

How Our Parish St Rose Has Influenced My Life

By Kathi Magnifico

Twenty four years ago I moved to the town of East Hanover, with high hopes of beginning a new life in this community, raising my family and making new friends. In my former hometown, I went to Catholic school, valued learning about the Bible and hearing the scriptures at Sunday Mass. My faith was reserved to a quiet, private and personal relationship with God. So, it was important for me to join my new community parish, and bring my children to hear the Word of God.

We found St Rose to be a warm comfortable church. The children made their sacraments through the CCD program, and we met many nice people. Soon we were involved in many community activities. My boys played CYO basketball for years, and those Sunday family days of church and a game will always remain fond memories. But still, I kept my relationship with God to a private level. I did not consider it a spiritual journey of growth.

Unfortunately, sometimes there comes a time in our lives that our faith will be tested, and we may be challenged at the crossroads. As fate would have it, my life changed drastically one day, and I had to find my strength to survive and be brave.

Where did I go? Where was the only place I could think of to go? I went to church. I went to hear the Word of the Lord. I wanted to hear what He had to say to me while I prayed.

It was during that time, Father Owen came to our church bringing his fresh energy. I was so compelled to get to that mass and hear him speak. And it always seemed like he knew exactly how I was feeling, and that he was actually speaking directly to me. Like never before, the homily became more than just a paraphrase of the scripture. It related to life as we see it today in our real world. Through the years, I have come to admire his strength to do all that he does for us, with a caring smile. Clearly, it is his passion for us, his parishioners, that makes him carry on. How blessed are we!

Slowly, I came to realize that our faith is a beautiful spiritual journey. With open

arms to give to others and share in the love of Jesus, faith takes on a new wonderful level. Eventually, I began to give up some time to deliver meals on wheels in the morning. A simple, yet rewarding task. Then, from behind the scenes, I enjoy occasionally helping out with the youth of our parish, while my son helps Mrs. Politi with her confirmation students. We both have learned that community service is so gratifying. And finally, making a pilgrimage to Poland this past summer for World Youth Day is something that I would not have done years ago, when I chose not to be open about my devotion to the Lord. I have my dear friend Stephanie Politi to thank for that, Father Owen for believing in me, Father Matthew for his light jokes that remind me that we are all good people, our Deacon Michael for his kind smile and guidance through Krakow, Deacon Andrew, and Seminarians Alex and Kamil.

Just as our town has grown through these years, I have watched our parish grow and thrive on the enthusiasm of so many like myself who have found welcoming comfort

in the various programs offered every week. I always feel open arms of comfort every week at mass, walking away with yet another spiritually lifting message. And I take that message with me, and carry it in my heart for the rest of the week. We are so fortunate to hear the comforting words of our fine priests! It pains me to hear someone speak about the monotony of the ritual of mass. Each of us must be open to receive the message of our Lord. He wants us to come to Him as a community with love in our hearts, so that we might embrace each other as His family. We are His family and He welcomes us every day. Thank you my parish of St. Rose, for giving us so many opportunities to explore so many different programs, and find the ones that open up our hearts.