



UP FRONT AND PERSONAL  
**Alumni Find Happy  
 Memories at Reunions**  
 BY MATTHEW MONAHAN

When my 15-year-old daughter, Margaret, answered the phone and called out, Dad, it's Carol Strauss, she did not realize that at that second pages were flying off the calendar like those flashback scenes in old movies. The last time I spoke with Carol was in 1969 when 36 solemn students graduated from Our Lady of the Angelus in Rego Park. She was part of a core group of alumni from Our Lady of the Angelus organizing our first reunion.

It started a year ago when Leo von Reissig, an intense international banker, decided to make the effort to locate the scattered classmates whose common bond was a red brick school off the beaten path, unlike our more visible neighbors, Our Lady Queen of Martyrs in Forest Hills and Resurrection-Ascension in Rego Park. Using various lists and directories, and striking out numerous times, he located a couple of dozen of us. Our e-mail exchanges helped surface a few more and before you could say, Alexander's, there was talk of a class reunion for those who graduated and those who left beforehand.

The kids who were organizers back then, picked up the ball and during their spare time spent countless hours polling the class for the date most of the group could attend. Since many of us have ties to the old neighborhood and OLA is located close to LaGuardia for those who would fly in and stay over, a lounge near the airport was chosen for the event. The excitement was building as some 20 signed up.

I had only seen a handful of classmates over the years and I was not sure how easily recognizable we would be. I vainly attempted to lose a few pounds as the reunion neared. The big day arrived and with traffic lighter than expected, I got to the hotel a little early and set about trying to find the OLA space. It's as if no one wanted to miss a minute of the experience as people started arriving one after another and like little candles coming together, we formed a warm, bright zone of our own.

By every objective standard, we looked fantastic. Had there been a matching column test, we would have been able to connect people to their occupations. The class cut-up keeps people in stitches at comedy clubs in the region and the studious boy with steady hands stitches peoples lives back together as a trauma center surgeon. Several have gone into education and one has entered the consecrated life. We ran the gamut of single and married. Parents have children spanning kindergarten to college. None of us has escaped loss or hardship.

Yet no matter where we have been, what we do or where we live, our common bond of receiving our primary education from devoted Sisters of Charity and dedicated laypersons keeps us together. What was so wonderful was that the evening was not just going back in time and staying there. So much of the evening was spent discussing the present and looking to the future. A few alums brought spouses and the striking thing was they know each other, but we knew them first!

Some from out-of-town arrived early and drove back to the school and church in the neighborhood that has held up well. The school with one of each grade now has kindergarten and pre-school. The dusty, dirt softball field has become a sodded soccer field named for a beloved pastor emeritus, Father William Hickey.

Of course, there were the recollections. I wished I had brought my tiny, blue, OLA tie with the little holes from where the miraculous medal was pinned. Photos and graduation autograph books were passed around. The guys remembered being the last class of altar boys who learned the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar in Latin and the times Father Barry Frazzitta celebrated Mass in the vernacular by himself turning to face the people before the altar was modified.

When we spoke about our teachers, it was with smiles and affection. I remembered finishing a math exam and handing it to Sister Regina Rose with a nod of self-satisfaction. She peered at it through rimless glasses and instead of putting it down, wordlessly handed it back. Taken aback, I went to my desk, went through the problems again, and returned with the test. Sister again gave it a look and then gave me a look. Feeling the redness in my face creep from chin to top of the ears, I returned to my desk and this time discovered an error. I did some erasing, fixed it and went back yet again. This time she scanned the paper, kept it, and shot me the tiniest of grins. I made a hasty exit and then made it a habit to double or triple check my work.

Like the past 35 years, the reunion passed all too quickly. With the Internet, we've been keeping in touch and another classmate has been found in Missouri.

As cardboard cartons of brand new books are opened across the diocese, dedicated and devoted teachers are getting ready for their students. Millions of memories are about to be created. Happy new year.

**Official Statement by  
 Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio  
 Diocese of Brooklyn  
 August 23, 2004**

I was profoundly saddened by the report of allegations of inappropriate sexual behavior made by a young man that led to the indictment and arrest of Father Joseph P. Byrns, the former pastor of St. Rose of Lima Church, Parkville. My delegates and I will follow this painful matter as it moves through the judicial system. Be assured that we will cooperate fully with the courts and law enforcement agencies in whatever way they may need our assistance.

As for the status of Father Byrns in the Diocese of Brooklyn, in 2002, after the Queens District Attorney found earlier allegations of sexual misconduct with minors made against Father Byrns to be credible, Bishop Thomas V. Daily placed him on administrative leave. This meant he was not permitted to function publicly as a priest, and not permitted to present himself publicly as a priest.

After the Diocesan Review Board also found the prior allegations credible, I accepted the panel's recommendation that Father Byrns not be permitted to return to active ministry. At that point, I forwarded the case to the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for further instruction.

I repeat my recent appeals for anyone who wishes to report an instance of sexual misconduct against a minor by a member of the clergy to do so by calling a toll-free number: (888) 634-4499. The information will be directed immediately to the District Attorney's Office, to the diocesan Victim/Survivor Coordinator and to me or my delegate.

While I regret the present circumstance and await its outcome, it provides me an opportunity once again to apologize to all victims of clergy sexual abuse. As the U.S. bishops promised in the "Charter for Protection of Children and Young People" two years ago, I will continue to do my part, with God's help, to restore the bonds of trust that unite us.

As people of faith who are members of the Body of Christ, we pray for all those who have been so deeply affected by this difficult situation.



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*Diocesan Assignments*

**INCARDINATED**

Rev. Francisco J. Walker, parochial vicar of Ascension, Elmhurst, effective Aug. 3.

**TEMPORARY ADMINISTRATOR**

Rev. Msgr. Rocco D. Villani, to temporary administrator of St. Brendan, Brooklyn.

**RESIDENCE**

Rev. Dennis D. Klein, to residence at St. Michael, 4th Avenue, Brooklyn, effective Aug. 1

**NON-INCARDINATED**

Rev. Godfrey Bonnet, from residence at St. Peter Claver, Brooklyn, returned to ministry in the Diocese of Kafanchan, Nigeria, effective Aug. 1.

Rev. Juan A. Dielinikatis, from parochial vicar of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Brooklyn, reassigned by his Bishop to ministry in Brazil, effective Aug. 15.

**RETIRED**

Rev. John J. Newell, from released from diocesan assignment, to senior priest status, effective Aug. 15.

**The Tablet**

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