

How I Came to Nazareth

Category: Endings and Beginnings

written by Mary B. Wiecezak | October 18, 2022

I still have fond memories of my kindergarten teacher, Sister M. Elizabeth Kobierowski at Our Lady of Czestochowa School in South Brooklyn, New York. She was the first of many Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth I would come to know and love during my formative years in our predominantly Polish-American parish. That love would continue well into my teens, when I attended the Bishop McDonnell Memorial High School, also in Brooklyn.

Bishop's, as we called it, was an all-girls school whose faculty consisted of eighty sisters from five different religious congregations. The only lay instructor I had during those years was Mrs. McGreevy, my physical education teacher. When I graduated in 1960, in a class of 723 students, seventeen percent of our class entered the convents of local congregations and became Sisters. As the old song goes: "Those were the days, my friend. Those were the days."

During my high school years, Sister Assumpta Whalen was my music teacher and my idol. I felt a loyalty to her and an urge to follow in her footsteps. This placed me in a bind. Sister Assumpta Whalen was a member of the Sisters of Mercy, a predominantly Irish community. Would I be happy leaving behind the Polish language, customs, songs and traditions that were an integral part of my family background?

Word got back to our parish Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth that I was seriously considering entering the Sisters of Mercy. That's when Sister M. Marietta, my fourth, fifth and sixth grade teacher, decided it was time for an intervention! I can still recall the Sunday morning Sister met me in the schoolyard after mass. "You are going to THOSE SISTERS?" she asked. Then, in her most commanding voice, she simply stated: "You come to US! We built the foundation (of your vocation). THEY just put the roof on!"

And that was the answer I needed for direction. Sixty-two years have passed since that Sunday morning, and I have never been happier with my decision.

Sister Marietta spoke words of wisdom to me that day. I'm certain the Holy Spirit moved her in showing me the way to Nazareth.

*Mary B. Wiecezak
Monroe, Connecticut*