

What St. Rose of Lima Parish means to me By Lisa Jo Ann Paradiso

My Catholic faith has always been very important to me and through the years I have belonged to Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Verona where I was raised and Holy Family Parish in Nutley. I always attended Mass but that was the extent of my involvement. It wasn't until my family moved to East Hanover and found St Rose of Lima that I really became an active Catholic and part of a Parish family. I believe it is a true leader that brings people together and Fr. Owen is an outstanding Pastor. He welcomed us and immediately made us feel at home in the St. Rose community.

My children attended St. Rose of Lima Academy and it was at a school meeting 12 1/2 years ago that I first met Fr. Owen. I approached him after the meeting and told him how impressed I was about his genuine concern for the children. He said "Why would I come to a Parish with a school if I did not care about the children?" Over time, I witnessed his love for all of the children and his ability to connect with them. They felt as if they belonged and wanted to participate in Mass. My own children answered the call to volunteer and they continue to be part of the Parish community.

Fr. Owen has a true calling in the Priesthood and I have watched him care for people throughout our Parish community. I would like to share a personal story about how Fr. Owen was there for me during a very difficult time in my life. My dad had been very sick and Fr. Owen suggested that I become an Extraordinary Minister so that I could bring him communion. I did and it was a special opportunity to be able to give my dad the Holy Eucharist for several years. I will never forget the day that dad took a turn for the worst and the whole family was at the hospital. My cell phone rang and it was Fr. Owen calling to check on dad. I told him that I thought dad was going to die. He was unable to come but he sent Sr. Lenora to the hospital to have a Priest called. A Priest came and dad was awake with the family around while the Priest prayed with him. The following morning my dad passed away and I was at peace knowing he had a Priest with him before he died. Two days later, my mom took a terrible fall and was bedridden in the hospital. Fr. Owen came to dad's wake to comfort my siblings and I. You could have heard a pin drop when Fr. Owen spoke to all of our family and friends gathered at the funeral home. He has such a beautiful gift of putting people at ease during trying times. My cousin said no Priest had ever moved him the way Fr. Owen did at that moment. Fr. Owen assisted us during that time visiting mom in the hospital and celebrating my dad's funeral. I am forever grateful to him for giving me the opportunity to give dad Holy Communion, sending a Priest before dad died and being there for mom and my family during those weeks. His response to me was that is what I should do as your Priest. But, I believe Fr. Owen goes above and beyond to be there for the people of his Parish.

Fr. Owen's dedication filters down to the people of the Parish. I see our Parish community rise up and assist whenever needed. Many causes have come to our attention and we continue to raise money, collect items and of course pray for those who are less fortunate. It is a wonderful community to raise children so that they

learn to be concerned for other people. These children are our future and this is an important lesson so that they grow up as caring individuals.

Over the years, Fr. Owen has become more than a Pastor to me and he is considered part of our family. He has an ability to reach people unlike any Priest I have ever known and he has touched my entire family. Because of this special calling, not only has he presided over my children's Academy Graduations, Sacraments of Confirmation and my son's Communion, he has been requested to celebrate my niece's Sacrament of marriage, to baptize several of my grandnephews and grandnieces and to celebrate a memorial Mass for my uncle. He has fulfilled every request and has made those moments much more special.

Fr. Owen's leadership has made St. Rose of Lima the Parish that it is today. Over the years, Fr. Owen has done an exceptional job mentoring many young Seminarians and Deacons as they prepare for their Priesthood. Because of his spiritual guidance, we are now blessed to have Fr. Matthew, Deacon Michal and Andrew, and Seminarians Alex and Kamil assist in our Parish. Fr. Owen has set an example by showing his love and concern for all the people of his Parish. Those beautiful actions have filtered down and have created an environment that makes the community want to be there for each other. It is such a wonderful feeling to walk into St. Rose each week and see familiar faces there to greet you. It is a family that bonds together to take care of each other. St. Rose of Lima is my home and I cannot imagine belonging to any other Parish. God Bless Fr. Owen as he continues to lead St. Rose of Lima Parish.