

Bozel siblings share 189 years of ministry

Decades ago, as other dads bragged about their sons becoming doctors and lawyers, Richard Bozel, the father of 10 children, retorted, "My son is a priest."

The proud papa recognized that there are riches other than money and prestige.

"He thought having a priest in the family was the greatest thing," said Sister Rita Bozel, D.C., 80, who further extended her father's bragging rights when she and her sister joined the Daughters of Charity.

"We got it from the family. That's where vocations start - in the family," said Sister Mary Ann Bozel, D.C., 83, one of just four siblings still living.

Their big brother is retired Monsignor Robert A. Bozel, 85. Combined, the trio has served a total of 189 years in the church.

It appears that Mr. and Mrs. Bozel (mother was Josephine V. Bozel, nee Albert) were quite encouraging in the thrust toward religious vocations while raising their children at St. Dominic in Hamilton, as a fourth child nearly became religious.

Maurice Bozel considered becoming a priest as well, attending St. Charles minor seminary (now Charlestown retirement community) like his brother, yet switched to the marriage and family vocation later, bearing five sons.

Sister Rita often prays these words: "I thank you for our birth into a loving Christian family.

"And that's what it is, it's your family," she said. "We need to talk to the parents (about vocations), not the kids."

Together the Bozel sisters manage the gift shop in Emmitsburg where they reside at the St. Joseph's Provincial House, with its seven miles of hallways. Weekly, they sign out a car and drive to Timonium to visit "Bobby" - he's their brother first, then a priest.

Monsignor Bozel, who uses a wheelchair, lives on Stella Maris property in assisted living. Although a 90-minute drive away, the ladies do what they can to care for him and manage his affairs.

During visits, the siblings play cards and board games, share meals and yes, sometimes the sisters disagree.

“What sisters don’t?” asked Sister Mary Ann with a smile. Although adorned in matching religious medals and light blue habits – their summer color – the nuns agreed they couldn’t be more different.

“She likes a lot of things I don’t,” said Sister Rita, “and I like a lot of things she doesn’t. We are two very distinct people.”

Both with educational backgrounds, the nuns have ministered in several Mid-Atlantic states in the roles of teacher, principal, superior, educational consultant, director of activities and bookkeeper. They both hold master’s degrees.

“We joined the community to see the world,” joked Sister Rita, “but we didn’t see all that much of it.”

Their brother, on the other hand, visited Rome several times, including a four-month sabbatical, and he served eight parishes in the archdiocese: St. John the Evangelist, Frederick; St. Edward, Baltimore; St. Elizabeth, Baltimore; St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Pasadena; Holy Trinity, Glen Burnie; St. Augustine, Elkridge; St. Lawrence, Woodlawn; and St. Michael, Poplar Springs.

He also served as director of the office of pastoral service to senior and retired clergy until his retirement in 1994, and as chaplain of Stella Maris and Villa Maria for seven years.

“I enjoyed every moment of it,” said the priest, dressed in a black blazer and full collar. “Best of all, I love people.”

What is not listed in his vocations record, yet which family members hold dear, are the countless baptisms, christenings, weddings and other special family liturgies the priest celebrated privately for the Bozel family in Baltimore, consisting of many

nieces and nephews.

His recent 60th anniversary party was attended by retired Archbishop William D. Borders, retired Bishop William C. Newman, two tables of priests and, according to his sisters, people from every parish he had served.

Sister Rita said her brother still “does not miss a trick.”

The two sisters fuss over him to make sure he is comfortable, happy and busy.

“The priests all say he’s spoiled,” Sister Rita said.