

# Son of Mount Carmel remembered as natural leader

**By George P. Matysek Jr.**

*gmatysek@CatholicReview.org*

*Twitter: @ReviewMatysek*

Without a date for his senior prom at Our Lady of Mount Carmel High School nearly four decades ago, the future Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski asked a classmate whether she would like to join him.

Juliann Gostomski Ball, who had taken Latin, physics, algebra and chemistry with “Mitch” and who was also dateless, happily accompanied her good friend to the Essex school’s social event of the year.

The two had a great time.

“He picked me up,” remembered Ball, a fellow member of Bishop Rozanski’s Class of 1976. “I met his parents for the first time and they were wonderful. He was a regular guy – not a holy-roller or anything like that, but always serious about his faith.”

Not long after the prom, Bishop Rozanski shocked his classmates by announcing he was becoming a priest. In the yearbook, the future bishop noted that he intended to go to college, but few expected that would mean the seminary.

Looking back at Bishop Rozanski’s years at Mount Carmel, Ball and others who knew the future bishop said there were early signs that he was something special.

Bishop Rozanski was president of the student government in his senior year, volunteered as scoreboard and time-keeper for the basketball team, was in the drama club and earned a spot on the “It’s Academic” television quiz show team.

“When he got on the P.A., everyone got quiet because he was speaking,” said Ball, a parishioner of Our Lady of Fatima in Baltimore. “If he said something, he said it with confidence and you believed him.”

Although she remembered Bishop Rozanski as a quiet person, Ball said her friend was no “stick in the mud.”

“Everyone liked him,” she said. “He wasn’t in any clique.”

Richard Gatto, who taught theology and helped with drama productions at the school, said Bishop Rozanski was the kind of student who gave his all.

“He was always dependable,” said Gatto, a retired Catholic school principal and leader of the contemporary music group at Church of the Annunciation in Rosedale.

“If I asked for a 15-page paper, he would give me a 20-page paper. He always had

great insights.”

Sister Virginia Spiegel, a Franciscan Sister of Philadelphia who taught science and math at the school from 1971 to 1983, was student council moderator when Bishop Rozanski was president.

“He was a born leader,” she said.

Bishop Rozanski credits the Franciscan sisters and lay teachers for being models of faith at Mount Carmel.

“I think they all showed us the importance of faith in our lives – especially through the Franciscan spirituality that pervaded the school,” he said. “It made it a very at-home place to be.”

The bishop continues to attend class reunions and stays in touch with his classmates. They share a “real bond and sense of pride” in having attended the small, co-educational school, he said.

Kathy Sipes, president of Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, said Bishop Rozanski often attended bull roasts and fundraising events with his former classmates before he became a bishop. He has also been a strong financial supporter of the school, with a giving level named in his honor in the school’s annual appeal.

“He once joked that his contribution always had to be sufficient to put him into the giving level named in his honor,” she said.

Sipes said her school community is proud of Bishop Rozanski’s accomplishments.

“He exemplifies many of the traits that we want our students to integrate: faith, desire for service, humility and integrity,” she said. “He’s such a great example of a disciple of Christ.”

Also see:

Bishop Rozanski’s parents nurtured his faith

[‘He deserves everything,’ say friends, parishioners and clergy of Bishop Rozanski](#)

[Pope Francis appoints Bishop Rozanski to head Diocese of Springfield](#)