

MORE

GOOD NEWS

**Volunteers
the lifeblood
of our parish**

Page 3

MEET THE FIRST COMMUNION CLASS OF 2022 — PAGES 4 & 5

PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Don't go along for the ride; be an active participant

Most of us live our lives within the wider and blessed life of a Catholic parish.

Even if there was not the experience of Catholic school days, the sacraments and special moments such as baptisms, weddings, funerals and saints' days — as well as seasonal celebrations and feast days — fashion our identity in faith, family and friendships.

What we sometimes forget, or choose to set aside, however, is the fact that the life of every Catholic parish depends on and revolves around the heartfelt and generous participation of volunteers.

If the presence of the Risen Lord and the working of the Holy Spirit is the engine that drives the parish, then the role of the parish volunteer is the transmission.

As with any operating vehicle that needs an engine and transmission, so the same is true for the operating and functioning and life-giving Catholic parish — especially these days when people of every age are stressed out and pulled in different directions, it is easy and most tempting to say, "Let someone else do it."

Like a cancer that invades the body and brings with it deterioration and death, so, too,



FATHER JIM CESTA

the "let-someone-else-do-it" way of thinking can bring the failing and even the eventual death of a parish community. We all know of Catholic parishes that no longer exist, due to many various causes, but usually one of them is the lack of persons doing their part.

There used to be a rule on old-time stage-coaches that the price to ride was set by whether or not you would just sit inside while others fixed the broken wheels or tended to the horses, or if you joined in the task at hand.

It is critical these days to consider if you're going to be just along for the ride — or with a generous spirit and some time and effort take up the task at hand.

God bless our dedicated parish volunteers.

CELEBRATING THE SAINTS

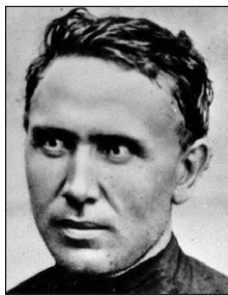
St. Damien of Moloka'i Feast Day May 10

When Joseph de Veuster was born in Tremelo, Belgium, in 1840, few people in Europe had any firsthand knowledge of leprosy, 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, to help staff this colony in Kalaupapa. Mother Marianne, who was canonized a saint in 2012, lived in Utica for years, founded St. Elizabeth Hospital.

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.

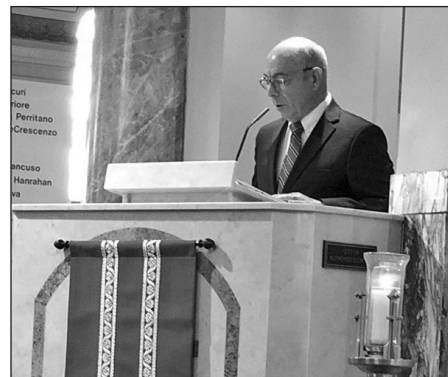
When Hawaii became a state in 1959, it selected Damien as one of its two representatives in the Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol. Damien was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on Oct. 11, 2009.

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



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: 315-725-1442; fax: 315-725-8806.
Office hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday.
Closed on Friday and national holidays.
Faith Formation and Sacraments Center: 315-724-9950.
Email: stmaryutca@syndio.org
Hearing impaired: Listening devices available in the sacristy.

MASS SCHEDULES
Weekend
Saturday: 4:30 p.m. (livestream on parish YouTube channel)
Sunday: 8 and 10:30 a.m.
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 5:30 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
In Residence: Rev. Luis Olguin
Thurston: Monsignor Sr. and Bill Thibault
Parish Office Manager: Terri Piazza-Panuccio
Faith Formation: Ed Terri Piazza-Panuccio
Faith Formation: 7:50: Anna Carione-Elacqua
Music Director: Peter Elacqua
Buildings and Grounds: Brian Chase
Website Manager, Bulletin Editor: Fran Pettinato



... 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

Giving their time, talent

Volunteers the fuel that keeps parish running

By FRAN PERRITANO

Though she didn't know it at the time, Michelle Commisso's decision to volunteer in our parish would change her life.

Michelle, 55, has been volunteering as a catechist for 22 years. She also assists with the First Reconciliation and First Communion children.

Her life changed after her decision to volunteer two decades ago.

"I began teaching religious education when my daughter was in kindergarten (she will be 27 years old in May)," Michelle said. "On the back of the enrollment form there was a place to check if interested in volunteering. I didn't give it much thought and checked 'yes.' Sister Linda was the director of religious education at the time and asked if I would be interested in teaching first grade. Teaching?"

"When I agreed to volunteer, I never had teaching in mind. However, I decided to give a try, and let's just say, the rest is history. I absolutely fell in love with teaching. Shortly thereafter, I went back to college to earn a bachelor's degree in education and have been an elementary school teacher in the Oriskany Central School District for the past 17 years."

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament Parish. Without them, it's safe to say, the parish would not survive. From catechists to Eucharistic ministers, altar servers, lectors, office personnel, music ministry, the parish festival — and others too numerous to mention, volunteering is a worthwhile endeavor.

Just ask Michelle.

"I will forever be grateful to the Holy Spirit for intervening," she said. "Had I not volunteered all those years ago at this parish as a catechist, I would have missed out at a career that I absolutely adore. I continue to volunteer for many reasons. Volunteering is one small way for me to express my gratitude — mostly, I love the children and families of this parish. Lastly, I have met so many wonderful people and made lifelong friendships because I volunteer."

Importance of volunteers

If you think Michelle's been volunteering for a long time, check out 95-year-old Rosemarie Chiffy. She's been volunteering here since she was about 13 years old.

"My grandmother introduced me to working in the rectory and I felt then, as I do now, that helping out whenever and wherever you can is very important. I enjoy being part of the church community," she said. "I have worked on the Liturgy Committee, as a lector and Eucharistic minister, sacristy ministry, St. Anne and Mount Carmel societies, scripture groups, bereave-



COVER AND ABOVE: Michelle Commisso has been a Faith Formation catechist in the parish for 22 years. She said her volunteering led to a professional career. "I absolutely fell in love with teaching," she said. "... I went back to college to earn a bachelor's degree in education and have been an elementary school teacher in the Oriskany Central School District for the past 17 years."

How to volunteer

If you would like to join the ranks of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament's volunteers, call the parish office at 315-735-1482. You can check a list of ministries on our parish website at www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com. You'll find it in the right column. Click on MINISTRIES under the WELCOME area.

ment ministry and have helped with the church festival.

"In times like these, with priest shortages, I feel volunteers are more important than ever," Rosemarie said. "One person cannot possibly complete all of the work that needs to be done in the church. Volunteers can relieve the priest of certain duties so that he is able to have more time for his pastoral duties."

At age 92, Vicki Perritano probably is the second-oldest parish volunteer. She's a Eucharistic minister, prepares everything for daily Mass and Saturday afternoon liturgy (she's in church five days a week), lectors on

occasion and prepares the gifts sometimes for funeral Masses.

Her road to volunteering at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament began with taking care of her sister and brother-in-law.

"I began volunteering and taking care of family when I retired in 1995," she said. "I don't know if you could call it volunteering, but at that time, I began taking care of my sister and her husband. My brother-in-law died in September of 1998, and my sister died in January of 2005 — thus (leaving) a big void in my life doing service to others."



PERRITANO

"When I began attending daily Mass, I felt I could do more than going to Mass. Thus, I became a Eucharistic minister. It gave me great pleasure to be able to distribute the Holy Eucharist to my fellow churchgoers. I was serving a purpose for God and myself."

Vicki said the parish could not survive without volunteers.

"Volunteers are able to do things that would not be accomplished because our pastor cannot do everything," she said. "They visit the sick and give them communion. They serve Mass."

Please see PARISH VOLUNTEERS, Page 7



CHIFFY

FIRST COMMUNION CLASS OF 2022



Giuliana

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? How were you able to make the whole world?



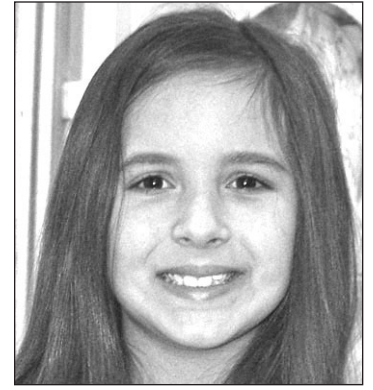
Addisyn

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? Who created God?



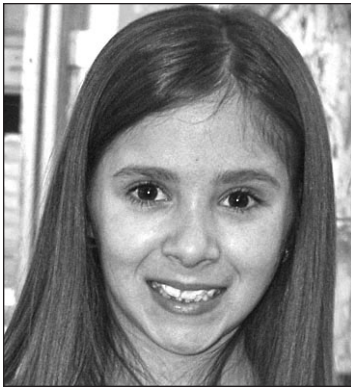
Carmen

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? Can you always help me control my emotions?



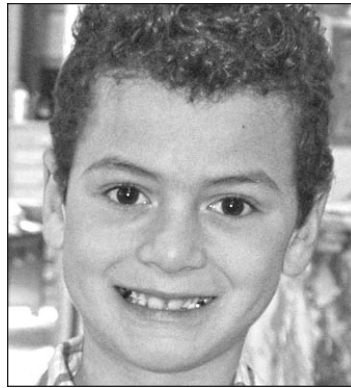
Sophia

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? How is my brother Ethan doing in Heaven?



Adrianna

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? How is my brother Ethan doing?



Blake

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? Please take care of my family.



Sophia

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? How do I get to know God better?



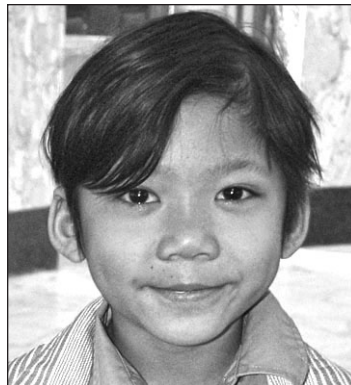
Deacon

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? How did you make the animals?



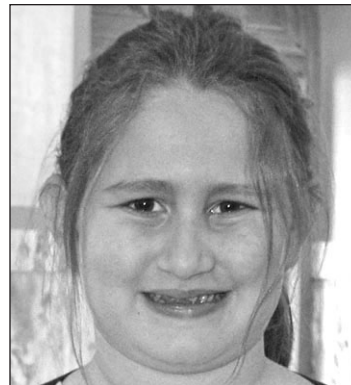
Johncci

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? To banish all the bad and evils.



BayBee

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? Will war end?



Cecelia

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? Can you come and live with me?



Mia

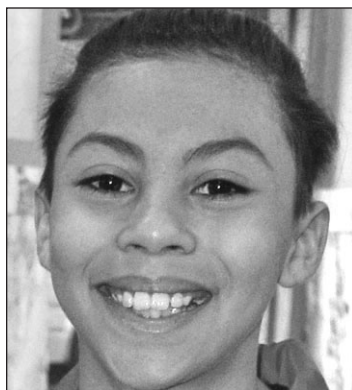
If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? For COVID to be all gone.

FIRST COMMUNION CLASS OF 2022



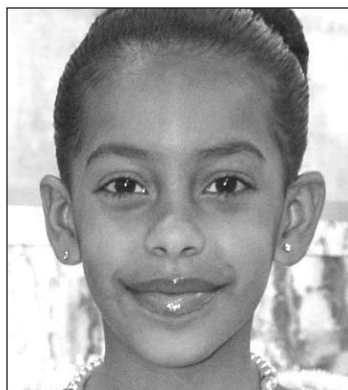
Isabella

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? Do you see my Papa Marino and is he safe in Heaven?



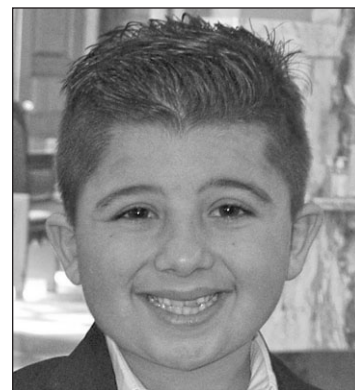
Zadiel

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? To donate money to the sick children in the hospital.



Ashley

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? Heal my dad's foot.



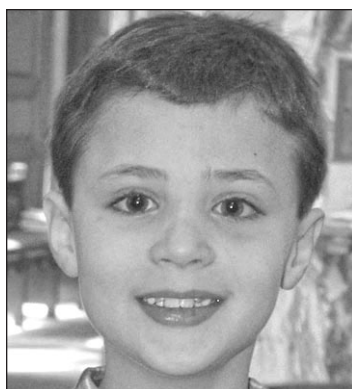
Peter

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? What does Heaven look like?



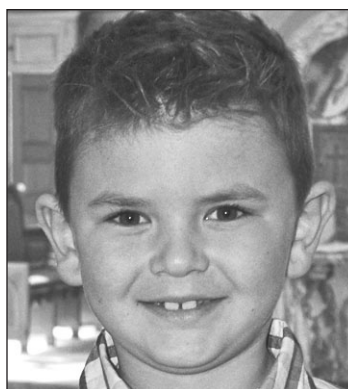
Caroline

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? What kind of books do you like to read?



Christopher

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? What is Heaven like?



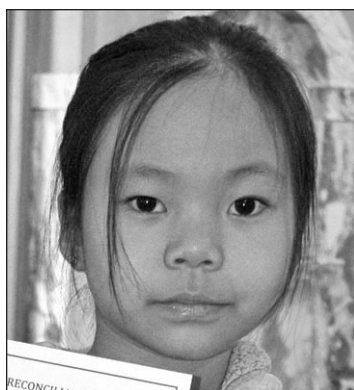
Dominic

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? For no more wars.



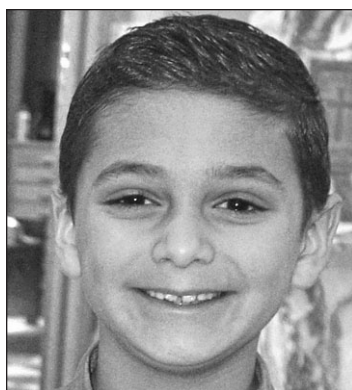
Dominic

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? How is my dog Elliot doing in Heaven?



Therasa

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? Jesus, I want to be smart.



Luca

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? What do you look like?



Lucianna

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? Can animals understand what we say when we talk to them?



Adalind

If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? What is it like in Heaven? Is it all white?

An infamous character

Balaam's story a reminder to avoid baser instincts

Chapter 3 in a series on our parish history and its artwork. Today, meet Balaam.

Continuing our series on our parish history and art we return to the arch over the altar of sacrifice at St. Mary of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament Parish.

In chapters 1 and 2, we learned about the two characters on the left of the arch. In this chapter we will delve into the story of Balaam, who appears on the right side of the arch.

Balaam was a famous prophet who lived in Mesopotamia at the time the Israelites had moved into the land of Moab on their way to Canaan. Offering a generous reward, King Balak of Moab summoned Balaam to pronounce a curse on these unwelcomed people in his kingdom. But Balaam refused to accompany Balak's emissary back because God told him not to curse the Jews as they were blessed. The king thought his emissary had not been impressive enough to convince the prophet, so he made a second attempt sending several high-level representatives of the court with a greater reward to make his case. This time God said to Balaam, "Go with them, but do only what I tell you."

The next day Balaam and the entourage left for Moab, but God sent an angel to block his way. The donkey that the prophet was riding could see the angel, even if his master could not, and refused to move forward — three times!

Balaam became so angry he began to beat the poor animal, but the Lord rebuked Balaam through the cries of the beast. Suddenly, the prophet was able to see the angel standing before him with sword drawn.

The angel said he had been ready to smite the prophet but was deterred by the donkey who recognized him. (There probably is a lesson in there about how man can be more blind to faith than animals.) The angel reminded Balaam to heed the Lord's command and only say what God told him regarding the Hebrews.

When Balaam arrived in Moab, King Balak took him to a high place from which he was commanded to curse the Israelites. After offering 14 sacrifices on seven altars, the prophet spoke with the Lord, who pronounced a blessing on Israel. Balaam told the king, "How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the Lord has not denounced?"

Dissatisfied with the results, the king took



A.J. VALENTINI



After meeting with King Balak, Balaam and his entourage left for Moab, but God sent an angel to block his way. The donkey that the prophet was riding could see the angel, even if his master could not, and refused to move forward — three times!

Balaam to a higher place, but after the sacrifices and consultation with the Lord, Balaam came up with the same response. Balak told the prophet that if he was going to continue to bless Israel, he might as well keep quiet. Undeterred he forced Balaam to try a third time. After climbing to an even greater height, building seven new altars, and making 14 sacrifices, God spoke to the prophet who delivered a message that the king did not want to hear: "How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, your dwelling places, Israel!"

King Balak was so angry, he commanded Balaam to go home with no reward. The prophet reminded the king that he had told him he could only say what the Lord had said to him. To redeem himself in the eyes of the king, Balaam offered four prophecies, the last of which was: "A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the people of Sheth."

Thus, Balaam predicted the coming of Christ. He had blessed the people of Israel and cursed

the enemies of the one true God.

Balaam could have left well enough alone, but he really wanted that reward from the king of Moab. Since he could not curse Israel, he proposed a way to seduce it, recommending the Moabites tempt them with prostitutes and idolatry. In doing that, Israel would curse itself. When the Jews did succumb to the temptations laid before them, God delivered a plague and 24,000 men died.

Balaam's name and story became infamous, and he is referred to several times in the New Testament. Peter compares false teachers to Balaam, "who loved the wages of wickedness." Jude echoes this sentiment, associating Balaam with the selling of one's soul for financial gain.

Finally, Jesus speaks of Balaam when He warns the church in Pergamum of their sin: "There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality."

The image of Balaam probably was placed above our altar as another harbinger of Christ. He also is, however, a reminder to us not to give into our baser instincts. We come to Mass and Communion to ask for forgiveness for our sins during a reenactment of Jesus' last supper, the sacrament given to us by the One whose coming Balaam announced.

Adapted by A.J. Valentini from GotQuestions.org. "Who was Balaam in the Bible"



PARISH VOLUNTEERS

Continued from Page 3

They distribute communion during holy Mass with father. They take care of the altar linens. They decorate the church. They prepare for daily and weekend Masses.

"I could go on and on, but volunteers are the backbone of any parish and are greatly needed so it can continue to survive and flourish."

John Reale has volunteered for almost 40 years — since he was an altar server in fourth grade at Mount Carmel School. He currently is a Eucharistic minister, serves on the Liturgy Committee, is co-chair of the Mount Carmel Society and volunteers for the parish festival.

"Volunteers are the lifeblood of any organization such as a parish community. Without the involvement of volunteers there really wouldn't be much life to a parish," John said. "Gone are the days where the mentality was that the priests and nuns would do everything. As the baptized we are all called to roll up our sleeves and serve in Christ's mission in any way we feel called to do in the parish. With so many opportunities to be involved there is something for everyone to share their talents and not just their treasure."



REALE

"Over the years I think the parish has learned how important it is to enlist the younger and newer members of the parish to volunteer even in areas that were once thought to be for the 'elder members' of the parish only. For any parish to survive we have to be open to welcoming new volunteers and not close our minds on new ideas. It is good to remember our heritage and keep those memories alive, but we have to listen to the new members and younger ones if we plan on staying a vibrant parish into the future."

New blood is needed

Tony Leone is 67 and has volunteered in the parish for more than 20 years, primarily at the festival and as an usher. He does it because he enjoys "giving back to the parish."

"Volunteers are very important to our parish. It keeps all our programs and traditions going," Tony said. "If everyone stopped volunteering, all our traditions, like the festival, would stop. The next generation needs to step up and get involved."

"Sometimes people just don't volunteer on their own; sometimes they need to be asked to get involved and they enjoy it when they do. ... Our young people need to get involved as much as possible, I know it's hard when you are raising a family. We have a beautiful church that they will never build them like this anymore."

Many of our volunteers are getting older and no one is replacing them. Just a few months ago, Father Jim put a flier in the bulletin and in church listing all the areas where people could volunteer. The first time around, he received only one response. A couple of months later, he asked again, and this time received a few more.

"If our volunteer pool dried up and no one



Tony Leone, left, with RoAnn Destito, former commissioner of the New York State Office of General Services, and Thomas DiNapoli, New York State Comptroller, at the 2019 parish festival. Tony provides many services at the festival in addition to being an usher at the 8 a.m. Sunday Mass.

“Volunteering as a catechist has changed my life.

I would encourage everyone to give it a try. You never know what God has in mind for you. You may stumble across a career you never dreamed of, like me. At the very least, you will meet some wonderful people.”

— Michelle Commisso

else joins in, our parish will change dramatically,” Michelle warned. “Much of what makes our parish so special will eventually disappear. They say it takes a village to raise a child. In my opinion, it takes a village to keep a parish alive and well.”

Rosemarie echoed those sentiments.

“If new volunteers don't step up, I fear that the parish would fail and we might have to close,” she said. “The role of volunteers is crucial to keep things going. I don't think people realize how much work goes into running the church.”

John also fears the worst if more people don't step up.”

“If that were to happen then the candle will slowly die out in our parish,” he said. “Running a parish takes a great deal of effort on so many

levels from liturgy to catechesis and sacramental prep, to fund-raising functions, maintenance of the whole parish campus, the list goes on. Like a family where all need to pitch in to run a household; we need to do the same to run our parish and keep it alive.”

Why you should volunteer

So, how can you help?

There is a list of ministries on our parish website. Prayerfully look at the list and determine what you would like to do. Then call the parish office at 315-735-1482 and volunteer.

“We encourage parishioners to pray over which ministry they feel their gifts and talents would be the best served,” John said. “We have something for everyone in most all age groups. It's also an opportunity to get to know your fellow parishioners and build on those relationships outside of just weekend Mass. My challenge would also be to our older parishioners to be welcoming to new thoughts and ideas so we know our parish will continue beyond our time here and continue God's mission for us.”

“Being a Catholic Christian is not a spectator sport,” he added. “You need to roll up your sleeves and get your hands dirty to do Christ's work. The work of the gospel is not just for the ordained but for all of the baptized. It's more than just about ourselves and our personal time with Christ ... but we need to be an active parish community to be Christ-like to all.”

Michelle said volunteering will take your life to a place you never would have imagined.

“Volunteering as a catechist has changed my life. I would encourage everyone to give it a try. You never know what God has in mind for you. You may stumble across a career you never dreamed of, like me. At the very least, you will meet some wonderful people.”



Holy Week, Easter glory: All shall be well

