

SENIOR LIFESTYLES

105-year-old man strives to 'do what God wants'

By Audrey Sommers
Catholic News Service

DETROIT — Talking to Pasquale "Pat" Pacitti, there is a feeling of conversing with a man in his 70s. But no, this man with a wonderful sense of humor is a remarkable 105 years old.

At his 105th birthday party in suburban Farmington Hills Aug. 21, his 71-year-old daughter Flora Jacoby was in tears as her father sang "O Sole Mio" for the crowd of seniors.

"It's uncanny that he has lived so long with all his capabilities," she said. "He is articulate and so active."

"He is a very moral man who believes women should be put on a pedestal. He treated my mother very special," Jacoby added. "But primary in our lives as children was going to church and loving God."

Pacitti says the rosary in the morning and again at night. "The main thing is to believe in God and do what God wants," he said.

Pacitti moved to American House, a senior citizen residence, when he was 102. Besides a few aches and pains, this man has few ailments.

"I was a real party guy in my younger days," he said. "I quit smoking 10 years ago when my wife, Bertha, died. I was getting careless with my cigars, and burning holes in my shirts and pants. I still drink wine and beer, but not like I used to."

Pacitti worked for a delivery company earning 9 cents an hour in the early 1900s after he came to Detroit from Italy.

He later learned the art of plastering, which paid him a dollar an hour. "Times were hard," he recalled. "I could do nothing but keep working 10 hours a day when there was work, because jobs were hard to get."

"I married a girl whose parents owned a saloon near downtown Detroit," he added. "If not for their financial help, I never could have felt comfortable supporting Bertha and starting a family."

'Do what is right and kind. Remember the people who are good to you and be twice as good to them.'



Audrey Sommers/CNS

Surrounded by his adult children, 105-year-old Pat Pacitti prepares to blow out the candles on his birthday cake at American House in Farmington Hills, Mich., Aug. 21. In back from left are Virginia Panackia, Earl Pacitti and Flora Jacoby.

Pacitti fathered three children, and now has 12 grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren.

"He was a wonderful role model and a tremendous father to us while we were growing up," said Pacitti's 73-year-old daughter, Virginia Panackia. "He made sure we went to church and followed rules of the house."

"He had no stress in his life. Our mother did everything for him that was stress-related, like paying the bills from his paycheck," said Jacoby.

"Even though he couldn't spend time with us, like dads do today with their kids, you know how the dads today go to their kids' soccer and baseball games, our dad was too busy working to support our family," said Earl Pacitti, 74.

"But we know he loved us because he would kiss us," he recalled. "To this day, my son kisses me, and I kiss him back, just like my dad did to me."

Pacitti doesn't understand why he has lived so long. His parents died when they were in their 60s. His five brothers died in their 70s.

Pacitti walks daily around the residence complex. And his diet is one that is filled with fruits and vegetables. "I really like figs, lots of figs," he said. "I would love it if someone gave me a crate of figs!"

So are figs his secret to longevity? "The true secret to longevity is having a positive outlook on life and a strong faith in God," Pacitti said. "Do what is right and kind. Remember the people who are good to you and be twice as good to them."

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