

MORE GOOD NEWS

FESTIVAL VETERANS

5 longtime volunteers
tell why they do it

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PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

2023 festival a success; '24 festival is up to you

From time immemorial, feasts, festivals and carnivals have served various purposes in just about every community and culture in the world.

The time of a festival promises so many good things for young and old — food, music, games the gathering of old and new friends and family reunions.

A good festival can serve to provide much fun and make weary folks glad in many ways.

The recent Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament feast continued a tradition decades in the making — without a doubt one of the oldest honoring Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the United States. Really, in the jargon of the Catholic church a feast means the commemoration or celebration on a Holy Day or special saint's day.

We all know, however, the parish feast here brought with it all those glad and welcomed additions, great food, excellent music offerings, reunions for families and the catching up with old friends and neighbors, most of it with an Italian touch.

Some very reflective and deep spiritual persons have even suggested that the happy gathering of many people on the grounds of a faith-sponsored festival is a glimpse of what it will be like to be gathered at the banquet table of God's Kingdom. The only difference might be that in Heaven there will be no long line and



FATHER JIM CESTA

wait for pizza frita — of course, that wait is when people do their catching up with the news of their lives.

Our long-standing and popular feast would not even be possible without the many devoted volunteers of all ages. The feast is such an important fundraiser to support the parish activities, upkeep of the beautiful structures and our pledges for Catholic education.

So many hours, labor and generous hearts go into the success of the feast. Many thanks to the friends and families who attended, volunteers who lent a hand, especially with the food preparations, and the set up and tear down.

Here's hoping a new generation — those in their 20s, 30s and 40s — will step up next year into "learning the ropes" and continue the long tradition so the festival will be part of our parish's future. The 2024 festival is up to you.

CELEBRATING THE SAINTS

St. Clare of Assisi

Feast Day Aug. 11

One of the more sugary movies made about Francis of Assisi pictures Clare as a golden-haired beauty floating through sun-drenched fields, a sort of one-woman counterpart to the new Franciscan Order.

The beginning of her religious life was indeed movie material. Having refused to marry at 15, Clare was moved by the dynamic preaching of Francis. He became her life-long friend and spiritual guide.

At 18, Clare escaped from her father's home one night, was met on the road by friars carrying torches, and in the poor little chapel called the Portiuncula received a rough woolen habit, exchanged her jeweled belt for a common rope with knots in it, and sacrificed her long tresses to Francis' scissors. He placed her in a Benedictine convent, which her father and uncles immediately



stormed in rage. Clare clung to the altar of the church, threw aside her veil to show her cropped hair, and remained adamant.

Sixteen days later her sister Agnes joined her. Others came. They lived a simple life of great poverty, austerity and complete seclusion from the world, according to a rule that Francis gave them as a Second Order. At age 21, Francis obliged Clare under obedience to accept the office of abbess, one she exercised until her death.

The Poor Ladies went barefoot, slept on the ground, ate no meat and observed almost complete silence. Later Clare, like Francis, persuaded her sisters to moderate this rigor: "Our bodies are not made of brass."

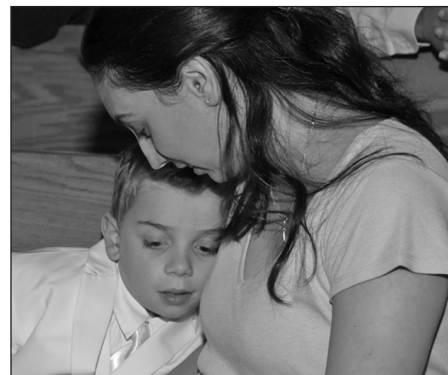
Contemporary accounts glow with admiration of Clare's life in the convent of San Damiano in Assisi. She served the sick and washed the feet of the begging nuns. She came from prayer, it was said, with her face so shining it dazzled those about her. She suffered serious illness for the last 27 years of her life. Her influence was such that popes, cardinals and bishops often came to consult her — Clare never left the walls of San Damiano.

— 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: 315-795-1482; Fax: 315-795-9806
Office hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday
Closed on Friday and national holidays
Faith Formation and Sacraments Center: 315-724-3950
Email: stmaryutic@syndio.org
Hearing impaired: Listening devices available in the sacristy.

MASS SCHEDULES
Weekend
Saturday: 4:30 p.m. (streamed on parish YouTube channel)
Sunday: 8 and 11 a.m.
Weekday
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 8:30 a.m.
Rosary for the unborn and Divine Mercy Chaplet: Thursday after Mass.
Holy Days
Consult the bulletin and website.
RECONCILIATION
Saturday: 3:45 p.m.
MARRIAGE
Couples must make arrangements six months in advance.

BAPTISM
Call the parish office to arrange. Parents must attend a preparation class prior to the baptism of their child.
RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS
Adults or children, 7 or older who have never been baptized or confirmed or received the Eucharist, are invited to call the parish office for information about this process.
NEW PARISHIONERS
Welcome to our parish family. We invite you to become an active participant of our parish community. Please be sure to register by calling the parish office.

PARISH STAFF
Pastor: Rev. Jim Cesta
In Residence: Rev. Luis Ojuguin
Trustees: Rocco Arcuri Sr. and Bill Thibault
Parish Office Manager: Terri Piazza-Panuccio
Faith Formation K-6: Terri Piazza-Panuccio
Faith Formation 7-10: Anna Carbone-Elacqua
Music Director: Peter Elacqua
Maintenance: Mike Sardina
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

Keeping the festival flame burning bright



There are many people who volunteer to make our annual Parish Festival a success. Some have worked each day of the festival for years, and even decades. These five combined have about two centuries of

volunteering, and there's no end in sight. Top row, from left: Joe Furgol and Terry Reale. Bottom row, from left: Mario Scalzo, Joe Briggs and Joe Siniscarco.

Veterans dedicate their time year after year

By **FRAN PERRITANO**
\$10,000.

That's a great grand prize if you bought a \$20 Buona Fortuna ticket for the recent Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament Parish Festival.

But if you were around in 1948 and had 50 cents to spend on a raffle ticket at what was called the Mount Carmel Bazaar, you had a chance to win something really special — a car.

Yes, a car. A spanking, brand new 1949 Plymouth Deluxe four-door sedan. No, it didn't have a moon roof, self-driving technology or air conditioning (unless you opened the windows), but it was a car.

It sold for \$1,850 — about \$23,580 in today's money.

Five parishioners who volunteer at our festival year after year didn't help at the 1949 ba-

zaar, but they have been integral to our festivities for a very long time.

Terry Reale, Mario Scalzo, Joe Furgol, Joe Briggs and Joe Siniscarco have been mainstays before, during and after the festival for decades. They are among a number of others — such as John Jones, Bill Thibault and Carmen D'Ambro — who are dedicated workers who combined have volunteered for more than two centuries!

Why do they do it?

All agree it is love of our parish community and wanting it give something back.

"As a lifelong parishioner, and with the festival being our main fundraiser, it just seemed like a no-brainer way to give back," said Terry, a parishioner for all her 74 years. "It seemed only right to pay it forward and try to perpetu-

ate it for our children and grandchildren. It just gives such a sense of satisfaction and pride in our parish community. It also allows us some special time with fellow parishioners that we might not otherwise see on a regular basis."

Terry, who has been volunteering at the festival for more than 20 years, calls herself the "referee" of the pizza frita operation. Prior to that, she worked in the food trailer.

"To be honest, I am kind of stepping back this year," she said. "While I will still be working in pizza frita, I'm passing the baton of 'chair' on to my son John, who was actually there before me — he and Mike Zasa were the ones who helped Rachel Sciortino and her crew. They were the brawn."

Mario Scalzo is 75 and said he's been volun-

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Dedicated to his work, parish

Tony carries on family tradition of service

Tony Laria is a modern man whose professional career is in technology. He is a bit old fashioned, however, continuing a long line of family members who serve our parish.

You might be one of our most high-tech parishioners. You are director of infrastructure at NYCM Insurance Co., worked at Utica National as a computer programmer in 1981 out of college, went on to General Electric Aerospace as a programmer, among many other technical jobs. What attracted you to this field?

My dad had a successful career in information technology with the federal government; back then it was called data processing. I was always intrigued with science and math and focused on problem solving. When I entered SUNY IT, the admissions director at the time explained this new degree program, and after 30 minutes of conversation I committed to that curriculum. I have loved it ever since; each day brings a new set of challenges. Making the move from staff to management was rewarding as it enabled me to mentor young IT professionals.

You have worked your entire career in the Utica area, while your jobs have taken you to areas around the United States and internationally to China, Singapore, Mexico and England. How were those experiences?

Amazing. My travels across the United States and abroad enabled me to embrace other cultures, including food, but knowing where home is always made the return trip special. I have so many experiences in both work and touring of those countries. When working with professionals of other countries, I had to work extra hard to keep my slang to a minimum and curb my sense of humor, but once they got to know me, they accepted me for who I am — an Italian from the Utica area who respected everyone and loved to learn more about them all. We are planning a family trip to Italy over the next year, looking forward to the memories and miles that trip will bring.

One of your passions is music — from listening to the '70s on satellite radio, to Elton John, to Frank Sinatra. Talk about your love of music.

A regret of mine was never having learned to play a musical instrument; my mother tried, but sports had a bigger influence in this kid's life. When I get into the car, any station that bridges the '70s forward is always welcome. Although my music interest ranges from the '70s, I always loved listening to Sinatra. That came from visiting my Uncle Ralph in New York as a youngster. He would listen to Jonathan Secwartz on Saturday night hosting a show on FM radio titled



Anthony and Diane Laria with their twin daughters, Cortney and Kristen.

Anthony Laria

- **Family:** Wife Diane, twin daughters Cortney and Kristen.
- **Education:** Bachelor of science in computer science from SUNY IT.
- **Employment:** Director of Infrastructure at NYCM Insurance Co.
- **What you like to do:** Landscaping around my house, Yankees and New York Giants fan, golf, traveling, hosting our extended families at our home for all parties and holidays.
- **Favorite musician:** Frank Sinatra.

"Saturday with Sinatra." My wife and I went to Elton John's farewell concert at MetLife Stadium. It was one of the best nights of my life. For two hours the clock was turned back.

Your parents, Joseph and Frances Laria, were parishioners of Mount Carmel dating back to the 1940s, remaining actively involved in all areas of church and school life through committees and volunteer groups from PTA to festival chairman, to substitute teacher when one of the nuns was out sick. Your sister, the late Margaret Laria Hanrahan, also was very involved in the parish. How did that background guide your life?

I learned at a young age through my parents to get involved and make a difference where you can. When I believe that my involvement will make a difference, it's hard for me to not get involved. "No" is not in my vocabulary. I encourage everyone to step up and make that difference in your community. The experience is worth the journey.

You're following in the family volunteer business. Throughout the years you have

been an altar server, lector, eucharistic minister, parish trustee and current president of the Parish Council, among others that include serving on committees and boards. Why do you do so much and what do you get out of it?

I wish I had an easy answer, I just know where I can make a difference and step up. I look back at my childhood and realize that not all children have had the same family structure and support that I had. Family is important, and the protection of our youth goes hand in hand with that concept. I look back every day and I thank God for my family, the memories I have and the ones that we keep making. I love my parish and will do whatever I can to keep it vibrant and alive. There are many parishioners that do as much if not more than I do, and to that I am very grateful to them. I have watched so many of my parents' generation lead this faithful community. The Greatest Generation continues to decrease in numbers. The onus is on us to keep their legacy alive.

Any final words of wisdom to share?

No words of wisdom, just advice. Step out of your comfort zone and make a difference. Stewardship is considered time, talent and treasure. The treasure can sometimes be the easy one; time and talent is where you can make a difference. We have a beautiful church and a strong faithful community; get involved and make that difference. When I was a trustee during Father Joe's time at Mount Carmel, he had a saying, "We have a history to preserve and a future to create." During these challenging times of parish consolidation in our diocese, those words still resonate. Get involved, get your family involved, make a difference so we can build our future together.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Nursing others to health

Shaelin helping those with mental health challenges

Shaelin Siniscarco is just 23 years old but has the wisdom of Solomon. She is a psychiatric nurse who has dedicated herself to helping those with their mental health, realizing that's a major concern in the world today. Speaking of the world, she wants to help people in other countries deal with their challenges.

It's amazing how time flies. It seems like yesterday you were an altar server and now you are a psychiatric nurse at a Syracuse hospital. What got you interested in that field?

While completing my psychiatric clinical in nursing school, I really enjoyed talking with the patients and hearing about their life stories and diagnoses. There is a huge need for mental health, and I realized I wanted to help the mentally ill. When most people think of "sick" people, they often think of the physically sick people, but the mentally ill are also sick and need to be taken care of as well.

What do you find most rewarding about your occupation?

My favorite population to work with is patients diagnosed with schizophrenia or drug-induced psychosis. I often work with people in their early 20s who have their first psychotic break. Seeing them go from having a normal life to being delusional, disorganized and confused is very disheartening. Once we stabilize them on medications, seeing their transformation and how the brain responds to medications is amazing. The patients are able to become mentally stable again and are able to function in society and live out their lives.

What do you find most frustrating?

I often work with a lot of homeless people who struggle with mental illness, and it's sometimes challenging to find appropriate housing for them. I wish everyone could have stable living situations, but there is a lack of resources in the community that can provide them with stable living situations, and it's disheartening to see at times.

One of your biggest goals is to volunteer in underprivileged countries and assist with vaccinations, medical care and providing health education to people. Please explain why you would like to do that.

I've always wanted to travel, but I wanted to travel using my nursing background, and I would love to give back to people and help people who don't have access to quality healthcare. I think it would be really rewarding to provide medical care to people to get them on the right track of living a healthy life. People in underprivileged countries don't always have the best access to healthcare, and even something as simple as giving a vaccine could be life-changing for them.

You like to travel and experience different cultures. What are some of the places you



Shaelin Siniscarco and her grandmother Jessie Siniscarco. "There is a huge need for mental health, and I realized I wanted to help the mentally ill," Shaelin said. "When most people think of 'sick' people, they often think of the physically sick people, but the mentally ill are also sick and need to be taken care of as well."

have been to and where would you like to go?

I went to Ecuador in college for a few weeks to take a Spanish course, which was a great experience. Ecuador was one of my favorite spots I have been to. I stayed with a host family, and the people were really friendly. In South American culture, people value family time and spending quality time with one another, which I enjoyed. I also recently went to St. Lucia on vacation in the Caribbean, which was also a beautiful island. Next winter, I plan to visit Chile in South America with my boyfriend for a few weeks to sightsee the country. Some places I would like to go to in the future are to see more countries in South America, and I would also like to travel around Europe and go to Ireland and Italy.

Another goal is to finish your master's degree in nursing education and would like to teach at a collegiate level. Why is that important?

After COVID-19, it is apparent that nurses are getting burned out and want to leave the profession. It is a goal of mine to ignite the passion back into nursing, and I want to be a part of educating future nurses and helping people get excited about nursing again. Being a nurse is my proudest accomplishment, and it is so rewarding. Even when being a nurse is

Please see SHAELIN, Page 7

Shaelin Siniscaro

Age: 23.

Family: Father John, mother Mary, brother John, sister Fallon.

Education. Graduated from high school in 2017; bachelor's degree in nursing from Utica College in 2021; currently pursuing a master's degree in nursing education at SUNY Delhi.

Employment: Psychiatric nurse at SUNY Upstate hospital in Syracuse. Also, clinical instructor at Utica University teaching a psychiatric nursing clinical for senior nursing students.

Things you like to do: Going to comedy shows in Syracuse, trying new restaurants and different cuisines, kickboxing.

Favorite book: "Night" by Elie Wisel.

Favorite movie: "Just Go With It."

Favorite TV show: "The Office."

Favorite musical genre: Listen to a variety of music, but my favorite is Reggae-ton and R&B.

Favorite quote: "The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." — Nelson Mandela

Utica's own saint: Mother Marianne Cope

In this last of our series on local saints from Central New York and the Mohawk Valley, we present the “most local” of them all, St. Marianne Cope.

Barbara Koob (known as Marianne Cope) was born in Germany on Jan. 23, 1838. The year after her birth, her family moved to the United States and settled in Utica. She was educated at the St. Joseph School. When her father became disabled, she left school in the eighth grade to work in a factory to help her family. Barbara always harbored a desire to follow a religious vocation but remained at the factory until a month after her father's death and her siblings were old enough to support themselves.

She entered the Sisters of St. Francis at age 24, taking the name Sister Marianne Cope. She soon became active in the field of education as a teacher and principal in several schools in Central New York. She was a dynamic presence on the governing board of her order, helping to establish two important medical centers: St. Joseph's Hospital in Syracuse and St. Elizabeth Hospital in Utica. Her rule of offering people of all walks of life appropriate medical attention, even if they couldn't afford it, made a tremendous impact on the communities she served.

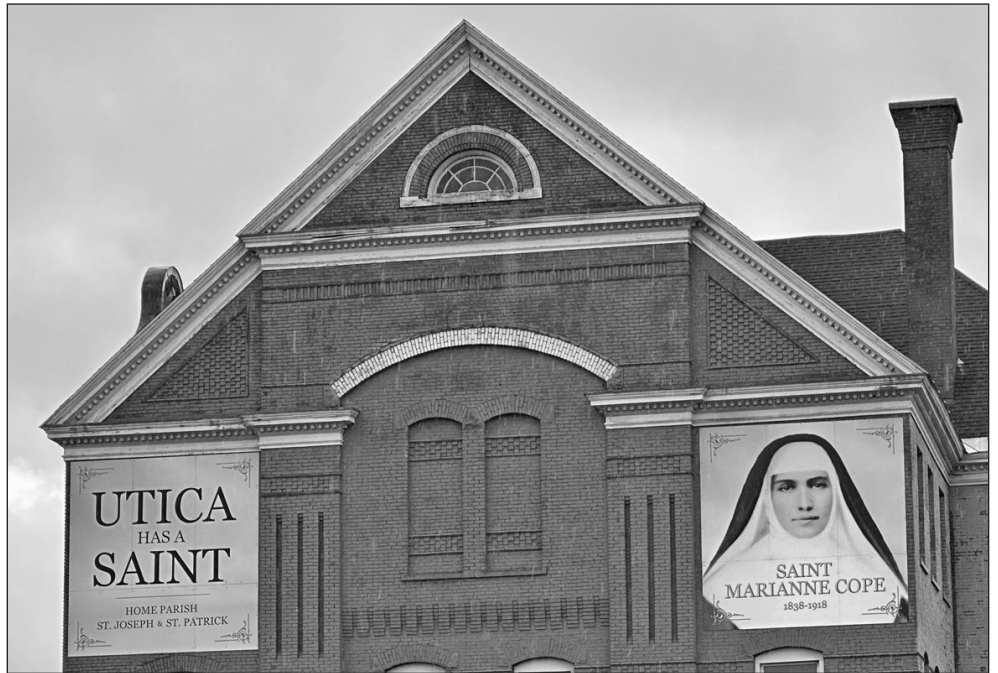


A.J. VALENTINI

Because of Sister Marianne's willingness to accept medical students for clinical instruction at St. Joseph's Hospital, the College of Medicine in Geneva, N.Y., moved to Syracuse University and became the College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1871. In the mid-1980s the name changed to the SUNY Upstate Medical Center and in 2000 SUNY Upstate Medical University. It is the region's largest employer and the only medical center in Central New York.

By 1883, Mother Marianne was the mother general of her order and received a letter from King Kalakaua of Hawaii begging for assistance in caring for the sick of the kingdom. With six sisters, Marianne made the arduous voyage and met the challenge. In 1884, she established Malulani Hospital, the first general hospital on the island of Maui. She was asked to deal with the mistreatment of people with leprosy on the isle of Oahu.

Upon analyzing the situation, Mother Mari-



St. Marianne Cope is featured on the campus of St. Joseph St. Patrick Church in West Utica.

anne demanded the government remove the administrator in charge or the sisters would return to Syracuse. Not only was she given full charge of the overcrowded hospital, but her planned return to Syracuse was delayed when the government and church decided her leadership was too important to the success of the mission to let her go.

A year later, in 1885, the Kapiolani Home was opened to save the homeless female children of patients with Hansen's disease (leprosy). In this way, families could stay intact, and children could stay close to their parents. Only the Franciscan sisters had the desire or the knowledge to care for the families afflicted with the terrible disease.

During her ministry, Mother Marianne met future saint, the Rev. Damien DeVeuster, the “Apostles to Lepers.” She even cared for him when he came down with the disease. She helped demystify the fear of the afflicted by brokering a meeting between Father Damian and the royal family. A more open policy toward those with Hansen's disease began to develop.

Unfortunately, in 1887, a new administration came to power in Hawaii and decided to close the Oahu hospital and reassumed former alienation policies. It was Mother Marianne and the Franciscan Sisters who would care for the sick and would be sent to the settlement for exiles on the Kalaupapa peninsula on the island of Molokai. By accepting this mission, Mother

Marianne gave up forever her hope of ever returning to Syracuse. She was able to help Father Damien during the last two years of his life at the mission. She gave up the home for boys when she got relief from the Brothers of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in 1895. She and the sisters continued to run the services for women and girls.

Mother Marianne died on Aug. 9, 1918. She was ahead of her time as an advocate for simple rules for healthcare, such as the washing of hands before administering to patients. As an educator she made sure patients and their children were literate and had practical skills. She made arrangements with local clergy to meet the religious needs of the community.

Furthermore, she believed in the creation of a pleasant environment through landscaping and an appreciation for aesthetics in the places she established. Her legacy lives on in the medical facilities of Syracuse, Utica and Poughkeepsie. Her lasting fame will, of course, always be tied to the medical services and compassionate institutions she established in the Hawaiian Islands.

Mother Marianne Cope was canonized by the Pope Benedict XVI on Oct. 21, 2012. Her presence is felt throughout our area, but particularly on Utica's west side, the neighborhood in which she grew up and through the various agencies and good works that operate under her name.

SHAELIN

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hard, I wouldn't trade it for the world. I feel that my vocation in my life was to be a nurse, and I would like to help others become nurses as well.

Soccer is one of your favorite sports, having played it for years on the club level, in high school and college. What do you enjoy most about that sport?

I spent a lot of time playing soccer and it's something I was very dedicated to growing up. I loved learning new foot skills and playing competitive games. I played midfield for the majority of my life, and my favorite part was sending in crosses to my teammates and making assists. By being a midfielder, you have an opportunity to be a key part of the defense and offense, and I enjoyed being a part of both.

Now, you are into kickboxing. How did that come about?

I started kickboxing back in college, and then when I graduated and moved out to Syracuse, I joined a kickboxing club. Kickboxing has been a great stress reliever, and it's a fun way to exercise.

You grew up in our parish. Your dad has been a parishioner his whole life and grew up in East Utica. What do you remember most about Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament?

One of my favorite memories was the Mount Carmel feast processions. I was a flower girl with my sister, and I would throw the flower petals at various spots when people would stop to say a prayer, with the Red Band play-

ing in the background. I also remember attending church every Sunday with my family and grandma. Then after church, my dad would take my family to Caruso's bakery for pastries and cappuccinos. My family gave my faith a good foundation, and I am thankful they instilled that in me at such a young age.

When you attended Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament, you were an altar server for many years and a lector. Were those experiences meaningful for you?

I was an altar server for about eight years, and then I was a lector for about three to four years. I really enjoyed altar serving, especially for Holy Week. It was really nice to be a part of such beautiful Masses, and it made me feel really close to God and connected to my faith. Whether it was being an altar server or lector, I enjoyed being able to serve the church in a different way, and it allowed me to grow stronger in my faith.

Now that you are out on your own and away from the area, is it difficult keeping up with your faith and how have you been able to maintain it?

It has been somewhat challenging at times, especially because my job requires me to work every other weekend, so I haven't always been able to maintain going to church every Sunday. However, when I do have the opportunity to do so, I try to go and keep up with going to church. I do have to say, though, there hasn't been a church in the Syracuse area that has that home-like feeling that Mount Carmel has, and I miss that. I often incorporate my faith into my job,

though, which I do daily. I work with many patients who are severely depressed and suicidal. Many of these patients feel that no one cares about them or loves them, and they don't see the value of living their life. As a nurse, I have discussions with patients about faith and remind them that their life is a precious gift from God and that no matter what hardships they are going through, they will get through it, and God is with them every step of the way. I sometimes use the quote, "God gives his toughest battles to his strongest soldiers." Many patients are open to discussing spirituality, and it makes me feel good knowing I can use my faith to help them through their problems.

Being a young person today who went through her teen years, what advice would you give to those younger than you about faith and its importance?

It's important to be grounded in your faith, and it provides a lot of good moral values as well. Faith helps you be able to develop meaningful relationships in your life. It's important to stay close to God because it's always good to thank God for the blessings in your life, but there will be times when you will need to rely on God to get you through difficult times.

What is the one lesson in life that you learned that has been the most important to you?

One important life lesson I learned is to trust the process. Oftentimes, people want things on their time, but it's important to remember that everything will come in God's time.

VETERANS

Continued from Page 3

teering at the festival for more than 55 years.

"My parents were always involved and as I grew older, I wanted to continue the tradition. It also gave me an opportunity to be part of and serve my parish," he said. "I believe it's my responsibility to my church and parish community. I met so many new families and friends while having a great time. With God's help, I will work the festival in some manner as long as I am able to."

Joe Briggs is an immigrant from Blessed Sacrament Parish, where he worked at its festival for a number of years before volunteering at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament when the churches merged in 2006.

"While I was at Blessed Sacrament, I was mostly a worker bee," said Joe, 72. "The last few years, I was chairman of the beer booth. Here at Mount Carmel, I have done many different jobs, including being co-chairman of the food booth with my good friend Al Forte (who died unexpectedly in 2016). I also served as the overall festival chairman for three years. Since those years, I have continued to help out in many different ways."

Joe welcomes the responsibility and the festivities.

"I enjoy seeing people that I may only see at festival time," he said. "I also enjoy working with my fellow volunteers to help make our parish a successful and welcoming place. The

festival helps to promote a feeling of community within our parish. People working together for the benefit of the parish."

Joe Siniscarco is 69 and a lifelong parishioner. He has been volunteering at the event since he was a teenager.

"I volunteer because of my love and commitment to our parish," Joe said. "With my good friend Mario Scalzo, we were the chairman of the food tent for 12 years. Since then, we continue to make the mushroom stew each year. We make approximately 80 gallons of stew each year."

What satisfaction does he get from all the work?

"My biggest satisfaction from volunteering is the friendships I have made with other volunteers."

Joe Furgol is one of the oldest volunteers at age 80. He's been helping for about 20 years, especially in the food trailer. He said the work encompasses more than just three days in July.

"The festival starts in January for us planning," Joe said. "It's many hours before the festival begins to prepare and then the long hours at the festival."

Why does he continue to do it year after year?

"Loyalty," he said. "I enjoy working with friends. (The festival) is a nice way to get together."

Does he ever want to say, "I served my time, now it's up to someone else?"

"Yes," he admitted, "on 90-degree days."

Despite their love of the parish and the festival, all agree it's time for others to step up and take the reins.

"I will continue to volunteer for as long as I can, (but) I do feel that is important to recruit some new blood," Joe Briggs said. "As I said, I am 72 years old, and that is probably the average age of most of our volunteers. We are getting old, and in order for the parish festival to continue to happen, it is important for some young blood to step up."

Terry said recruiting younger people is vital to keep the parish and festival alive.

"Oh, I absolutely do," Terry said. "How can we hope to keep it going if we don't encourage the next generation to understand how it's done? ... I guess I'd just tell them, 'Look, we all had to start somewhere. It's something you learn to love because you're becoming part of a tradition, a history that's preceded us for decades.'"

What would Mario Scalzo say to other parishioners to convince them to volunteer in the future?

"I cannot stress the friends and great friendships that we have made over the years as well as the unbelievable great times," he said. "If we are to survive as a parish, we must all take on a role, regardless of the size, and use our talents. At the end of the day, you will have a great feeling and lots of memories."

Faces from the festival



View more photos at www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com