

Salvatore Donze

Salvatore Donze lived as difficult a life as you could imagine. Times in Sicily were hard, so at the age of 43 he decided to move with his wife and four children from there to the United States in hopes of a better future. That required hope and courage. He landed a job with Bel-Art, put his kids in school, and got interested in the real estate business. It's not easy coming to a new country and learning the ins and outs of a business as complex as selling houses, but he did it, and did it well. Maybe it was because of how hard it was to provide food at home in Sicily, but he loved to spend time in his garden here and to help his wife cook and bake. Salvatore was one of many volunteers who provided baked goods for our St. Joseph's Table, a tradition that began in Sicily, where people who had suffered from famine got St. Joseph to intercede on their behalf. They never forgot the favor. Salvatore made his home here on St. John Avenue for 48 years. In the real estate business he could have picked some other house in some other part of the city, but he loved this neighborhood, he loved these people, and he loved this church.

Suffering does not always lead to glory, but it is wonderful when it does, and Salvatore's life is an example of that. St. Paul says that we are "joint-heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him." Paul knew great hardship in his life, but he wrote, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us." If you have a reason for sacrifice, you can do it. If you have to provide for the spouse and children you love, you will undergo great hardships on their behalf.

One of the symbols of the glorious life to come is food. Isaiah prophesied that God would come to Jerusalem and change their fortunes from famine and want to abundance and feast - not just for his own people, but for all the earth. Isaiah said, "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples." He envisions a menu of juicy, rich food and pure, choice wine. The banquet that means the most to us Christians, of course, is the eucharist. Jesus said, "My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in" them.

One of the great mysteries of life is the balance we strike between suffering and satisfaction. When you suffer, you're willing to take risks. Sometimes they pay off. Salvatore struggled hard to achieve success, and at the end of his life he struggled again. He lost his beloved wife Vita. His health declined. But he ended his days surrounded by what he valued: his home, his family, his garden and his church. After so much sacrifice only God can provide a fitting reward. We lift up Salvatore with our prayers that he will find a welcome in a better home, a reunion with members of his family, and a banquet that never ends with food he didn't have to fix. May we follow the example of his love and service, and may Salvatore find rest.