

Looking Back at OLG

Let's take a look back at our Lady of Grace
Teeming with children, oh ... such a place!

It started as a dream – this parish had heart
So they gave the Building Fund a strong start

No money to spare, they made the decision
Canvassing, collecting with careful precision

Each family would bravely pledge a sum
Then smiling, collecting, Mr. Powell would come

On each door he'd knock, then chat for a bit
He charmed us weekly with his kind wit

We'd have our dollars ready, all set aside
Building our future with a deep sense of pride

Meanwhile some of us took the Public Service bus
To Camden for the Catholic school nearest to us

Others went to Somerdale School No. 1
Waiting for our own school soon to be done

There was another hurdle to be overcome
Teachers were needed Maybe even a nun!

Remember the ugly nightclub all broken down
That place was an eyesore, the worst in our town?

A huge transformation overtook the old place,
To prepare for each sister her own quiet space.

An army of volunteers made it soon ready
We now had a convent, solid, sure and steady

Soon Sisters aplenty in the convent were living
Now it was *green stamps* we were saving and giving

With thousands of stamps ... millions? Maybe more?
We could get our Sisters a car, but not from a store

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Purchases mounted as did those filled S&H books
A black station wagon was greeted with astonished looks!

We wanted our Sisters, who came from far and wide
To know we were grateful to have them by our side

There was a troubling thought, when we first found it true
To get teachers .. why, *what* the public schools had to do!

Pay them yes, money, to be in the classroom
When our Sisters for love, nurtured *us* to bloom

Can't help but feel sorry for each public school child
Even if during Catechetical they were unruly and wild

Their teachers didn't have this fine, lofty goal
To teach and to save their precious, immortal soul

We started in second grade, then went on through
By 7th we'd built on an addition, brand new!

For 4th and for 5th our class was so big
They sent us a lively nun, dancing a jig

The young Sr. St. Mark, fresh on her US mission
Steeped in Catholic truths, rules, and long-held tradition

With her cute Irish brogue & figures of speech
She was equipped to enthrall and wow, could she teach!

"You've got me off ta th' rrraces", she'd call out full force
Suddenly quiet, *then* we'd pay attention, of course.

She must have wondered, "Now, how *could* they ask?"
97 children in *one* room - such a formidable task!

So to the church basement, the only room large enough
To hold ... 97 ... 98? ... and *all* our stuff!

We soon learned of honor and honest self-control
Besides, if we didn't, we *knew* heads would roll!

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Remember our picnics at Clementon Lake Park?
Outdoor fun with our teachers all day until dark.

Some Sisters would ride the roller coaster hill
But others preferred the jarring bumping cars' thrill

Once we were all driving, bumping, and crashing away
When something happened that almost ruined the day

Sister's rosary, her beads ... scattered, pulled all apart
"Now wait, children. Careful! Watch, ok ... start!

We scampered on knees searching clear to the door
Beads beneath cars, rolling, skittling all over the floor

Good sleuths, to the last, each bead we soon counted
Our frolicking resumed; excitement again mounted

The sound of our voices in church or at Mass
Could soar and swell, yes, and vibrate the glass

Our parents delighted in hearing us sing
"Tantum Ergo", "Salve Regina" ... the Latin would ring

Tuesdays, first Fridays ... we practiced and sang
Learning timing and diction, until the rafters rang

For smiling Sr. Loretta Therese we sang our hearts out
She spoke in a whisper, rarely a loud shout

Hands gracefully sweeping the air with the beat
Our eyes riveted on her, now that was a feat!

For our wiggle-worm selves to hold still & to sing
We were fighting the urge to sway and to swing

Just seeing her nod to us with a smiled "Good!"
We'd strive to do anything, *all* that we should.

Musicals, spring pageants and crownings in May
Were times for rejoicing and savoring the day

Soft pretzels, pre-ordered, and only a nickel
Soon you're surrounded, sure, pretzels make friends fickle

The brass recess bell sat cornered on Mother's high desk
For the privilege to carry it – boy, we'd sure risk

Matching step for step with Mother Donata in schoolyard's melee
Through girls jumping rope, boys racing in "Breakaway" relay

The time soon arrived, it was your turn this moment
To ring the bell, clanging, instantly stopping all movement.

To take your turn, and not stand in those 2 by 2 lines
Arm's length to your neighbor, standing orderly and fine

Was a joy we each relished and hardly could wait
Until the day came around, your one assigned date

Another chance, hourly, was to ring the class bell
And "Bless The Hour", a job we loved as well.

There were some days when ... the side blackboard rose
Filled with seatwork assignments, so many- we froze!

As reading groups rotated, our copybooks would show
Red lines drawn and slanted where adverbs should go

The hundreds of sentences we diagramed must be
The reason for our *complete* grammar propensity!

Often, our mornings started off with a flash
As 5 question "mentals" up and down the rows dashed

Mid year another time of renewal and move
New seat assignments, a new classroom views might behoove

The assimilation of knowledge without so much chatter
New seatmates, good board view & attention's what mattered

We'd troop, books in arms, to the room front en mass
Soon we'd be re-settled, feeling refreshed as a class

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Reports came round quarterly like a dreaded disease
We'd squirm, eyes darting and all ill at ease.

Through the *whole* alphabet Monsignor would go
Calling our names, as we fidgeted to and fro

We'd be sitting there praying for at least a "plus"
To show we'd been working, and to avoid the fuss

Our parents noticed check marks blaring out loud
Our failing to comply, standing out in the crowd

Our uniforms equalized us, the poor and the rich
Jumpers and navy ties we preserved with many a stitch

No worry each morning about what to wear
But unpolished saddle shoes we couldn't bear!

For the girls there was this little beanie affair
That mashed and distressed even the most well behaved hair!

For the boys there was always the problem of white
Whose shirt could still be so after all day & night?

Our janitors... let's not forget that kind, gentle soul
Mssrs. Lex & Schaeffer made our school *sparkle*, going beyond their
roles

We'd hope and we'd wait to see what next year brought
Which class, which teacher, what had been wrought?

You could hear from a distance our loud, complete pleasure
With unbridled joy and in abundant measure

When we learned that we stayed with Sisters Mark and Therese
A second year – who'd have thought it, who says?

OLG meant a sound education, rest assured
Never for a moment were we idle or bored

Graduation, then high school for us in 1967
We quickly learned that at OLG we'd tasted Heaven!

With much affection and many memories and a great education,
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