As part of St. Ursula's, young Fran makes lifelong impression on teacher, classmates

As a parochial school student

It was her first teaching assignment. With 65 students in her seventh-grade class, Sister Catherine Dolores, now Sister Catherine D. Cress, S.N.D. de N., taught all subjects. That's how elementary education was organized between 1950-58, when Bishop W. Francis Malooly attended St. Ursula School in Parkville.

It was during those eight years that he heard the silent calling to the priesthood.

Only one lay teacher was then on the faculty, which consisted of Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, the same religious order serving St. Ursula today.

Sister Catherine taught there for seven years. A pastoral associate of the Catholic Community of South Baltimore for the last 20, the nun still remembers teaching the bishop and his brother, Austin.

"Fran was a good student," she said, "a rather quiet student, not at the top of the class, but he always worked hard. He was well-liked and accepted by his peers."

The Malooly boys came from what she described as a "marvelous" Catholic family, one that lived on Putty Hill Avenue, across from the church that was dedicated in 1954.

"I remember their parents," Sister Catherine said, "although I knew the mother more than the father. She was a very lovely, devout, good Catholic. "I have very fond memories of the Malooly family."

Sister Catherine recalls the bishop's grandmother making the vestments for the parish.

Door boy at the rectory

Door boys at St. Ursula's rectory greeted guests, monitored the telephone, filled out Mass cards, emptied waste baskets and busied themselves with other small chores. In that capacity, young Fran worked at the rectory from 6-9 p.m.

"The door boys would bring their schoolbooks, so they were able to do their homework when not busy," said Mel Ruth, a longtime parishioner who was then active in events such as the St. Ursula carnival. Three of the Ruths' five sons were door boys. They were paid $1 per day, "big money" at the time, he said.

Bishop Malooly was also an altar server, which required him to learn Latin. Later he returned to the parish to teach altar servers, including his youngest brother, Gerard.

While current St. Ursula students eat in shifts in the lunchroom, young Fran walked home for lunch hour.

Because of his love of baseball, young Fran was included in treks to Baltimore Orioles games with the late Monsignor James J. Cronin.

"He was very good to the boys," Sister Catherine said, of Monsignor Cronin. "They had a role model in him."

Hanging with the guys

Charlie "Buck" Delcher still resides on Moreland Avenue in Parkville and attends St. Ursula, but one thing is missing from the neighborhood – the guys he grew up with.

A group of approximately 10 lived on the same street. Neighborhood activities included baseball, football, basketball and hikes, along the Gunpowder River and through Double Rock Park.

"I'd say it was great," Mr. Delcher said. "It was idealistic, the neighborhood."

Mr. Delcher met Bishop Malooly in the first grade.

"We were kind of like 'The Diner' guys of the Barry Levinson movie," Mr. Delcher said. "We all hung out at one place – the Putty Hill drugstore."

In addition to Mr. Delcher, Bishop Malooly and his brother Austin, the group also

included Rudy “Sonny” Fischer, John Snyder, Mike Mazzie, Bob Menzies, Thaddeus “Butch” Grzymala, Ray Matthai and Terry Aronson. It also counted the late Ed Nohe and Dick Byrd, whose uncle was Father Thomas J. Byrd, associate pastor of St. Ursula.

Not all were Catholic.
“We were all different religions in the neighborhood,” said Mr. Delcher, 64, a graduate of Calvert Hall College High School, Towson.

It did not surprise young Buck when his friend became a priest.

“He had the pedigree, although it wouldn’t have surprised me if Fran had become a scientist,” Mr. Delcher said. “He was smart.”

On May 9, 1970, at St. Ursula, the young Francis Malooly was ordained by his uncle, Bishop T. Austin Murphy, now deceased.

Sister Catherine attended his first Mass after ordination. When he became an auxiliary bishop, she attended that as well.

“I’m very proud of him,” she said. “I think you could not get a better bishop for the Catholic Church than Francis Malooly. He’s very Christ-like, just what we need in our church today.”

Approximately five years ago, when Mr. Delcher’s mother was hospitalized, he was surprised to greet a visitor.

“He (Bishop Malooly) showed up!” Mr. Delcher. “That was quite something, a bishop coming to the hospital. That’s the way Fran is. That impressed me. … He’s kinda busy. I hear he has an important job!”