

**MEMORIAL REFLECTION
FOR
LORRAINE IAFRATE
July 22, 2020**

We are gathered here today to honor and celebrate the memory of Lorraine Simonelli IafRATE – wife, mother, grandmother, sister, teacher, colleague and friend. In looking about at those who are sharing this moment with us today, we see and feel Lorraine’s presence everywhere - in the hearts of her family, in the faces of her children and grandchildren, and in the smiles and laughter of her colleagues and friends.

Lorraine and I both grew up in the same town – Johnston – not too far from where we now stand. I knew of her and her sisters from my younger brothers and sisters but really did not get to know her until 1989 when we taught together at St. Ann School in Providence. I left St. Ann’s in 1993 to come to St. Philip’s and we stayed in touch, frequently seeing each other at principals meetings and diocesan school events. At one of those meetings, Lorraine expressed a desire to get back into the classroom and so we invited her to consider accepting a position as our middle school math and science teacher. I believe that was around 1996-97. She said “yes” and remained a vital and integral part of our faculty and school community until she retired.

There is so much I could say about her time here – anyone who knew her (students, parents, parish and local community) was struck by her enthusiasm, dedication and faithful witness to our Catholic faith and school community. She was always among the first to raise her hand to volunteer for one of our new initiatives or school projects – yearbook, rock-a-thon, science fair, career day, NEASC accreditation...the list goes

on and on. The two initiatives which stand out most in my mind, however, are the NASA Rocket Launch and God's Little Acre.

Shortly after Lorraine joined our faculty, Project Comet Chaser, a proposed program sponsored by Brown University and the state Aviation and Space Education Council, was brought to my attention through the RI Department of Education and the Catholic School Office. Schools across the state were invited to send representatives to help with planning a major statewide event which would involve building and launching rockets under the direction of local space and aviation leaders including our own parishioner Pat O'Connors and NASA authorities. Lorraine and veteran 5th grade teacher, Janet Boswell, joined with me in representing our school on the planning board. We met for months to learn about rocketry and plan for the day-long event which was held in November 1999 at Ninegret Park in Charlestown. Thousands of elementary and secondary school children came from all over the state to attend and witness the launch of an actual rocket brought to RI by NASA. It was one of those peak experiences that students and teachers long for and, once experienced, will never forget.

Back on earth and closer to home, Lorraine was preparing to launch another initiative that was suggested by longtime parishioner and green gardener, Tony Esposito. It was late winter/early spring and Tony thought our students could learn a little about gardening by starting some plants from seed on the windowsill of their classroom. He mentioned his idea to Father Beirne who thought it had merit and offered a strip of grass behind the rectory for the plants should the seeds take root. Well, they did and the first "God's Little Acre" was born. Under Lorraine's watchful eye the plan took root and by midsummer the SVDP food pantry had fresh vegetables to distribute to the community members who visited every week. When the new middle school addition was completed and the greenhouse added in

2003, Lorraine worked with parishioner Paul Santucci and school and parish families to ensure that there would always be a complete and varied supply of seedlings for the larger garden which is now located behind the parish center.

Corinthians 1:3 states, "Absent in body, but present in spirit". Lorraine's spirit is present with us today and her presence here will long be remembered by those who were taught by her, those who worked alongside her and all who were privileged to know her.