

*"Hold out your hands," Sister said, "you lied to me." She hit them till they bled, with a flagstick. I was in first grade.*

Pittsburgh's Catholic immigrants had very strong opinions about their children's schooling. If the American government insisted that their children go to school, they wouldn't send them to just any school. Their children would be educated by their church, in classes where teachers ruled with an iron fist and taught them the same values they were taught at home. Parochial schools proliferated in and around Pittsburgh, and nearly 25% of the city's children went to Catholic school. Most of these schools were run by Irish nuns, with German nuns running a close second.

*I was always a good speller. We had a line form along the side of the room, and if you stayed at the head of the line for a week you got a rosary. I had about six rosary beads, I used to win all the contests.*

St. Rosalia's old school building was falling apart and the parish built its students a big red brick building that fronted on Greenfield Avenue. The modern structure had 12 large classrooms and even an office for the principal. The pastor, Father John Faughnan, recruited Immaculate Heart of Mary nuns to teach at the new school and bought a building across the street for their Mother Superior, Sister Loyola, to convert into a convent.

*We had one nun in sixth grade, she must have been 75 years old—at least she seemed very old to us, but of course we were only twelve. This boy, he was a little wee kid, he used to get her so mad that Sister would chase him around the room. He'd get up on top of the desk and he'd hop from desk to desk and she'd run up the aisle with her rosary beads flying; they'd catch on the back of the seat, and she'd have to stop and unhook them before she broke them, all the time shouting, "I'll get you yet!"*

There were 371 students in St. Rosalia School during its first year. St. Joachim Church built its own school at the corner of Saline and Boundary in The Run. Its students were taught by Vincentian Sisters of Charity, who made themselves a home above the school while the parish built a convent to house them.

*The old convent for St. Rosalia School's Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is now the GO Center.*

*The convent for the Vincentian Sisters of Charity who taught at St. Joachim School was at 28 Alexis Street.*