

FEATURE

Sisters of St. Joseph celebrate 22 jubilarians

Twenty-two Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester are celebrating 25, 50, 60, 70, 75 and 80 years of religious life in 1999.

The Sisters of St. Joseph plan to honor these jubilarians during a special Mass and reception 7 p.m. Friday, April 30 in the Motherhouse chapel, 4095 East Ave., Pittsford.

80 Years

Eighty years ago, Sister Joan of Arc Pero entered the Sisters of St. Joseph. She said she chose the religious life because she wanted to serve God first. And she did. From 1920 to 1975, Sister Joan of Arc taught students at a number of area parishes. Her first ministry was teaching second-graders at Blessed Sacrament (1920-21). Through the years, she taught at St. Patrick Cathedral, Nazareth Hall, St. Agnes Institute, St. Mary in Canandaigua, and Sacred Heart. She also served at Holy Apostles, St. Agnes in Avon, Immaculate Conception in Ithaca, Holy Rosary, and St. Patrick in Mt. Morris.

"I enjoyed teaching the older children in the sixth and seventh grades."

In addition to her many teaching ministries, Sister Joan of Arc attended the Excelsior Business School. This training was especially critical at the schools where she taught because many did not have secretarial support at the time. During her second year at St. Patrick Cathedral School Sister Joan of Arc not only taught students, but also performed secretarial duties, including typing all the graduates' diplomas.

Sister Joan of Arc retired in 1975. She currently spends her days in prayer ministry at St. Joseph Convent Infirmary.

Sister Nathalie Brahler was born in 1897 in Penfield. Just before her 21st birthday in 1918, she entered the Sisters of St. Joseph. This year, she celebrates her 80th anniversary in the order.

Sister Nathalie took on her first teaching assignment at St. Augustine's in Rochester. For the next 45 years, she taught at many area schools including St. Aloysius in Auburn, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Theodore, St. John the Evangelist in Spencerport, St. Monica, St. Patrick in Dansville and St. Lucy. While at St. Lucy, Sister Nathalie also served as superior of the convent.

Other teaching assignments took Sister Nathalie to St. Mary in Canandaigua, St. Patrick in Corning, St. Francis Xavier, St. Mary in Elmira, Christ the King, St. Thomas More and St. Agnes in Avon.

During her career in education Sister Nathalie also served one summer at St.



Bernard's Seminary and worked for a time at St. Ann's Home. In 1964, Sister Nathalie pursued another one of her many talents as a seamstress at the Motherhouse. There, she shared her sewing skills with her fellow sisters until 1990 when she officially retired to St. Joseph Convent Infirmary. This 101-year-old celebrates a life well lived and an example of model service.

75 Years

It has been 75 very full years since Sister Mary Linus Witukiewicz entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1923.



Her present ministries consist of prayer and visiting the sick, but this Elmira native spent the majority of her time as a Sister of St. Joseph involved in education.

From 1925 to 1958 she taught first- and third-graders at St. Stanislaus in Rochester. In 1958, she served as principal and first-grade teacher at St. Casimir in Elmira. In 1964, Sister Mary Linus began teaching at St. Mary in Dansville until she retired in 1979. For the next 10 years, until 1989, she remained at St. Mary serving as a sacristan and visitor to the sick.

Sister Mary Linus earned a bachelor's degree in education from Nazareth College in 1950.

"Being associated with the Sisters of St. Joseph is very rewarding," she said. "And the teaching ministry has been one of the greatest experiences and joys of my life."

70 Years

Sister Marie Martin Madigan says that while her 70 years as a Sister of St. Joseph have been filled with many ups and downs and twists and turns, she is grateful for them. She is especially grateful for the opportunity to know some wonderful people.



"My ministry put me in contact with two extraordinary groups of people who profoundly affected my life: mentally challenged individuals and African-Americans," she said. "The minds of mentally challenged individuals are not cluttered. They express basic truths with a forthrightness that can be jolting."

"African-Americans have a charisma we call 'soul.' Their religious expression is joyful, transcending the pain of their history."

Sister Marie Martin has also had a wonderful impact on many people. From 1930-1979 she taught at Immaculate Conception, St. Michael in Penn Yan, Holy Childhood and St. Monica. From 1964 to 1969 Sister Marie Martin served as the di-

rector of residents and facilities at Nazareth College, and instructor of education.

Sister Marie Martin retired in 1979. These days Sister Marie Martin is involved in a variety of services, from tutoring and proofreading, to researching for the Congregation's Peace and Justice Committee, cooking, and, in her words, "trying to be useful 'round the house."

Sister Marie Bernard Kinsella said she has done much praying, reflecting and giving thanks on her 70th anniversary as a Sister of St. Joseph.

For more than 40 years she dedicated her life to education. She learned from the beginning the important role parents play in their children's education.

"It was a privilege teaching children whose parents were so thankful for the interest I took in them," she said.

Beginning in 1930, Sister Marie Bernard taught many children at area schools, including Nazareth Academy, St. Monica, St. Mary in Elmira, St. Stephen in Geneva, Sacred Heart, St. Ambrose, Blessed Sacrament, and St. Augustine.

In 1964, Sister Marie Bernard was appointed the community supervisor of schools and later a social studies consultant. In 1973, she began yet another ministry, chair of the planning committee for a survey on religious education in St. Louis Parish. In addition to interviewing parishioners, Sister Marie Bernard was a very active visitor for the parish.

"I started many Prayer Groups throughout the community," she noted.

Today, she focuses much of her energy on prayer ministry, both at the Motherhouse and at private homes.

"I am well aware," she said, "of how God has used me to help families in raising their children to know Jesus personally. I carry many miracles in my heart."

She spent 62 years in the education ministry, 23 of those years teaching first grade,

but Sister Agnes Paula Shambo said her most rewarding ministry is her current one, prayer. "Living at St. Joseph Convent Infirmary has been the greatest experience of my life," she said. "It is so peaceful and quiet here, and there is so much love. It is truly a place of prayer."

Before retiring to St. Joseph Convent Infirmary in 1992, Sister Agnes Paula was active at a variety of area parishes. From 1930-1940, she taught first- and second-graders at St. Michael's, Penn Yan.

"It was my first love even though it was a challenge," she recalled fondly.

Through the years, Sister Agnes Paula

taught at St. Mary, Canandaigua, St. Augustine, Rochester, St. Mary, Auburn, St. Stephen, Geneva, and St. Patrick, Seneca Falls. Her last years in the education ministry was spent as a classroom assistant at St. Mary, Waterloo. In addition to teaching, Sister served as eucharistic minister at St. Patrick, Seneca Falls, and St. Mary, Waterloo parishes.

A native of Auburn, Sister Agnes Paula said she chose religious life because "this is where the Lord wanted me."

She added that while it was not her primary reason for entering religious life, she always admired the Sisters of St. Joseph who taught her.

Sister Grace Conway (formerly Sister Clara) knows something about children. After all, she spent 47 of her 70 years as a Sister of St. Joseph teaching them. Of all her experiences, Sister Grace said two have had the greatest impact on her life.

"In the 1930s I taught immigrant children who were learning English, and I have spent all my life teaching people to love poetry and stories."

There is no doubt that through the years Sister Grace taught many children to love poetry and stories. From 1930 to 1977 she taught at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Sacred Heart, St. Patrick in Seneca Falls, Immaculate Conception, Holy Apostles, St. Francis Xavier, St. Peter and Paul in Elmira, St. Bridget, St. Aloysius in Auburn, St. Anthony in Elmira, St. Anne, St. Joseph's Villa, St. Francis de Sales, Geneva, and St. Pius X.

Upon retiring from teaching in 1977 Sister Grace continued to work, taking on housekeeping and mail service duties at the Motherhouse. It wasn't until last year that she permanently retired. These days, Sister Grace fills her time with prayer ministry at St. Joseph Convent Infirmary. She also spends her days visiting sisters at the Motherhouse and the infirmary.

Sister Anne Elizabeth Cooney entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1928. She spent the majority of her nearly 69-year teaching career developing the minds of children in kindergarten and the first grade.

A Rochester native, Sister Anne Elizabeth began teaching in 1930 at St. Peter and Paul in Elmira. From 1931 to 1978 she taught at such schools as St. Mary in Canandaigua, St. Paul in Oswego, Nazareth Model School, Our Lady of Lourdes, Holy Apostles, Nazareth Hall Cadet School, Immaculate Conception in Ithaca, Mother of Sorrows, and St. Bridget. During her teaching career, in 1949, Sister Anne Elizabeth earned a bachelor's degree in education from Nazareth College.

In 1978 Sister Anne Elizabeth took her skills in a new direction when she began tutoring children at St. Pius X, and in 1982, at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School. Sister's final tutoring assignment was at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse and Trinity Montessori School where she worked from 1986 until her retirement in 1989.

Sister Anne Elizabeth currently resides at St. Joseph Convent Infirmary.

Sister Francis Miriam Reddy has many fond memories to recall since the Rochester native entered the congregation in 1928. Sister Francis Miriam dedicated nearly 50 of her 70 years as a Sister of St. Joseph to teaching and education. Her first teaching position was at St. Francis de Sales in Geneva in 1930. Through the years, Sister taught, pri-



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