



# Dorothy Lopes

Today is October 2nd, 2023. My name is Dorothy Lopes. I am the daughter of Antonio L. Lopes and Mary Amber Lopes. I was born in New Bedford on July 11th, 1934 at 263 South Second Street. On June 6th, 1937, I was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of the Assumption. My godparents were Laura Gomes and Joel Silva.

I have been a parishioner at Our Lady of the Assumption Church since that date, 85 years ago. Our Lady of the Assumption, or OLOA, as our parish is affectionately called, was established on August 15th, 1905 by Bishop William Stang and the congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. It was established to serve the spiritual needs of the Cape Verdean people who had settled in New Bedford from the Cape Verde Islands. It has the distinction of being the first Catholic church for Cape Verdeans in America. Currently, we are preparing to celebrate 117 years as a parish.

Our Lady of the Assumption has been a very significant part of my life in many ways. I received my first Eucharist on May 3rd, 1942, and was confirmed on April 20, 1948. At this time, the church building was located on South Water Street. After a hurricane in 1954 destroyed much of the building, it was decided we needed to seek a location that would be more secure. After much planning and discussion, land was purchased and a new worship space was built at 47 South Sixth Street. The present building was dedicated in September of 1957. So currently we have been at the location longer than at the Water Street location.

I was part of the fundraising committee that went out to solicit pledges from parishioners and donations from local businesses to help pay for our new church. As a parishioner, I was encouraged, especially by Father Edmund Francis, to teach catechism. I taught classes to students who lived in Dartmouth using the home of Nancy Ramis for our classroom space. I also taught classes in the church. Later I worked with Sister Marianna Sylvester, a religious Sister of Mercy, teaching confirmation class and planning retreats. In addition, I became a Eucharistic minister, elector, a member of the parish council and the liturgy committee.

Planning fundraisers was another way I used my time, talent, and treasure for the sake of the parish. During several summers, I organized Sunday breakfast after Mass. Funds raised supported youth activities. This meant getting to church long before mass to bake the muffins, make the coffee, et cetera. I would recruit people to assist, people like Gordon, Alice Antwistle, Jacqueline Lamento, Ida Fimino, my sister, and several others. People enjoyed the time after Mass to sit and chat with each other or with some coffee and goodies. Many friendships were strengthened during those times.

Growing up in the church, I witnessed many, many examples of love for the parish and examples of my elders of how to serve the parish and the community. These examples of loyal service and community spirit inspired me to do the same. It was a close-knit community of mostly Cape Verdeans, but others were always welcomed. OLOA has been a rock for me, and I have profited by choosing to remain a part of it since my childhood to the present age of 89. Long live OLOA.