

# Memories of five great women religious

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Yesterday (Sunday, Sept. 10), I had the pleasure of preaching at a liturgy in celebration of the Golden Jubilee of 10 Sisters of Mercy of the Albany Regional Community. That gathering at St. John's Church, Rensselaer, was a wonderful opportunity to spend time with some old friends. The event also afforded me a time to think about the women religious I have known in my life and about the impact they have had on me.

Sisters were never a part of my life until I started Catholic Central High School, Troy, in 1955. There the great majority of our faculty were Sisters of St. Joseph and Sisters of Mercy. I remember them as competent, dedicated, loving women who cared deeply about us and who consistently gave us the best they had to offer.

I picked up my high school yearbook recently and spent some time looking at the photographs of those women, remembering them all and the way in which each influenced me. It's not possible to list all of them, but I think for example of:

Sister Mary Carolus, a great Latin teacher who also had a special gift of helping apprehensive, first-year students like me adjust to the larger world in which we then found ourselves. I knew right away that she was a good Latin teacher. I think it was only later that I understood the lessons she taught about hospitality and respect;

Sister Mary Genevieve, who realized early on that Math was neither my interest nor a strong point, but who also knew I



## A LONG THE WAY

could do better than I was doing in her class. One day she allowed as how I'd be a lot better off if I paid less attention to the girls in class and more to what she had to say about algebra. She said it with an ardor that made a deep impression on me! And my grade improved quite a bit;

Sister Mary Fredericka, who introduced us sophomores to the business of applying our Catholic convictions about human dignity and mutual respect to the concrete events of our daily life. We talked about the music of the day and advertising, and about the ways in which the culture of the day supported or ran counter to our values;

Sister Mary Thomas, who manifested such simplicity and openness to life and to us that we were able to confide in her and seek her advice. We could do that because we knew she would respond in a way that would both demonstrate her support and

leave us free in the way in which we employed her advice;

Sister Mary Margretta, who communicated to us her love for literature, who encouraged us to in every way she could to organize and to express our thoughts orally and in writing. In my senior year, Sister used all of her persuasive power, and that was considerable, to get me to participate in a play. I finally did, but not before protesting vigorously that I had little or no acting ability. My performance proved me absolutely right about the acting. But Sister Margretta had other things in mind. She was interested in our growth through new experience.

The five sisters I have mentioned are examples of the great women who taught us in high school. I could easily have mentioned many others. But I think of them all tonight and thank them sincerely for all they gave me.

As I come to the end of this week's column, I am mindful that I admire and offer thanks not only to the sisters I knew "way back then" but to the women religious I have known through the years and know now. Since 1951 when I met Sister Mary Carolus in Latin I class, religious women responding to the explicit call of the church have been generous and courageous in their efforts at renewal.

Those efforts — which, I believe, have brought benefit to the whole church — have not always been as well understood as well as they might have been. But, more about that another time soon. In the meantime ...

Peace to all.

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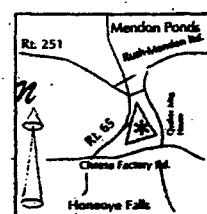
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