARRIAGE
Couples must make arrangements six months in advance.

BAPTISM
Call the parish office to arrange. Parents must attend a preparation class prior to the baptism of their child.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS
Adults or children, 7 or older who have never been baptized or confirmed or received the Eucharist, are invited to call the parish office for information about this process.

NEW PARISHIONERS
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.

PARISH STAFF
Pastor: Rev. Jim Cesta
Parish Assistant: Rev. Luis Olguin
Trustees: Rocco Arcuri Sr. and Bill Thibault
Parish Office Manager: Terri Piazza-Panuccio
Faith Formation: Kiki Terri Piazza-Panuccio
Faith Formation: 7:30 Anne Carone-Elacqua
Music Director: Peter Elacqua
Buildings and grounds: Brian Chasen
Website Manager, Bulletin Editor: Fran Perritano



... and more

Scan the QR code below to get the mobile version of the website and save it to your home screen. Here's some of what you'll find:

- Wedding Planning Guide.
- Funeral Service Planning Guide.
- Weekly prayers, reflections, photos, videos and more to enrich your faith.
- Photo galleries
- Mass schedules



COVER STORY

Celebration of life

Why it's important to honor loved ones with funeral Mass after their earthly time ends

By FRAN PERTANO

When her Uncle Tom Averson died at age 74 this summer, Cynthia Zainchowski knew what kind of memorial he would want.

"It was important for our family that he had a funeral Mass because he was a very devout Catholic," said Cynthia, who helped plan the funeral. "Going to weekly Sunday Mass was the highlight of his week. We felt he deserved a Mass dedicated to his honor."

And with the help of the Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament funeral team, the celebration of his life more than lived up to his family's expectations.

"We were able to pick the readings that best suited Tom," Cynthia said. "The music was perfect as Peter Elacqua knew what songs that Tom liked. A family member was able to give the eulogy. Plus, Father (Jim) talked about how he knew Tom personally. In every way the Mass was both personal and comforting."

In our current world, many families of those who pass on to eternal life bypass a funeral Mass, electing instead to have services elsewhere.

Peter Elacqua, along with his sister-in-law Anne Elacqua, work alongside families planning funeral Masses. Anne said there are other ways for Catholics to be remembered or buried without a Mass, but they don't quite offer the same level of comfort and respect as does a funeral Mass.

"Oftentimes, families will have a funeral prayer service at the funeral home or even graveside," she said. "A priest will go to the funeral home or grave and offer scripture readings, prayers and a homily to those present."

But for those raised in the Catholic faith, a funeral Mass is the most appropriate way to honor the deceased.

Honoring your deceased family member with a funeral or memorial Mass shows your commitment to the faith of your family member. Though the funeral or memorial Mass celebrates the life of the deceased, it is meant to be the sign of a bridge between life on Earth and eternal life with God. The funeral service offers an opportunity for those assembled to grow stronger in their own faith and to be supported by the faith of others.

"The funeral Mass is a time to pray for the deceased person and for those who grieve," said Peter Elacqua. "It is a time to remember the dignity and holiness of life and to affirm our faith in the resurrection of Jesus and in our own personal resurrection to eternal life. When a person of deep faith dies, it is best for the family to honor that person with a funeral Mass



Photos (cover and above) by A.J. VALENTINI

"The funeral Mass is a time to pray for the deceased person and for those who grieve," said Peter Elacqua, who along with his sister-in-law Anne Elacqua help families plan funerals in our parish. "It is a time to remember the dignity and holiness of life and to affirm our faith in the resurrection of Jesus and in our own personal resurrection to eternal life."

in church."

When Janice Felitto died at age 70 in May following a battle with cancer, it was up to her niece Caroline Felitto Suttle to help plan the funeral.

"Catholic faith is a cornerstone in my uncle (Anthony Felitto) and aunt's life, and although we wished to have her earthly life last longer, she and we were comforted by the faith she was home with our Lord and family who have passed before her, like her loving parents," Caroline said. "We felt strongly we needed the opportunity to celebrate her life in her church, singing her favorite songs and focused on the love we have for her and the love she had for us, God and Mount Carmel. It was healing."

Mass brings people together

Peter said "it is sad" when the deceased person was someone of deep faith and the family decides not to have a funeral Mass because family members might not see its importance.

"Sometimes, families opt for convenience rather than celebrating more fully the life of the deceased through dignified prayer and ritual offered by the church," he said. "The church

liturgy is a place for everyone to gather with the purpose of praying together. The funeral home does not provide the same atmosphere of prayer that a church can offer.

"Also, for people who have fallen away from faith, or for those who are weak in their faith, a well-celebrated funeral can bring people back to church and to a deeper appreciation for community."

Even if the deceased preferred cremation, a funeral Mass still is appropriate.

"You can have a Mass with the deceased body present or their cremains at the Mass," Anne said. "The church, however, feels that the body is sacred, whether in full body form or cremated, and therefore the cremains need to be buried to preserve the sacredness of the individual. The church does not want you scattered in the park or over your favorite body of water or sitting on a mantle forever either. Their belief is to have you buried."

The loss of a loved one not only is a loss for a few people or for a family, it is a loss for the community as well.

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For Pat, it's a wonderful life

Faith and family are paramount

Patrick Morrissey loves his life. He volunteers in our parish and in the community. He loves his faith and his family. Works hard. What more can one ask for?

Family is very important to you. You come from a gang of eight children, have five grown kids of your own and two grandchildren. Why is family No. 1 in your life?

Because other than God, there is nothing more important than my family. The way we love each other, bond and help one another through any situation allowed me to understand what unconditional love is.

When you were young, did you have to battle your siblings for attention?

No. My mother and father got divorced when I was very young. It wasn't about fighting for attention with my siblings; it was about being there for one another.

As a father and grandfather, what do you hope you've passed along to your children and your grandchildren someday?

I hope that my children and grandchildren learned to have a hard work ethic, to not focus on materialistic things in life and to thank God for the blessings that He has provided for us.

Most people who know you understand you are a die-hard Kansas City Chiefs' fan? You live in the middle of New York state. How did you become a Chiefs' loyalist?

It was Christmas Day 1969, and I was watching a playoff game between the Kansas City Chiefs and the Miami Dolphins. Miami kicked the winning field goal, and it was the longest game in NFL history. I felt bad for the Chiefs because they lost the game, and I've been a fan of them ever since. And now, 50 years later, we finally made it to the Super Bowl.

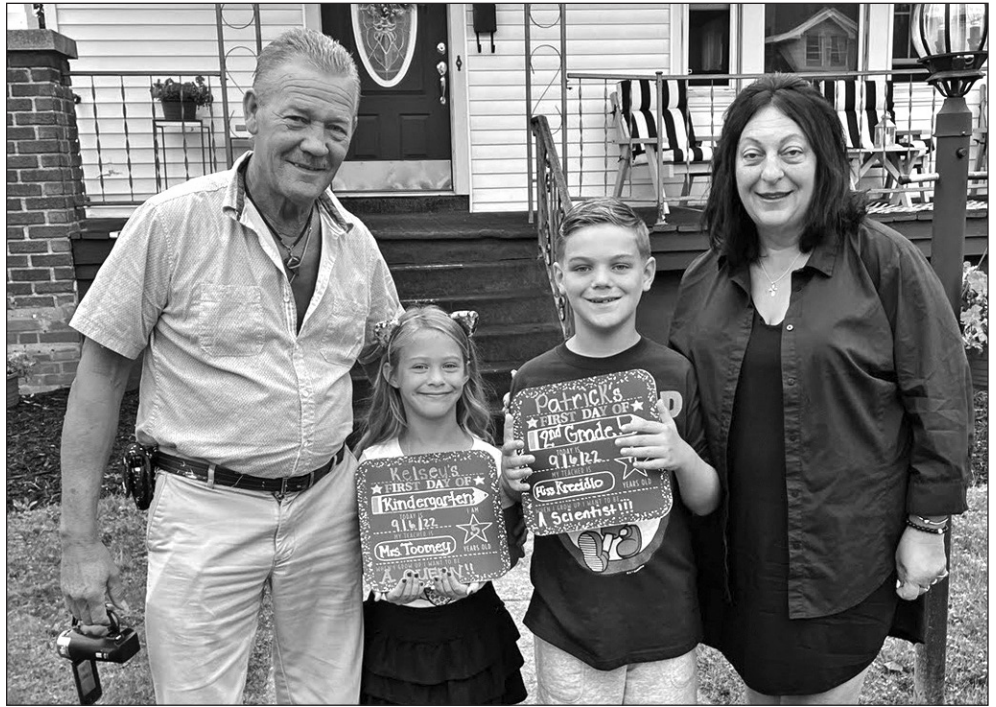
You worked as a correction officer for about 30 years. What did you love about the job and what did you dislike?

For an uneducated man, it was good paying job with great benefits. My wife and I had just started our family and the job allowed me to still be heavily involved in my family's life. When it comes to the dislikes about the job, I mean it was prison.

How has law enforcement changed over the years?

The thing about being in law enforcement is that you have to be flexible and willing to change with the new societal standards. I was certainly not using the same tactics at the end of my career as I was taught in the academy when I first got the job.

You love working with kids. You coached the Mount Carmel CYO basketball team to the city title in 2003; coached Mount Carmel East T-ball and baseball, Ed Hinko baseball and Dick Miller girls' and boys' basketball;



Patrick Morrissey with his wife, Rosemary, and their grandchildren.

Patrick Morrissey

- **Age:** 62.
- **Family:** Married 39 years to Rosemary. Children Patrick Jr., Jenae, Danielle, Maria and Michael. Grandchildren Patrick III and Kelsey.
- **Education:** Graduated from Whitesboro Central School system.
- **Past employment:** Village of Whitesboro Highway Department from 1977-1987; New York State Department of Correctional Services correction officer from 1987-2017.
- **Things I like to do in my spare time:** Look for sharks' teeth at the ocean, fish, spend time with my family, love my pool and the beach, volunteer at church, talking to the elderly, asking people a lot of questions, studying history.
- **Favorite movie:** "It's A Wonderful Life"
- **Favorite TV shows:** "NYPD Blue," "The Office."
- **Favorite book:** Any Dean Koontz novel.

and were a Cub Scout Leader. How did you get into working with kids and why do you love it so much?

My kids were participating in all of these programs as well. I decided to coach/lead these things because I wanted to be as involved as I could in my kids' lives. Instead of being the parent complaining on the side lines, I stepped up.

In our parish, you volunteer. You current-

ly work alongside our parish buildings and grounds caretaker, you pitch in with the festival and other events. What does this parish mean to you?

This parish means everything to me. I got married here, my kids made all of the sacraments here, and it is the place that I have always worshipped my God. Volunteering for the festival and working alongside the buildings and grounds caretaker is the least I could do for this parish after all it has done for me. I will always feel like I can and should be doing more for my parish and I will continue to do anything that is asked of me by my fellow parishioners and Father.

Why is it important for people to volunteer their time and talent?

There is a constant demand for volunteers within the community and parish. There is a sense of tradition with volunteering and giving back to your community. No matter what age, we all have something to give back.

Earlier this year there was a health scare in your family? What did you learn from that and what advice do you have for people who undergo similar circumstances?

I think the most important thing I've learned and would tell others is that no matter what the circumstance is or how hard it may be, we have to try to be compassionate. Above all else, love and compassion are most important. We aren't on Earth for very long, but the memory of how we treated others lingers.

How would you describe Patrick Morrissey Sr.

I would describe myself as, simply, a person who tries live life one day at a time.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Maria Panuccio and her fiancé, Pat Hartnett, are on top of the world in New York City.

Finding happiness in NYC

Start spreading the news: Maria living her dream

When “More Good News” profiled Maria Panuccio in October 2013, she was working at Nicky Doodles before starting her freshman year at SUNY Cortland planning to become a teacher. She had a plan. So far, it’s working out.

Has your life gone as you hoped in the last nine years, or has it taken different directions?

I’d say that it has gone as I have hoped. Of course, nothing is perfect, but I always wanted to finish college, get a job I love and move to a big city — which I have done!

You grew up in Utica and now live in Queens and work in Brooklyn. Was the transition difficult?

Honestly, not really! I had my sister there through the transition, and I always wanted to live in a big city. Like anything in life, some days are more difficult than others.

You teach third-grade students at a public school in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. How did that job come about and what made you decide to make the move to the Big Apple?

I decided to move to New York City because my sister lived here and there was really no other place I wanted to be at the moment. I got my current job because I called many, MANY schools in the New York City Department of Education and asked if they were hiring four days before the school year began. The school I am working at opened an extra kindergarten class the day I called. I interviewed and got the job.

What’s it like living in New York City?

It is chaotic, but in a good way! There is never a dull moment. In New York City we take public transportation everywhere so the subway has become second nature. It’s great because you are able to walk places, too. I live right across the street from a grocery store and it’s very convenient. There is so much culture,

Maria Panuccio

- **Age:** 27.
- **Family:** Mom Terri; dad Nick; sister Nicole, brothers Vinny, Nicky and Peter.
- **Education:** Bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood and Childhood Education from SUNY Cortland; master’s degree in Literacy Education from SUNY Oneonta.
- **Employment:** Third-grade teacher
- **Favorite TV shows:** “Modern Family,” “Gilmore Girls” and “Survivor.”
- **Favorite movie:** “Mamma Mia!”
- **Favorite book:** There are too many to choose from, but any thriller book.
- **Things you like to do:** Read, cook, and travel.
- **Favorite quote:** “The sun will rise.”

which is great. My favorite thing about New York City is the food. It truly has the best Italian food (sorry Utica).

What’s the downside about living in a big city?

Being away from a lot of my close friends and family can be tough. I miss the convenience of living five to 10 minutes away from everyone. Though I do not mind the subway and walking everywhere, there are days I wish I could just hop in a car and drive where I wanted to go.

You also love to travel. Where have you gone and what is your favorite place to visit?

I have been to Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Greece, London, Paris, Switzerland, Scotland, Amsterdam, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Aruba, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. The most special place to me is Australia because I student-taught there. My favorite place is either New Zealand or Italy.

Back in 2013, you said your family was very rooted in the Catholic faith. “We say prayers before meals, have to attend Mass every week and there is hardly ever a conversation where God isn’t mentioned,” you said. Has it been difficult living up to those standards that were set when you were young?

I would say yes! As I have become my own person, I have learned that it is OK to maintain my faith in a way that I feel most connected to God in.

You also said, “My faith has helped me to get through hard times, and I know that there is always something I can turn to when things don’t work out the way I plan.” Do you still feel that way and how do you hope to improve?

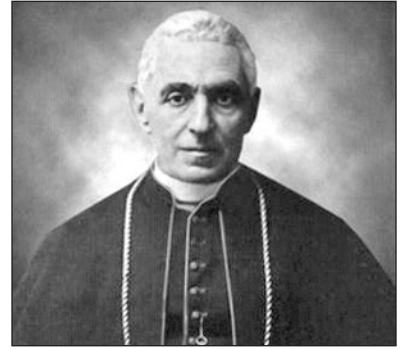
For the most part, yes. It is sometimes hard to have faith when there is so much negativity in the world. However, in order to improve, I try to find God in the mundane activities of life. For example, I find God in the stranger who helps a homeless person on the street or the kind man who offers me his seat on the busy Monday morning subway ride. Seeing God in people’s actions helps me to keep my faith when times are tough and reminds me there is SO much good in the world.

When envisioning your future nine years ago you said, “I hope to finish college with a good GPA and get a good job in the field of speech pathology/audiology or deaf education. I hope to travel the world and one day fall in love and get married.” It seems like you’re on target, especially since you’re getting married next year. How do you feel you’re doing on your “bucket list?”

Well, after reading what I wrote at 18, I’d say I’m doing pretty good! It’s fun to read back on that and to see that I have accomplished a lot of what my 18-year-old self wanted.

New saint blessed our parish in 1901

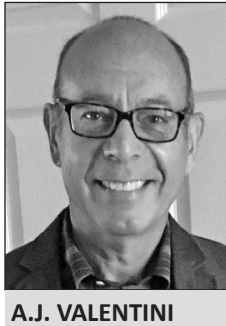
Scalabrini canonized on Oct. 9



Utica in recent years has been blessed with connections to two local saints: Kateri Tekakwitha from nearby Auriesville, and Marianne Cope, who was a parishioner across town at then-St. Joseph Church. Both were canonized on Oct. 21, 2012, by Pope Benedict XVI.

Now, as of Oct. 9, Utica and St. Mary of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament Parish are associated with another saint: Giovanni Battista Scalabrini.

Scalabrini was born on July 8, 1839, the third of the eight children of Luigi Scalabrini, a wine merchant, and his wife, Colomba Trombetta, people of modest means. As a young man he studied philosophy and theology in Como, Italy, and was ordained on May 30, 1863. He became a professor of Greek and history and eventually was named rector of St. Abundius Seminary.



A.J. VALENTINI

In 1870, Scalabrini was appointed pastor of San Bartolomeo, one of the largest parishes in Como, where he was renowned for his work with the working class and remained forward thinking on political, social and economic issues. Having published conferences on the First Vatican Council, he earned the attention of Pope Pius IX and subsequently was named bishop of Piacenza in 1875.

The new bishop was tireless in his dedication to his flock. He made five diocesan visits to all 365 parishes in his district, even though some could be reached only on foot or by mule. Of the three synods he celebrated, one was dedicated to the Eucharist, in which he promoted frequent communion and perpetual adoration. He also reorganized seminaries and reformed their curricula.

Scalabrini tended to cholera victims, visited the sick and prisoners, helped the poor and bankrupt nobility. To help save farmers and workers from famine, he sold his horse, chalice and the pectoral cross that Pope Pius IX had given him to buy food.

His work did not stop there. The good bishop founded an institute to help hearing and speech-impaired women, organized assistance for young single women employed in rice fields, established mutual aid societies, workers' associations, rural banks, cooperatives and Catholic Action groups. He insisted that cat-



Bishop Giovanni Battista Scalabrini blesses the cornerstone of St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church on Sept. 15, 1901.

echism be taught in all parishes, even planning and presiding over the first National Catechetical Congress in 1889.

On the political front, Scalabrini helped resolve one of the biggest conundrums faced by the people of the newly united Italian State. He promoted reconciliation between that new political entity and the Papal States, which had controlled a vast swath of the central Italian peninsula. In his capacity as mediator/diplomat, he reached out to the thousands of Italians forced to migrate from their beloved Italy whom he saw in danger of losing their faith.

With the approval of Pope Leo XIII, on Nov. 28, 1887, he founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles (Scalabrinians) for religious, moral, social and legal care of migrants. These were the very priests and missionaries who helped found our parish.

It was Scalabrini who convinced St. Francis Xavier Cabrini, the Mother of Migrants, to leave for America in 1889 to care for children, orphans and sick Italian migrants. In 1895, Scalabrini founded the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles for migrants. This spirituality and love for migrants inspired the Scalabrinian Lay Missionary Women.

In 1901, Bishop Scalabrini made his first voyage to North and South America to visit the missions and parishes established or served by the Scalabrinians. It was on that voyage that on Sept. 15, 1901, Scalabrini came to Utica to bless the cornerstone of St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church. Scalabrini made an additional tour of the Scalabrinian institutions in the Americas in 1904. Through his countless contributions on

behalf of the children of the Italian diaspora, Giovanni Battista Scalabrini earned the appellation "Father of Migrants."

Scalabrini died on the Solemnity of the Ascension saying: "Lord, I am ready. Let us go." His mortal remains are venerated in the cathedral of Piacenza.

Scalabrini's cause for beatification was introduced by Bishop Menzani at Piacenza in June 1936. On March 16, 1987, Pope John Paul II promulgated a decree recognizing him as venerable, the first step to sainthood. The required miracle was approved July 7, 1997. On the Feast of the Dedication of St. John Lateran (Nov. 9, 1997), the pope's cathedral church, Pope John Paul II beatified Scalabrini and recalled his repeated saying: "Would that I could sanctify myself and all the souls entrusted to me."

On Aug. 20, 2022, Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, announced that the pope set Oct. 9, 2022, as the date for the canonization of Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini.

Pope Pius IX once described Scalabrini as "the apostle of the Catechism." While speaking to members of the congregation founded by Scalabrini in October 2018, Pope Francis called upon the religious to walk with migrants, following the charisma of their founder, by paying attention to the "dignity of the human person, especially where it is most wounded and threatened."

Sources: www.scalabriniani.org; www.catholicnewsagency.com; www.encyclopedia.com; <https://catholic.net>

FUNERALS

Continued from Page 3

“Why not celebrate that life and loss with hope and faith and with the beauty of a liturgy, ritual and prayer,” Peter said. “So many people from our parish wish to honor the memory of someone by attending that person’s funeral and by praying for that person in a place that can be uplifting and holy.

“Families who attend a funeral Mass can understand their beloved deceased member as someone who was more than just a relative, friend, co-worker. The church highlights more than the little we might know about the person who died. The church tells us how that person is a cherished child of God, a member of a community that is larger, greater and more encompassing than a family or a group of friends. To place that person’s life into the hands of God together with so many others can be a powerfully moving time and something so much more memorable than a few prayers or stories told outside the church.”

Funeral team helps families

Many families are too grief stricken or overwhelmed to plan the entire funeral service. If this is true for you, the Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament team will plan all or parts of the funeral for you.

First, the funeral home calls the church secretary (Terri Panuccio) and musicians (Peter and Anne) with the time and date of the funeral and other essential information.

The funeral home informs the family about our parish website that includes all planning information. It also informs the family that someone will be in touch with them from the parish to guide them in their choices.

This online guide at www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com is set up in six parts:

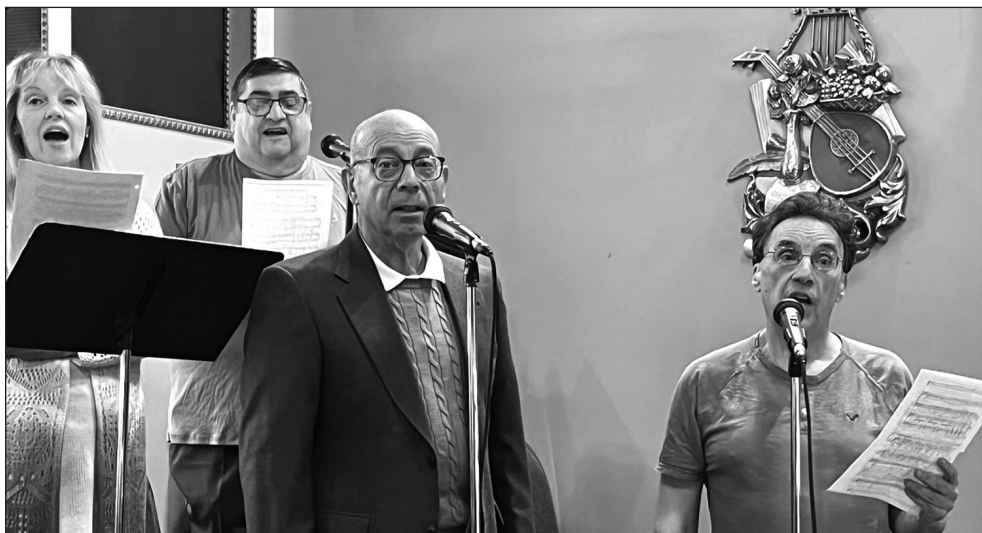
- Choosing scriptures and readers.
- Gathering procedures (including pall placers and offertory gift presenters).
- Choosing sacred music (including diocesan policy regarding popular, secular, favorite or recorded music.)
- Should someone give a eulogy? (Advice for the eulogy presenter.)
- Respecting church space.
- Livestreaming the funeral Mass.

If you are not computer savvy, we have binders with planning information that can be picked up at the rectory, or the church funeral planner can meet with you at your convenience. We prefer that funeral planning not be rushed or regarded as just another task. If you wish to plan the funeral service or any part of it, this guide will help you.

Next, the family receives a phone call from Peter or Anne, who can answer questions and help guide them with the choices they make.

The funeral Mass is just like a regular Sunday Mass with very few additions. The priest and ministers greet the body at mid-church at the opening of the service and a funeral pall (a large white drape) is placed over the casket as a reminder of the baptism of the deceased person.

Sometimes a eulogy is given at the beginning of the service so that all those assembled can be attuned to the life and some cherished memories



Our parish has a choir that sings at all funerals. Some of the members of that ministry are, from left: Joanne Vanderwood, Mario Scalzo, Fred Valentini and David Struz.

of the deceased. The eulogy also can welcome and gather everyone together. Eulogies are not always given since Father Jim always highlights the life of the deceased person in a special and unique way. Eulogies should be five to six minutes so that it does not become repetitive or overshadow the power of the church prayer.

Memories of the deceased more often are better expressed through storytelling that is shared among people at a wake, graveside service or a funeral reception. Eulogies should highlight the Christian characteristics of the life of the deceased.

At the end of the funeral, prayers of commendation are offered before the casket. These prayers underscore the opening of the gates of heaven and eternal life to the deceased person.

Choir, servers part of service

At Mount Carmel, we have a funeral choir that sings at every funeral. We offer our song as a prayer and as a comfort for the family and friends of the deceased. It is a gift from the parish that has no charge. Often, a pianist is included with the choir in addition to the organist who is hired by the family. A choir helps to engage the family and friends in fuller participation by singing and praying aloud together. It makes us understand that the death is a loss to our entire community.

There also are adult servers who participate during the funerals.

We follow diocesan rules with every funeral — so popular music is not allowed in church, nor is recorded music ever allowed. We encourage popular music to be used at wakes, receptions or at graveside services following the funeral. Also, popular readings may not be substituted for scripture readings but also can be used outside of the church service.

If a family would like to livestream the Mass, we need to know that as soon as possible so we can find an operator for our livestream equipment.

Finally, every family receives a keepsake folder at the funeral that includes a keepsake of the funeral liturgy; copies of eulogy; a person-

alized card from Father Jim; a listing of times for extra Masses to be offered for the deceased; the names of parishioners who served, ministered, read or sung at the funeral; information on the first name of the person and his or her patron saint; special prayers that can be offered privately; general information on our parish and parish membership and some help and guidance for personal growth and bereavement.

Helping ease the burden

“We are very pastoral and careful in our planning,” Peter said. “We do not want to burden families that may be overwhelmed. We are always ready to help plan the entire funeral even with just very few suggestions from the family. We take time to read the obituaries and to recommend readings and music that highlight the life of the deceased. Father always chooses a gospel that will fit and that will be the basis for his homily and reflection on the life of the deceased.

“No two funerals are the same at Mount Carmel,” he added. “They are extremely individualized and unique. They are times of deep prayer and faith expression, even through so much suffering and grief. Bringing and building faith at every funeral is one of the most healing and memorable parts of every funeral Mass. Funerals make us all understand the sanctity of life, the holy dignity of the deceased person and the healing love of God. It is the best way to honor the one we love so deeply.”

For families who are hesitant, Caroline Felitto Suttle puts it in perspective.

“The death of a loved one is never easy. In our particular situation, Janice passed away after a short cancer battle and our family wasn’t ready,” she said. “It was a tragic loss for us and during that time you want to be surrounded by people who lift you up and offer support. ... I will forever be grateful for the beautiful Mass and true celebration and send off Mount Carmel provided for my aunt. I know my uncle Anthony Felitto is also appreciative of the ease of working with his church during a difficult time.”



History lesson at Communion Brunch

About 160 people attended the Communion Brunch on Sunday, Oct. 23, at Monarch Banquets in Yorkville. Guest speaker was noted local historian and former Observer-Dispatch editor Frank Tomaino, left, who spoke about the history of our parish through the influences of two Johns: St. John Baptist Scalabrini and local philanthropist John Devereux.



*View more photos from the Communion Brunch
on the parish website at
www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com*