

MORE

GOOD NEWS

ST. MARY OF MOUNT CARMEL / BLESSED SACRAMENT PARISH - WINTER 2016

Music
ministry
welcomes
new friend

PAGE 3

THIS ISSUE IS A GIFT OF ARLOTT OFFICE SUPPLY

Lent is where and when we live

From the moment we wake up until the late hours of night, so many of us are connected with the gadgets of social media and communications.

Check your e-mail and Facebook. Scan the laptop and your iPad, and bring the smartphone to life – hopefully recharged.

We are so easily and obsessively connected with everyone and everything

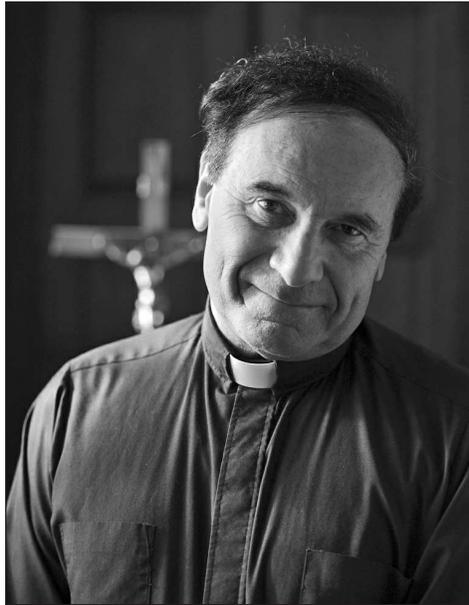
Now entering the 40 days of Lent, which will carry us from the chilly blows of winter to the earliest days of spring, we are invited to be connected with the heart of faith. This connection is not digital or electronic; it is spiritual and practical.

Lent calls us to recognize the presence and activity of God in Jesus happening in our lives and situations.

For more than 40 years, I've led good Catholic people through the season of Lent. We heard the proclaimed Gospel, giving up this and that, and tried taking on positive Lenten practices of learning, praying and charity.

We've put on the color purple, been marked with ashes, walked with Jesus on the Stations of the Cross, but we should keep in mind the difference between the traditions and trappings of faith in Lent and the real connecting with the heart of faith, and the renewal and refreshing of our personal faith and our parish household faith.

Every Lent — each year it happens — always happens in the particular rootedness of



FATHER JIM

our own times and place and existing situations. Lent this time around will echo this time and this place.

The invitation to connect with God's presence and activity hopefully will help and nurture a better faith to meet the challenges of this time and to grapple with the demands of this place.

Have a happy and a holy Lent.

PARISH MINISTRIES

Over the next several issues of "More Good News," we will list information on several parish ministries. If you are interested in any of the following, call the parish office at 735-1482.

LITURGY

Liturgical Committee

This committee meets on a monthly basis to plan all liturgical events of the parish, as well as providing assistance for the training and spiritual development for all lectors, Eucharistic ministers and servers.

Music Ministry

We welcome you to join our choir, maybe to be a cantor, or if you are an accomplished musician, as an instrumentalist.

Ushers

The ushers assure that parishioners and visitors are assisted when necessary as they enter or exit the church. They notify the Eucharistic ministers if anyone needs assistance to receive Communion. The ushers also serve as collectors for the weekly offerings. Ushers are assigned to the Mass of their choice.

FAITH FORMATION

Children's Liturgy

The children of our parish are welcome to hear the Word of God as a group. These children are called forth during the 10:30 a.m. Mass on Sunday, after which a catechist proclaims the Word of God to them in their own language. The children and catechist return to Mass after the Prayer of the Faithful. We welcome all children and new catechists.

Marriage Team

This is a group of married couples who help prepare the engaged for their upcoming weddings. The marriage team administers the required marriage preparation, participate in the Engaged Couples Event and rehearses with the bride and groom-to-be for their wedding ceremony.

PARISH WEBSITE: THE LATEST INFORMATION

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

A Community on a Journey of Faith November 21, 2011

ST. MARY OF MT. CARMEL BLESSED SACRAMENT PARISH
 648 Jay St., Utica, NY 13501 • www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/mountcarmelblessedsacrament

Ministry Alerts
 Sunday at 8:30 AM
 Sunday at 10:30 AM
 Reconciliation: Saturday 2-10 PM

Parish News
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Parish Office
 648 Jay St., Utica, NY 13501
 Phone: 735-1482
 Fax: 735-1483
 Email: parish@mtcarmelblessedsacrament.com
 Website: www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com

... AND MORE

- Father Jim's "Wise and Otherwise"
- History of the parish
- Lector, minister, altar server schedules
- Mass schedules
- Parish news
- Ministries
- Weekly reflection on Sunday's readings
- "More Good News" magazine
- Links to our social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.
- Links to Diocese of Syracuse online sites.

‘We are all about good liturgy’

New organ accentuates an already prayerful music ministry

By FRAN PERRITANO

Throughout the diocese and beyond, St. Mary of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament Parish is renowned for many things.

The beautiful church building with its glorious murals. Parishioners who give their time, talent and treasure to keep the parish vibrant. Priests who lead the people with intelligent decisions, prayerful liturgies, a kind word and even a sense of humor.

Then there’s the music. From Helen Ehlinger, to Donn Sullivan to Peter Elacqua, music has enhanced Masses and liturgies at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament for decades. It’s a wonderful way to pray.

Now, the music ministry has been given a boost – a brand new organ for the first time in memory.

And those who play that instrument – Music Director Peter Elacqua, Anne Elacqua and Mollie Crumrine – are more than thrilled because it only can enhance the parish’s prayerful experience.

“When I first began as organist (back in 1979), the only organ I had ever seen at our church, I assume, was the original organ,” Peter said. “It had several ranks of pipes, and as time went on it became very expensive to tune and there were problems with the organ.”

So, a recommendation was made to purchase another organ.

When the Rev. Carmelo Negro was pastor, Peter said, he made a deal with another Scalabrini parish that had purchased an organ that was half pipe and half electronic, (a hybrid, so to speak). That organ lasted for about 10 years, but it also had increasing problems that cost a lot of money to tune and repair.

“When Blessed Sacrament combined with Mount Carmel, we were very lucky because the organ that was at Blessed Sacrament was relatively new — just about 5 or 6 years old — and we loved having it here,” Peter said. “Our problems were solved — no reason for tuning — it was entirely electronic, and the sounds from that organ were adjusted to accommodate our church space. That organ was wonderful.”

Then lightning struck – literally.

“It got struck by lightning a few years ago (through the electrical system),” Peter said. “The organ would just stop playing at times or would lose volume, or the pedals would not work. We never knew what would happen.”

For two years after the strike, damaged parts were replaced with second-hand or new parts.

“We did not pay for this gradual rebuilding until we were sure we would be able to salvage the entire organ,” Peter said. “In total, we put about \$10,000 worth of parts in the organ, but we never reached the point where we were



“We don’t just sing songs because we like them; we sing songs because they help us to break open the words of the scriptures and the message of that particular day.”

Music Director Peter Elacqua

secure that it would be entirely all right.”

So, finally, it was time to put the organ out of its misery and get a new one.

“The organ company that helped us to rebuild the organ (Allen Organ in Albany) made us a wonderful offer,” Peter said. “They agreed to dismiss the charges for the revamping of the old organ if we chose to purchase a new organ.”

“We met with Father Cesta and assessed the problem and decided that the new organ model we chose would be best for our present and future needs. The \$10,000 fee for parts to the old organ was forgiven and we were able to purchase a new organ from parish funds and from the generous donations that people are making presently and that we hope they will continue to make in our future.”

For Anne Elacqua, playing the new organ only enhances Mass and other celebrations.

“At Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament, we are all about good liturgy,” she said. “I have played and attended Masses at so many other churches in our area and no one comes close to our liturgies. Our congregation sings and fully participates. It’s so beautiful. Mass without

music is so empty.”

Anne has been part of the music ministry for more than 25 years. She started out covering funerals during the week when Peter was working. She was the organist and choir director at St. Agnes Church, retiring from there in 1997. Anne became an active choir member here, singing at Masses and special events. She still covers funerals during the week, sings in the choir and plays the organ or piano when needed.

Mollie Crumrine is the third member of the musical holy trinity. She’s been involved in music ministries since the early 1960s, serving in parishes locally, in the state and in North Carolina.

“When I returned to this area in 2004, I knew Mount Carmel was where I needed to worship, and Peter invited me to participate in the music ministry here,” she said.

Sacramental music is very important to Mollie.

“I have always felt blessed to be able to

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A CONVERSATION WITH ... A.J. VALENTINI

Celebrating proud heritage

A.J. "Fred" Valentini's life has been deeply immersed in his Italian heritage, much like that of our parish. He grew up in an Italian family, married into another, studied in Italy and taught the language for years. He came to Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament from another parish and has found home right here.

You were an Italian teacher for many years in the Utica City School District. How did you decide to teach a foreign language?

As I was entering university, I had the opportunity to study the language I had heard since infancy from my grandparents. None of my cousins could put a sentence together. I wanted to be able to communicate with my grandparents in their first language. Studying it also gave me a link to centuries of heritage. I enjoyed teaching because it gave me an opportunity to stay in touch with what I enjoy and exercise those modest talents that I possess.

Describe what those years were like for you?

I loved teaching (and still do). Kids have a way of grounding you. They haven't developed sophisticated filters on their speech. They tell it like they see it. They also have boundless optimism that gives you hope for a better future. I always tried to go beyond just the classroom experience with my students. I offered them chances to travel abroad, took busloads to New York and other places where they could get a glimpse of the world beyond the confines of the beautiful Mohawk Valley. I also helped plan social events for kids to meet and interact outside of the academic environment.

How did teaching change for you from the time you began until you retired?

When I began, the school was more neighborhood oriented. Technology was limited to a slide or 16-mm film projector. I had time to be creative and invent things to make lessons interesting for the students. As time went by, more and more paperwork and documentation was demanded to justify outcomes. The school population changed and more and more students of other ethnicities were taking my class, which required me to find commonalities in the culture I was teaching. I began teaching more English as well through the study of a foreign language. The school was more under the microscope, yet frequently I saw it taking on the job of parents who were unavailable, missing or just uninterested. At the beginning of my career, Parents Night would draw dozens of concerned, involved parents; later in my career I would only see a handful. As the years went on I saw more instances of parents going after hard-working teachers for the fail-



Maria and Fred Valentini at Rome's Spanish steps.

ures of their children, yet I saw the district offering a myriad of programs and services to help improve performance. I don't place blame. The world has changed, too, and it takes a lot to negotiate pathways through the complicated society that has evolved.

It seems as though learning languages such as Italian, French and Latin have diminished over the years with more of a focus now on Spanish and Mandarin. What are your thoughts about that?

In general, Americans are perceived as lazy when it comes to learning other languages. The Italian community in this area has largely assimilated into mainstream America. Those continuing to study the language are trying to maintain those same connections that I was so many years ago. Italian remains important in the field of the arts, fashion, design and cul-

A.J. Valentini

Age: 65.

Family: Wife Maria, daughter Arianna, son-in law Nick.

Educational background: BA cum laude Albany University ('72), master's in Italian/Education Albany University ('73), certificate in Educational Administration ('94). Also studied at the Università per Stranieri of Perugia ('71 and '89), as well as the Università per Stranieri of Siena ('88).

Current occupation: Adjunct professor of Italian at Utica College.

Former occupation: Chairman of the Department of Languages Other than English at Proctor High School, teacher of Italian (33 years), co-author of the textbook series, "Amici, Volumes 1 and 2."

Interests: History, music, art, international affairs, writing, gardening.

Favorite book: "Shogun."

Favorite movie: "Cinema Paradiso."

Favorite TV show: "House of Cards."

Favorite musical genre or artist: All types from classical to R&B and country (depends on the day).

Favorite quote: "Ignorance is not so much shame as being unwilling to learn."

sine, but the current emphasis in education is on technology. English is the de facto language of technology. Even French, which was once considered the language of diplomacy when I was growing up, has given up its position to English on the global stage. Latin, the mother of so many languages, is perceived as a "dead language," yet were one to study it, one would understand so much more about the subtleties of language today. Spanish remains important in the USA thanks to the huge numbers of Hispanics who continue to enter the country and cluster in ethnic pockets. Second generations of that culture are now entering in national politics. The study of Mandarin is being helped in part by the support of the Chinese government that has supplied seed money to schools through the states for nascent pro-

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Serafina Sortino is a very busy 16-year-old. One of her passions is dancing. "I like dance because it makes me happy. When I'm dancing, it's like nothing else matters and it just makes me feel great."

Making every second count

It seems as though Serafina Sortino needs more than 24 hours in a day. A sophomore at Thomas R. Proctor High School, she is involved in numerous clubs and organizations. She also dances every day, loves being outdoors and is a Girl Scout. She enjoys her life immensely and looks forward to what the future will bring.

You're in your sophomore year at Proctor High School. What do you like best about the school?

I like Proctor a lot. My favorite parts would have to be all the classes and clubs offered. There's a variety of choices that I feel are going to help me in college.

Is there anything you believe needs improvement in the high school?

One of the things that could be better at school is that most clubs are scheduled on the same day. That's really hard for kids like me who want to be involved in so many things.

You're involved in many clubs at Proctor: Yearbook, Drama Club, Best Buddies and Student Council. How do you find the time to do all of them?

I have a very busy schedule and it's important that I keep an agenda marked with everything I have to do. Like I mentioned before, some clubs can be scheduled on the same day, so sometimes I will meet with the teacher before or after the meeting to make sure I know what is going on. However, I am very fortunate that this rarely happens with me, so I usually make it to everything. And my parents

Serafina McGlynn Sortino

Age: 16.

School: Sophomore at Thomas R. Proctor High School.

Family: Mom Theresa; Dad Fino; brothers Rob, Nathan, Russell.

Things I like to do in my spare time: Sing, dance, read, spend time with family, listen to music.

Favorite book: "A Walk in the Woods" by Bill Bryso.

Favorite TV show: "The Fosters."

Favorite movie: "Cinderella."

Favorite musical performer: Taylor Swift.

Favorite quote: "Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning to dance in the rain."

usually keep an eye on the family schedule, which helps a lot.

Why are you so involved and what do you like best about it?

I've always wanted to join lots of clubs and help people. It's kind of something that has come naturally to me. It's great that at this time in my life I have all these clubs and programs to join. With most the clubs I'm in, I know that I'm making a difference and helping my school. I like the most that there's so many different people to meet and so many things to do.

Do you like working together with fellow students?

I love being involved and working with my peers. Being in several different clubs has

allowed me to meet lots of different people. And with Proctor being such a large school, there are lots of people to meet and work with. Most of the kids that I have worked with in past years in clubs have even become my friends.

You're also an outdoors person. You love to hike and have climbed four of the state's High Peaks. How did you learn to love the outdoors and what kind of rush do you get from being outside?

When I was younger, I always remember constantly playing outside and going to the playground with my parents. It is just something I've grown up with. My mom always took my brother and me on walks when we were younger and it's something we still do today. I also spent a lot of time on my Uncle John's farm and at my Aunt Pat's house on the lake. That's where I feel it really started. I always feel like there's this big thing to discover and explore when I'm outdoors.

You're also a Girl Scout. What lessons have you learned from that experience?

I think that Girl Scouts and my troop leaders have taught me a lot. Things like no judgement, honesty, respect and fairness are things that we follow every meeting and continue in everyday life.

Is there one person who has been the biggest influence on your life?

My mom. She's always been there when I

Please see SERAFINA, Page 7

From alpha to omega, we are a vibrant community

In an era when churches of all denominations are struggling to maintain and increase their flocks – including a congregation in Taiwan that just built a church in the shape of a giant glass high-heeled pump to attract women – our parish is doing well.

It is common knowledge that there is an attendance slump among the demographic of Christian 18- to 30-year-olds. In our own parish, I often see classmates and friends of my daughter, who are in that demographic, in the pews.

That is just one example of how vital the parish of St. Mary of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament is. Let's look at some of the statistics for 2015 and how it reflects the life of the congregation.



A.J. VALENTINI

Last year, Mount Carmel included a population of 1,011 families, meaning of course, that the number of individual parishioners is more. That population was amplified with the baptisms of 63 children into our community. Hopefully, with the marriages of 18 couples during the year, we will continue to grow.

The spiritual life of a religious community can continue only if its children receive the appropriate instruction in the faith, and with that, assure their on-going commitment to the congregation.

A dedicated group of adults take on this responsibility. Last year there were 174 children in Faith Formation classes. Among those children, 13 made their First Communion in May and 14 young adults were confirmed.

Faith Formation directors Terri Panuccio and Anne Elacqua and crew go beyond classroom activities each year, raising funds and bringing some of the most promising youths to the annual Vision conference at the University of Notre Dame. John Reale, trainer of our altar servers, reports that there are about 30 children assisting Father Jim at Mass.

During the year, hundreds of parishioners roll up their sleeves for the various activities and ministries of the church community. Scores of individuals can be found setting up the July festival, frying peppers and sausage, making pizza frita, running the rummage sale, operating games, displaying their musical talents, cleaning up and tearing it all down.

There are 59 people who serve as Eucharistic ministers. At weekend Masses, 43 parishioners share the Good Word as lectors. And the voices and instruments of approximately 50 people



can be heard during various religious services. Our altar linens always are crisp and clean thanks to the 10 women who launder, press and drap them.

During any given year, certain projects must be undertaken to maintain the structural and aesthetic value of the parish campus.

In the past we have seen renovations to the former school building and rectory. Two years ago we watched as the beautiful artwork of the interior of the church was restored by local artist Serafina Vetrano-Gape and her husband, Bill.

Recently, the HVAC system was attended to. In 2015, roofing was replaced and a new organ was installed. All of that work takes commitment by the Parish Council and its pastor.

One full-time custodian and other volunteers help to keep the campus tidy and in shape. Even Father Jim has contributed his gardening skills.

Mount Carmel's reach goes beyond its campus in many ways. Lay ministers visit the sick and elderly, bringing Communion and appreciated company. Holiday drives bring gifts and treats to the less fortunate. A nurses group conducts several blood drives through the year.

Flowers are brought to patients in nursing homes. Volunteers help at places such as Hope House and Mother Marianne's Kitchen. Several parish societies still are involved in parish life.

Life, as we know, is a circle. A responsible parish and its pastor tend to the needs of its congregation from its alpha to its omega. Sadly, there were 102 funerals during the course of 2015. Father Jim, assisted mostly by adult funeral servers, gave comfort to the living and an appropriate sendoff to the eternal reward of the deceased.

The Bereavement Committee composed for seven members helps with the ceremony and related functions, while another group of seven helps organize funeral lunches following services.

Often, our pastor is called to the bedsides of the sick approaching their end. It is a difficult job staying strong for those who are at their weakest point, but with the support of a concerned and committed priest and the on-going love of a parish, even this passage can become less terrifying and one can pass peacefully into the night.

SERAFINA

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need her. She helps me see the other side of things and she's always a good person that I can go to. She's my best friend.

You attended Notre Dame Vision over the summer. What was that like for you?

Notre Dame was an amazing experience. I loved everything about it. Everyone there is just so in love with our faith and it's wonderful to just have the opportunity to meet and talk with them. What I enjoyed most was going and doing the Rosary every day at the Grotto with the group of friends I made. The music and everything about it is truly incredible and I definitely want to go again.

What does Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament Parish mean to you?

Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament Parish is a place I really love to be. I always want to sing upstairs with the choir and I can't miss religion class. It's the only church I can see myself going to.

Many young people are hesitant to express their faith. Do you mind talking about it with friends? What does your faith mean to you?

I've never felt uncomfortable about my faith and I don't think I ever will. My friends and I who are Catholic will talk about our Faith Formation classes and plans of being confirmed. Faith to me is a sense of belonging, and I really enjoy being part of my church.

You seem to have done a lot in a short period of time. What do you hope the future holds for you?

In the future I see myself going to college. As of right now I really want to major in recreational therapy. I want to earn my Gold Award in Girl Scouting. I'd like to travel and see the world and hike some more High Peaks. Dance is something I would want to continue to better myself at. Also, to keep participating in the community and my church.

VALENTINI

Continued from Page 4

grams. Clearly, considering the size of the potential Chinese market for American goods and the fact that the Chinese hold much of our national debt make the language an attractive course of study.

You love your Italian heritage. How did that fascination come about?

I was fascinated with Italian culture even before I realized it was a hook for me. My dad traveled extensively for his company, training people in foreign countries to operate assembly lines that produced coated abrasives and adhesives. He traveled twice to France, and while there took time to visit his relatives in Italy. It was emotional for him because his parents, once in the States, never got back. He was an ambassador for the whole Valentini clan. I remember in elementary school, after growing out of dinosaurs, taking out library books on Italy. Seeing the beautiful monuments, the fantastic artwork and the picturesque countryside gave me pride that my blood traced back to that magnificent country. After my wife, it has become my greatest passion.

After retirement, you became involved with the former Sons of Italy, now called the Italian Heritage Center. What drew you to that organization and what did you hope to accomplish?

My first approach to the Sons of Italy was on behalf of my students. The club allowed the kids to use the bocce courts for a yearly competition between the students of the then-three city high schools. Later, my students benefited from annual scholarships given by the Sons. After retirement, I became more involved. Unfortunately, it was at a time when overall membership had fallen and volunteers to help push forward group activities were scarce. The building and equipment were in need of repairs and daily operation costs outstripped income. I was elected president, and during my time tried to recapture some of the glory of the past through social events, educational projects and cultural activities. People still stop me from time to time and say how much they enjoyed those efforts, but ultimately the building was

too big for the small number of active participants to go forward. After my term, the next administration put the place up for sale.

You and your wife came to Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament from St. Mark's. Why were you searching for another parish and what is it that drew you here?

Mount Carmel was actually the parish in which my wife had grown up. We were married there in 1977. Our first home was in North Utica, just around the corner from St. Mark's Church. It was where our daughter took all her religious instruction and sacraments. We walked to church in those days. We became close to the pastor there, and when he was transferred and we moved to a new home our daughter was off to college, my wife and I felt we needed to find a parish that was linked to us by more than geography. We started to attend Mass at Mount Carmel again and fell back in love with the parish and its people.

Do you feel your spiritual life has deepened since you became a parishioner?

It wasn't long after our declaration to become members of the parish that we were asked to become active in ministry. I was asked first to help with collections at Mass. Maria became a Eucharistic minister. I was later asked to be a lector. I have to say that we had never been asked to be ministers in any capacity in our previous parishes. We enjoy being a part of the rituals established thousands of years ago. Again, it's a recall to our ancient culture.

If you were to tell a friend why he or she should attend Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament, what would you tell them?

I tell them that if you want to be a part of an extended family in a beautiful building and listen to a priest who has a sense of humor but also knows his doctrine, they need to give us a test drive. This parish is part of a tradition in Utica that is 120 years old. It was established by people who didn't have much more than their faith to give. There was a lot of love — love of God, love of tradition, love of culture and love of community that went into the brick and mortar of this parish. It deserves to be experienced.

NEW ORGAN

Continued from Page 3

return to God the gift of music with which I have been entrusted, and in doing so serving God's people," she said. "It is exhilarating to participate in the creative and life-giving liturgies which we have here at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament."

Peter has been involved with music in the parish since 1967 when he was 13 years old. Nearly a half century later, he's not tired of it.

"I love planning and playing for Mass at Mount Carmel," he said. "Many people understand that the music choices are always influenced by the message of the readings. We

don't just sing songs because we like them; we sing songs because they help us to break open the words of the scriptures and the message of that particular day. Liturgical music speaks to our hearts and helps us to build our faith and our relationships with God and with others."

And Peter feels extremely blessed to be part of the long tradition of music at Mount Carmel.

"We are very lucky because music has for a long time been a charisma and a gift of our parish," he said. "From our former pastor Father William Pizzoglio, who was a published liturgical composer; to Miss Helen Ehlinger,

who dedicated her entire life to this ministry; to Mr. Donn Sullivan, who was in charge of the Sullivan Players (Syracuse) who brought a lot of Broadway musical knowledge to us; and through the presence of parish priests like Father Gino Marzola and Father Jim Cesta (who is a magnificent pianist), we have been blest in the parish because liturgical music has been such a major concern here.

"Liturgy here dynamically celebrates who we are as a Christian people and who we are becoming. We are so lucky and blessed to have parishioners who understand this and who support our program so strongly."



Holiday blessings

Christmas 2015 once again was a very memorable time for our parish community. From the Advent-Christmas Concert, to the Christmas Gala, to Breakfast with Santa and our beautiful altar and nativity scene, the season was celebrated with prayer, song and joy.



To view more photos from these events and others, visit www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com and click on PHOTOS