

Twins among priests celebrating 25 years

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Some Catholic families dream of raising at least one son for the priesthood.

Other families dream of raising a whole flock of potential candidates to inherit the mantle Christ gave his apostles.

But how many mothers dream of carrying two future priests in their womb — at the same time?

Linda Pierpolini Beligotti did just that, giving birth to Richard J. and Robert L. on Sept. 8, 1942, in Watkins Glen.

The fraternal twins were both ordained to the priesthood on June 1, 1968. And it seems that their bond formed in the womb has only strengthened throughout their whole life.

Father Richard claimed getting the idea for the priesthood in his teenage years before his brother who readily agreed that he warmed to the notion more slowly. Both credited their parish priests and their Franciscan teachers at the former St. Anthony of Padua Preparatory School in Watkins Glen for inspiring their vocations.

Despite Father Richard's sureness of his vocation before his brother, they obviously were on the same wavelength when they were ordained as evidenced from the "facts" form each submitted to the diocesan newspaper upon their ordination. In the "remarks" section, both brothers wrote: "This first Mass will be an even greater joy for me since my twin brother will be celebrating with me his own first Mass ..."

Together, talking about their vocation, the Beligottis are an energetic pair, finishing each other's sentences, joking and talking in a lively manner about the family that nurtured their vocation through their deep Catholic faith.

Father Richard, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo in Elmira Heights since June, 1989, credited his maternal grandmother — who went blind in her old age — with influencing him to become a priest.

"You'd never know she was blind," Father Richard said. "She was not bitter at all about her blindness."

"Her attitude was this is what the Lord wanted," Father Robert chimed in.

Their father, Sarafino Beligotti, who passed away last year, also made them both want to serve the Lord, the twins noted, because he boldly expressed his love of God.

"He was never afraid to do what is right," Father Richard said.

His brother, who recently left his pastorate at Rochester's St. Anthony of Padua for a pastorate at St. Francis of Assisi in Auburn, explained that the senior Beligotti was famous in their Watkins Glen parish of St. Mary's of the Lake.

"In high school, Mother and Dad would bring us to Mass. People would comment, 'Oh, you're father sings too loud,'" he explained. "But he sang all the louder!"

Apparently, all that singing must have influenced the priest-twins whose jubilee celebration at St. Mary's of the Lake on June 6 featured a wide range of classical and modern musical selections.

The brothers paid special thanks to David Jackson, the liturgy's organist, in their program, and his choir "who

encourages us to sing so well."

The number of musical selections offered at the celebration Mass, attended by 400 people, reflects the number of parishes at which the brothers have served.

In addition to St. Charles Borromeo, Father Richard has served at St. Cecilia, Irondequoit; St. Margaret Mary, Apalachin; Immaculate Conception, Ithaca; Holy Cross, Rochester; St. Agnes, Avon; St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads; St. Thomas More, Brighton; St. Michael, Newark; and St. Pius, Chili.

Father Robert also served at St. Charles and at Holy Family, Auburn; St. Vincent DePaul, Corning; St. Mary, Southside Elmira; and as assistant pastor and pastor at St. Anthony of Padua.

In addition to the Beligotti brothers, the following priests are celebrating their 25th year since ordination.

Born June 22, 1942, Father Charles J. Latus, currently serves as pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Church, Mendon.



Following his ordination, he served at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Rochester, before being named co-pastor of Rochester's Our Lady of Mercy Parish in 1974. He became the parish's pastor in 1976, and left in 1978 to work as secretary to Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, and then to Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

He also served as diocesan director of what was then the Division of Personnel, Staffing and Development in the early 1980s. He was named St. Catherine's pastor in 1986.

Father Kevin P. Murphy was born Jan. 10, 1943. From 1968-72, he was assigned to St. Mary, Canandaigua, after which he served the Cornell Catholic Community, Ithaca, until 1977.



In the 1970s, he served some time as chairman of the Priests' Personnel Finance Committee. From 1977-79 he served as co-pastor of St. Patrick, Elmira, and from 1979-81, he was associate pastor at St. Louis, Pittsford. He became co-pastor of Rochester's St. John the Evangelist Church on Humboldt Street in 1981. He was named pastor in 1991, a position he currently holds.

Born March 23, 1942, Father James A. Schwartz this week began serving as pastor of St. Louis Church, Pittsford. He left from his pastorate at Holy Family, Rochester, a position he had held since June of 1990.



Following his ordination, Father Schwartz was assigned to St. Theodore Church, Gates. He later served as chaplain at Rochester General Hospital until 1979.

He was named the first diocesan director of what was then known as the Ministry to Priests from 1979-87. He also served as spiritual director of Becket Hall from 1982-84, and as director from 1984-87.

Father Schwartz attended the Jungian Institute in Zurich, Switzerland from 1987-88, and served as director of



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
Fathers Richard (left) and Robert Beligotti sit in front of a statue of St. Anthony of Padua at Father Robert's former parish, St. Anthony of Padua in Rochester. The twin priests are both celebrating their 25th jubilees this year.

the Center for Human Development in Washington, D.C., from 1988-1990.

Father Melvin H. Walczak was ordained a married priest of the Polish National Church in 1968. By extraordinary privilege of the Holy See, he



became a Roman Catholic priest in 1985, first serving the diocese at St. Joseph's Church, Penfield. In 1988, he became Catholic chaplain at Rochester General Hospital, and eventually directed pastoral care there. About 18 months ago, Father Walczak began assisting on Sundays at St. Jerome Church, East Rochester, and this week he began his pastorate at St. An-

thony of Padua, Rochester.

Born Sept. 28, 1942, Father George H. Hill Jr. was ordained in the Diocese of Worcester, Mass., and also celebrates 25 years of priesthood this year.

He began serving in the Rochester diocese in 1974 as dean of students at St. Bernard's Seminary. He served as director of counseling there from 1978-81.

From 1981-82, Father Hill was chaplain at Industry School in Rush. He then served as pastoral director of the American College of Louvain, Belgium, from 1982-85. He joined the Family Brothers of the Trappist Abbey of the Genesee in Piffard in 1985. A counseling psychologist, he has given talks on how spiritual life and ministry combine in action and contemplation.

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