



Courtesy of Vincent Perrone



Courtesy of Monsignor David Cassato

Coming Home

“Oddly enough, throughout this crisis, our homeless veterans have actually stepped up to help us to secure, protect and sanitize our facilities,” says retired USAF Lt. Colonel Vincent J. Perrone, president and CEO of Veterans Inc., based in Worcester, Mass. “Their military training is showing through. They are helping the staff at Veterans Inc. fight the war against COVID-19.”

When Perrone was a joint staff member in the Operational Command Center for Desert Storm, he learned that 450,000 American veterans were homeless. He knew some of them wouldn’t make it home. But he never imagined any would end up homeless. So, he volunteered at an emergency shelter founded by Vietnam veterans.

Since 1993, he has serviced as CEO and president of Veterans Inc. He transformed it into an award-winning nonprofit offering health, housing, employment and training services to thousands of veterans. Despite the pandemic’s financial strain, Perrone remains committed to ending homelessness among veterans. “Everyone who honorably served our country should have a place to live,”

he insists.

Perrone grew up in a large family where he learned about Italian heritage, culture and food. “Being a second generation Italian and growing up in a beautiful extended family has given me a life filled with love, generosity and support,” says the father of four, “...the kind of life that many only dream of.” Visit: www.veteransinc.org.

— *Christina Galeone*



Courtesy of Vincent Perrone

The Pope of Bensonhurst

“I try to be there for them and help them and their families cope with the stress,” says Monsignor David Cassato. “I’ve been calling cops who have the coronavirus and I’m trying my best to counsel them.”

Called “The Pope of Bensonhurst,” Cassato has been a priest for 50 years. The grandson of Italian American immigrants and a native of Kenarski, Brooklyn, he is wildly popular among New Yorkers and well known all over the tri-state area.

Since age 5, Cassato felt a calling to be a priest. Over the years, he has touched the lives of thousands in the parishes of St. Rita, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and St. Athanasius—and as a New York City Police chaplain.

“To be a police chaplain is a heavy responsibility, but it’s tremendously rewarding,” he says. “The cops are a great gift in my life. It’s an honor to serve.”

Cassato says two reasons played a role in his decision to become a priest: the nuns at his Holy Family Middle School and his Italian heritage. The nuns inspired him to live a life of faith and his Italian heritage helped grow his sense of family values and tradition.

“For me, it’s all about when the kids greet you coming into the school yard,” he says. When asked about his nickname, Cassato confesses, “I love it! I want to be the Pope of the Catholic Church.”

— *Anthony Sciaratta*

Courtesy of Monsignor David Cassato

