

'Uncle Fran' touches hearts of niece, nephew

Bishop W. Francis Malooly plays many roles to countless people, but to Jonathan Malooly and Erin Malooly Miller, he is a generous uncle who has demonstrated his faith through selfless acts.

"He is a person everyone in the family can truly rely on and trust," said Mr. Malooly, 23, a parishioner of Immaculate Conception, Towson, and godson of the bishop. "My uncle cares so much about the family, especially his nieces and nephews."

Watching young Jonathan's baseball games, treating him to an Orioles game, or greeting him with "there's my favorite youngest nephew" were ways the bishop helped form their tight relationship.

When the Morgan Stanley analyst graduated from Washington and Lee University in 2007, the bishop drove the 230 miles "to share in the joy of one of my greatest accomplishments," said Mr. Malooly. "He is always giving of himself, but never asks for anything in return."

For sound advice, the young man knows where to turn.

"He's a great listener. I am lucky and grateful to have Uncle Fran in my corner."

The bishop has celebrated many Masses with the Malooly clan, making holidays, birthdays and other family gatherings more memorable.

"Family is the greatest foundation a person can have," said Mr. Malooly. "My uncle takes this to heart with his great love and generosity."

Although the Malooly children are saddened to see their uncle leave the area, Mr. Malooly knows in a heartbeat "Uncle Fran" will return "whenever the family needs him."

Mrs. Miller did need him in the early 1980s when creepy bugs showed up in the pool at what is now the Monsignor O'Dwyer Retreat House in Sparks.

After the bishop plucked the bugs out of the water to pacify his niece, young Erin appreciated her uncle's heroic bug-ridding efforts as she swam at the retreat house where he served as associate administrator from 1981-84.

She and Mr. Malooly are the children of Gerard "Jardy" Malooly, one of the bishop's younger brothers, and they are among five siblings in a group of six Malooly nieces and nephews.

"We never see him in that light," she said of her uncle's status in the church. He is family first - an uncle who supported her childhood activities.

"He would come and watch all of us," she said, remembering her swim meets.

Mrs. Miller, 30, isn't worried she won't see her uncle much.

"He'll be around," she said. "He has no problem putting mileage on his car!"

The bishop had prepared her and Greg Miller for marriage two years ago, then presided over their wedding at Immaculate, the parish in which she grew up. They are now parishioners of the Catholic Community of St. Francis Xavier in Hunt Valley, and they are expecting their first baby in November.

Mrs. Miller said he "absolutely" has been an influence on her faith.