

Mercy nurse celebrates 50 years in career

When Our Lady of Good Counsel parishioner Mary Rossbach received a nurse's kit for Christmas decades ago, she couldn't have known that she would one day build a lifelong career out of it.

"In those days that was your Christmas present. You had a nurse's kit and a new outfit for your doll and that was about it," said the 71-year-old about her childhood. "It was fun for us because that was what we had."

This year Ms. Rossbach will celebrate 50 years as a nurse, serving her entire career at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore.

She currently works two to three days a week in outpatient PACU, which focuses on recovery after operations. Helping patients is the most meaningful part of her career.

"I just try to make my patients feel better," Ms. Rossbach said, "more comfortable, less pain."

Working at Mercy has become a family affair for the Baltimore native. Ms. Rossbach's daughter, Susan Linder, is a patient service representative. Ms. Linder's daughter, Rachel Thomas, is a nurse.

A 30-year-old parishioner of St. Agnes in Catonsville, Ms. Thomas originally studied information systems before turning to nursing.

Ms. Thomas said she realized that a job where she could help people could make her life "better and more rewarding."

She finds fulfillment in being a nurse, just like her grandmother.

"I am just very proud of my grandmother and how she's hung in there for 50 years in a very demanding profession," Ms. Thomas said. "I think it's a real testament to her character and just how loyal and devoted she is to her profession."

A lot has changed in nursing over those 50 years, according to Ms. Rossbach, from patient care to illnesses.

“It’s unbelievable. Everything has changed,” she said. “Except at Mercy I think they try to keep the same value of patient first.”

With her many years of experience, Ms. Rossbach is able to offer her granddaughter advice about how to work with difficult patients and tips about nursing in general.

“She’s definitely a life-gives-you-lemons-make-lemonade-type person. I think it’s probably from being a nurse for so long,” Ms. Thomas explained. “She is able to take any situation and make the best of it.”

Reflecting on her decades of experience, Ms. Rossbach offered a wish for her fellow nurses.

“I just hope that they’ve had the pleasures that I’ve had,” she said, “the fulfillment that I’ve had being a nurse.”