

Father Joe

“Fr. Joe,” as he is known to his people, has accepted his role in our Almighty Father’s intricate plan.

Fr. Joe was born in Brooklyn, New York on April 9, 1929. His parents were Anthony Granato and Theresa DePiano Granato. The family moved to Newark during his infancy. His brother was Rev. Anthony F. Granato, Pastor of St. Anthony’s Church, East Newark.

His rearing in the typical First Ward neighborhood, where family was of the essence, where friends were part of the family, and where Catholic traditions were dominant, served to endear him to young and old alike. His parents provided the happy atmosphere which he was able to extend to his entire St. Lucy’s family.

Father attended Sacred Heart Cathedral Grammar School in Newark and graduated in 1943. As a youngster attending Sacred Heart Elementary, he was an extremely busy young man. Along with his brother and most trusted friend, he enjoyed a normal upbringing. Their activities covered both ends of the spectrum. They could either be seen playing in typical “rough house” style or participating in high school plays at Good Counsel. They were on constant call to lend a helping hand around Sacred Heart as part-time sextons. Many games and play times were halted by Fr. Doyle’s call for help and assistance.

Father then attended Our Lady of Good Counsel High School also in Newark and graduated in 1947. He distinctly recalls a Sister at Good Counsel who seemed to have had access to his future and she suggested he consider the priesthood. Little did she know Father already had decided that he indeed wanted to be a priest. He spent his early adult life at Seton Hall and ultimately at Darlington Seminary where he put forth his efforts in preparation for the Priesthood. All through these years he deeply yearned for his mom’s cooking and the camaraderie of his old neighborhood. Happily, however, these years of obligations to studies and prayer were augmented by jovial exchanges he shared with his fellow seminarians.

On June 4, 1955 his day of ordination arrived. This joyous event was magnified many-fold when he found his place of religious assignment was to be St. Lucy’s Parish. What greater gift could he receive than to be assigned so close to his own home and his loving parents?

As we reflect on Father Joe’s first assignment, many of us recall that Fr. Ruggiero, the third Pastor of St. Lucy’s had been searching for and seeking to obtain a young curate. He had shown one prospective individual the plans for his new rectory and asked, “What do you think?” The young deacon answered, “Only one room for a curate!” Fr. Ruggiero later reflected on his feelings, “He fell from my heart!” He later showed the same plans to Fr. Granato and asked, “Would you like to come here?” The normally reserved young priest anxiously responded without hesitation, “Yes!” From that very moment the deed was done and Fr. Ruggiero was never disappointed with his choice.

Many happy days followed for Father. He took under his wing: CYO, Drum Corps, Children of Mary, Altar Boys, sick calls, First Friday calls and confessions. Father worked very closely with Fr. Ruggiero until his death in 1966. Only the perseverance of Fr. Joe and the helpful presence of Fr. Nat enabled to keep St. Lucy's Parish afloat.

Father was appointed Administrator in 1971 and shortly thereafter in 1977 was assigned by Archbishop Peter Gerety as Pastor of the Church he so dearly loved. On July 16, 1979, he was awarded the honor of being named Monsignor by His Holiness, John Paul II, and honor which Msgr. Granato said was bestowed more as a result of the virtue of the people of St. Lucy's rather than his own. While these sentiments reflect the humility of Monsignor, they exemplify the dynamic relationship between the people and their pastor. He has remained as pastor of St. Lucy's and has served the community faithfully during his 51 years in the priesthood. The years that followed were busy and a happy. The happy times were interrupted by the illness, incapacitation and passing of his mom.

On October 29, 1999 Father was awarded the first Msgr. Joseph Granato Italian Culture Medal at Seton Hall University. The medal celebrates distinguished achievement in the promotion and preservation of Italian culture in the state of New Jersey.

On October 24, 2004 Father was inducted with seven other alumni into the first Our Lady of Good Counsel Hall of Fame. Father always acknowledged that a significant part of who he is today is due to the excellent education received at Good Counsel.

On May 16, 2006 the Essex-West Hudson Federation of Holy Name Societies honored Msgr. Granato with a plaque for his outstanding service to the Archdiocese of Newark and the parish of St. Lucy's.

Under his guidance and leadership, St. Lucy's is thriving. He is responsible for the formation and/or execution of the various Societies, Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration, the Feast of St. Gerard and the construction of the St. Gerard Plaza.

Today, Father shares his priesthood with his people and everyone who comes in search of God. His time is still dedicated to his Parish and his Church. His involvement in the revitalization of Newark is ongoing. His strength typifies his principles and he earns the respect of his people and all citizens on a continuous basis.

We pray that God grants him many more years with us.