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Siblings never strayed far off God's path

Priest followed 2 sisters, brother into Catholic ministry 50 years ago

Don't ask the Rev. James Ogurchock why he and all three of his siblings became Catholic priests and religious sisters.

Ogurchock will try to give you an answer. But the truth is, he doesn't know.

"You're asking the wrong person," he said. "You should ask God."

Ogurchock is celebrating the 50th anniversary of his ordination into the priesthood. The 75-year-old Gahanna man split his career between high-school education and serving as a chaplain at Mount Carmel East hospital, a position he still holds part time.

He'll celebrate with a Mass at St. Philip the Apostle Church on the East Side. His brother, John, 80, is traveling from Bolivia, where he's been a missionary for nearly 46 years.

After that, they will travel to Cleveland to see their older sister, Margaret, 87, who is in an assisted-living facility. Their sister Dorothy died seven years ago of a heart attack at age 74.

Both sisters, members of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph in Cleveland, taught elementary school for 35 years.

On the surface, the siblings were very different people. Margaret is shy and introverted, and Dorothy was a bubbly, outgoing scatterbrain. John is reserved and organized but loves the occasional practical joke. James is personable and impulsive and can talk to anyone.

Still, all four took the same path.

Margaret entered the convent in September 1938, the week Ogurchock started the first grade. Dorothy wasn't far behind.

John knew from age 13 that he wanted to do missionary work abroad.

James wasn't always so sure about the priesthood. He considered medicine and architecture, and remembers drinking beer with buddies back in his 20s and talking about marriage and fatherhood.

But gradually, he felt pulled to minister. He was ordained on May 31, 1958.

"Boy, I'm so glad I did what I did," Ogurchock said. "It's been so rewarding and fantastic."

His parents were religious, but not fanatical, and they certainly didn't push their children, he said.

Ann and John Ogurchock raised their children in Akron and sent them to Catholic school and weekly Mass.

Mostly, his parents led by example, their youngest son said.

He remembers his father, a grocer who logged 10- and 12-hour days, going to novena services every Friday night before he changed clothes or ate dinner.

"Religion was just a natural part of our lives," Ogurchock said. His father died in 1968, and his mother in 1990.

It's special to mark the anniversary with John and Margaret, Ogurchock said.

"I think it's a real blessing," he said. "I wish all four of us were still alive to celebrate together."

The Rev. James Ogurchock's 50 years of ministry will be honored with a Mass at 2 p.m. Sunday at St. Philip the Apostle Church, 1573 Elaine Rd. A reception will follow at the church.