



Mission Moments
No. 36

Standing on the Shoulders

The American Experience -Part 1

The American experience began with the eleven pioneer Sisters. Aside from our Mother Foundress, what do we know of these almost nameless Sisters. Who were they? Although there are not many records of the early Sisters in the Congregation, we can share a snapshot of the eleven.



Mother Raphael was the first provincial superior of the American Mission (1885-1888). She was born in Warsaw on May 18, 1850, and was educated by the Visitation Sisters who conducted a boarding school for girls. She entered the Congregation in 1877 and professed her perpetual vows in 1882 at which time she was given the title 'Mother.' In addition to other administrative duties, Mother Raphael developed a program of evening classes for the continuing education of working girls. This resulted in the establishment of a formal school with a full-time academic course.



Mother Laretta was born in Poland on January 30, 1862. Her early education was under the guidance of private tutors. She entered the Congregation in 1882. She professed her First Vows in 1884. She was assigned to St. Josaphat Parish convent, serving as the first superior and school principal until 1888. When Mother Raphael returned to Rome, the 25-year-old Mother Laretta succeeded her in the leadership of the American Mission until 1903 when she assumed leadership of the Congregation. Under her leadership in the Sacred Heart Province, the Sisters were called to staff twelve additional schools, not only in Illinois, but also in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Indiana.



Sister Angela was born in 1855 and entered the Congregation in 1881. In her ministry, Sister Angela served as local superior at St. Adalbert Parish. In 1895, she assumed the role of supervisor of schools in Sacred Heart Province.

Sister Paula was born on May 14, 1851, into a noble and aristocratic family. Little is known of her childhood but at age 32



in 1884, she entered the Congregation. When called to America, she was a novice and pronounced her First Vows in Chicago in 1885. Subsequently, she served as local superior at St. Adalbert, St. Hedwig and St. Joseph Convents. She was known for her zealous dedication as a superior and for the care of souls entrusted to her leadership.

Sister Frances came from a prosperous Lutheran family in Krakow. She was born on Oct. 10, 1865. As a young, well-educated woman she entered the Catholic Church over her parents' objections. She entered the Congregation under an assumed name in 1885. Since her parents tried to compel her to return to the family, she changed her surname from Morganstern to Murray. Sister Frances was entrusted with the supervision of the educational methods and practices in the schools conducted by the CSFNs. Subsequently, she held the positions of superior-director of St. Adalbert School, Director of Novices and director of Holy Family Academy.



Sister Cecilia was born on February 5, 1854 and entered the Congregation in 1884 and became a novice in 1885. In Chicago, she was placed in charge of the orphans in St. Josaphat parish. Later, she was one of the staff who conducted evening classes for working girls. She also taught beautiful and practical handwork, sewing and embroidery. Sister was one of the first Sisters assigned to Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary School in Scranton, PA.



Sister Evangelista was born in 1860 and accepted into the Congregation in 1881. She professed her First Vows in 1883. There is little information available about S. Evangelista's ministry in the United States.



Sister Agnes entered the Congregation in 1885. Little information is available in the archives on the life and ministry of this Sister. She was assigned for a short time to care for the orphans at St. Josaphat Parish and later ministered at St. Adalbert School.



Sister Stanislaus was born in 1863 and received her early education at St. Scholastica in Krakow. An eminent educator and

instructor, local superior, principal, director, provincial councilor Sister was a zealous promoter of Polish culture among students and adults. In Chicago, she was assigned as the director of the orphanage. She was superior and director of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Scranton, and taught in schools in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, PA; Cleveland, OH and South Chicago.

Sister Theresa was born in 1861 and entered the Congregation in 1885. She became a novice just one day before she left for America and therefore, began her novitiate on the ocean! Having been in a Carmelite community before she entered Nazareth, Mother Foundress appointed her to be director of vocations and novices. She also taught several classes at Holy Family Academy.



Sister Philomena was born in 1862 and entered the Congregation in 1883. She was a novice at the time of being called for missionary work in America. During her journey to America, due to the stormy weather at sea, her health declined. The change in climate and intense rainy season in Chicago greatly affected her already weakened condition. Despite the loving care of the Sisters, death came to claim the young novice one month after her arrival in America.

Mother Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd was among the first Sisters to answer the call to come to America in 1885. If the need arose, she was willing to stay in America to further the mission in spite of her obligations as Foundress. Mother made three trips to the United States and became a naturalized citizen on July 26, 1897. Mother also adopted several African American girls and brought them to Europe for their education in Paris and in Rome. Those who sought admission were welcomed into the Congregation.



Integrating the Mission

- What comes to your mind and heart as you reflect on the brief biographies of our Sisters?
- How can these Sisters reach across the years to motivate your own dedication to mission and openness to possibilities?