

Vocations

Cousins give their lives to God and the church

By David Eck

ARCHDIOCESE — It could be said that a group of cousins who grew up in the northern reaches of the Cincinnati archdiocese simply joined the family business.

The six Hoying cousins all entered religious life, with two boys becoming priests and four girls becoming women religious. They are all still working or semi-retired.

Missionaries of the Precious Blood Fathers Vincent and John Hoying live at St. Charles Center in Carthagen. Father John Hoying's sibling, Sister Madonna, is a Franciscan Sister of the Poor in Cincinnati, and Sister of the Precious Blood Barbara Ann Hoying works at the Maria Stein Center in Maria Stein. Precious Blood Sisters Carolyn and Jean Rene Hoying work in Dayton. A seventh cousin, Sister Barbara Ann's brother, Father Mark Hoying, is also a Missionary of the Precious Blood priest serving in Kalida, Ohio.

The cousins, whose families socialized growing up, said pursuit of a religious vocation was accepted and encouraged. They all had uncles and other older relatives who were priests or members of religious communities. Religious life wasn't unique to the Hoyings.

"I think the parents were favorable to it," said Father Vincent Hoying, who entered the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1952 and was ordained in 1958. "They knew it through experience. It was a blessing."

Father Hoying grew up in McCartyville and had a half-brother who was a Missionary of the Precious Blood brother. The idea of becoming a priest was brought up when he was in the eighth grade and his parents said they would support him if he entered the seminary. He was open to the idea.

"I kind of backed into it," Father Hoying said. "I don't think that any of them pushed us in any way, shape or form."

For much of the 20th century the church was the center of family life in the archdiocese. That was particularly true in the farm towns of the St. Marys and Sidney deaneries, where historic churches rise from the fields. Families went to Mass nearly every day and prayed the rosary at home.

"The church was pretty important," Father Hoying said. "I remember my dad taking off his straw hat when we went by the church. He knew there was something



COURTESY PHOTO

The Hoying cousins celebrated Precious Blood Sister Jean Rene Hoying's 50th anniversary of entering the community last June. From left are Missionary of the Precious Blood Father Vincent Hoying, Sister of the Precious Blood Barbara Ann Hoying, Missionary of the Precious Blood Father John Hoying, Precious Blood Sisters Jean Rene and Carolyn Hoying and Franciscan Sister of the Poor Madonna Hoying.

important going on in that church, and he bowed to it. He knew the Blessed Sacrament was there."

Father John Hoying and Sister Madonna grew up in family of eight children in Celina. Four uncles, three on their father's side and one on their mother's, were priests. Religious life was part of their family.

"There was a lot of influence and our whole family respected it and thought of it very highly," Father Hoying said. "I think that's where I realized I could be called by God to this and I went to high school seminary. We didn't think it was so extraordinary because others had gone."

He entered the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1956 and was ordained in 1962. During his priesthood, he worked in parish ministry in Ohio, Michigan, Virginia and Indiana. He also worked as a chaplain on a cruise ship.

While her cousins and brother entered the Precious Blood communities, Sister Madonna Hoying became a Franciscan Sister so she could be a nurse. Ironically, she ended up teaching for much of her ministry but did spend some time as an instructor at the nursing school at then-St. Elizabeth Hospital in Dayton. She taught high school math and science at then-St. Clare Aspirancy High School in

Cincinnati and also taught religion in St. Henry. She has been involved in retreat ministry and worked in the community's general administration. She made first profession with the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor in 1957.

"Now I see it all as part of God's plan," Sister Madonna said. "This was God's way of leading me to where God wanted me to be, and I loved it. It showed me that God knows better what's good for us."

Growing up in Celina, Sister Madonna knew early on that she wanted to give her life to God. Her brother, John, was in the high school seminary while she was in her teens.

It wasn't unusual for parents of large Catholic families to hope that a child would become a priest, brother or Sister.

"A lot of the parents...felt that God had given to them and they were willing to give a child back to God," Father John Hoying said. "It was encouraged by the fact that they respected priests and religious to such a high degree."

That was the case with Sister Jean Rene, a first cousin to Father John Hoying and Sister Madonna. As a child growing up in St. Patrick, she always wanted to stay longer at Mass and remembers dressing up as a nun. Growing up she maintained an ongoing relationship with the

Lord. By the time she was in junior high school, Sister Jean Rene was looking at different religious communities.

"I just liked [the Sisters of] the Precious Blood," she said. "I'm so glad because I love Precious Blood spirituality. It's so life-giving."

Sister Jean Rene entered the community in 1960 and taught elementary school. She then trained as a physical therapist. She is now the coordinator of the community's Emma Hall in Dayton, and celebrated her 50th anniversary of entering the community in 2010.

"My mother always said she hoped there would be one nun in the family," Sister Jean Rene said. "I was the one chosen to fulfill her dream."

Sister Carolyn is the vocations director for the Sisters of the Precious Blood, after having spent much of her career as a teacher and administrator. She entered the community in 1962.

She grew up on a farm in Egypt, one of 11 children. Two of her brothers and a sister also considered the priesthood and religious life, but Sister Carolyn was the one who stayed.

"God just works in different ways," she said. "It was just a gift. It was definitely a

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Rooted in Eucharistic Prayer

As Sisters of the Precious Blood, we "do" many things. But all of our ministries and activity flow from our relationship with God through prayer.

Whether we're praying together at Mass, sharing Scripture in our small local communities or praying in silence as individuals, it's the Eucharistic Christ who is the center of our lives.

Through our ministries, Sisters of the Precious Blood have been serving God's people of all ages and walks of life since 1834. You, too, may be called to be a life-giving, reconciling presence in our fractured world.



Photo by E.L. Hubbard, www.elhubbard.com

Vocations

Booklet shares power of listening to God

By David Eck

ARCHDIOCESE — As a young U.S. Marine wading ashore during the Battle of Tinian in World War II with men crying and dying around him, Robert Massa prayed. He waited for God's reply.

"That was the first time I listened to what He had to say," said Massa. "What He said gave me the guts to do what I had to do."

It was a turning point in his relationship with God and gave him direction. Though he was raised in St. Catharine of Siena Parish in Cincinnati and went to church regularly, he didn't know the role God plays in our lives until he began listening to Him during the war. From those early days of combat, Massa has developed a deeper relationship with the Lord.

A graduate of Elder High School and the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., Massa has been a member of the Serra Club for nearly 40 years and

spent more than 30 years giving vocation talks at area high schools.

"I emphasized my prayer life," he said. "God wants you to pray. He wants you to talk to Him."

More importantly, God wants people to listen to Him when they pray, Massa said.

To help others listen to God and deepen their own relationship with Him, Massa, 86, has put together a small booklet, *Listening Prayer*, detailing his own spirituality. Massa, a retired insurance agent, also discusses his daily prayer life and meditation. He mentions priests who have influenced him, including the late Father Joseph Tieken, who was pastor of St. Catharine of Siena when Massa was a boy, and the late Father William T. Hilvert, a teacher at Elder High School. When Massa left for the war, he sought out Father Tieken, who helped put his fear at bay.

"There have been many wonderful priests and nuns in my life," he wrote in

the booklet. "That's how I was getting to know God. My life has been graced with countless kindnesses, lessons and friendships that have made a positive difference."

"I have found out that the most important part of prayer is to give our Lord a little chance to talk to you," Massa said. "I would have to say that it isn't my book; it's our Lord's book. Everything I put in there He told me about."

Massa tells how Oldenburg Franciscan Sister Francis De Sales Schwetschenau, his first-grade teacher at St. Catharine of Siena, taught her classes that the primary purpose in life is to know, love and serve God.

Other details in the booklet include humorous stories from Massa's childhood and a unique anecdote about his Holy

Cross baseball team playing Yale.

Massa has distributed more than 6,500 copies of the booklet to parishes, relatives and classmates. A copy can be obtained by calling 513-521-4935. ■

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call."

Sister Carolyn's family was also filled with faith; her parents relied on prayer during times of tragedy. She grew up with Sisters teaching her in school, and she recalls the Franciscan Sisters visiting farms in summer, asking for grain to bake bread for the needy. It all played a role in her own vocation.

"You just had religious around you," she said. "We prayed the rosary every day. We went to Mass every day. God works through the seed that was planted."

Sister Carolyn also spent time with Sister Barbara Ann and her family when they were children. Their fathers are brothers.

Sister Barbara Ann joined the Sisters of

the Precious Blood in 1959. She has taught primary grades in Ohio, Missouri and Virginia. She worked in religious education and in retreat ministry. She has also been the director of Maria Stein Center.

Family influence and the environment in which she was raised helped form Sister Barbara Ann's vocation.

"Growing up in the rural area is a factor," she said. "Being taught by the nuns is a factor."

While there are scores of other extended family members, the religious cousins share a special bond. They see each other occasionally and communicate via email.

"I think it's a real blessing to all the [religious] relations," Father John Hoying said. "They have a deeper faith because of it. They've grown in the faith." ■

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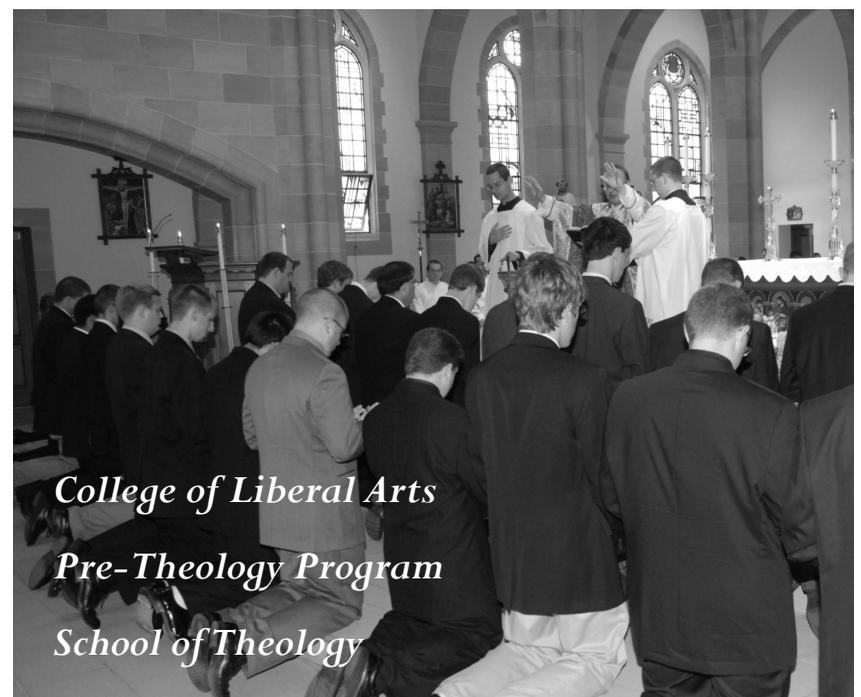
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