

MORE

GOOD NEWS



**Why get
married
in church?**

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PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Marriage blessed in church a 'beautiful gift to all of us'

It's always a privilege to officiate at a holy marriage performed in church before the altar of God.

The couple is not there just because they love each other. With the eyes of faith, they're in church to be a sign and echo of God's love for all of us — it's named the Sacrament of Marriage.

When a couple "gets married" apart from a church or religious way, it seems they're not interested in making their love a sign of anything more than just their personal love.

In our Catholic way of thinking, the couple doesn't just "get married" — they become a living and breathing, walking and talking and loving sacrament — a beautiful gift to all of us.

When a couple is asked, "Why do you want to celebrate your wedding in church?" they have many answers ("Well, because my grandmother did.") I suggest it's because God brought you together to fulfill God's purpose to be that sign of something much bigger and more awesome than just your personal affection.

It's interesting the first miracle that Jesus of



FATHER JIM CESTA

Nazareth worked wasn't making the blind to see, the lame to walk or raising the dead. It was providing wine at a local wedding reception in Cana of Galilee. That's how important blessed and sacramental marriage is in the life of the Church, our faith and the world.

It's too bad that too many couples, in love, don't want to bless their love in church — too bad that many don't even want to be married at all. How will the children know about holiness, faithfulness, faith itself with parents just settling for "playing house?"

At the wedding in Cana the best wine came out after Jesus saved the day. The best marriage is blessed and made a sacrament.

CELEBRATING THE SAINTS

St. Dominic

Feast Day: Aug. 8

Patron saint of astronomers,
Dominican Republic

If he hadn't taken a trip with his bishop, Dominic probably would have remained within the structure of contemplative life; after the trip, he spent the rest of his life being a contemplative in active apostolic work.

Born in old Castile, Spain, Dominic was trained for the priesthood by a priest-uncle, studied the arts and theology, and became a canon of the cathedral at Osma, where there was an attempt to revive the apostolic common life described in *Acts of the Apostles*.

On a journey through France with his bishop, Dominic came face to face with the then virulent Albigensian heresy at Languedoc. The Albigensians — or Cathari, "the pure ones" — held to two principles — one good, one evil — in the world. All matter is evil, hence they denied the Incarnation and the sacraments. On the same principle, they abstained from procreation and took a minimum of food and drink. The inner circle led what some people regarded as a heroic life of purity and asceticism not



shared by ordinary followers.

Dominic sensed the need for the Church to combat this heresy and was commissioned to be part of the preaching crusade against it. He saw immediately why the preaching crusade was not succeeding: the ordinary people admired and followed the ascetical heroes of the Albigensians. Understandably, they were not im-

pressed by the Catholic preachers who traveled with horse and retinues, stayed at the best inns and had servants. Dominic, therefore, with three Cistercians, began itinerant preaching according to the gospel ideal. He continued this work for 10 years, being successful with the ordinary people but not with the leaders.

His fellow preachers gradually became a community, and in 1215 Dominic founded a religious house

at Toulouse, the beginning of the Order of Preachers or Dominicans.

Dominic's ideal, and that of his Order, was to organically link a life with God, study, and prayer in all forms, with a ministry of salvation to people by the word of God. His ideal: *contemplata tradere*: "to pass on the fruits of contemplation" or "to speak only of God or with God."

PARISH WEBSITE

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

PHOTO GALLERIES



BULLETIN



St. Mary of Mount Carmel Blessed Sacrament Parish

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

ABOUT THE PARISH
Address: 648 Jay St., Utica, NY 13501.
Telephone: 315-735-1442, fax: 315-735-0800.
Summer office hours: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Closed on Friday and national holidays.
Faith Formation and Sacramental Center: 315-724-3950.
Email: stmaryutic@syntio.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.
Weekday
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 Ogilvie
Treasures: Nicole Arcuri Sr. and Bill Thibault
Parish Office Manager: Terri Piazza-Panuccio
Faith Formation: Kiki Terri Piazza-Panuccio
Faith Formation: 7:30: Anne Carbone-Elacqua
Music Director: Peter Elacqua
Buildings and grounds: Brian Chase
Website Manager, Bulletin Editor: Fran Perritano



... and more

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

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



COVER STORY



Photos by Michele Ashlee

ON THE COVER AND ABOVE: Jennifer Sadallah and Justin Worboys on their wedding day, Dec. 28, 2019. Jennifer said it was important for them to be married in church. "I grew up in the Catholic church and marriage is a sacrament. I wanted to start my marriage with my faith and community."

Church weddings offer more than just the 'I do's'

By **FRAN PERRITANO**

Jennifer Sadallah and Justin Worboys really wanted to get married in the Catholic Church, even if they had to travel more than 8,000 miles to do it.

"Justin and I were living in Thailand when we got engaged, but I wanted to get married at home and in the Catholic Church," Jennifer said. "I needed to find a local parish and priest that would be willing to accommodate premarital counseling when we were visiting the United States for the summer and communicate with us while we were in Asia. Father Cesta was excellent and willing to work with us as a couple so we could get married in the Church. Also, Justin and I were going to have a December wedding and I had seen how beautiful Mount Carmel is decorated during the Christmas season."

The couple was married on Dec. 28, 2019, by Father Jim at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament.

Why was getting married in church that important to the couple?

"We chose marriage in the church because we wanted to incorporate Catholic values into our marriage," Justin said. "We continue to stay connected with Father Cesta and the church in order to honor our eternal vows."

In an age when couples are married by justices of the peace, the mayor, a ship captain or



Dennis and Helene Toczala will be married 58 years on Aug. 29. Helene said being united in church in the eyes of God has helped them through their six decades together. "The church wedding was the glue that held us together through thick and thin, reminding us of our vows to honor and obey, and our marriage was not something to be treated lightly," Helene said.

cousin Billy who just was ordained online, why is getting married in the church and in God's eyes important?

Parishioners Dennis and Helene Toczala

will be married 58 years in August. They exchanged vows on Aug. 29, 1964, in St. Joseph's New Cathedral in Buffalo after dating for more than two years

"Being married in a church was a public acknowledgement of our commitment to marriage," Helene said. "The church wedding was the glue that held us together through thick and thin, reminding us of our vows to honor and obey, and our marriage was not something to be treated lightly."

Dennis said being married in church "is one of the primary reasons we have been able to navigate through the stormy parts of our marriage."

"Our vow is for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health — it can only work through God's presence in our home," he said. "(God) is love, and love is the glue that holds a marriage together."

Helene said when their marriage ran into difficulties, she had to search for "meaning in our lives and, for that, I had to search for God."

"The world had easy answers, like divorce, but that was not an option for me," she said. "It forced me to make tough decisions that affirmed my marriage vows really meant something. Beside our fractured relationship, we had tragedies like my mother's death and my father-in-law's death in 1973, which hit us

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Full speed ahead for Gina

Always on the go, she takes time to enjoy her life

Gina Batson probably doesn't have time to sleep. She's always busy working, volunteering, traveling, listening to music, exercising and learning about her Italian roots.

Our parish was built by Italian immigrants, and one of your favorite things is learning Italian traditions. Why do you like to learn about these traditions and what have you learned?

I grew up watching my mother and aunts cook delicious Italian meals and desserts for our family dinners we enjoyed together. Sunday dinner was my favorite day of the week, not only the food, but the Italian music my parents would have playing. My mom would make enough food for a small army and made it with love for all of us to enjoy.

As a young child I learned how to make our family favorites of homemade raviolis, bracirole, pizza frita, delicious Italian cookies and all kinds of desserts, to name just a few. When I cook and bake these meals today, I feel close to my family history and take pride that I know how to carry on our family recipes and traditions. It's very important to me to preserve our heritage.

How are you passing along these traditions to your daughter and others of her generation?

My daughter Alana has participated in our family baking days for the holidays since she was little and also the annual making of our raviolis for a big family dinner. I want her to know how to do these things and appreciate the hard work of those that came before her and show her how important it is to cook for those you love. As a child she would say her Nana's food tasted the best because it was made with love.

You enjoy exercising on your Peleton, you downhill ski and you love watching basketball, baseball and hockey. How did you become involved in all these athletic activities?

I was a bit of a tomboy when I was young so I grew up playing sports and watching them on TV with my dad and siblings. I started downhill skiing I was 12. I feel skiing is the best part of winter — you really come to appreciate the beauty of it when you ski and it's just good for your soul to be out there doing that. I love starting my day with a Peleton ride and working out with some weights. I do this right when I wake up and it's my time for "me" before I start work. It gives me a motivating way start to my day.

Why do you enjoy them so much?

I will admit I have always been very compet-



Gina Batson, with daughter Alana and husband Jeff. In addition to all her activities, Gina loves to volunteer in our parish. "I find it rewarding to volunteer in our parish. My dad always volunteered his time and he set a wonderful example for me."

Gina (DeCrescenzo) Batson

- **Age:** 51.
- **Family:** Husband Jeff, daughter Alana. Daughter of the late Tom and Grace DeCrescenzo.
- **Occupation:** Claim support specialist/quality assurance at MetLife.
- **Things I like to do:** Spending time with my family, travel, exercising, downhill skiing, watching sporting events, listening to music.
- **Favorite TV shows:** I love to watch old sitcoms such as "The Odd Couple," "Seinfeld," "The Honeymooners," "King of Queens," "Golden Girls" and some Netflix shows.
- **Favorite movies:** "Goodfellas," "Jaws," "The Shawshank Redemption," "Remember the Titans."
- **Favorite quote:** "Every day is a good day; it all depends on your attitude." My brother Tommy always told me that.

itive when I play sports. I just love the competition of it all, especially when games are close. I absolutely love watching sports live — there's just nothing like it! March Madness is my favorite time of year. My daughter played three sports all through school and in her early years we coached some of her teams. Now that she is a college athlete playing basketball at SUNY Oneonta, we enjoy going to her games and rooting on her team. There's just something

special about watching a game live and gives me such pride to see her compete at that level. If you want to make me happy, take me to a sporting event.

Your musical tastes range from Frank Sinatra, to Dave Matthews to Bruce Springsteen. Why do you enjoy music so much?

Growing up, my mom always had music on in our house. It's the one thing that really can lift your spirits even on your worst day. A song can take you back in time to a good memory and even sometimes something sad. It just moves your spirit so much and can change the moment instantly. I am happiest when I have my favorite music on!

Another love of yours is traveling: Las Vegas, the ocean, New York, Boston. When did you first start traveling and why do you love it so much?

Every year my parents would take us on a wonderful family summer vacation. That's when I got hooked on being at the ocean. It just makes me think of God's wonder and beauty when you watch the waves crash in. No matter what you have going on when you stand at the shoreline it gives you a comforting feeling. As a teen I traveled to New York several times a year to Yankee games and shopping trips. I started going to Las Vegas yearly the past 28 years. It's changed so much over time, but it's still one of the most fun places to visit. There's always something happening there and in the cities like New York City and Boston — the vibe of the city life is just fun.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

'True start to my life'

Zachary looks forward to his next crescendo

"More Good News" featured Zachary Slade 10 years ago when he was 8. He was, and still is, a gifted pianist. He is more than a musician, however, as he has matured into a young adult eager for the next challenge in life.

How has your life changed in the last 10 years?

The biggest thing that happened was making it through school. I had difficulties I had to overcome over the years, but graduating is really the point where I feel my life begins. Especially the past two to three years, everything in my mind was about making it to this point, and in the end, I got here. I feel now that I am in charge of my life and I can finally be who I want to be.

People in our parish know you from playing the piano at major religious events. Was that hard for you as a child and is it any easier now that you're an adult?

Honestly, it wasn't that hard. The performances I got the most nervous from were competitions: I had one shot to play my pieces, by memory, in front of expert judges who I never met before. In the parish, I felt far more at home, and I knew many of the people I was playing for, so I felt way more at ease. Hearing all the compliments after my performances helped a lot as well.

Music and playing the piano have been a major part of your life. How did you get started and when did you realize that you were great at it?

I started when I was 4 after my mom found a local piano teacher. She did this partly because I would always climb on the piano when I was very little, and she thought I might have had a connection to music. She was correct. I had a lot of competitions and I traveled to Poland twice: once for a competition when I was 8 years old, which I placed third in. I always heard people saying, "You're so amazing for your age!" when I was little, but I would always face people in competitions who were better than me. I was always on someone's tail, but the standard was raised every year, and although there was always someone ahead of me who won the competitions, my skill would continue to rise and rise. Progress seemed very gradual, but eventually I saw how much I progressed by comparing myself to those around me. At this point, I feel pretty confident, especially when I got second place at the B-Sharp Scholarship Competition. I did not get first (again). I was chasing the tail of someone who was significantly better than me, but I saw how far I came after winning that award.

Why do you love music and playing the piano so much?

Achievements. I would not have any motivation to play if it wasn't for goals and achieving



Faith has played a major role in Zachary Slade's first 18 years. "God was there in my life even if nothing else was. Faith kept me grounded as I hit rough spots in my life because of this."

Zachary Slade

- **Age:** 18.
- **Family:** Mom Maria Quintal, dad Mike Slade, dog Kendo.
- **Education:** Graduated this year from New Hartford High School with highest honors. Going to Stony Brook this fall majoring in chemical and molecular engineering with a minor in music technology.
- **Things I like to do:** Hiking, mountain climbing, watching football.
- **Favorite book:** "1984."
- **Favorite movie:** "Top Gun: Maverick."
- **Favorite TV show:** "Impractical Jokers."
- **Favorite quote:** "Due tomorrow, do tomorrow."

those goals. Performances and competitions are both chances for me to validate my hard work. If the bar keeps getting raised and I meet the bar, it is very rewarding.

Where does music fit into your future?

I plan on minoring in music and technology at Stony Brook. The curriculum for the minor involves a few theory and audio engineering-type classes, but it allows me to continue piano lessons and possibly audition for the university orchestra. At the very least, I will take lessons in college and maintain my level of piano playing I do right now. I'm hoping to always have piano gigs as an option for a side hustle, in college years and beyond.

You'll be attending Stony Brook majoring in chemical and molecular engineering. Please explain what that is and what you hope to do in the future with that education?

Think chemistry major with a far more intense workload and a senior thesis. The reason I picked the major was because I loved AP Chemistry in school, and most importantly, it is a well-paying degree. The doors the major lead to are numerous, and I have no idea what my career plans are, but I know I will figure them out in my college years.

One of your favorite things to do is climbing the High Peaks of New York. You have climbed 26 of the 46 and hope to do all of them. How did you get started in that and what is it that you like about hiking?

My dad and I went to the Adirondacks for a camping trip in 2013 and came across a manual for the Saranac Lake 6ers. We saw a small mountain (Mt. Baker) on the manual and decided to hike it. That same week, we decided to try a mountain over three times the length of Baker, with a far more grueling climb. We completed it. After that, we finished the 6ers in two years, and we decided to start the Adirondack 46ers, since that seemed like the next logical step. We started with Cascade and Porter, the easiest two, and they got significantly harder from there. But as we climbed mountains year after year, we figured we were too far in to stop. And now we have over half of them done and plan to climb three to four more this year.

In our parish, you have been an altar server, played piano during services and now assist in our livestream Masses. What is it that you like most about our parish?

There are a lot of great things about the parish, but the greatest has to be the people. There are people that I have known and been close with all my life, and there are others who I met more recently. Regardless, the people I met at the parish have all been so welcoming and support-

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Ezra instrumental in getting the Israelites back on track

Final chapter in our series on the artwork in the arch over the altar of sacrifice. You can read the first three parts on the parish website.

In chapters 1 and 2, we learned about the two characters on the left of the arch. In the last chapter we learned the story of Balaam, who appears on the right side of the arch. To the right of Balaam is the fourth figure, Esdra.

Esdra, or Ezra in English, was an ancient Jewish priest and scribe who was one of the primary leaders of the Israelites when they returned from exile to rebuild Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple.

His story begins around 480 B.C. The Persian king Cyrus the Great had given the Jews permission to return to their country after being enslaved in Babylon for 70 years. Waves of immigration took place over the time as clan by clan the Israelites repatriated their country. Some years later the new king of Persia, Artaxerxes, gave Ezra (a shortened form of Azariah, which means "Yahweh has helped") whatever he needed to make the journey and to rebuild the temple.



A.J. VALENTINI

When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, King Artaxerxes told nearby countries to provide the Jewish people with supplies for the temple, and he also made the provinces give them food and water when they needed it as well. The king's decree also allowed the Jewish people to take back the treasures that were taken from the Lord's Temple by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

The Jewish priests and temple servants did not have to pay taxes because the decree freed them from this responsibility. Life should have been easy with all that help, but Ezra discovered that many of the Jews who preceded him back to his homeland had lost some of their Jewish ways. He was shocked to discover that his people had intermingled with the pagan nations that surrounded Jerusalem.

Ezra prayed for forgiveness for his people, and he then set out to make some reforms. He formed a great assembly comprised of 120 prophets and sages. He influenced this council to oversee and enforce the Biblical laws that God had given to his people in the days of Moses. He no longer permitted any people to marry foreign women and led them to re-



Ezra is depicted on our ceiling (below) holding a scroll of God's law. His ministry included teaching the Word of God, initiating reforms, restoring worship and leading spiritual revival in Jerusalem. These reforms magnified the need for a genuine concern for reputation and for public image.



pent of their sins. He then organized leaders for the newly established community. Ezra restored the worship. He renewed the celebration of festivals and supported the rededication of

the temple and the rebuilding of the Jerusalem wall. He sought to shape his community in accordance with the Torah. Ezra's impeccable priestly and scribal credentials allowed him to remain the model leader.

Though Ezra was associated with prophets, he was not considered a prophet in the truest sense of the word. God did not send Ezra out with specific messages or revelations to give to the people. He used him to remind the people about keeping God's word. Ezra made it a point to keep God's word relevant to the people and to make sure that they were careful to obey all that was written.

Ezra is depicted on our ceiling holding a scroll of God's law. His ministry included teaching the Word of God, initiating reforms, restoring worship and leading spiritual revival in Jerusalem. These reforms magnified the need for a genuine concern for reputation and for public image. He reminds us that God's Word is the only authoritative rule for living, and to be concerned about the image God's people show to the world.

When we attend Mass, we remember God's commandment to "Keep holy the Lord's Day." Ezra image looks down upon us at every function in our beautiful church.

Adapted by A.J. Valentini from Hunter, M., "Ezra, Bible Prophet – Amazing Bible Timeline with World History." "Amazing Bible Timeline." <https://amazingbibletimeline.com/blog/bible-prophet-ezra/> and GotQuestions.org; "Who Was Ezra in the Bible?" www.gotquestions.org/life-Ezra.html

CHURCH WEDDINGS

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hard. Our marriage has been put to the test many times since then, but we learned to lean on each other, and with God's grace, to accept what was happening."

Spiritual dimension important

Peter Elacqua, our parish's director of the Music Ministry, did a lot of research from many sources on why couples should get married in church. Here's what he learned:

- A church is so much more than simply a venue for your wedding. Unique and special things become part of your marriage — on the day of the wedding and beyond.

- A church wedding will add a spiritual dimension to your marriage. The ceremony includes God and looks to God for help and guidance. Seeking God's blessing is a humble way of affirming that God's grace and the prayers of a faith community will make your marriage happier and more fulfilling.

- The beautiful vows you make in church also are made in public amid the faith community, in a place where many couples from older generations have expressed their love for each other and have begun to build solid marriages. These public vows, made in such rich traditional settings, will help you stay together, grow together and develop the faith and values upon which you may build your family. God and your church community are there to support you and nourish you.

- The priest and the faith community have a particularly important role to play in your wedding. The priest can blend ancient tradition and modern experience to reflect your story. He can personalize your wedding to make it memorable, meaningful and beautiful. Often, a wedding is the beginning of a relationship with a priest that can become particularly important as time goes on.

- Church buildings offer outstanding beauty. Old or new, intimate or grand, Catholic and Christian churches are some of the nation's most stunning wedding venues. These venues can underscore the importance of your marriage and help you to understand that your marriage is a witness to the entire community, and much more than just a confirmation of your relationship together.

- Church buildings offer centuries of history. Imagine all the couples who have married in your local church, some of whom may well be your family. You can feel you are becoming part of history itself, the bigger plan, by marrying in the same place as your relatives. These sorts of connections can make your day even more special.

- You can be highly involved in planning your church ceremony. Even though there are some restrictions, a wedding planner can help you understand how scripture and music can be used to make your wedding very prayerful and yet very personal. Often, couples who may not have imagined a spiritual dimension to their marriage are opened to understanding the depth of what marriage can be and can become.

- For some people, a church simply seems like the proper place to get married. Churches



Photo by Michele Ashlee

"We chose marriage in the church because we wanted to incorporate Catholic values into our marriage," Justin Worboys said. "We continue to stay connected with Father Cesta and the church in order to honor our eternal vows."

The Catholic Church teaches that a wedding is a sacramental event. It is more than an exchange of vows or an expression of love. It is a sacred action, one upon which God smiles and blesses — so when it happens in a church setting with ritual and ceremony, it is not only memorable, but also formative.

can be described as peaceful, serene, or having an atmosphere that makes marrying there a particularly special experience.

- The Catholic Church teaches that a wedding is a sacramental event. It is more than an exchange of vows or an expression of love. It is a sacred action, one upon which God smiles and blesses — so when it happens in a church setting with ritual and ceremony, it is not only memorable, but also formative.

- Churches are different from most other places. They have an atmosphere of peace, reverence and respect. They are places where all are welcome; places that permeate a sense of God's loving presence. Weddings are sacred moments, which ordinarily happen in the place where the bride or groom worships, with their families and their faith community.

- A church isn't just a set or backdrop for a wedding; rather a wedding is an expression of a faith community's joys and hopes. Everyone in our community takes joy in your wedding. Your choice to marry within our faith community shows that you honor us as we honor you.

- The ritual of a Christian wedding ceremony in most cases includes this significant state-

ment: "By the authority committed unto me as a minister of the church of Christ, I declare that you are now husband and wife, according to the ordinance of God and the law of the state; in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This pastoral pronouncement seems to blend the twin notions of legal and religious authority in establishing the status of marriage.

Advice to couples

Jennifer Sadallah acknowledges getting married in the eyes of God is something special.

"The process of getting married in the church allows you to have a community of people to care and support you as a couple," she said. "As a Catholic, it was one of the most special experiences to receive the Sacrament of Marriage in church."

Dennis Tocza said, "Couples are more apt to stick together if they view their vows as a sacred commitment and not only as a civil contract."

His wife said vows exchanged in church as more meaningful.

"Couples who are seriously committed to fulfilling their vows and who are prepared to grow in their marriage will look for ways to weather the storms," Helene said. "As we mature, we learn that it takes more than romantic love to succeed in marriage. We struggled to find answers for ourselves, and we were blessed to have a firm foundation rooted in our Catholic upbringing."

"I would say that marriage is essential to our society," she added. "It provides a base from which to grow a family, grounded in the love of God. The firmer and more stable and loving our family life is, then the more of that life gets exported out to our society. We all need more of that!"

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Another love of yours is our parish. You co-chaired the 125th anniversary celebration, are a member of Finance Committee, have been on a collection counting team for more than 20 years, participate on the Parish Festival committee and have sold Buona Fortuna tickets for more than 20 years. You also previously served on Parish Council. Where do you find the time and why do you do it?

I find it rewarding to volunteer in our parish. My dad always volunteered his time and he set a wonderful example for me.

Working full time, raising a child and volunteering at school and in sports didn't always allow a lot of extra free time, but I always made it work with what the parish needed. I feel the time is well spent and helps our parish family life thrive.

I have made such wonderful friends by volunteering. It just gives me happiness giving of myself in this capacity and hopefully setting an example to others

How important are volunteers in our parish?

Volunteers are crucial to keep our beautiful parish life going. Without them, we would not have what we have come to love here.

You seem to find the time to volunteer. What's your advice to someone who might be considering it but is on the fence?

I tell them just try it once and give it a chance. Because I know once they do it, they'll love it as much as I do and make the time.

When you look at the history of our parish, the hard work and dedication of those that came before us should be a guiding example of how to do it. Especially with our aging parishioners, the younger generation really needs to help out.

How important is our parish in your life?

I feel fortunate to be a part of this parish family. I have made so many caring and wonderful friends here. When you go through difficult times as I recently have with the loss of my brother and my parents, these friends were right there to help and support me through.

My parents raised us with a deep faith and dedication, and I'm thankful for their example. By participating in weekly Mass, volunteering at our events or just taking time to sit in our beautiful church and look around, it truly fills me up with a great feeling of love and peace. There's not much today in this hectic world that you can say can do that for you. It's a very important part of my life.

If you were to describe Gina Batson, how would it read?

Positive outlook, loves a good joke, generous, compassionate, proud of her heritage, loves to make others smile and definitely wears her heart on her sleeve.

Festival faces

After a two-year absence due to the pandemic, our Italian Festival returned July 15-17. Here are some of the faces in the crowd.



ZACHARY

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ive. Whether that be Father Cesta, my lifelong friends, or people I see at 4:30 Mass, everyone I have met from our parish is super awesome.

How has your faith played a role in your life?

God was there in my life even if nothing else was. Faith kept me grounded as I hit rough spots in my life because of this.

You said you will see "what the future holds for me. I am going to go to college and see where life goes from there. Anything could happen." Please explain further?

I have never had a solid idea of what my career plans were. I took classes in high school, and I found something that seemed the most appealing to me (chemistry) and decided to follow that lead into college. I will have a far

greater array of classes in college, and access to career-planning services. I might end up taking an entirely different path entirely — who knows. But I will only have an idea once I put myself out there and see what the world has to offer through the lens of college.

What advice would you have given 8-year-old Zachary from what you have learned over the last 10 years?

You'll make it someday. It might be long, it might be hard, but you'll get there. Honestly, for me at least, childhood is not all it was chalked up to be. There was definitely more that I could have done throughout the past 18 years, but many of those years involved overcoming many struggles, and of course, piano practice. I don't really have much to say about my old self, and I view this point as the true start to my life.