

THE TABLET



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Call to Expand Mass in Diocese For Those With Special Needs

Faithful encourage churches to follow Holy Trinity Parish model

by Bill Miller, Senior Reporter

PROSPECT HEIGHTS — Anne Marie Kanable knows “the looks.”

She described how her son, Dane, who has Down syndrome, seems to pick the quieter moments to announce “whatever is on his mind,” drawing some attention, even at Mass.

“It could be ‘I’m hungry,’ or ‘Let’s go home now,’” Kanable said. “And oftentimes people will look at us.”

Kanable and her family belong to Holy Trinity Parish in Whitestone, Queens. Dane was baptized there 13 years ago. Still, his mother said, “you get looks.”

But, that is not the case at the parish’s special needs Mass, which has been celebrated for a decade.

“I can’t say enough good things about it,” Kanable said of the Mass. “And it has grown. We went from just a couple of families to now where it’s a pretty big deal.”

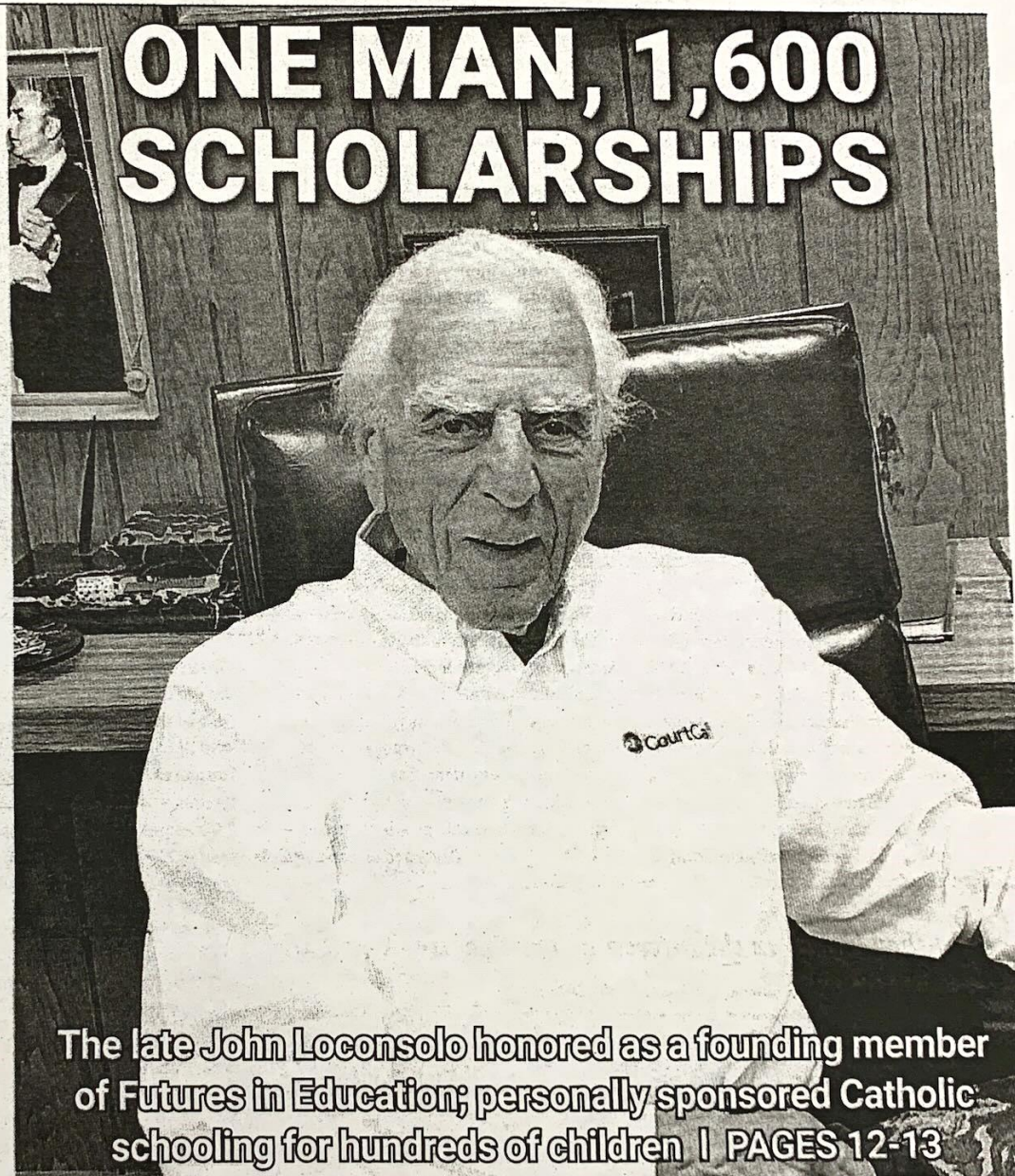
Nancy Rullo, Holy Trinity’s director of religious education, said that, before the pandemic, the church hosted as many as 120 people at the Mass.

“We’d have a full church,” she said.

Kanable said all people are welcome, no matter their disabilities — such as Down syndrome, autism, hearing impairments, or quadriplegia, to name a few.

“I love the age range of people,” she said. “We also have older parents with adult children with disabilities.”

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ONE MAN, 1,600 SCHOLARSHIPS

The late John Loconsolo honored as a founding member of Futures in Education; personally sponsored Catholic schooling for hundreds of children | PAGES 12-13

Futures in Education Founder Was

'It shows what kind of man he was'

by Paula Katinas, Senior Reporter

PROSPECT HEIGHTS — John Loconsolo worked hard to earn the money to send his eight daughters to Catholic school. All of his girls attended Visitation Academy and then Fontbonne Hall Academy.

But Loconsolo's belief in the importance of Catholic education extended far beyond his own family. He saw to it that lots of other children — 1,600, to be exact — got the chance to go to schools in the Diocese of Brooklyn.

Loconsolo, who died April 1 at the age of 101, provided \$2.5 million in scholarships over the years through the Victoria Loconsolo Foundation.

Loconsolo and his wife Jean had nine children — eight daughters and a son, Giacomo, who died in infancy. Tragedy struck the family again in 1977 when their eldest daughter Victoria, director of the Long Island office of the New York Arthritis Foundation, was stabbed to death in her apartment at age 29.

Searching for a way to pay tribute to her, the family started the Victoria Loconsolo Foundation.

The first scholarships were awarded to students at Marymount Manhattan College, Victoria's alma mater. Within a few years, the donations started going to Futures in Education, the non-profit organization founded in 1989 that provides scholarships to Catholic school students. Loconsolo was a founding member of Futures.

"My father didn't have the formal education that he would like to have had. And he always felt it was important for children to get a good education. He felt that Catholic schools give not only a spiritual foundation, but a good education," said his daughter Regina Dedick.

On Oct. 19, Futures paid tribute to Loconsolo by showing a video of him at its annual scholarship dinner at Cipriani Wall Street in Manhattan. Inspired by their father, Loconsolo's seven surviving daughters — Regina Dedick, Maria Caccese, Jaqueline Loconsolo-Gates, Antoinette Chiaro, Janet D'Auria, Elizabeth Loconsolo-Sposato, and Rosemarie Rizzo — are continuing his legacy



John Loconsolo single-handedly sponsored 100 children a year under the "Be an Angel to a Student" program.

through the "Be an Angel to a Student" program, a project run by Futures in which a donor subsidizes the tuition costs for an individual child. He single-handedly sponsored 100 children a year.

"John was a great leader. He believed in leading by example," said Futures Executive Director John Notaro.

Be an Angel, which John Loconsolo created, has a personal touch. Donors receive updates in the form of cards from the children they are supporting, reporting on how they're doing in school.

Notaro described it as "our marquee program."

Notaro always got a kick out of seeing Loconsolo interact with his beneficiaries at the annual Be an Angel luncheon — an event at which the students and their benefactors meet in person. "It was astounding to see 100 kids lined up to meet him," Notaro said.

One of the students Loconsolo was an angel to is Angelina Damico, a fourth-grader at Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy in Douglaston. Her father, Christopher Damico, said his family is grateful to John Loconsolo.

"He was a generous man. His generosity has helped a lot of kids. He didn't have to do it. It shows what kind of man he was," Damico said.

Without help from Be an Angel, the family would not have been able to afford to send young Angelina to Catholic school, the father



John Loconsolo and his wife Jean created the Victoria Loconsolo Foundation as a tribute to their late daughter. (Photos: Courtesy of Regina Dedick)

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'Angel' to 1,600 Catholic School Kids

someone ... that's so generous. We get a lot of donations. But it's so important that we have someone that's ongoing, that's so committed to Catholic education, and is so generous, year after year," said Msgr. Gigantiello.

Loconsolo grew up in Brooklyn and was close to his parents, Jack and Victoria. "He started working when he was a young boy," Dedick said. "His first job was a paper route. And actually what he would do when he started working was hand his whole paycheck to his mother and say, 'Just give me what you don't need.'" Dedick said.

Years later, Jack and John Loconsolo started a painting and contracting business together. Their original store, Loconsolo Paints, is still on Coney Island Avenue.

Their company won numerous contracts to paint and repair churches and schools in the diocese. Loconsolo later expanded his business interests and served as president of LoCon Realty Corp., Loconsolo Properties, and Jack Loconsolo & Company.

A Catholic and a proud Italian-American, Loconsolo was a founding member of the Columbus Citizens Committee, the organization that sponsors the annual Columbus Day Parade. He was a parishioner for many years of St. Anselm Church in Bay Ridge and a member of the Knights of Malta and the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great.

"They're wonderful role models of stewardship — of sharing your time, talent and treasure. But it's also an opportunity to see how a family can take something tragic and turn it into something very positive and good," Msgr. Gigantiello said.



John Loconsolo (above with his daughters) was always proud of the fact he was able to provide a Catholic education for them.

Annual Gala Raises \$2.1 Million for Scholarships

by Paula Katinas

LOWER MANHATTAN — Manuel Hernandez, a graduate of Christ the King High School who currently attends New York City College of Technology and aspires to become a mechanical engineer, is convinced that he couldn't have made it through Catholic school without help from Futures in Education.

The organization, which provides scholarships to help students pay Catholic school tuition, assisted Hernandez throughout his high school years. "Futures in Education helped me to become the person I am today," he said. "I'm very grateful."

His association with the organization goes back to his days as a student at Salve Regina

Catholic Academy when he received financial aid through the Be an Angel program. Under Be an Angel, each donor provides financial aid to help an individual student with tuition costs. Hernandez was a guest speaker at the Futures in Education's Annual Scholarship Dinner on Oct. 19, which drew more than 500 people and filled the grand ballroom of Cipriani Wall Street.

Msgr. Jamie Gigantiello said the dinner raised \$2.1 million. He estimated that amount will help as many as 3,000 students in schools across the Diocese of Brooklyn.

"The message is, without the support of our donors, children would never be able to receive a good Catholic education," Msgr. Gigantiello said. "Many of our children come

from families that don't have the means to send their children to [Catholic] school. And unless we support them with these scholarships through the 'Angel' program, they would never be able to attend."

However, he stressed, it's about more than just money: "And it's not just a matter of attending a Catholic school and hearing our faith. It's a matter of giving them a foundation for the rest of their lives."

Rosanna Scotto, co-anchor of "Good Day New York" on Fox5 NY, served as master of ceremonies at the gala. The honorees were Lidia Bastianich, the television chef and cookbook author, and Frank Carone, a lawyer who has been a supporter of Futures in Education over the years.

"I think tonight is an extremely important night," Bastianich said, adding that after the COVID-19 pandemic, people feel the need to be closer to their families and to do something for their community.

"This is certainly an event for our children. The future is our children," she added.

Carone, who brought his whole family to the dinner, said he was deeply humbled by the honor: "You never expect something like this."

For him, the important thing was that the dinner was going to raise money to help children. "That's what we need to keep our eye on. We're doing this for kids," he said. "That's why I believe in Futures in Education and the job they do."