

140 Years: It's the Journey, not the Destination



Spring 2017
interchange
Sisters of Saint Francis

Exploring values common to you and today's Rochester Franciscans

Focus: It's the Journey...

interchange

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editor
Kathy Gatliff

layout/design
Ben Sebesta

cover photo
Sister Marlene Pinzka

telephone: (507) 282-7441

fax: (507) 282-7762

info@rochesterfranciscan.org

www.rochesterfranciscan.org

1001 14th Street Northwest
Rochester, MN 55901



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From the National Catholic Development Conference

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Dear Friends and Family,

The Rochester Franciscan journey began with a tenacious woman that had tremendous faith and an indomitable spirit, forging ahead despite the challenges and obstacles put in her way. In doing so, she is recognized as having founded two congregations of women religious in the United States. This immigrant woman ventured out of her comfort zone, entered a new country and left the world a much better place.

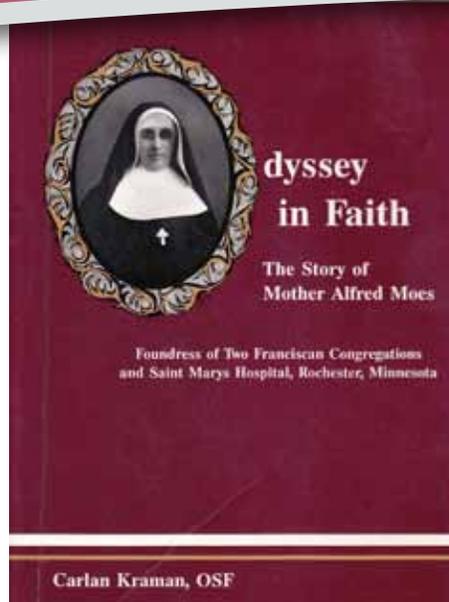
As we embark on the 140th Anniversary of the founding of our Congregation, it is interesting to note all that has transpired in that time. As Rochester Franciscans, we have been witness to the establishment of schools, a college, hospitals, hospices, and even other Congregations. Over the decades we have also been witness to the closing of those same institutions; all while new opportunities were presented, leading us forward on other paths.

Each of us is on a personal journey, a spiritual journey – often with a specific destination in mind – and yet, obstacles are put in our way. We have to take detours and make alternative plans. That is what makes life so interesting... we don't often end up where we intended to go, but when we look back, we see what an interesting journey it has been along the way.

We hope your journey through life leads you to walk with the Sisters of Saint Francis being a compassionate presence for peace in the world, striving for justice and reverence for all creation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sister Marilyn Geiger, OSF". The script is fluid and cursive.

Sister Marilyn Geiger
Congregational Minister



This year marks the 140th anniversary of Mother Alfred's decision to trust in God and remain in Minnesota when the Chicago bishop was requesting her return to Illinois in 1877; a decision that resulted in the founding of our congregation, the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Third Order Regular of the Congregation of Our Lady of Lourdes. Mother Alfred died on December 18, 1899, at the age of 71. Her obituary in the *Olmsted County Democrat* stated that she was "a woman whose unceasing labors have given the world monuments that will forever keep her memory green in the hearts of suffering humanity." Her indefatigable spirit never waned as she identified ministries for this new congregation. From 1877 – 1899, Rochester Franciscan Sisters served in over 25 cities.

Sister Carlan Kraman performed a colossal task of research and writing to present us with *Odyssey in Faith: The Story of Mother Alfred Moes*, published in 1990. The youngest of ten children born to Peter-Gerard and Anna-Marie Moes in Remich, Luxembourg, Maria Catherine would become Mother Alfred Moes, foundress of two congregations of Franciscan Sisters in the United States. She and her older sister, Catherine, came to the United States, in 1851, desiring to teach the Indians. According to Sister Carlan, the personality traits of the two Moes women complemented each other: "Catherine was frail, her younger sister was indefatigable; she was cautious where Maria was inclined to be rash; prudent and considerate where the younger was spontaneously generous. Catherine's were the less spectacular virtues

which furnished a balance to her sister's impulsive temperament."

Mother Alfred's main interest was the education of immigrant children. She was known as an excellent teacher. Pastors of parishes in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Ohio requested her Sisters. In 1883, her response to the tragedy of a tornado leaving many wounded was to have them brought to the Academy of Our Lady of Lourdes as a temporary hospital. That experience prompted her to negotiate with Dr. W.W. Mayo for a hospital that the Sisters would build and administer in collaboration with the Mayo physicians as the medical staff.

Schools and hospitals are monuments that keep the memory green of those who initiated them, but the more important "monument" for us is the exemplar of virtue that Mother Alfred provides. Sister Petronilla said, "Although her official duties were many and important, still, in her humility, she never considered any manual work too menial for her performance." Sister Eleanor Granger assessed Mother Alfred's contribution to education: "If she had not had the courage of her convictions, many communities across the Midwest would not have been the beneficiaries of solid Christian, Catholic education." Significant is Mother Alfred's philosophy about collaborating with Protestant doctors for care of the sick: "the cause of suffering humanity knows no religion and no sex; the charity of the Sisters of Saint Francis is as broad as their religion." These virtues are the fruition of a lifetime commitment to "trust in God and do good (Psalm 37)."



This 1985 photo shows Sisters Patricia Fritz, right, (Rochester) and Elaine Murphy, left, (Joliet), both serving as Congregational Leaders, standing next to a sketch of Mother Alfred in Joliet. The two Leadership Teams were meeting together even prior to the beginning of "Mother Al's Gals" gatherings.

As we tell the story of Mother Alfred and our founding Sisters, we find a rich, passionate, sometimes mysterious adventure that now includes five unique Religious Congregations. Let us highlight some of the treasured memories from these five groups whose Leadership, since the early 1990s has found life and goodness in gathering together. Affectionately known as "Mother Al's Gals," these Leadership Teams continue to meet annually, exploring and celebrating the Spirit alive in the early pioneer women who brought about blessings for so many people. They also inspire and encourage each other marveling at that same Spirit alive today in these congregations.

Holy Cross Congregation

Mother Alfred and Sister Barbara, her blood sister, entered the Marianite Sisters of the Holy Cross in South Bend, Indiana, on July 17, 1856. Mother Alfred professed final vows in 1858. Sister Grace Shonk, CSC, archivist of the Sisters of the Holy Cross writes:

"The Sisters of the Holy Cross are blessed to have had Mother Alfred Moes (Mary Catherine Moes), known as Sister Alfred, as a member during her beginning years of religious life together with her older sibling, Sister Barbara (Catherine Moes).



One branch on the "family tree" plaque of the Sisters of the Holy Cross.

"The Sisters of the Holy Cross revere her as a branch from the tree of Holy Cross. Indeed, she is honored among the pioneer spirits who, formed by the message of the Cross, gave witness in their lives to the love of God for all His people. A small picture is displayed in the Congregation's Heritage Room."

(see image above)

Franciscan Sisters of Allegany

Ms. Ellen Winger, Congregational Archivist for the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, submitted the following from "the earliest materials in our archives."

"During the early 1860s, Father Pamfilo had taken under his care four Sisters in the Congregation of the Holy Cross at St. Mary (Notre Dame), Indiana. They desired to transfer from the congregation and become members of the Franciscan family. On August 2, 1865, Father Pamfilo received their first postulant, Mary Rosenberger (Sister Mary Angela) in the chapel at St. Bonaventure College in Allegany. At that time, he appointed Sister Alfred Moes the first superior of the Congregation of the Third Order Regular of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet, Illinois. During their stay in Allegany, Mother Alfred and Sister Angela lived at St. Elizabeth Motherhouse."

continued...

Many Destinations, Similar Journeys

Joliet Franciscans

On June 1, 1863, Mother Alfred and companions were accepted into Third Order Regular of Saint Francis by Fr. Pamfilo, OFM, of St. Bonaventure University. Thus begins the new Franciscan Order, the “Joliet Franciscans.”^[1] Mother Alfred and Sister Bernard moved to Joliet on November 5, 1863, to begin teaching. In 1876, at the direction of Bishop Foley, a new general superior was elected, Sister Alberta. She appointed Mother Alfred to move to Minnesota in response to a request to build an academy for girls in Waseca.

In December of 1877, Bishop Foley expelled Mother Alfred from the Joliet Community. At that same time, a new Order, the “Rochester Franciscans” was begun. The Archives of the Joliet Franciscans provide us with letters from Mother Alfred, in her own hand, to Sisters in Joliet. Note the dates of the letters, which were provided by Ms. Nan Nagl, Director for Mission Advancement, and appear on the next page.

^[1] The Order was incorporated in the state of Illinois in 1874.

Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

In 1901, three members of the Franciscan Sisters of Joliet, Illinois, responded to the needs of the immigrants, by establishing a new Franciscan Community in St. Louis, Missouri. This congregation became known as the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Sister Regina Strassburger, OSF, Secretary General for the Congregation, sent her reflections about Mother Alfred:

“The quote from Psalm 37 that appears on the icon of Mother Alfred Moes, “Commit your way to God; Trust that God will act,” resonates with the spirit of the foundresses and members of the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. In the Testament of Mother Ernestine Matz, one of our three foundresses that broke off from the Joliet Franciscans, we read,

“All beginnings are difficult, failure seemed to stare us in the face. We placed our confidence in the [God] . . . “ We had no direct dealings with Mother Alfred, but we think we inherited some of her spunk, spirit, dedication and trust in God. We often state that the first mission statement of our foundresses, “No place too far, no person too lowly, no service too humble” is in our DNA! We are certain and so grateful for the gifts passed down to us from the Joliet Franciscans and Mother Alfred Moes.”

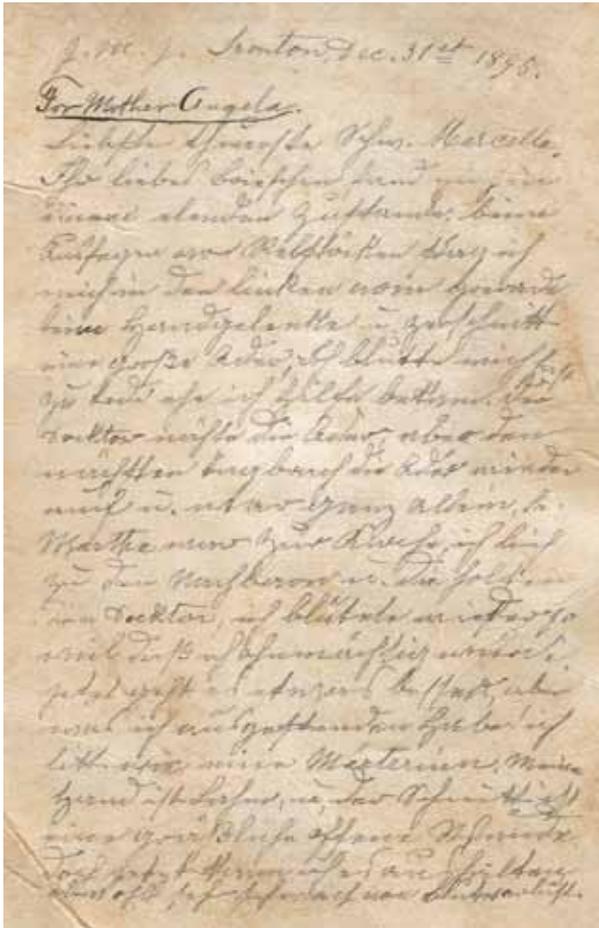
Sisters of Saint Francis of Sylvania, Ohio

On December 8, 1916, Mother Adelaide Sandusky, along with 22 other Sisters, responded to the call from Bishop Schrembs to move from Rochester, Minnesota, to Toledo, Ohio, to educate the children of Polish immigrants. This move was approved by the Council and Mother Leo. Sister Nora Klewicki, Congregational Archivist, offers her reflections:

“Mother Adelaide professed first vows on July 16, 1899, less than four months before Mother Alfred’s death at St. Joseph’s Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota. It is not unreasonable to assume that she attended the profession ceremony. It is also quite possible that Mother Adelaide was known to Mother Alfred even before her entrance into the Rochester Franciscan sisterhood in 1893, as the Sandusky family lived in St. Paul. These instances however, are in the realm of conjecture.

“Mother Adelaide Sandusky surely benefitted from the educational gifts of the College of St. Teresa, an institution that she not only attended, but served with distinction. An institution which, though started by Mother Leo Tracy, was most surely blessed by Mother Alfred. And Mother Alfred would have cheered for the inspired architecture that is the Sylvania motherhouse and for the success of Lourdes University, an institution that began as an extension of St. Teresa.”

Letters from Mother Alfred



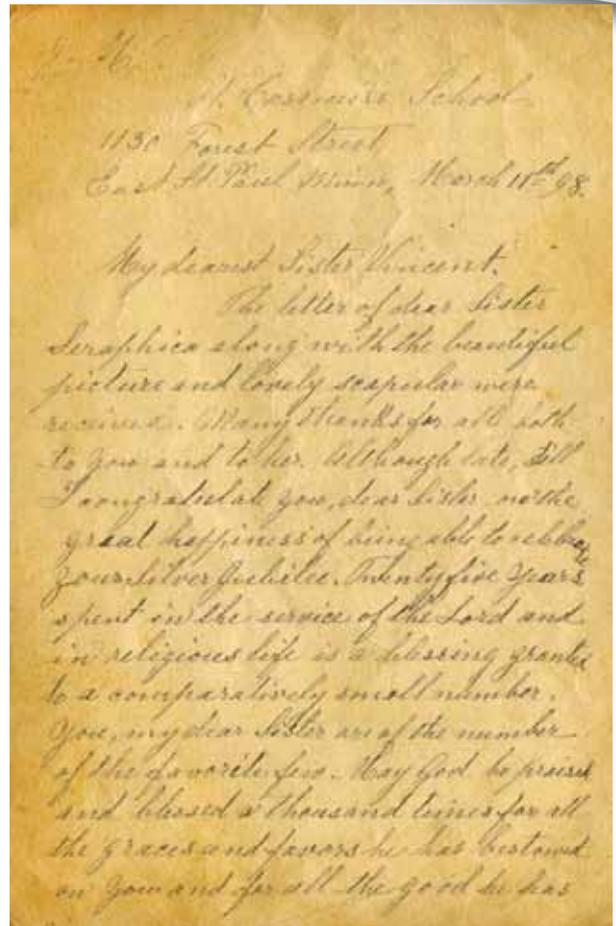
(translated from German)

For Mother Angela

Dearest beloved Sister Marcella,

Your dear letter reached me in a sad state of health. When I was working in the vineyards I injured my left arm just above the wrist and cut a vein. I almost bled to death before help arrived. The physician sutured the vein but it broke open again the next day when I was completely alone. Sister Martha was at church, so I ran to a neighbor who called the doctor. I again bled so severely that I fainted! Now I am somewhat better but I suffered like a martyr. My hand is lame and the cut is horrible open wound. But I can stand it now although I am very weak from loss of blood. Everything happened just before Christmas. You can imagine what Christmas I had, I couldn't go to church and received few presents, except from Sister Stanislaus. Her family sent me stockings, apron, towels and some other small items. I hope you had a more pleasant Christmas. Excuse the poor writing but my hand still trembles from weakness.

Enclosed is a picture of Sister Barbara and myself. Please distribute the other pictures - they are from Sister Barbara. Oh, how we miss her! How boring it is here without her but she is better off where she is - I wish I would be with her.



St. Casimir's School

1130 Forest Street

St. Paul, Minn., March 11, 1898

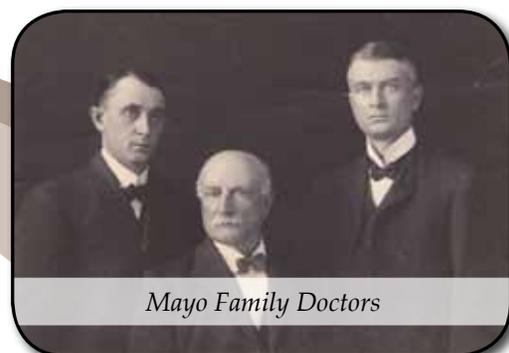
My dearest Sister Vincent,

The letter of dear Sister Seraphica along with the beautiful picture and lovely scapular were received. Many thanks for all, both to you and to her. Although late, still I congratulate you, dear Sister, on the great happiness of being able to celebrate your Silver Jubilee. Twenty-five years spent in the service of the Lord and in religious life is a blessing granted to a comparatively small number. You, my dear Sister, are of the number of the favorite five. May God be praised and blessed a thousand times for all the graces and favors he has bestowed on you and for all the good he has accomplished through you during these many years. I hope you had a very joyful Silver Jubilee celebration.

Re-examining the Origins of Saint Marys Hospital



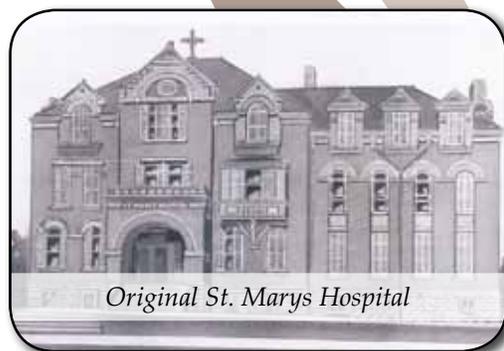
Tornado, Rochester, MN (1883)



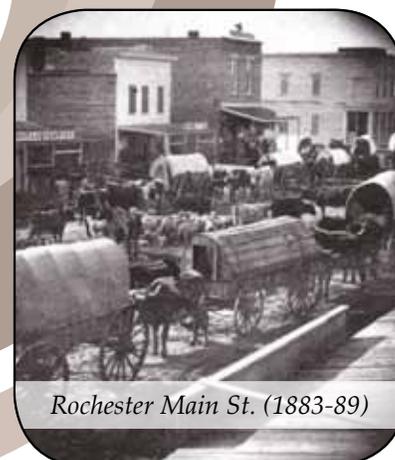
Mayo Family Doctors



Mother Alfred Moes



Original St. Marys Hospital



Rochester Main St. (1883-89)

The following article is excerpted from an introductory address to a Values Review retreat, given to a group of Mayo Clinic/Saint Marys Hospital employees by Sister Valerie Usher in January, 1996. – Sister Tierney Trueman

The unforgettable date was August 21, 1883. One of Minnesota's violent summer tornadoes and the presence of two relatively recent immigrants to Rochester were the catalysts that gave birth to Saint Marys Hospital and the Mayo Clinic. Dr. William Worrall Mayo had emigrated from England; Mother Alfred Moes had emigrated from Luxembourg. It was the devastating tornado that brought their extraordinary lives together, and gifted the world with their vision and their values, which have left an indelible imprint on the field of medicine for over a century.

Dr. William Worrall Mayo emigrated from England to the United States at the age of twenty-six; he studied and practiced medicine in New York and Indiana; he married, began a family, and decided to settle in Minnesota. Before he ever made it to Rochester, he had assisted the victims of the Sioux uprising in New Ulm, and served as an examining surgeon in the draft offices of the Union Army at the outset of the Civil War. At the age of 44, he moved his family to Rochester.

The people of the area described him as "an intelligent gentleman, a good talker, serious, energetic, forthrightly honest . . . and professionally able in medicine." (Helen Clapesattle, *The Doctors Mayo*.) Once established in Rochester, he soon became well-known, because "With characteristic energy



Tornado Street View, Rochester, MN (1883)

he accepted the invitation to leadership offered by Rochester's possibilities, and he was soon a force to be reckoned with in community life." (Clapesattle) He was a man focused on doing and serving, on alleviating suffering and making things better for his fellow human beings.

Mother Alfred Moes was born in Luxembourg in 1828. Being adventuresome, faith-filled, and generous of spirit, she felt called to respond to the appeal of a bishop from Milwaukee to come to America to help serve the many needs there. At the age of 22, she and her older sister left their family and their homeland to begin a new life of dedicated service in America. A series of events led them, first to the Notre Dame Sisters in Milwaukee, then to the Holy Cross Sisters in South Bend, and finally, to their Franciscan life that began in Joliet. Ultimately, their journey brought them to Rochester, and the founding of the Rochester Franciscans. They came as educators and began building and staffing schools in Waseca, Owatonna and Rochester. She was 49.

Mother Alfred, like Dr. Mayo, was a person with a mission – she was a tireless hard worker and a bundle

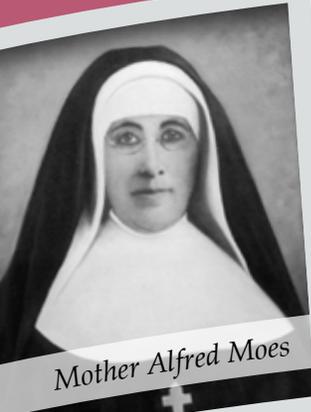
of energy. She was well-educated and refined, very focused on service to those in need. For her, "to think was to do."

The event, that fateful moment in history which connects them forever after, is the killer tornado of August 21, 1883, which came out of nowhere, and in a few moments time, left 31 dead, hundreds injured, and many more left homeless or with greatly damaged property. Mother Alfred immediately opened the convent doors to receive many of the homeless and wounded. By morning, Dr. Mayo called at her door to suggest that "there ought to be a Sister down there (at the local hotel-turned-makeshift-hospital) to look after those 'fellows.'" Mother Alfred immediately responded by sending two of her fledgling Sisters down to help, and sent reinforcements around the clock.

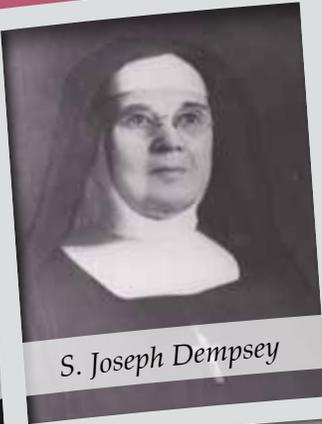
It was not long after that striking episode that Mother Alfred paid a visit to Dr. Mayo. "Some weeks after our patients had been relieved and the temporary hospital closed, the Mother Superior came to my office and,

continued...

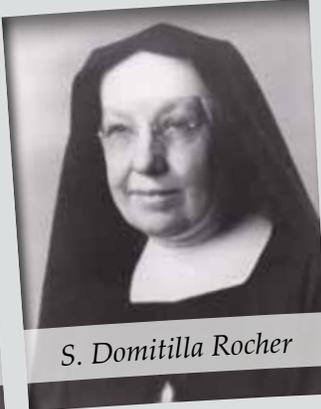
Re-examining the Origins of Saint Marys Hospital



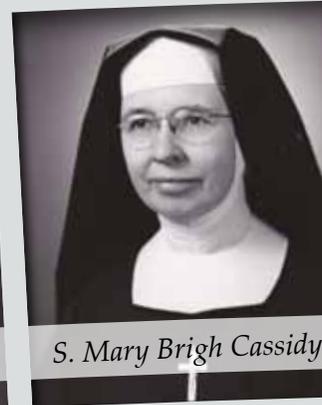
Mother Alfred Moes



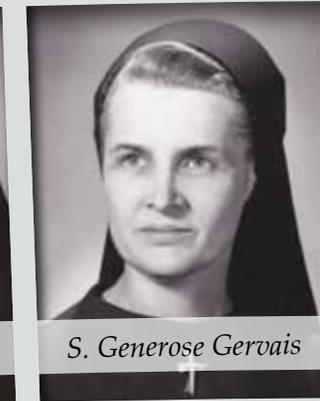
S. Joseph Dempsey



S. Domitilla Rocher



S. Mary Brigh Cassidy



S. Generose Gervais

Sister Administrators of Saint Marys Hospital

in the course of the visit she asked, 'Doctor, do you not think a hospital in this city would be an excellent thing?' I answered, 'Mother Superior, this city is too small to support a hospital.' I told her, too, that the erection of a hospital was a difficult undertaking and required a great deal of money, and moreover we had no assurance of its success even after a great deal of time and money had been put into it. 'Very true,' she persisted: 'but you just promise me to take charge of it and we will set the building before you at once. With our faith and hope and energy, it will succeed.' I asked her how much money the Sisters would be willing to put into it, and her reply was, 'How much do you want?' 'Would you be willing to risk forty thousand dollars?' I said. 'Yes,' she replied, and 'more if you want it. Draw up your plans. It will be built at once.'" (Souvenir edition, 1922, pp 33-34.)

This gives you some idea of the character of this woman, who could size up a need, imagine the possibilities of response, tap some collaborative resources, set her sights on a goal, and go after it with gusto.

The new hospital, staffed by brand-new doctors Will and Charlie Mayo, and a few Sisters who were teachers but were willing to do whatever Mother Alfred asked of them. Contrary to the prevailing myths of the day, they became such a source of genuine healing, that within only five years after the hospital opened in 1889, the Sisters were providing an addition to the original structure, as is evidenced in these dedicatory remarks by the elder Dr. Mayo:

"The building which we are met to dedicate represents

the work of the Sisters of Saint Francis. The hospital has sprung up and developed into its present magnificent proportions almost without your knowing it. To many of our people, it is if a grand and useful gift dropped from the clouds. It has cost you not one cent of money, not one hour of labor, not one moment of anxiety, and there it stands without a peer in the Northwest, one of the brightest ornaments of your fair city and one of its chief sources of pride. Its equipments are surpassed by no hospital in the United States. The Sisters of Saint Francis have done this for us out of their goodness and charity, and I thank you in their name for your appreciation of their efforts." (Souvenir edition, 1922, p. 33)

It is striking to me that the Doctors Mayo are in clear and vocal accord that this was not their hospital, but rather, it was only the place where they worked. Dr. Will, on the same occasion of the 1894 dedication, said:

"I can say for myself, my father and my brother, that we are thankful to you for your kindly sentiments expressed in our favor tonight, but it is the devoted and skillful care of the Sisters that has effected the good done at Saint Marys; it is their funds that have built and maintained Saint Marys and they have steadily endeavored to improve it in every possible way . . . All the credit for the successful treatment of patients at the hospital here is due to the ministrations of the devoted, skillful Sisters in charge. We are but the Sisters' agents.'" (1922 Souvenir edition, pp 48-49.) Is this not a clear indication of the great collaborative spirit from the very beginning onward – that the Mayo family and the Franciscan Sisters were members of some form of "mutual admiration society" which, in effect, bore rich fruit not for their own benefit as

much as for the common good and the welfare of others. There were none of the barriers between them that could have easily served as an excuse for not moving ahead with this huge and risky undertaking: barriers like differences in sex or religion or different professional orientations or traditional backgrounds. NONE of that got in the way of doing “the right thing to do” . . . together!

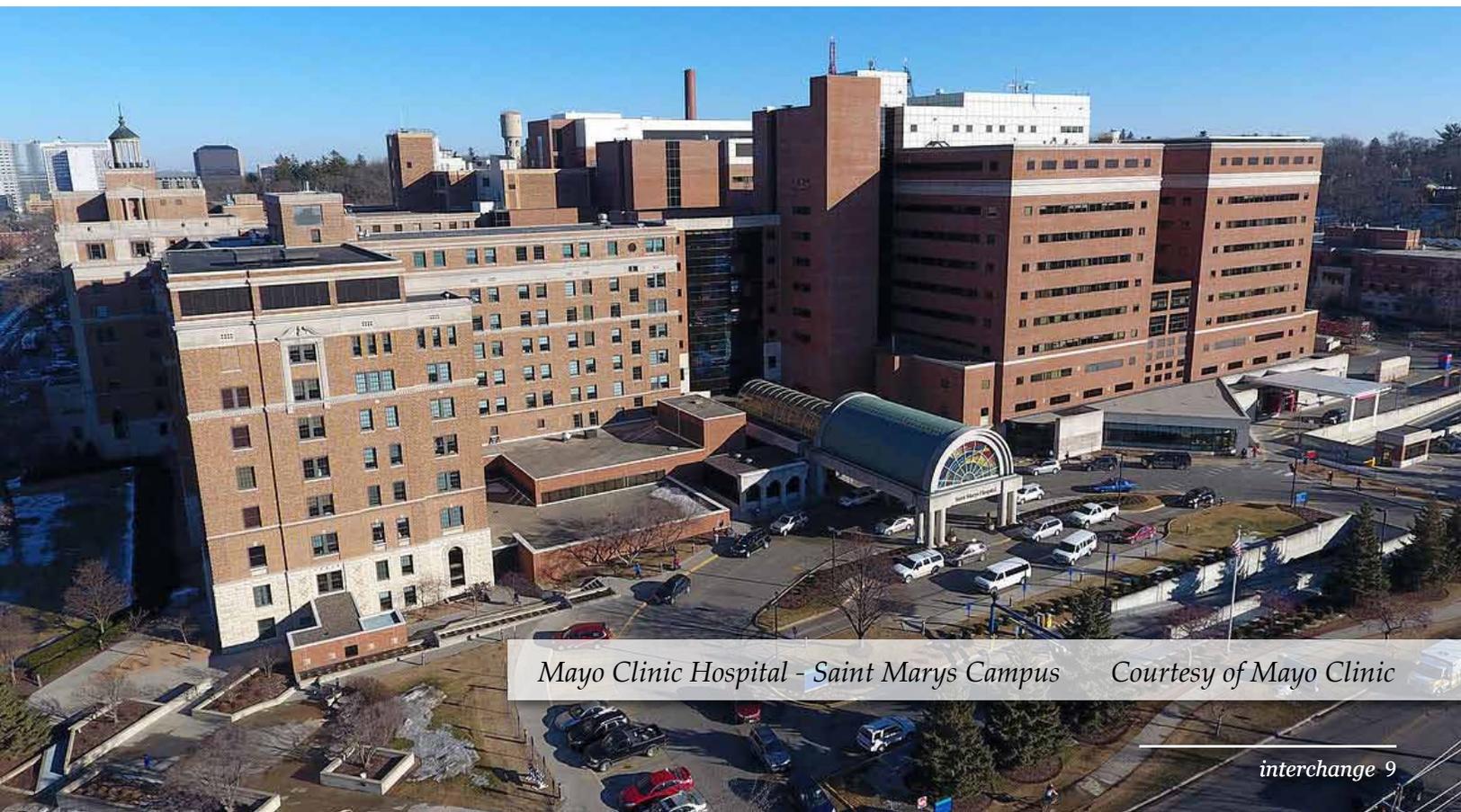
This is the legacy that we have inherited. This modeling and mentoring by a few of the “giants” of our past witnesses to a fruitful, altruistic relationship that was not based on any “profit margin” or mutually beneficial “trade-offs” or legal arrangement (would you believe that there was nothing in writing about this amazing relationship for over 97 years of its history?!), but a relationship that was grounded in good will and shared values and a down-to-earth mutual respect and appreciation for one another’s contribution to improving our common lot and being of service to those in need, a commitment that was sealed in a handshake.

Dr. W. W. Mayo took obvious pride in recounting stories of the beginning days. The following story

(which appeared in several area newspapers) was his favorite version of the “creation” of Saint Marys Hospital.

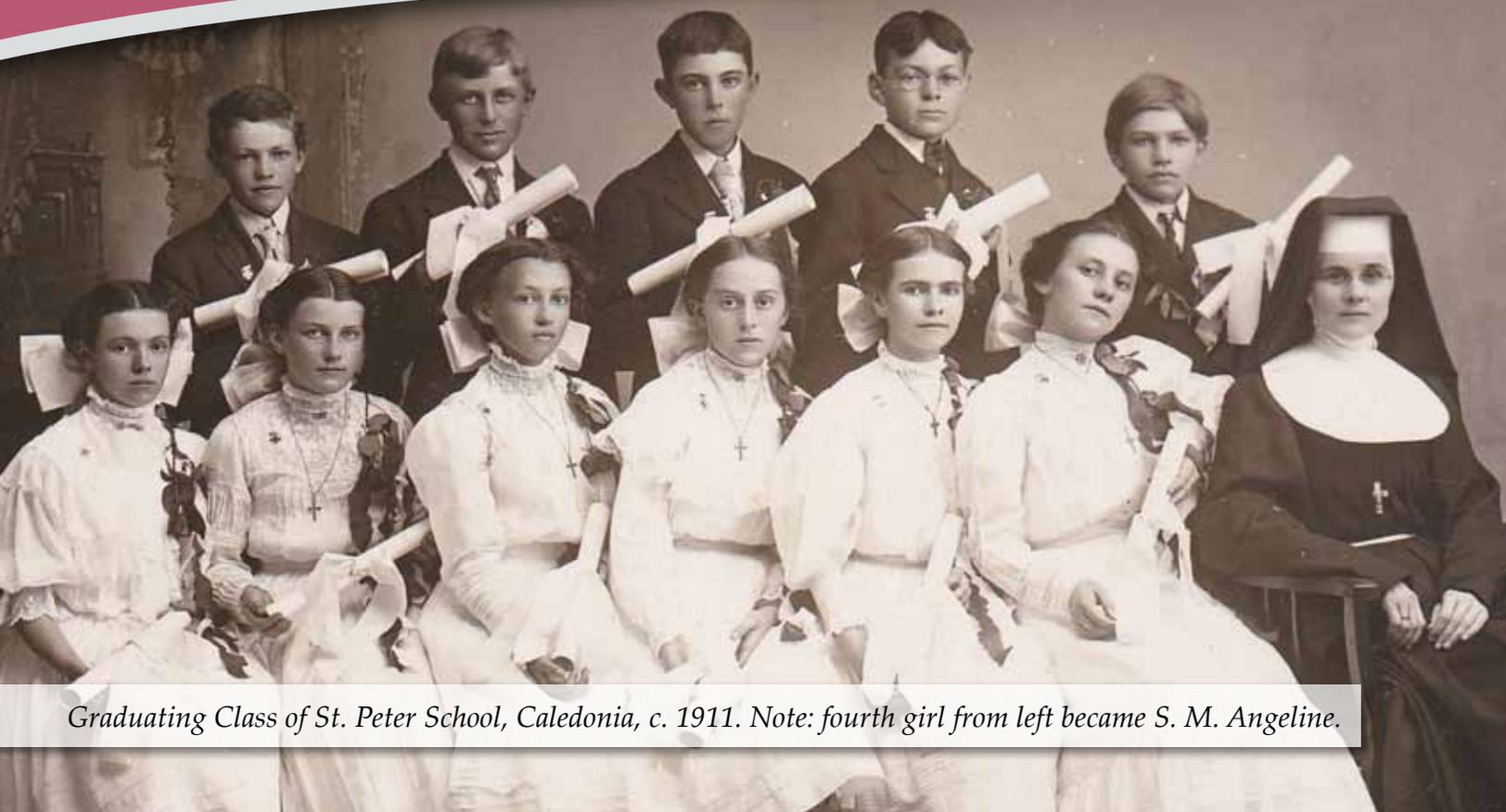
“After the tornado, when the worst was over, the dead buried, the injured recovering, the Mother Superior of the little convent sent for me. She told me she had a vision of the future. It had come upon her in a waking dream, but so vividly and with such force that she had to reveal it to me. Her vision was of a great hospital in Rochester – this small country town. To that hospital she had been told in her vision would come patients from all parts of the world. And she had seen, in her fancy, the name “Mayo Clinic” respected the world over for surgical achievement. ‘But I am nearly sixty years old. How can I achieve such fame? How can I build such a hospital? How would the world know if we did?’ ‘You have sons’, she said to me. ‘They will be great surgeons, wonderful surgeons. The world will find a path to your door.’”

As Francis would remind us: “For what else are God’s servants but minstrels whose work it is to lift up people’s hearts.”



Mayo Clinic Hospital - Saint Marys Campus Courtesy of Mayo Clinic

They Came to Teach



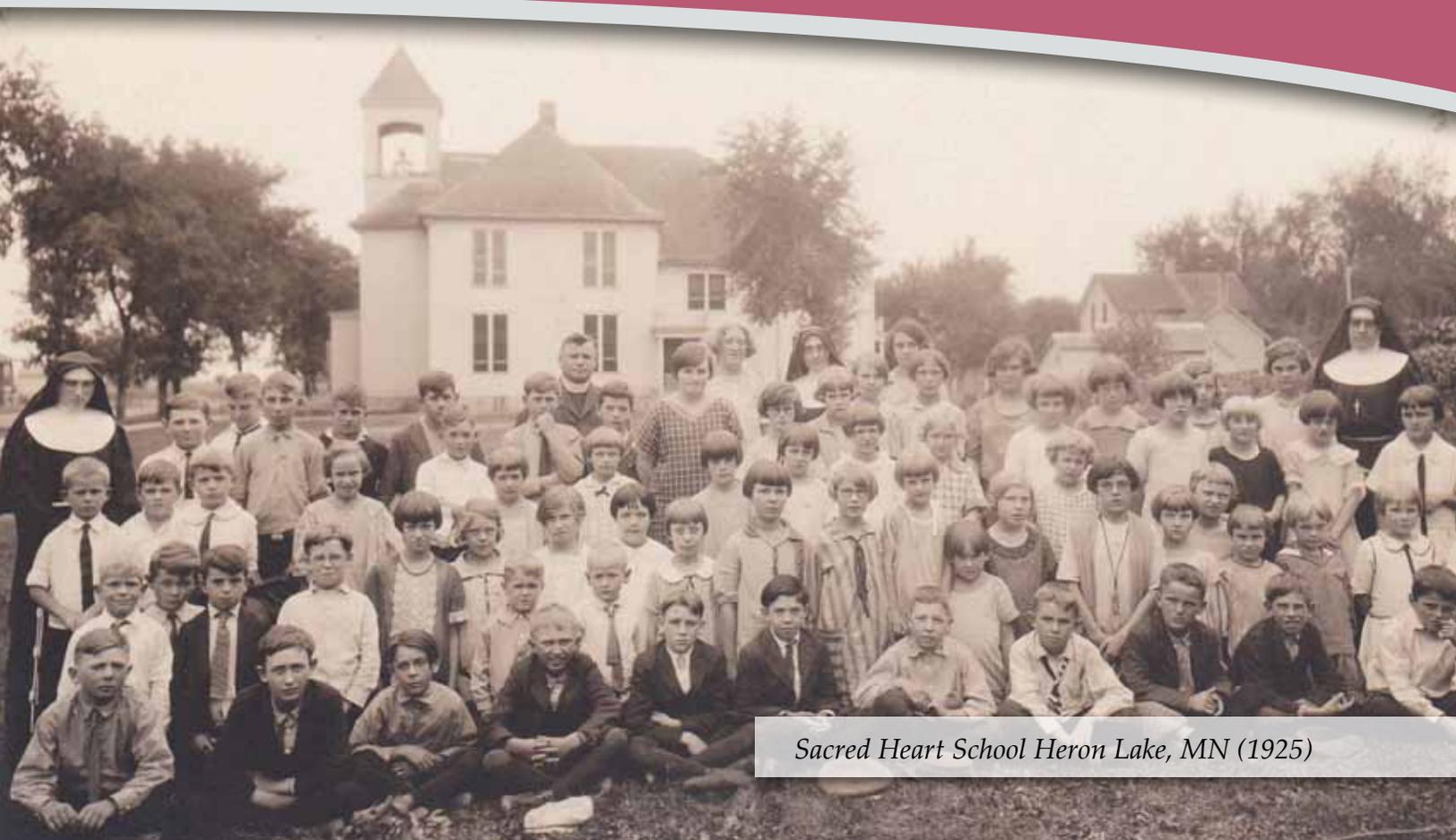
Graduating Class of St. Peter School, Caledonia, c. 1911. Note: fourth girl from left became S. M. Angeline.

The Rochester Franciscan Congregation was formed around the ministry of teaching. The book *They Came to Teach*, tells the story of nine congregations of women religious who came to Minnesota to teach. Rochester Franciscan Sisters Fidelis Logan and M. Severina Caron were a part of the “Shared Story Project,” which involved researching the material for the book, which was published in 1994.

Four of the Minnesota-based religious communities began their work by teaching within academies that they themselves established and operated. The academies included both elementary and secondary departments.¹ Of those four communities, two arrived 20 years before Mother Alfred and her Sisters made the journey from Joliet, Illinois, to establish teaching ministries in Waseca, Owatonna and Rochester, Minnesota. All of the 25 Joliet Sisters, who later became Rochester Franciscans, were educators. They staffed the two academies in Rochester and Owatonna and a few other schools that the Joliet Sisters had formerly staffed.

Soon, other parishes in Minnesota wanted the Sisters to teach their youth. As more women came to join the Rochester Franciscans, there were more teachers to spread across the landscape. Many parish schools were established in southern Minnesota, which became part of the Diocese of Winona. As the Congregation grew, more and more Sisters received their mission slips with assignments to serve in one of these schools. By the early 1950s, due to the growing demand for teachers, Mother Alcuin was requesting prayers for more women to become Rochester Franciscan Sisters. The December 1951 issue of *Franciscan Tidings* lists these statistics in the article “Know Your Congregation:” Sisters assigned to College: 68. School of Music: 5. Grade and High Schools: 387. In fact, by 1951, 460 of the 668 Sisters in the Congregation were assigned to the ministry of teaching!

Some Sisters were assigned as School Visitors. Their task was to observe each Sister in the classroom, to encourage them and offer positive feedback and ways they might improve their teaching skills. To keep up with their educational requirements, many



Sacred Heart School Heron Lake, MN (1925)

Sisters attended the College of Saint Teresa during the summer to complete their bachelor's degree, while others attended various universities to obtain their master's and doctorate degrees.

In a later issue of *Franciscan Tidings*, Mother Alcuin was facing a personnel crisis. Lay teachers were moving to the public schools for better wages while, at the same time, many of our Sisters were retiring from teaching. Her call for "Prayers for Teachers" was sent to all the missions. As lay teachers needed to be hired to fill teaching positions, the Sisters' salaries were often used to pay them because pastors felt that it was a failure on the part of the Congregation that they did not send enough Sisters! By the 1960s-1970s, there were not enough Sisters to staff all the schools and, consequently, Sisters were withdrawn from some parish schools. As a result, some parishes closed their schools, while others were determined to continue with only lay staff, which has continued to this day. As the Congregations began to look at their own finances, it was determined that the teaching salaries needed to be raised to a living wage. This also caused hard

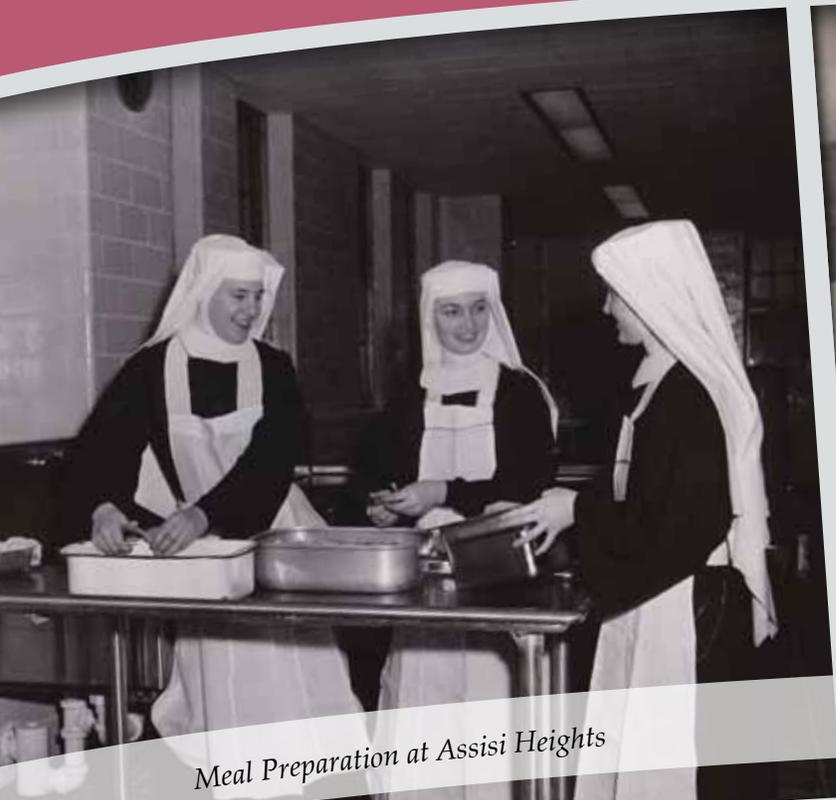
feelings among the pastors and parish councils, as they needed to come up with more money. At that time, they began charging tuition for the education of their children. Sisters still interested in teaching also had to apply for these jobs as they moved from one school to another.

By the 1970s, the Rochester Franciscan Congregation formed a Personnel Board, as Sisters were beginning to leave the teaching profession for other ministries that better suited their gifts. Parish work, social work and pastoral work in hospitals came to be professions where the Sisters flourished.

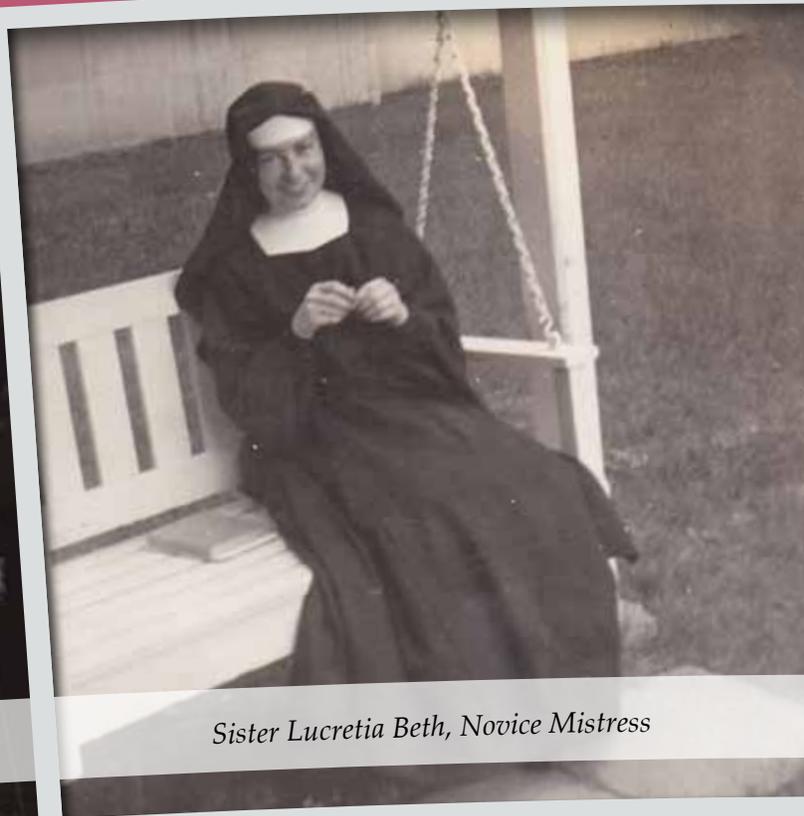
Despite all these changes and transitions, we still have a few Sisters that carry on this tradition and legacy, by continuing to teach and serve as teacher aides in parish grade schools.

¹ Annabelle Raiche, CSJ, and Ann Marie Biermaier, OSB, *They Came to Teach* (St. Cloud: North Star Press, 1994), 70.

Life at Assisi Heights: City on the Hill



Meal Preparation at Assisi Heights



Sister Lucretia Beth, Novice Mistress

Of all God's gifts, perhaps our memory is the greatest we treasure. For it is in remembering we have the opportunity to find deeper meaning. For that reason, we share our story of life at Assisi Heights.

The Motherhouse on Center Street fit on one square block in the heart of downtown Rochester. The building was old and in need of repair. However, everything necessary seemed to fit and it had a cozy quality. A favorite place was the chapel; its wood seemed to have absorbed the incense used periodically, and there was a dark and intimate quality about the space.

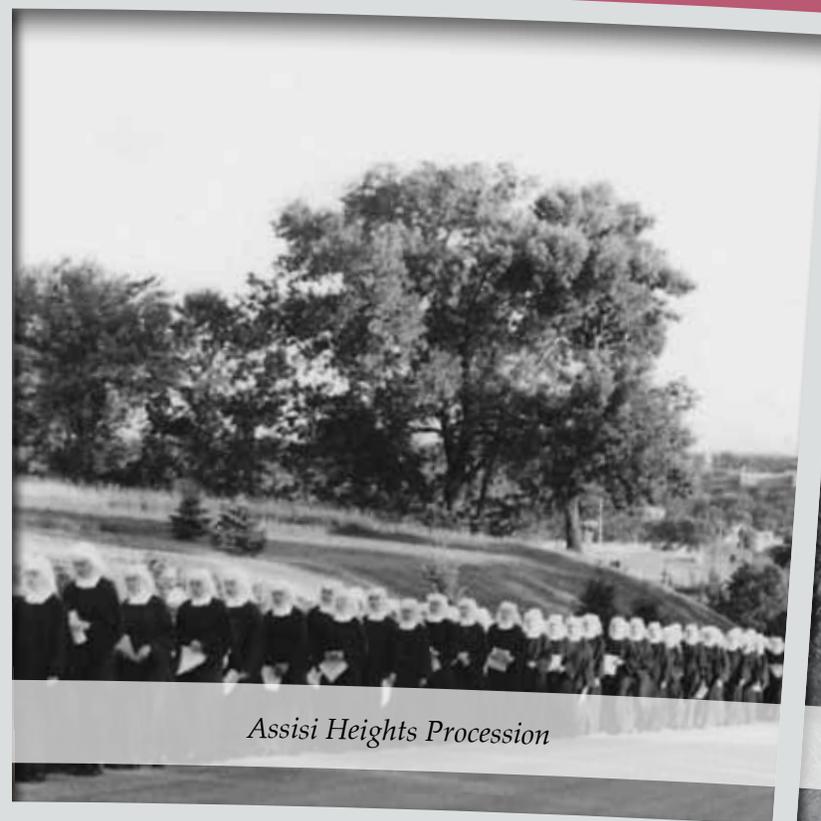
By comparison, Assisi Heights was huge and brand new with large rooms and long corridors. The splendor of creation was evident on every side of the building which overlooked acres of natural habitat. The first eight Sisters moved into Assisi Heights on March 8, 1955, with our newly appointed chaplain, Father Ploof, blessing all the rooms. Novices were busy setting up furniture, making beds, moving items

to their designated spaces while the construction workers were still busy plastering the ceiling in Lourdes Chapel.

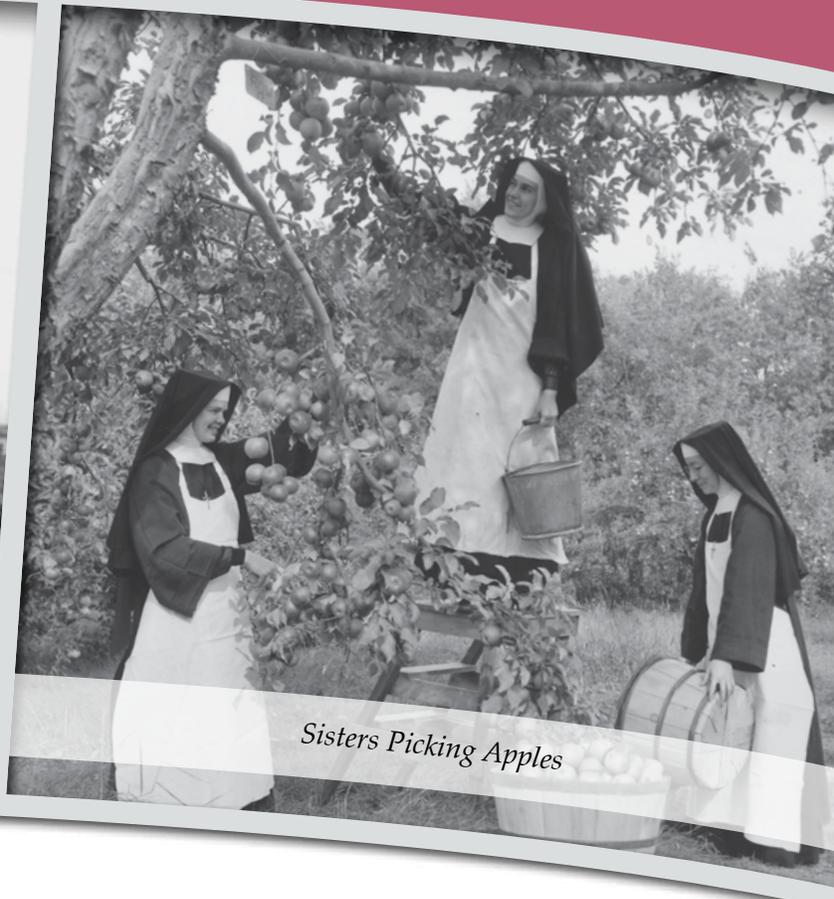
On March 16, seventy Novices, along with Sister Lucretia, arrived to take up residence. The next day, the first Mass was held in the Clare Chapel. And on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation, Bishop Fitzgerald consecrated the altar in the Novitiate Chapel, and then blessed and erected the Stations of the Cross.

Novices were assigned to various tasks in the house, which included hauling away all items brought to the loading dock. All day long chairs, desks, tables, dishes and whatever were delivered to their designated places. By supper time all were worn out, yet the pots and pans were piled high, so the rest of the evening was spent washing dishes and putting away pots and pans.

We went from washing, sorting, cleaning pots and pans to picking, washing, sorting, and packing apples! The adjacent orchard had over 700 apple trees of



Assisi Heights Procession



Sisters Picking Apples

42 different varieties. Keeping the house clean took muscle, especially when learning how to use the scrubbers and buffers. If there was spare time, we did investigate the halls, stairwells, secret doors and even thought about climbing the bell tower. Gates at the entrance were locked, as well as the ones in the lobby, at 10:00 pm, until we were told by the fire department it was not allowed. On June 7, the IBM bells and clocks were put in motion. At first, the bells in the tower would toll at 6:00 am, noon and 6:00 pm – until the neighbors complained! It was then changed to 7:00 am, noon and 6:00 pm. The cross on the Campanile was lit on August 6, with the intention that it was to be lit through the night from that day forward.

For many, singing the “Blessed Virgin Mary Office” in the chapel every day was a highlight. Our processions to the Grotto were very meaningful. Many Sisters formed their routine of praying during those years.

Of course, we all had to be assigned tasks to get the work done. Sister Lucretia handed out specific job assignments to each Sister, and when she got to Sister

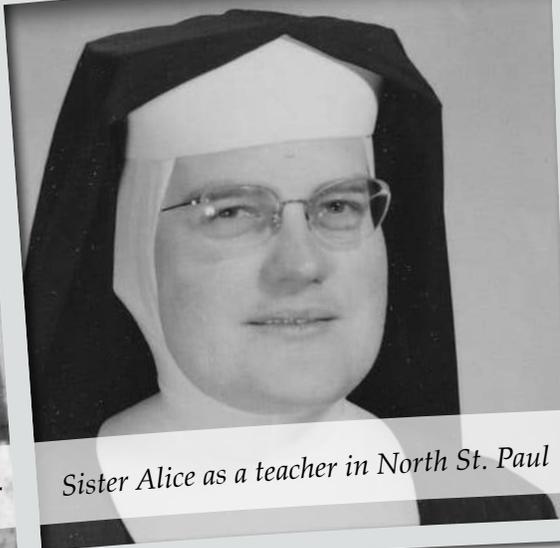
Nena, the only task remaining was to feed Gubbio, Sister Mary Keating’s dog. It seemed like all that we did was clean, clean, and clean some more! Following each meal we would dry mop the entire dining room to remove the plaster dust. Even the attics had to be swept. The dust was so pervasive, that we had to take our veils off. Yes, Novices spent many hours on their knees. . . including time in Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel, using razor blades to scrape the paint from the aisles, in order to be ready for the official Dedication on October 4, the Feast of St. Francis.

After a long day of work, we would meet in the Community Room and share stories of what took place that day. As one Sister summed it up, our senior novitiate days were always spent working (cleaning or sorting), but in the end, it was all worth it. And it was always prayer that held us together. Sister Lucretia always told us that this had been an unusual year.

Similarities on My Journey



S. Alice with her dad and twin brother



Sister Alice as a teacher in North St. Paul

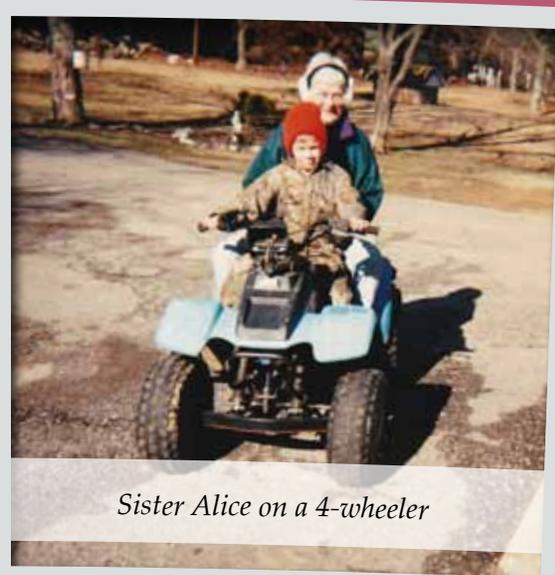


Establishing a new parish school library

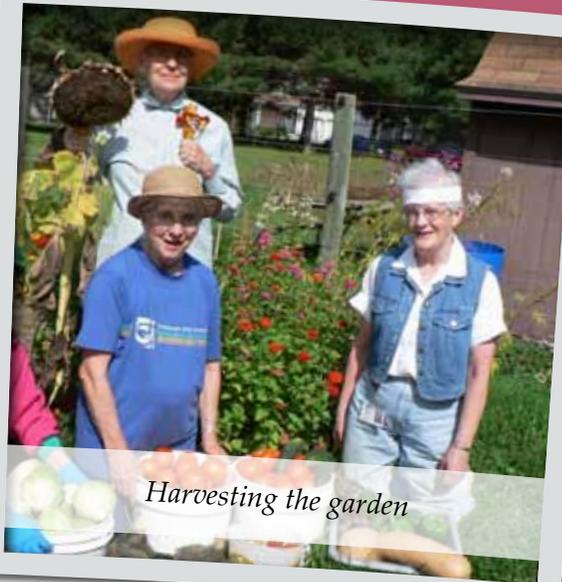
As a young woman entering the convent, for me, everything was new. I came from a family of 14 to a larger family of over 800. I came from a small town of 265 to a larger community of over 50,000. I came from a farmhouse to a much larger house which, within 2 years, became an even bigger house. Everything was new, exciting and challenging. However, it did not take me long to get into the swing of things.

Today at Assisi Heights, the journey of life continues. Never did I ever dream that someday I would be able to apply so many of the skills from my past life to my present day activities at Assisi Heights. For example:

-
- from driving the tractor on the farm,
to driving the John Deere Gator to bring in fresh produce from the Umbrian garden;
 - from walking home a mile and a half after school,
to walking the halls at Assisi to get in 10,000 steps per day as part of a Wellness program;
 - from helping mom get her brooder houses ready for baby chicks,
to preparing the brood boxes on the hives for the installation of the honeybees in the spring;
 - from kneeling beside the bed as a child to say my prayers,
to gathering with Sisters for Evensong at the end of the day, giving praise and thanks to God for graces received to make the day a memorable one;
 - from rising early as a teenager to make breakfast for my brothers,
to rising early at the Heights for private prayer and meditation;
 - from writing and preparing lesson plans in teaching,
to designing calendar pages on the computer for tour guides;
 - from chaperoning students on field trips as a teacher,
to guiding groups and individuals on a tour throughout the Heights;



Sister Alice on a 4-wheeler



Harvesting the garden



Working with the bees

- from conducting school general assemblies,
to facilitating meetings for many committees at Assisi Heights;
- from leading of prayer in school systems,
to serving as Chaplain for Teams of Our Lady at Byron;
- from being a receptionist in the school's office,
to being a receptionist at the front desk at the Heights;
- from canning tomatoes in our convent kitchen,
to bottling honey for sale in the Assisi Heights Gift Shop;
- from picking and washing apples from the Assisi Heights orchard,
to pulling up, washing and bringing in rhubarb from the Umbrian Garden;
- from being the chauffeur on our Heritage trips to Sylvania, Ohio,
to being an "early morning taxi driver" taking Sisters to their clinic appointments;
- from being the "on call" person for ER on Francis wings at the Heights,
to being "on call" for "odds and ends" throughout the house;
- from being Eucharistic Minister at Assisi Heights,
to joining the volunteers in Saint Marys Chaplaincy department.

For me, this has been an enriching life filled with joys, sorrows, successes, failures, ups and downs and filled with lasting relationships.

And so, my journey of life continues with more potential to be explored. All I can say is, "What's next?"

Expanded Ministries: Beyond Teaching and Healthcare



Dear Mother Alfred,

Congratulations on this 140th anniversary of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Rochester, Minnesota! You really started something, Mother Alfred. You were one “self-willed, confident, and sometimes headstrong woman,” to quote one of the current members of your Community (Sister Ellen Whelan, *The Sisters’ Story*, p. 20). You had the wisdom to discern a call; not to the established communities you explored, but to a new community of Sisters who would inherit and adopt the same spirit of adventure that led you to found the group. Bravo to you, Mother Alfred, and bravo to them!

A walk down the “Heritage Hall” at Assisi Heights reveals the breadth of the work of the Sisters who dared to venture across the USA and other parts of the world: North America, South America, Central America, Europe, Asia and Africa. The maps on that wall indicate the extent of that outreach, and every Sister’s story demonstrates your spirit of adventure, Mother Alfred, which has been carried on by these



Cojourner Eileen Lundy

Sisters. That spirit was for you, and has been for them, and continues to be, marked by the wisdom to see clearly the needs of the day; to hear with compassion the cries of the poor, the needy, the displaced, the immigrant, the refugee, the homeless, those hungry for knowledge, and those wanting to be home.

I thought it would be helpful to interview several Sisters and record their stories for you, Mother Alfred, but their stories are so varied, so rich, so wonderful, they could fill volumes. So I offer you only a few, just to give you a glimpse into the continuation of the spirit of adventure and compassion you seeded in your own life.



It was 7:00 pm. I called Sister Colleen Waterman at Assisi Heights to see if she would tell me her story. It was a complete surprise to her. It is now 8:00 pm, and the tears of amazement and admiration are still on my cheeks. I mentioned that I heard she worked with Project SAIL in Charleston, South Carolina, and asked what she did there. An abbreviated version of what she said follows:

“I did everything,” said Sister Colleen. Sister Maigread Conway requested a nurse from the Congregation come join her in Charleston. And that was how Sister Colleen came to spend 32 years working in Project SAIL—Summer Achievement in Literacy. When Sister Maigread became ill and had to return to Minnesota, Sister Colleen remained for another ten years. In Charleston, there had been no mandatory school attendance until 1970, so the Sisters began programs in literacy and tutoring for adults, teenagers and children. Sister Maigread had worked in the Cabrini Project in Chicago, but told Sister Colleen that she wanted to go “where the Church was behind me.” That took her, and later Sister Colleen, to Charleston in the mid-1960s. It all began a few years earlier, when the Bishop and his driver found themselves lost in the Union Heights area of Charleston. As they drove around and witnessed the depths of poverty, the Bishop said, “I want the Sisters here.” And so, Sister Maigread and Sister Colleen came to work for years among the poor, the needy, the sick and the traumatized. Sister Colleen tells of one young boy who saw brutal violence against his mother in his

home. Later, as an adult, he committed acts of violence against others, murdering two. The Sisters pled for mercy for him, saying his early experiences should be considered, but to no avail. Sister Colleen spent 8 hours with him before his execution. She drove his mother to the site of the execution in a raging storm. At the execution, the storm raged with lightning and thunder. “I felt I was at Gethsemane,” remembers Sister Colleen.

“And the homeless?” I asked. “With all of that, you had time to care for the homeless, too?” Sister Colleen then told me about “Neighborhood House,” where the Sisters not only tutored but also provided meals, clothing and other help for the homeless who would come in from the streets.

Do you see what you started, Mother Alfred? Aren’t you filled with wonder and joy? One more story, Mother Alfred. Here is a story represented by the pin on the map at El Paso, Texas. Sisters Mary Kay Mahowald and Arnold Ritchey live on the border of Mexico and Texas in El Paso. Sister Mary Kay moved there in 2012, after a challenge directing the Sisters to discern what God was calling them to do. She had worked with immigrants in Minnesota and Georgia, and the thought came to her, “I want to accompany the undocumented.” So, off to El Paso she went! For the first two years she worked as a chaplain with the frail and elderly, and served the poor. Later, she went

continued...

Expanded Ministries *continued...*



S. Arnold sorting socks



S. Mary Kay as chaplain to elderly



S. Colleen in front of ECHO House

to work as a chaplain with the Jesuit Refugee Services at the Homeland Security El Paso Conferencing Center. She was responsible for making the necessary arrangements to meet the religious needs of the refugees, regardless of faith, and to offering counseling to the 800 persons seeking asylum while being detained at that facility. After an exhausting and intense two years, she wisely stepped away and began teaching in an adult education program, and signed up for classes at the Tucson School of Spiritual Direction. In April, she will complete her studies and be certified as a Spiritual Director. In the meantime, she has used the knowledge and wisdom gained from her experiences with immigrants and refugees to serve on the Board of Las Americas at the Immigrant Legal Advisory Center in El Paso.

Initially, Mary Kay lived with the School Sisters of St. Francis in El Paso. At her invitation, upon retirement, Sister Arnold Ritchey moved to join her in El Paso. Sister Arnold visits English-speaking detainees, offering support during the transitions experienced as their futures take shape. At one time, she was working with 15 detainees. Of those, 12 were eventually deported, while the remaining three maintained asylum. Sister Arnold packs a bundle of activities

into her week: sorting donated clothing; working in a women's co-op; crocheting and knitting items to be sold in order to provide the women with a small income; and caring for and playing with children at the Children's Crisis Center. In addition, Sister Arnold is the primary cook at home and spends time in prayer with Sister Mary Kay.

These stories represent only a few of the hundreds of Sisters who have answered the call to discernment over these 140 years. Women who have dared to venture where the needs of the times cry out. Mother Alfred, you came to the USA to educate. But with Doctor Mayo, you saw the need for nurses and for a medical ministry. Those were primary needs of the time. Had you been with the Sisters through all these 140 years, you would have been saying all along: "Go for it, Sister! Go to the homeless, the sick, those who hunger for knowledge, the immigrants, the refugees, the displaced, the hopeless, the war-torn, the aging. Follow the steps already there: the steps of Jesus, of Francis, of Clare, of the Sisters who have gone before you. Courage, my Sisters."

Sincerely,

Eileen Lundy, Cojourner

Reflections from Our Past Presidents

Sister Gretchen Berg (1970-1976)



Sister Gretchen Berg was the first congregational leader to retain the title of Sister, rather than Mother Superior. In the new governance structure her title and role was president. A woman of pastoral vision, she challenged the Sisters to be pilgrims and make their way as they walked forward

courageously. Pastoral weekends gathered Sisters for personal and spiritual growth. Having known Gustavo Gutierrez when in Peru, she knew first-hand and encouraged the importance of nurturing relationships through small faith communities among the Sisters. As president, with her Council and personnel director, she forged ahead, often at great personal cost, with the Chapter Directives related to both the institutional works with the Philosophy of Sponsorship and parish schools and college with the Resources for Ministry Study. The long-range planning involved a pastoral plan and provided for long-range the funding of Sisters' retirement and some health care benefits, as well as the possibility of continued mission values, as fewer Sisters became a reality. One Sister said, "Gretchen took her authority lightly." Yes, she trusted the inner Spirit to author life in her, each Sister, and in all gathered when she called the first Assembly of all the Sisters in the summer of 1972.

Sister Kathleen Van Groll (1976-1982)



Sister Kathleen served as first councilor in Sister Gretchen's term of office. During this time, Kathleen used her skill in organizational theory to develop a model of area governance built on participation connecting groups of small local communities. Kathleen began her term as president with three

full-time councilors, each related to the 16 geographic areas. She also initiated an Expanded Council made up of area Sister chairpersons to "maximize information for good decision-making" — her often repeated statement.

Her astute financial management was an asset at a time when the number of income-earning Sisters

diminished and expenses rose. Her work experience at Saint Marys Hospital guided her involvement in participating on boards of sponsored institutions. Sister Kathleen was well-read and informed on the issues of Justice and Social Concern. The first process for a corporate stance was initiated to address such issues. Knowing the importance of small local community and building relationships with one another, she invited each Sister to choose an Emmaus companion with whom to share her faith life.

Sister Patricia Fritz (1982-1988)



Sisters Gretchen and Kathleen were mentors for me as I served one term with each as the only full-time councilor. Each brought unique gifts appropriate to the time in the role of Congregational leader. We—Sisters Meigan Fogarty, Eleanor Granger, Franchon Pirkl

and I—worked together as a Leadership Team. A highlight was receiving the new Third Order Regular Franciscan Rule in 1982 and the 1987 approval of our Constitutions from Rome, especially after all the years of work involving all the Sisters. Building upon those before us, we were able to encourage participation and shared decision-making. Critical issues faced the Congregation related to our mission in sponsored institutions with the movement toward integration of Saint Marys Hospital and Mayo Clinic, and with future concerns about the College of Saint Teresa. The splendid gift of all was to witness first-hand the generous spirit of prayer, community and service alive among us as Sisters. Being called to serve such gifted and challenging women was blessing!

Sister Eleanor Granger (1988-1994)



In 1988, the Chapter of the Rochester Franciscans Sisters of Saint Francis elected Sister Eleanor Granger as president along with Sister Valerie Usher, Sister Martha Ann McGinnis and Sister Lucille Hass as full-time councilors. Also serving on the team were Sister Joyce Rowland,

Reflections from Our Past Presidents *continued...*

Sister Lalonde Ryan, Sister Elizabeth Gillis, Sister Marie Nord and Sister Kate Manahan as part-time councillors.

At our very first Council meeting, we had to make a painful decision that affected every member of the Community: our beloved College of Saint Teresa would close its doors after seventy-six years. The Leadership Team and Council spent many hours and months working with individuals Sisters and other groups who had spent years at the College, including our lay faculty and Board of Trustees.

A special gift of those years was the encouragement of the leadership and all of the Sisters to go deeply into our Franciscan Rule in our daily prayer life. We suggested that each Sister pray the paragraphs of the Rule that matched the day of the month. That daily reading has been a gift to me and I have heard that many of our Sisters have continued to do this (perhaps even before I suggested it) daily up to this very day.

Another community-building task was to gather our Sisters who were scattered around the United States and beyond into regions. The Leadership Team and Council worked diligently with the Sisters, and the newly formed Cojourners, in regions across the nation and beyond. Those connections between our Sisters, as well as Cojourners, continue to this very day.

Sister Valerie Usher (1994-2000)



As our Leadership Team of 1994-2000 began, we expressed a Directional Statement in July 1994, intending to give the Congregation a picture of what we hoped to be about during our term in office. Our first priority was “the deepening of evangelical life among us,” to which we gave

focus through our Missioning Ritual for all Sisters and Cojourners: In desiring to live the Gospel, we challenge ourselves to: spend an hour daily before the Cross; be sister/brother/neighbor to all we meet; and choose to go among strangers.

In our communications and our actions, we sought to put flesh on our six-year theme: “We desire the Spirit of God at work in ALL of us.” (TOR: 32); which empowered our Sisters and Cojourners in personal and communal ways. The challenges, inherited from the Chapter of 1993, encouraged us to foster nonviolence, to integrate our understanding of contemplation in both solitude and activity, to expand our sense of membership, and to use our governance structure (a forerunner to our Franciscan Life groups) as an expression of our Evangelical Life. During our term, we saw shifts in our understanding of sponsorship, as well as the value of expanded forms of collaboration with groups beyond ourselves. As our term concluded, we found ourselves celebrating the tremendous influence of our Foundress, Mother Alfred Moes (on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of her death) and crossing the threshold into a new Millennium in a spirit of hope and renewed commitment.

We made a Franciscan Proclamation for the New Millennium in December of 1999 which presents us with an interesting examen now nearly 18 years later:

We, the Rochester Franciscan Community, enter the new millennium with bold hope and loving trust in the goodness of God.

Inspired by the Gospel as lived by Francis and Clare of Assisi, we wish to unite with those who seek a more peaceful and just world.

We commit ourselves to a life of prayer, personal conversion, simplicity and peacemaking.

We envision joining hands, hearts and minds with others to further the movement away from violence and oppression, toward a world where faithful relationships with God, with each other and with the earth will flourish.

Let us celebrate the Spirit of God at work in all!

Sister Dolore Rockers (2000-2006)



In March 2000, six generous women were elected to Congregational Leadership: Sisters Avis Schons, Barbara Haag, Dolore Rockers, Geneva Berns, Marie Nord and Monique Schwartz. Sister Jean Keniry was appointed congregational treasurer.

During this six-year term, much of the energy spent was devoted to Assisi Heights, to include continuation of the major renovation project work started in Sister Valerie Usher's term for the assisted-care wing of the building, as well as establishing a long term lease of the education wing to Mayo Clinic.

We faced some big challenges during these years. Violent car crashes claimed the lives of two of our Sisters: Marie Nord, who served on our leadership team, and Barbara Giltzow. One of our Cojourners, Ron Fraga, drowned while scuba diving with his wife. A fund for Cojourners was established in his memory. And, in 2001, while hosting the Regional meeting of LCWR members at Tau Center in Winona, the terrorist attack of 9/11 took place. Shock, grief and a new world view became part of our agenda. Later, we sold that Franciscan treasure, Tau Center, to Winona State University.

Yet, there were several positive and significant changes and contributions that took place during this term. A revised Mission Statement was formulated, in collaboration with the entire Community, to proclaim the compassionate presence of Sisters and Cojourners, and the desire to promote peace in our world and focus on care for all of creation. A "Memorandum of Understanding" was drawn up by the Academy Board to outline the collaboration with Mayo Clinic. The Lourdes Chapel sanctuary was restored to its former glory and the pipe organ was moved to a new space, replaced with a digital system. Canticle Park was dedicated and a ceramic tile mosaic was installed. Another highlight during this time was the preparation for and celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the Congregation in 2003. We also hosted a highly successful, and memorable,

Renaissance Fest, which was open to the public.

Sisters devoted their spiritual life in specific ways, focusing on the Gospels and the Franciscan Rule. The concept of Rochester Franciscan Life Teams (RFLT) was established, which would serve as a new model for the facilitation of communications and enhancement of living out the Franciscan charism. Cojourners walked with us and began looking at their life and spiritual connections with the Sisters with a view toward their future.

Sister Tierney Trueman (2006-2012)



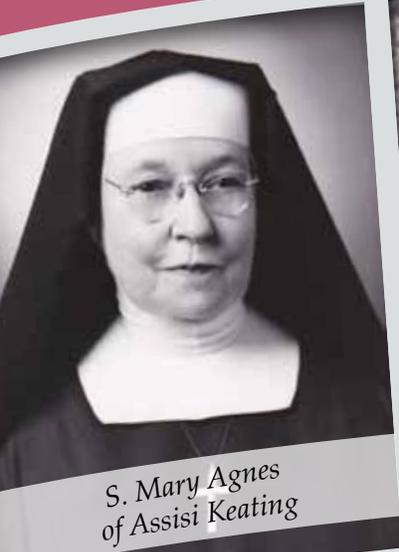
Serving in Leadership was truly a joy for me, but also mixed blessing, as it meant the end of my 31 years of service in Bogotá, Colombia.

In the fall of the first year of our leadership, we invited all of our Sisters to participate in "Listening Circles," which invited sharing our

voices about Congregational desires and concerns in random groups, and the sharing was diverse. Later, we realized that this experience enabled us to grow in a deeper sense of trust that became a vital element for issues that arose in the years that followed.

We faced our challenges. On December 22, 2008, an "Apostolic Visitation" was announced to be carried out in every congregation of religious women, other than the cloistered communities. An extensive questionnaire was sent to each congregation to be filled out and sent to Rome. This event created an almost overnight expression of solidarity among all our congregations -- a solidarity that was born out of the Sister Formation Conference of earlier decades; at which time a number of our Rochester Franciscan Sisters played key roles. Canon lawyers provided excellent advice to these congregations, which enabled leadership to respond in ways that protected the rights of both congregations and individual Sisters. This solidarity greatly minimized the impact the Apostolic Visitation could have had on women religious congregations in the US.

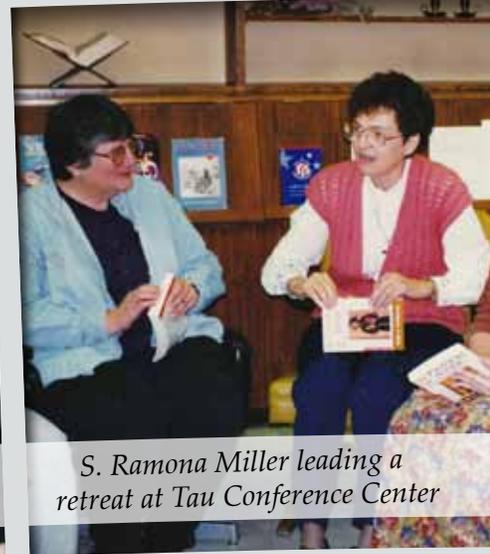
Over Sixty Years of Making Room for God!



S. Mary Agnes
of Assisi Keating



ACC Staff in front of Canticle Hall



S. Ramona Miller leading a
retreat at Tau Conference Center

When the Assisi Heights building complex was a mere “design bubble” in the eyes of the beholders, Rochester Franciscan spirituality seekers already had space for ‘retreats’ firmly implanted in the design phase with Maguolo and Quick, architects. In the fall of 1956, one year after moving into the building, retreats began.

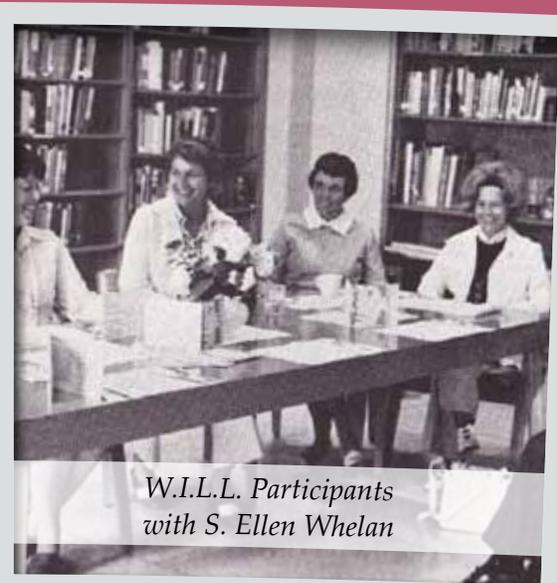
Sister Mary Agnes of Assisi Keating, congregational secretary, initiated the retreat phenomena that lasted until the current day, with the only hiatus occurring during the 2005 renovation of the building. Nurses from Saint Marys School of Nursing in Rochester inaugurated the October retreat program that has continued to evolve over the years. Various women’s Lenten retreats continued for many more years. At that time, Sister Mary Agnes of Assisi responded to the faith-based needs of the local church. She may not have envisioned all the endeavors that spirituality centers incorporate today, but the impact of her vision remains an important and lasting legacy that gives direction to our current mission. Along with those early dreamers, she realized this hillside on the edge of the city belonged, in part, to the wider community. It was a place to enter, unwind and get re-charged. Individuals came searching, finding mystical entry points and destinations. The contemplative setting

allowed curiosity to be intertwined with the sacred and secular.

This design set the stage of the Rochester Franciscans’ commitment to welcome all and provide contemplative space apart from the noisy world – a refuge for rest, slowing down and recalculating life’s purpose; which they would later share with their families and places of work. Assisi Heights’ mission as a spirituality center has not changed from its original purpose to serve the needs of humanity.

Milestones mark the history of a perpetual state of progression. The retreat center at Assisi Heights was known by a variety of names. In 1970, it was the Christian Community Center (CCC). In 1987, it changed to Assisi Community Center (ACC). And finally, in 2008, it was christened Assisi Heights Spirituality Center (AHSC), revealing the evolution of the times, unfolding of the cultures and changing world developments.

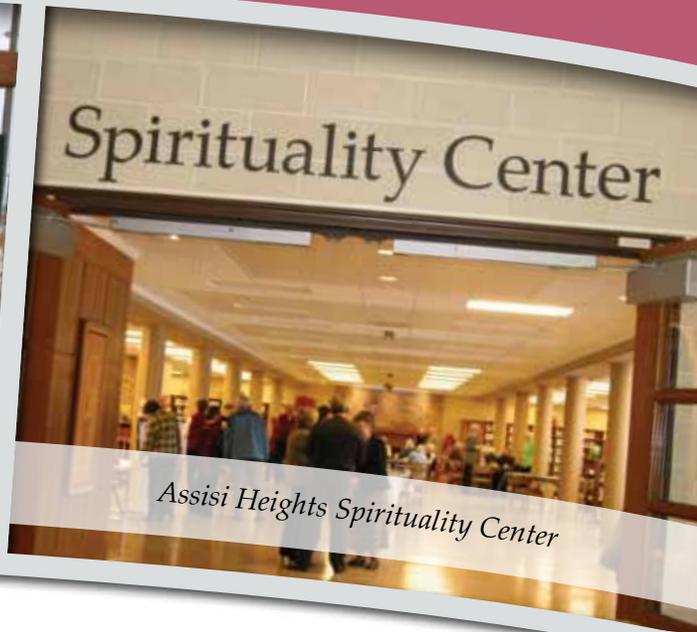
Another Franciscan reflection center, Tau Conference Center, opened in Winona in 1973 on the campus of the College of St. Teresa. The Tau Conference Center offered a variety of educational and spiritual renewal programs. They welcomed all to explore the spiritual



*W.I.L.L. Participants
with S. Ellen Whelan*



...on Lake Elysian



Assisi Heights Spirituality Center

dimensions of contemporary life and examine pathways of personal and societal transformation. A Franciscan Component of Ministries was under the umbrella of Tau Conference Center, which included a Franciscan Sabbatical program and Franciscan Intercommunity Novitiate.

The quest for a different educational option for women emerged in the 1970s, which resulted in the birthing of Women's Institute in Lifelong Learning (W.I.L.L.) at Assisi Heights in 1974. The predominant need was to offer higher education opportunities for women in Rochester, apart from those offered to the medical profession. W.I.L.L., as an extension of the College of St. Teresa, provided academic courses to complete an unfinished degree or the ability to choose a new path to fit the evolving job market. W.I.L.L. offered opportunities for self-development and career planning in a beautiful space that honored the heart, experience and spirituality of all attendees. Women formed lasting relationships and supported the emerging place of women in society. A unique perk in the program included free childcare, which brought delight to retired teachers at Assisi Heights.

Another opportunity presented itself in 1996. The Rochester Franciscans embraced a reflective oasis

in a rural south central Minnesota community near Janesville, named the Holy Spirit Retreat Center (HSRC). It has four hermitages on 35 acres of wooded shoreline on Lake Elysian. This pastoral setting on the lake provided an ideal place to meet the God of all creation. The HSRC was anchored by Franciscan values, providing openness and hospitality to seekers of all traditions.

Lives are in need of constant tending. The 21st Century focus of the Assisi Heights Spirituality Center is "to tend the soul and spirit!" Assisi Heights stands alone on the stretch of limestone mounds that lean and slope between the flora and fauna, to feed the souls and spirits of those who come with the desire to leave rejuvenated. We embrace the world's spiritual traditions, offer educational and personal development programs in a variety of increasingly current topics—including meditation, contemplation, mindfulness, and justice education—helping people to live more genuine, loving and fulfilling lives. Our events reflect the Franciscan mission to be a compassionate presence, striving for justice and reverence for all creation.

Simply said, our task is to help each other make room for God!

Cojourning: A Spiritual Journey with the Rochester Franciscan Sisters



Covenant Ceremony for Mary Siem, Ellen Stelling and Eileen Young



Cojourner Kathy Redig and Sister Janel Crumb

Although there have always been lay people who tried to live the spiritual life in a loose connection with religious orders, in the 1970's and early 80's there was movement across the country in which some people sought a direct affiliation with religious communities. The majority of these early seekers were women. Some had been former members of religious communities, who wanted to retain friendships forged over the years, and continue the deep spiritual growth that they had begun while in the Community. Others longed for a deeper spiritual connection with women who had been role models, teachers or mentors. This became a topic of discussion among the Rochester Franciscans in 1970 after Sister Rosemary Grebin, who had requested a leave of absence, made a proposal to the Chapter. A task force was formed to study the proposal and research was gathered from other congregations. By the 1984 Chapter, Sister Eleanor Granger made a motion to accept the Cojourner concept and the motion passed unanimously. Jane Campion and Steve Ohly became the first two affiliates, known as Cojourners. Early on it was recognized that, although Sisters and the affiliates walk beside each other, we are on the same journey, seeking to know and serve our God.

Cojourners have always been interviewed by Leadership prior to holding a ceremony formally accepting them as affiliates of the Community. They are not "members" because that is a canonical

designation, but they share in the prayers, celebrations, struggles and joys of the community. Some have met and worked with the Sisters on their missions in schools and hospitals, parishes and towns. Cojourners have joined from such distances as Florida, Colorado, New York, and South America, always attracted by the joy and commitment they have witnessed in the Rochester Franciscans.

The concept of "cojourning" with the Rochester Franciscan Sisters has continued for over 30 years. In the early 2000s, the process of becoming a Cojourner became more structured, with a program of orientation, study and prayer to help Cojourners learn the history, mission, and Franciscan spirituality of the Sisters and to draw out the gifts they were bringing to the Sisters. Among the 100 women and men, there are artists, social workers, teachers, nurses, gardeners, bakers, administrators, doctors, spiritual directors, and wonderful "pray-ers!" In 2006, the Sisters appointed a Cojourner Advisory Committee, and although there had been both Sisters and Cojourner Directors prior to this, an office was officially established and it became a more recognized part of the Rochester Franciscan Community.

Today, Cojourners are part of "small life groups" consisting of Sisters and Cojourners who meet regularly for prayer and discussion. They attend workshops, retreats, and meetings with the Sisters.

by Kathryn Johnson, Cojourner



Cojourner David Brunner opens the picnic with a prayer beside Cojourner Coordinator, Pam Captain



Sister M. Carolina Pardo takes a selfie with the Cojourners and Sisters in Bogotá

Cojourners in the Rochester area often visit the elder Sisters in retirement at Assisi Heights, and join together to help prepare a meal at the Dorothy Day House for the homeless.

Walking with the Sisters, Cojourners seek to live the mission of the Rochester Franciscans: "Led by the

Holy Spirit to embrace the Gospel Life of continual conversion, through prayer, community and service in the tradition of Francis, Clare, and Mother Alfred, we, Rochester Franciscan Sisters and Cojourners, commit ourselves to be a compassionate presence for peace in our world, striving for justice and reverence for all creation."



S. Therese Jilk, Cojourner David Strauss and S. Mary Frederick



Tucked away in our subconscious minds is an idyllic vision in which we see ourselves on a long journey that spans an entire continent. We're travelling by train and, from the windows, we drink in the passing scenes of cars on nearby highways, of children waving at crossings, of cattle grazing in distant pastures, of smoke pouring from power plants, of row upon row upon row of cotton and corn and wheat, of flatlands and valleys, of city skylines and village halls.

But uppermost in our conscious minds is our final destination—for at a certain hour and on a given day, our train will finally pull into the station with bells ringing, flags waving, and bands playing. And once that day comes, so many wonderful dreams will come true. So restlessly, we pace the aisles and count the miles, peering ahead, waiting, waiting, waiting for the station.

"Yes, when we reach the station that will be it!" we promise ourselves. "When we're eighteen . . . win that promotion . . . put the last kid through college . . . buy that 450SL Mercedes-Benz . . . have a nest egg for retirement!"

From that day on, we will all live happily ever after. Sooner or later, however, we must realize there is no station in this life, no one earthly place to arrive at once and for all. The journey is the joy. The station is an illusion—it constantly outdistances us. Yesterday's a memory, tomorrow's a dream. Yesterday belongs to a history, tomorrow belongs to God. Yesterday's a fading sunset, tomorrow's a faint sunrise. Only today is there light enough to love and live.

So, gently close the door on yesterday and throw the key away. It isn't the burdens of today that drive men mad, but rather regret over yesterday and the fear of tomorrow. Regret and fear are twin thieves who would rob us of today.

"Relish the moment" is a good motto, especially when coupled with Psalm 118:24, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

So stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, swim more rivers, climb more mountains, kiss more babies, count more stars. Laugh more and cry less. Go barefoot more often. Eat more ice cream. Ride more merry-go-rounds. Watch more sunsets. Life must be lived as we go along. The station will come soon enough.

Celebrating Nine Decades of Life!

As **Sister Merici Maher** looks back on her long Franciscan life, she sees how faithfully her life was formed by the spirit of obedience, in which she found guidance and growth. Connections with other Franciscan Sisters in Community served as models for the Gospel life she was called to lead over 70 years ago. Changes through the years were challenging and even now it is clear that they still are.

Sister Jeanette Klein, in her shining humility, says, “My years living as a Franciscan Sister serving in the field of education for fifty years, helping children become the best human beings they can, has greatly enriched my life.”

Sister Mary Kathryn Esch remarked that from the beginning of her life, she “was born into a very special family . . . perhaps made more so because I was near death as an infant.” As a Rochester Franciscan, it has been her privilege to work in our schools as principal and teacher. “’Tis only through the grace and love of God that one can grow through the joys and sorrows of human life, so I name it all ‘A Blessed Mystery.’”

The description offered by **Sister Ronan Degan** is summed up very succinctly in her answer to this question: What made you stay? She says emphatically, “Although after many years, three of my closest dear classmates left our Community and married, it was always clear to me that this is what I was to be and to do. I am grateful for that certainty.”

Listening to **Sister Mary Lonan Reilly's** story makes it very clear that her early childhood "training years" were great preparation for joining the Franciscans. "Nobody stayed in bed in the morning; we got up, ate breakfast together before going to our individual pieces of family living and work." A high point in her Franciscan Life was going to Notre Dame to study for two years including summers. She stated that traveling to San Francisco with her sister, Sister Marcella, and making the Franciscan Pilgrimage, too, were enough memories for this country girl to keep building the rest of her life, until she moves into God's Heaven.

For **Sister June Kaiser**, looking back on her life reminds her that she has been motivated by the excitement and challenge of each new morning. That refreshing viewpoint, along with the faithful support and shared life of our Rochester Franciscan community members, created a spiritual atmosphere for seeking truth—as we embark on the journey to reach God's House of Love. Sister June's path led through two long and significant ministries: Congregational Treasurer from 1978-1998, and serving as the primary steward of the Gaelic Grove, a residence which was gifted to our Community long ago.



Standing: Sisters Jeanette Klein, June Kaiser, Merici Maher

Seated: Sisters Ronan Degan, Mary Kathryn Esch and Mary Lonan Reilly

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Committing ourselves to be a compassionate presence for peace in our world, striving for justice and reverence for all creation is possible because of our generous benefactors. Many gifts were given in memory of a Sister or loved one who was a vital part of your life. We remember you through the daily prayers of our Sisters.

Gifts received October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016.

In Memory of:

Sister Ancina Adams
 Nicholas and Margaret Adelman
 Sarah Altstadt
 Robert E. Anderson
 Winifred and Edward Auer
 Elizabeth Rose Barrett
 William Bateman
 Sister Vinciana Bauer
 Sister Scholastica Bauman
 Rita Bergen
 Marjorie Bergstrom
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 Sister M. Alphonse Billian
 Sister Faber Bird
 Sister Gemella Bishop
 Margaret Bisson
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Annual Report

Annual Report 2015-2016

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Lloyd Keiner
George C. Keller
Mary Larene Keller
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Lloyd Kelly Family
Sister Conor Kelly
Dr. W. Charles Kennedy
The Kilkus Family
Sister Gildas Klinkhammer
Sister Loretta Klinkhammer
Sister Vera Klinkhammer
Bernadine Kmetz
Timothy Knapp
Sister Carlan Kraman
Sister Macrina Kunkel
Mary Margaret Kutney
Dr. Jeanne LaBlonde
JoAnne M. Lalonde
Joseph Lam
Marie Landherr
Oral and Susan Larson
Sister Joanne Lawson
Loretta Lenton
Mary Desrude Liedl
Sister Fidelis Logan
Sister Ethylind Loudner
Sister Jeanine Luger
Sister Viatrix Mach
Agnes and Gerald Maciolek
Vicky and Scott Mackay
Jane and Alex Mackey
Helen and Chet Maday
Rev. Ambrose Mahon
Sister Arlene Majerus
John Francis and Anne Malone
Sister Kate Manahan
Paislea Rose Mangen
Sister Antoinette Marie Manning
Bernard and Betty Martin
Maureen McAvoy
Richard McBrien, Sr.
Margaret McCarthy
Honorable George McDonald
Joseph McGovern
Mary McInerney
Sister Frances McManimon
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Sister Jeremiah McRaith
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Sister Bona Mueller

A. J. Mullen
Sister Josanne Mulvihill
Joseph Nagle
Sister Mary Theophane Nalezny
Jim Nervig
Colleen Obrecht
Joseph O'Connor
Patty Granger Ogren
Sister Alverna O'Laughlin
Jerry O'Leary
Agnes Osborn-Flautt
Sister Gabriella Palzer
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Sister Yolande Schulte
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Sisters who taught at St. Juliana
School in Chicago, IL
Sisters who taught at St. Piux X
School
Sisters who taught at Lourdes
High School
David Snook
Sister Genevieve Speltz
Phillip Stanoch
Sue Staunton
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Margaret Lorraine Stenger
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Sister Audrey Zinner

We are grateful for gifts given in honor of a Sister or loved one who has been a vital part of your life.

We remember those who have gone before us, and you, our generous benefactors, through the daily prayers of our Sisters.

Gifts received October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016.

In Honor of:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Sister Joy Barth | Henry and Barbara Helmer | Jim and Roberta Moran |
| Sister Gretchen Berg | Peg Hennes | Colleen Obrecht |
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Each year, it is our delight to thank you, our benefactors, through this Annual Report.

Recently, a donor shared these kind words: "The Sisters of Saint Francis continue to be such an incredible source of good in our community. You educate, empower and lift up all of us. I will never be able to express the love and gratitude I hold for you. God bless you and your wonderful work!"

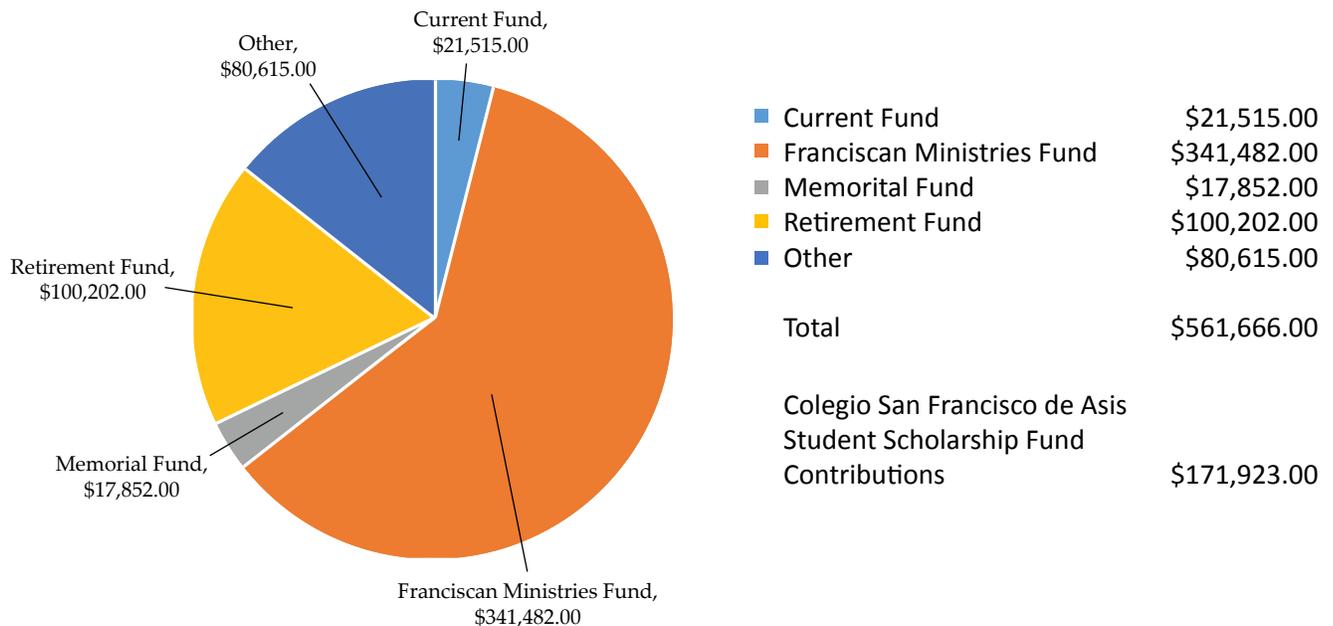
During this past fiscal year, 1804 generous hearts gifted the Sisters of Saint Francis with financial support. Through your support, you affirmed your belief in the work and legacy of the Sisters who continue their ministries of educating, healing, beautifying our land and most importantly, praying for you each day. And just as you have your special connections to the Sisters of Saint Francis, in turn you are truly a blessing to the Sisters.

Thank you for your gifts, your friendship and your prayers.

May God give you peace and all good,

Barb DeCramer
Director of Development

Sisters of Saint Francis
Development Office - Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Report



Stewardship of Our Gifts

Throughout their 140 year history, the Sisters of Saint Francis have been blessed with generous friends and benefactors. It is you, the family and friends of the Sisters, who make their work possible.

Fundraising has been a hallmark of the Sisters from the very early years. In her book, *The Sisters' Story*, Sister Ellen Whelan writes, "To supplement their meager parish salaries, the Sisters created paper flowers, banners, and church articles. Working after school and late into the night, they enlisted help from their boarders. From the outset, the enterprising Sister Alfred never let lack of money stand in the way of building capital investments."

The Sisters seem to always be ahead of their times. *The Sisters Story* relates that, in 1930, Sister Joseph made this note in the hospital Annals, writing about beginning work on the chapel at Saint Marys Hospital: "No hospital earnings were used for the chapel. Donations for the Chapel Fund were accumulated over a long period of years. Names and addresses of donors were not recorded, as whatever they gave was a voluntary offering for which they neither asked nor expected any reward, privilege, or even credit in this world. Many requested that no mention be made of their names. There were wealthy donors who out of their abundance gave large sums; there were others whose tiny gifts may have meant greater sacrifices. God will reward them all, but to these and all other benefactors, the Sisters owe grateful, prayerful and lasting, remembrance." It sounds a bit like the disclaimer that all nonprofits are required to provide for their donors today, but with much more elegance and grace!

Because of your generous support, the Sisters have the funding to complete repairs on the beautiful Inner Courtyard at Assisi Heights. This focal point and gathering space for Sisters and visitors is enjoyed especially by our retired Sisters who live at Assisi Heights. It is a safe and welcoming place to be outdoors and enjoy a perfect Minnesota day. Thank you for responding to our call for gifts to make this project a reality.

Every day that you spend at Assisi Heights reminds you that the Sisters of Saint Francis are careful stewards of their benefactors' kindness. Meticulous care of material goods and astute investments in ESG (environmental, social, governance) opportunities enable the Sisters to use your gifts to make a difference. When you make a gift to the Sisters of Saint Francis, you can be assured that they will use that gift with the utmost wisdom and good judgment.

Make a Gift Today

The Mission of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Rochester, Minnesota is to be a compassionate presence for peace in our world, striving for justice and reverence for all creation. Our ministries include praying for the needs of our world in the silence of the chapel and daily in our homes; ministering in hospitals and hospices; eliminating social injustice; providing support to immigrants and working to end human trafficking; volunteering at Dorothy Day Centers and social agencies in our local communities; ministering to those with addictions and those imprisoned; providing education in schools and serving as spiritual guides.

Your generosity allows us to continue these ministries as well as maintaining our home, Assisi Heights, which provides care for our retired Sisters. In addition, we welcome hundreds of people each year, who come to Lourdes Chapel for prayer, liturgy and reflection, or to Assisi Heights Spirituality Center for educational programs or retreats.

We are a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.

To make a donation, you may use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.rochesterfranciscan.org. Click on the "Make a Difference – Donate" button at the bottom of the homepage.



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