

ST. MARY OF MOUNT CARMEL / BLESSED SACRAMENT PARISH — SPRING 2021

GOOD MORE NEWS

THE STORY BEHIND THE MURAL

It began with Raphael's historic painting — Page 3

FIRST COMMUNION DURING PANDEMIC; CONFIRMATION'S 'GIFTS' — Pages 4-5

PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

First Communion, Confirmation is beginning, not an end of faith journey

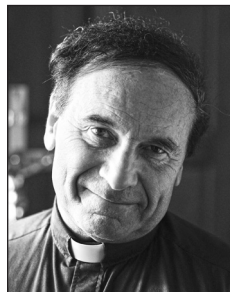
In this issue of "More Good News," we honor and celebrate the children who receive First Holy Communion and the young people marking their Sacrament of Confirmation.

We are all proud of them and pray for their families.

Certainly, Catholics have fond memories of First Communion and Confirmation — even those who haven't been real churchgoers later in life do keep those memories in their heart and imagination.

What is important for all of us to know and be aware of is that in our Catholic way of the sacraments, it is perhaps too easy and a bit tempting to celebrate the day of receiving these wondrous experiences, but then leaving it at that — not walking in faith regularly, dutifully, faithfully.

It is a little like showing up for the trophy on awards night but not honestly staying with the sport or activity for which the award is given.



FATHER JIM

What needs to happen is along with the happy celebration of Eucharist or Confirmation, there needs to be with it a strong and very personal relationship with Jesus, the Risen Lord. If only appreciated as a reason for a traditional First Communion or Confirmation ceremony and "party," then there might not be much hope for a close attachment with the Lord, the sacraments or the church.

How many times do priests meet folks who say, "I made my Communion and Confirmation at the church," but never came back.

The family home is the first church for good example and modeling of a faithfully practiced and enjoyed Catholic faith.

May our cherished children and young people be blessed and walk the walk and experience the love of Christ's heart for each of them, personally.

CELEBRATING THE SAINTS

St. Damien of Moloka'i

Feast day: May 10

When Joseph de Veuster was born in Treme-lo, Belgium, in 1840, few people in Europe had any firsthand knowledge of leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease.

By the time he died at age 49, people all over the world knew about this disease because of him. They knew that human compassion could soften the ravages of this disease.

Forced to quit school at age 13 to work on the family farm, Joseph entered the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary six years later, taking the name of a fourth-century physician and martyr. When his brother Pamphile, a priest in the same congregation, fell ill and was unable to go to the Hawaiian Islands as assigned, Damien quickly volunteered in his place.

In May 1864, two months after arriving in his new mission, Damien was ordained a priest in Honolulu and assigned to the island of Hawaii.

In 1873, he went to the Hawaiian government's leper colony on the island of Moloka'i, set up seven years earlier. Part of a team of four chaplains taking that assignment for three



months each year, Damien soon volunteered to remain permanently, caring for the people's physical, medical, and spiritual needs. In time, he became their most effective advocate to obtain promised government support.

Soon, the settlement had new houses and a new church, school and orphanage. Morale improved considerably. A few years later, he succeeded in getting the Franciscan Sisters of

Syracuse, led by Mother Marianne Cope of Utica, to help staff this colony in Kalaupapa.

Damien contracted Hansen's disease and died of its complications. As requested, he was buried in Kalaupapa, but in 1936 the Belgian government succeeded in having his body moved to Belgium. Part of Damien's body was returned to his beloved Hawaiian brothers and sisters after his beatification in 1995.

When Hawaii became a state in 1959, it selected Damien as one of its two representatives in the Statuary Hall at the US Capitol. Damien was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on Oct. 11, 2009.

— Source: www.franciscanmedia.org

PARISH WEBSITE

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

PHOTO GALLERIES



BULLETIN

SUNDAY, JAN. 3, 2021
CELEBRATING 125 YEARS: 1896-2021

St. Mary of Mount Carmel Blessed Sacrament Parish

ABOUT THE PARISH
Address: 648 Jay St., Utica, NY 13501.
Telephone: 315-735-1482; fax: 315-735-9806.
Office hours: Masses must be worn.
• 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: stmaryparish@pyrodo.org
Hearing impaired: Listening devices available in the sacristy.

MASS SCHEDULES
Weekend
Saturday: 4:30 p.m.
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
Make arrangements six months in advance.

BAPTISM
Call the parish office to arrange. New parents are encouraged to attend the parent class before the birth of your 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.

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 Costa
In Residence: Rev. Luis Dignin
Coordinator of Faith Formation K-6: Terri Piazza-Pencocco
Coordinator of Faith Formation 7-10: Anne Carbone-Elacqua
Maintenance: Patrick Zaza
Music director: Peter Elacqua
Website manager: bulletin, publicity: Fran Perritano

Mount Carmel School students in 1904.
Rock Gerson, Tony D'Acunzio, Al Candido and Joe Zaleski.
Mount Carmel Cadets basketball team from 1931-32.

... and more

- Weekly prayers, reflections, photos, videos and more to enrich your faith.
- Father Jim's "Wise and Otherwise"
- History of the parish
- Lector and minister, schedules
- Mass schedules
- Parish news
- Ministries
- Event calendar
- Weekly reflection on Sunday's readings
- "More Good News" articles
- Links to our social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

COVER STORY



Mural above sanctuary inspired by Raphael

By A.J. VALENTINI

Parishioners and guests always are impressed by the art-filled walls and ceilings when they enter St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church.

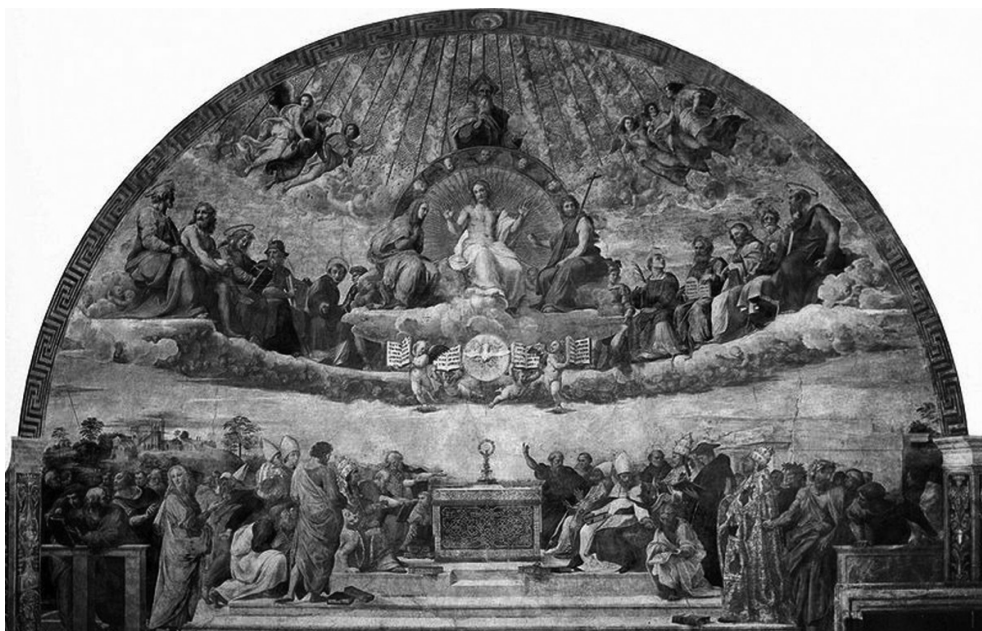
Perhaps the most admired work in the church at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament Parish lies in the apse over the main altar. This impressive painting is a reproduction of the upper portion of one of the masterpieces of the great Renaissance painter Raffaello Sanzio, better known as Raphael. And like most great works of art, it has an interesting back story.

Raphael was born in 1483 in the Italian town of Urbino, one of the great centers of culture of Renaissance Italy. Its court at the Ducal palace was a magnet for artists, philosophers and other great persons of that time.

Raphael's father, Giovanni de'Santi, was an artist by trade who worked at the palace and churches in the area, and he trained his son until he recognized that the boy's talent far surpassed his own.

Giovanni and his son traveled to Umbria and met with Pietro Vanucci, known as il "Perugino." Perugino's ethereal works were so renowned that he was called to Rome and contributed some of the panel frescos that now lie below Michelangelo's world-famous ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Perugino was impressed by the talents of his new apprentice. It was not long before Raphael was able to copy his master's style so thoroughly that Giorgio Vasari, a contemporary and father of art history, said one could barely discern the difference between the contributions of the two. In a short time, the boy was



Raphael's "The Disputation of the Holy Sacrament."

completing commissions of his own.

In 1504, Raphael traveled to Florence to observe and study the works of other great masters. He was able to see the proposed works of Leonardo DaVinci and Michelangelo for the decoration of Palazzo Vecchio, the city's town hall. The young artist soaked up the inspiration, and this began to alter his own style, making his work unique among all artists of his time.

In 1508, the young master received an invitation to the Papal Court upon the recommenda-

tion of the great architect Bramante, who also was from the area of Urbino and had become the principal architect of the new St. Peter's Basilica. It is his plan that Michelangelo would later modify and bring closer to completion.

Pope Julius II commissioned Raphael to decorate a suite of rooms in the papal palace. The first, the Stanza della Segnatura was for the tribunal of the "Segnatura Gratiae et iustitiae,"

See RAPHAEL, Page 8

Year full of challenges leads to joyful celebrations

By TERRI PANUCCIO

Preparing children for their First Communion during a pandemic has proven to be a challenge — but ultimately very rewarding.

From New York state being completely shut down, to slowly opening with restrictions in place, I had to rethink my approach to the Faith Formation program, not only in educating students in their faith, but doing so in a way that will keep them safe and healthy.

The greatest challenge was how I was going to manage the delay of the 2020 First Communion class. It was a waiting game determining if an in-person Mass would even be feasible last year. Ultimately, as we were able to open at limited capacity, I checked with parents to see what their preferences were.

Most of the parents, whose children were slated to receive their First Communion in May 2020, preferred to wait in hopes that in the near future they could celebrate in a safer environment with a more “normal” feel. I was able, however, to accommodate seven families who wanted to experience the sacrament in 2020. We were able to have two First Communion Masses with four children in August and three children in October.

The remaining 20 families from the 2020 class will be joining the 2021 class of 23 students — an impressive total of 43 children receiving Jesus Christ through the Eucharist for the first time on May 1 and 2 and May 15 and 16. Planning for the high volume of children, with social distance guidelines still being implemented at Mass, at a limited capacity, is no easy feat.

On the upside, more parishioners are vaccinated and capacity at Mass has increased to 50 percent. After laying out several possibilities in how to approach, I decided that it made the most logistical sense to split the class into six groups, with five to 10 children at each Mass. The goal is for more family members to attend for each child, while feeling at ease with the guidelines being enforced, and allowing them to enjoy this special day in the children’s faith journey.

Our sacramental preparation usually consists of the weekly Sunday morning Faith Formation classes, with additional classes on Monday evenings that are geared specifically to prepare the children for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion. Because of social distance restrictions, I was unable to have all the children in one classroom at the same time.

With that and the added stress that most of the families have been enduring (navigating this new world of remote learning and, in many



cases, working from home), I felt the best approach was to give choices to the parents. So as not to add more stress to the parents, I decided it would be best to use the Sunday morning classes to prepare the second- and third-grade children for their sacraments and also allow the parents to choose whether they wanted to send their children to in-person classes or home-school them with materials I would drop off to them every couple of months, and always being available if they needed any assistance.

The diocese also has been very supportive and understanding of these circumstances and has been lenient of the required contact hours for Faith Formation classes and Sacramental Preparation classes.

Keeping the Faith Formation community connected while our program was on hiatus was another priority. Ultimately, social media has a wonderful ability to keep us all in touch, so reaching families within our parish on our Facebook page proved to be effective in maintaining our sense of community.

We created several videos with photos of the children, along with hopeful messages that we will get through this tough time and to keep the faith through it all. Throughout the year I have constantly reminded the children and families that although this past year was a difficult and

Class of 2021

- Layla Grace Allen
- Carmella Marie Arcuri
- Vincent Edward Arena II
- Mung Dan Aung
- Natalie Maria Bottini
- Angelina Grace Callari
- Samie Gaetano-Gates Cimbalo
- Caleb Anthony Cosamano
- Evelyn Paige Durr
- Makenly Olivia Fernalld
- Rocco Anthony Fernalld
- David Martin George
- Madison Rose Golding
- Nicholas Ryan Helmer
- Petrucci Hpo
- Bella Rose Jones
- Blake Harrison Jones
- Cecilia Vita Kane
- Mason Markian Kaszycki
- Milania Nicole Kloster
- Hudson Ryder Knoop
- Evalena Rose Leone
- Vincenza Rosalie Leone
- Quintin Wayne LoRusso
- Marciano Leonard Maldonado
- Brady Thomas McAuslan
- Gavin Michael Moore
- Larry Joseph Myers
- Joseph Daniel Nash
- Greyson Everly Ramirez
- Santino Angel Ramos
- Matthew Leonard Reale
- Michael Romeo Ruiz
- Olivia Rose Sacco
- Lillyanna Marie Saunders
- Adrianna Marie Scalise
- Vincent Michael Trevisani
- Carson Nicholas Vella
- Constantino Walter Visalli
- Thaw Thaw Paw Wah
- Alzaina Faye Weeks
- Amerah Grace Weeks
- Eugenio John Whiteley

scary one for them, it also was that same for Jesus and His followers on that Holy Thursday and Good Friday almost 2,000 years ago. But just as Jesus conquered death on that Easter morning, we know that nothing bad will ever last forever.

While we will be celebrating First Communion a little different than usual this year, we are all unified as a parish through the Body and Blood of Christ.

Holy Spirit's special gifts

By ANNE ELACQUA

Confirmation is a step toward a deeper knowledge and appreciation of Jesus Christ and the Church. It also is the final step of initiation into full membership in the Catholic Church.

It does not mean, however, graduation from church.

The Sacrament of Confirmation in our parish is celebrated in the spring during 10th grade. This year it is scheduled for 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 19, with Bishop Douglas Lucia.

It is a two-year program that begins in the ninth grade. Although COVID has made it a bit tricky since March 2020, we have made sure that our students are receiving the information that they need to learn about and understand this beautiful sacrament.

In Confirmation, we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit — permanent dispositions that help us to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. With these gifts we can live lives guided by the Spirit and, in doing so, to build the Church.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are:

• **Wisdom:** Helps us to seek and know the truth as God sees it.

• **Understanding:** Helps us to open our minds and hearts to others so we can identify with their feelings and see life from their point of view.

• **Right judgment, or counsel:** Gives us the important ability to judge between good and evil, to live according to God's ways.

• **Courage:** Gives us the inner strength, or fortitude, to stand up for what we believe in through the gift of our faith, and to put our beliefs into action.

• **Knowledge:** Gives us the opportunity to reflect on the life of the Trinity and the oneness of God's being in three interrelated, equal Divine Persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We seek to know God as any human being knows his or her parents.

• **Reverence, or piety:** Helps us to worship God, especially by participating fully in the liturgical life of the Church. This gift also helps us to have an active personal prayer life and to respect others.

• **Wonder and awe in God's presence:** Allows us to recognize all of life and creation as a gift from God. This gift helps us continue to work to improve our relationship with God and to respond to the needs of others.

When we cooperate with the graces and gifts we receive from the Holy Spirit, we grow as followers of Jesus. We see the effect of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives in special qualities and attitudes that we develop as we grow in faith.

The Church identifies these qualities and attitudes as the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit are signs that the Holy Spirit is alive within us and helping us live the Catholic faith in our daily lives.

• **Love:** We exhibit the virtue of charity, or



Confirmation candidates

- Santino Alsante
- Paul Caruso
- Remi Charlebois IV
- Skylar Conkling
- Philip Cittadino
- Hay Ye Doh
- Genaro Graziano
- Sha Mu La
- Isabella Laino
- Kaitlyn Noon
- Ben Rawnika
- Emily Spiak
- Ty Stanley
- Gianella Szuba
- Julia Wagner
- Nan Zar

love, by our unselfish devotion and care for God and our neighbor.

• **Joy:** We live with joy when we recognize that true happiness comes not from money or possessions, but from knowing and following Christ.

• **Peace:** We are freed from worrying about trivial things because of the inner peace we experience with God in our hearts. We work and pray for peace throughout the world.

• **Patience:** We demonstrate patience by treating others with thoughtfulness and tolerance. We know that we can overcome the temptations and sufferings of life because God is always with us.

• **Kindness:** We live the virtue of kindness by treating others as we want to be treated.

• **Goodness:** We exhibit goodness when we honor God by avoiding sin and always trying to do what we know is right.

• **Generosity:** We demonstrate the fruit of generosity when we share our gifts and posses-

sions with others.

• **Gentleness:** Gentle people act calmly and avoid actions that might lead others to anger or resentment.

• **Faithfulness:** We are faithful when we live out our commitment to the teachings of Jesus, the scriptures and the Catholic Church.

• **Modesty:** We exhibit modesty by being pure in our thoughts, words and dress.

• **Self-control:** We exercise self-control by working to overcome the temptations we face and by trying always to do God's will.

• **Chastity:** We live the virtue of chastity when we use the gift of sexuality wisely, according to God's plan.

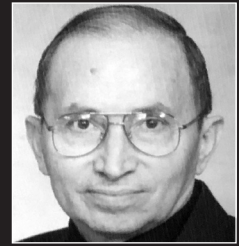
When a teen enters our program, we do not assume that all wish to be confirmed. Through our time together in class, with discussions and opportunities to openly ask questions and seek information, our teens can feel ready and willing to receive the sacrament. The sacrament is not a "graduation" of their faith but a grown-up decision to take faith into their own hands and make the journey life-long and on-going.

Our candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation have requirements from our parish that must occur before he or she is to be confirmed. They have several written assignments based on three articles that they must read; a brief essay; writing a letter to the bishop; service hours and a service day that has been changed this year because of covid; and direct prep classes that occur right before they receive the sacrament.

Our catechists are Jennifer Tran, Christine Gray and Anne Elacqua.

We hope that once they receive the Sacrament of Confirmation that they will take on roles in our parish as lectors, eucharistic ministers, ushers or join the choir. We welcome them in any way that they would like to give of themselves to their parish. God bless these young men and women always, and in all ways.

Many changes over 4 decades



REV. HENRY BENIN



Father Joseph Berton with the Knights of St. Charles.

This is the fifth in a series of articles highlighting the history of our parish leading to its 125th anniversary. Previous articles and issues of "More Good News" are available at www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com.

1950-1991

Father William Pizzoglio's assistant, Father Joseph Berton, became Mount Carmel's next pastor. Out of his 26 years of service, his most lasting contribution was the construction of the rectory on Jay Street.

Despite the disappearance of much of the surrounding neighborhood due to urban renewal, Berton was able to keep his flock together, even after many had moved elsewhere.

The Rev. Peter Bortolazzo succeeded Father Berton in 1964. We still enjoy his contributions today, including the pews, the altar of the sacrifice, restoration of the artwork and the granite steps in front of the church.



A.J. VALENTINI

During the pastorship of Father John Corrado (1973-79), the shrine to Our Lady of Mount Carmel was created, school renovations took place, a senior center and a park dedicated to the memory of St. Charles Borromeo, founder of the Scalabrini Order, were established. The next pastor, Father Carmelo Negro (1979-83) continued his predecessor's work and replaced the old organ and established "The Busy Bodies," an outreach group from the parish.

In 1983, when Father Henry Benin, former assistant to Father Bartolozzo, became pastor, once again there was an upheaval in the life of our parish. The diocese decided to close the school and the Sisters of St. Francis who ran it left. Benin successfully negotiated the renting of the former convent to the Italian Cultural Center and readapted the school as the catechetical center.

Before leaving in 1991, Father Henry recognized the changing demographics in the parish and urged his flock to embrace newcomers of other ethnicities.

Source: History of St. Mary of Mount Carmel (prepared by the History Committee for the 1996 centennial celebration)

A CONVERSATION WITH BONNIE GARDINER

Bonnie finds 'all are welcome'

She sings the praises of her faith and those in parish community

Bonnie Gardiner came to Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament from another parish and has found a home. After working hard for a living, she has found volunteering in our parish a blessing. She says our people are very welcoming, and she tries to be a reflection of their care and concern.

You worked for New York Telephone for a while and then 25 years at Indium Corp. of America, performing a variety of tasks. Tell us about what you did.

I made solder paste while the department was just beginning in 1984. In my 25 years with Indium I did various jobs: cleaning punched metal parts and packing them and labeling. When they opened the plant in Clinton, I did packaging and labeling of different solder paste product and powder (metal).

It sounds like a lot of grueling work. You did it for more than two decades. How rewarding was that work?

I never thought of it as that. The women I worked with were welcoming and sharing of their knowledge of the job. It was important and necessary work, also, well paid. My bosses appreciated our dedication and expertise. College educated people don't think that what we do matters, but without us, computers wouldn't have come into being.

Were there many women working alongside you at the time and how was the work environment?

Our plant(s) were well kept and clean. The maintenance men were adept at their jobs of keeping our machines running and serviced. It was much like a family at Indium; even the bosses were liked and included in our everyday work. These people had a long history with each other, so I was glad to be so welcomed. There were as many women as men with the company at that time in Utica and Clinton. It's a worldwide company, has been for about 30 years, maybe more.

When you retired in 2009, you volunteered at the Presbyterian Home with Mollie Crumrine's Bell Choir. Please describe what that was like.

Bell Choir at Presbyterian Home was fun. These residents were our friends and dedicated to playing and being with each other. We took pride in them; it meant a lot to them to have practice once a week and concerts twice a year. Their families enjoyed this, too, and were proud of their accomplishment.

You like to read, and during the spring and summer you do some gardening at your nephew's home on Kayuta Lake. What does gardening do for you?

Gardening meant a lot when I owned my own



"St. Mary of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament is my family," Bonnie says. "Everyone smiles back, and like the sign says, 'All are welcome.' It should say, 'All Are Welcoming.'"

Bonnie Gardiner

Age: 78.

Education: Whitesboro High School, class of 1960.

Occupation: Retired; worked at New York Telephone and Indium Corp. of America.

Family: Brother Bill and Donna Miller; sister Dorothy and Tom Suba

Things you like to do in your spare time: Read mostly Regency Romance, but I just finished "Backlash" by Brad Thor.

Favorite movie: "White House Down."

Favorite TV show: "NCIS."

Favorite musician: Barry Manilow.

Favorite book: Bill O'Reilly's "Legend and Lies: The Patriots."

home. Now I share myself with family and friends. Years ago, I did some gardening on the church grounds, but it's not possible now that I'm older.

In our church, you sang with the choir, cantored and now are volunteering registering people for Saturday Mass and funerals.

You also are a Eucharistic minister. What does volunteering do for your mental and spiritual well-being.

A year ago was the last of my cantoring. I probably should have given it up sooner but thought I needed to "help out" with our lessening of people who were cantors. Clearly, with my voice aging and the other cantors doing so well, I'm not needed. I loved the congregation smiling back at me (especially when I slipped up.)

You mentioned the camaraderie with members of the choir also helped you through a difficult time in your life. Please tell us about that and what those people mean to you?

When I first came to choir, I was newly divorced. I'm a lot older than most of these kids, but they were very accepting. I always thought of that time as a second or third childhood.

You were a parishioner of Sacred Heart Church and now call Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament home. What has our parish meant to you?

St. Mary of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament is my family. Everyone smiles back, and like the sign says, "All are welcome." It should say, "All Are Welcoming."

How would you like Bonnie Gardiner to be thought of by others?

I'd like people to think of me as welcoming, too.

RAPHAEL

Continued from Page 3

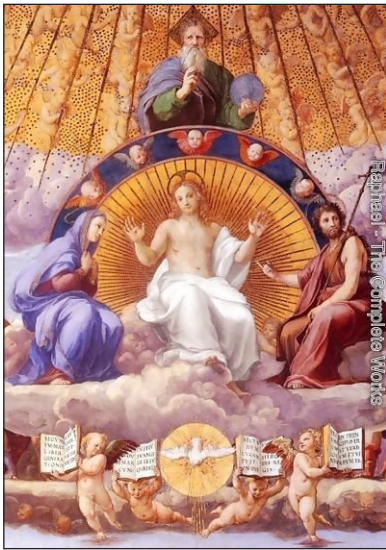
the highest court of the Holy See. There, decisions were made regarding the church and the pope's secular realm. The themes of frescoes in this room were theology, philosophy, poetry and jurisprudence.

On one wall of this room Raffaello painted the "School of Athens." It illustrates the great philosophers of various disciplines and sciences in a mammoth classical basilica (representing the limits of man's reason) searching for truth through reason."

In that same room is the inspiration for the mural over the sanctuary at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament.

As a counterpoint to "The School of Athens," "The Disputation of the Holy Sacrament," probably the first fresco the 27-year-old Raphael painted at the Vatican, focuses on faith over human reason.

The original work in Rome has two levels. The work in our church concentrates on the upper portion. Taken in its whole, the composition suggests a cruciform layout, with the vertical line delineated from God the Father down to the monstrance on the altar below. The arms of the cross are suggested by the line of honored saints flanking the Savior.



Heaven above

Two realms are depicted in the fresco: Heaven above and Earth below. Above all is the stylized version of a "velarium," a sort of canopy that was used to shelter from the harsh sun and elements. This symbol had been used since early Christian art as a sign of heavenly protection of the faithful. The velarium here is filled with shadowy figures of angels and the blessed. In this space we see God the Father with the globe in his left hand and blessing us with his right. To the left and right of the Father, floating in the clouds are six angels.

Below the Father, Christ sits enthroned and flanked by the Virgin Mary on the left and John the Baptist on the right. Jesus came from the womb of Mary, thus sustaining the humanity of the Savior. John points to Jesus, as he was the harbinger of Christ. And just below Jesus is the



On the left are St. Peter (with the key to the church), Adam, St. John the Evangelist (a young man writing his Gospel), King David (with his harp), St. Steven and Jeremiah. On the right are Judas Maccabeus, St. Lawrence, Moses (with the rays of divine light), St. Matthew (or James), Abraham (with the knife with which he was to sacrifice Isaac) and St. Paul (with a sword).

Watch "Disputation of the Holy Sacrament" on our YouTube channel or at <https://youtu.be/p-ihbUXa-JQ>

dove representing the Holy Spirit.

Some artistic license was taken in the version in our church as the dove is above God the Father.

Seated in a semicircle around the throne of Christ are some of the most important personages of the Bible. This configuration recalls a classical symposium in which wise men would exchange ideas. On the left are St. Peter (with the key to the church), Adam, St. John the Evangelist (writing his Gospel), King David (with his harp), St. Steven and Jeremiah.

On the right are Judas Maccabeus, St. Lawrence, Moses (with the rays of divine light), St. Matthew (or James), Abraham (with the knife with which he was to sacrifice Isaac) and St. Paul (with a sword). In the Mount Carmel version a halo has been placed on the second character from the right. That means this person is a saint and not Isaac from the Old Testament. We surmise in this version we see St. Bartholomew, who was martyred by being flayed with a knife.

To the left and right of the dove of the Holy Spirit fly cherubs who hold the books of the gospels. The cherub on the right holds the Gospel of John and he glances upward and to our left toward that saint as he writes in his book. In our church, the pairs of angels have switched sides, but the cherub with the Gospel of John still glances toward its author.

The upper part of this fresco depicts the church triumphant in heaven, and through the wounds visible on Christ a reminder of the day of universal judgment. The lower portion of the fresco (not reproduced in our church) shows the church as militant upon Earth — thinkers, scholars and theologians do not just gather for the celebration of the Eucharist, they are engaged in an animated discussion on the mystery of it. The link between the two: a search

for truth — reason versus faith.

Earth below

The characters in the lower portion of the fresco are seeking to comprehend the transubstantiation of the body and blood of Christ. The scene is populated with representatives of the church, including four doctors of the church; Sts. Dominic, Francis, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Scotus and Nicholas; Pope Julius II (the patron of Raphael and thus an homage to him); Pope Sixtus IV (dressed in gold); Savonarola (the firebrand monk responsible for the "Bonfire of the Vanities"); Dante Alighieri (the Italian poet whose mystical travel through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise in the "Divine Comedy" is the most translated and read book after the Bible); and Bramante (again, the artist shows his appreciation for the intelligence of his friend as he leans on a railing, gesturing to his book, looking at the young man to the right).

A disputation does not mean there is disagreement among the earthly characters of the lower level — it is a formal argument rather than stress disagreement. The animated figures gesture with their hands, make movements with their bodies, bend their ears, knit their brows and exhibit different facial expressions. And Raphael knits the whole composition together by repeating gestures from the Heavenly realm to that of Earth.

The uplifted finger of John the Baptist is reflected in the uplifted figure to the right of the altar below. The hands to chest of the Madonna are reflected in the figure to the left of the altar. St. Steven above points to the standing figure with the blue toga below who seems to be making a point. The conversation between Peter and Adam above is reflected across to the bottom right between the characters at the railing.

The obvious difference in the characters above from those below is that those in Heaven are serene — they "get it," they know the truth. The mortals below are wrestling with the truth. They have yet to completely grasp it.



The lower portion of Raphael's fresco not depicted in our church.