

**MORE**  
***GOOD***  
***NEWS***

**Maria  
takes on  
mantle  
of service  
at which  
her mom  
excelled**

**Page 3**





# Find time for God when things are going good, too

When life is going along relatively well, we don't seem to have much time for God. Praying and "getting right with God" are the last things on their minds. But it is our loss if we regard prayer merely as a spiritual fire extinguisher labeled "for emergency use only." Prayer is also for good times. It is a time and way to grow in your relationship with God.

Here are two examples of people who were grateful for God's presence in their lives.

In 1951, comedian Red Skelton and a group of friends flew to Europe, where Skelton was scheduled to perform.

As they were flying over the Alps, three of the plane's engines failed. The situation looked grave, and the passengers began to pray.

As the plane lost altitude and moved closer to the ominous peaks, Skelton went into one of his classic comic routines to distract the passengers. At almost the last moment, the pilot spotted a field and made a perfect landing. Skelton broke the relieved silence by saying, "Now ladies and gentlemen, you may return to all the evil habits you gave up 20 minutes ago."

Skelton knew that many people turn to prayer only when some dire emergency comes along and they see no way out of it except through divine intervention.

Babe Ruth is one of the most famous names in American sports.

A memorable time in Ruth's personal life was a cold December night in 1946. He explained why in an article in "Guideposts" magazine. He wrote: "(Even though) I drifted away from the church, I did have my own altar — a big



FATHER JIM CESTA

window in my New York apartment overlooking the city lights. Often, I would kneel before that window and say my prayers. I would feel quite humble then. I'd ask God to help me ... and pray that I'd measure up to what he expected of me."

On this cold December night, however, Ruth was in a New York hospital, seriously ill. His closest friend Paul Carey was at his side. After a while Carey turned to him and said, "Babe, they're going to operate in the morning. Don't you think you should see a priest?"

Ruth saw the concern in Paul's eyes, and for the first time in his life he realized that death could strike him out. So, he said to Carey, "Yes, Paul, I'd appreciate you calling a priest."

That night Babe Ruth spent a long time talking to Jesus with the priest's help. When he finished, he made a full and humble confession.

After the priest left, the Babe said, "As I lay in bed that evening, I thought to myself what a comfortable feeling to be free from fear and worries. I could simply turn them over to God."

## CATHOLIC Q&A

### Catholic vs. Protestant Bibles

**Question:** Why are Catholic and Protestant Bibles different?

**Answer:** Since the earliest days of the Church, Christians used a Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. This collection of the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures included 46 books.

At the time of the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s, the Protestant reformers began to create their own translations of the Bible (into local languages) and some began to question why the Jewish Scriptures would have included texts that were written in Greek, because, they assumed, the only valid Jewish Scriptures would have been written in Hebrew.

And so, they decided to remove seven books from the Old Testament: Baruch, Sirach, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Tobit, Judith and Wisdom (as well as portions of the Books of Daniel and Esther). This means that the Protestant Old Testament only includes 39 books, while Catholic Bibles continue to include those original 46 books.

Both Catholic and Protestant Bibles include 27 books and letters in the New Testament.

### Marriage in church

**Question:** Why are Catholics required to get married in a church, and not outside or at a different venue?

**Answer:** Because the Sacrament of Marriage is a sacred covenant between the husband and wife, the celebration of the sacrament of matrimony is much more than simply a social or family event.

So, the rule that the sacrament be celebrated in a church is a way to help reinforce the deeper meaning of Christian marriage. To help make this clearer, the Church's tradition also normally includes the celebration of the Mass when the marriage is being celebrated between two Catholics, and so a church or chapel is the ideal setting.

For special reasons — which vary from diocese to diocese — the local bishop can give permission for the marriage to be celebrated in another suitable place.

## PARISH WEBSITE

Visit [www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com](http://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](http://www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com) and [www.facebook.com/mountcarmelblessedsacrament](https://www.facebook.com/mountcarmelblessedsacrament)

- ABOUT THE PARISH**
  - Address: 648 Jay St., Utica, NY 13501.
  - Telephone: 315-735-1482; fax: 315-735-9806.
  - Office hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Closed on Friday and national holidays.
  - Faith Formation and Sacramental Center: 315-724-3950.
  - Email: [stmaryscatholic.org](mailto:stmaryscatholic.org)
  - Hearing impaired: Listening devices available in the sacristy.
- MASS SCHEDULES**
  - Weekend**
    - Saturday: 4:30 p.m. at St. Anthony & St. Agnes Parish.
    - Sunday: 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. at Mount Carmel; 9:30 a.m. at St. Anthony.
  - Weekday**
    - Monday and Tuesday: 8:30 a.m. at St. Anthony & St. Agnes.
    - Thursday and Friday: 8:30 a.m. in our parish.
    - Please note: No morning Mass if Utica schools are closed due to inclement weather.
  - Holy Days**
    - Consult the bulletin and website.
- SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**
  - Saturday: 3:45 p.m. at St. Anthony & St. Agnes Parish and by appointment by calling Mount Carmel parish office.
- 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.
- ORDER 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 in our community. Call the parish office.
- PARISH STAFF**
  - Pastor: Rev. Jim Cesta
  - In Residence: Rev. Luis Olguin
  - Trustees: Riccardo Accorci and Tony Leone
  - Parish Office Manager: Terri Piazza-Panuccio
  - Faith Formation: 6-6: Terri Piazza-Panuccio
  - Faith Formation: 7-8: Anne Carbone-Saccia
  - Music Director: Peter Elacqua
  - Website Manager: Bulletin Editor: Fran Perritino
  - Buildings and grounds: Lemmy Jones



## ... 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



# Maria building her life on lessons learned from mom

## Re Chiffy's daughter carrying on faithful family tradition

*Maria Peycke has a tough act to follow. She's the daughter of Rosemarie Chiffy, who gave so much time, talent and treasure to our parish over her 98 years. But Maria is up to the task, living up to the tradition of her mom and creating a legacy of her own in her family and at Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament.*

**You grew up in the large Suppa family that lived in side-by-side houses on Lansing Street, which you termed "the compound." Your mother was a Suppa. What was your childhood like with many cousins and your grandparents living so close?**

Having so many cousins to play with and all in such close proximity was wonderful. Our grandmother would sit by the kitchen window in her rocking chair watching us running up and down the driveway playing cowboys and Indians. The whole yard and every apartment there were part of our playground. We didn't need a swing set or fancy toys; we used our imaginations and had fun for hours.

We were there pretty much on a daily basis, walking home from Mount Carmel School to wait for our mother to pick us up and take us home. I can recall doing homework at the kitchen table after school while my grandmother started dinner. That kitchen was where I first learned how to make sauce, meatballs and chicken soup. What I have learned is that I wasn't being taught how to cook; we were creating magic and many holy moments together.

I would love to spend one more day there by her side in that kitchen! One thing I can say without a doubt is that I consider myself very blessed by my extended family.

**Your maternal grandparents were Joseph "Chick" and Magdelene Suppa, who lived on the first floor of one of those houses. What are your memories of them?**

My grandfather loved golf and baseball, and he would sit in his chair next to the upright piano and watch sports on television all afternoon. The sounds of baseball in summer would carry into the kitchen, and you knew he was enjoying himself watching the game he loved to play in his youth. He was a faithful and charming family man who had so much patience and a warm, loving heart. My mother always described him as a "Damon Runyon" character. Mr. Runyon wrote short stories, and the musical "Guys and Dolls" was based on his work.

My grandmother was a voracious reader. She suffered from poor health in her older years and spent most of her time at home in her kitchen, so the books she read helped to transport her to a world she could only dream about. She would send me to the Lansing Street branch of the Utica Public Library on Saturdays to pick up her reading for the week. I can still recall



**ON THE COVER:** Maria said her daughter Mia was right by her side as Maria cared for her mother, Rosemarie Chiffy (above). "Mia has always had an understanding of my mother's situation that was far beyond her years. As we discussed what would happen for her after graduation, she said that she wanted to continue to help my mother as much as possible. She said that she knew that she would spend the majority of her life without her grandmother, and she wanted to be there for her while she had the chance."

the first time I walked into the library. I was mesmerized by the shelves of books and was thrilled when I was given my first library card. I was so excited that I ran all the way back to her house clutching that precious card in my hand. I think her smile was as big as mine that day. I can't thank her enough for instilling in me a great love of reading. It has been a mainstay in my life ever since and has helped me through many difficult times.

**Are there any lessons from that time that you have imparted upon your kids?**

I made a point of reading to my children every night. I knew that time spent with them would not ever be wasted. Both of them enjoy reading, and my daughter also enjoys writing. I tried to continue many of the holiday traditions that my grandparents and mother enjoyed.

Both of my children were taught that considering other people, being empathetic and giving freely of your blessings is important. I

Please see MARIA, Page 7

### Maria Peycke

- **Age:** 61.
- **Former occupation:** Secretary in the Utica City School District for 34 years.
- **Things you like to do in your spare time:** Read, write, cook and create art.
- **Favorite kind of music and/or musician:** I love the music of Loreena McKennitt.
- **Favorite foods:** Italian and Lebanese food.
- **Favorite TV show:** "Frasier."
- **Favorite movie:** "Last of the Mohicans."
- **Favorite book:** "Jane Eyre."
- **Favorite quote:** "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop." — Mother Theresa



# Bill Thibault leads by example in parish

*Bill Thibault retired in 2012, but he apparently doesn't know the meaning of relaxation. Though he doesn't work professionally anymore, he's very busy in our parish volunteering in a number of capacities, including leading our Parish Festival. He and his wife, Jacky, were honored in December with the Immaculata Award for their volunteerism.*

**You were a Utica firefighter for 32 years. Describe what that job was like and what satisfaction you received from it.**

It was a very physical job. I enjoyed the fact we were helping others.

**You do custom leather work and sell your wares at craft shows. Please describe what you do and why you do it.**

I do custom leatherwork as a small side business — mostly belts, wallets, gun holsters and guitar straps. It is very therapeutic and it keeps me busy in the winter months.

**You and Jacky have been married for 46 years. Tell us how you met.**

We met at a bar in Yorkville during a CB Radio meeting. I asked her out on a few dates, and we got along very well. Engaged in 1978; married on Sept. 15, 1979.

**You guys like to travel. Your favorite spots are the Caribbean, Alaska and Nova Scotia. Why those places?**

Cruises! We love cruises.

**You volunteer in our parish in varied capacities. You have been an usher for more than 20 years, a member and president of the Parish Council since 2010, parish delegate to the Diocesan Parish Council since 2016, past trustee of the parish, volunteer worker of the festival since 1979, and have been festival chairman for the past three years and will be in charge again for this year's festival. Why do you volunteer so much?**

I have always volunteered for the festival since I got married, and after I retired in 2012. I helped set up and take down the festival. Five years ago, I took over the chairmanship after the COVID shutdown of 2020. If I didn't do that, the festival might not have happened.

**You and your wife were the parish recipients of the 2025 Immaculata Award from the diocese. What does that award mean to you?**

We were both surprised that we got nominated as this year's recipients from our parish. We were not looking to be rewarded for our work, but the recognition is truly acceptable.

**What would you say to other parishioners about the importance of getting involved?**

How would you like to be remembered by our parish and your family? Someone who steps up to help others and continues a long tradition of things.



Bill and Jacky Thibault help keep Mount Carmel / Blessed Sacrament vibrant with all the ministries in which they participate. They were honored by the diocese in December with the Immaculata Award for their volunteer work.

## Bill Thibault

- **Age:** 71.
- **Family:** Wife Jacquelyn, daughter Cathy Philo, four grandchildren.
- **Former occupations:** CB Radio sales and installations 1975 to 1980; firefighter with City of Utica 1980 to 2012; 911 dispatcher part time for City of Utica 1987 to 2012; independent loss control insurance inspector 1984-2004; currently employed as an usher at Utica Memorial Auditorium since 2010
- **Education:** St. Peter's School in North Utica; graduated from Notre Dame High

School in 1972.

- **Things you like to do in your spare time:** Watching the Yankees, going to car shows with my classic convertible in the summer.
- **Hobbies:** I do custom leather work — belts, wallets and holsters. Cooking and grilling in the summer
- **Places you like to travel:** Cruising the Caribbean, Alaska and Nova Scotia.
- **Favorite kind of music:** Anything from the Beatles, country.
- **Favorite foods:** Italian, bacon, seafood, bacon (Did I mention BACON!!)

# Happy 130th anniversary

## Parish has deep roots as it continues to thrive

This year we mark another milestone — the 130th year of the birth of our parish.

Although the first Mass celebrated in our building was in 1896, we can trace our lineage as far back as 1865. In that year, Michael Kernan returned to his hometown of Utica from the Civil War with his new wife, Cecelia, the daughter of an Italian broker living in New York City. She took it upon herself to help the new Italian families of the city of Utica become part of the St. John's Church on John Street.

Over the succeeding years, the West Shore Railroad, the Utica brickyards and later the textile mills attracted hundreds of Italian immigrants to become the workforce in the town's booming economy.

By 1887, the Italian-American community had its own priest, the Rev. Antonio Castelli, who was an assistant to Monsignor James M. Lynch of St. John's. It was Father Castelli who inspired the Italians of St. John's to build their own church. To that end, Monsignor Lynch donated an old school building on Catherine Street. Father Castelli turned it into a temporary house of worship and meeting place.

*The following are excerpts from a series written by A.J. Valentini for the parish's 125 anniversary in 2021. You can read the full history of the church and view a video series on our website.*

### 1896-1903

A plot of land stretching from Catherine Street to Jay Street was purchased and the first soil was turned in April 1896. On Dec. 20, 1896, Father Castelli celebrated the first Mass in what then was the basement of the new building. In 1898, a rectory was built adjacent to the rising sanctuary. It was at this time that the Society of St. Mary of Mount Carmel was founded.

On Sept. 15, 1901, Bishop Scalabrini (now a saint) blessed the cornerstone of the new church. By June 29, 1902, however, the modest house of worship was able to be used for its first Mass. Father Castelli, feeling the rigors of building a parish from the ground up and the pressure of an ever-growing flock requested, and was granted, an assistant — the Rev. Joseph Formia. It must have been written in the book of fate because a year later Father Castelli died.

### 1903-1933

Father Formia fostered the growth of the parish by establishing a parochial school and convincing Joseph Tomaino, a prominent parishioner, to donate a home next to the church for use as a residence for the nuns who taught in the new school. After 18 years at the helm, Father Formia returned to his native Italy and passed away, befittingly, on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel — July 16, 1942.

On June 21, 1921, the Rev. John Marchegiani became pastor. He was responsible for many repairs to the existing buildings and had a cor-



From left: the convent, church, gymnasium and nursery school in 1964.

ridor from the rectory to the sacristy built. At the suggestion of Bishop Grimes, not only was the church enlarged by two naves, but the basement was lowered and made into an auditorium and the convent was enlarged.

In 1933, Marchegiani left Mount Carmel to become Provincial Superior of the Eastern Province of the Scalabrini Fathers in New York City

### 1933-1950

When the Rev. William Pizzoglio became pastor in 1934, the parish had 2,035 families and 12,700 parishioners. Father Pizzoglio's primary goal was to nurture the spiritual needs of young and old, and so it was that catechism classes were expanded and religious instruction classes intensified for public school children.

Another noteworthy task undertaken by him was the decoration and painting of the church in preparation for the 40th anniversary in 1936. Professor Antonio D' Ambrosio of New York City was commissioned to decorate and paint the church. Three new marble altars were designed and installed by the DaPrato Firm of New York.

In 1939, Father Pizzoglio opened a clinic for children on Elizabeth Street operated by the Utica Visiting Nurses Association, with the church incurring all costs. When World War II broke out, Father Pizzoglio kept in touch with the 3,000 parishioners drafted into the armed services and established a day care center for the children of the wives left behind who had to work outside the home during the war. Father Pizzoglio left our parish after 17 years of service.

### 1950-1991

The Rev. Joseph Berton became Mount Carmel's next pastor. Out of his 26 years of service, his most lasting contribution was the construction of the rectory on Jay Street.

The Rev. Peter Bortolazzo succeeded Father Berton in 1964. We still enjoy his contributions today, including the pews, the altar of the sacrifice, restoration of the artwork and the granite steps in front of the church.

During the pastorship of the Rev. John Corrao (1973-79), the shrine to Our Lady of Mount Carmel was created, school renovations took place, a senior center and a park dedicated to the memory of St. Charles Borromeo, founder of the Scalabrini Order, were established.

The next pastor, the Rev. Carmelo Negro (1979-83), continued his predecessor's work and replaced the old organ and established "The Busy Bodies," an outreach group from the parish. In 1983, when the Rev. Henry Benin became pastor, once again there was an upheaval in the life of our parish. The diocese decided to close the school and the Sisters of St. Francis who ran it left. Father Henry successfully negotiated the renting of the former convent to the Italian Cultural Center and re-adapted the school as the catechetical center.

### 1991 to present

The next pastor was the first native son to assume that position. The Rev. Joseph Salerno became one of the most popular modern shepherds of the parish, leading the way to build the Mount Carmel Apartments for seniors, installing air conditioning in the church, rewiring the building and rebuilding the front steps.

He had the gift of establishing successful collaborations with neighboring parishes, which has become a standard for ecumenicalism in our city. He, along with Deacon Bob Riggalls, planned and executed the 100th anniversary of the parish, which culminated at the end of the anniversary year on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

It took 10 months to find a replacement for Father Joe when he left to become pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes in 2002. The Rev. John Rose saw us through the difficult and sensitive consolidation of Mount Carmel and Blessed Sacrament parishes. After five years, Father John left to work with troubled priests, and we gained our present pastor, the Rev. James Cesta.

Father Jim's humor and his homilies have endeared him to an increasingly diverse community. He has used his artistic abilities to embellish and preserve our facility. His attention to the mechanical systems, a new pulpit, organ and the roof of the building ensures its viability for future generations. He continues collaborative initiatives with priests from neighboring parishes and has since become pastor of St. Anthony and St. Agnes Parish. He is not shy about sharing his Italian heritage and in his own folksy way is able to drive home the messages of the gospels through comic stories and shared common experiences.





OSV NEWS/YARA NARDI, REUTERS

Pope Leo XIV and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, the spiritual leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church, participate in an ecumenical prayer service Nov. 28, 2025, near the archaeological excavations of the ancient Basilica of St. Neophytos, during his first

# ‘... Consubstantial with the Father ...’

## Leo’s historic visit to the site of the Nicene Creed

*I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of Heaven and Earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
consubstantial with the Father;  
through him all things were made ....*

All good Catholics are familiar with the Nicene Creed. It was written at the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

The leaders of the church wanted to set the record straight because there were those who were promulgating the belief that Jesus was a created being, not fully divine. That belief, promoted by a priest called Arius — hence it is called the Arian Heresy — conflicted with the whole concept of the Holy Trinity by placing Jesus as a subordinate to God the Father. That phrase in the creed, “consubstantial with the Father,” intentionally places Jesus as one with God.

In the year 381AD, the Council of Constantinople took a clarifying step further regarding

the Holy Spirit. It is at this time that the words, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.” The addition cemented forever the beliefs in the Holy Trinity.

It is particularly significant that on Pope Leo XIV’s November trip to Turkey that he met with other religious leaders of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox faiths in modern-day Iznik, formerly Nicaea, the sight of that first ecumenical council 1,700 years ago. Catholic, Orthodox and many Protestant faiths recognize that long-ago written profession of faith. It was Leo’s intention to draw attention to our common beliefs in hopes of affecting a rapprochement between believers.

The occasion was an act of reconciliation and encouragement for Christians to overcome divisions and work toward full communion. The Orthodox and Catholic churches split in the Great Schism (1054) over centuries of theo-

logical, political and cultural differences. The final break was triggered by a dispute over the Roman pope’s claim to universal jurisdiction.

Under the Emperor Justinian (r. 527–565), the Church was governed by the heads (or patriarchs) of the five major episcopal sees: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. Rome considered itself preeminent, but Constantinople, united with the eastern episcopates, felt equal to Rome. The split continues to this day. Pope Leo stressed the commonalities among all concerned. He also exhorted representatives to not use religion as a justification for war, violence, and fanaticism, advocating for dialogue and cooperation instead.

The pope thanked Patriarch Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, for his “great wisdom and foresight” in calling for church leaders to celebrate this important anniversary together. He also expressed appreciation to the Heads of Churches and Representatives of Christian World Communions for attending the event. Let’s pray that this initiative leads to more unity between the Christian communities around the world.



A.J. VALENTINI

Sources: [www.americamagazine.org](http://www.americamagazine.org), [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org); [www.vaticannews.va](http://www.vaticannews.va)

# MARIA

Continued from Page 3

wanted to raise them a little slower than this fast-paced, high-tech world we live in. I wanted to share with them a little piece of what it was like growing up during my time as a child, and I think both of them appreciate the simple pleasures of life, and their home and family.

**Your mother was active in a whole host of ministries. She died at age 98 in spring 2025. When you were younger, did you fully realize how devoted she was to her faith?**

I was always very acutely aware of my mother's deep and abiding faith. She spoke of it often and tried to instill such devotion in my brother and myself. Whenever we had a chore to do that we didn't particularly care for, she would tell us to "offer it up" for the poor souls in purgatory, or for a particular person we wished to pray for.

I know that most people think of a legacy as money or property left to their loved ones upon their passing. My mother didn't have much because she shared so much with others. Money wasn't important to her. She said the only thing we can take with us to God at the end of our lives is our loving heart and good works. Her legacy was her faith and service, and yes, I do understand it more now than ever and appreciate the importance of her depth of faith and the church she devoted her life to. It is her gift, not only to her family, but to all of us at Mount Carmel, and I am determined to continue her work and carry on her legacy of service to the best of my ability.

**In her later years, you were devoted to her and were her primary caretaker. What lessons did you learn from that time?**

I was fortunate to have been able to retire six years ago, and to have shared every day of that time with her. I know that's not everyone's idea of a happy retirement, but I wouldn't change it if I could. I would say she began to decline about four months before my retirement, requiring weekly doctor visits that I couldn't always attend at that time. As far as her health requirements, I hit the ground running the week after I stopped working. It wasn't easy for any of us, but we made it as fun as possible, taking her to lunch after her appointment, and taking her to her favorite stores.

When her mobility began to decline, her transport chair would wing through the aisles at Boscov's, and we had a lovely time, even then. Every day was considered an opportunity to share joy, no matter the health issue of the moment. She had an indomitable spirit and would never complain or feel badly about her situation. She offered everything up to God, and that lesson has stuck with me more than any other.

The realization that she wouldn't be returning home this past winter after being in rehabilitation was very hard for all of us. She wanted to try to go home so badly, but her body wasn't up for the task. I found that in some ways we had switched roles and I was now the mother, reminding her that this was where she needed to be, reminding her of who she was and how strong she could be.

She was able to find value in every day and in



**Maria and Mia carry the banner of the Mount Carmel Society during the Parish Festival Procession. They also are co-Presidents of the St. Anne's Society.**

every moment. She believed in the grace found in redemptive suffering, and I am grateful that I was a part of that journey with her because it has helped me to see what truly matters and what we are called to do. It was the most difficult experience I have had to endure in my life thus far, but despite that, I feel truly blessed.

**Your daughter Mia also helped. What did she learned about life over those years and about your mom, her grandmother?**

Mia has always had an understanding of my mother's situation that was far beyond her years. During COVID, I not only helped her with online schooling, but was still taking constant care of my mother. Because of her flexible class schedule, she was able to accompany me to doctor appointments, and she also helped clean mom's house while I did the cooking. I never told her she had to come, she simply expected that was part of how it would be and never once complained. She wanted to be there, and that wasn't something I expected from a teenager.

As we discussed what would happen for her after graduation, she said that she wanted to continue to help my mother as much as possible. She said that she knew that she would spend the majority of her life without her grandmother, and she wanted to be there for her while she had the chance. She took a year off to be there for mom and then got a part-time job that still allowed her to attend appointments and to help at the house, and later on, the rehabilitation center.

I feel that this time she spent devoted to her grandmother will serve her well throughout her life. Witnessing first-hand my mother's trials and constant devotion to God has definitely given her great confidence and strength

of character.

**In our parish, you help in the office, run Mount Carmel Society booth at the festival, are co-president of St. Anne's Society with Mia, and organize the schedules for the Lord's Linens and help with that when needed. Why do you give your time to such endeavors?**

I find giving my time to the church quite fulfilling. At this point in my life, I want to do meaningful things. It's somewhat natural that the activities we valued and found to be so important as young people no longer hold our attention. Is it awareness or evolution? Possibly to an extent, but I think it's more of a calling.

I think the idea of it being a calling is most aligned with how I view this stage in my life and the activities I chose to invest in. My mother's grace in the face of the end of her life has given me a new awareness of the impermanence of things and the importance of doing what truly matters. This church meant everything to her, to her parents and grandparents. They sacrificed so much to build this place we call home, and again, we get back to the idea of legacy. Their legacy was their faith and belief in the importance of this church and the community they created that sustained them, and continues to sustain us, even now, almost 130 years later.

I find my heart gravitating toward picking up where they left off, and even though the things I do here seem mundane, I believe they hold great importance. It is in the little things we do that add up and join together with the little things others do, that act as pillars to hold up the church in the face of much societal upheaval and the prevailing indifference toward all things spiritual. We need Mount Carmel more than ever, and if we want to keep worshipping here together, we all need to step up in little ways to become part of the structure that will keep her strong long into the future.

**How has your faith changed?**

My faith has certainly strengthened over the years. I feel I have witnessed much, especially in this past year, which has helped me to see things more clearly. My belief in Heaven as a child was hopeful, but doubtful. I couldn't imagine a place such as was described to me, but I can say that over the years, after losing very important people, I have come to a new, stronger belief in what lies beyond this temporal world. Thankfully, my core beliefs that were fostered here at Mount Carmel were built upon by those beautiful people, my grandmother, my grandfather, my aunts and uncles, and most of all, my mother. I feel them with me still, guiding me and holding me up during difficult times. What greater peace is there than that?

**What do you hope your children have learned from you?**

I hope that my children have learned to be strong, not to doubt their abilities. I want them to always see their value, and respect themselves because they are beautiful just as they are. They aren't perfect, because none of us are, but they are perfectly themselves. Most of all I want them to know how blessed I feel to have the privilege to be their mother and to journey through this life with them.



# Celebrating the holidays 2025



View photo galleries on the parish website at [www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com](http://www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com)