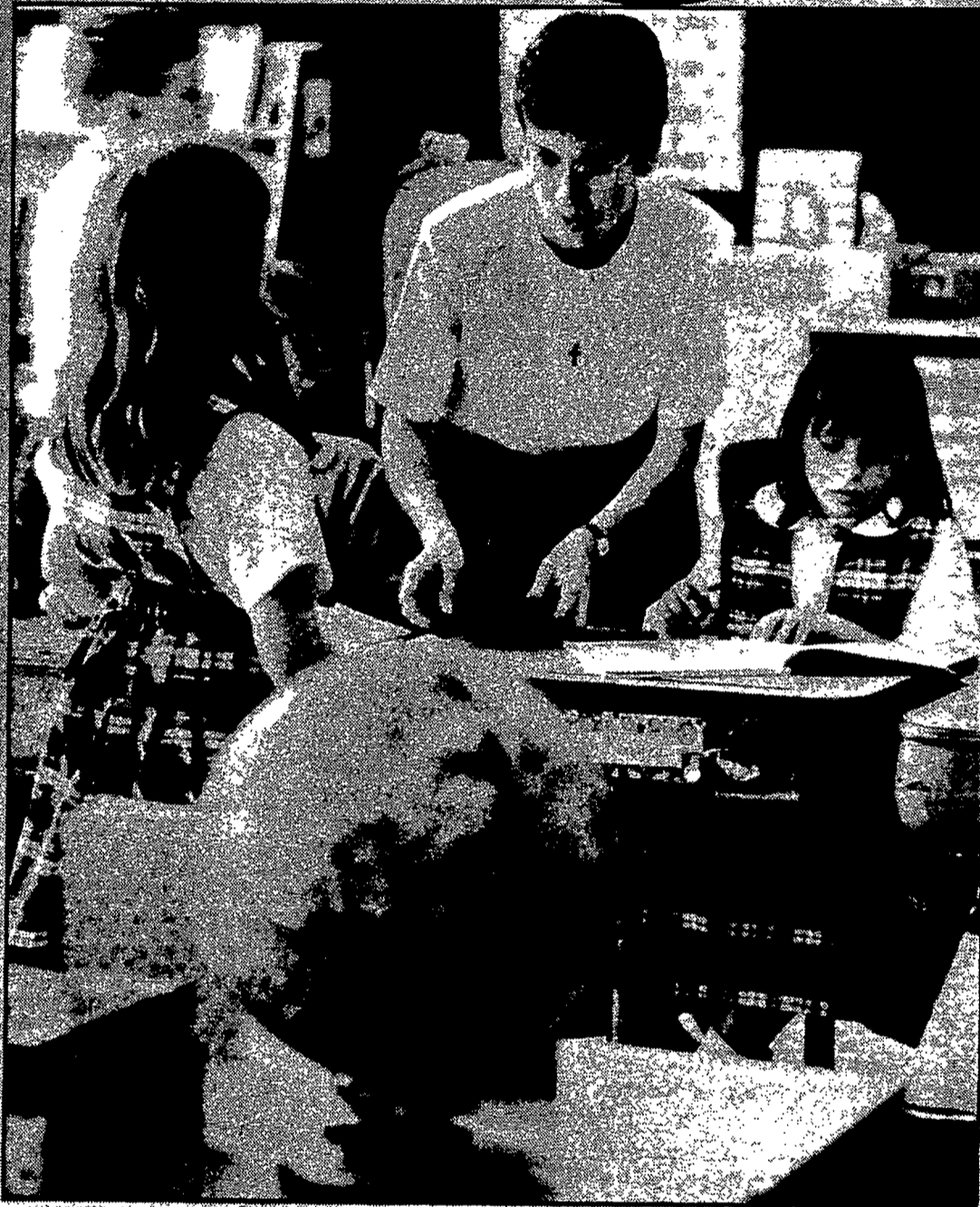


Called ^{by} God

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Century's 'final' vows near

There's a potentially frightening thought inside the head of Sister Carolyn Rosica, RSM, a third-grade teacher at Seton Catholic School, 165 Rhinecliff Drive, Brighton.

"It's a little scary, but I try not to dwell on it too much," she said.

"It" is the fact that Sister Rosica will be the last woman to profess final vows as a Mercy sister in Rochester during this century. Then there's the added fact that no other candidates are waiting in the wings to become Mercy sisters in the Diocese of Rochester.

But the 36-year-old woman religious noted that her order began few in number in 19th century Dublin, Ireland.

"The Sisters of Mercy just started as two, and two by two they kept multiplying," she noted.

Sister Rosica will make her final profession at her order's motherhouse chapel on Saturday, Nov. 8, at 2:30 p.m. Father Paul English, CSB, campus ministry director at St. John Fisher College, will celebrate the liturgy, assisted by Sister Sheila Stevenson, RSM, president of the Rochester chapter of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

Also present at the service will be Sister Kathleen McAlpin, RSM, from Merion, Pa., who was one of Sister Rosica's novice directors. Meanwhile, the children's choir from Our Lady of Lourdes

Parish — where Seton Catholic School is located — will sing at the Mass.

Sister Rosica said her own vocation began in her family, headed by her mother, Rose Ann Rosica and her father, Dr. Anthony Rosica, of East Irondequoit, who died Aug. 26.

"My faith was ... the faith of my parents," she said. "It didn't just fall from a tree or from heaven."

The Rosicas, members of St. Ambrose Parish, were a devout family, Sister Rosica said. She and her siblings prayed often with her parents, she said, and the family regularly attended Mass together. Sister Rosica has two sisters, Maria and Lisa, and three brothers, John, Bill and Father Tom Rosica, CSB, a Basilian priest in Toronto.

Sister Rosica said her vocation was also nurtured while she was a student at Our Lady of Mercy High School from 1975 to 1979. Sister Rosica said the Mercy sisters staffing the place inspired her by their unpretentious dedication.

"They just seemed like a very happy group of people," she said. "There was something down to earth about the Sister of Mercy. I always found them approachable — very warm, very caring."

Sister Rosica then attended Nazareth College, Rochester, and the College of New Rochelle, N.Y., where she obtained a master's degree in early childhood education in 1985. While in graduate

school, she began to realize that she wanted to live a life vowed to others and God.

"I feel there's a freedom within the vows to be much more of who I am, be other-centered," she said.

In 1988, Sister Rosica became a candidate for the Sisters of Mercy. She was received into the order's two-year novitiate program in 1989. She professed her first Mercy vows in 1991, pledging to work for Christ and her order by embracing poverty, chastity, obedience and service to the poor, the sick and the ignorant.

Sister Sheila Geraghty, RSM, social ministry coordinator at Our Lady of Lourdes, served as Sister Rosica's first novice director. She remembered that the young woman liked to visit with the order's older members, exploring the Mercy sisters' history.

"Her faith was very deep," Sister Geraghty recalled of Sister Rosica. "Her prayer life was good."

Sister Geraghty added that she thought Sister Rosica could pass on her order's history to her young charges at Seton Catholic School, a thought that Sister Rosica said she shared.

"My own faith can't help but get passed along to the kids," Sister Rosica said.

A veteran of teaching at such diocesan schools

Continued on page 4b

Story by Rob Cullivan • Photo by Greg Francis