



## Maria (Piacenti) Pilla

May 5, 1944 - December 22, 2025

CLINTON – On Monday, December 22, 2025, Maria (Piacenti) Pilla, age 81, was reunited in peace with the Lord. Knowing she was in the company of those she loved most, she felt no fear. She trusted in the rewards awaiting her as she passed from this life to the next.

Born in Utica on May 5, 1944, Maria was the daughter of the late Mark Anthony “Tony” Sr. and Angela (Montanaro) Piacenti. She attended St. Mary’s and St. Stanislaus Grammar Schools and graduated from St. Francis de Sales High School with the Class of 1961. She continued her studies at SUNY Oswego, where she majored in education and psychology and earned her bachelor’s degree. Later, she entered a master’s program at Syracuse University.

On July 11, 1970, she wed the love of her life, Michael S. “Mike” Pilla. Maria knew of Mike’s love and commitment to her, and he was her rock for 48 years, until his passing on April 12, 2019. Together, Mike and Maria built a wonderful family life for their children. They encouraged them to make their own decisions and take risks, but the kids always knew that no matter what happened “out there,” they would always have a home to return to. An educator through and through, Maria taught her children empathy for others, how to learn from and correct their mistakes, and to do unto others as you would want done unto you.

Maria believed deeply in the greater good and devoted herself to uplifting the most vulnerable members of society. Alongside her dear friend, Tina Edwards, she co-founded Women's Options, a mission close to her heart, which empowered women returning to the workforce after hardship and guided many others as they entered the workforce for the very first time. Maria also served on Oneida County's first task force dedicated to protecting children suffering from abuse and later continued her advocacy through a task force committed to supporting victims of sexual assault. Through her compassion, courage, and unwavering commitment to justice, Maria truly made a lasting difference in her community.

Maria held various positions within the Utica City School District, followed by a distinguished career in the parochial school system. She once wrote, "I truly believe in the values imparted to children by these schools." She first worked at St. Peter's, where she rose through the ranks to become the principal. In 1999, she most humbly accepted the Teacher of the Year Award. This recognition touched her heart and was a testament to her empathy and compassion for her students and coworkers. In 2000, she transitioned to Notre Dame Junior-Senior High School, the grade levels that she always considered her niche. Maria was blessed to have a fulfilling career that also stimulated her passionate mind. She had an affinity for teaching religion, English, and history. She would eventually retire in 2009.

A parishioner of St. Anthony and St. Agnes Church, Maria trusted in the Lord and understood the importance of "walking the walk." She would often encourage others to unite their sufferings with Christ and to "offer it up."

Maria is survived by her children and their spouses, Mark C. Pilla, Michael L. and Michele Pilla, and Angela and Robert Bernier; and her grandchildren, Giavanna Marie Pilla, Michael Joseph Pilla; Anthony Michael Bernier, and

Dominic Paul Bernier. She fondly remembered her brother, Mark Anthony Piacenti, Jr., who passed away on March 11, 2016. She is additionally survived by her nieces and nephews, Barbara Anne Tressler, Marc A. Piacenti; Justin Pilla; and Patricia and Kristian Rouillard; great-nieces and great-nephews; aunt, Margaret Montanaro (the late Joseph Montanaro); cousins, Maria DeMarco Nitti and her husband Dominick, Patricia DeMarco Creswell, Dominick and Barbara Montanaro, Joseph and Sandy Montanaro, and Amelia Montanaro Massi and her husband Anthony; in-laws, Robert Pilla, and Laurie Pilla; and her many friends, especially the gals from the following groups: "Magnificent 7," her lunch friends, and card players. Forever in her heart she held close Betty Bilodeau, and Regina Lewis who preceded her. She was additionally predeceased by her father-in-law and mother-in-law, Leonard and Edith M. (Lawrence) Pilla; aunt and godmother, Lucille (Montanaro) DeMarco Seitz; and brother-in-law, Leonard L. Pilla.

The family extends their heartfelt gratitude to Crystal and everyone at Hospice and Palliative Care, Inc. Although Maria's time at the Abraham House was brief, they are deeply thankful for the unwavering dedication, compassion, and kindness shown to her during her stay.

Visitation will be held on Friday, January 2, 2026, from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. at the Eannace Funeral Home, Inc., corner of Hammond Ave. Memorial contributions in Maria's honor may be made to the Abraham House online at [www.theabrahamhouse.org/donate](http://www.theabrahamhouse.org/donate) or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital online at [www.stjude.org/donate](http://www.stjude.org/donate); envelopes will also be available at the funeral home. Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend Maria's Mass of Christian Burial and Celebration of Life which will commence on Friday, January 2, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. at St. Anthony and St. Agnes Church, 422 Tilden Ave. Interment will take place in Calvary Cemetery at the convenience of the family.



# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN 2. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Eannace Funeral Home, Inc.  
932 South Street  
corner of Hammond Ave.  
Utica, NY 13501  
(315) 724-6714  
eannacefh@roadrunner.com

## Funeral Service

JAN 2. 1:00 PM (ET)

St. Anthony & St. Agnes Church  
422 Tilden Ave.  
Utica, NY 13501  
(315) 732-1177  
<https://www.stanthonystagnes.com/>

# Tribute Wall

KH

“ I’ll miss seeing Maria at our St. Francis lunches. There aren’t very many of the class of 1960 left. Maria was a very special person and will be missed by all that knew her.

Katharine (Pugh) Hooper - January 06 at 03:30 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Maria (Piacenti) Pilla.



January 02 at 08:12 AM

PF

“ Paul Bernier Jr. & family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Maria (Piacenti) Pilla.

Paul Bernier Jr. & family - December 30, 2025 at 06:04 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Maria (Piacenti) Pilla.



December 30, 2025 at 06:04 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Maria (Piacenti) Pilla.*



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December 30, 2025 at 03:43 PM



“ *Love Robert, Laurie and Justin purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Maria (Piacenti) Pilla.*



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**Love Robert, Laurie and Justin** - December 30, 2025 at 12:28 PM



“ *3 files added to the tribute wall*



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**Lisa Morosco** - December 30, 2025 at 10:42 AM



*Happy Days this Summer.*

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**Lisa Morosco** - December 30, 2025 at 10:42 AM

TD

“ We will always remember our fun trips to Utica. Sitting around Aunt Edith's kitchen table with Maria and Mike sharing family stories and just enjoying being together. Maria was an amazing woman with so many interests. We will miss her and our time together. Our deepest condolences to Angela, Michael and the family. Love, Chris and Theresa DeMattia

Theresa and Chris DeMattia - December 28, 2025 at 07:08 PM

KV

“ I had the honor and privilege of teaching with Maria at Notre Dame. She had a golden heart and was so kind always lifting spirits with her smile and wit. My prayers are with your family.

Kathleen Valeriano - December 28, 2025 at 06:52 PM

FC

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family as you go through this difficult time. Thinking of you all. RIP MARIA ❤️❤️  
❤️.



Frank and Lisa Carinci - December 28, 2025 at 06:16 PM

KM

“ Kristen M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Maria (Piacenti) Pilla.

Kristen M. - December 28, 2025 at 08:41 AM