

Immaculate Conception School Celebrates Flag Day

On June 14, Immaculate Conception School in Astoria celebrated its 12th annual Flag Day Ceremony in the courtyard of the Holy Union Sisters' Convent. Hosted by the Knights of Columbus and Columbian Squires of Immaculate Conception Parish, the ceremony was attended by Catholic War Veterans Post No. 1 also of the parish, Councilmember Peter Vallone Jr., Nicole Aloise from the Queens District Attorney's office, educators and the entire school community.

The ceremony began with the NYPD Band leading the invited guests. Vallone Jr. and Jonathan Chung, his chief of staff and the Columbian Squires, unfolded the American flag and raised it, along with the POW/MIA flag. This was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, an opening prayer by Monsignor Fernando Ferrarese and the "Star Spangled Banner" sung by operatic tenor Daniel Rodriguez, the NYPD police officer who became well known for his rendition of "God Bless America" after the 9/11 attacks.

Vallone, an alumnus of Immaculate Conception said, "I am honored to stand before so many men and women who have served to keep our country safe and free, and I am especially proud to stand by Jonathan, who works extremely hard for our residents in Astoria." To the children he spoke about how they can achieve anything they really want. He said, "Whatever you want to do,

do it with God in your heart and a smile on your face." Chung and Aloise were honored for their work in the Astoria community and commitment to public service.

Following a few more speeches and awards, Rodriguez once again performed, singing "Amazing Grace".

Persephone Simon, mother of Passan Simon, a 20 year-old soldier who was killed on February 25 in Iraq was presented with a folded American flag and a purple heart in memory of her son during the ceremony. This part of the ceremony was followed by the laying of the wreath, and a moment of silence.

The ceremony concluded with the older students of the school singing "God Bless America" and "America the Beautiful". This was followed by the NYPD Band leading the invited guests out of the courtyard.

Monsignor Fernando Ferrarese gave an opening and closing prayer.

NYPD police officer and operatic tenor Daniel Rodriguez sang the "Star Spangled Banner" and "Amazing Grace".

Councilmember Peter Vallone Jr. gave an inspirational talk to the students.

The NYPD Band led the invited guests into the ceremony.

The first graders of Immaculate Conception School made American flags and held them throughout the ceremony.



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