

28 SSJs celebrate their anniversaries

The following Sisters of St. Joseph who are celebrating 80-, 70-, 60-, 50- and 25-year anniversaries in 2004 reflect on their ministries in their own words.

80 YEARS



Sister Mary Linus Witukiewicz entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Casimir Parish in Elmira. She taught at St. Stanislaus, Rochester; St. Casimir, Elmira; and St. Mary, Dansville. She also was a visitor to the sick and sacristan. She is currently serving in the prayer ministry at the motherhouse.

"My first mission was to St. Stanislaus Parish where I taught for 33 years. Even though the classes were large in those days (sometimes as many as 62), I liked teaching very much. I enjoyed the simple goodness of the children.

"Next, I served in St. Mary's School in Dansville, as teacher and parish visitor. Twenty-five more years went by!

"My commitment has always been maintained through prayer, and even now my good health enables me to pray in my favorite place — our chapel."

70 YEARS



Sister Bernice Benner (formerly Sister Rosalia) entered the congregation from St. Paul of the Cross Parish in Honeoye Falls. In her education ministry, she taught in Rochester at Sacred Heart, St. Ambrose, St. Monica, St. Francis Xavier, St. Theodore, Holy Rosary

and Nazareth Hall. She also taught at St. Paul, Oswego; St. Mary, Waterloo; St. Alphonsus, Auburn; St. James, Waverly; and St. Patrick, Seneca Falls. She is currently involved in volunteer services at the motherhouse.

"It was early in life when I began to think of religious life. My twin sister and I had good times in high school but we each felt in the midst of all of this there was emptiness — 'What is life all about?'"

"We lived in Honeoye Falls, and one Sunday on our way into Rochester with my parents and siblings we passed the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse. Outside the gate there were two sisters standing. I felt this deep attraction — to know more! Later that night, my twin sister and I were talking, and found that we had both experienced the same feelings! After getting to know the Sisters of St. Joseph during our remaining years in high school, we entered the congregation after graduation.

"Life in community brought many blessings. There I could share my joys and sorrows. Suffering was made easier and joy became brighter. I continue to feel the support of my sisters!"



Sister Barbara Hughes (formerly Sister Euphemia) served in the education ministry following her entrance into the order from St. Patrick in Mt. Morris. Her teaching assignments included Sacred Heart, Holy Apostles, St. Francis Xavier, St. Ambrose and Guardian Angels schools in Rochester; St. Mary, Dansville; St. Mary, Canandaigua; St. Mary, Auburn; St. Stephen, Geneva; and Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Anthony, both

in Elmira. She also served as hairdresser for her sisters at the motherhouse and is presently in the prayer ministry.

Of Sister Barbara, Sister St. Luke Hardy writes, "Sister Barbara touched many lives within and outside the congregation through her unique ministry. Today she continues her loving care for others through her ministry of prayer."



Sister Ruth Magin (formerly Sister John Mary) taught at Blessed Sacrament School and Nazareth Academy, both in Rochester, after she became a Sister of St. Joseph, having entered the congregation from Holy Apostles Parish in Rochester. She now serves in the prayer ministry at the motherhouse.

Her colleague, Sister Melita Burley, writes, "Sister Ruth will be remembered as a woman with a song in her heart, a spring in her step and a deep love for God.

"During her 48 years as teacher at Nazareth Academy, she influenced hundreds of students with her warm enthusiasm and gentle humor. A former student recalled, 'It was through Sister Ruth that I first came to know Jesus as a personal friend.'

"When reminded of her 70 years of 'Jubilee,' her simple response is one of amazement, wonder and gratitude."



Sister Elizabeth Mandell (formerly Sister Theophane) taught at Immaculate Conception and St. Bridget schools, at the former St. Mary's Boys Home and at St. Joseph's

Villa, all in Rochester. She then served as a social worker at the Villa. A native of Holy Apostles Parish in Rochester, she is presently in the congregation's prayer ministry.

"My first ministries were teaching at Immaculate Conception and St. Bridget's Schools. Then I was assigned to St. Mary's Boys Home, which along with St. Patrick's Girls Home merged to become St. Joseph's Villa. I taught there in the living room of the cottage until the Villa school was built. I loved being with the children!

"In later years, I studied to become a social worker at Catholic University in Washington. I returned to St. Joseph's Villa in my new role. Helping clients and their families was never a chore for me. I was happy to be able to ease the transition of

clients from their homes to living for a time at St. Joseph's Villa where I could watch them grow and mature."



Sister Mary Audrey Mazzeo, currently in the congregation's prayer ministry, entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from her home parish of St. Francis of Assisi in Auburn. She served in financial services at St. Joseph's Villa, Rochester; St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira; and St. Ann's Home in Rochester.

"I spent almost 30 years of my religious life living and working at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira. What I remember most was the importance the administrators placed on kindness and compassion for patients. My work was primarily secretarial — and I shall never forget 1972 when the Chemung and Susquehanna Rivers flooded Elmira, and my job was to salvage all the records!

"But there are other happier memories — celebrations that would rouse me to harmonize with the singing, even get up to dance! The celebration of the Sisters of St. Joseph's 150th anniversary coinciding with my own jubilee year enhances my rejoicing and gratitude for my life in this congregation!"

60 YEARS



Sister Agnes Catherine Battersby, a native of St. Patrick Parish, Elmira, served in the teaching ministry at the former St. Agnes elementary and high schools,

Aquinas Institute and Nazareth Academy, all in Rochester; DeSales High School, Geneva; St. Mary, Canandaigua; and St. Patrick, Corning. In addition to serving as principal at St. Mary, Canandaigua, she was a member of the congregation's central administration and pastoral assistant at St. James in Waverly. She now is pastoral associate for the St. Felix/St. Francis Cluster in Clifton Springs/Phelps.

"It was at graduation from St. Patrick's grammar school that I first recall thinking that I might be blessed with a religious vocation. In 1944 I joined the Sisters of St. Joseph.

"Though I loved every place I've been and appreciate all the people with whom I have worked, I am most grateful for my opportunities in parish ministry. This work has enabled me to be involved in the spe-

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