



Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament

Our First 50 Years - Extended History



Detroit, 1906. From the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs division, the Detroit Publishing Company Collection.

PART I: THE BEGINNINGS

Westward the train chugged, westward toward Detroit! Detroit, the goal of seven white-clad Cloistered Dominican Nuns. Detroit, soon to be the locus of their contemplative living and apostolic love.

As the Annals tell us: "Their itinerary lay on the upper side of the Niagara river which flows in rapid currents from Lake Erie to Ontario, and which possesses the most beautiful cataracts in the world. With the eyes of contemplative souls they viewed this stupendous work of the Creator. Through the years of cloistered seclusion which lay ahead they would return in prayer and conversation to this marvel of marvels, again hear the roar of the of the falls above the sound of the train, and compare the Creator with the creature: the Creator making Himself so humble, so insignificant in the Sacrament of His love for their sake." God's greatness, God's humility, the two concepts were always united in their thoughts. And with the riches of the Dominican monastic life, they were bringing their privilege of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to the city they already claimed as their own.

Who were these foundresses who had left the Monastery of St. Dominic, Newark, New Jersey, on the evening of April 1st, 1906? Each of them would leave her special cachet on the community in the motor city.



Mother Mary Emmanuel, O.P., Prioress

Mother Mary Emmanuel, the Prioress, was one of four nuns who first brought Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to the United States in 1880. Love for Jesus, zeal for Adoration, kindness and cheerfulness marked her leadership. Mother Mary Theresa, Sub-Prioress, brought an ardent temperament along with her Spanish zest for rigor of observance and of penance (perhaps a bit too much at times, the Prioress thought!).

Capable Mother Mary of the Visitation was a

mature religious. The others were promising beginners. Gentle Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart who was just 24 was a fine musician. Impetuous Sister Mary of the Infant Jesus, who had celebrated her 20th birthday in the train, was filled with energy and enthusiasm. Prayerful Sister Mary Joseph, a saintly lay-sister, was still a novice. Each had her own special gift of nature and grace to bequeath to the Community now and in the years to come, as we shall learn in subsequent chapters of this history. Sister Mary of the Nativity, a mature Lay-sister loved by all, was soon compelled by illness to return to Newark.

As they detrained in Windsor, they were met by Father Francis Van Antwerp. Through God's loving Providence it was he who was present with Bishop John S. Foley when Mother's offer of a foundation arrived. Perpetual Adoration? A good thing for Detroit to be sure, but..."What shall I do with them, Van?" the Bishop mused. "Let them come," replied the capable and popular Pastor. "I'll take care of them." That spontaneous promise he kept with outstanding distinction for the next 25 years!



Mother Mary Theresa, O.P., Subprioress

A suitable house had not yet been found, he informed the Nuns. In the meantime they would lodge with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and the Religious of the Sacred Heart. Moreover, Father was determined that the good Nuns would ride in one of the new automobiles before cloister was established. After all, this was Detroit! Mother Mary Theresa's Cuban accent exploded in exclamations "Oh, Oh!" "My goodness!" "And they say they can go up to 30 miles an hour!" Mother Mary Emmanuel tried to calm her, but to no avail. Mother Mary of the Visitation, a former school teacher, retained her composure. The delighted young nuns giggled at the fun. Mischievous Father Van was amused.



Bishop John S. Foley



Msgr. Francis Van Antwerp

But Father was not neglecting his search. In just a day, the Murphy Mansion at 1189 Woodward Avenue was procured. Carpeting and draperies were removed, cleaning and partitioning began immediately. There were dozens and dozens of windows to be washed as Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart could testify. The new confessional needed to be stained. It was, by Sister Mary of the Infant Jesus who neglected to pin up her white habit..... the hem!! The offended garment-edge was tied up in a butter bag, the best remedy someone said. Discreetly the other nuns made no comment; but during the evening "Salve Regina" procession, they could not subdue some tittering over the rattling bag.

The sacred vessels and sacristy supplies promised by a devout friend had not yet arrived. Father Van provided all from his Holy Rosary Church, even his own chalice. He brought a sturdy but rather scruffy used altar with platform and steps, and also two paint brushes, along with cans of white enamel paint and gold for the trimming. How handsome it was. This altar was used until the permanent chapel was built in 1912.

"I'll take care of them." Father Van was there with welcome advice on matters both great and small, even to such as "Now look here, you Sisters can't burn that red sanctuary lamp in the front window. There is wickedness in this city; people will not understand." The following morning a man exclaimed to the Prioress: "Mother, you have a beautiful new statue of St. Anthony in the front window, I saw it last evening. And Mother," he confided, "the saint raised his arm and blessed me." Mother had to



View of the 1100 Block of Woodward Avenue in 1906

inform the devout man that it was young Sister

Mary of the Infant Jesus standing in the bay window hanging a curtain there. The nuns were not about to deprive the dear Eucharistic Lord of a single thing - not even a vigil light.

"There is wickedness in this city," Father Van had remarked. Yes, but there was much goodness, too. Goodness in family life, goodness in civic life. Then as now there was the innocent pleasure in music and sports. Detroit's Remick was producing such hits as "Put on Your Old Grey Bonnet" and "Moonlight Bay." And although the Tigers came out in sixth place that year, Frank Navin was predicting larger parks and larger crowds. And from its Bishop to its simple faithful, Detroit was good to its new Nuns. These, amid busy days were faithful to their times of prayer.

Soon a happy succession of "First's" was recorded for the new foundation. On April 6 the little group of five choir nuns chanted Matins and Lauds of the Compassion of our Lady - their first Office prayed in common, standing around the fireplace in the Murphy Mansion for all 15 psalms and nine readings from Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church.

On April 8, Palm Sunday, the Chapel now ready, Father Van celebrated the first Mass in the new Monastery. A week later, April 15, Easter Sunday, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was inaugurated. It was but two weeks since they departed from Newark. The Adoration was only for the day hours at first, with the assistance of women and girls from Holy Rosary and other parishes. Soon there were 120 volunteers.

Three weeks later, May 7, Bishop Foley came to bless the Monastery and to establish the enclosure. When the nuns asked his blessing their Bishop replied: "Not I, but Jesus bless you and make your Order to grow. Work for the salvation of souls and the conversion of sinners by your prayers and good works."

The following month, Bishop Foley formally presented in writing his vision of the role of Bishop and nuns. The Bishop would provide priestly ministry for Mass and sacraments. "The Sisters, on their side... promise the Right Reverend Bishop that they will persevere in the observance of their Rule and Constitutions and that they will, moreover, both by day and by night according as their numbers allow, attend to the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed in their chapel" (Letter of Bp Foley June 23, 1906).

How good to be in cloister with its silence. Silence invited to recollection and to that "devout and constant contemplation of Our Lord, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier" of which the rule spoke.

August brought another "first," the arrival of two candidates. Theresa Barlow had had to wait until her 32nd year before a cloister came to Detroit. As Sister Mary of the Blessed Sacrament she served until a very old age in the life for which she had longed. Her companion, May Ritchie, found the life too rigorous; as Mrs. May Jarkow she remained until her death a dear friend of the Community. So it progressed: some candidates remained and some withdrew; this is the purpose of the Novitiate.

Thus life in the cloister proceeded. Good Father Van with his daily Mass and his gift of fresh bread for his nuns. The prayer petitioners, the gifters and the adorers, the comings and the goings, the prayer and work of the Nuns. But only for a year and a half! Then, alas, Mrs. Murphy sent word that her Mansion had been sold; the purchaser requested immediate occupancy! Another house need be located. Fortunately one was found at 1180 Cass Avenue within Father Van's parish as he desired. But it was smaller. The whole round of cleaning, partitioning, adapting must be initiated again. They moved on November 21, 1907. Candidates continued to come; among them, on December 8, 1908 the Kalt girls arrived, volunteer adorers whom the Eucharistic Jesus called to Himself in the cloister. Both Bertha and Louise remained to bless the house for years to come. Within a few weeks Postulant Bertha was assigned a singing part in the Divine Office. Louise was the leader who, as Mother Mary of Jesus, built the Monastery in Farmington at the age of 78! But that is to rush ahead in our story. Now it was the pressing question of a first Monastery on Oakland Avenue in Detroit, or at least the first section of it. In the house on Cass Avenue crowding reached the point where one nun had her cell (monastic bedroom) on a stair landing! Mother Mary Emmanuel knew she would have to build.

God would provide..... and Detroit would help. His Providence paved the way.

Note: information drawn from the Annals of the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament and from the biography of Mother Mary Emmanuel Noel by Sr. Mary of the Heart of Jesus, O.P.



Facade of the Detroit Monastery

The year 1908. What might History record? Surely the appearance of the Ford Model T! But also the groundbreaking for the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament on Sept 4 of the year. The events occur in different spheres; yet they are not entirely unrelated.

Probably it was in the earlier Model "A" that Father Van provided that memorable first auto ride for the thrilled or terrified Dominican nuns upon their arrival in Detroit in 1906. But

the immortal inventor, Henry Ford, had further plans with the Model T: "I believe that I have solved the problem of simple automobile construction. The five hundred dollar model is destined to revolutionize auto manufacture." Ford wanted the auto for the ordinary family. The Model T won a cross country race in 1909, the year that phase I of the Monastery was completed.

Did the famous inventor become a generous donor for the nuns? Surely not. But the famous "Mr. Ford's \$5.00 Day" did attract streams of workers to his Highland Park plant. At the time, skilled labor had gone at \$2.45 per 9 hour day, unskilled at \$1.79. Now \$5.00 for an 8 hour day! What an opportunity! Mr. Ford wanted his workers' families to live above the subsistence level. Some of these modest new families joined those of French, German, Irish and Polish Catholic ancestry in Detroit who befriended the Cloister. Their number grew slowly.



Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the outside Chapel of the old Monastery



Sr. Mary of the Visitation Cowles tends to the boiler in the "dungeon."

The honor of first donor for the building of our new Monastery went to the Newark Community which took out a fifteen thousand dollar mortgage on the Monastery there to enable Mother M. Emmanuel to begin construction. Help came gradually, mostly in small gifts as is the case of cloisters which lack former school students or hospital patients to help. Friends gather more slowly, drawn by the labor of the "outside" or Extern Sisters or by word of mouth of those who had benefited from the prayers of the nuns. A second loan

needed to be procured before the building was completed. For Mother, financial concerns lingered. She and Mr. Walsh, first architect, had a few disputes; both were right, and both wrong. Mr. Walsh who had visited European monasteries, had plans; Mother visited her slim pocketbook and her ideas of poverty. He did finish part one of the building with its granite stone on sills and coping. Cement sills on phase II were to crumble in later years. Other "economies" met corrections too. One of Mr. Walsh's monastic windows survived to grace the cloister; its Gothic arch and granite coping were pleasing, but its small size and pale gold tinted glass panes would not have been sufficiently lightsome.

The Detroit nuns were able to occupy the first half of their building at 9704 Oakland Ave. in 1909. Oct. 27 and the following three "Opening Days" allowed the public to tour the cloister. One person remarked "I want to see the dungeons!" but there were none to be found. Sr. M. Joseph hid in a windowless store room to make her meditation, taking Spotty the dog with her. Mother M. Theresa took Daisy the cat which Newark had sent to discipline the bold rats back in the Murphy Mansion. Four days later, on October 30, the nuns were relieved when Bishop Foley came with Father Van Antwerp to bless the Monastery and enclose the nuns. Happily they wended their way toward the parlor, their temporary chapel, to sing a fervent "Te Deum".



Sr. Mary Joseph, center, with several other unidentified sisters.

Mother decided to initiate Phase II in 1911. The cornerstone for the permanent chapel of Perpetual Adoration was blessed by Bishop Foley on June 25 of that year. However, when the completed Monastery was dedicated on March 25, 1912 the dear Bishop was too ill to be present. Auxiliary Bishop Edward Kelly officiated in the presence of Bishop Fallon of London, Ontario, and many priests and people.



Placing the cornerstone

During the construction and afterward, payments often worried the nuns who prayed and worked earnestly over their embroidery frames. On one occasion, after prayer, Mother gave the names of 4 friends for the Extern Sister to contact. The first patron gave a small offering, the 2nd and 3rd refused, but the fourth patron gave \$10,000.00! One payment assured! But more would become due. From the time the first portion was occupied, Mother rose at 4:30 AM before the Community was up to offer her own procession with a statue of the Infant of Prague! She showed Him what yet needed be done in phase I and the place where phase II must be constructed. The Divine Infant did not fail. For many years the nuns held a monthly procession in His honor.



Mother Mary of the Visitation (left) with Mother Mary of the Blessed Sacrament

There were other aspects of the life to build as well. With construction in progress and other duties to concern her, Mother M. Emmanuel felt she could not do justice to the formation of the Novices. At her request Newark sent Mother M. Alphonsa of the Blessed Sacrament to assume the role. This competent religious had been Novice Mistress for many years among the Dominican Sisters of St Catherine's, Kentucky before her transfer to

the cloister in Newark. One Sister in Kentucky cautioned Mother Alphonsa, "Here you are somebody, respected by all. There you will be nobody." But that was just what Sr. Alphonsa desired, to be hidden with God. Later, she was to assume formation duties in the cloister, and would succeed Mother M. Emmanuel as Prioress in Detroit as she had in Newark. Diminutive in stature and much beloved, she was always called "Little Mother"; the nomination would be some help for future generations to identify the various Sisters M. of the Blessed Sacrament to adorn the Monastery Chronicles!

There was monastic observance for Mother M. Emmanuel to consider as well. In 1909 the "Verses of the Passion," a Dominican Lenten ceremony composed by St Catharine de Ricci were sung for the first time in Detroit. In the same year new Graduales were received, heavy liturgical books with Gregorian Chant Mass Commons and Propers for the entire year! With enthusiasm, the Chronicler announces that choir practice was scheduled three times a week! Life proceeded, gardens grew, shrines were dedicated, candidates presented themselves for "Little Mother's" novitiate, Father Van preached at reception and Profession Ceremonies. When a surprise celebration was arranged in 1914 for Mother's 25 years as Prioress, 17 of them spent in Newark, Father Van Antwerp brought his Holy Rosary Choir and harmonium to sing the anthems. The ceremony completed, Father Van offered the harmonium as gift to the Monastery.



Mother Mary of the Blessed Sacrament (left) with Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart.



From left to right: Mother Mary Magdalen, Sr. Mary Joseph and Mother Mary Imelda

The Feast of Corpus Christi always had special meaning for the nuns. The “Holy Midnight” was the treasured time of prayer in Dominican Cloisters. In the depth of the silence they celebrated Matins and Lauds of the Divine Office. In Detroit the 14 psalms, 9 readings and a Canticle were sung before the Blessed Sacrament exposed. The time remaining before 2 AM was spent in silent prayer. On a solemn day, the Office might not conclude before 2:20 AM. Each night was holy, but for the Octave of Feast of Corpus

Christi the nuns added a tender devotion special to those with the gift of Perpetual Adoration. During the singing of the “Te Deum” one Choir Nun and One Lay Sister took their places before the Altar, arms extended in the form of a cross, one arm behind the shoulder of the other, a lighted candle in the other hand. In this way they signified before God and each other, the unity of the Community gathered in the service of the Eucharistic Lord. The Choir nuns observed the Holy Midnight; the Lay Sisters kept vigil before the Blessed Sacrament during the other night Hours as well as at their daily times of prayer. All were bound together by love of Our Lord and zeal for souls. Here they found their purpose and their unity. In 1915, the Feast held special poignancy although only a few nuns were aware of it as yet. The first night’s ceremony was assigned the Prioress and the senior Lay sister: Mother M. Emmanuel and Sr. M. Rose. Sister had been the first candidate to join the Dominican nuns upon their arrival in America in 1880. Mother, then a young nun, was assigned charge of the Kitchen with Sr. M. Rose to direct. The choir Nun who had been raised in luxury knew little about cooking and housekeeping, the Lay Sister postulant knew little about Monastic living with its stress on poverty, humility and obedience. What adventures they had together. “Sister, did you ever cook spaghetti?” “Sure and I didn’t” came the answer in a delightful Irish brogue, “but I often ate it.” Well, that was a help. Indeed, proud of her first serving of macaroni and cheese, she looked forward to some words of appreciation from the nuns, at the recreation time. Nothing was said, not a word. Did she forget the salt, put in too much, were the good Sisters displeased? When she inquired, Mother held a finger to her lips. and whispered “Shhh, Sister, this is a Retreat day!”



Sisters process around cloister walk

Sr. M. Rose was one of that chosen class of lay sisters who have served in religious houses for centuries. Some, like Sister, had received no schooling in the “old country” to enable her to read the choir Office, some deliberately choose the more silent life, others did not wish to pray in Latin. Most were possessed of a singular purity of heart, some truly seem to have “seen God” as the beatitude promises. Each of the religious grew in her needed knowledge, and each grew to know and love the other. And now they must part.

Mother M. Emmanuel and Mother M. Theresa discussed it. The Detroit Monastery had indeed been blessed; was it not time to erect another Throne of Adoration for the Lord? Bishop Thomas F. Cusack of Albany was eager to receive them. November 21, 1915 was set as departure day. A special supper with delicious lemon pie was prepared for the seven nuns. But they were not to enjoy it after all. Father Van Antwerp, with his horror of being late, arrived quite early to take the travelers to the train. They must come and right Now! Each year on their Foundation date the Albany Community feasted on lemon pies in memory of those the Detroit nuns had lovingly prepared for them.

But disappointments deeper than missed pastry were to plague Mother in the new location. Detroit had been founded as an act of Thanksgiving; richly blessed, it seemed Mother’s crown. Albany was founded as an act of Reparation. It became Mother’s Cross. Only God knows which was more pleasing to Him. Both vocations and funds were very slow in coming. Within 2 years, Detroit had begun construction of phase I of its building; in Albany it would take 12 years to begin phase I. Mother M. Emmanuel did not live to see it. Phase II was never to be constructed.

It was in late November that Mother M. Emmanuel departed to Albany. Less than 2 months later, in early January, her beloved Sr. M. Rose took her journey to eternity after an illness of one day. An

era had closed.

Death would come for several others of the Detroit Community as well. Most moving was that of two young nuns during the Flu epidemic. Sr. M. Gabriel died in 1919. She was 24 and but 3 years professed. Sister had shared her desire to cultivate the virtues as she cultivated the plants in the garden assigned to her. God must have found her spiritual work well done and called her home. She was the second Chichanski girl to pledge herself to God in the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament. Her older sister, Dora, had gone on the Albany foundation while yet a novice. Upon the deaths of Mothers M. Emmanuel and Theresa, Dora was called to leadership for many years, a task the retiring nun found uncongenial. Yet she did well. Sr. M. of the Holy Ghost was the first Chichanski nun, Sr. M. Gabriel was second. But she was not to be the last. Through the double grille little Margie Chichanski gazed at the still body of her big sister, Sr. M. Gabriel, laid out in the Nuns' choir. In due time she too would follow her sisters into the cloister. There as Sr. M. Therese she would serve for many years!

Both Viola Allor and her suitor had a decision to face; should they marry or should they enter religious life. They would make a novena. Viola offered her prayers kneeling on the upturned bristles of a sturdy scrubbing brush. The nine days complete, Viola entered the Monastery and her friend joined the Jesuits! Early in 1920 the flu claimed the life of Sr. Mary of the Angels. She was 26 years of age, 3 of religious Profession. "I want to be a Nun of a thousand years" the fervent young Sister had written. How God reckoned her years we do not know. Surely she had lived them with great earnestness.

The Monastery Chronicle has much more to record. In 1922, relief when the last mortgage payment was paid. Pleasure at vestment and banner orders received: local parishes, the Felician Sisters, the Cathedral in Toledo, the Visitandines of Georgetown and so on. Gratitude is often recorded for gifts of produce, gifts of time, of garden work, of new statues. 1923 brought the gift of electric lights in choir; neighbors had complained about the gas. 1924 brought lights for the first floor. Eventually the boon reached the second floor; monastic cells were illumined by 15 watt bulbs. The neighbors would not be dazzled!

The liturgy gained a number of firsts. 1919 St Dominic's Invitatory was sung for the first time; in 1922 the entire Matins and Lauds with 9 ornate Gregorian responsories; December 8, Our Lady's Matins sung, Easter 1924 etc. In 1923 new Breviaries were received. No, liturgical changes were not invented at Vatican II. This has been going on for centuries in the Church.

Candidates continued to come, some left. Among the latter talented LaVergne's and unique and colorful Violet's parents demanded they depart. Both returned in due time. We shall meet them again.

Faithful Father Van was still with them. Still with his dislike of delay. On confession days he continued to blare his auto horn for the final two blocks as he drove down Boston Boulevard. Quickly the Extern Sister summoned the cloister Sister Tourière (page) who promptly told Reverend Mother who promptly notified the nuns. When Father Van reached the confessional his first penitent was waiting! What a good friend and mentor he remained. No wonder they loved him.

Father Van preached for receptions and professions and rejoiced over them. The nuns rejoiced with him too as he became Monsignor Van Antwerp, Vicar for religious, and finally Vicar General of the Diocese. They shared his sorrow too when the tabernacle at Holy Rosary Church was desecrated. The nuns joined in the special novena and in the solemn day of Reparation.

Mother M. Emmanuel died in 1928, Mothers Mary of Jesus and Mary of Mercy in 1924. Now none of the American Foundresses was alive. An era had closed. But another was opening. On June 23, 1923, the Holy See published an Indult offering to the cloistered nuns of the Great Orders which had formerly enjoyed Solemn Vows the opportunity to resume them. What did "solemn" vows involve? What would they do for the enthusiastic nuns? This we shall explore in Chapter three of our History.

PART III: METAMORPHISMS TIMES TWO & OTHER THINGS NEW



Sisters at prayer in the Detroit Monastery

SOLEMN VOWS

Tomorrow! Tomorrow!!

It was April 29, 1930. Mass completed, the Community gathered in the Chapter Hall. Each of the nuns longing to pronounce her solemn vows on the morrow advanced to the center, dropped to her knees and with arms extended in the form of a cross asked forgiveness of her faults and the prayers of her Sisters. Now they were ready for the morrow.

What a year it had been! On June 23, 1929, the formal proposal had been made to the Community; on June 24 came the unanimous vote to petition for Solemn Vows. The Bishop's permission secured, the letter to Rome had been forwarded; the response arrived on Christmas Eve. Deo Gratias! Even before that happy date, serious preparation had begun: Retreat of Fr. Pendergast in the Fall and of Fr. Reilly in the Spring. Several times there were long study days with Fr. Reilly presenting the meaning, juridical and spiritual, of solemn vows and papal enclosure. Eagerly the nuns had assented to everything.

April 30, 1930, Feast of St Catherine of Siena, was the blessed day. Mass was at 9:00, the students from Sacred Heart Seminary constituted the choir, Monsignor Doyle was the celebrant, Fathers Louis and Pokriefka, former curates at Holy Rosary Church served as Deacon and Sub-deacon, Fr. Vincent Kienberger, O.P., read in Latin and English the Decretal admitting the nuns of the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament to Solemn profession with Papal Enclosure. After the Gospel, the eligible nuns advanced to center Choir as Bishop Gallagher took his place at the grille.



Bishop Gallagher

Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart, Prioress, pronounced her solemn vows before the Bishop. Then each of the other 21 nuns knelt before their Prioress, placed their hands in hers — which held the Constitutions — and firmly pronounced her vows. The Novices and Sisters in temporary vows looked on with admiration and longing.

In his homily, Father Reilly assured those attending the ceremony that Solemn Profession was the highest vocation of a woman in the Church, next only to the sacred Priesthood. These Dominicans were now "nuns" in official Church parlance: religious women in solemn vows living in Papal enclosure. The nuns spent the rest of the day in prayer. There was no need to cook since all was a gift from Walker Caterers. This was such a unique occasion that the Bishop said they should enjoy the treat. The following few days were for Community rejoicing. Indeed they did!

But what exactly did the solemn vows enjoin? Juridical norms could be briefly stated, profound spiritual implications ran much deeper. There was Papal Enclosure and the nuns cherished the closer bond with the Pope. The obligation to celebrate the Divine Office, indeed each one of the seven "Hours" of it, was more serious; the nuns were aware that they prayed in the name of the Church as sacred privilege and duty. And the vows? The law simply stated that contrary acts were not only unlawful, but also invalid. One had given not



Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart

only the act but even the capacity, not only the leaves and fruit, but the tree itself, roots and all. They had given everything in this Solemn Profession, everything to God. And so, did these nuns really

long to be bound, more tightly bound? Yes. Yes, as the Bride and Bridegroom long for their wedding day, to be totally given to each other in love “unto death do us part”; the nuns desired to give all in love, but for them death would not part, it would bring only closer union for all eternity.

Sr. Mary Magdalen Sandt was not able to pronounce her solemn vows that day; she had not yet completed the time of temporary vows. Later she would pour out in poetry the meaning of the solemn vows for her. All the nuns would agree.



Sister Mary Magdalen

MY SOLEMN VOWS

FREE BOUND: by vow, my liberty

to Highest Good.

Of chattel shorn -

Obedience born -

Love chains of Blessed Trinity.

FIRM BOUND: in reigning Peter's girth.

Earth's sweet Christ.

A mystic part -

Yea, pulsing heart -

Of Christ's sweet spouse of earth.

FAITH BOUND: through Word begotten Son

and Spirit dour'd

Love's Temple shrine -

Souls heaven mine -

Beloved, possessed by Three in One.

CLOSE BOUND: my prayer Christ's prayer

Divinely heard.

Each action gold -

Dual merit mold -

My life, Christ's life, share.

LOVE BOUND: a sacrificial host.

Bloodless slain.

In Him made white -

Assured delight -

For aye, in Father, Son and Ghost.

ALL BOUND: make this nothing remiss

another Self.

Flow in, Sweet Guest -

Myriad souls to wrest -

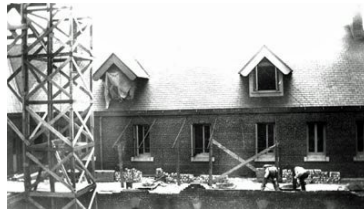
All one in Triune Love abyss

The date of Solemn Vows, April 30 was celebrated with visible joy for many years to come.

FR. VAN

But — did you notice? Monsignor Francis Van Antwerp's name did not appear among the celebrants of that great day. He who had officiated or preached at every Clothing or Profession, been with the nuns for every joyous occasion, then in the evening had sent in ice cream “to finish the day,” he who had come for Mass or Benediction daily, he whose advice had guided the Community always! There had been a few warnings. In 1928, because of illness he missed the Clothing in the Holy Habit of Sr. Mary of the Heart of Jesus, the Violet Board who, several years before, arriving late, had tossed her suitcase over the wall, climbed through the locked gate, then hurried to ring the doorbell in order to get into the Monastery! Monsignor had been ill often in 1929 and in 1930. He died on June 25, 1930, a month and a half after the Solemn Vows. Fittingly he was buried next to his friend Bishop Foley to whose query “What shall I do with them, Van?” Fr. Francis Van Antwerp had replied: “Let them come, Bishop, I will take care of them.” That he had done faithfully for 24 years. The love between the priest and the nuns ran deep. A few weeks following the death, nephew Fr. Francis Van Antwerp brought the Monsignor's Breviaries for the Monastery. Fr. Van Junior, as the nuns termed him, remained a warm friend of the community.

INTERLUDE



Men at work on the upper cloister

Quiet and peace! Ah, no. On June 11 came architect Mr. Winter, 2 hoists, several engines and 31 workmen to repair roofs, chimneys, upper cloister and other cement work. It would not be the last time. Alas, the feast of the Prioress, Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart, had to be postponed to July 4 when no workmen would be present. The nuns had a happy day. In the evening, the Outside Sisters provided popcorn balls, but it was Friday, a fast day. The

treat would have to wait for Sunday.

NEW CONSTITUTIONS

The Father General of the Dominican Order, Martin Stanislaus Gillet, O.P., had been invited for the Profession of Solemn Vows. Unable to come at that time, Fr. presented himself on Oct 30; he was in the area on the regular Visitation of the Eastern Province of Dominican Fathers. Accompanying him were his Socius Fr. Garde, two French Friars and 2 Friars from St. Dominic's parish, Detroit. Following a short visit in the parlor, the Fr. General gave a conference in French at the chapel grille. Fr. Garde translated. Fr. Gillet spoke



Fr. Martin Gillet, O.P.

with enthusiasm of the new Constitutions of the nuns just published on Sept. 10, 1930. They had been brought into conformity with a new code of Canon Law, as was required. The General desired "to fasten the bonds of unity among all the members of the great Dominican Family, not excepting the nuns for whom in his lifetime St. Dominic exercised so much care." It was Fr. Gillet's hope that the new Constitutions would accomplish this for the nuns, scattered as they were in independent Monasteries throughout the world. If he hoped that the nuns would accept the new Constitutions with joy he was to be disappointed. They did not! From all over the world came letters; Detroit's missive was posted Jan 26, 1931. They voiced not compliments but complaints. A few Monasteries wished to reject the new Constitutions entirely. Others expressed concerns, even consternation. Keep the perpetual abstinence from meat? Of course. Keep the traditional Monastic fast from Sept 14 to Easter? Surely. But no more black fast in Lent? And what about this austerity, and that? No more kneeling to drink a beverage while holding the cup with both hands! And no palliases! (a large muslin sack which was filled with corn shucks – used as a mattress). What was the Order coming to! Poor Fr. General was dismayed, but he knew what to do. He was a superior; he would ordain. He was a Dominican, he would teach!

In 1931 Fr. Gillet wrote an encyclical Letter to the nuns of the Order. In Part One he addressed the ascetical dimension of their life which so concerned them. Fortunately he was French, and the reputed French finesse came to the fore in such phrases as "fervent but ill informed", "error or rather unfortunate misunderstanding," "under the impulse of motives so exalted that it is impossible that, on reflection, they will not adopt with the joy of sacrifice the new constitutions." But had the French flair faded when he wrote: "If the custom of sleeping on palliases has become general, then, for the love of God, let the palliases be retained" ?

Perceptively the Fr. General ordained that each nun have her own copy of the Constitutions. The older volume contained a mélange of Constitutions, Commentaries, and Customaries all together in cursory style. Hearing them read only, the nuns could not view the various typefaces and sizes which distinguished the sources. Some of the provisions now omitted had never been part of the law.

Secondly Fr. Gillet ordained that each Provincial dispatch a competent Friar to instruct the nuns in his Province concerning the new Constitutions and his encyclical Letter. Thus in May 30, 1931, Fr. Thomas a Kempis Reilly arrived for an extended stay.

One result was the Lay Sisters' reception of the white scapular on the Feast of the Rosary, 1931. They as well as the Lay Brothers of the Order had worn the black scapular.



Above, Lay Sisters wearing black scapulars (Sr. Mary Rose, mentioned in Part II is in the center) while the picture below shows a group of Lay Sisters

Another change found the nuns keeping Lenten fast in 1932 with the addition of eggs and cheese, and reposing on thin cotton mattresses spread upon their board beds. Gone were the palliases! No more young Sisters stuffing the large heavy muslin sacks with fresh corn shucks each year. And Sr. Mary Agnes lost a favorite job. Since the time she was the young and sturdy postulant Genevieve, she had been assigned to sleep a few days atop each fresh corn shuck sack, lest some older nun mount one side of her “blimp” and slide right off the other. (That danger did not perdure; by the end of the year they had become packed down, hard and lumpy.)

wearing white scapulars



Sr. Mary Agnes

But Fr. Reilly had far more than the ascetical life of the nuns to expound. It was toward “Part II, The Mystical Life of the Nuns” that the Master General’s Instruction hastened. “Let us ascend higher and speak of the very object of our vocation, that is contemplation.” It is not possible to unpack all the riches of this splendid letter here. Let us share a few passages.

“There cannot be any other end of religious life in all its forms than charity...loving God for his own sake and also the neighbor for God’s sake.... The distinction between the different forms of religious life comes from what might be called the works of charity accomplished toward God or neighbor. Hence it is that contemplation, in which consists the only possible work of charity towards God, has given its name to the contemplative life, and distinguishes it from all the other forms of religious life. A religious of such an Order must consecrate herself especially to contemplation. All the rest, all the organized exercises by which one advances toward this end, enters into the category of means of realization, and also distinguishes the different religious families vowed...to contemplation.”

“The Dominican contemplatives have at their disposal three great means of realizing their vocation, namely a) the choral celebration of the Divine Office; b) the assiduous study of Christian doctrine; and c) the monastic observances. These three means, whatever may be their respective value, cannot be separated from one another. It is their harmonious union which assures their full efficacy in view of contemplation.”

Faith and charity are the foci of his remarks as the Fr. General goes on to speak of the supernatural knowledge bestowed by faith which must be enlivened by charity. “This is the reason why...our very dear Sisters in St. Dominic ought to devote themselves to the study of sacred doctrine, and principally to all that which in this doctrine refers to God and can nourish their meditations, enrich their prayers, and keep in their minds in an habitual manner the thought of the presence of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.... When one has the honor of belonging to the Order of Truth, the Truth should not be feared.”

Although the Letter expounded the whole teaching about the life, there is no question but that the chief emphasis was this matter of doctrinal study. Happily, Detroit had a little start on it.

Such riches here. We shall treat more of these facets of our vocation in future chapters.

But the 1930’s with their innovations were not over. The Holy See had another change to introduce. It pertained to Extern Sisters.

Metamorphosis II - “Outside Sisters” to “Externs”: – Dominican Laity to Religious Sisters – June 15, 1936

He could see her as they approached the next trolley stop, the familiar black dress and cape, white bonnet and the veil. He sported also her two large canvas shopping bags bulging with the wares she had gained. Smiling, he took the parcels from her. She would go begging for more. As always, when they reached Boston Blvd, end of their line, he or the conductor would carry the bags up to the Monastery porch, ring the bell and hurry to take the trolley back on their line. He knew other Sisters would come and take the things inside the convent. These parcels were easy this morning; sometimes there were brooms and mops, occasionally even a pail of fresh fish. He knew he would meet Sister again at the close of her day, more wares in tow. Actually there were two black-clad Sisters. Some days they would just be begging in office buildings downtown or even at homes in the neighborhoods. What a job! They really loved their cloistered nuns. The trolley men liked these

women, they were such cheerful and plucky Sisters!

Sisters indeed they were to the cloistered nuns, sisters in St. Dominic, but not religious sisters in the first thirty years. They were Dominican Tertiaries, those called "Dominican Laity" today.

As Dominican laity they had no religious vows and were not strictly speaking members of the Community. They might and did come and go at choice. Some would serve a few years at one monastery, then move to another to remain there or just for a rest. They might decide to return home, a few did. Cloister laws of the time did not admit them into the enclosure unless they were ill or elderly. This will clarify some episodes to follow.



Outside Sisters, SM Jesus is at left center and SM Immaculata is at right center

There is a roster of beloved early "Outside Sisters": Sr. Antonia in the first year, Sisters Mary Reginald, Mary Francis, Mary of the Rosary, Mary Assumption, and good Genevieve as the years progressed. The two pillars in the middle years were Sr. Maria of Jesus and Sr. Mary Immaculata. They are protagonists in some treasured Monastery lore.



Extern Sisters in white habit. Sr. Cecelia at left and Sr. Mary Immaculata at right.

There was much to tote in those canvas shopping bags in earlier days; the 'pack it in as best you can' rule found a fresh chicken wrapped in a role of yard goods. The cloistered Sister who received that day's riches passed the role of cloth to a delighted clothes room seamstress; she placed it on her shelf. Poor chicken voiced no protest at the time, but later she announced her presence in an olfactory manner. True Story!

A Sister, possibly Sr. Mary Dominic, was dying. The nuns in cloister were praying by her deathbed, the Outside sisters were gathered in

the public chapel. Having an appointment with a donor, one Sister set out on her mendicant journey. She could pray on the trolley. Having completed her errand, Sister decided to make one more stop. Might just as well stop at City Hall; it would save her an extra trip later. She responded to the clerk's usual queries clearly until he asked "When did she die?" "Oh, she's not dead yet," the black clad Sister replied, "but she will be by the time I get home." Sister returned without the Death Certificate. Just as well; Sr. Mary Dominic did not die until many years later. Story apocryphal? It is at least possible knowing the Sister's pluck.

"All Gaul is divided into four parts." Remember your first year Latin and "Caesar's Gallic Wars"? All Detroit was divided into 2 parts, not by Caesar but by the Prioress. And it was not of course a war, well, not exactly. "A verbal skirmish" let us say. One Sister was unhappy when the other approached some of "her" patrons for alms; the reverse was true as well. The Prioress decreed: Let one Sister take the East side the other the West! Woodward Avenue the Great Divide. Now this tale is true, and the solution worked.

Yes, we can retell these tales as families do about cherished and much loved members. We can tell them because we know they are but a fraction of the whole story. The whole story about our Outside Sisters is their love of God and of the nuns, their years of dedication, rain or snow or shine, their mendicant life, their sincere gratitude for alms received, large or small, even their serene acceptance of refusal, even of reproach. Jesus had received those too. One day Sr. Mary Immaculata accepted quietly not only a "No" but a tirade of insults from a brusque businessman. She stood and meekly bowed her head; finally a few tears coursed down the old wrinkled cheeks. Ashamed, the bully melted and penned a handsome check.



From left, extern sisters Sr. Mary of the Assumption, Sr. Mary Raphael and Sr. Mary Louis with "Shiny."

Recognizing the strong women who had served the nuns of all the enclosed Orders for years, even centuries, the Holy See enacted new laws which admitted these good laywomen to the Religious Life with simple vows. Thus on June 15, 1936, five Outside Sisters received the white Dominican habit and veil. The three younger women began their Novitiate in the Cloister. Sr. Maria of Jesus and Sr. Mary Immaculata would hold the fort outside and wait. The three young Novices did not persevere. The two grand warriors remained faithful. But God would send others. Isabel Kebbe was soon to enter. As Sr. Mary Anastasia, Extern Sister, she followed in the footsteps of faithful Outside Sisters of old. Sisters Mary Raphael, Louis, Assumption later, and Sisters Miriam, Anna Maria and Faustina Marie of today would follow in her steps.



Our Externs today; from left: Sr. Miriam, Sr. Faustina Marie and Sr. Anna Maria.

It had been a decade full of God's great gifts. And there were other gifts not yet recorded. Although we have reached the thirtieth year of the Monastery, in Chapter 4 we shall need to review some of them to manifest more fully the Greatness and Goodness of the Lord and in doing so illustrate in the concrete the teaching of Fr. General Gillet.

A CENTURY OF ADORATION PART IV: THE THRIVING THIRTIES

On a blustery day, December 29, 1933, Bishop Michael Gallagher rang the doorbell at 9704 Oakland Ave. Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart's term as Prioress would expire in less than a month; a good time to make a Visitation of the Community, the Prelate decided. He had great respect for this Prioress, yet he knew that she had often been ill in the past year. The Bishop had not announced his coming beforehand; still, the hesitancy of the Extern Sister seemed more than one would expect. Ushered into the parlor, a second unusual wait was equally puzzling. Was something amiss?



Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart

When the curtains at the grille opened it was the concerned face of Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus, the Mistress of Novices, which met his gaze. She was the only member of Council able to receive the Bishop she explained. Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart, the Sub-prioress, the Vicarress, and a good number of the other nuns were down with the flu. A Visitation would be very difficult now.

Having already scheduled this time-slot, the Bishop remained to converse with her a while. What an important office she filled as Mistress of Novices, he remarked, and went on to speak of the education of the child Mary in the temple under the tutelage of Anna the Prophetess, as he believed. Yes, the nun replied, she had been reading just that in the pages of Mary of Agreda's book *Mystical City of God*. The Bishop had heard of this volume but lamented that he did not have a copy. The Nun said she would loan him the community copy, promising to obtain a set for him from a Maltese family in Detroit devoted to the Mystic. As the conversation continued, they spoke at length of Our Lady and of the Passion of the Lord. A "fateful encounter," the nuns always called it; a "providential" one might be a better term, and the first of many more to come.

When the Bishop returned on January 13, 1934, to preside at the nuns' prioral election, Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart, to her relief, was not reelected for a second term. The Community adage ran "As Prioress, Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart was a very good Novice Mistress". This should not be misunderstood; she had been a competent prioress. All the formal correspondence, all the canonical requirements pertaining to the Solemn Vows had been excellently arranged;



business matters, building repairs were all attended to. Yet the long-time beloved Mistress

Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus

of Novices did not find administration congenial. She had been a very good formator. It was a task she had filled for years. Very many of the sisters had been her novices. She loved her young charges, had delighted in teaching them the beginning ways of prayer and virtue, the splendor of the Divine Office, the meaning of the vows, the importance of the cloister, gratitude to benefactors and above all the love of the dear Sacred Heart. Her failing health these last two years seemed God's way of earning her release. The Community chose as Prioress, Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus, the Bishop's interlocutor a fortnight earlier.

Readers have met this new Mother in the first chapter of our *History* as one of the foundresses of the Monastery in 1906; she it was who turned twenty on the train en route to Detroit. A good deal of her early impetuosity remained. Her conviction of the importance of humility marked her leadership of her novices and the professed sisters as well. With a bluntness that would perhaps cause consternation in our more sensitive times, Mother Mary would speak her mind about the foibles of her charges with such remarks as: "What do you mean 'IT' broke? You mean YOU broke it." So the breaker must display the casualty to all. For a novice who criticized the Chaplain's sermon Mother's "solution" was that the novice herself must preach a "better one" to the nuns.

One tale that was handed down with chuckles through those early years, though the poor white-veiled novice who was the object of the story, did not find it so amusing at the time, concerned the "Pleat Raid." Now you, dear reader, will surely agree with us that the Dominican Habit is one of the most beautiful in the Church. (Ahem!) Though its glory is the white scapular given by Our Lady, its basis is a simple white tunic which comes in two widths, the length alone being adjusted to match the height of the nun, then gathered at the waist by a leather cincture. An excellent design, all thought, except for the unfortunate novice who decided to 'improve' hers. This did not escape the eyes of the Prioress. There came a day when all the nuns were assembled in the atrium of the refectory to pray for the deceased benefactors. The Prioress summoned Sister "Fashion Queen" to the center and bade her remove the pleats she had artfully arranged in her tunic. There were many pleats and many pins - and many tears as each pin was removed. No vanity here, please! And so it went. A novice might consider that Mother had a little too much zeal for humility; the professed sisters would say she had a lot too much. But she found ways to practice humility herself as well. Besides, Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus had many other gifts appreciated by all. They esteemed and loved her so much they elected her for three terms as Prioress, a two-thirds majority being needed for the third.



New extern quarters were built over the Sacristy

The new Mother Prioress had many challenges to face. There were the usual maintenance projects: tile to be installed on the kitchen floor, linoleum in the Host Room and laundry and, most ambitious of all, construction of a second floor over the sacristy and Chaplain's house to create quarters for the Extern Sisters, the former rooms at front end of the Infirmary being cramped.

It was an exciting day when the workmen literally "raised the roof" to begin construction of the Extern Sisters' new quarters. Four jacks were set in place and the jacks moved in sync one inch at a time to the desired height. It was a tense time for all, but most nervous was the workman assigned to cut the second floor opening into the wall of the sanctuary to provide an adoration oratory for the use of the Extern Sisters. "That Sister stood watching me all morning," he complained to the foreman in exasperation. The "supervising sister" proved to be a life-size statue of St. Catherine of Siena on the opposite wall next to the Infirmary Oratory window!



Statue of St. Catherine of Siena, upper right, which "supervised" the workman drilling into the opposite wall

But the Prioress and Community had deeper, spiritual concerns: the document of Master General Martin Gillet needed to be implemented. The contemplative aspect of the life must be fostered. They would begin with "the solemn celebration of the Divine Office" as he indicated. Father Vincent Donovan O.P. was invited to help improve the singing of the Gregorian Chant. A number of visits and many hours Father spent directing the choir. Sister Mary of the Angels showed such aptitude that she was trained to be Choir Directress. Several choir books are still extant with her

careful tracing of the chironomy, the indication of the gentle fluid rise and fall of the Gregorian melodies. Even as a soaring passage raises and inspires the soul, it calms it as well, preparing for the period of silent contemplative prayer which follows the Office. No more beautiful music exists in the Church. Each nun put her heart into the lessons as her aptitude allowed. The execution of the chant improved.

In June 1934, a landmark year, Father Thomas a Kempis Reilly preached the retreat. Mother found part of it too philosophical (and told him so); this distinction between human acts and acts of man (acts with intellection and deliberation, indicative of virtue or sin, and those of a semi-automatic, merely instinctive response.) The distinction was important in moral life but the good priest wisely returned to a more devotional plane, at least for this retreat. The “too philosophical” aspect would be addressed at another time.

Doctrinal study had been another of Father Gillet’s concerns. What to do? The Nuns’ prayers seemed to find no answer. Some petitions just needed to be taken over the border into heaven personally; Mother reflected. Yet no nun seemed about to take this journey. Soon Providence did provide. Father Lemire, assistant at the Blessed Sacrament Parish had urged Sister Maria, the extern sister, to visit a saintly young parishioner. Very ill, Emily Prell seemed near death. Permission was sought to go to the girl and ask her to obtain the automobile the externs so badly needed. By all means, the prioress agreed, but bring as well the community’s need of doctrinal instruction. The Extern Sister found the angelic Emily dying of TB, serene and joyful “just like the Little Flower”. A few days later, at the end of July, Emily Prell died. And in the days following it was clear that she had accepted the nuns’ petitions, taking them to heaven with herself. Father Healy’s brother gave a good secondhand Cadillac. Now when Mister Albert drove Sister Mary Immaculata to market, he sat tall in the driver’s seat. In a Cadillac he felt that other drivers gave him respect.

It was evident that Emily had remembered Mother’s second request as well. On August 7, 1934 Father Alphonse Hochard C.S.S.R. a priest from a local parish, asked to see Reverend Mother in the parlor and volunteered to give the sisters lectures in theology. Thus began the series on theology so enlightening on matters of faith and the contemplative life. Father arrived weekly with his French accent, his books, his notes and his box of snuff. He made ample use of all. For the snuff he carried a large navy blue and a large red railway-man’s handkerchief. If one became damp, the teacher would drape it over the parlor radiator and continue his lecture. The Sisters were so grateful for his classes. None was more delighted than the young convert Sister Mary of the Heart of Jesus. Extant at the time of her death fifty years later, were her careful notes. In lieu of the file cards she lacked, Sister employed the blank side of used greeting cards donated to the nuns. Their condition revealed that they had often been studied.



Sr. Mary of the Heart of Jesus

At any future time he was assigned to Holy Redeemer Parish Father Hochard would come to the Dominican Nuns. He was there many years later near the time of his Golden Jubilee of Ordination. The Nuns, who planned to make him a gold vestment, asked if he preferred the Gothic or Roman style. The first concern of this faithful religious was to secure his superior’s permission to accept such a gift (his vow of poverty, you know!) Of course it was given, but the Father Superior cautioned the short and now a bit rotund jubilant “Better not take the gothic style, Alphonse, you’d look for all the world like the Infant of Prague!” The gold Roman ‘fiddleback’ was stitched and embroidered with much love. Over the years, Father Hochard had presented to the nuns, several volumes of *A Manual for Consecrated Souls*, bound mimeographed conferences he had prepared for his many directees, religious and lay. The wise spiritual guide stressed this truth: Yes, we are consecrated at Baptism, at Religious Profession, yet more is needed, we must be busy consecrating ourselves to God each day, each hour, in all we think or do or pray. Such was the fervor of this son of St. Alphonsus.

In 1934, Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus had faced the fact that no nun seemed ready to die and carry her requests to heaven. (Thank you, Emily Prell.) Several years later, there was quite a contingent of sick and elderly nuns in the Infirmary, including beloved Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart. They had better prepare, Mother Mary reflected, for a funeral liturgy that they had not experienced in years.

**A CENTURY OF ADORATION PART V:
THE LATER THIRTIES ~ CLOSE OF AN ERA**

“Get your Saturday cleaning chores done ahead of time.” Thus the word went out. “We had better do a practice run of all of this.”

If in 1934 Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus (picture above) had faced the fact that no nun seemed to be at the stage where she could carry her requests right up heaven, by 1936 there was quite a contingent in the Infirmary, including beloved Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart (picture above). It had been over thirteen years since there had been a funeral in the monastery, and add five years since the one which preceded that. Not many of the nuns in the monastery had ever experienced one, knew the various monastic funeral rites or the needed chants! None of the patients seemed to be in critical condition, still one never knew! They had best prepare. Rites were reviewed, challenging Latin words conquered, chant pieces practiced. Now, to put it all together in a practice funeral. . .

Action! Who could be the corpse? Why, who of course, but that long, lanky, laid-back Kentuckian, Sister Mary of the Sacred Wounds. She would not run away - she never ran, never even hurried. The Chapter Hall would be the church, the prioress be the ‘priest’.. No! For such an esteemed deceased, there need be a ‘bishop’! Out of the costume box came a large cardboard miter. Bishop Mary of the Infant Jesus would preside!



*Sr. Mary of the Sacred
Wounds*

Saturday morning: time to begin. The community celebrated the long prayers for the deceased with four appointed psalms of the procession transporting the “body” to the “chapel” (the Chapter Hall) for the wake. Now, “Holy Mass” would follow immediately. They would omit the Canon, the nuns conceded. Yes, they knew the “Requiem” Introit, Offertory and Communion, but there was a proper funeral Responsory and Tract. All the Mass chants were correctly executed, an eloquent eulogy of the ‘esteemed deceased’ was preached by the ‘bishop’, not without many chuckles from the attending mourners, even a few from the ‘corpse’.



*Novitiate steps to the crypt ramp (pictured
below)*

Time for the procession to the crypt for the interment. Now, would the “body” mind walking down the three stairs to the ramp? She did not mind. The psalm was intoned, down the ramp into the crypt beneath the chapel the singing nuns processed. Following the proper prayers, the nuns chanted the beautiful and solemn antiphon “Clementissime” which had concluded the burial rite of each Dominican Friar or Nun for seven centuries. They had

finished and done quite well indeed. But my, these obsequies had taken longer than expected! The nuns would be late for the Midday Office and dinner. They would miss most of the noon recreation period. Well, it must be admitted, they had a pretty good time at the “Dry Run Funeral.” It remained in the Community memory for years to come.



Yes, they would be ready for the rites soon to come. Better still, they would have time to unpack the richness of these ancient rites. The prayers were full of Old Testament allusions to such biblical characters as Enoch, Elijah, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Daniel.. The passages gained meaning to enrich prayer in the coming years.

There were also those four psalms recited “post mortem”, Psalms 113-116 in the old

numbering. They were the “Little Hallel”, the Little Book of Praise, the very ones Jesus had prayed with His disciples at the Last Supper before He went out to His Passion and death. “Not to us Lord...to your Name give the glory....Sons of Israel trust in the Lord, He is their help and their shield.”(113) “I love the Lord for He has heard the cry of my appeal...I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living.”(114) “How can I repay the Lord for His goodness to me...the cup of salvation I will raise...I will call on the Lord’s name.”(115) Ah, and so soon the Lord will pray to His Father about that ‘Cup’, the Cup of our salvation. “O praise the Lord all you nations....strong

is His love for us, He is faithful forever.”(116)

The Psalm the nuns chanted after ‘Mass’ on way to the burial vault was the Great Hallel, the “Great Psalm of Praise” which preceded the final cup of wine at the Jewish Passover Seder. Now we treasure it as the Resurrection psalm: “Open to me the gates of holiness, I will enter and give thanks. This is the Lord’s own gate where the just may enter... I will thank You for You have answered and You are my savior...Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endures forever”.(117) The final antiphon “Clementissime” was also a praise of God’s mercy, yet it concluded with the assembled community dropping to their knees as they sang “Domine miserere super peccatrice”. “O God be merciful to this sinner.” The careful honesty and wisdom of the Church! All of us are sinners. It is for us Jesus died. Praise Him!

It was a good thing they had done it; the community was ready in rite and in understanding. And the funerals were soon to come. They started in 1938. The nuns called home represented a cross section of monastic community life. They were Sister Mary Francis, Lay Sister, Sister Maria of Jesus, Extern Sister, Sister Mary Augustine, Choir Sister, Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart, former Prioress. Each has a beautiful story to tell.

It was only on her third journey to America that Sister Mary Francis was accepted at Ellis Island. After two long voyages, open sores on her legs caused refusal; she had had to return to Europe. On the third trip the ulcers did not appear. God allowed this benefit, yet her physical difficulties were to reappear in later life. After her loving daily duties in kitchen, laundry or Altar Bread room, Sister would spend her prayer time and two hour night Adoration sitting on the floor between Blessed Mother’s altar and the choir grille. With back against the shrine and legs stretched out before her to relieve the pain, she would gaze lovingly at Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Fittingly her mind most often focused on His sufferings. One day during her final illness Sister Mary Francis questioned the Infirmarian, “What time is it Sister?” Consulting the clock, the nun responded with hour and minutes. The Dear One replied. “Oh, not that! What time of the Passion is it?” She kept the Horarium of the Lord’s Passion each day. When someone offered a Mass stipend for her during her final illness, Sister offered it in thanksgiving for her sufferings. She and other Lay Sisters lived a very devout prayer life in our cloister.



Sr. Mary Francis, Lay Sister



Sr. Maria of Jesus, Extern

The Extern, Sister Maria of Jesus, we have encountered more than once in earlier issues of this History, one of the spunky Extern Sisters from early days. A member of the Third Order (now termed Dominican Laity) Sister had been given the white habit of the nuns, though not required to make a formal novitiate. In her final months, Sister Maria of Jesus, like our other Extern Sisters, was lovingly cared for in the cloister Infirmary by the grateful nuns.

We met Sister Mary Augustine in an earlier chapter absorbed in reading *The Story of A Soul*, autobiography of Little Therese, when she should have been polishing the monstrance while the Extern washed the Exposition Niche. But Saint Therese rescued her fascinated friend; the monstrance had never looked so bright and shiny. Sister Mary Augustine reflected the outwardly simple yet inwardly rich life of most cloistered nuns. The interior life of conversation with God, this was the real life:

pouring forth praise, pouring forth love,
pouring forth intercession for all; this life could flower while hands plied the embroidery needle, ran the sewing machine, operated an altar bread cutter.



Sr. Mary Augustine

Even during her term as Prioress, the health of Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart had begun to fail. As the decade progressed, an infirmary bed became her cell and little chapel. The tiny elevator later built under a staircase could not convey a bed to choir or recreation room. The sisters, most of them

her former novices came to visit, to sing the hymns and litanies she so loved. How she loved the angels, cherished the concept of monastic life as 'the angelic life'. Yes, purity with the vow of chastity, but not primarily that at all; rather, primarily the angels' life of adoration and praise, facing toward God, focused on God, ready to do His Will. Photos of the monastery chapel in the late Twenties reveal angel statues, nine of them for the nine choirs of angels! Seven adorned the outside sanctuary and Adoration Niche, and two adoring statues graced the nuns' choir.



Angel statues adorn the extern chapel

Several times as her end approached Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart confided to the Prioress "O Mother, the room is filled with angels!" "Do they have wings," the Superior asked. "Oh no! But they are very beautiful!" "Very beautiful" was also her description of St. Gertrude, the Baptismal patron she so loved. When the Sisters assembled at her deathbed, Mother asked that they sing Our Lady's Magnificat. As the chantress intoned the canticle, Mother raised her hand. Not that one; she would like the eighth Gregorian mode melody. As the nuns sang it, Mother 'played' the melody on the coverlet with graceful fingers. From the beginning of the foundation in 1906 she was "the harmonium Sister" Mother Mary Emmanuel had asked of Newark. To the end she retained that gift. Even in death her fingers remained so supple and pink that the Prioress felt obliged to reproach good Mr. Sullivan for using make-up and nail polish. He had used nothing of the kind, he assured her.. It seems that God had manifested His pleasure for those decades of chant antiphons and psalms played with such dedication.

Attendance to the sick and the deceased had been carefully provided. But other matters preoccupied the Nuns as well. The Community continued to grow. Among the postulants was Theresa Weir. Most nuns were allowed to choose a religious name. In honor of Bishop Michael Gallagher, her friend, Rev Mother gave Theresa, a faithful and charitable nun until her death, the name Sister Mary St. Michael.



Sr. Mary St. Michael

Another was Isabel Kebbe; as Sister Mary Anastasia she was the first Extern Sister to persevere as a vowed religious. She was a treasure whom we shall meet in a future paragraph or two. A good number of others joined the Community. They were a blessing to choir and community, yes, but a strain on the pocketbook. The Altar Society ladies at Holy Rosary and Blessed Sacrament parishes had 'pantry showered' the nuns from time to time. The first benefit party recorded was in 1924. The grand prize was a large "Mama Doll"; the winner returned the doll who again



Sr. Mary Anastasia (note the Infant of Prague statue at lower left)

went to work for the nuns! Still, Mother reflected, a Ladies Auxiliary would be beneficial. To the rescue rose Margaret Darling who recruited Alice Marvin, Jennie Hughes, Mae Connel, Adelaide Waggener, Lillian McGraw, Helen McGrath, Mary Bostick, Mary Hospital, Marguerite Merdian, Delia Ward and Mary Kennedy. In May of 1938 they met in the then empty chaplain quarters. Their goal: "to assist the Cloistered Dominican Nuns spiritually by their prayers and financially by their activities, and to promote devotion to our Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Rosary." Remembering the early morning processions with the Foundress, Mother Mary Emmanuel carrying the statue of the Infant Jesus in 1910 and 1911 begging Our Lord for the completion of phase two of the Monastery, the Prioress named the ladies' group the Infant of Prague Guild. The Guild would be a blessing for many years to come, gathering more beloved members. Recently professed Sister Mary Anastasia learned that it was her

job to obtain prizes for the Benefits! Begging food at the Market she had done. With prayer and trepidation she approached her first contact! The good shopkeeper willingly donated a small set of China. Thank God! Sister took courage for journeys to come.

It was 1940. Until now the Prioresses had been chosen from the 1906 Foundresses. Mothers Mary Emmanuel, Theresa, Visitation were deceased; Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart was near death. Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus' third term was coming to its conclusion. She could not be reelected. Whom would the nuns choose as Prioress, and where would she lead them? It was indeed the End of an Era for the Monastery; but a new one was about to begin!

A CENTURY OF ADORATION PART VI: NEW GENERATIONS AND A NEW THRONE

There are a few overlooked events we would like to share. The earliest years brought the weight of the Depression to the working class; so many men were out of work. Some of these fathers of families were parents of the nuns or dear friends of the Monastery. These Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus engaged in the excavation of a partial basement. Pay was very modest: a hearty meal, some food for the family (thanks to Sr. Mary Immaculata's trips to nearby farms), and since at that time the Nuns never ate meat, this item appeared on the mens' table and in family baskets. There was a very modest pay check and in the envelope the weekly holy card; some workers remarked on these little printed "bonuses." They liked them.



*Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus
(whose name became Mother
Mary Rose of the Infant Jesus at
the Lufkin foundation)*

Providence brought other benefits too. Young postulant Sister Alberta's father was out of work; he was out of the Church as well. Recently Sister Alberta's sister had married out of the Church. Mother got to work! Dad returned to the Fold and the young couple agreed to the blessing of their union right in the Monastery parlor. Sr. Alberta did not remain in religious life. In His loving Providence God had other designs for her entrance. Papa's daughter returned home, he returned to the Fold and he had a stash of holy cards as well.

1934 brought the visit of Father Nolan, O.P., Prior of San Clemente, the Irish Dominican house in Rome. Sent to the U.S. by the Master General to view the state of religious observance of the Dominicans in the U.S.A, he was brought to the Monastery from St. Dominic's parish and priory in Detroit. Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus was interviewed and requested to present a list of all the Nuns with date of birth and of religious profession by the following morning. Mother presented the priest with a tastefully decorated box of candy to enjoy as well. He was delighted. "Oh, Mother, give them to the Sisters and tell them they are from Father Nolan," he directed in a soft Irish brogue, "and by the way do you have any nice holy pictures? I don't know where the stores are in Detroit. Give them to the Sisters and tell them to write on the back 'from Father Nolan.'" In the morning the Irish Prior addressed the nuns, assuring them he found the observances well kept in the United States. Then, each Sister received a chocolate and a holy card. With his Irish eyes a-smiling he instructed the nuns to write on the back of the cards "from Father Nolan." Only later did Mother reveal the origin of candy and card. Since the title was already bestowed on another, we dare not call the Irishman the "good thief." He goes down in community memory as the "Charming thief."

November 29th brought a first visit from Father Solanus, Capuchin. He spoke to the nuns at the Choir grille, then blessed each nun at the communion window. Many visits were to follow.

Another entry informs us that an unexpected benefactor came to the door and left the exact sum needed for a new Dominican Altar Missal.

Other events include tile laid, linoleum placed, even seven 100 watt bulbs installed in the choir. "We did not realize how much 'in the dark' we had been" the Annals declared. Ten years later the incandescent bulbs were replaced by fluorescent ones. Deo Gratias for all.



Detroit Novitiate when future prioress, Mother Mary of Jesus (far right), was Mistress of Novices; Sr. Mary St. Catherine is in the white veil; Sr. Mary (Dominic) of the Holy Cross is to her right and Sr. Mary Henry is at the far left.

Shrines were added. A Calvary group in the Chapter Hall; Sr. Mary of the Heart of Jesus painted in oils a Jerusalem and Holy Sepulchre scene as background. Mrs. Robert O'Brien donated a statue of St. Michael the Archangel asking that the nuns pray that "Mike O'Brien would be a good boy." The Nuns did and we trust Mike turned out well.

The years flowed on to 1940. Former Prioresses had been chosen from the founding Nuns. Now the Community must look elsewhere, but not really far. They chose Mother Mary of Jesus, Louise Kalt, who with her elder sister Bertha had entered the second

temporary house on Cass Ave. in 1908. She was just eighteen then, but had grown steadily in age, in grace and in capability. It was an excellent choice; the future looked promising, yet before a year had elapsed she was forced by illness to resign her Office. Later her promise would revive to bless many years ahead, but for the present a new Prioress was needed.

The Community chose Mother Mary Imelda, (Marie De Rosiers), a Canadian, who entered in 1917. She had shown herself capable in many charges. And when she led them there was no doubt as to who was the sister in charge. The construction of the Extern Sisters' new quarters above the sacristies and the Priest's house was a case in point. However, getting the concept of "enclosure" into workmen's minds was always a problem. Why not just climb over the gate; why not park the truck in front of the sacristies and climb up to the second floor. Why ring the doorbell, ask an Extern Sister to ring into the cloister, why wait until the cloistered Portresses admitted them into the house and then escorted them all around the building and very near to where they had driven into the property in the first place but outside the enclosure!! It is always a problem for workers, this "Papal Cloister." But Sister Mary Imelda made the rules very clear to them. They complied.



Mother Mary Imelda

There was another episode as well. Dare we mention it! Earlier we did not. But a day came when someone saw a bug. A Bug? A BUG! Alarm! ACTION! With Sister Mary Imelda as Portress directing, the Dorm was scrubbed, strong solutions used on the plain wooden beds, twenty two of them from the temporary houses of 1906 and 1908. These were just flat boards with wooden legs and small head and foot boards, but too costly to replace. O happy fault! Now they got a coat of shiny white enamel paint. It was because of this episode that no protest came from our Detroit Monastery when Father General Martin Gillet did away with the "paillasses," those corn-shuck stuffed canvas ticks! The nuns accepted in their place their new thin cotton springless mattresses with gratitude.



Sr. Mary St. Catherine

One of Mother Mary Imelda's first acts as Prioress was an unusual one. She retained for herself the office of Infirmarian. She had been a competent one. She did assign two assistant Infirmarians. Sister Mary St. Catherine, the younger nun, would spend many years at that service. Mother requested Dr. Bernard Gariepy, one of the list of generous physicians who have served the community down the years, to extend his Royal Oak clinic to the Monastery so that the nuns need not exit the cloister for tests. Sister Mary Agnes was taught to operate

an X-ray machine, chest X-rays for all. Sister was justifiably proud of her new skill. Blood tests were administered; a number of nuns with low blood counts were treated. Doctor and his nurse taught Sr. Mary St. Catherine many procedures. She became an excellent home care nurse. When Doctor Gariepy moved out of Detroit, a subsequent Prioress donated the X-ray machine to the medical missions.

Holy Cards again. On December 10, 1944 during evening recreation the Portress excitedly brought a heavy package some 15" long and 3" wide saying it was left at the door by an unknown

person who hurried off as fast as he could. It was done up in soiled brown wrapping paper without name or address. Nothing had been ordered, what could it be? A bomb perhaps? some nervous nuns worried. The idea stuck [it *was* wartime]. Sub-Prioress Mother Mary of the Holy Cross took it to the middle of the Novices' garden and gave it "hospitality" in the deep snow..... investigation in the morning revealed that it was a "bomb," yes, but one to be used in spiritual warfare - the plates of the Little Jesus prayer set up in Italian by Msgr. Ciarrocchi. Mother, who wished to promote devotion to the Little Child Jesus, had requested the approval of a prayer by Archbishop Mooney as well as its translation into French, German, Italian and Polish. The Archbishop had agreed to arrange for these. Italian prayers would now be on their way.

The Community was growing in number. What was God saying? Mother Mary Imelda considered the possibility of a new foundation. What an honor to erect a new Throne of Perpetual Adoration in this land. She would prepare for that. Her reelection on May 29, 1944 would allow for it.

October 1944 saw the beginning of preparations for a foundation "somewhere." Vestments, altar linens, clothing, music, books, furniture, food. All joined in the project. It was not until July 16, 1945 that Mother Mary Imelda and a companion left for Texas; Bishop Byrne of Galveston had invited the Nuns and greeted them cordially on their courtesy visit. They did search for land in the Galveston area but fell in love with a 100 acre plot in Lufkin. The property was rich with pine trees and boasted a very large old farmhouse to serve as temporary Monastery. The Sisters would be touched by the wisteria vine on its side, remembering summer recreations on St. Michael's porch in Detroit, with wisteria vines climbing the lattices in that venue. The proposed foundation was named the Monastery of the Infant Jesus.

Land having been procured, Mother Mary Imelda moved quickly. On July 27th the first of three moving vans was sent on its way. The third, the movers declared to be the largest and heaviest which they had ever sent out of Detroit!

July 24th, August 5th, 12th and Sept 18th were departure days for the nuns. The foundation would claim 18 nuns in all; more than enough to begin a new foundation. Surprisingly, eleven of the number departing Detroit were Novitiate sisters.



Original Lufkin farmhouse

Special mention seems to be in order for some of the nuns who went on the foundation. Two had helped found the Detroit monastery from Newark almost forty years before: Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus would bring her overabundant zeal for humility to a new generation of novices; Sister Mary Joseph, now elderly, would pass her few remaining years as an example of a truly humble, recollected and prayerful nun.



The foundation grows



Mother Mary Dominic of the Holy Cross

Others require special mention also. The beloved Mother Mary Dominic of the Holy Cross, Subprioress at the time of the foundation, was chosen as the second Prioress when, at the completion of her term, Mother Mary Imelda returned North. The Lufkin community esteems her almost as a second Foundress and her early death was a painful blow to the struggling foundation. One of the "twenty something" nuns among the 1945

foundresses, Sister Mary Henry, became the third Prioress. A dispensation had to be sought because she lacked the required age, but she proved a most competent superior.

Among the Novitiate sisters on the foundation were young Sisters Mary Anne and Mary Sybillina. These two sisters are now Diamond Jubilarians and still in Texas.

Departure day dawned, hoping, no doubt, not to prolong the pain of leave-taking, Sr. Mary Imelda had the founding sisters leave early in the morning. The following day, Mother Mary of the Holy Cross, who herself would leave for Lufkin shortly, assembled the Detroit Community to explain why Mother Mary Imelda had asked for so many novices for the foundation, and requested the sorrowing Community to make this sacrifice generously.

With a certain lack of prudence, it must be admitted, Mother Mary Imelda had left the Detroit community with but one young novice and only two nuns in their thirties. And up in the Novitiate, Mother Mary Rose Harrigan looked around the now empty rooms, hugged the statue of the Infant Jesus and wept.



Sisters Mary Anne (top) and Mary Sybillina

On November 9, 1945 the Lufkin Monastery was blessed and formally erected as a Monastery of Cloistered Dominican Nuns. As so often happens, the new Monastery had a difficult beginning. A local saying claimed that Lufkin had 100 Baptist Churches and only one Catholic Church. The Baptist number was hyperbole to be sure, the Catholic one only too true. The Sisters were aware they had chosen a largely non-Catholic setting. They had not realized, though, how strongly anti-Catholic were the environs. Precious little alms would come their way. Neither had they gauged the impact of the climate. A visiting priest advised the Prioress that the nuns could not work outdoors in the middle of the day in Texas. The young nuns, busy constructing a cinder block enclosure wall, had uttered no complaint. But there was solace from that only Catholic Church, St. Patrick's, where the La Salette Fathers and the Dominican Sisters opened their hearts to the Nuns. There was an abundance of hard work; an abundance of God's blessings too. Detroit would help. The Lufkin Monastery flourishes to this day. Praise God.



Mother Mary Rose Harrigan



Mother Mary of Jesus

A CENTURY OF ADORATION PART VII: THROUGH THE TIME WARP, TWICE, FOR A NEW BEGINNING

In 1945 we sent 18 of our nuns to make a new foundation of Dominican Cloistered Nuns in Lufkin, Texas. The departure of such a large contingent of nuns for the Texas foundation left a much smaller Community in Detroit to face its future with courage. On September 14, 1945, it was Archbishop Edward Mooney himself who arrived to conduct the election of a new Prioress to replace Mother Mary Imelda

who led the founding group to Lufkin.

The Nuns again chose Mother Mary of Jesus. Her health regained, she was ready and able for the Office of Prioress. Very fatherly words from the Archbishop would encourage all on the way forward. It was for this purpose that he had come in person. He spoke at some length. The following were some of the high points:

"Your Rule commands you to be of one mind and one heart in the Lord in the unity of Charity... This does not mean to call black white or white black, but for the love of God to *do good always to the neighbor as to God*, and here the neighbor is very close.

"Your life is one of intense prayer for your own perfection and the needs of Holy Church. Daily, hourly you adore the "mystery" satisfying and supplicating for those in action who cannot.....

"Your Constitutions are the touchstone of your life. What contributes to the carrying out of the Constitutions is evidently from God. Anything not in full accord with the Constitutions existing in the Community, from no matter what source, is to be suspect.

"Each one here is needed, working together in a common spirit of charity based on your Constitutions.

"I ask two things. First pray always for the new Foundation in Texas Second - pray much for *this* Monastery, that you yourselves may reach the end for which you came here, namely perfection of life, thereby reaping abundant fruits of holiness in the Church by the faithful observance of your Rule and Constitutions through Faith and Charity."

The Nuns, grateful for the fatherly concern of their Archbishop, rejoiced when on Dec. 23 his election as Cardinal was announced and conferred on Feb. 21st, 1946. The nuns made his zucchetto. Later they were asked to clean and reline his cappa magna. As is often done a new cardinal uses one which had been worn by a deceased prelate. Sister Mary of the Heart of Jesus undertook the task with her usual promptness. Nothing to do but take the voluminous garment apart for the work. Finished, Sister could not remember how to put the "real house" back together. Careful examination of numerous books revealed the proper layers, but that is a bit ahead of our present story.

But for the time following their own election, armed by the words of their Shepherd the Nuns set out with eagerness to be Dominican Cloistered Contemplative Nuns in the Church. There were other contemplative orders. What would identify Dominicans, who must they be? The nuns knew where to look for the keys. According to the Rule, a major focus was easily identified:

"Among the principal observances of the Order which minister to divine contemplation, the solemn recitation of the Divine Office holds the first place." {#227.}

As the founder of a Religious Order St Dominic had been given a special grace. By the Providence of God, the "DNA strands" of Dominican life, as it were, had been first formed in the life of Dominic himself. This is thrilling to contemplate. Let us take a journey through the "Time-Warp", or if you prefer, the "Time Capsule." We find ourselves in the late 1170's to behold eight year old Dominic de Guzman seated with a wax tablet on his right knee and a stylus in his hand tracing out Latin words and phrases. As was the custom of the time Dominic was placed in the care of his priest uncle in the rather large church in which the uncle was a Dean.

As a recent biographer, the Dominican M.H. Vicaire words it "the expression 'in the church' is correct...the child was immediately set to spelling out the psalms. He learned Latin at the same time he learned to read and the intention was for him to be able to recite the Latin in the sanctuary in a loud, clear voice.... The order of lector, the lowest rank in the clerical status, would soon come to crown this knowledge which was wholly ordained to the worship of God in the Church. During this time the music of the sacred chant became familiar to him. He was made to chant responsories and hymns. With a few other boys of his age he formed a choir which had its place in the chanting of the Liturgical Offices."

"Throughout his life Dominic was to preserve this sensitive feeling for the ceremonies of the Church, the Divine Office and the Mass which he could not celebrate without tears coming to his eyes in abundance." This segment of Fr Vicaire's work may well be concluded with this striking phrase "If a strong perfume is poured into a vessel of new clay, it permeates it in such a way that afterward nothing can obliterate the fragrance. Similarly, from his earliest the young boy's soul was impregnated with clerical sanctity."

(Footnote M.H.Vicaire, St Dominic and His Times, Chapter 2, 2 pg. 13,14. ALT Publishing Co., Green Bay, Wisc.)



Sr. Marie of the Sacred Heart

This sweet fragrance of Liturgical chant had arisen from the Detroit Monastery from earliest days. Now with eager hearts the smaller community would renew its dedication. None was more intent than Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart.

She had long served the Liturgy, now she renewed her fervor. In an entry following December 25, 1945, the community annalist wrote "The magnificent Office, sung in its

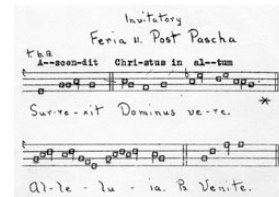
entirety, rang with the “peace” that reigns in every heart. Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart played a considerable part of the Office greatly assisting and supporting the choir.” In a year she would assume the direction of the choir with tact and good judgement to the appreciation of the Nuns.

Vast was the scope of her work, and difficult to appreciate without another journey through the Time-Warp. We have a good distance to travel, not chronologically but technologically, not to the twelfth century but to earlier years in the century preceding our own. In our journey we find another figure bent over a table with a stylus in her hand. It is our dear Sister. The reproducing processes of the day did not include photocopy machines, faxes or offset presses. There were no computers, computer music programs, and certainly no iPods or iPads! The lowly mimeograph, sometimes dubbed ‘the purple flood’ with mock affection, multiplied sources for community use, but how laboriously.



The antiphonary with mimeograph stencil and a sample of sister's work; a close up of her chant notation is below

As for our Sister, on a mimeograph stencil she carefully inscribed Gregorian notes. With the stylus she traced each square chant note, removing some of the emulsion from the stencil, careful not to penetrate the thin porous membrane through which the ink must be able to flow. Mind you there must be no mistake in the notation! Our musician had already typed the text on the stencil with her manual typewriter, the only ‘electrical source’ being her own strong fingers. Not to fear, she never made a mistake in her typing. A row of letters swiftly penetrated the stencil to the proper depth, but for each square Gregorian note all four sides were inscribed with great care. It took many hours to gift the community with a single page. But because of all this loving dedication, the community was able to sing ornate Latin responsories which had not been included in more modern printed volumes, but must be gleaned from huge and weighty ancient antiphonarians. In this way the community was able to sing the nine long Matins responsories for every small or great commemoration or feast of Our Lady. Joy for the community and we trust joy to the Lord.



At other times, the Time-Warp would find Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart bent over table with pen, not stylus in hand. As La Verne La Londe she had entered religious life in late 1920's. The young woman had studied piano with success. Accompaniments she was able to compose in the modern keys. How grateful she was to Sister Humilitas, an active religious, who taught her to compose them in the eight Gregorian modes as well. The Dedication of her volumes of accompaniments for the Divine Office was inscribed as follows:

“To the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus this work is lovingly dedicated. Harmonized: 1930-1960.”

Love, yes, but also exuberant joy seems to leap from her signature high flying eighth notes. A page of her music is easy to identify. Each piece was unique; copiers were things of the future; when needed for another feast, one must transfer the sheet and be careful to return it to its place of origin for future use. Happily this was most often accomplished. When occasionally it was not, an earnest search



Sister's distinctive eighth notes

ensued, never with more consternation than when at the very moment of his arrival to celebrate the Corpus Christi liturgy, shortly after our move to Farmington Hills, Cardinal Edmund Szoka requested that the Sequence be sung. It had become optional in the renewed liturgy and the nuns had not been using it because of the large crowd attending the lengthy Mass and outdoor procession with Benediction. Singing the sequence was not a problem for the nuns who knew it well. But it proved a huge problem for the organists. The final four stanzas of the piece had been transferred into a votive mass years back and had not been replaced. Oh! At the organ Sister Mary of the Divine Heart began the sequence with some trepidation with only the first twenty verses at hand. Next door in the Chapter Hall, Sr Mary of the Visitation hurriedly searched for the final four stanzas! Quietly, but with a drama appreciated by all involved, at the last minute, Sister slipped across the front of choir and handed over the final stanzas to the organist - and just in time! But we have gotten ahead of our story.



Mother Mary of Jesus with Sr. Mary of the Divine Heart

The annals frequently mention the choir observance. Christmas 1945 we have mentioned. At Christmas 1946, because of flu nothing was sung. The entry for January 1, 1947 reads "For the first time since our siege of the flu we were able to sing Lauds, Holy Mass and the Little Hours. Matins had to be sacrificed. It is a privation that makes us better understand how much the sung Office is part and parcel of our life."



From left, Sisters Mary Agnes, Mary of the Pure Heart and Mary of the Visitation

A monastic choir needs the participation of every nun. Leaders of song are crucial also. The Texas foundation had claimed Chantresses too. Fortunately good leaders remained, none more accomplished than Sister Mary Agnes. Even as a novice she had been appointed; an unusual step, but Sister had an unusually good voice. The chantress did not sing everything of course, many sisters could take parts, but the head chantress had to be prepared for everything. At

no time was this more crucial than in the final days of Holy Week. Nine psalms, nine readings were sung, also nine ornate responsories. Yes, each was assigned to two nuns for intonation and verse. But every year Good Friday's bread and water fast might incapacitate some singers for the Holy Saturday Office. Sister Mary Agnes supplied. Yet one year she 'had had it' with Sisters having to absent themselves from the choral office! Prior to the day she repeatedly and emphatically proclaimed "It's not necessary at all, it's just their mental attitude, their mental attitude." Remembering that Bible quote which begins "pride goeth before a fall ..." you may guess what transpired in God's pedagogy. That year it was Sister Mary Agnes who hastily exited the choir. In a subsequent term, Mother Mary of Jesus would address this ongoing problem with the Dominican Master General. Subsequently coffee or tea might accompany the Good Friday bread; a plain soup could be added.



Prayer of Consecration to

St. Joseph

O Glorious St. Joseph, Foster Father of the Son of God and true spouse of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, in the presence of the whole heavenly court we choose thee this day as our special Patron and Protector. To prove our confidence in thy powerful intercession we promise to call upon thee in all our needs both of soul and body and give thee henceforth the title of "Glorious Protector of our Monastery" as we have for so many years experienced thy wonderful aid as Procurator.

O Glorious St. Joseph, Protector and Procurator of our Monastery, pray for us that this day

But Mother Mary of Jesus had other concerns too. Only one candidate remained in the novitiate after the departure for the Texas foundation. The nuns must pray - and did. Vocations came and as usual in novitiates of contemplative orders some left or were asked to leave. Respect needs be extended to those who had the courage to try. "Sister Mary," however, stayed only four days. The record is held by Jessie McMurey who entered at 4 P.M. on Sept 11 and departed at 8:30 A.M. on the 12th informing the novice mistress that she had had 'her vacation with Jesus.' Could it have been the Prioress' announcement on the evening of the 11th that all should come next day for a 'tomato party'? (The I.H.M. Sisters had sent 67 bushels from their farm.)

Still Mother Mary of Jesus knew that more was needed than the nuns' prayers for vocations. After prayer, on March 19, 1947 she initiated a consecration of the Monastery to St. Joseph as "Glorious Protector and Procurator of our Monastery" in petition for postulants. One of the early fruits of this act was the entrance that year of Delphine Filipiak, a candidate Mother

Monastery and ours may grow in number and holiness and flourish in the Church of God.

O thou, head of the House of God upon earth, in faithful imitation of Jesus and Mary, we place ourselves and all our concerns under thy care and protection. Forsake us not. Adopt us as the little ones of your household. Watch over us at all times, but especially at the last awful hour of our life on earth; then visit, console and strengthen us that having safely arrived at our eternal home we may deserve to praise the adorable Trinity and One God for ever and ever. Amen

considered so promising that she gave her the name of the Foundress, Sister Mary Emmanuel. The candidate did not disappoint her. Others came too. By the Fall of 1948 there were eleven in the Novitiate, Christmas 1949 saw fourteen! Not all of them stayed of course but St Joseph it seems has good hearing. The act of consecration was renewed each year.

The years brought many events. Among them visits from missionaries, from Father Solanus, new lights in choir, repairs in the monastery, the four year old St Bernard dog poisoned, a new puppy donated, and so on. The Monastery annalist wisely concludes one year's entries

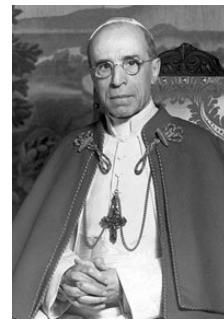
"Only the external and notable events are recorded in the Monastery Annals; the Angels take note of the hidden acts that endure eternally."

The interior life of the nuns about which Prioresses and retreat Masters speak is indeed the true life of a contemplative Monastery. You, our friends, by your charity, share in its fruits. Thank You.

A CENTURY OF ADORATION PART VIII: PAPAL EYES ON THE CLOISTER

The Papacy of Pius XII was truly a watershed for the Church. There was scarcely an aspect of the life of the Church that this noble Pontiff did not address: Scripture, Doctrine, Liturgy. Many of the authentic changes of Vatican II found a fruitful pre- dawn glow through his leadership.

Religious women were in the Pope's concern as well. In 1952, Mother Mary Gerald, O.P., Mother General of the Adrian Dominicans was named by Pope Pius XII himself as Executive Chairperson of the first-ever congress for religious women in the United States. She came to ask the prayers of our Community for this venture and for her Congregation's missions in Santo Domingo.



Pope Pius XII

With all this activity, did the Pope forget his cloistered nuns? By no means. Pius XII addressed cloistered nuns fully four times in the space of eight years with *Sponsa Christi*, 1950, *Inter Praeclara*, 1952, *Inter Coetera*, 1956 and in 1958, the first ever of such an event, Three Radio Talks to Cloistered Nuns of the world, his spiritual daughters. They felt loved and indeed they were. We shall concern ourselves here with the first and fourth presentations.

THE POPE'S TEACHING ON

THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

The Apostolic Constitution *Sponsa Christi*, 1950, was a major document. However we shall present it fairly briefly here. Pius XII first traces the practice and institution of Virgins for Christ. The first quote is from St. Cyprian saluting such Virgins as "the most illustrious portion of the flock of Christ." (De Habitu Virginum, 3) Other praises follow. The list of writers reads like a roster of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church: Hermas, Origen, Methodius, Ignatius, Clement, Athanasius, Basil, Jerome, Augustine etc. St. Ambrose alone, whose sister, Marcellina received the virgin's veil from Pope Liberius in the early fourth century, penned four discourses on holy virginity. In this fourth century appeared the Solemn Rite for the Consecration of a Virgin.

The Pope delineated the history and development of Virgins for Christ. In earliest years, the virgins lived in their own families; then, quite early these women began to gather in communities in the broad sense of the term. As the hermits and monastic cenobites appeared, the virgins preferred the cenobitic life although some still chose to live at home. Aware of the need in the life of virginity for rigorous asceticism and the practice of all the virtues, the Church more and more encouraged and

later, in the middle ages, required monastic cloister for consecrated virgins. Here the practice of stringent poverty, exact obedience and a clear doctrine of a life of perfection would be found.

The thirteenth century mendicants, Dominicans and Franciscans, incorporated women into their Orders. These lived in monasteries as Cloistered Nuns sharing in the special grace of each Order.

Later the Clerks Regular and congregations of priests associated women to their apostolates. Here we find women dedicated to education or works of charity such as the Ursulines or Visitandines among others. These Nuns followed some form of enclosure, but sometimes coupled with the absence of one or other practice of monastic nuns. The Visitandines for example did not pray the Divine Office. Later years saw other communities related to congregations of men.

For clarity's sake, it was this situation Pius XII wished to address when he initiated what he termed "Minor Papal Cloister" in which a third part of the monastic building would be marked off and dedicated to the work of education or charity, and only the religious assigned to that work might go there.

For monastic nuns of purely contemplative life Pius proposed no innovation. Rather he preserved the full vigor of the "Major Papal Cloister" with all its traditional elements, such as celebration of the Divine Office in the name of the Church - the "universal apostolic vocation" as the Pope termed it. This is the form of life, given us by St. Dominic that Cloistered Dominicans gladly observe to this day. Pius XII signed this document on the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The 1952 document gave provisional regulations for minor cloister; that of 1956 laid down final regulations for both Major and Minor Papal Cloister.

In 1958, nuns of the world reminded the Pope that though he often addressed pilgrims in St. Peter's Basilica and the halls of the Vatican, cloistered nuns could not be present. Would not the Holy Father speak to them too? This Pius XII did in three radio talks to nuns in 1958. No. We did not enjoy the French language talks with our ears but perused them eagerly with our eyes in English translation. Let us share from them: To Know Contemplative Life, To Love it, To Live it.

To Know the Contemplative Life: Some pearls of wisdom must be shared. "Contemplative life is a road leading to God." The Holy Father draws from the teaching of St. Thomas "Human activity is regulated either by the knowledge of truth, which is the work of the contemplative intelligence, or by external actions which depend on the practical intellect....Contemplative Life, far from isolating itself in lifeless speculation also embraces the activity of the affections--its



Novitiate sisters from our early days (1923)

heart.... Out of love for God one is fired by the desire to contemplate His Beauty." The love of God which St. Thomas places at the beginning of contemplation is also found at its end. It culminates in the joy and rest which it brings about when it possesses the Beloved Object." (S.T. I-II 180 Art 1,c.)

Of course all Christians are called to contemplation. The Pope makes clear that he here addresses what he calls "the canonical contemplative life", "a way of life which through cloister and pious exercises of prayer and mortification is so directed to interior contemplation that the whole of life and every activity can be easily and effectively penetrated by Him who is sought." (Sponsa Christi)

Among the regulations guiding this form of religious life the text numbers: "observance of cloister, the Divine Office, exercises of piety, prayer, mortification and manual work in which the Nuns engage."

"But these specific points are invoked only as a means in the service of an essential reality, interior contemplation. What is first of all demanded is that through prayer, meditation and contemplation the nun unites herself with God, so that all her thoughts and all her actions may be penetrated by His presence and ordered to His service."

"Undoubtedly, this contemplative life does not consist only in contemplation; it embraces many other elements, but contemplation must occupy the first place it is contemplation which gives the life its meaning, its worth and its direction....If your being is not anchored in God, if your mind does not return constantly to Him as toward an irresistible pole of attraction one would have to say. 'I am nothing.'"

The Pontiff further lays down the need of formation for this life; education in mystical theology is a necessity. After this, would not one await the next radio talk with eagerness! Yes surely, but let us take time to meet two nuns who did know and love and live this life; one who was older and one

younger.

THE LIFE LIVED OUT IN PRACTICE

Teresa Barlow was the first postulant received into the Monastery in its initial year, 1906. Born in 1875 she had awaited the advent of a contemplative monastery in Detroit. Entrance was a joy yet tinged with sorrow when her mother declared she would never visit Teresa nor write to her. Yet Teresa, soon to be known as Sister Mary of the Blessed Sacrament, persevered many years, embracing the life of prayer fully and serving with a gifted needle the community's needs. When in 1930 the community was enabled to take solemn vows with papal enclosure, Sister prayed the Divine Office with renewed fervor, now as a solemnly professed nun aware that she was praying in the name of the whole Church. She treasured that privilege. In advanced age, scarcely able to see except through a pin hole in the cornea, she remained one hour after all the choir nuns had left the choir at 2:00 A.M. Using the organist's goose-neck lamp, Sister poured over the breviary held close to her face. After this, the dear bent-over old nun would pray with fervent postures for another hour. Thus satisfied she returned to bed. Yes, occasionally the old soldier would doze and at the first sound of the rising bell would rush up to bed before Mother Mary of Jesus caught her in her prolonged prayer vigil. Soon she reappeared for the Office of Prime. This perdured until the opening conference of the first day of the annual retreat in 1951. A sudden weakness and Sister fell back into the arms of the Infirmarian assisting her to bed. It was May 29, 1951. Sister Mary of the Blessed Sacrament was 76.



Sr. Mary of the Blessed Sacrament

Sister Mary Cecilia was only 24 when after a very brief illness she died quite unexpectedly on Dec 7, 1952. Barbara Murray entered the cloister at 19. Because she had a heart murmur, Mrs. Murray was concerned that the cloister might be too severe for her. "I think I can do it," Barbara affirmed. On August 22, 1948, then the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, she received the holy Habit and the name Sister Mary Cecilia of the Blessed Sacrament. She was right at home with a group of eager and high spirited companions who also found the regimen challenging, but happily possible. On the quiet side, Sister Mary Cecilia joined in prayer, work and recreation.



Sr. Mary Cecilia



Sr. Mary Cecilia as a novice (top row, 2nd from left)

By early December 1952, Sister was looking forward to her solemn profession in February, when she informed Mother Mary of Jesus that she felt unwell. With the flu invading the whole community Mother was not overly alarmed until Sister complained of severe pains in the stomach. In St. John's Hospital, December 2nd, Sister Mary Cecilia was found to be in serious, then critical, condition. The symptoms were difficult to diagnose. The question arose: was this malnutrition, neglect? When the young patient was told she might indeed die,

Sister exclaimed "but I have done nothing for God yet....but His Will be done." A brokenhearted Mother Mary of Jesus was refused permission to leave the cloister to see her little nun. However, one of our extern sisters, Sr. Mary Louis, along with Barbara's mother, Mrs. Murray, Mother Aileen, S.S.J. and other Sisters of St. Joseph who administered the hospital were present when the young Nun stretched out her arms in form of a Cross and pronounced her vows "until death."

Sister Mary Cecilia's death was an unexpected one but not an unprepared one. God allowed three little warnings, and a great grace. There was an electric shock from an open socket, its burnt out bulb removed but not yet replaced; a near accident at the laundry steam press; and a fright when her clothing became entangled when she tried to turn off the high pressure boiler for the laundry work.

At the last mishap, Sister herself remarked with some alarm “you almost lost your little Sister.” More telling was the spiritual gift God gave. Sister had been reading a chapter by Father Edward Leen, C.S.Sp. on the Humility of Our Lord. She was very deeply impressed and spoke of it to the other novices. Jesus chose to become man, to live among sinful human beings in a sinful world. He fully accepted the consequences in suffering. He accepted all, and all for us. Sister Mary Cecilia strove to imitate that example. She was preoccupied with the grace - so fully so that when death approached, she humbly bowed her head as Jesus had bowed His on the Cross.

With the Pope’s eyes on the cloister in love, Cardinal Mooney’s looked with some umbrage upon his Detroit nuns, particularly the Prioress upon learning of Sister’s death. How could this early mysterious death of so young a nun be explained? Orders were delivered to all area cloisters for daily time outdoors, for better diet. The Novices at the Monastery went outdoors daily for a recreation walk. It was then that Mother Mary Magdalen taught her budding contemplatives to truly “see” the trees and flowers and even the bugs showing forth the wonder and beauty of God. She took then also to the burial vault beneath the chapel and related the stories about the early nuns which have enriched this little history. As to the diet, Dr. Bernard Garipey had attended to it at an earlier date. The food was healthy and substantial, though plain, some protein was served daily although meat was never allowed according to the Rule at the time. What then was the cause of Sister Mary Cecilia’s death? Only 10 years later was the mystery solved when her brother, Father John Murray, C.S.B. came down with the same grave symptoms. This was Barbara’s favorite brother and pal. The girl used to tuck up her hair into Jack’s cap and collect the papers for his newspaper route - a No, No at the distribution center. But the two youngsters looked so much alike that no one ever guessed. Now, comparing the medical records from both cases there was found to be a family blood disorder. Other siblings and their children were affected too. But, thank God, a treatment was found for Fr. John.

Though his conjecture proved unfounded, Cardinal Mooney’s injunctions did benefit the Nuns and especially the Novices at 9704 Oakland. Mother Mary Imelda having taken all the younger Sisters to the Texas foundation, there remained in Detroit somewhat of an age gap among the nuns in the Monastery. On a great Feast such as St. Dominic’s day, the Professed Nuns had enjoyed a smashing game of...croquet! Well! It could be enjoyed..but! Then the younger nuns asked for volleyball! When a lighter ball was procured, like a novice it got its own new name, “Suzy!” Later Novitiate classes put up a basket ball hoop, but Badminton remains the favorite to this day. Table games were enjoyed at recreation too. When Monopoly appeared, enthusiasm soared. Great wheeling and dealing, hassle and haggle followed. There came a time when a new Novice Mistress, shocked by the clamor of her cloistered charges at Monopoly transactions reconfigured the game. The “realtors” became known as the Sacred Heart, Our Lady, St. Joseph and other canonized dealers. “Properties” likewise received pious designations. All was very proper, very polite and, of course, utterly boring! After all, who wants to buy a Marian Shrine from the Little Flower? Monopoly returned to its shelf to await a better day. Chinese Checkers and Scrabble re-emerged. In spite of, or better because of the penances of the life, these Novices were a happy group. Yes, even these, proportionately limited, recreations had their part in the Contemplative Life. The young nuns, the older ones too, knew the Contemplative Life; and loved it well.

But the Radio Talks on these two themes To Love the Contemplative Life, and To Live the Contemplative Life/ must await a future ECHOES. The decade of the 1950’s was quite eventful. We shall have much to share with you, our dear Friends. May Our Loving God be praised and you be thanked.

A CENTURY OF ADORATION PART IX: THE GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

Our last history installment, “Papal Eyes on the Cloister,” led us into the 1950’s and introduced us to two sisters who loved and lived their contemplative vocations. We resume our story with Mother Mary Agnes Bradish who was prioress in the early 1950’s.

Mother Agnes smiled as she leaned back in her chair in the Prioress' office. She had moved into it last year, 1954. She had not desired the Prioress duty, had never considered such a role when as a young lady in Gary, Indiana she chose the cloister. Let be admitted that in earlier years she had toyed with the idea of being an actress. There were still some small live acting theaters, one indeed in the next street. But growing maturity and a parish mission extinguished that day dream. The preacher spoke to her of the Holy Cross Sisters, part of his own Congregation. She asked him about the cloister. From his suggestions she chose the Dominican Nuns in Detroit and had never regretted that choice. But she did bring her very lovely mellow voice, her sense of drama, love of religious poetry, literature, history even astronomy - an active mind. Her gifts were appreciated. Even as a novice she was assigned as chantress, leading voice in the choir. The graceful and reverent bows and genuflections of the Divine Office filled her sense of choreography. Humble monastic feast day programs offered a smidgen of drama.



Mother Mary Agnes



Working in the Altar Bread Department, from left to right: Sr. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Sr. Mary of the Visitation, Sr. Mary Agnes and Sr. Mary of Mercy

We have met this generous religious before as the sturdy postulant, Sister Genevieve, who had pressed down the freshly filled and bulky corn shuck palaises for the elder nuns. Not much gifted for the sewing of elaborate vestments, she shone and was content in practical tasks like gardening, and baking altar breads. She had a secret here: while the large sheet of batter was baking, she could occasionally read a few lines of her book before the need to open the baker and lift off the thin baked sheet, later to be cut into round hosts. How she loved to read! But other tasks arrived. The sincere and fervent nun

was chosen a member of the Council to advise the Prioress, and to serve as Novice Mistress, as Sub-Prioress, and finally Prioress.,



Sr. Mary Agnes (arrow, left of the Christmas tree) and sisters enjoy a Christmas concert

Now as she rested in her chair a happy thought struck her: Next year, 1956 would bring the Golden Anniversary of the Monastery. She had not been in the monastery for the first twenty years of its existence, but, never fear, the Community memory retained and revered the people, the events. What fun just to think of them, and to share them with the dear friends of the Monastery.

Beloved names: The American Foundress, Mother Mary of Jesus, Julia Crooks, whom, it was said, Jesus had asked to bring contemplative life to the United States. This she did with the founding of the first Dominican monastery in the United States, that of St. Dominic in Newark, New Jersey. Then there was her niece Mother Mary Emmanuel Noel, our own Foundress, so zealous to bring Perpetual Adoration to Detroit, and, later to Albany, N.Y.

More beloved names came to mind: Father Francis Van Antwerp who encouraged the acceptance of the founding group from Newark, assuring Bishop John Foley "Let them come; I'll take care of them." Indeed he had, motivating his curates to do the same: Msgr. Lynch, Father Frank Pokriefka, who, from his own parish sent good candidates, most recently young Sister Mary Joseph. Nor could we forget so many good lay friends like dear Mr. Brennan of early days who had brought this

concern to Mother Mary Emmanuel: His wife was allowing their daughters to receive their suitors in his parlor even up to eight o'clock at night! What did Mother think of that? Mother had prudently counseled watchful permission. Eventually the girls had entered holy Catholic marriages. Now their children, and soon a grandchild, would be consecrated to Our Lady on the altar their Father and Grandfather had erected in the permanent chapel in 1912. Another treasured name surfaced next: Frances Darling who started the Infant of Prague Ladies Guild which was such a help. They should be remembered.

More names came to mind: The nuns themselves! Think of young Sister Mary Henry who, undergoing surgery in the days of older anesthetics, brought to tears her doctor and others in the operating theater when, as the ether wore off, kept repeating the sentiments held in mind as she awaited the surgery "O my God, I love you with all my heart." Yes, memories of holy nuns. At least their photos should be in the booklet, the nuns already gone to their reward. There were amusing memories too, of young well-intentioned novices, who could get themselves in such ridiculous scrapes! Happily the twins, Sisters Mary Visitatin and Mary Pure Heart, former photographers, could come up with good pictures. A recent Novitiate program had a couple of good poems..

Most importantly, a brief history of the Order and the monastery must include the zeal of the foundresses, the nuns' love of the liturgy which brought them to choir at Midnight and six times during the day. The Perpetual Adoration also, day and night. They must share especially that precious gift of solemn vows with Papal Enclosure, 1930. Father Thomas a Kempis Reilly had stressed that "solemn vows represent the most sacred form of personal consecration known in the Church outside the priesthood." They revered the stricter form of enclosure, treasured a very tender bond to the person of the Holy Father, a bond which would keep them faithful in years ahead.

The hard years of the Depression had followed. The Prioress gazed across the clothes line patch, past the cherry trees and the berry patches to the creamery behind the monastery. They had sold that parcel of land in their need, as earlier they had sold a long strip opposite the community room to help Mother Mary Emmanuel in the Albany foundation, surely a very sacrificial offering from Detroit; the purchaser had agreed to use frosted glass on the side of the quiet factory facing our building.. They made their offering lovingly and moved on. Better days came. God provided. That is what counted!

A Jubilee is primarily about God! Thanksgiving for all. His presence and blessing and guidance through fifty years of triumphs and trials, all of them graces. Yes, there was so much for which to sing praise and gratitude.

Mother Mary Agnes would respond well to this challenge. There would be a fitting and joyous Jubilee. She did not yet see the greater challenge to follow after this one. It would be a "biggie". But God and the Community would meet it with her.

A CENTURY OF ADORATION PART X: THE EVENTFUL FIFTIES

It had all begun as an ordinary midnight Office of Matins, now concluded. The nuns sat back in the choir stalls with their high backs and tall arms enveloping each of them like a little private chapel. The sisters had chanted the nine psalms, readings and responsories of the Midnight Matins, they had sung the five beautiful Gregorian antiphons and psalms with the hymn, short reading and Benedictus Canticle of Lauds. The choir lights now turned down, the nuns listened in silence to the chanting of the Martyrology, the Church's daily memorial of the many who, down through the centuries, had shed their blood for Jesus Christ. True, some had formidable names, especially in the sonorous Latin text, some names were easy. Familiar surely were the recurring lines "in the persecution of Nero, of Diocletian, of Marcus Aurelius" and others. It was awe inspiring to remember these heroes of the past.

For Sister Mary, who loved these quiet moments in the depths of the night, it was just as fitting to remember the many who this very day were living heroic lives and deaths behind the iron and bamboo curtains. She loved to pray for these martyrs of her day, the 40's, 50's, 60's, living out their fidelity to Jesus Christ. O Lord grant them grace and light, courage and awareness of Your love and the love of the Church.

Many years later, Sister was deeply touched to read in the "Magnificat" magazine 'saint of the day' accounts of new heroes of our century, these also called Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Anastasia or Cletuus, Clement, Lawrence, John or Paul, but with contemporary surnames in French, Polish, Czech or Russian, in Chinese, Vietnamese or Korean. Those recently Beatified under Blessed Pope John Paul

II and listed in the new Roman Martyrology. Sister was spiritually moved to realize that she and the other nuns had been praying for these modern Beati during their years of trial. Indeed the Communion of Saints is a blessed reality!

But there were others whom Sister Mary held in prayer in the hush of her midnight stall, those of that very day who in the sanctuary of the home or the convent, in a hospital bed, within their office cubicles or behind their factory gates, were living out their fidelity to God and Church amid trying circumstances. By letter or phone some of them committed their concerns to the cloistered nuns of Detroit.

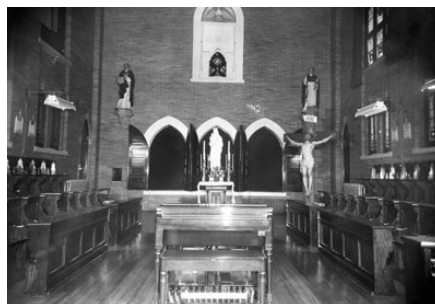
The chanting of the Martyrology complete, the prioress, Mother Mary Agnes, led the prayers before meditation; it was now 1:25 A.M. The chapel lights were extinguished except for one small bulb near the prioress' place in case some nun wished to read a Scripture passage for reflection. The community began the period of personal prayer. All was silence. Kneeling or sitting in the choir stall the nuns refrained from moving about. The deep of a winter night was a fit venue for recollection. The stillness itself facilitated reflective pondering, an invitation to prayer. These moments were precious. The quiet was soothing, conducive even to bodily restfulness. All was hushed.



Nuns chanting the Office c. 1954. Mother Mary Agnes is pictured above just to the left of the doorway

Then, quite suddenly, there was a loud clatter in the outside chapel. There followed the thud of someone crashing to the floor, and quick footsteps on the chapel floor. Meanwhile, in the startled choir, Mother Mary Agnes rushed to the choir grille, pulled aside the black curtains and rapped firmly on the iron grillework. The surprised intruder who was just about to enter the Sanctuary, spied the full-robed nun behind the iron grille. The black cloaked "being" pointed toward the back of the chapel. The intruder turned abruptly and sped out the rear door. How had he managed to get in? Tuck pointing (mortar repair) was in progress on the south side of the chapel. The intruder had climbed the extension ladder to a high tilting window, pushed it open, slid in and dropped to the floor below. Thank God the nuns were there, and a good number of them, too.

The prioress and portress closed that window and secured the panic bars on the chapel door. Mother summoned the police but the intruder was not apprehended. Mother Mary Agnes asked the nuns present not to speak of the event to the nuns not in choir that night. These were those keeping the other hours of night adoration as well as some of the younger nuns who had entered in the 1940's and 50's and were as yet unable to sustain the midnight rising for seven nights. Twice a week these had what was termed "a night in bed," a monastic expression which puzzled more than one lay person. The following morning the construction company was directed to lower and secure the extension ladders at night. Hopefully this break-in would be an isolated incident. Unfortunately it was not.



Nuns choir facing the outside chapel which shows the black curtains covering the grille



*A view of the chapel exterior from the nuns' cloister garden.
Note the height of the upper windows and the bars on the lower ones*

In the meantime life went along predictably. Six nuns who entered in the late 40's reached solemn vows in the early years of the 50's: the beloved twins, Sisters Mary of the Visitation and Mary of the Pure Heart as well as Sisters Mary of the Incarnation, Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Mary of Mercy and Mary Joseph. Saint Joseph had heard those novenas for vocations, and he was busy. Helen, Dolores and Elaine entered, became novices as Sisters Mary of the Annunciation, Mary of the Incarnate Word, and Mary of the Blessed Sacrament. They later pronounced first and solemn vows. Postulant Catherine who entered with Dolores returned home. Dynamic Mary Bernetta Breivogel became a welcome extern postulant and a novice as Sister Mary Louis de Montfort. Near the close of the decade Irish Noreen and Detroit's Frances became Sisters Therese Marie and Mary Thomas. Each had her gift to the Community.



Novitiate sisters in the 1950's; from right to left: Sr. Mary Louis de Montfort, Sr. Mary of Mercy (author of this history series), Sr. Mary of the Incarnation (1st editor of ECHOES), Sr. Mary Joseph (current editor of ECHOES), Sr. Mary of the Immaculate Conception and a novice who did not remain in the community

Various classes were held. Father James Egan O.P. came weekly from his assignment in Monroe for instructions on the Trinity. When Father Timothy Sparks, Assistant General of the Dominican Order visited, the nuns had eager questions about the Divine Missions of the Trinity in the Soul about which Father Egan was teaching. Young Dominicans, Fathers Thomas Ertle and William Ryan gave lectures on Old and New Testament Scriptures. Father Ertle would later be Provincial, Father Ryan an advisor to the budding "Conference of U. S. Dominican Nuns" in the 1970's. The Marist priests moved to their new headquarters; and the P.I.M.E. priests became our chaplains. Bishop Babcock was assigned to Grand Rapids; Fathers Donovan and Donnelly became Auxiliary Bishops. Life went on as usual.

And then it happened. Sister Mary of the Precious Blood was a farm girl through and through. That did not change in the monastery. She needed to retire early most nights and rose at the crack of dawn, often earlier than that. She would wend her way to the choir for a greeting to the Lord before going to the basement kitchen to start her bread. Other plans would be on her 'to do' list as well. This day it was her task, her pleasure to "pay the bill" to Dr. Gasow and helpers at his Royal Oak Pet Care Office. That good doctor had been taking care of the monastery dogs for a long time.



Sr. Mary of the Precious Blood

Today she planned to bake her large molasses muffins, to be sent warm along with a pound of butter and a gallon jar of her old fashioned strong farm coffee. The huge white enamel coffee pot would be set to boil, the raw coffee grounds within it. Good farm women and older women of the day still knew the trick. After a time on good boil, a cup of ice water was dashed onto the whirling coffee grounds; immediately these settled to the bottom of the enamel pot. Voila! Best coffee in Michigan. The young people who worked at Dr. Gasow's and took great care of the 'monastery pups' anticipated their treat. Dr Gasow asked no more. (To this day, Gasow's Veterinary Hospital provides care for the 'monastery pups' at no cost. The muffins have been replaced by homemade cookies and Sr. Therese Marie's Irish soda bread.)

These plans in mind, it was about 3:15 A.M. when Sister Mary of the Precious Blood hurried quietly down the Community Room corridor toward the Choir. As she passed the door she glanced into the community room and caught sight of an intruder attempting to climb through one of the windows. Seeing the nun, the husky man made a quick retreat. The monastic 'baker' quickly notified Mother Mary Agnes.

There were other incidents as well. No longer were they like the amusing episode of the neighborhood children at play running into the chapel and attempting to mount the stairs to the Monstrance until the stern face, and firm rap of Sister Mary of the Incarnation, the "adoration sister" at the time halted their mounting feet. Round eyes and frightened faces met her gaze. "Is you God?" they exclaimed; then fled.

Now the entries were serious. The prioress would meet with her council. They would need to ponder and decide what was to be done.

A CENTURY OF ADORATION PART XI:

ADVENTURES IN THE MONASTERY, THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

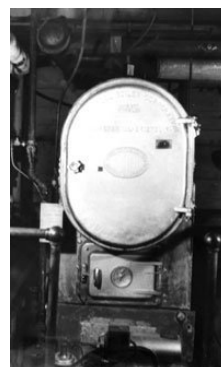
It was cold! "It is really cold!" thought the novice. But the bell had rung for the Midnight Office. Time to get up and out and down to chapel. Remember St. Dominic's fervor at prayer, his urgent cry: "Lord, what will become of sinners!"

On the way down the beginner touched the radiators in the corridor. Dead, cold. Well, the novices would have to stop teasing that the radiators were purely ornamental. Not true, the young nun found, and what heat they did produce was surely missed now. Of course there was no heat in the small monastic cells. Central heating was not in the original construction.



Sr. Mary of the Heart of Jesus

The furnace was out of order. When would it be restored? Not so fast! It was truly out. Yes, the building had two furnaces, but not as alternates as in newer buildings today. Neither tread on the other's turf. It was December and half of the monastery was in the frigid zone: both chapels, the chapter hall, both sacristies, and above these the extern sisters' dormitory, the novitiate community room and the novitiate dormitory. Quite a territory!



Steam boiler

The prioress' quick investigations revealed that although it would be best to install a new furnace, repair was possible. The White Co. agreed, but could not guarantee it. A repair job might last two years or perhaps only two months or even less. The Council agreed that the monastery finances favored only the repair.

Plans were laid. Extern Sisters would sleep in the infirmary, the novices would have classes and recreation in the professed nuns' library but would have to 'tough it out' in their own dormitory. Agreed. But what about the celebration of the Divine Office seven times a day and night? What about the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament 24/7?

The White Co. offered a source of heat for the nuns' choir; a large heater used on outdoor construction sites. The chapel, remember, was almost 60 feet high; the open expanse between the two choirs extended 14 feet. Enter the barrel-like heater reposing on its side; it took its stand in front of Our Lady's shrine at center choir, and faced the organ at a distance of 14 feet to belch out some warmth. It was a funny looking clunker but it worked. The novices dubbed it "The White Cow" and enjoyed poking fun at it during recreation. They were young and needed some merriment to lighten their day. The novitiate was serious business. The teaching about the virtues was interesting, the example of the saints was inspiring. Firm, perfect virtue, the novice mistress taught, is marked by consistency, ease, joy. But these young ones were not *there* yet and it could be hard, especially this business of *humility*! Joy? Well, not thrills, but there was a happiness and a peace in trying to please Jesus. But leave us a little space to tease the White Cow.

That metal "*animal*" was funny, until one night at about 1:45 A.M. Matins had been sung, meditation time had begun, the nuns were kneeling or sitting in the choir stalls, and suddenly the 'White Cow' spewed forth a five foot long flame aimed at the organ! This was no joke! The 'Cow' was "excommunicated." The White Co. installed a few small electric radiators of a size expected to warm a small bedroom or bathroom. It was comparable to using a few candles to light up Cobo Hall. Yes, the novices found them amusing too, never more so than when, after Matins one night, Sister Mary of the Heart of Jesus flipped her habit and tunic over one of the baby radiators and sat upon it. Our Southern Belle who wore a sweater on the fourth of July, and had on at least three of them that midnight hour of which we speak, could not resist the try.

At last repairs were finished. The year 1952 ended on a warm note and 1953 opened on one too. But not for long! The patched up furnace collapsed again and expired. So, it had to be a new furnace after all! The Council voted to dip into the Monastery savings fund to smooth that problem. Back came the White workers, informing the portress that they appreciated the way they were treated at a basement lunchroom where hot coffee, donuts and apples always awaited them until the new furnace was successfully installed. Ah, it was warm again! Blessed be God in His gifts. This was not the only adventure in the history of the Monastery.

Enter Thomas Ryan. Tom came to America in 1925. a few phrases out of his mouth and the brogue revealed that he had come from Ireland. That brogue thickened noticeably should he encounter someone with an O', a Mc, or a Fitz or other Irish surname. After a friend's well-meant practical joke caused him to lose an eye and his bus drivers license, and with the aftermath of the 1929 Depression, he was grateful to find work at the monastery in 1930, a Dominican monastery to be sure. He was a devout member of the Third Order now called Dominican Laity. His life was centered in his



Tom Ryan

Faith. Daily Mass and Communion and his beloved Rosary. His Irish heritage rendered him compassionate toward others, quick for laughter, and - to be truthful - quick of temper. That Irish temper was fast, intense, short lived and utterly harmless. He was a blessing to the monastery for thirty-seven years. Utterly devoted, he would have done anything for the nuns and proved it at the end. Tom easily involved his friends in helping out what they called "Tom's Monastery" and "Tom's Nuns." Many evenings Harold McHale could be found in the host room adjusting the bakers or cutters there. Young Dorothy McHale, as Mrs Marv Stayman remained until senior years a faithful member of the Ladies' Guild.

The nuns were happy with Tom Ryan and he was happy with them. Well, happy most of the time. But not when the novices strained his patience.

Thus it was the morning he found a large puddle of water on the basement floor. He had not been able to complete his repair project before quitting time the evening before. Yet he left the stage carefully set for this day's work, purposely leaving the faucet upstairs with a slow drip. "Jesus, Mary, Joseph!" was his typical prayer in exasperation. "Which one of those novices up there had turned off that faucet!" But by this time the Holy Three to whom he had prayed had cooled his annoyance.



Mr. McCloskey, at right, working in the garden

Those novices were the nemesis of every workman the Monastery ever had, he mused. Was it Mr Riordan or Mr. McClosky who planted all those green beans. One morning the novices were sent to pick the beans. After a space of bending and picking, one of their number had a bright idea. Why not just take them up to the novitiate and do them there? Agreed. Armfuls of plants were gathered into newspapers, carried up, spread out on the general table and picked in comfort. Poor Mr. McClosky! His whole bean plot was completely despoiled. The novice mistress tried to soothe the gardener. Novices were much like young people everywhere, their slogan: there has to be a faster way, an easier way! They meant well but she did give them a good scolding. And they had it coming, Mr. Ryan mused. Just think of the messes they made for himself. Ha!

The novitiate floor was getting worn. Tread paths could be clearly seen. With eagerness the novices applied a good coat of varnish, surveyed the shiny finish with satisfaction, then waited for it to dry, to dry, to dry, to DRY! It didn't. Mr. Ryan was summoned, consulted, and ended up stripping, sanding and refinishing the room. "Those Greenhorns!" he exclaimed. The Greenhorns wisely stayed out of sight until the end; then came to give thanks. The "hero" had cooled off by then. Well, they were just young things.

But that was not the worst. The worst was actually before the varnishing venture. That was the shutter skirmish. Oh! The shutters on the windows in the novitiate community room needed a good scrubbing. The novices willingly tackled the task. They found it troublesome to stand on footstools, or on ladders for the upper set, and still get enough traction for a good rub. The "faster, easier" slogan reappeared. "Let's take them down." Flat on the tables more effective vim would prevail. True, the shutters looked great and there were a lot of them. Upper shutters had four panels as did the lower, 8 per window and 8 windows. "Let's put them up." The eager workers exulted over their 64 shiny clean panels. Pleasure soon faded. Many hinges did not match. No one had kept track of which panels belonged to which windows. Numerous experiments revealed that the problem was just more than the poor novices could solve. Call Mr. Ryan!



Novitiate community room: note window bifold shutter panels and wood floor which are featured in this story

The perpetrators of that mess won Tom Ryan's most devastating epithet. After his usual ejaculation he exclaimed "Those 'Greenhorns' should have stayed in bed!" He remembered it now with a bit of amusement.

When the portress came to summon him to the laundry, he did not mention the puddle from the faucet repair. Today's problem was a laundry basket which Mother Mary Agnes had just purchased. It was a grey plasticized canvas laundry cart on a sturdy metal frame mounted on wooden boards. When she found the catalog truck too pricey, the salesman assured her that it would be less costly without the wheels; it could easily slide across the floor on the wooden boards from washer to dryer. Indeed it did - when it was empty! But full of wet clothing it did not slide easily at all. The laundress could scarcely move it. Mr. Ryan was provoked, not against the prioress, but the salesman. As he told the portress. "He deceives her every time."



Mr. Ryan searched for wheels, traveling by streetcar to the shop where he could usually charm the manager into a more favorable price "for the good Nuns." To this day that grey canvas laundry cart with its sturdy frame and its "discount" wheels which served well in Detroit, serves even now in Farmington Hills, more

Laundry cart - still in use today

than fifty years later. It remains as a practical memorial of a good, devout, humble and beloved workman and “brother” in the

Dominican Order and in Jesus Christ. Tom Ryan loved his Monastery in his life and proved it fully to the end.

Thus, we close the fifties with these little tales. We hope you enjoy them; we chuckle over them still. They were not the primary thrust at the Monastery to be sure. Central were the song of praise of the liturgy, the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the ongoing prayer of the heart, the intercession for our benefactors and for all who ask for our prayer, and pleas for mercy, mercy for the whole world.

Our first fifty years were complete. A second fifty were about to begin.