

History of Marist Sisters coming to Eastpointe.

Today we are celebrating Jubilees. Sister Linda Sevcik is celebrating fifty years as a Marist Sister and this is within the context of the Marist Sisters presence in St Barnabas Parish for about sixty years. I was asked to give a brief history as to how the Marist Sisters came to St Barnabas.

In the 1940's and 50's, in our diocese of Detroit, new parishes were sprouting up – St Barnabas was one of them. Most parishes wanted a catholic school. Cardinal Dearden in Detroit stipulated that no permission would be given for a school unless the parish had a commitment from a congregation of sisters to staff the school. The Marist Sisters are an international congregation and had no house and no school in the US at that time.

Father Evon was the founding pastor of St Barnabas, and his best friend, Father dePlaunty was founding pastor of St Albert the Great in Dearborn and both wanted schools. But there were no sisters available so they could not get permission for a school. At that time, the Marist Fathers who are here today staffed Notre Dame High School in Harper Woods and they were weekend assistants at both parishes. They mentioned to the pastors that it was a long shot, but that maybe, just maybe, there might be a possibility of getting Marist Sisters to staff the schools but the general administration of the Marist Sisters was in Rome, Italy. At the word, Father Evon and his friend, Father DePlaunty jumped on a plane to Rome to meet with our General Administration. They came back with a promise that both schools would be staffed by Marist Sisters. And that happened. At that time, Ireland had many vocations and so the first sisters came from there, but later sisters from England and Canada joined us and we were blessed that some young women from the U.S. became Marist Sisters also. After some years, we branched out to other States.

So it was actually in 1958 that two Marist sisters came to St Barnabas to direct the Rel Educ Program. (As a matter of interest, that year there were 600 students enrolled in Religious Education.) Then in 1961 St Barnabas Catholic School opened beginning with first and second grade. The Marist Sisters with the help of dedicated lay teachers staffed the school for twenty six years. In 1987 St Barnabas School, like many other Catholic Schools at that time, closed its doors.

But the Marist Sisters remained part of St Barnabas family. And what we Marist Sisters are celebrating today is gratitude; deep and sincere gratitude for the great privilege of belonging to St Barnabas Parish Family that is now HI/SB; grateful for you, our parishioners and our friends, for walking with us in love, support and friendship in getting closer to Our Lord. You trusted us with the education of your children. You inspired us with a love of our church, you deepened our faith, in short, you helped us to know who Jesus is. We treasure you for all you have done for us and for all you still do for us. And we **treasure the leadership** we have had from so many great pastors and priests who served our parish. And that includes our present pastor, Father John. It has been a graced journey.

And it has been graced by the young women who joined us on the way and became Marist Sisters. And I want to mention one of those young women in particular. Fifty years ago, a twenty year old creative, talented and intelligent girl from Wheeling West Virginia joined us. She had a world of opportunity and success open to her, and she was full of the joys of life. That young lady was Linda Sevcik who chose to commit her life to the service of God as a Marist Sister. And for the past fifty years she has shared her many gifts, talents and leadership skills joyfully and generously with us. And today we celebrate the blessing that she has been in our lives, and here she is now: Sister Linda Sevcik.

Sr Constance Dodd