'Being Church' is more than going to church

The social dimension of being a Catholic companion of the Lord Jesus starts with remembering that only three of the Ten Commandments deal with our relationship with God — the other seven have us consider our social relationship with other people.

Sometimes, good and devout Catholic folks really fall into believing that our beautiful worship — the Mass, sacraments rituals and customs — are the only requirements of the person of faith. These "spiritual and Spirit-filled" dimensions of a life of faith are so important and needed to nourish faith. They are the source and summit, especially the Holy Eucharist.

We are social beings by nature, however, which means reaching out and taking part together in all the elements of walking the way of Jesus, walking in the way of faith, cannot be absent or avoided.

Some people, saying they are good Catholics, only go to Mass and do nothing else. Some Catholic people would go to Mass three times a day and never interact or participate in actually "being Church," which is different from just going to Church. Being Church means doing your part — participating in programs, projects and social events, and reaching out to represent your parish household in the wider community



where you live.

To be Church might be seen when someone offers to teach the faith to our youngsters, or volunteering at the local soup kitchen, possibly visiting shut-ins or hospital patients, maybe helping organize enjoyable parish events that boost our spirits.

The social outreach of a life of faith might even prompt someone to speak out, to protest something that is clearly wrong, even unethical. In the Sacrament of Confession, most penitents start with whatever they did wrong. It takes some advising to remind that person to consider the good that should have been done that wasn't done. Usually that means the social dimension of our wondrous faith.

CELEBRATING THE SAINTS

The Chair of St. Peter

This feast commemorates Christ's choosing Peter to sit in his place as the servant-authority of the whole Church.

After the "lost weekend" of pain, doubt and self-torment, Peter hears the Good News. Angels at the tomb say to Magdalene, "The Lord has risen! Go, tell his disciples and Peter."

John relates that when he and Peter ran to the tomb, the younger outraced the older, then waited for him. Peter entered, saw the wrappings on the ground, the headpiece rolled up in a place by itself. John saw and believed. But he adds a reminder: "... They did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead."

They went home. There, the slowly exploding, impossible idea became reality. Jesus appeared to them as they waited fearfully behind locked doors. "Peace be with you," he said, and they rejoiced.

The Pentecost event completed Peter's experience of the risen Christ. "... They were all filled with the holy Spirit" and began to express themselves in foreign tongues and make bold proclamation as the Spirit prompted them.

Only then can Peter fulfill the task Jesus had given him: "... Once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers." He at once becomes the spokesman for the Twelve about their experience of the Holy Spirit — before the civil authorities who wished to quash their



preaching, before the Council of Jerusalem, for the community in the problem of Ananias and Sapphira. He is the first to preach the Good News to the Gentiles. The healing power of Jesus in him is well attested: the raising of Tabitha from the dead, the cure of the crippled beggar. People carry the sick into the streets so that when Peter passed his shadow might fall on them.

At the end of John's Gospel, Jesus says to Peter, "Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

What Jesus said indicated the sort of death by which Peter was to glorify God. On Vatican Hill, in Rome, during the reign of Nero, Peter did glorify his Lord with a martyr's death, probably in the company of many Christians.

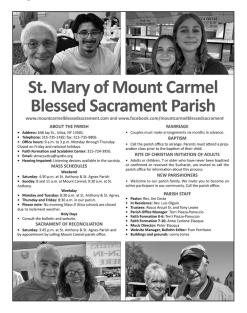
PARISH WEBSITE

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.

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Spreading the joy beyond the sanctuary

Social Ministry important part of parish life

By FRAN PERRITANO

St. Mary of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament is renowned around the region and diocese — and beyond — for its wonderful and meaningful liturgies, beautiful music, an energetic congregation and faith-filled parishioners.

Beyond its religious foundation, however, there is another important aspect — the parish's social community.

Parishioners and friends gather during the year to enjoy camaraderie at many parish functions outside of our beautiful church.

That's where Mario and Carmelann Scalzo come in. For more than 30 years they have been organizing events as the heads of the parish's Social Ministry, formerly known as the Social Committee.

"It started over 30 years ago when we were asked to give a reception at church, and then later we were continually asked to host the events on behalf of our priests," said Carm, 78.

"After our first reception for Father Henry," Mario said, "my wife and a few good friends who worked with us decided that we wanted to form some type of ministry to plan and sponsor social activities where our parishioners can become a close community.

Why have they been doing it for more than three decades?

"(I get satisfaction) hearing our parishioners telling us what a great time they had at our events and telling us that they would have stayed home wrapped up in front on the television," Carm said.

Mario, 78, said it's a joy "just to be with our friends and have fun planning and sponsoring activities that will encourage camaraderie with our parishioners. And the by-product that enables us to support local ministries and programs that extend beyond our parish."

A major aspect of the Social Ministry is that people outside of the parish benefit.

"We always felt that we would like to share by supporting our church's outreach efforts into our community," said Carm. "We researched and found several groups and organizations that need additional resources to fulfill their goals.

All of the beneficiaries receive monetary donations to support their needs: They include: Veterans Outreach, Rescue Mission, Thea Bowman House (through Anne Elacqua's program), Purple Heart, Abraham House, Father Luis' Spanish ministry, Mount Carmel Society Thanksgiving program, The House of the Good Shepherd, and the Monday Night Walk In at



Two events sponsored by the Social Ministry are the Craft Fair and Bake Sale, above, the Bistro, below. "We subsidize all of the events with our funds to keep the costs to our parishioners downs," said Mario Scazlo, who along with wife Carm, head the ministry.

the Rescue Mission

Mario stressed none of the Social Ministry's events are fundraising.

"In fact, we subsidize all of the events with our funds to keep the costs to our parishioners down," he said. "Our only fundraiser is the Bake Sale and Craft Fair."

Among its numerous endeavors are Valentine's Day Dinners, Mardi Gras parties, Murder Mysteries, the popular Bistro, dinners (roast beef, ham, manicotti and fish fries), A Night at the Races, The Christmas Galas, Breakfast with Santa, chicken barbecues, bake sales and craft fairs, pizza fritta mornings, several teas, a wine trip and raffles.

Guiding the Social Ministry only is one aspect of their lives.

Before he retired, Mario engaged in the technology field since the early days of mainframe computers in the mid-1960s. He retired from Bank of New York Melon as a vice president of technology development. Now, he's in the choir, teams with Carm on the Marriage Committee, serves on the Board of Directors for the Italian Heritage Club of the Mohawk Valley, and is secretary of the St. Rosalia Society.

Please see SOCIAL MINISTRY, Page 7





Vicki Perritano is surrounded by her grandchildren, several of her great grandchildren and other family members on Christmas Eve, where she cooked dinner for 23 people.

Faith is her savior

Once angry with God, Vicki's trust in Lord undeniable

In full disclosure for those who don't know, Vicki Perritano is the mother of the editor of this magazine, who interviewed her for this article. This is the 53rd edition of "More Good News," and we felt after 13 years of publication it was time to feature one of the matriarchs of the parish. Vicki is 95 years old, still attends Mass and volunteered over the years in many parish ministries.

You grew up on Lansing Street, and then after marriage you moved basically into the backyard of your childhood home to your current home on Blandina Street. What was the neighborhood like during those times?

It was great. The neighbors knew everybody. Everybody got along. You could walk the streets at midnight if you wanted to and everything was great. Its people were beautiful.

You grew up in the Great Depression in the 1930s and during World War II in the 1940s. What do you remember about those times?

Well, I was in grade school when Dec. 7, 1941, happened (Pearl Harbor). I was 12 years old and, naturally, as young kids, we were all saying, "If something happens, what are we gonna do?" I remember we had rationing books. My mother would have to ration to get the stamps for sugar, flour and other household items that we needed. Even at that time, we didn't wear panty hose. We had nylon stock-

Vicki Perritano

- Age: 95.
- Education: Graduated from Mount Carmel School and Thomas R. Proctor High School.
- Family: Married to Salvatore Perritano Sr. for nearly 27 years before his death in 1976; four sons, six grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren.
- Former employment: Utica Mutual, Oneita Knitting Mills, Oneida County Purchasing Department, City of Utica Purchasing Department, City of Utica Assessor's Office (retiring in 1995 as the first female appointed assessor).
- Favorite TV shows: "NCIS" and "Blue Bloods."

ings, and we had to go downtown to buy our stockings and stand in line because they were rationed.

You graduated from Mount Carmel School in 1943. What was school like?

Great. At that time, we had all nuns, and I think our parish had four or five priests and we knew the nuns. I don't know how many kids in class, maybe about 30 kids or better. The priests would come out during recess time and

they would play with us and play ball and do whatever. It was just a nice time.

You're a 1947 graduate of Proctor High School. What do you recall about those years?

I loved Proctor. It isn't like it is today. We weren't that many — I think we were 300 when we graduated, There were no drugs at that time, and everybody was amicable. Everybody got along. We had a beautiful football team. We were at odds with UFA (Utica Free Academy) at that time because there was Proctor vs. UFA, but never anybody getting into any fights. We had a great time.

How did you meet dad?

Well, his father died, and our backyards connected, and my mother made a meal for them. And so he was at our house and that's how I met him. For me it was love at first sight. And to repay my mother for giving us dinner, we had our first date. We went to the Orpheum Theater on South Street, and at that time he had this old clunker car, and when we went out when the movie was over, the car wouldn't start. That was the beginning of our beautiful friendship.

You were married almost 27 years and had four sons before he died unexpectedly at age 49 and January 1976. How would you Please see VICKI, Page 7

They are a dynamic duo

Gina, Steve inseparable in life, business, family

Steve Surace and Gina Reale met at a college event. Their friendship grew and turned into love. They raised two girls and now have a granddaughter. They built careers together and give back to the community — and to the parish they love.

Gina: You're a numbers woman. You are the founder of Clearview Accounting LLC, were controller at Notre Dame Junior-Senior High School and finance manager at Utica Coffee Roasting Co. How did you get attracted to that field?

I guess math and numbers have always interested me, which led me to my first full-time job at the Savings Bank of Utica as a teller, which led to the loan department and so on.

Gina: What you do at Clearview?

I created Clearview as a result of my time at Notre Dame and my continued partnership with Utica Coffee. This allows me to be able to grow and help other businesses in the area with their financial bookkeeping so they can focus on what they know best, their business. It isn't always about the financial numbers as much as it is taking the time to get to know the owners and learn about their business.

Steve: You're a numbers guy. You're a CPA, management consultant and involved in real estate development. Same question: How did you get attracted to that field?

I was always interested in real estate — Gina and I building our own home and renovating so many others. We loved the ideas of transformation. Gina then wanted to acquire a cottage community in Inlet. In her acquiring and setting up and running this business, we started to think about other transformations. After some time running the business, we had an opportunity to acquire a property from her uncle, and Gina had the vision to transform it into loft apartments. We then had some additional opportunities along the way. I think our early years of transforming our homes turned into turning old properties into new.

Gina: How did you guys meet? Was it love at first sight or something else?

As Steve describes below, we met at a college event, had mutual friends in common and started to spend more time as friends together getting to know each other which evolved into a relationship.

Steve: How did the courtship develop? Did you take the lead or was it Gina?

We met one evening at a college event and while I was enamored with her, I chased her first as being a friend until we both learned enough about each other to move toward a relationship.

Gina: One of your favorite spots to relax is the family camp on Otter Lake. What's so special about that place?

Well, this place, where to begin. Steve's parents had a place on Otter from when the girls were babies. So, getting to spend time there



The Surace Family, from left: Daughter and son-in-law Emily and Jon Steenburg and their daughter Hadley; Gina and Steve; and daughter Rachel and her boyfriend Matthew.

Steve and Gina Surace

- Ages: Gina 50, Steve 49.
- **Family**: Daughter and son-in-law Emily and Jon Steenburg, daughter Rachel, infant granddaughter Hadley.
- Occupations: Gina is owner of Clearview Accounting LLC and a member of the SUNY Poly Foundation Board; Steve is a certified public accountant and management consultant, and real estate development; also, board member and finance committee member on Mohawk Valley Edge and The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties and former board member of United Way and of The NYS Society of CPAs.
- Favorite vacation spots: Otter Lake, Southwest Florida, family camp at Otter Lake
- Activities outside of work: Gina and Steve are avid hockey fans and season ticket holders for the Utica Comets, boating.

we came to enjoy our time there and wanted to be close to his parents. As luck would have it, we found a place in walking distance to my inlaws. We have built this "camp" into our summer home away from home where we spend quality family time. Unplugging from reality and getting to enjoy time on the water, in front of campfires and a place we're now not only us but our extended family loves to come and spend time. We have the best memories of kayak rides on the lake and taking swim lessons in Old Forge pond. Our hope is that our daughters will continue to cherish this place to bring family together and enjoy spending time together.

Steve: Another favorite vacation spot is south Florida. Where exactly do you vacation and what's so special about that area?

We have a home in southwest Florida. We initially visited my parents and enjoyed the time there in the winter months. We decided that maybe we could set down some roots to eventually have a place to go to on some regular basis. We stayed at my cousin's home a few times and really got a rhythm and excitement over being there. We began to search out and found that it was place we could spend with family and each other.

Gina: You both are involved in community service, sitting on boards of different entities. Why do you give so much of your time to those endeavors?

As Steve mentions, giving back has been something we both feel very strongly about. We

Please see SURACE, Page 7

Party time at Carnevale

Parish hosts traditional celebration before Lent

As one holiday season ends, we start preparations for another.

In Catholic tradition, Lent (*Quaresima* in Italian) is a time for prayer, fasting and almsgiving. So, before the Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5, Christians around the world will take time to party in diverse ways.

The last chance to partake in meals centered on a meat dish gave rise to the name of the celebration of "Carnevale." That name comes from the Latin "carnem levare," which translates roughly to "eliminate meat."

The Tuesday before Ash Wednesday became a day when the last feasts before the days of

fast and abstinence took place. Carnevale, Carnaval or Mardis Gras (Fat Tuesday), depending on the country in which you may find yourself, is quite a thing.

The banquets and feasts grew into celebrations, including the soon-to-be-avoided meat and other reveries including parades, parties, sweet treats



and masked balls. In Venice, the masks became elaborate costumes that completely enveloped a person in such a way that the class distinction between nobles, rich, the common and poor no longer were evident and allowed people to enter places in which they would not normally be seen, making it possible to celebrate with those of another social rank.

This March, St. Mary of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament's Social Ministry, in collaboration with the Italian Heritage Club of the Mohawk Valley, will host a family centered Carnevale celebration from 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, March 1, in our gymnasium. Children should accompany adults. There will be free beverages and a chance to socialize. Traditional Carnevale sweets, tasty "chiacchiere" and "fritelle" will be available for purchase with all proceeds going to Abraham House.

Children will be shown how to create Carnevale masks. There will be a "Sfilata di Carnevale" (Carnival parade) around the gym, where children, led by "Re Carnevale" (the Carnival King) will show off their colorful creations.

Reservations are required. Call the Italian Heritage Club at 315-733-6106 or the parish office at 315-735-1482 to let us know how many participants will be joining in the fun. We look forward to sharing this great tradition with you!

The history of Carnevale is interesting. According to one legend, the Carnevale di



PHOTO BY A.J. VALENTIN

Carnevale is celebrated with parades with elaborately decorated floats In Venice. The masks became elaborate costumes that completely enveloped a person.

Carnevale

St. Mary of Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament's Social Ministry, in collaboration with the Italian Heritage Club of the Mohawk Valley, will host a family centered Carnevale celebration.

- When: 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, March 1, in the gymnasium.
- Who: Children and adults.
- What: Free beverages and a chance to socialize. Traditional Carnevale sweets, tasty "chiacchiere" and "fritelle," will be available for purchase with all proceeds going to Abraham House.
- **Reservations**: Call the Italian Heritage Club at 315-733-6106 or the parish office at 315-735-1482.

Venezia began as a celebration of the victory of the Venetian Republic over the Patriarch of Aquileia in 1162 just before Lent. People gathered in St. Mark's Square and started to dance.

The celebration became official during the Renaissance and became even more sumptuous in the 17th century. Things got a bit out of hand, however, prompting the Holy Roman Emperor Francis II to ban it in 1797. The celebration was revived in 1979 and now attracts at least 3 million visitors a year to the "floating" city.

In other parts of Italy, America and in the Latin countries, Carnevale is celebrated with parades with elaborately decorated floats, the most famous ones in Italy's Viareggio, Brazil's Rio de Janeiro and New Orleans.

In the Sicilian community of Misterbianco the celebration combines Italian, American and Latin country traditions where local parades feature costumes that become the parade floats. Each year a theme is chosen and, like the celebration in New Orleans, neighborhoods compete for the best presentation of the year.

SURACE

Continued from Page 5

have been blessed with the love and support of family and friends along with the good fortune of both having good careers. For us giving back came very natural. We both not only come from families who have taught us the importance of giving back but know how hard they worked to be able to give us the best life.

Steve: Why is community service important to you?

I always felt that giving back is something that keeps you grounded, and also coming from homes that were of lesser means where opportunities were given by other community organizations. I felt that I wanted to give back in the ways I was given, too.

Gina: You both are long-time parishioners at our church. You're a past member of the finance committee, past chairwoman of festival finance committee and volunteer for annual feast. Why is this parish special to you?

SOCIAL MINISTRY

Continued from Page 3

Carm is no slouch either. She retired as an office manager. In addition to the Social Ministry and Marriage Committee, she's a eucharist minister and occupies her day cooking, cleaning and doing laundry — the basic necessities.

Of course, one of the most rewarding "occupations" is spending time with their grand-children.

Mario and Carm met in high school and lived around the corner from each other. Their families were good friends. They also were members of the Mount Carmel Players group in what seems like a lifetime ago.

Both agree that social activities are important to our parish community.

"It keeps our parishioners linked together to have a social life and enjoy each other," Carm said.

"We want to ensure that our parish family continues into the future and that we can continue to serve our parishioners and the community," Mario added.

So, what's in store for this year and how can others help?

"We will continue to support and sponsor events that will benefit our community and parishioners," Carm said. "We are looking for new members of our ministry with some fresh ideas for more entertaining events."

"The best vehicle to share ideas is to attend the ministry's meetings and help us plan the events," Mario said.

Like many ministries in the parish, the people involved are getting along in years. Younger parishioners need to step up and get involved — anywhere from teens to adults in their 20s, 30s, 40s, etc.

"We are looking to plan some activities that will be aimed at the younger generations, including children," Carm said. "Of course, we would like some of these younger parents to offer some ideas as us older members are out of tune with today's events for young adults and children." Mount Carmel holds a special place in my heart as a former student at the school, to following in my grandparents and parents footsteps by getting married on the same altar. Baptizing both my girls and soon my granddaughter will be baptized there as well. Sharing this wonderful place and community with my family.

Steve: You are on the parish's finance committee and former finance co-chair of the festival. Describe what Mount Carmel means to you?

I love being able to use my skills that help contribute to the church in a way that I feel I can add a lot of value for the church.

Gina: You and Steve just became grandparents. Describe what that feeling is like.

This feeling is indescribable. Everyone tried to tell me that it is a love like no other, I am learning that. You never think you can love someone as much if not more than your children. Hadley has already brought so much love

and joy to our family. I can't wait to continue to watch her grow and hopefully be able to give her the love and foundation of family that I was so fortunate to have. If I can become half of the grandparent to her that all of mine gave me, I will consider myself successful. If they taught me anything is that family, love and faith are all you need to live a happy life.

Steve: Same question for you.

It is amazing seeing this little person. Watching our daughter become a mom and watching her raise this child and make it look so easy just amazes me every day. My eyes twinkle every time I see her.

Gina: You've raised two young ladies. What are your plans for treating your granddaughter?

My plan — to spend as much time with her as possible. Because time is the one thing that there is never enough of. Yes of course, I think spoiling her goes without saying!

VICKI

Continued from Page 4

describe your marriage of almost 27 years?

We had a good marriage. We had our bumps — some small, some big — but we managed to work them out. And if anybody says it's easy, it's not. But if you love one another, this is what you do.

After he died, how did you cope?

Well, I was very angry at God. And one day I was in my laundry room doing laundry and crying and just talking to God and I was angry. Then I stopped and I said, "What am I doing?" I said, "I can't do this." So, you either go up or down. So, I went to visit church, and the faith I had, that's what got me through it.

So, you blamed God and then He helped you.

Yes, he did. And he's helped ever since.

You went to work before dad passed and you moved your way up becoming the first appointed female assessor of the City of Utica. How proud are you of that accomplishment?

I am very proud of that. That's something I didn't think I'd ever do, but I was honored that I was chosen. At that time, Lou LaPolla was the mayor, and he had enough trust in me, and he appointed me. I was there for two years because then I retired in January of 1995. And I was told by many people, by lawyers, that I did a good job, and they missed me when I retired. I felt very good about what I had done. I started as a typist and then senior typist, office manager and then assessor. It was quite a journey working and taking care of my family.

Other than your family, Mount Carmel has been the center of your life. You were a eucharistic minister and lector, set up for weekend and morning Masses and conducted communion services. What does Mount Carmel mean to you?

Mount Carmel's my second home. Without Mount Carmel, I don't know if I could have done it. We have such beautiful people, and

Well, I was very angry at God.
And one day I was in my laundry room doing laundry and crying and just talking to God and I was angry. Then I stopped and I said, 'What am I doing?' I said, 'I can't do this.' So, you either go up or down. So, I went to visit church, and the faith I had, that's what got me through it."

it's something that I've lived with for all these years. It's brought me through quite a bit.

Most people, if they go to church, they just go to church. You became involved. Why?

I found that doing something for the church was helping our parish, our priests; getting involved with a lot of the parishioners and helping some of them. Mostly it helped me because I enjoyed everything that I did.

What advice would give to others about the importance of faith?

Without faith, life does not exist. I don't think there's anything that you can cope with. I don't care what religion you are. You still have to have faith. It sustains you and helps you get through a lot of things that happen in your life.

What do you hope your legacy will be?

To be honest, I never thought about it — having a legacy. I would just like my family, friends — if they're still alive — to remember me for anything that I may have done and maybe to help someone, I know I've helped a few people with just talking to them and being there for them. And just being a very social individual and hoping my family would take after me just a little bit to do what I've done. I would like to think I made a difference in the little things I did.





Celebrating the fall and holiday seasons

As is tradition in our parish, we commemorated the fall and holiday seasons with reverence and fun. Autumn events included the Communion Brunch, the Craft Fair & Bake Sale and the beautiful Thanksgiving Mass. The Advent / Christmas "Lessons and Carols," Christmas Masses and the Epiphany highlighted the season.







View more photos on the parish website at www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com