

COVER SHEET

Bulletin # 511245

Number of Pages Sent: 21 (including this cover sheet)

Date of Publication: April 25, 2004

John Fruner (718) 236-0124 Extension 24

This is our Easter Newsletter. We have 20 pages and originally Peter Farrel arranged for us to pay \$500 for 14 pages.

Since this is a larger newsletter, I understand the price will increase.

It is best that the newsletters are delivered to the rectory and be addressed to my attention.

We need 1,500 copies. We are requesting black ink. Is it possible for a yellow paper instead of white? (or any color paper actually). If not, white is fine.

Thank you so much.



Saint A's News

of Saint Athanasius Roman Catholic Church
Bensonhurst, Brooklyn

Volume 1 Issue 3

April 2004 Spring/Easter Issue

St. Athanasius Roman Catholic Church
2154 61st Stret
Brooklyn, New York 11203

Phone: 718.236.0124
Fax: 718.236.4960
E-mail: StAthanasiusNY@aol.com
Parish Web Site:
<http://StAthanasiusNY.tripod.com>

St. A's Mission Statement

We, the Parish of St. Athanasius, are a faith-filled worshipping Roman Catholic community, where Jesus Christ is recognized as Lord and Savior in our journey and made present through our joyful celebration of the sacraments, our proclamation and living of the gospel, and our loving outreach and service, especially to those in most need. We acknowledge the need for God's grace in our unfinished lives. We acknowledge our incompleteness and pledge our faith lives to work for the creation of a community where the equality of God's people that flows from Baptism is celebrated with hope and passion. We pledge our commitment to the creation of a community where seekers and questioners are welcomed, where the forgotten and marginalized are recognized, where God's people are refreshed, reconciled and renewed.

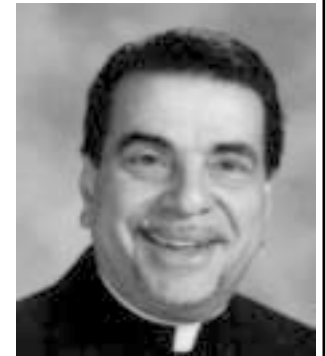
St. Athanasius School
6120 Bay Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11204
718.233.4791

St. Athanasius Religious Education
6120 Bay Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11204
718.331.8811

FROM OUR PASTOR

My Dear Parishioners,

Have you seen "the movie"? This is the big question that everyone is asking. It is certainly a movie that has stirred the minds and hearts of many. It seems that this movie will go down in history as one of the biggest hits in Hollywood history and one of the most controversial movies in our times.



The Pope has met with the actor who played Jesus. Enormous amounts of energy have gone into publicity. As I was returning to my car, the night I saw the movie, I noticed a young woman in the parking lot sobbing. I went over to speak to her to see what was the matter. As I approached, she said the movie "touched my heart".

What was Mel Gibson's point? During an interview with Diane Sawyer of Prime Time, Mel Gibson said that he wanted people to be inspired by the great love that God has for each of us in sending us His Son, Jesus.

This movie, I feel, can and has reawakened faith in people. I have seen Mass attendance rise since the movie. I have heard more and more people speaking about Jesus..

The movie might be described as being overly graphic in the suffering of Jesus. But it does make you think and reflect on the love that God has for us.

- v There are many powerful scenes:
- v Mary kissing Jesus' feet on the Cross.
- v The nails going into the Lord's hand.
- v The cruel beating by the Roman Soldiers.

The most powerful scene in the movie – which is the essence of our faith - is indeed the Resurrection.

May Christ Resurrected be with you this Easter. By the way, if you have not seen the movie, do not wait for it to be out on Video – you need to see this movie in a Theatre. (No commission for the plug!)

Happy Easter!
Love,

Msgr. David L. Cassato

St. A's News Staff**Editor-in-Chief**

John S. Fruner
Pastoral Associate

Associate Editors

Paula Lobello-Raiola
Anna Cali

Contributing Editors

The Rev. Richard E. Long
Parochial Vicar
Alice Friedman
James Russo
Elaine Sarcona
Joseph Barbieri
Lay Ecclesial Minister
Joanne Bruccoleri
Bensonhurst Cluster Lay Minister
Lay Ecclesial Minister Candidate
Lay Ecclesial Minister

Contributing Writers

Amalia Anzalone
Joanne Bruccoleri
Teresa Cali
The Rev. Msgr. David Cassato
Pastor
The Rev. Deacon Dante Colandrea
Tom Dalton
Patricia Deasy
Jonathan Fronterre
Dear J
Donna Karim
Jessica Karim
Samantha Rose Lobello
Luigi Rizzo
Lorraine Garone-Tesoro

Layout & Design

Rose Ann Pollani
SoHo Publishing
212-937-2557

St. A's News is a publication of St. Athanasius Roman Catholic Church. Any letters or articles submitted become property of ST. A'S - NEWS. All letters must be signed by the writer. We reserve the right to edit and/or shorten any letter or article. All inquires or letters should be addressed to:

ST. A'S NEWS

Attn: John S. Fruner

2154 61st Street Brooklyn, N.Y. 11204

Easter Reflection

Fr. Richard Long

The most "holy" people I know are those in whom the gap between the "ontological" (real) self and the daily self is the smallest. They possess wholeness, integrity, and they don't worry neurotically about themselves. The word, *integrity*, comes from the Latin, *integer*, which means intact or whole.

While none of us is completely whole, because we are broken in some way, here are holy people who don't focus on themselves or manipulate others.

They possess an often-elusive quality, and that is humility.

There is the story of a young monk asking a very wise ab-
bess, "Mother, in the old days, there were more people who could see God. Why is it that nobody sees God nowadays? The abbess replied, "My son, nowadays nobody can stoop so low."

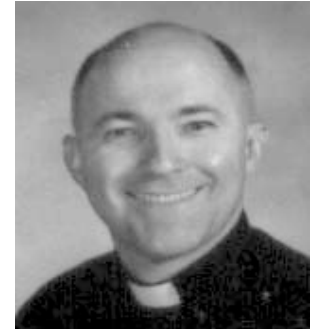
Why are we afraid of stooping so low? Aren't we in Holy Week called to remember that the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, stooped lower than we can even conceive when he willingly relinquished all power and glory, when he suffered for all of us? God, in choosing to be incarnate, human, also chose the possibility of being hurt, even unto the point of death.

God, who came to us in Jesus Christ, was fully alive, with a wonder and joy that is astonishing. Astonishing because along with that joy was a willingness to assume all of our human suffering. The most holy people are those who are most alive because they are also the most wounded, and have not run from that hurt. They possess Easter Joy, which we see celebrated whenever we embrace the gifts for fun and laughter, even when we are hurting in the darkest parts of our being. They believe in the Resurrection.

One of the greatest tools for fighting the darkness of ego is that of embracing laughter and fun. When as a child I pouted, all too often isolating myself, my grandfather would say repeatedly and most solemnly, "Look at me. Now don't laugh. Whatever you do, don't you dare laugh!" You know what followed: I could not manage to stay sulky at all, and would start to laugh, long and hard.

Laughter, fun, and joy restore what is often broken in our lives, whether it is communication or understanding.

This Easter, may we remember to examine differently our own pain through Jesus' holy humility. May we also take ourselves seriously only enough to take ourselves lightheartedly. If every hair on our head is counted by God, then we are all cherished by a loving Power, who cares for Brooklyn, Iraq, and for YOU!



WELCOME DEACON DANTE COLANDREA

In February we were blessed with being assigned a Permanent Deacon, Dante Colandrea, carrying on the work that Deacon Frank began in the early seventies, when the ministry of Deacon was new for Catholics.

Deacon Dante emigrated to the United States in 1966 after serving in the Italian Navy. He and his wife, Carmela, have been married for 35 years and have 3 children, Michael, 30, Marc, 29 and Marisa, 26. They have 2 daughters-in-law, Maria and Cristal and 2 grandchildren, Anthony 10, and Samantha Maria, 2 years old.

Dante and Carmela lived in Pennsylvania for several years where they owned and operated a pizzeria. They returned to Brooklyn in 1982 and joined St. Dominic's parish. In 1988 Dante entered the Diaconate Preparation Program and was ordained a Deacon by Bishop Daily on May 15, 1993. Deacon Dante has also worked for the Union Welfare Fund and was a Letter Carrier for the U.S. Postal Service. Deacon Dante currently works at Gino's Restaurant on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan.

Deacon Dante's wife, Carmela, is employed by the New York State Department of Education as a paraprofessional for children with special needs. She was commissioned as a Lay Ecclesial Minister on May 2, 2003. At St. Dominic's she is a Lector, Eucharistic Minister, and a catechist in the C.C.D. program for children with special educational needs. Carmela is also the R.C.I.A. Director and Director of the Adult Confirmation Program.

Deacon Dante's favorite things are music and dancing. Carmela enjoys spending time with their grandchildren. Deacon Dante is very excited about his new assignment here at St. A's and looks forward to a happy and fruitful ministry here.



Easter 2004

Most of us are familiar with the Story from Luke's Gospel about the two disciples who encounter a stranger on *The Road to Emmaus*. Their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus during the breaking of the bread. The disciples were so excited by their encounter with the risen Christ that they hurried back to Jerusalem that very night to tell the others what they had experienced. Their hope, which had been crucified, was alive again!

Like the disciples of Emmaus, we sometimes find ourselves on a road that leads in a different direction that we had not intended. We may find ourselves walking away from a community that we had grown to love but had somehow splintered itself into many pieces or lost its center. We may find ourselves searching for an identity, wondering who we really are, uncertain of our future and trying to return to a simpler time and easier questions. Then too, we may find ourselves estranged from God because events in our lives have become chaotic and Jesus seems to have abandoned us.

On the other hand, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we experience moments when we are fully connected with life. We feel propelled to other people, bursting with the assurance of the Good News we have to share. We know who we are and we know the central purpose of our lives. Most important, we know that God is good, that Christ is alive, and that nothing- "Not death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything in creation" (Romans 8:38-39)-no, absolutely nothing will ever separate us from the love of God.

As we celebrate this Easter season let us always remember that we are all invited to be the unnamed disciple of the Emmaus story. It is an invitation to pause in our faith journey and gives us the gift of each new day for reconciliation and spiritual refreshment. Let this holy season remind us that no matter what road we are traveling, Christ is always walking beside us. He invites us to unburden ourselves of the cares of the day and warm our hearts to the wisdom of the Scriptures speaking truth for our lives. Having encountered the risen Christ, we find ourselves renewed and full of hope, ready to share the Good News that Christ, our hope, is fully alive!

God bless you,

Deacon Dante



Holy Name Christmas Party

Written by: Teresa Cali & Sal Cali, Jr., students of St. A's School

On Sunday, December 14, 2003, the Saint Athanasius Holy Name Society had their annual Christmas Party. The snow outside gave Santa the perfect landing strip for his sleigh. Even though traveling may have been difficult, many braved the snowy weather and came to the school auditorium to meet Santa and spend an enjoyable time with family and friends. Ginger Bivona led the children in singing Christmas Carols awaiting Santa's arrival. There also was an added surprise by "Bonkers" the Clown performing his magic. Children, as well as the big folks (including Monsignor Cassato) had photos taken while sitting on Santa's lap. It was a most wonderful time for all and a great opportunity to bring our community together during the Advent and Christmas season.



Reflections on Lay Ministry

My journey to the Diocesan Formation Program for Lay Ecclesial Ministers began with my participation in the Bensonhurst Cluster Lay Formation Program.

At first, I just wanted to learn a little more about my religion. Since my last religion class was in high school, it was past time to approach religion from an adult perspective. I discovered the more I learned, the more I wanted to learn. The Cluster classes were interesting and thought provoking, and the people I met were wonderful and sincere about trying to live their faith in their daily lives.

After I completed the Cluster program, it seemed only natural to enter the Diocesan program. Although the two dozen people in my class come from different parishes in the area, we share many of the same challenges and we learn from each other's accomplishments. Currently, we are studying liturgy and sacraments, to be followed by moral theology, and we recently completed a day of reflection on prayer and developing a deeper relationship with God.

The biggest misconception people generally have about lay ministry is that it is a result of the priest shortage. In reality, lay ministry is a separate role, and it is something we are all called to by our baptism. We are meant to take our God-given talents and use them to serve God by serving our communities. Lay ecclesial ministers are trained volunteers who do this by working with parish staff and sharing decision making about various aspects of parish life.

This has been a great experience, and I encourage everyone to consider becoming a lay minister.

Joanne Bruccoleri

Let
His
Light
Shine

WHILE IT WAS STILL DARK: An Easter Message from our Pastoral Associate



While it was still dark, Mary Magdalene slipped out of her bed, reached for her clothes, felt around on the floor for her sandals, and moved out of her room. While it was still dark, the story said, she stepped out the door, shivered in the still-night air, drew her robe close around her, and started down the road, as quickly as she could into the the night.

She hadn't slept at all. It's hard to sleep with the weight of that much grief pressing in, with hard memories crowding in, with anxiety keeping your eyes from closing. It was still dark when Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb of her friend Jesus, clutching in her hand a bag of spices, coming there to anoint the body of one she'd loved. It was still dark when she found that the stone had been rolled away and there was no one there. There was no one in the tomb.

While it was still dark, God had been at work and now we celebrate the resurrection in the bright light of Easter morning. But the truth is that though we celebrate at dawn, we don't know when the resurrection happened, when it was that God reached out and with his touch turned death to life again.

It was sometime in the dark. Sometime before Mary, making her way through the night, arrived at an empty tomb. While it was still dark, while the air was still heavy with grief, while the disciples slept and sorrowed, while it was still dark, God had been at work turning death to life.

It is in the dark that God, in quiet power and startling grace, breathes life into death, reverses, turns around, turns the light back on. It is in the darkness that God is at work, doing what God does.

Through our Bereavement Ministry I met a woman, widowed, who speaking about the sadness of her first year of grief remembered also how unprepared she was to handle life alone: confused by machinery and home repairs, baffled by bank fees and the cost of things, lost without the shelter of her protective husband. One day, not quite a year after her husband's death, she had a new freezer delivered in the hopes of saving money by freezing her own vegetables.

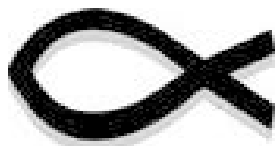
"Don't plug it in too soon," the deliveryman warns her, "the oil needs time to settle. Plug it in too soon and you'll blow a fuse." She waited a couple of hours, then, hesitantly, plugged it in. Immediately not only her house but the entire city around her plunged into darkness. "Was it possible?" Had I blown the fuses of a the whole city by plugging my freezer in too soon? I heard sirens in the distance and feared they were coming to get me, the widow lady with the freezer. Then I heard over my battery-powered radio that New York City was in a blackout and a large part of the country."

Standing there in the darkness, she felt something replace the fear that she had been living with since her husband's death. She told me the feeling was somewhere between lightness and joy. In telling the story at our monthly Bereavement Support Group, she remembers how she had lived a sorrowful and frightened year. But deep within herself, she could still laugh. Her laughter made her feel powerful. After all, hadn't she just blacked out a whole city?

If resurrection was something God did once, then we wouldn't have much of a story to tell today. But resurrection is what God does, over and over again, something that God does every day, what God did that one night in this widow's life, when grief reversed itself, when life-giving laughter replaced her fear with something "between lightness and joy." Like she told me that night, and like the angel most likely told Mary Magdalene, "it does get better. Rejoice! New life replaces emptiness."

"I felt powerful," she said. That power we name as God's own power, God's own resurrection power at work in a life while it was still dark, gently, imperceptibly, and inevitably turning it toward the light.

While it was still dark the resurrection happened. While it was still dark God breathed life into the cold and warmth into the shadows. And in darkness and in quiet in our own lives and in all creation God *is* at work. In laughter, love, and light, this day and every day. Alleluia! Amen.



John S. Fruner
Pastoral Associate

PERCHE' LA MESSA ITALIANA

Dopo una lunga assenza, durata diversi anni, una Domenica mi sono ritrovata seduta nell'ultimo banco della chiesa sottopiano, il luogo che tutti semplicemente chiamano "la chiesa di giu". Un'amico aveva finalmente vinto la sua battaglia di ricondurmi all'ovile di Dio.

Anche se avevo nelle mani il foglio con la Santa Messa scritta mi veniva molto difficile seguire. Facevo quasi finta di leggere. Dopo tutto per chi perde la fede per lungo tempo il primo incontro con Dio non e' facile. Mentre tutti gli altri fedeli partecipavano accanitamente alla Messa io guardavo in giro quasi esplorando questa chiesa di giu' cioe' questo posto umile. E mentre mi facevo un concetto di questo luogo sottopiano il tempo scorreva e la Santa Messa termino'. Fui la prima ad uscire quasi scappando incerta se ritornare la seguente Domenica oppure continuare a seguire la strada di smarrimento che avevo percorso cosi' bene per tanti anni. Nella mia mente pero' una cosa era sicura, quella chiesa di giu' mi era piaciuta enormemente perche' rifletteva il posto ideale per chi cerca un luogo di preghiera semplice e puro, senza colonne di marmo e senza costose tovaglie di pizzo sull'altare. Dopo tutto Gesu' e la sua famiglia erano poveri, non vivevano nel lusso e ne frequentavano posti lussuosi.

La seguente Domenica mi sono ritrovata di nuovo in quell'ultimo banco della chiesa di giu', questa volta armata di buona volonta' e non sono scappata alla fine della Santa Messa ma ho anche cercato di prendere discorso con qualcuno dei fedeli. Dopo tutto queste persone (che non si lamentano mai di scendere tanti scalini per ascoltare la Santa Messa) parlavano la mia lingua; l'unica lingua che conoscevo per i primi anni della mia vita fino al giorno che io e la mia famiglia ci siamo trasferiti qui negli Stati Uniti. Poi a mia grande sorpresa mi sono accorta che ogni Domenica mattina trascuravo tutti gli impegni che avevo avuto per tanti anni e andavo a Messa in questo sottopiano che tanti non osono metterci piede perche' non e' lussuoso. Non so se e' stato proprio l'umilta' di questo posto oppure i Sacerdoti che abitualmente celebrano la Messa a farmi rendere conto che Dio non si abbandona mai perche' Dio non abbandona mai nessuno. Ma una cosa e' certa; oggi a distanza di circa quattro anni da quella Domenica che mi ritrovai per la prima volta nella chiesa di giu', sono sicura di non abbandonare mai piu' ne la fede in Dio e ne la chiesa di giu'. Ogni Domenica anticipo il piacere di ascoltare la parola di Dio insieme a gente che non si vergogna di ascoltare la Santa Messa seduti l'aggiu'su banchi vecchi che ci vorrebbero cifre da capogiro per restaurarli. Sono invece fiera di avere la possibilita' di evadere per un'ora "dal mio mondo di lingua-inglese" e di ritornare alle mie vecchie radici e alla mia cultura. Il fatto di essere criticata non mi da il minimo fastidio. Anzi rido. Rido quando mi si chiede la ragione di questo attaccamento alla mia cultura. E' quasi inconcepibile per molti il fatto che una persona come me arrivata qui negli Stati Uniti in eta' giovanissima, che ha frequentato scuole Americane, che ha poi ottenuto due specializzazioni sempre in universita' americane, non ascolti la Messa in Inglese nella chiesa di sopra.

A volte cerco di rendermi utile sia nella chiesa di giu' che con questo gruppo di fedeli che frequentano abitualmente da circa quarant'anni questa chiesa di giu'. Ma so che potrei e dovrei fare molto di piu'. Dopo tutto e' stato proprio qui nella chiesa di giu' che ho ritrovato la strada che porta a Dio. E' stato proprio qui in questo sottopiano che ho capito che Dio e' accanto a me anche nei momenti piu' difficili della mia vita.

Ho forse avuto la piu' grande soddisfazione lo scorso Dicembre quando il piu' prestigioso quotidiano degli Stati Uniti ha pubblicato un'articolo sul grande tesoro natalizio che la chiesa di giu' ospita, incoraggiando i lettori ad andare ad ammirarlo. Alcuni miei famigliari pensano che sia stato proprio questo Bambino Gesu' a riportare la fede in me. Altri mi dicono che Padre Pio ha guarito la fede perduta. Non so chi abbia ragione. So solo che ogni Domenica immancabilmente alle 11.30 scendo gli scalini che portano nella chiesa di giu' e ringrazio il Signore per l'opportunita' di poter ascoltare la Santa Messa in lingua Italiana proprio come facevo tanti anni fa al mio paese nativo.

(Quest'omaggio alla chiesa di giu' e' la sola semplice opinione di Amalia Anzalone, M.Ed, PD e non e' per nessun motivo direttamente collegabile ad altre opinioni dei vari gruppi associati alla parrocchia.)



La maggior parte di noi conosce la storia del vangelo di Luca circa I due discepoli che incontrarono uno straniero sulla strada che conduce a Emmaus.

D' improvviso I loro occhi si aprirono e riconobbero Gesu' quando spezzo' il pane con loro. Essi divennero cosi eccitati per la loro scoperta che subito si affrettarono a raggiungere Gerusalemme per rivelare agli altri cio' che avevano sperimentato; Colui, che era la loro speranza , e che era stato messo in croce, era di nuovo vivo.

Ancora oggi il messaggio continua ad essere lo stesso: Gesu' e' risorto, Gesu' e' vivo.

Papa Paolo IV nel messaggio del 10 Aprile 1966 disse: "L'annuncio della Risurrezione riempie gli uomini di luce e di speranza. Nel nostro tempo in cui l'umanita' vacilla tra la pace e la guerra e'

necessario ripetere il grido della nostra fede: CRISTO E' RISORTO."

Possa lo splendore del Cristo risorto illuminare I cuori di tutti affinche' questa pace tanto sognata possa finalmente divenire realta'.



Buona Pasqua

Diacono Dante

WHY THE ITALIAN MASS



After a long absence of several years, one Sunday I found myself seated in the last pew of the Lower Church, called by many simply "the downstairs church". A friend of mine had finally convinced me to return to the flock of God.

Even though I had the Missalette in my hand, I found I had a hard time following the readings. I just pretended to read them. After all, after having been away from worshipping for a long time, the first encounter with God was not easy. While other parishioners were participating in the Mass, I was looking around and observing this humble place. As I was capturing the essence of this basement church, time passed, and the Mass ended. I was the first person to leave, almost running, unsure whether to return the next Sunday or continue the road of uncertainty that I had walked for many years. In my mind one thing was certain, I really liked this lower church because it reflected for me the ideal place of worship: simple, pure, without marble columns and without an expensive altar cloth. After all, Jesus and his family were poor; they had no luxuries, and did not go to expensive places.

The following Sunday I was again in the last pew of the lower church. This time I was more anxious to participate, and, I did not run when Mass ended. I even tried to acknowledge some of the other parishioners. After all, these people (who never complain about going down the stairs to worship at Mass) spoke my "language"; the only language my family and I spoke before we moved to the U.S. Since then, surprisingly, each Sunday morning I abandoned the routine which I had for so many years. Instead I go to Mass in this basement where so many people did not dare step because it is not luxurious. I do not know if it was the humbleness of this place, or the priests who routinely celebrated the Mass to make me realize that it was wrong to abandon God because God never abandons anyone.

One thing is certain, four years since I found myself for the first time in the lower church, I am sure I will never abandon God nor the lower church. Now every Sunday I look forward to hearing the Word of God with other people who are not ashamed to also attend Mass in the lower church, seated in old pews that would take astronomical amounts of money to repair. I am, instead, proud to have the possibility to escape for one hour from my English-speaking world, and to return to my roots and my culture. The fact that I am criticized does not bother me a bit. As matter of fact, I smile when I am asked about the attachment to my culture. It is not understood by many that a person, like me, arrived in the U.S. at a very early age, went to an American college, earned two advanced degrees from an American university, and does not participate nor listen to the Mass in English.

Sometimes I make myself useful in the Lower Church along a group of parishioners who have been here about forty years. But I know that I could, and I should, do more. After all, it was right here in this lower church that I rediscovered the road to God. It was right here, in this basement church, that I learned that God is always with me even in the most difficult moments of my life.

I had the biggest satisfaction last year, in December, of the publication of an article in the most prestigious newspaper in the U.S. regarding the Christmas treasure in the lower church encouraging its readers to visit and admire it. Some of my family members thought it was this Baby Jesus who brought faith back to me. Others tell me it was Padre Pio who healed my lost faith. I am not sure exactly who is correct. I only know that every Sunday, faithfully at 11:30 AM, I go down the steps which bring me to the Lower Church. I thank God for the opportunity to listen to the Mass in Italian just as I did so many years ago in my native town.



Editor's Note: This homage to the Lower Church is only the personal opinion of AMALIA ANZALONE, M.Ed, PD and does not reflect the opinions of any groups affiliated with the parish.

St. A's Teacher Profile: Mrs. Karen Hayes

By Teresa Cali (5th grade student)



The students at Saint Athanasius are very lucky to have Mrs. Karen Hayes as a teacher. She has not only taught many students math and science but has also taught them about being good Christians. She is always happy and optimistic about school and life. She has been teaching for 29 years and has been at St. Athanasius for 23 years. She has touched many lives and affected many students along her way. Prior to coming to St. A's, Mrs. Hayes taught Kindergarten in Tokyo, Japan for 1 year. She always wanted to be a teacher. As a young girl she pretended that she was teaching a class. She always enjoyed being with children and loves the rewards and challenges of her busy days with them. Mrs. Hayes lived in Pennsylvania and attended Edinboro University. She started teaching at the grade school they had on campus and loved it. After she received her degree she moved to Brooklyn

and started her Masters degree in Education at Fordham University in New York. She is a very dedicated teacher and motivates her students with her positive and outgoing personality. When she is not in the classroom teaching, she is in the auditorium with 87 children that are in the After School Program. She is currently the Coordinator of this program which is sponsored by The Federation of Italian Americans. The children stay after school until 4:30 from Mondays to Thursdays under her supervision. Grades 1-7 are welcome to join. They do their homework with help from older students, teachers, and parents. After homework it's all fun and games. They have a variety of board games and card games or they all get to go to the gym or outside for some exercise. The children love it.

Mr. Hayes is also often seen around school helping out with fundraisers and anything that Mrs. Hayes needs. There are three things that we know that Mrs. Hayes really loves, Mr. Hayes, teaching and her cats. *Thank you Mrs. Hayes for all your hard work and your dedication to Saint Athanasius.*

A Reflection about Having the Elijah Cup in the Home

by Thomas Dalton



In September the parish began offering the Elijah Cup as a way to pray for vocations. Our Pastoral Associate, John Fruner, put together a prayer book with Morning, Evening and Night Prayer. THE ELIJAH CUP provides a focal point as a family comes together in prayer for vocations. To participate, a family, individual, or couple is called forward at the end of a Sunday Mass to receive the chalice and be given a blessing. The following week that same family or single person returns the chalice and brings it to the altar with the gifts of bread and wine. The Chalice is used at Mass by one of the Eucharistic Ministers or Priest Celebrants. I had the cup twice since it began here at St. A's.

I had such a blessed week both times. It restored my spirituality so many times, just having the cup in my house. The important thing I want to share is, when we possess the cup and we pray for vocations, we also must do our work for an increase in vocations. However we minister here at St. A's, we do it for the church. When there are those in need, we are called to open our heart and do our part. Sometimes helping our brothers and sisters, helping them to believe in themselves when they feel down, is one way that you and I can minister. I sing with the choir and cook for the homeless. By taking the Elijah Cup home and reflecting on the meaning of the Scriptures contained in the Prayer Book, I was surprised how I was able to find time to help a brother and sister considering lay ministry, religious life, the Diaconate or ordination. It's easy to find time for myself, but we need to find time for those in need. We are blessed here at St. A's to have people committed to ministry as we can see through the Bensonhurst Cluster Lay Ministry Formation Program and the Diocese's Lay Ecclesial Minister Preparation. Here too, we are blessed by having an ordained staff and lay staff but many parishes struggle with only one priest and no other staff member. Imagine a parish with no Director of Music, DRE or School? The Elijah Cup has given me the opportunity to better see the urgency of the need of vocations, especially in the area of lay ministry. I encourage you to sign up for a week and host the Cup. This has given me a new view on the needs the Catholic Church in Brooklyn.

Good News from Saint Athanasius School

I can't believe that March is here and our school year will be winding down. September began on a very bright and promising note, enrollment was up, there were many new faces as well as familiar ones working together to begin a new and exciting school year. New programs were introduced and old ones began again. "The Stock Market Game" began with our 8th grade now with our 7th, I'm pleased to say our school teams hold the first seven places in the Diocesan Competition. Our Aquinas Program for our gifted and talented students began and the projects they work on throughout the year will be displayed at the Diocesan Aquinas Expo in May.

Fund-Raising and Holiday Celebrations were a great success this year, our candy drive did exceptionally well as did our many other fundraisers, our annual Fall Festival Card Party, our Christmas Boutique, The Christmas Tree display, Breakfast with Santa as well as pizza, hot dog days, and cake sales and of course in June the Bazaar will once again take place. I thank everyone in the St. Athanasius Community for their help in all of these activities, Monsignor Cassato, the parents, the students, the faculty and staff and all the parishioners who support all our endeavors!

Winter, even with all the snow, gave us many reasons to be thankful. December came and we prepared for the celebration of the birth of Jesus, we all looked forward to Christmas and Christmas vacation. In January we celebrated "Catholic Schools Week" which began with a visit from Bishop De Marzio and unfortunately ended with another snow-storm. February gave us a mid-winter break and we began our Lenten season with all the children and staff receiving ashes, during Lent some of the classes are attending Mass every Wednesday and Friday, besides our regular school liturgy once a month. Re-registration for all students presently attending our school was held in February and in March we began registration for all new students. I am happy to say that many classes are either filled to capacity or near capacity. It's wonderful to see the school growing!

April will hopefully bring us a beautiful Spring and the glorious celebration of Easter. On April 25th, our second grade will receive First Holy Communion and on May 2nd our 7th grade will be confirmed that day also being The Feast of Saint Athanasius. During May, our 8th grade will have its Dinner/Dance and the school will hold its annual "Fun-A-Thon."

June brings us the anticipated expectations of graduation for our 8th Grade, our Kindergarten, and Step-Up for our Pre-K. Our school will come to a close on a very promising and positive note, we hold in our hearts a school year that was filled with learning, laughter, and love and we look forward to a relaxing summer recess, one filled with God's blessings. My many thanks again to all of the Saint Athanasius Community!

Sincerely, Mrs. Lorraine Garone-Tesoro



OUR NEW MINISTRY OF CARING

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so, some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:2)

The Ministry of Caring was formed as an outreach service to provide support to our homebound and hospitalized parishioners. This service consists of trained parishioners who visit or telephone the homebound or shut-ins. The purpose of this important program is to use the talents of our parishioners (who are not Eucharistic ministers) to reach out to those in need. As for now, these are the first Ministers of Caring, it's director is Palma Parmese, Theresa Beddingfield, Rose Lamicella and Christine Robinson. If you are interested in being part of this wonderful ministry, please call Palma Parmese by leaving a message in the Pastoral Ministry Office of the rectory. The telephone number is (718) 236-0124, extension 24. You can make a difference in someone's life. Please call to join in this.



by Anna Romano

What is happening at St. Athanasius School

By Anna Cali



Nursery-Ms. Ilowite and nursery school are working on the alphabet and the numbers. They just finished letter G. They are working on putting together an alphabet book with words and pictures. They celebrate different holidays and special events with art activities and by reading special books. They love story time and talking about different stories. *Happy Reading Nursery!*

Pre- Kindergarten-Ms. DeLessio and Pre-K are having a very exciting year. This year was the first time that Pre-K children went to church on Ash Wednesday for ashes. Everyone was very proud of them and their good behavior. The children are learning about things that God made such as the moon, sun, stars, flowers, animals, fish and people. They enjoy drawing and working on the creative art projects that Ms. D prepares for them. The hallways are filled with beautiful projects that they have made throughout the year. The children get especially excited on Monday afternoons when Monsignor Cassato visits them. *We're proud of you Pre-K.*

Kindergarten-Mrs. Anastasio always introduces a new friend to her kindergarten class. For a few years it has been Huggy the bear. This year it is Belle, Huggy's cousin. Since Huggy is living in Italy for a while, he asked his cousin Belle to visit New York and Saint Athanasius. Belle comes from Hawaii and is very excited about making new friends and spending time with the children. She hopes to learn many things about Brooklyn and about her new friends. Mrs. Anastasio teaches the children Geography through Huggy's and Belle's travels and adventures. They also learn about responsibility when each child gets to take Belle home and take care of her. They also have to keep a journal of their experiences together. *Welcome to Saint A's Belle.*

First Grade-On February 12 Ms. Nichols and the First Grade class celebrated the 100th day of school. They marked the occasion by creating a list of 100 beloved storybook characters, and brought in 100 objects and also counted to 100 by 2's, 4's and 5's. Grades K-fourth had a "mix it up" lunch where all the children switched seats and sat with different friends from other grades. Ms. Nichols also initiated a cross curriculum activity in which each grade participated. They all read the story "100 shoes". Each student designed a shoe and decorated the school hallways. First grade also had a play that focused on things that began 100 years ago. It included things like Dr. Seuss, the teddy bear and the first ice cream cone. They also learned how to say "I love you" in 100 different ways. *Those are great ideas, Ms Nichols and Great Job first grade.*

↑ **Editors Note:** Mix It Up Lunch comes from "Teaching Tolerance" magazine, dedicated to forming our children as accepting and affirming individuals. This is a nationwide effort that cuts across all faith traditions.

Second Grade-Ms. LoPardo's second grade class is now preparing for their First Holy Communion which is on April 25, 2004. Their first reconciliation was on February 7th. They all wrapped boxes and decorated them and placed them on the altar. It symbolized the bricks that helped build the road to heaven. The children did a wonderful job reciting the Act of Contrition and according to Father Richard Long, the children did a marvelous job and they were the most ambitious group he had ever seen and heard. They were very excited about talking to Father Richard, Father Bryan and Father Godofredo. They were confident and came out of the Reconciliation Rooms with smiles. After Reconciliation the parents placed a lamb pin on their child and they received a special candle to light and pray everyday until Communion. *Thank you Ms. LoPardo and Ms. Nickie Milo our DRE for preparing them so well and many prayers for April 25th your Communion day.*

Third Grade-Mrs. Russo and third grade performed their class play, "Big Words, Strong Words". It was about Martin Luther King. The children learned many different facts about his life and accomplishments. They talked about his determination and about his hopes and ideas. His famous speech "I Have a Dream" taught them a lot about his courage and strength and how he strived for peace and harmony. They were really excited and enjoyed performing their play for their parents and classmates. *Great job third grade.*

Continued on next page

Fourth Grade-Ms. MacCormack and fourth grade worked very hard to prepare for the NY State English Language Arts test which involves a lot of writing and critical thinking. Their hard work will be evident when the scores come back in April. As a matter of fact, last year Ms. MacCormack had a student that received a perfect score. They are also busy preparing for a play about New York State called "E is for Empire State". *Good Luck with your ELA and we are looking forward to seeing your play.*



Fifth Grade-Mrs. Hayes did a great job producing and directing the fifth grade Christmas play "The Dream". It was about a modern day Mary and Joseph with flashbacks of the past and of Jesus' birth. Mr. Hayes and the children made the scenery and the props. They made a manger with animals and even a car that actually moved up and down the aisle. The children's performance and singing was great and the scenery was extraordinary. They also had a special performance for Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio when he came to visit. *We are looking forward to seeing next year's play.*

Sixth Grade-Ms. Young and the sixth grade just finished celebrating black history month. They learned about the culture, the many accomplishments and the important contributions of many famous African Americans. The children created crossword puzzles and wrote acrostic poems pertaining to the famous African American they chose to learn about. An example of an acrostic poem is KING (as in Martin Luther King). K-kind, I-ingenious, N-noble, G-grand.

Seventh Grade-Mr. Marino and the seventh grade are preparing for Confirmation. They are busy completing the Confirmation preparation program. Each candidate is required to attend mass every Sunday, participate in Religious Education classes and do apostolic service. The goal of this formation is to prepare each candidate to take his or her place in the world of a committed witness to Jesus Christ and his gospel of love and truth. Additionally, Confirmation catechesis helps each individual to realize the active vocation they have as baptized disciples of Jesus. They participated in a spiritual retreat in Saint Francis Center in Staten Island on March 25th and Confirmation is on May 2nd. *Congratulations! Seventh grade.*

Eighth Grade-Ms Marino and the eighth grade worked very hard preparing for the Coop exam that was taken in November. All the hard work paid off. They all did well and Dennis Spadaro received a full sports scholarship to Bishop Ford and Christian Jezzi received an academic scholarship to Xaverian. Most of the eighth grade is already registered in Catholic High Schools. On January 23, 2004 they received their graduation rings at a beautiful ceremony held in the school auditorium. They are currently working on their yearbook which will be available in May. *Congratulations, eighth grade and Good Luck.*

Other school news-March 2, 2004 was "Read to Kids Day" in honor of Dr. Suess's birthday. It was a special event for the children at Saint A's. The older children picked one of their favorite books and shared them with younger students. All the kids got to interact with each other and share their time and stories and some classes even shared treats like doughnuts and candy.

Saint Athanasius has a wonderful music program under the direction of Mr McLean. Once a week the children see him for music lessons. They perform twice a year at a Christmas and spring concert. Some students have been with this music program for years and have been chosen to perform in the NY City Catholic Schools Honor Band for the past two years. Salvatore Mari, Anthony Meijia, Anthony Scivoli and Starlene Solar will have the honor of performing at Saint John's Prep school In Astoria NY on April 3, 2004. *Congratulations and good luck to our students.*



PARISHIONER PROFILE: MICHELLE ELIZABETH VILLALTA ORTIZ

Michelle Elizabeth Villalta Ortíz is 22 years of age. She was born on February 22, 1981 in Brooklyn, New York. She has two siblings, Maximillian Melo, who is sixteen years old, and Maximo Melo, twelve years old. When Michelle was a baby, her parents separated. As a result, she grew up in the Dominican Republic with her maternal grandparents. Her nationality, however, is half-Dominican and half-Salvadorean/Honduran. Michelle says "that's a long story!" To make a long story short, Michelle was born in the United States, but considers herself Dominican since she was raised there until she was 11 years old.



Michelle came back to live in the United States in 1992, and, as it probably would be for anyone, it was a very difficult transition. She attended Seth Low Intermediate School from 1992 to 1994, completing 7th and 8th grade. She went on to James Madison High School and graduated in 1998. To further her education, she attended Bernard Baruch College (part of CUNY) and graduated Magna Cum Laude in May 2002 with a degree in Economics and a minor in Hispanic Studies. She played volleyball in both high school and college; she was the captain of Baruch's Women's Volleyball team during the 2000 season.

At this time, Michelle is working toward her Master's Degree in Latin American Literature at New York University and also works for the Social Security Administration as a Claims Authorizer. She directs Saint Athanasius' Spanish Choir and participates with the English Choir on occasion; she also fulfills the role of Cantor whenever possible. Michelle has many aspirations, some of which are to continue working for the Social Security Administration, finish her Master's and begin teaching Latin American Literature at the University level. Michelle would also like to get married and have children one day. "I guess you could say I want it all!," says Michelle. "I feel it is possible though, if you work hard, you can make it happen; I am happy to say that I have achieved my goals so far."

She became involved with Saint Athanasius in 1998 when the Spanish Mass was initiated. A few years later, Steven Laplante, the Director of Music Ministry at Saint Athanasius, asked Michelle to cantor at English Masses. "I was thrilled because I love to sing," says Michelle when she looks back on that time in her life. The Spanish Choir is a big priority in Michelle's life. "It truly feels like we are a family. We know each other well and we share both in our grief and our joy." "I enjoy all the activities I am currently involved with at Saint A's. It brings me a lot of satisfaction knowing that I can use my voice to praise the Lord. Singing at St. A's has definitely had a big impact on my life. Thanks to this ministry, I have been able to meet wonderful people and help others as well. I will remain involved at St. A's as long as possible."

PARISHIONER PROFILE: TONY VIGILANTE

Being a neighbor of Tony Vigilante, I thought I knew everything there was to know about his selfless dedication to our parish for so many years. I didn't. After this interview, I was overwhelmed with gratitude and proud to pay tribute to "Tony V."

Born Antonio Vigilante in Solofra (Avellino) he is a self-taught musician who, as a child, sang in the choirs of Italy. He came to the United States in 1961 where he met Josephine and was married in St. Joseph's Church in Manhattan 39 years ago. They are blessed with two sons, Blaise and Joseph and 4 grandchildren. He worked as an aircraft maintenance worker for Trans World Airlines and is now retired. Tony was involved for 3 years in the Radio Uno Religious Program and is also a member of the Art Association. He is very helpful with any carpentry work required in the church and, along with Tony Pellegrino, built and created 6 new devotional shrines into the lower church. With his extensive knowledge of Italian hymns and expertise in music, he started the Italian choir in 1967, which is one of the most acclaimed Italian Choirs in the Diocese of Brooklyn. His greatest accomplishment is "The Presepio" (in Italian, "Presepe" means The Nativity scene and everything surrounding it). Few can compare with Tony's labor of love in Saint Athanasius' Lower Church, home to the Italian speaking, Spanish speaking and Korean speaking parishioners as well as to our two Charismatic Prayer Groups. Not only has this Presepio been nominated as the best Nativity scene in the tri-state area, but newspaper articles have been written about the beauty and artistry of this gorgeous scene. The creche is a link to his boyhood in Italy where he was responsible for erecting and maintaining his family's nativity scene. In his hometown, there is a contest each year for the best Nativity scene; Tony was awarded an honorary medal for bringing the tradition to Brooklyn. "For some people, the Christmas tree is the symbol of Christmas," says Tony. "For Italians, it's the Nativity scene."

Well, Tony, your accomplishments are profound and we gratefully say "Thank you" for being such an inspiration to Saint Athanasius and being so dedicated to keeping Christ in Christmas.

Paula Lobello-Raiola



PROFILO DI UNO DEI NOSTRI FEDELI: TONY VIGILANTE

Essendo una vicina di casa di Tony Vigilante, pensavo di sapere tutto quello che c'era da sapere riguardo l'altruismo che ha dedicato verso la nostra parrocchia da tanti anni. Mi sono sbagliata, invece sapevo ben poco. Dopo quest'intervista ero piena di gratitudine e piu' che contenta ad onorare "Tony V."

Nato Antonio Vigilante in Solofra (Avellino) e' musicista autodidatta e da bambino cantava nei cori della chiese italiane. Emigrato negli Stati Uniti nel 1961, dove li' ha conosciuto Josephine che poi sposo' nella Chiesa di San Giuseppe a Manhattan 39 anni fa. Hanno due figli, Blaise e Joseph, e 4 nipoti. Ha lavorato per la compagnia aerea Trans World Airlines ed ora e' pensionato. Tony ha lavorato per 3 anni per i programmi religiosi di Radio Uno ed e' socio dell'Associazione Artistica. E' sempre disposto per lavori artigianali da fare in chiesa ed insieme a Tony Pellegrino ha recentemente costruito 6 altari nuovi nella chiesa inferiore. Con la sua vasta conoscenza di canti religiosi in lingua italiana e con la sua esperienza in musica, nel 1967 inizio' il coro italiano che e' uno dei cori piu' acclamati all'interno della diocesi di Brooklyn. La sua piu' grande opera d'arte e' il Presepe. Pochi sono quelli che possono paragonare il loro lavoro a quello di Tony nella chiesa al piano inferiore di Sant'Atanasio, la casa dei fedeli Italiani. Non solo questo presepe e' stato nominato il migliore della nostra zona ma vari articoli sono stati scritti sulla bellezza e l'arte di questo bellissimo paesaggio. Tutto questo risale alla sua infanzia in Italia dove lui era il responsabile

nella sua famiglia di preparare e occuparsi del presepe nella sua casa. Nel suo paese ogni anno c'e' una gara per il migliore presepe; Tony ha ricevuto una medaglia d'onore per portare questa tradizione a Brooklyn. "Per certe persone l'albero natalizio e' il simbolo del Natale," dice Tony. "Per gli Italiani, il presepe simboleggia Natale."

Dunque, Tony, i tuoi traguardi sono molti e noi con gratitudine diciamo, "Grazie" per essere un'ispirazione qui a Sant'Atanasio e per essere cosi' dedicato a mantenere Gesu' nel Natale.



AROUND THE PARISH WITH ALICE FREIDMAN

What other word to start telling you about all that has happened at St. A's but ALLELUIA! What a bunch of busy months here at St. A's. In December we blessed all the lighted Trees, saw our new life size Nativity, remembered our dear family members on our new Tree of Lights and enjoyed the hard work of Steven LaPlante, our Choir Master, who prepared so well our choirs. Christmas Eve began with Nickie Milo and Fr. Long's Christmas Gospel Pageant and the season ended with a Blessing of Newly Baptized and Baby's First Christmas. In the early hours of the morning of the snowy, icy and stormy January mornings, our church sanctuary began to be restored. Today we stand in awe celebrating the Eucharist on a new marble altar in a spacious, bright and shiny sanctuary with new marble and new terrazzo! Our new children's Hand Bell choir dings while our newly formed Family Mass Choir sings. We still remember the beginning of Lent with Sal Iacullo and the Holy Name Society's Tenth Annual Mardi Gras dinner; that week we also buried our alleluias, burned our palm and now proudly carry our alleluias out to our homes to celebrate Easter. What other word but ALLELUIA?

February also was a time for a new added tradition to St. A's parish life with a Blessing of Married and Engaged Couples for the celebration of World Marriage Day. Bishop DiMarzio suggested that each parish recognize parishioners in committed marriage relationships so Pastoral Associate John Fruner and Fr. Long put together a celebration on Sunday Feb. 15 at the 11:30a.m. Mass. Fr. Long presided and 40 couples renewed their vows which included: Jessie and Peter Giannettino with a wedding date of Dec. 2, 1944 celebrating 59 years of marriage; Barbara and Tony Fiumara-July 19, 1969-35 years; Anthony and Wanda Del Rosso-April 19, 2003-1 year; Israel and MaryAnn Gonzalez-June 29, 1999-4 years; Lucy and John Pratti-Nov. 5, 1989-14 years; Rose and Domenico Saco-December 7, 1969-34 years; Antonia and Luigi Campanella-Oct. 24, 1962-41 years; Maria and John Tamadge-Aug. 6, 1988-15 years; Maria and Giuseppe Giamporcar-Dec. 3, 1982-22 years; Debbie and Ron Gabel-July 15, 1972-31 years; Jeannie and Kevin McFeeley-April 18, 1970-34 years; Joan and Sam Mazza-April 24, 1954-40 years; John and Josephine Domanico-Sept. 10, 1950-53 years; Franco and Palma Riggio-Aug. 10, 1996-7 years; Tino and Angela Garuccio-July 10, 1999-4 years; Phil and Carrie Canto-Oct. 5, 1946-57 years; Peter and Rose Cianciotta-Jan. 13, 1944-60 years; Dewey and Vita Gallese-Sept. 20, 1947-56 years; Michael and Eleanor Damiano-Dec. 2, 1948-55 years; Frank and Mary Papi-June 20, 1953-50 years; Joseph & Marie Mallia-Sept. 7, 1980-23 years; Sal and Jo Iacullo-May 28, 1944-59 years; Martha & Nino Prochilo-Sept. 27, 1964-40 years; Joan and Frank Cangiarello-Feb. 21, 1965-39 years; Richard and Charlene Arent-Mar. 14, 1998-5 years; John and Maria DiMarco-Aug. 14, 1994-10 years; John and Catherine Marra-Feb. 23, 1951-53 years; Marie and Joseph Russotti-Sept. 5, 1953-50 years; Christine and Billy Valentine- July 20, 2001-3 years; Connie and Pat Costa-Oct. 8, 1955-49 years; Louise and MaryAnn Pedutto-Sept. 17, 1961-42 years; Jean and Bill Finn-April 4, 1992-12 years; Dominick and Annette Buonpane-June 14, 1975-28 years; Nick and Ann Cagliuso-Oct. 7, 1972-31 years; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Zanardi-Feb. 8, 1958-46 years; Maria and Joseph Grillo-July 11, 1970-32 years; Mrs. and Mr. Paul Sibilo-Oct. 5, 1952-52 years; Giovanni and Rita Verna-Dec. 27, 1972-32 years.

At the same mass, Fr. Long celebrated Anointing of the sick with Catherine Marra as she is in stage III of cancer. Her husband thanked God for the 53 years of marriage and the opportunity to worship here at St. A's. He asked his fellow parishioners for prayers for his "bride" as they approach some difficult times battling the cancer. Fr. Long, a survivor of cancer, was a true image of Christ the Healer as he shared his struggles in living with chemotherapy.

At the same celebration, five engaged couples were presented to the community and they included: Nicole Vincent & Michael Guadagno; Dawn Gabel and Wes Bauman who will marry on Sept. 4, 2005; Kevin McFeely and Dana Burger who will marry here at St. A's on Nov. 13, 2004; Salvatore Ventura and Alessa Cucchia who will marry on July 30, 2005; Dominick Piscitelli and Nicole Jestone who will marry on April 2006; Maria Viterbo and John Verna who will marry here at St. A's on Nov. 13, 2004. Maria is also completing her MSW degree at Fordham University. New ministries were also formed such as Marriage Rehearsal Coordinators, being organized by Lay Ecclesial Minister Joe Barbieri, Ministers of Caring, organized by Bensonhurst Cluster Lay Minister Palma Parmese, Children's Liturgy of the Word, by our DRE Nickie Milo and the Catholic Social Justice Ministry, by Don Clark, participant in the current Bensonhurst Cluster Lay Formation Program. The Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry Offices are still struggling to form a Family Mass Committee. Interested? See Nickie our DRE or John our Pastoral Associate.



The Talent of St. A's 11:30a.m. Choir

By Elaine Sarcona

We all know that there's something special going on at St. A's. It's just a different feeling from other churches and parishes — the energy, the multi-lingual Masses, the renovations in the church, the camaraderie, our wonderful Priests and Monsignor.

And now we are so blessed to have two new additions to our English choir — Steven's prayers have been answered! You must have heard Mark Fredericks and Sarah Griffith at Mass. Mark has been providing percussion effects to some of our Masses. Sarah's beautiful, operatic voice has blended with and is such a wonderful complement to our already talented English choir. We are so fortunate that this talented couple settled here from Maine just a few short months ago. Sarah has a B.M. in Vocal Performance and an M.A. in Music History. Mark has a B.A. in Music Performance.

Sarah and Mark were gracious enough to invite the choir members to a pre-St. Patrick's Day party on Sunday evening, March 14th. Of course, the traditional Irish fare was served, delicious corn beef and cabbage, but the real treat was the live entertainment that followed.

Tom Dalton started it out by singing a traditional Irish song, "Miss Fogarty's Christmas Cake," a really cute song that we tapped and clapped along to and ended in laughter. Before he left, he also sang "Danny Boy" and left us with the Irish Blessing song.

Sarah then treated us to a beautiful aria from Puccini's Turandot, "Tu che digel sei cinta" (you are like ice), and gave us the history and story behind it. She became so engrossed in the aria that her voluptuous voice filled the house. Our wine glasses practically trembled from the vibrations of her voice. She sang so passionately that it brought tears to everyone's eyes. Sarah herself had to leave the room after her performance to compose herself. We had the feeling that Sarah's great voice will one day be heard at the Met. What a talent!

George Escalante sang an old Neopolitan song, "Musica Prohibito." We all thought it was from an opera, but no, it was just one of his favorites. No one knew how strong George could really belt it out, but he did again in "Luno Nova" and "O Solo Mio."

Before the evening was over, Michael Sarcona treated us to a triad of his own written and composed spiritual songs on guitar.

We had dessert while Phyllis Micillo sang an old Italian song, "A Mamma," quietly in her seat at the table.

We said our goodbyes to the sound of the sweet lilting voice of Melissa, George's daughter, singing one of her favorite songs by Mariah Carey while playing the piano.

Other Choir members Mary Ann, Denise and Ann Marie were there to enjoy this delightful festivity. We all left saying how much of a family the choir has become, a part of the larger family of St. Athanasius parish.



Continued from previous page

Lent was a time for us to pray the Stations of the Cross, have a day of prayer in English, Italian and Spanish as well as preparing to host the Italian Apostolate's Good Friday Procession. Not only did the parish gather for an afternoon of prayer, but our Bereavement and Divorced Support Groups spent a Sunday afternoon in prayer and fellowship, trying to better understand their new direction after the loss of a spouse or loved one. What a busy time! What an intense Lent!

Holy Week arrived and we gathered for Morning Prayer with Sr. Isabel Bracero, the DRE of Most Precious Blood here in Bensonhurst and then spent quiet time in prayer on Holy Thursday night. We once again gathered for Morning Prayer on Good Friday with Deacon Tom Devaney and on Holy Saturday with the RCIA "elect" to listen to Margaret Piccolo share her experiences in Iraq as a member of the U.S. Air Force. That same night we rejoiced around the Easter fire at the Holy Saturday Vigil. This celebration was made more intense through the preparation of our Lenten Vesper Preachers all named Frank! "Frankly Speaking" encouraged us to consider various themes, leading us to great Easter joy. Fr. Frank Gasparik spoke to us about the mission of the Saints and Fr. Frank Shannon inspired us to reach the poor. Msgr. Frank Gaeta challenged us to look towards the future as Catholic Parish life is rapidly and radically changing. Msgr. Frank Caggiano, who was stationed here at St. A's, returned and taught us about service.

Dear J,

I went to see the Passion of the Christ and some of my friends refused to go with me. All I heard was how anti-Semitic the film was. Did you see the movie? If you did, was it anti-Semitic in your opinion? This movie has shaped my Lent and I know that it will help me better experience Palm Sunday and Good Friday for the rest of my life.

An Italian-American, Jewish, Irish Parishioner who is passionate for "The Passion."

Dear "Passionate for 'The Passion,'"

The answer will probably vary from viewer to viewer. Of course this film could be used by bigots to arouse prejudice but so could the film "Jesus Christ: Superstar," in which the priests were even more negatively portrayed.

Mel Gibson followed the Gospel writers, especially St. John, who definitely blames Christ's death on Caiaphas and his allies. In this film two members of the Sanhedrin object to the way Jesus is being treated, but Caiaphas uses his authority to expel them so he can get on with his agenda.

The Romans come off as the real sadists. (I didn't hear the Italian-American community complaining that they were negatively portrayed in this film and I haven't heard this once here at St. A's!) Look at the scene of Jesus' scourging: The Jewish priests become so sickened by the brutality of the Roman guards that they turn and walk away! If Gibson wanted to be anti-Semitic, he would have had them stay there and enjoy the entire scourging. Do you remember the enjoyment on the faces of the soldiers who scourged Jesus? They were obviously more than content with their job. Again, did I hear an outcry from the Italian-American community?

Pilate knowingly allows an innocent man to be killed when he gives in to the voice of the priests and mob. It is fair to say that Gibson's film pins most of the blame on the Romans, which is where it should be. Only they had the power to inflict the death penalty.

Lent is an appropriate time to reflect on the suffering of Jesus and I am glad that this film helped you better experience the scriptures on Palm Sunday and Good Friday.

***O sacred head now wounded, With grief and shame weighed down;
Now scornfully surrounded With thorns, Thine only crown;
O sacred head, what glory, What bliss till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine."***

From the Lenten Hymn: O Sacred Head Surrounded, attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux



Dear J,

I am Korean and have been dating a girl from the Dominican Republic for two years. My family is not happy with my choice of a girlfriend. While I am proud of my Korean heritage, I am already dating a girl who isn't Korean. I want to respect my family but am not going to be forced to date a Korean girl because I am told to. Do you have some advice for me?

Does Love Have Limits?

Dear "Does Love Have Limits?"

People tend to be attracted to others they feel comfortable with — which is why there is pressure for people to date within their own cultural and religious groups. Do I have advice for you? Well... advice yes, an answer no. You will have to come to some peace within yourself while making sure your family knows how much you love them and how proud you are of your Korean heritage.

To get a sense of St. A's, I spoke to members of our Italian speaking, Spanish speaking, Polish speaking and Korean speaking community (who naturally also spoke English as I only speak Bensonhurst English, a dialect of Brooklyn English!)

Continued on next page

Dear J, Continued from previous page

LOVE

I was welcomed warmly by the Korean speaking community and after Korean Mass one Sunday, a graduate student in Psychology stated that "There's a fine line between dating a person for their culture and liking them for them." Another Korean Community parishioner commented on the socioeconomic dimension to interracial dating: "I think there is a hierarchy of race," she said. "Sometimes we date American born people to improve our acceptability. I look Korean and speak Korean but was born here in Brooklyn. If I fall in love with a Korean guy my family will be happy but if I fall in love with a guy who isn't Korean, in my family, it isn't the end of the world. I need to examine, though, if I am following my heart or being influence by society's biases."

Frieda, who is white and Jewish, is currently dating a member of our Spanish speaking community. She underscored the importance of raising her children in her religious tradition, saying that to do otherwise would be "to turn my back on the people I'm standing on." This has become a difficult aspect of her relationship as she also attends Sunday Mass here at St. A's to accommodate her boyfriend's religious customs. Frieda also speaks Spanish.

Giacomo, a grandson of a member of an Italian speaking parishioner who attends the 11:30 Italian Mass each Sunday stated that origins are important, but said he would let his children marry whomever they want. "They should understand their past for sure," he said. "What the future is, is up to them as long as they know they are Italian-American."

Another member of our Spanish speaking community offered another perspective on Giacomo's point. "Because you're dating someone outside your race doesn't mean you're turning your back on your origins."

Two senior members of our English speaking community, Angie and Fred, commented that St. A's needs to "bring people from diverse backgrounds together so they can share their experiences more often, like we did for that Lenten Day of Prayer. This way, we can realize we have more in common. When we share a meal, barriers seem to be broken down. Add a little wine and we are setting up someone for a Friday night date!"

I had a wonderful experience when the parish started its Children's Liturgy of the Word in the Lower Church Vestibule this Lent. Children from the Spanish Mass wandered out, sat down with their English speaking counterparts and listened to God's Word. Some even came back upstairs to see what happens in the "big Church." Blending cultural differences start with our children.

My advice: speak to your parents about how proud you are to be Korean-American. Tell them how much you love them, care for your girlfriend and want to be happy. Although this might be difficult, remind your parents that you need someone to share your life with. What is important is that you are convinced that this girl is the right one for you and she too knows you are the right one for her. Blending the cultures can only make the tapestry more colorful.

In the Pastoral Ministry Office hangs a poem, "Tapestry of Justice" and when I asked John why he has it hanging up, he suggested that I read it. I want to share it with you:

We are threads of all colors gifted and free creating for earth a tapestry of justice.

We are living and loving, working and dreaming, hoping, believing that all may be one.

We are threads of all colors, gifted and free creating for Earth a tapestry of justice.

We are singing and dancing, teaching and healing, giving, receiving that all may be one.

We are gathered and sent with hearts that can see creating for Earth a tapestry of justice.

We are changing and growing, laughing and weeping, seeking and searching that all may be one.

We are bridging and building, a promise are we creating for Earth a tapestry of justice.

By Sr. Kathy Sherman, CSJ



Assistant Editor's Note: Since we are not revealing who "J" is, I think we have just hinted that Pastoral Associate John is not J. So much for thinking "J" stood for John. We do, though, have a few more "Js" on the newsletter staff.

WANT TO ASK A QUESTION? E-mail us at StAPastoralMin@aol.com In the "Re" section please write DEAR J. You can also snail mail us at the rectory or drop off your question in an envelope marked DEAR J. Next issue: June 13- Solemnity of Corpus Christi, Feast of St. Anthony of Padua and Bazaar Issue.

The People Who Put the Music In The Church

By Anna Cali



Every Sunday my family and I look forward to going to church. Not only eager to listen to the wonderful homilies given by the priests and deacon in our parish but to also be inspired by the uplifting music as part of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Our church has such a variety of music and whether it is the contemporary style or the more traditional music, there is something for everyone. Our talented cantors Therese Panicali, Theresa Marinelli, and MaryAnn Gonzalez engage us in worship with their beautiful voices. The liturgical musicians, Michael Panicali and Doug Morelli inspire us with their music at the 10a.m. Mass each Sunday. They enliven the mass and unite us in song and prayer. Their music plays such an important role in the celebration of the mass. We become one body that sings and praises God together.

Michael Panicali is a graduate of Saint Athanasius and has been playing the piano and singing in church for 7 years. He started playing the piano at age 11. He went to Pace University and majored in English. He is currently working in the Social Work/Human Services field and works for the non profit Human Services agency, Lifespire. This organization works with adults with mental retardation and autism and provides day services where they can interact and be with others. Michael loves his work very much and finds many rewards in helping others. I am sure that the music he has in his heart enables him to put the music in the hearts of everyone he helps. Michael provides music at the 10 am and the 6pm mass on Sundays.

Therese Panicali is also a graduate of Saint Athanasius and is Michael's sister. They are the 9th and 10th of 11 children of which all are musically inclined. Therese has been singing at Saint A's for two years with Michael. She is an opera singer who studied at Brooklyn College Conservatory of Music. She has been singing since she was 4 years old. She studied voice for many years and is now teaching it. She recently appeared in a production with the Queens Symphony Orchestra. Her voice touches the hearts of many who hear it and it is truly beautiful. She cantors at the 6 pm Mass on Sundays.

Therese and Michael also made a special trip to Sloane Kettering hospital to sing for the patients. I know one particular patient that appreciated it more than words can express.

Our other cantor, Theresa Marinelli, is a graduate of Saint Athanasius as well. She has been singing in church since she was sixteen years old and became a cantor about seven years ago. She lives in Staten Island with her husband and two daughters. Theresa used to perform with the Saint Athanasius theater guild. She is currently teaching physical education and dance at Murrow high school. Her husband Bill is also a teacher. The talent runs in the family because on several occasions her daughters joined her at church to sing. Theresa cantors at the 10 Am mass on Sundays. Doug Morelli is our dedicated guitarist.

These music ministers are servants of the Word and of the community and we enjoy singing with them at church every Sunday. As said by Saint Augustine, "The one who sings, prays twice." Therefore, let us all pray twice together.

Saint Athanasius Italian Choir

Soon after the installation of the Italian Mass in 1967, Mr. Antonio (Tony) Vigilante, began the Italian Choir at Saint Athanasius and became its Music Director. The choir members are the talented men and women of our Parish community. Most of them are immigrants who arrived in the United States several years ago to seek a better life. Some were educated in Italy, others had the opportunity to be educated in the United States since they arrived at an early age. Some choir members are employed full-time, a few are retired. Tony himself is a retired airline worker. Regardless of their level of education and employment status, each member of the choir does a fantastic job.



In no particular order, the members of the Italian Choir are Anna DiGiacomo, Santo DiGiacomo, Anita DeMattia, Ena Maurici, Ernesta Le Piani, Maria Porcú, Maria Vicenzino, Antonio Loverde, Tony Pellegrini, Tina Genovese, Gina Patalano, Petronilla Ruggieri, Franca Prestigiaco, Serafina Galati, Maria Caruso, Antonio Caruso, Pino Militiello, and Miranda Jukic. Lisa Genovese played the piano for the choir for many years until she relocated to New Jersey. She still comes back to help play on holidays. Lisa is the only member of the choir to play an instrument.

Most recently, the choir sang at the Italian Apostolate Mass on October 5, 2003 here at Saint Athanasius for Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio. This was the bishop's first public appearance since he was installed on October 3rd. This Mass was a huge success complete with media coverage (RAI, an Italian television network, was present with their cameras and did a beautiful piece on the Mass.) In November 2003, the choir sang at Our Lady of Pompei Church in Manhattan at which President Campi of Italy was present. In the past, but unfortunately not this year, the choir sang at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan for the Columbus Day Mass. The Italian Choir has participated in the Italian Mass every Sunday at 11:30 a.m. in the Lower Church since 1967. They also sing at some bilingual Masses in the Upper Church.

When asked if he feels the Italian Choir brings a special element to the Mass, Tony's reply was, "absolutely and without a doubt!" "Their singing brings life to the Italian Mass. They are a pleasure to have in the lower church," adds Tony. "Since the birth of the choir in 1967, I can count on one hand how many times the choir did not sing. All of the members are loyal and faithful to both the church and the

Song In Their Hearts...Pat and Connie Costa (Costagliola)

Did you ever have one of those days when you just wanted to stay under the covers? That's how this cold, snowy, miserable February day started out, until this warm ray of sunshine suddenly appeared that could melt even the coldest heart. I am speaking of the warmth that is ever-present in the hearts of this lovely couple, Pat and Connie Costa. The moment I entered their home, I felt so blessed to have the honor of doing this interview.

Pat and Connie have been playing music together forever. They met when Pat went into an ice cream parlor where Connie's sister was a "soda jerk." He just happened to mention that he needed an accordion player for an upcoming graduation party he was invited to play at. There must have been some "Divine Intervention" for these two even back then! You see, Connie plays the accordion, and her sister was quick to point this out to Pat. Connie's sister took him home to meet her, and the rest as they say, is history!

They started a little band after that, along with a friend named Tommy and eventually added a saxophone player and a drummer. I guess it's true what they say about fate - 6 years after that ice cream parlor "coincidence," they became husband and wife. That was in 1955. That's right, these two beautiful people will be married 49 blessed years in October of this year.

Not long after that, the first of their three daughters Patricia arrived. Three years later their second daughter Caryn was born, followed by Regina the youngest of the three.

The love with which they spoke of their children's accomplishments touched me in such a way that I had to share them with all of you.

Inheriting her parents' talent, Patricia started the Saint Athanasius' Folk Group with her friends Jack Romano and Michael Tusay when they were only in the 7th Grade. Finding it too difficult to continue as they were preparing for college, they invited Pat to take over the reigns. Patricia is now Dr. Patricia Kim, Director of Education and Community Programs for the Seattle Symphony Orchestra - what an accomplishment! She has one daughter, Zacarra with her husband, David Michael Kim.

Caryn was a dance major in college and is now a Group Exercise Trainer as well as a Personal Trainer. Caryn and her husband, Sal LaFerlita, are the parents of three children: Ariana, Joseph, and Juliette. Maybe we can convince her to come to St. A's and whip us all in shape!

Regina recently opened her own dance studio called the Lincroft Dance Studio located in Lincroft, New Jersey. Regina and her husband, Alex Kreimer, also have 3 children: Alison, Jillian, and Brian.

So with all that talent, it's no wonder their parents beam with pride when describing these remarkable ladies and their families.

As of today, Pat and Connie have been playing for Saint A's Folk Group for 34 years. The members in the Folk Group accompanying Pat and Connie are MaryAnn Saputo-Gonzalez, who has been with the group for 26 years (she must have started when she was 2!), and Dougie Morelli who has been with them for 14 years.

Pat and Connie also play for many Charismatic Diocesan Functions, and have been members of the Charismatic Renewal for 30 years. They have also led music at Healing Masses, Retreats, Workshops and Parties. You can find them at St. Patrick's in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn every second Wednesday of the month, at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, also in Brooklyn every first Friday of the month, and of course right here at St. Athanasius every third Sunday of each month at the 10 a.m. Folk Mass, and at 8:00 p.m. every Tuesday in the lower Church for the Saint Athanasius Prayer Group which they helped start in March of 1975.

They have been members of St. A's Parish since 1961 and have lived in the same lovely home all that time as well. All their children attended St. A's Grade School and belonged to the Y.C.S. (Young Christian Students) Association with Sister Barbara Lynch.

With every Mass, you are left with a feeling of elation, but if you have never been to a Mass where Pat and Connie have played, you can't imagine the experience you are missing. For all of us who have had that experience, we thank you!

Donna Karim



Saint Athanasius Italian Choir... continued

Italian community. These people give up so much of their time to practice and are truly a blessing to the community." Tony's dedication to the parish not only as a choir director but also with any kind of carpentry work is commendable. He is, as many of you may already know, the very talented artist of the Presepio that is ever-present in the lower church and displayed every Advent attracting people from all over the city. The Italian Choir always welcomes new members. If you are interested in joining the Italian Choir, or for more information, please contact the director, Tony Vigilante. He can always be found in the Lower Church before and after the Italian Mass every Sunday.

Jessica Karim

THE REAL BAY PARKWAY BOYS

By Patricia Deasey

Did you even wonder what is going to happen to our parish when you can no longer do for it as you do now? Did you ever think that there is no one to replace you? While we all like to think we are irreplaceable, the fact is we aren't. Maybe the next person to come along won't do the job the same as we did, or as well as we did, or as often as we did, it will get done.

It has been my privilege and pleasure while ministering at our Church to get to know some of our young people. We have been blessed with some delightful young people. I am sure that in your dealing around the parish you know some of them. I would like to tell you about a few of them.

Adam Gonzalez is a lector in our Church. Many times he lectures at the 5:30 Mass on Saturday. He is a soft-spoken, bright, and kind young man. He is a full-time student at St. Francis College. His G.P.A. (grade point average) is a 4.0 and he has just received a full time scholarship. Adam is a member of Psi Chi Honor Society, the Psychology Honor Society. He has a job at Barretta Research, a company that does title searches. He finishes his classes and runs over to work. He comes from a family where he has one older brother and a younger sister.

Joey Buonocore is one of the smartest young people I have ever met. He is attending St. Francis College on a Franciscan Scholarship. Joey worries about every single test and grade that he gets, of course, he always gets A's. Joey has a 4.0 G.P.A. He works as a cleaner for the Board of Education. Whenever I need someone to help me out I always call upon Joey. He is always right there with his perpetual good humor and know how. It is impossible to be in Joey's company for longer than three minutes without laughing. He has a very quick wit and he loves to make people laugh. He does wonderful impressions of Fr. Long and Msgr. Cassato. One reason to be grateful for face to face confessions. Joey worked in the rectory for six years. I don't think he would want to make a career of this, but he even cat sat for me this past Christmas. He comes from a family that has been active in our parish for many years.

Mike Santulli is also a student at St. Francis College. He is due to graduate this January Mike is a Communications major. He looks forward to a career in radio broadcasting. His days are quite full being a full time student here and then working as a cleaner for the Board of Education.

Adam, Joey and Mike do cleaning and decorating of our Church for the holidays. They also work at the bazaar.

So when you look over all you have done, and think maybe it is time to turn it over to someone else. Wouldn't you want it to be one of these young people that will continue what you started? I would feel very confident in having any one of these young men replace me and anything that I have done in our parish. With all the talk these days about how terrible the young people are today I wanted to paint a picture of three outstanding young men. We are very lucky to have them in our parish. When you see them around stop and say hi. You will be amazed at who and what they are. So, when committees need people or the parish in general needs help, let us call these special young men and welcome them with open arms.

INTRODUCING YOU TO "THE DEACON'S DEN"

by Jonathan Fronterre and Luigi Rizzo

We had the pleasure of interviewing our new Deacon, Dante and his wife, Carmela Colandrea. We proudly welcome them to St. Athanasius Parish!

Jonathan: When did you come to the United States?

Deacon Dante: I emigrated to the United States in 1966 after serving in the Italian Navy. I enjoy the United States very much.

Jonathan: How many years have you and Carmela been married and how many children do you have?

Deacon Dante: We have been married for 35 years and have three children; Michael, 30 who is married to Maria and they have a 10 year old son, Anthony. Our son Marc is 29 and is married to Cristal and they have a daughter, Samantha who is 2 1/2 years old. Our youngest child is Marisa who is 26 years old.

Luigi: You belonged to Saint Dominic's Parish. How did you like it?

Deacon Dante: I liked it very much. It was my first Parish since moving back to Brooklyn from Pennsylvania in 1982.

Luigi: How long have you been a Deacon and do you enjoy it?

Deacon Dante: In 1988, I entered the Diaconate Formation Program and was ordained a Deacon by Bishop Daily on May 15, 1993. I enjoy being a Deacon very much!

Jonathan: When did you come to Saint Athanasius Parish?

Deacon Dante: Carmela and I came February 1, 2004.

Jonathan: How are you adjusting to our Parish?

Deacon Dante: So far, Carmela and I are very excited about this new assignment at Saint Athanasius and we look forward to a happy ministry here.

Luigi: How did your wife feel about your becoming a Deacon?

Deacon Dante: Carmela was surprised at first, but she supports me 100% all the way. She is employed by the New York State Department of Education as a paraprofessional for children with special needs. She was commissioned as a Lay Ecclesial Minister on May 2, 2003 and at Saint Dominics, she is a Lector, Eucharistic Minister and a Catechist in the C.C.D. program for children with special educational needs. She is also R.C.I.A. Director and Director of the Adult Confirmation Program.



Luigi: What are Deacons allowed to do in Church?

Deacon Dante: Deacons can serve with the Priest on the Altar. We can perform weddings and baptisms; in fact, I baptized my grandchild, Samantha.