



## ROCCO A. GONNELLA

September 27, 1948 - December 9, 2023

Rocco A. Gonnella, 75, of Liverpool, affectionately known by his family and friends as “Rocky”, was born in Syracuse on September 27, 1948 to the late August and Ann (Kordak) Gonnella. He grew up in an Italian American neighborhood on Delhi Street. His home and others were later raised to build the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School. Rocky graduated from Henninger in 1967. By then, one of his lifelong passions came to be realized. He developed into a star quarterback in Section 3 Athletics. Almost all high school football fans of the time knew who he was and respected his athletic ability. After high school, he went to college at the University of Nebraska Omaha on an athletic scholarship where he started at quarterback.

Upon graduation, Rocky taught and coached football at Liverpool High School. As described by a close friend, “Rocky loved the Lord and his great passion was telling others that they could come to know Jesus personally.” He joined Living Word Church in Syracuse, New York, where he became a lifelong member. He shared the Gospel as a street preacher at the bus stops downtown on Fayette and Salina streets.

Rocky began teaching at Living Word Academy in 1979 combining his passions for athletics and the Gospel. In addition to being the Phys Ed teacher and Athletic Director, he taught middle school Bible class, shared weekly sermons with high school students in chapel, and left a lasting legacy of zealous faith. He retired in 2014 after almost 40 years. He loved his brother, sister and nieces, as well as his Church family. Rocky will be missed by those

who loved him dearly.

Rocco is survived by his sister, Kathleen Gonnella, of Syracuse and many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Family and friends may call from 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM Monday December 18, 2023 at Living Word Church, 6099 Old Court St, Syracuse, NY 13206 with a Memorial Service at 11:00 AM. BAGOZZI TWINS FUNERAL HOME has care of arrangements.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his memory to Living Word Church.

Please share online tributes at [www.bagozzitwins.com](http://www.bagozzitwins.com).

# Previous Events

## Visitation

DEC 18. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

LIVING WORD CHURCH  
6099 OLD COURT ST.  
SYRACUSE, NY 13206

## Memorial Service

DEC 18. 11:00 AM (ET)

LIVING WORD CHURCH  
6099 OLD COURT ST.  
SYRACUSE, NY 13206

# Tribute Wall

NG

“ Brother Rocky was very instrumental in my salvation. God used him to show me through scripture that many things in my religion actually taught the opposite of what the bible said. He could see the hunger in me for truth, and sometimes would say to me "you're going to get saved". I would outwardly deny it, but inwardly I was excited and hoping that it was true. He was a man of the Word. He knew the scriptures, and how to explain them to others that they might come to Christ as well. He'll always have a special place in my heart, and always has. You fought the good fight, and you finished the race. Thank you Lord, for your life and testimony brother Rocky. I pray that your family is finding comfort in knowing that you are with Jesus. I felt very bad that I missed your funeral; I wanted to be there. See you on the other side my dear brother, Rocky. 🕊️

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**Niki Goodrich** - December 28, 2023 at 05:43 PM

GT

“ Sad to hear of my brother Rocky's passing. He was a good man who lived the life and set a fine example of being a true Christian man. He served with distinction and was loved by All those who knew him. I will honor his memory. He fought the fight and finished the race. He is now in his masters house and his joy is forever.

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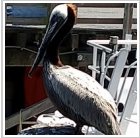
**Gary Tancredi** - December 23, 2023 at 12:02 PM

NG

*Amen! Brother Rocky was very instrumental in my salvation. God used him to show me through scripture that many things in my religion actually taught the opposite of what the bible said. He could see the hunger in me for truth, and sometimes would say to me "you're going to get saved". I would outwardly deny it, but inwardly I was excited and hoping that it was true. He was a man of the Word. He knew the scriptures, and how to explain them to others that they might come to Christ as well. He'll always have a special place in my heart, and always has. You fought the good fight, and you finished the race. Thank you Lord, for your life and testimony brother Rocky. I pray that your family is finding comfort in knowing that you are with Jesus. I felt very bad that I missed your funeral; I wanted to be there. See you on the other side my dear brother, Rocky. 🙏*

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**Niki Goodrich** - December 28, 2023 at 05:35 PM

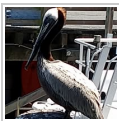


“ *To those who couldn't make the service for Rocky Gonnella, you can watch the service here at this link below. (The first hour doesn't have sound - but you can go right to the 2:00:00 mark to hear the tributes about him)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXkjz2RI1dU>

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**Rich Carrier** - December 20, 2023 at 01:11 PM



*Bro. Rocky was a wonderful man. I had the privilege of living with him and a few guys for about 2 and a half years before I got married. He was a man of faith, an encourager of the brethren, a witness for Jesus Christ, a faithful friend, a good role model, and so many more things. He will definitely be missed by his church family in Christ and by all who knew him.*

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**Rich Carrier** - December 20, 2023 at 01:18 PM

LB

“ I was a long time friend of his brother Rich. Rich was my oldest son Godfather. I knew Rocky too. I send my prayers to their Sister.  
God Bless  
Lloyd "Buzz" Besaw

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**Lloyd Buzz Besaw** - December 18, 2023 at 03:55 PM

DL

“ I group up on Hawley Ave just around the corner from Rocky. I was a tomboy then and spent many summer days on Delhi playing football with Rocky and the guys. RiP Rocky. Sincerely, Donna (Haskell) Lannon

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**Donna (Haskell) Lannon** - December 18, 2023 at 01:03 PM

VS

“ I roomed with Bro Rocky on a pilgrimage to Israel in 1994, a real gentleman. He faithfully taught both my sons in phys ed from K-12th grade, and had a role in shaping them as men. Long before, I was once sweet on a young lady who was more interested in Rocky than me. That one didn't work out for either one of us, oh well, life moves on. We're born, we live, and then we die. Along the way we look for significance. Rocky found significance in service to his Lord, Jesus Christ. Sure, there's some sacrifice in living a God-directed life, but also many blessings along the way, and the ultimate reward is out of this world -- literally. So glad you made it all the way, Brother.  
Von Sleight



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**Vonden Sleight** - December 17, 2023 at 03:31 PM



“ Rocky and I began our first year of teaching (1070) at Nate Perry Elementary in Liverpool. We became fast friends and hung out often. We had so many laughs! I am so sorry to hear of his passing. I now live in Omaha, Nebraska with my family. Prayers to his family!  
Marilyn Sage Weller

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**Marilyn Weller** - December 17, 2023 at 01:56 PM



*I am sorry..1970!*

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**Marilyn Weller** - December 17, 2023 at 01:58 PM

TF

*I roomed with Rocky @ UNO my freshman year and we traveled back and forth from Omaha to Syracuse (Seneca Falls for me) a few times. I have many memories of our time together along with Max, Bruce, Albert and Smitty. They were fun memories.  
Rocky was great person, but a terrible driver, LOL.  
He will be missed & his life on this earth was always to help others, now he can reap the benefits of his many years of service in his final resting place.*

*Riposa in pace*

*Tony Ferrara*

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**Tony Ferrara** - December 18, 2023 at 08:50 AM

FB

*I grew up around the corner from Oak Street. Rocky. we were friends playing sports together little league, pop warner football. and Henninger. Me and John Trotter were his running backs. He was a great friend and good man who love God.He is now with God in Glory. I will miss my dear friend.  
He was great QB*

*Rest in Peace my Friend*

*Frankie Broome #44*

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**Frankie Broome** - December 18, 2023 at 03:21 PM

JG

“ I played football against Henninger in 1966 and Rocky was the best quarterback in CNY. He had a outstanding ability to escape his pursuers and quickly deliver a accurate pass anywhere on the field. Best wishes to his family and sorry for your loss. John Goly (Bishop Ludden)

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**John Goly** - December 17, 2023 at 02:26 AM