



FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHICAGO

125 YEARS OF LOVING, JOYFUL MINISTRY

DECEMBER 8, 1894— DECEMBER 8, 2019

PART FOUR — THE FOURTH PERIOD, 1955 to 1964

The fourth period of the history of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago covers the years of 1955 to 1964. At the beginning of this time period in the United States, Walt Disney opened Disneyland in California, while the first McDonald's hamburger restaurant opened in Des Plaines, Illinois. During this time, to the great relief of millions of fearful parents, Dr. Jonas Salk developed the polio vaccine. School children across the entire country were given the vaccine which would prevent the dreaded paralysis and subsequent life in an iron lung machine.

In the second term of President Eisenhower, the Soviets launched Sputnik, and the "space race" began. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA, was formed as the U.S. ramped up its efforts to compete with the USSR in exploring space.

The late 1950's saw the beginnings of civil rights movement as well as the feminist movement. The American flag changed from having 48 stars to the current 50 when Alaska and Hawaii joined the union.

The early 1960's were marked by huge, violent changes in society. Newly elected President Kennedy was quickly confronted with the Berlin Crisis of 1961, the beginnings of the Vietnam War, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. While the establishment of the Peace Corps, the success of astronauts Alan Shepard and John Glenn, and the inspirational "I Have a Dream" speech of Martin Luther King, Jr. brought a measure of hope to this decade, the banning of prayer in public schools, and the shocking assassination of President Kennedy followed by the killing of his attacker, Lee Harvey Oswald, left the nation reeling in sad disbelief. This time period ended with race riots in major U.S. cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago.

Early in this time period the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago experienced the first major changes in their habit. First, the custom of wearing a top veil over their regular veil for Mass was abolished. Secondly, the large bowed framework of the reg-



Mother Theresa wearing the original habit's veil and collar.



Sister Agatha wearing the updated habit's veil and collar.

ular veil, which limited her peripheral vision, was greatly reduced. The new design kept the veil pinned in neat folds behind the back of the Sister, rather than over her shoulders. Lastly, the large starched linen collar which wrinkled so easily was replaced by a smaller plasticized version which required no laundering or starching.

In 1963 the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago set the cornerstone to

their new large Motherhouse in Lemont, Illinois. Now there would be space for the congregation's large membership to have their annual retreats, to have their infirm and aged Sisters cared for in a dedicated infirmary, to have the leadership of the Sisters in suitable offices with ample access to files and archives, to have a spacious chapel which would accommodate the Sisters and their guests, and to have an entire wing for those in formation to become vowed religious. The new Motherhouse had air conditioning in its chapel,

dining room, and library. The sizable grounds also held space for a cemetery for the deceased Sisters. When the Sisters vacated Mother Theresa Home to move to the new Motherhouse, the Home was added to the cluster of sponsored eldercare facilities to house and care for the laity.

In this decade the Sisters agreed to staff three additional Catholic elementary schools, one each in Cleveland, Ohio, Gary, Indiana, and LaGrange Park, Illinois. This brought the total ministries of the Sisters to 23 elementary schools, one high school, six eldercare facilities, three hospitals, and two child care/orphanage ministries.

As had been the pattern in the previous period of the Sisters' history, the ministries continued to require more knowledge and professional skills. Consequently the Sisters attended colleges and universities, completing certification programs, and acquiring Bachelors and Masters degrees. The children, youth, and adults whom they served benefitted greatly from the Sisters' increased knowledge and skill.

The biggest change to impact the Sisters' lives, however, was the Second Vatican Council, announced by Pope John XXIII on Jan. 25, 1959. He sought for the Council to be a means of spiritual renewal for the church and as an occasion for Christians separated from Rome to join in search for reunion. The documents that emanated from the Council changed the way that the Mass and sacraments were celebrated,

called for increased participation by the laity in the ministry of the Church, and asked Religious to go back to their own histories to re-discover the charism and spirit of their founders.

Vocations to the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago seemed to keep pace as large groups of young women entered the congregation. The bounty of initial vocations, however, was an illusion, as many women tried out religious life but found that it was not God's call for them.

By 1964, the end of the fourth period, the United States was in the midst of a time of great turmoil. By contrast, the following women answered the call of Jesus and persevered in their call to a life of peacemaking and service to the poor. Like Venerable Mother Theresa (Josephine) Dudzik before them, they became vowed Franciscan Sisters of Chicago for life:

1955

S. Joseph Marie Zenda

1956

S. Kathleen (M. Agnes Ann) Melia

1957

1958

S. Lois Marie Rossi

1959

S. Joan (Leona Marie) Klimek

1960

S. Jeanne Marie Toriskie

1961

S. Susan Catherine (M. Matthew) Bayliss

S. M. Ann Francis Grosh

S. Carol Marie (M. Jane Frances) Schommer

S.M. Bernadette Bajuscik
(entered the Daughters of the Most Holy Saviour)

S. Emilie Marie Lesniak

S.M. Francis Clare Radke

1962

S. Jean Therese (M. Michael) Jarosz

1963

S.M. Helene Galuszka

S.M. Rose Wilbur Flower

1964



An oil painting of the novices gathering outdoors for recreation by artist Janice Petak, who tested her vocation with the Sisters and discovered that it was not God's call for her.