

MORE GOOD NEWS

Discovering
a real
Sicilian
delight

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When Our Lady spoke, it was worth listening

October is one of those months that we focus devotion on Mary, with her many titles — Mother of God, Tower of Ivory, Lady of Perpetual Help, etc.

We seldom think of Mary, however, as Mother of the Word of God. Jesus is God's Word become Flesh. She is the mother of that Blessed Word!

How ironic that we usually think of Mary as the woman wrapped in silence, keeping everything in her heart, not saying much. How could Mother of the Word remain silent?

When we survey the Gospels, we find that the Blessed Mother often spoke, and her words carried weight. She interrogates the angel Gabriel, asking how she will have a baby. She speaks in poetic verses when greeted by Elizabeth, her cousin. It is Mary who speaks up and asks the child Jesus who had left Joseph and Mary for three days in Jerusalem, "My child, why have you done this to us?"

Mary is the one to talk up the need for Jesus to work a miracle at the Wedding in Cana — "Son, they have no more wine."

She must have spoken to Christ upon the cross those three hours — for He spoke to her while dying for us.

Tradition tells us Mary prayed with the early Church at the first Pentecost.



FATHER JIM CESTA

How ironic that we usually think of Mary as the woman wrapped in silence, keeping everything in her heart, not saying much. How could Mother of the Word remain silent?

Mary, whom we honor during October, was a woman of silence, sorrow and contemplation — but also a woman of words, joy and action. She was a woman of the Word who gave her word, "Yes," so that the Word could become Flesh and dwell among us.

CATHOLIC Q&A

Coming back to church

Question: I have been away from the Church for a few years and really want to get active again, not so much for me, but for my children. Is this a bad reason to come back to Church?

Answer: If you are on your way to the supermarket, and you are forced to detour from your usual route because of road work, does the food you buy taste different? Is the meal less filling? Are the vegetables less tasty? Of course not.

In our faith journey, there are many detours called sin. Some are greater than others, some are even a bit longer. But God's grace comes to us in ways we understand and recognize and need. Your children leading you back to the Church is not as important as the fact that you are back.

This is an opportunity for you to renew, strengthen and deepen your faith. Regardless of how we get to Church, or what draws us closer to God, the fact is we are there. Do what you need to do to get right with God and the Church. Go to confession, begin good family religious practices and be involved in the ministries your parish offers. Be more than a lukewarm parishioner. Be the kind of Catholic you want your children to be.

Vestment colors

Q: What do the colors of the priest's and deacon's vestments mean?

A: In the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church, the colors of the vestments evolved over the course of several centuries and there was wide variation in the colors used, and in the feasts and seasons associated with particular colors.

It was Pope Innocent III (d. 1216) who gave us the basic outline that was later prescribed by Pope St. Pius V in 1570. The various colors remind us of the dominant themes of a particular season or celebration.

• **White:** Used for the seasons of Christmas and Easter and in celebrations of the Lord, of Mary, the angels, and saints who were not martyrs. This color also is used in Masses for the dead, at baptisms, weddings and other festive celebrations.

• **Red:** As the color of blood and fire, red is used on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, as well as Pentecost and special celebrations of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, red is used on the feasts and memorials of the Apostles and those saints who died as martyrs.

• **Violet:** The color for Advent and Lent. Violet also may be used in Masses for the dead and on All Souls Day (Nov. 2).

• **Green:** A color of life and hope, green is used throughout Ordinary Time.

• **Other colors:** Rose may be used on the Third Sunday of Advent and the Fourth Sunday of Lent; black may be used in Masses of the dead and on All Souls Day; gold or silver may be used on solemn occasions in place of white, red or green.

— Liturgical Publications

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

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| <p>ABOUT THE PARISH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Sacramental Center: 315-724-3950. • Email: stmaryuticany@earthlink.net • Hearing impaired: Listening devices available in the sacristy. <p>MASS SCHEDULES</p> <p>Weekend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saturday: 4:30 p.m. at St. Anthony & St. Agnes Parish. • Sunday: 8 and 11 a.m. at Mount Carmel; 9:30 a.m. at St. Anthony. <p>Weekday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday and Tuesday: 8:30 a.m. at St. Anthony & St. Agnes. • Thursday and Friday: 8:30 a.m. in our parish. • Please note: No morning Mass if Utica schools are closed due to inclement weather. <p>Holy Days</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult the bulletin and website. <p>SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saturday: 3:45 p.m. at St. Anthony & St. Agnes Parish and by appointment by calling Mount Carmel parish office. | <p>MARRIAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples must make arrangements six months in advance. <p>BAPTISM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call the parish office to arrange. Parents must attend a preparation class prior to the baptism of their child. <p>RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>NEW PARISHIONERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome to our parish family. We invite you to become an active participant in our community. Call the parish office. <p>PARISH STAFF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastor: Rev. Jim Cesta • In Residence: Rev. Luis Olguin • Treasurer: Rebecca Arcuri Sr. and Tony Leone • Parish Office Manager: Terri Piazza-Parascio • Faith Formation 6-6: Terri Piazza-Parascio • Faith Formation 7-10: Anna Carlone-Elacqua • Music Director: Peter Elacqua • Website Manager, Bulletin Editor: Fran Perittano • Buildings and grounds: Lenny Jones |
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... AND MORE

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



21 days in Sicily

8,900 miles in the air; 2,700 driving miles;
21 towns; one unforgettable family vacation

By LISA HYATT

(Contributing: Jim Hyatt)

The idea for a trip to Sicily for the Hyatt family was born out of a conversation my brother had with my father about gaining dual citizenship in Italy.

Since the forms require a large amount of information regarding background and heritage, he went right to the source — my parents.

While discussing this information and on a rather uncharacteristic whim, my dad decided it was time to take his family back to where it all started. We thought it was a joke at first because anyone who knows my dad knows that he hates traveling. But then he told us why. He wanted to “complete the circle” — meaning, he started his life in Sicily, left it behind for a new and better life, and now wants to return with the people he loves the most to show his grandchildren (you know them as altar servers Vincent and Cecilia) the place that holds so many memories.

My dad was born in Partinico, Sicily, and came to the United States as a young adult in his early 20s. My mom was born in Canicatti, Sicily, and moved to the United States in her early teens. It was decided that we would spend 21 days in Sicily visiting both towns, along with all the famous sites and cities that were in the area. After a few days of planning, we booked our flights and spent the next few months developing a rough itinerary of what we wanted to do and things we wanted to see.

Voyage begins

We flew out of Newark airport in New Jersey on July 30 and landed in Palermo, Sicily, on July 31. The bed and breakfast we stayed in Partinico was off a dirt road in the middle of the country. It was called Il Bracco, and the owner, a wonderful man named Aldo, was a childhood friend of my dad's and they had not seen each other in several decades. It was wonderful to see them reconnect and rehash old times. Every day was filled with hilarious stories of their youth.

We realized early on that driving in Sicily would be quite the adventure. The traffic control signs regarding speed limits or stop signs are more of a suggestion than anything as people routinely disregard them. We navigated the narrow streets of Partinico and visited my dad's house where he grew up and took some photographs together in front of his old front door. We even met some neighbors who remembered him and my Nonna from more than 50 years ago. The best part of this day was seeing the town through the teenage version of my dad — his school, his church where he rang the bells,



ON THE COVER: The Hyatts in front of Teatro Massimo in Palermo (this was featured in the “The Godfather Part III” movie).

ABOVE: The family in front of the Cattedrale di Monreale (aka il Duomo), built in 1172 in the town of Monreale.

BELOW: Lisa and Cecilia on a cobblestone road in the town of Erice (the oldest structures in this town range from 6th century BC to the 13th century AD).

his library, and his favorite panelli shop (which still is there).

We spent the next few days trying to get in as much sightseeing as we could handle with the weather being as hot as it was. One of the most memorable days was when we visited the ancient temples in Segesta and the medieval mountain-top town of Erice. On a 90-degree day we climbed the hills of Segesta, viewing the temples and ruins built by the ancient Greeks almost 3,000 years ago. There are no words to describe the feeling of standing in the middle of such pieces of history.

On the same day we visited Erice — a preserved medieval village with views of the Mediterranean that don't even seem real. If you ask Vincent and Cecilia about their favorite part of this day, they will tell you it was the genovesi we ate at the smallest dessert shop owned by the sweetest 70-year-old man. I think we would all fly back at this very moment just for one of those buttery, flaky pastries filled with Nutella and crema.

We then visited Palermo with the assistance
Please see **SICILY**, Page 7 / More photos, Page 8





Loraine and Scott Bolen at the Mount of Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel in 2019.

An amazing life together

Scott and Loraine proud of past, at peace in present

Compared to many lifelong parishioners, Scott and Loraine Bolen are relative newcomers, having been communicants for less than a decade. Scott grew up in Detroit while Loraine was a local girl. They met on the job, worked in the federal government for years in important positions before retiring and settling down in the region. They found Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament and have made it their home worshipping and volunteering.

(The following are excerpts from the in-depth interviews with Scott and Loraine. You can read the full version at www.mount-carmelblessedsacrament.com.)

Scott

You're not a local guy. You were born in California and grew up in Detroit. You came to our area when you got a job at the former Rome Air Development Center, which later became Rome Laboratory and Air Force Research Laboratory. What did your job entail?

When I arrived, I was older than most starting engineers. I'd just finished my master's in electrical engineering at Michigan State University. I've always felt called to serve my community and country, so working for the government felt like the right path for me.

Rome Laboratory turned out to be an absolute treasure, a hidden gem right here in our little corner of the world.

The work itself was incredibly challenging and rewarding. I was part of a team developing advanced radar systems for military aircraft. I remember passionate debates about design

The most humbling moment came years later, toward the end of my career, when I worked with an Air Force general who didn't know my

full background. One day, when he discovered I was the inventor behind the radar technology he'd used as a fighter pilot, I'll never forget what he told me. He asked me about my work, looked me in the eye, and said, "You need to know the technology you invented saved the lives of countless airmen, myself included."

It was there you met Loraine. Tell us your love story.

Loraine truly is the love of my life; yes, I know that might sound like a cliché, but it's anything but that for us.

I'd always believed in God. I grew up Catholic, went to Catholic school for first and second grade, and received my First Communion and Confirmation, all the things good Catholic kids do. But like so many others, I'd drifted away from active participation in my faith. I figured believing was enough; I didn't need to attend Mass or get involved in parish life. I was completely absorbed in my passion for science and engineering; that was my whole world.

Then God put Loraine in my path. She worked at Rome Laboratory for my division chief, right down the hall, so whenever I needed to see the boss, she was always the first person I'd encounter. And she was always smiling; this genuine, radiant smile that just lit up the room.

Rome is a small place (compared to Detroit), and I'd see her out with friends at the same places I'd go. Eventually, I realized I needed to get to know her better. My trips to the boss' office suddenly had a different purpose! Those quick "good mornings" turned into little conversations about nothing in particular, which gradually grew into real conversations, until I finally found the courage to ask her out.

It was the best decision I ever made. As we

grew closer and eventually married, I discovered her greatest gift. In those quiet, intimate moments we shared, beyond all the things that first attracted me to her, she revealed her deep, authentic faith in God. Through her love and gentle example, she brought me back home to my Catholic faith — not through preaching or pushing, but by opening her heart to me and showing me how God was woven into every fiber of her being.

Eventually, you continued to work in the federal government across multiple departments and agencies in the intelligence community and homeland security. Please describe what that career was like.

After my time at Rome Lab, my career took me through various roles in the intelligence community and homeland security, eventually leading to some very senior positions in Washington, D.C. I was blessed to serve in key leadership roles focused on securing our nation against a broad range of foreign threats, particularly foreign terror threats to the homeland. These were critical positions during our nation's most challenging security periods, working at the highest levels of government to coordinate intelligence, develop counterterrorism strategies, and protect American lives.

Later in my career, my focus shifted from counterterrorism to counter-illicit trafficking. My service required extensive travel throughout Central and South America, working directly with our partner nations and seeing firsthand the devastating impact of these criminal organizations. What I witnessed was heart-breaking: the atrocities committed by transnational criminal organizations and the immense

Please see THE BOLENS, Page 7

Finding a new home

Bev and Carol continue their good work here

Bev Franz and Carol Trinco didn't attend our parish in their younger years. Bev was a Lutheran who converted, and attended Blessed Sacrament Church. Carol attended St. Agnes School and was a parishioner there. When both churches closed, they found a new home here. Now, they each volunteer in the parish office. They also help in other areas, too.

Bev Franz

You're a country girl at heart. You grew up in the small town of Akron, near Buffalo. You lived in the country where your paternal grandparents had a dairy farm. Please describe what life was like back then.

Life was much simpler back then. There were no computers, electronic games, cellphones and we didn't even have TV until the early 1950s. My sisters, cousins and I all went to a one-room schoolhouse from first through sixth grade. There was no kindergarten. As kids we played outside most of the time, riding bikes, playing ball, etc., and maybe doing some light chores on the farm. Sundays we went to Sunday school and church, and on most Sundays after church we all would gather at my grandmother's bachelor brother's home where the women would prepare dinner and the men would play cards or croquet. It was all about family and being together.

Unlike most of our parishioners, you were not baptized Catholic. You were a Lutheran but eventually converted.

I grew up in a very religious Lutheran family. Sunday school before church every Sunday. So, when I met my husband, I never returned to my hometown after graduation. We were married a year later, and because he was Catholic and we were getting married in a Catholic Church, I would have had to sign papers that I would raise my children in the Catholic Church. As I was already attending Mass at Blessed Sacrament with my future husband and his family, I decided that there wasn't that much of a difference in beliefs, and I converted, receiving my First Holy Communion on my wedding day and Confirmation the following year with that year's Confirmation class. Mass was in Latin then — you followed along in your missal and there were no singing hymns. How things have changed!

How did you end up in our parish?

When Blessed Sacrament closed in 2006, I became a parishioner. It was really sad to see our church where I became a Catholic in, got married in, baptized my children in, where they all went to school and we could walk across the street to attend Mass, close. But I can truly say from Day One that I felt welcome here and have felt like home to me ever since. But I really do miss Saturday evening Mass here.

Since joining the parish, you have volunteered in many capacities — the church office since 2006, lead a money-counting team and participate in the festival. Why do you do it?

Prior to that, I was volunteering at Blessed



Bev Franz, left, came to our parish after being a parishioner Blessed Sacrament Church. She was raised Lutheran and converted when she married. Carol Trinco was a communicant of St. Agnes Church before it closed. Now they call Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament their home. They volunteer in the parish office and in other ministries.

Sacrament when the secretary had already left to work at St Joseph's, and Mary Beth LaNeve thought it would be good to have me in the office here to help with the process of merging because I was familiar with Blessed Sacrament parishioners. So, since I had retired in 2005 and I needed something to keep me active and I could be of service to my church and get to know my new fellow parishioners, I decided to volunteer.

Now that Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament has become your "home," do you think God has led you to where you are now?

Yes, I really do, and I am truly thankful that He has led me here. My faith has been strengthened, and I have met so many great people. God has a plan for each of us, we just need to listen carefully to what He is telling us. I feel so blessed to be a part of this faith community and "home."

Carol Trinco

You were educated at St. Agnes School in East Utica and Proctor High School. You were a parishioner of St. Agnes and worked as its secretary for a while. Please describe your feelings when St. Agnes closed.

It was very sad when St Agnes closed. My growing up was around the church and school. It was a very close community of friends that were more like family.

Why did you choose to attend Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament?

My husband and I were baptized and married at Mount Carmel, so it seemed we were going

back to our roots. We also had family and friends who were parishioners of Mount Carmel.

You mentioned you've traveled to Europe and the Caribbean. Where did you visit in those places and what were some of the things you enjoyed the most?

Italy, London, France in Europe. Going to Europe was like stepping back in time. I visited several of the islands in the Caribbean.

You have four granddaughters and two great-grandsons. What has that experience been like for you?

It has been awesome. I am blessed to have the experience of watching them grow. They bring so much joy into my life.

You say your favorite music is "old standards." What and who exactly are "old standards?"

Music from the '40s and '50s featuring Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Barbra Streisand.

In our parish you lector, work at the festival and take care of the altar linens. You also volunteer in the office once a week. What made you volunteer and what are those experiences like?

In order to be a part of the community of Mount Carmel. Mary Beth LaNeve and Rosemary Chiffy asked, and my immediate answer was YES. That was the beginning.

What has Mount Carmel come to mean to you?

My home away from home is filled with warm and welcoming people.

The Holy House of Mary

It's one of Italy's hidden treasures

The average American Catholic traveler in Italy is well versed in some of the most highly regarded pilgrimage destinations.

No. 1 would have to be the Vatican as the resting place of St. Peter and the seat of the pope and the Catholic Church. In addition, the dozens of other religious sites in Rome related to our faith make it a smorgasbord of possible holy sites.

Second probably would be Assisi, home of the fabulous Basilica built there to house the mortal remains of the town's favorite son, St. Francis. He is much admired for his unique example of walking in the footsteps of Jesus through poverty, humility, chastity and devotion. He has become sort of a "super saint" as patron of ecology, a hot button topic in our day.

Recently, the great Basilica of St. Francis has experienced an uptick in visitors as one of our newest saints, Carlo Acutis, the 15-year-old first millennial saint, is entombed there. He also strikes a chord with our day as he has been popularly called "the patron saint of the Internet" because of his interest in computers and because he built a website that documented miracles related to the Eucharist.



A.J. VALENTINI

After these sites, many religious travelers flock to Padova — to the Basilica of St. Anthony, Venice; to the Basilica of St. Mark, Bari; to the Basilica of St. Nicolas or Amalfi; to the Basilica of St. Andrew. The last three of these holy men's remains were brought to Italy by the Crusaders who, returning home, wanted to be sure that their holy saints would not ever be left in the hands of their adversaries — the Muslims.

Another important relic brought back to Italy at this time is the "Holy House of Mary," the childhood home of the Virgin. The faithful believe it is where the Annunciation took place, setting in motion the birth and life of Jesus. This significant structure is housed in a great Basilica in Loreto, in the Marche region of Italy, a short distance from the Adriatic Sea. Most American travelers are unfamiliar with the impressive site.

In Israel, in the town of Nazareth, there is the Basilica of the Annunciation. It is built over a grotto, the site where Mary was visited by the Archangel Gabriel and gave her Fiat — her consent to conceive, bear a son and name him Jesus (Luke 1:26-38).

The Basilica of the Annunciation is the largest church in the Middle East. The actual



The "Holy House of Mary," the childhood home of the Virgin, is enclosed in an ornate, Renaissance-era marble monument. The faithful believe it is where the Annunciation took place, setting in motion the birth and life of Jesus. This significant structure is housed in a great Basilica in Loreto, in the Marche region of Italy, a short distance from the Adriatic Sea.

church is modern, consecrated in 1969. However, the site has a long history. Archaeologists have determined there are the ruins of four other churches beneath and around the grotto. This is where the Holy House of Mary had its origins.

Legends say that angels miraculously transported the house over the sea to Loreto in 1294. In the early 1900s, however, a priest and papal archivist was studying Vatican documents when he discovered a ledger detailing items that were brought out of the Holy Land during the Crusades. He read that a Byzantine Greek merchant, with the surname Angelos, financed the expedition and paid the crusaders to move the house to Italy as part a wedding dowry for his daughter, who was to marry Philip of Tarento in 1294. His name would have been Angeli in Latin and Italian, which means "Angels." This, they say, is the origin of the tradition of the "angels" carrying the House to Italy.

The House of Mary consists of three walls of stacked stones. Scientists have verified their probable origins through chemical analysis. Studies have shown that the stones making up the walls were not cut according to local Italian methods. Furthermore, there are the graffiti on the Loreto walls that are like those found

in early Judeo-Christian churches in Palestine before the 5th century. There is a marking on one of the Loreto walls that is identical to one in the Nazareth grotto.

The Holy House is enclosed in an ornate, Renaissance-era marble monument within the basilica, which was built starting in 1468, and is 305 feet long and 200 feet wide. Its bell-tower is 248 feet high. Around the house is a tall marble screen designed by Bramante with sculptural work by Andrea Sansovino and Raffaello da Montelupo and his pupils. The four sides depict the Annunciation, the Nativity of Jesus, the Arrival of the Santa Casa at Loreto and the Nativity of the Virgin.

Within the little house a niche contains a 33-inch image of the Virgin and Child, adorned with jewels, above the altar. The statue replaces an original one destroyed after a fire in Santa Casa in 1921. Miracles have been attributed to the sacred image.

So, if you plan to visit religious sites in Italy, consider a tip to the lesser-known eastern coast of the country. Among the rolling hills overlooking the Adriatic Sea, you will not be disappointed to visit Loreto.

— Sources: www.ncregister.com; www.santuarioloreto.va; <https://en.wikipedia.org>

THE BOLENS

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suffering they inflicted on local populations. The drug and human trafficking trade is particularly insidious, destroying families and entire communities.

These experiences gave me tremendous empathy for those populations and for the immigrants seeking to come to America, often fleeing the very violence and chaos these criminal networks create. It's one thing to read the news reports; it's quite another to see the human cost with your own eyes.

Loraine

Unlike your husband, you were born and raised here, growing up on a dairy farm in Barneveld. Please describe what life was like back then.

Growing up on our family dairy farm was a wonderful way to learn about life, responsibility, and the value of hard work. There were six of us — Mom, Dad, and four children — and we all had our roles to play in keeping the farm running.

Our "vacation" was right there in the fields during summer break from school, with plenty of farm chores to keep us busy. That was normal for farm families back then; honestly, we never felt like we were missing out on anything. What I treasured most was having our parents home when we got off the school bus each day — that's something not every family had.

You've worked all your life. Please describe what your career meant to you.

Looking back on my career, I feel incredibly blessed to have had such diverse experiences that taught me something new at every step. I started working at the New York Telephone Co., then onto the mortgage department at Oneida National Bank, next as a bookkeeper at Poland Building Supply, and then at St. Luke's Hospital. Each of these positions taught me the fundamentals of business and working with

people, skills that would serve me throughout my entire career.

My federal government service began at Griffiss Air Force Base, working with the Office of Personnel Management for Strategic Air Command and later the Air Force Research Laboratory. That's actually where Scott and I first crossed paths. Working at Griffiss opened my eyes to the incredible dedication and talent of the people serving our country. I was surrounded by very smart, dedicated military and civilian people devoted to their mission.

But it was my time with the U.S. Coast Guard that really defined my career. At the Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore, I served as administrator for the executive officer and commanding officer. The Coast Guard Yard was a fantastic place, a hub of innovation and excellence where some of the most talented people I've ever met worked tirelessly to support the Coast Guard's vital missions. These weren't just colleagues; they were truly heroic men and women, both military and civilian, who understood they were part of something much bigger than themselves.

You both have taken volunteering to the next level, not only in our parish but in the community. What satisfaction do you get from helping out?

I have volunteered all my life, starting when I was a student. Even back in school, I passed out attendance sheets to teachers each morning, kept track of boys' sports scores for the athletic director during study hall, and helped teach physical education to the younger students. I guess you could say the desire to help has always been part of who I am.

But perhaps most meaningful of all is our service here at our beautiful St. Mary of Mount Carmel. Scott and I are both on the Wedding Rehearsal Team; we serve as ushers and greeters and volunteer during our annual festival. Scott also serves as a lector and usher. We even

have the privilege of occasionally entertaining Father Jim's visiting ministers and pastors; that's always such a blessing.

What satisfaction do I get from all this volunteering? It's simple, really — it fills my heart. Whenever I help someone, whether it's welcoming a young couple at their wedding rehearsal, sharing God's creation with tourists, or working alongside fellow parishioners at our festival, I feel like I'm living out my faith in a tangible way.

I think God calls us to use our gifts to serve others, and volunteering has allowed me to do that throughout every chapter of my life. The joy I get back is always much more than what I give. It's how communities grow strong, how we build lasting friendships, and how we show God's love in action.

You've lived a very diversified life. Is there anything you would change or anything you still want to do?

You know, people ask about regrets, but I honestly don't have any. That might sound surprising, but here's how I see it: God has a plan for all of us. We are exactly where we're supposed to be, exactly when we need to be there.

Sure, there were ups and downs like anyone else has, and perhaps at the time it was unclear how everything would work out. In the moment, we can't always know why something happens or how it will all turn out. But now, looking back at where I've landed, it all seems to have been for the best. That's the beauty of trusting in God and His plan. He always makes it "right," even when we can't see it at the time.

It all seems to have worked out just as God planned. Every job I had, every place I lived, every decision Scott and I made together, and even the challenging moments that didn't make sense at the time led us to this moment, to this life, to this faith community. How could I wish to change any of that?

SICILY

Continued from Page 3

of Aldo who was kind enough to be our guide for the day. Palermo is the most modern city that we visited and has all the famous shopping brands we are familiar with here. We walked into the heart of the city and checked out all the famous structures there — the theater where "The Godfather Part III" was filmed, la Vucciria market where vendors yell out to customers, and the Quattro Canti corner where statues of the four female patron saints of Palermo keep watch over the city.

It's all about family

The second week of our trip consisted mostly of beach days, dinners with my dad's side of the family, and a day trip to the island of Favignana, which is known for its crystal-clear waters and rocky beaches.

During our third week in Sicily we drove about two hours east of Partinico to Canicatti to visit my mom's side of the family. We stayed

in a beautiful bed and breakfast in Naro and had daily authentic Sicilian meals with my aunt and uncle in the countryside. On one of these nights, we went out to dinner with more than 40 aunts, uncles and cousins who have not seen my mom since 2016. The amount of love in the room was overwhelming, and it took more than an hour to say goodbye at the end. Needless to say, we went to bed very late that night.

Toward the end of our trip we made it to one of the more well-known beach towns in Sicily called Cefalù. This was about a 1.5-hour drive and was the worst traffic we encountered during the trip. Once you found a place to park you understood why. The place is gorgeous and the town is absolutely stunning. The streets were alive with vendors, restaurants, tourists and entertainment. The cannoli were great, too!

As we traveled from town to town, we made it a point to stop in many of the beautiful churches that each hold their own pieces of history.

Some memorable ones were the Cattedrale di Monreale with its breathtaking Byzantine mural work, La Chiesa della Madonna della Rocca where Padre Gioacchino is buried (a candidate for canonization), and La Madonna delle Grazie, where my cousin Don Angelo has been a priest for the last several years.

It would be an understatement to say that this trip to Sicily will be one we never forget. What started as a conversation, with me repeatedly asking, "Are you serious?" turned into the most memorable and deeply personal family adventure.

We experienced the pride my parents have for their country, the love the family has for each other no matter the miles apart, the joy felt by our children, and the presence of God who continues to bless us each and every day.

This trip has ignited a spark in all of us, turning our thoughts to future adventures. In the words of our daughter Cecilia, "Where are we going next?"

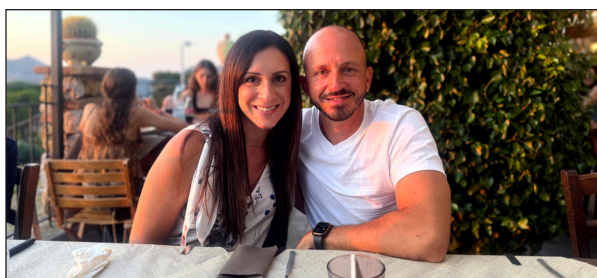


Grand tour of Sicilian history

ABOVE: The Greek theater in the town of Segesta, built in 4th or 3rd century BC.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: Lisa and Jim Hyatt in a restaurant on the mountain of Romitello, a settlement in the town of Borgetto; the beach town of Cefalu; Doric Temple in the town of Segesta (built in 5th century BC by the Elymian people); a city street in Trapani (streets are decorated with lights in the summer because of different feasts and summer celebrations); and a photo of Lisa's father's side of the family, all cousins, at a restaurant in Alcamo.

Photos courtesy of the Hyatt family



View photo galleries on the parish website at www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com