

YEAR OF FAITH

Faith memoirs: revealing one's story of conversion and grace

BY JULIE FILBY

"At times, you will be tested, just as I have been tested. Sometimes you will doubt. Even when you doubt, keep going. Do not let the doubts overcome you and never stop going to Mass. Just say, 'Lord, I need more faith, because I doubt right now.' He will help you. Remember, even the apostles doubted. The faith is the most important gift that God has given to you. Practice it and help others to find it once you have found it yourself."

That counsel is just a small portion of a larger message that Maureen Lanzilotti wants to leave her 18 grandchildren, as well as generations to come. It's a passage from her faith memoir written by her niece Nanette Randall five years ago.

Randall, a parishioner of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Lakewood, left a long career in human resources and started writing personal memoirs in 2006. Through her business Memoirs By Design, she captures oral and written life sto-

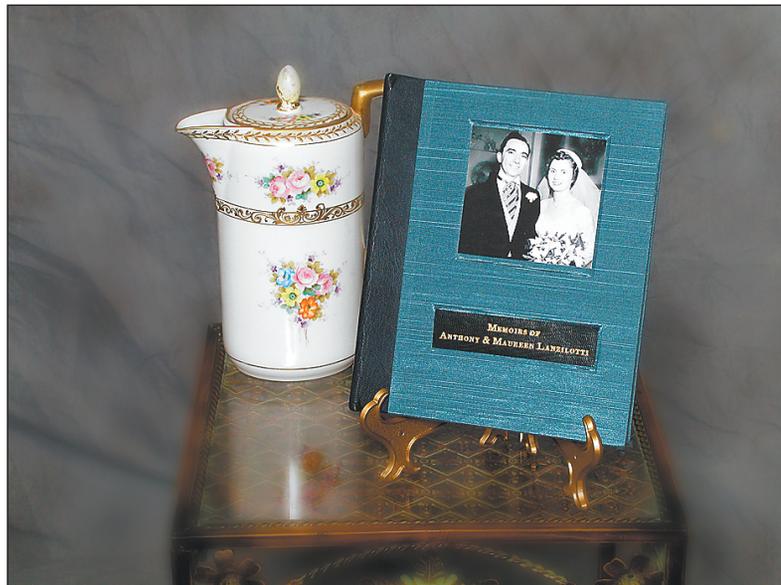


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PICTURED above is the faith memoir of Maureen and Anthony Lanzilotti, researched and written by their niece, Nanette Randall, through her business: Memoirs By Design.

ries of individuals and families—specializing in faith memoirs that allow Catholics to pass on to future generations what their faith has meant to them.

"A faith memoir is a compilation of the special and simple

stories about a relationship with Our Lord, his mother, the saints and the Church," Randall said. "It doesn't have to be complex or difficult."

The current Year of Faith can provide Catholics an opportunity to reflect on the gift of

faith, and describe how it has impacted their lives.

"By the grace of God, Catholics have hope. It runs deep," she said. "Memoirs give insight about how hardship and loss was overcome, or how perseverance led to joy."

Such stories of conversion, love and sacrifice should be told, revealed, documented and passed down because once they're lost, "they're lost forever."

"Stories are lost every day because of illness, disease or death," Randall said. "We don't have to lose them. It's possible that years from now a family member might listen to or read about a journey and be inspired to return to the faith."

"What a gift that would be!"

Randall—a wife, mother and grandmother, who is writing 20 minutes every morning to complete her own faith memoir—offered the following suggestions for starting one:

Put yourself in a quiet place, perhaps in front of the Blessed Sacrament, and think about times when your faith has been

strongest. Write it down, fill in the details later.

Get together with another prayer warrior. Buy a tape recorder and share stories. Set aside time to write weekly.

Ask other family members to talk about what they recall about being Catholic and what it means to them.

Locate photographs of people who influenced you, and see if you can remember some of their faith stories.

Find letters from people who influenced you, and see if you can find something from the letters that might help you describe their influence.

Jot down things you recall about your faith journey, and times in your life when you were grateful for the gift of faith.

Seek expert help by hiring someone to interview, write, edit and print the story.

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