

SENIOR LIFESTYLES

Sister's classroom moved from schools to parishes

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

IRONDEQUOIT — When Sister Lucille Nalbone, MPF, was 4, her mother took a day job and placed her daughter in kindergarten a year early so that the child would be watched during the day.

It was during that first year at St. James School in Trenton, N.J., that the seeds of her vocation were planted.

One day, one of the school's nuns was working on a bonnet when Sister Nalbone asked her what she was doing.

"She said, 'I'm making it for you,'" Sister Nalbone recalled. "I really feel that's when it all began."

That 4-year-old girl eventually did need a bonnet when she entered that woman's religious order — the Religious Teachers Filippini — whose habit included a bonnet. Although the Filippini habit was modified after Vatican II, Sister Nalbone said she and her fellow sisters are still required to wear their distinctive bonnets as a sign of their vocation.

On June 27, Sister Nalbone and 300 of her friends, area parishioners and family members celebrated her 50 years as a woman religious with a morning Mass and

reception at St. Andrew's Church on Portland Avenue. Sister Nalbone has been director of religious education at St. Andrew's since 1996, and held the same position at Holy Spirit Church in Penfield from 1992 to 1996.

Sister Nalbone said she and eight other members of her order will celebrate their golden jubilees at the Filippini provincial motherhouse in Morristown, N.J., Oct. 9.

"It's been the fastest and happiest 50 years of my life," she said.

Sister Nalbone currently lives with her mother, Josephine, in Irondequoit. Josephine Nalbone said she always thought her daughter would enter the religious life.

"She always talked about being a sister," she said. "It was a great desire."

Sister Nalbone pointed out that she also knew at an early age she wanted to be an educator.

"I loved to gather the kids in the neighborhood together and 'teach,'" she said.

Sister Nalbone has served as a teacher, choir director and principal in Catholic elementary and junior high schools in New Jersey, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maryland and Schenectady. She also worked as a hospital chaplain's assistant in Schenectady. Her teaching career included



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Sister Lucille Nalbone, MPF, right, jokes with her mother, Josephine Nalbone, at their Irondequoit home June 23.

a stint at St. Mary of the Lake School in Watkins Glen (1952-54).

In the mid-1980s, Sister Nalbone shifted gears and took graduate studies that trained her to catechize Catholics of all ages.

"I saw how the church was moving in that direction, that the parish was becoming the classroom," she said.

At St. Andrew's, for example, catechesis emphasizes parental involvement in their children's sacramental preparation.

"Today when we do sacramental programs, parents have the responsibility ... to realize how much they are a part of the sacramental life of the children," she said.

She added that many parents need to be "re-catechized" when they bring their chil-

dren for sacraments.

"We help them to understand what their commitment is to get them back to church," she said.

In addition, St. Andrew's encourages teenagers to help with planning parish Masses, and conducts Liturgy of the Word for children during weekend Masses, she said. Families can also attend religious-education classes between Sunday Masses.

Sister Nalbone plans to continue in her ministry, and said being a teacher and religious has been a fruitful life for her.

"It's a most rewarding life because what you do is give yourself in service to all and everyone who comes to you," she said. "When you love doing what you're doing, the time flies by fast."

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