

What St. Brendan's Means To Me

Good morning.

For those who don't know me, my name is Angela Grasso and I feel honoured to have been asked to share today my thoughts on what it means to me to be a part of St. Brendan's Parish.

I am probably one of the few parishioners who can say that they have lived all their life in the parish. My parents were married here in this very church in 1957. Unfortunately, my parent's marriage was cut short through my father's death in 1966, at age 40, while holidaying in Italy and mum was left a widow at age 32 with an 8 year old daughter. My mother Maria Pavone is still an active member of this community.

My grandparents and uncles also lived in the parish and St. Brendan's has been the place where many family events have taken place over the years.

I attended the parish school, moved onto St. Aloysius College and then obtained my Diploma of Teaching at Mercy Teachers' College, Ascot Vale – now the home of Scientology.

John and I married here in December, 1979 and have 2 children, Daniela and Mark. Eighteen months ago we became the proud grandparents of Daniela's son, Sebastian. John was also a parishioner prior to our marriage and his parents, George and Grace, still live in the parish and attend St. Brendan's. What a family affair we have....

Sacramentally, St. Brendan's has played an important part of my life. It has nurtured my spirituality and empowered me with the ability to use the gifts given to me by the Holy Spirit to the fullest.

I give thanks to the Pastorelle Sisters who were helping here in the Parish with the Italian Mass and encouraged me to use my music in Liturgy. It has therefore been, dare I say, 42 years that I have been an organist in this parish... Oh wow, that is frightening!

I began playing for the Italian Mass every Sunday and then became very involved with the Italian Catholic Federation, Italian Liturgy Committee, Parish council and Liturgy group.

It was then through the encouragement of one of our past assistant priests, Fr. Michael Casey, that he got me to play and sing at a wedding here in the parish in 1979. I have never, ever forgotten this gesture and it has made me always be aware of other's gifts and acknowledge to them how their gift has influenced me and others.

St. Brendan's has been the one that has helped me move into the ministry I have been involved in for over 25 years – providing music for funeral services and assisting families in their time of grief.

This work has taken me into the many different parishes of the archdiocese. On entering a new parish, I could feel that there was hesitancy in having me and not knowing where I was from and if I knew anything about liturgy. The minute I would and still say: I am from St. Brendan's Flemington, the welcome becomes so embracing and it is as if people are envious of the fact that I belong to this Flemington parish with such a reputable reputation in the archdiocese.

St. Brendan's has always been known for the care and welfare it gives to others. I am sure we can all think of a time when we have witnessed this. One personal experience I have is when

I finished Grade 6. I will never forget when Mr. Bergin, representing the Parish, and Sr. Noeline, principal of the school, came to my home to tell mum that she would be helped with my school fees as I entered my first year at St. Aloysius. A way of helping her out, to keep me in catholic education.

St. Brendan's is home....it's being at home. It's belonging to a family where God's love is experienced. A place of nurturing. A place where I have witnessed the different ways we have been ministered to by the many parish priests and assistant priests and have hence developed a great respect and concern for the clergy. I have to say, Fr. Max, that in the short time you have been here, your smile, radiance and care has brought new sunshine into the parish.

Over the years, I have also seen how St. Brendan's has had to accept and adapt to different changes. We have had pioneer parishioners who have given so much in ensuring that the St. Brendan's family is well maintained. On this feast day of St. Brendan's, I want to give thanks to all these people and clergy, living and deceased, who have made St. Brendan's what it is and I turn to St. Brendan, the voyager, with this prayer, not only for me as I journey into the next phase of my life but for all here who have their own special intentions:

St. Brendan, the voyager
Help me to journey beyond the familiar
and into the unknown.

Give me the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with You.

Christ of the mysteries, I trust You
to be stronger than each storm within me.

Help me trust in the darkness and know
that my times, even now, are in Your hand.

And tune my spirit to the music of heaven.

Amen.