



Catholic Courier

DIocese OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK ■ VOL. 108 NO. 27 ■ THURSDAY, April 17, 1997 ■ 75¢ ■ 24 PAGES

Milestones

Events mark life's journey

Story by Kathleen Schwar

In 1947, three daughters of Frederick and Pasqualine Varno were married in separate ceremonies at St. Francis de Sales Church in Geneva.

Since then, the three sisters and their husbands have celebrated their birthdays, anniversaries and other good times together, with everything from cake and ice cream, to a Caribbean cruise.

This 50th anniversary year, however, Ann Garofono of St. John the Evangelist in Clyde won't be celebrating her wedding anniversary with her sisters. Her husband William passed away in 1991.

"I just feel like I should be celebrating with them," she said, "but it wouldn't be my celebration. I was hoping we all could have celebrated at the same time. It just wasn't meant to be, I guess."

Garofono is not the self-pitying type. She looks back on plenty of other significant and happy times - her daughter's marriage, her son's marriage, another son's joining the service, the birth of her four grandchildren.

"Those are my milestones," she said.

Garofono explained that a milestone is "something that happened that was very very important to you. Something out of the ordinary, over a long period of time."

And to this day she is grateful the three couples took a one-week cruise together to San Juan, Puerto Rico, 10 years ago.

"We gave ourselves a 40th anniversary party," she recalled. "We all celebrated together. ... I'm glad we did that. That was another milestone."

"You don't know how much longer you'll be here to celebrate," she added, "so do everything you can."

Such milestones as graduations, weddings, ordinations and anniversaries often serve to mark people's lives - much as stone markers along roads helped travelers discern how far they'd gone or had yet to go.

Milestones also apparently help to transform the journey itself.

"I think a milestone changes most people's lives," noted Abbot John Eudes Bamberger of the Abbey of the Genesee in Piffard.

"You live out 25 years of married life, or in my case 25 years as an abbot, day by day," the abbot said. "It is a diffuse, general experience that enters into most of the things you do. But an anniversary circumscribes, crystallizes and gives it more of a face, more of a character. It does contribute to the way you experience yourself, how you relate to others and perceive life."

His biggest milestone was becoming a monk - professing his solemn vows in 1955; but other milestones included entering the Navy in 1944, graduating from medical school at the University of Cincinnati in 1949, and becoming an abbot in 1971.

"They changed my way of experiencing life and even knowing myself, people who are important to me and the way I relate to them," he said. When he joined the Navy out of Covington, Ky., he said, and served at a hospital, it was a milestone because of "the actual experience of sharing life with people from every place and being on my own for the first time."

What would normally be a milestone for many people, his 70th birthday last August, was as quiet as most birthdays at the monastery, in contrast to his 25th jubilee, he noted. About 100 monastic brothers and sisters, and other friends from the United States and Canada came to honor him in Sep-



tember.

"I didn't feel the need for that," Abbot Bamberger said. "But others recommended it and I thought I should accept that. I thought it was important for others, not just myself. I'm not inclined to a lot of fuss."

"It was a good experience," he said, adding it helped renew some bonds. "And knowing these people were interested enough to participate, I think it was more of a sharing."

In helping Catholics prepare for the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, Pope John Paul II wrote in "As the Third Millennium Draws Near": "In the lives of individuals, jubilees are usually connected with the date of birth; but other anniversaries are also celebrated such as those of baptism, confirmation, first communion, priestly or episcopal ordination and the sacrament of marriage."

Continued on page 10