



FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHICAGO

125 YEARS OF LOVING, JOYFUL MINISTRY

DECEMBER 8, 1894— DECEMBER 8, 2019

PART ONE — THE FIRST 2 DECADES

It was Saturday, December 8, 1894, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, in Chicago. The hearts of the four novices beat a little faster as they anticipated taking their vows as religious sisters. Rev. Vincent Barzynski, pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish, would be receiving their vows on behalf of the Archdiocese of Chicago. In just a few minutes these four Sisters would become the Franciscan Sisters of Blessed Kunegunda, (later called the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago), the first religious congregation to be founded in the city.

Unknown to them was what they would accomplish in the future. In that future, but five years hence, they would found the first nursing home for the elderly and crippled in the city. At this moment, however, as they faced the high altar, novice Sister Mary Theresa Dudzik, a Polish immigrant, felt totally overwhelmed and “unworthy” of taking the momentous step of making her vows and thus founding the congregation to care for the poor, homeless, and elderly of her Chicago neighborhood. Next to her knelt novices Sister Angelina Topolinski, Sister Agnes Dzik, and Sister Anna Wisinski, young single women, and, like Sister Theresa, immigrants who had fled Poland, a country which no longer existed on the map.

Only four Sisters to care for so many people who desperately needed help! The next month would bring Chicago into the record books with the harshest January yet on record, a potential death blow for the homeless who huddled in alleys, foraged in garbage piles, begged on corners. But the four devoted novices had generous hearts and willing hands. As they made their vows of poverty,

chastity, and obedience, they committed themselves to tirelessly working to provide not only a home for these poor homeless, but nourishment of their bodies and spirits as well, in a setting that spoke of the warmth of God’s love and merciful care for everyone.



Left to right: Sister Anna, Sister Angeline, Sister Agnes, and Sister Theresa.

In the days, months, and years that followed they continued caring for the homeless. At first it was just the small number of homeless whom Sister Theresa had sheltered in her apartment with her elderly mother since her father had died. But more homeless kept coming. The Sisters supported themselves and these homeless by cleaning and doing the laundry for the parish rectory and church, taking sewing engagements from people of means for designing and making their clothing, and begging funds from parishioners after Sunday Masses. The number of needy were increasing. Now the Sisters were asked to care for orphans and to teach immigrant children in parish schools. Consequently within the first two decades of their existence, the Franciscan Sisters of Blessed Kunegunda, took up ministries at their own St. Joseph Home for the Elderly and Crippled, together with three orphanages, one nursery, and twenty parish elementary schools.

Their ministries now extended beyond Chicago into other locations in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, Texas, and Pennsylvania.

The Franciscan Sisters' prayers for more helping hands were answered and by 1914, the end of the first two decades, the congregation numbered 153 Sisters and counted these vowed women as members for life:

1894

M.M. Theresa Dudzik
M.M. Anna Wysinski
M.M. Angelina Topolinski

1895

1896

1897

S.M. Clara Ogurek
S.M. Elizabeth Baut

1898

S.M. Mary Welter

1899

S.M. Hedwig Kubera
S.M. Andrea Zawadzka
S.M. Kunegunda Pinkowska
S.M. Rose Gorski
M.M. Aloysia Holysz
M.M. Vincent Czyzewski
S.M. Josepha Suchomska
S.M. Stanislaus Reich
S.M. Salomea Grabowski

1900

S.M. Felixa Karwata
S.M. Filipina Lama
S.M. Seraphine Zamrowski
S.M. Agnes Roszak

1901

S.M. Magdalen Schreiber
S.M. Colette Nowak
S.M. Leona Pochelski

1902

S.M. Francis Drufke
M.M. Antonina Osinski
S.M. Margaret Nawracaj
S.M. Hyacinth Barczewski
S.M. Ludwika Scibior
S.M. Dominic Makowski

1903

S.M. Bonaventure Blazek
S.M. Jolanta Nowak
S.M. Gerarda Gorzkowska
S.M. Delphina Myszevska
S.M. Patricia Eiress
S.M. Barbara Grochola
S.M. Cajetana Tabasz
S.M. Philomena Marszalkowska
S.M. Catherine Bobula

1904

S.M. Zita Kosmala
S.M. Berchmans Fidler
S.M. Benedicta Polcyn
S.M. Bernarda Jagiello
S.M. Rosalia Scepuniak
S.M. Bridget Czuj
S.M. Leocadia Das
S.M. Chester Dziarnowski

S.M. Lucy Murdza

S.M. Agatha Kostka
S.M. Alphonsa Makowski
S.M. Casimira Janowiak
S.M. Michaela Sobieszczyk
S.M. Augustina Malinowska
S.M. Ladislaus Wroblewska
S.M. Stephania Pinkowski

1905

S.M. Monica Frankowska
S.M. Ludwina Prokuszka
S.M. Ignatia Dukowska
S.M. Innocenta Antosz
S.M. Joanna Trojak
S.M. Humilianna Lemanczyk
S.M. Pelagia Bywalec
S.M. Helena Swiszcz
S.M. Theophila Stasiak
S.M. Ursula Murdza
S.M. Praxedo Ostrega
S.M. Mercy Witczak
S.M. Benigna Jakajtis
S.M. Boleslaus Nagorski
S.M. Michaeline Tabor
S.M. Sylvestra Pelczar
S.M. Boniface Pranke
S.M. Apollonia Stozek

1906

M.M. Jerome Dadej
S.M. Anselma Pasternacki
S.M. Symplicia Bloch

Faithfulness to the call of Jesus

S.M. Germaine Moson
S.M. Martha Bywalec
S.M. Genevieve Swiatowiec
S.M. Anastasia Halcarz
S.M. Sophie Ciurkot
M.M. Mechtilde Zynda
S.M. Raymond Tabor
S.M. Clothilde Stefiej
S.M. Felicita Pajor
S.M. Wenceslaus Gorski
S.M. Marcelline Molek

1907

S.M. Thecla Gawlowicz
S.M. Salesia Rzeszutko
S.M. Blasé Wojcik
S.M. Caroline Cabaj
S.M. Cyrilla Gawlowicz

1908

S.M. Angela Jasinska
S.M. Methodia Pajdo
S.M. Emilia Kondziolka
S.M. Albina Bieszczat
S.M. Hilary Dadej
S.M. Victoria Modelski
S.M. Constance Pajdo
S.M. Emerentiana Sztuka
S.M. Nicholas Poterek

1909

S.M. Marcianna Mysliwiec
S.M. Rufina Klucznik
S.M. Eleanor Bomba
S.M. Hermana Pieniazek
S.M. Josephata Tadych
S.M. Bernardine Narozny
S.M. Kostka Baron
S.M. Romana Szkutak
S.M. Martina Gazda
S.M. Paschalina Dudek
S.M. Lauretta Partyka
S.M. Paula Kirschbaum
S.M. Alexa Olszewski
S.M. Raphaela Bogalecka
S.M. Christine Zborowska

1910

S.M. Sabina Bujak
S.M. Isabelle Sutor
S.M. Thomas Halgas
S.M. Irene Stojak
S.M. Gabrielle Moskal
S.M. Edmunda Siernicka
S.M. Rudolpha Trytek
S.M. Isidore Wilkos
S.M. Maxima Wozniczka
S. Sophie Marie (Henry) Kierszke
S.M. Rita Schmitt
S.M. John Barczak

1911

S.M. Euphrosine Trojanowski
S.M. Eugenia Detlaf
S.M. Cecilia Janicki
S.M. Ottilia Madaj
S.M. Peter Ostrega

1912

S.M. Blandina Orłowska
S.M. Bibiana Wiza
S.M. Clavera Papiernik
S.M. Febronia Morzuch
S.M. Theodore Laska
S.M. Ignatia Chodkiewicz

1913

S.M. Desideria Grendys
S.M. Florentine Karasek
S.M. Celestine Potwora
S.M. Eustace Borowski

1914

S.M. Ambrose Tworek
S.M. Valeria Szkutak
S.M. Pius Wojcicka(Markiewicz)
S.M. Theresia Rybak
S.M. Basil Ochocinski
S.M. Leonarda Dzierwa
S.M. Alexandra Jablonski
S.M. Zygmunta Zebracka
S.M. Bonaventure Paprocka
S.M. Ligoria Motyka
S.M. Susanna Pietrzycki
S.M. Brunona Szwagiel

The first two decades of the Franciscan Sisters of Blessed Kunegunda came to a close as World War 1 spread over Europe. Because the majority of the early Sisters were either immigrants from Europe or first generation U.S. citizens, the war affected them greatly. Occupying their minds and their prayers were deep concerns regarding family members abroad, caught up in one of the deadliest conflicts in history.

In the spirit of the humble peacemaker, St. Francis, the Sisters continued to labor for the poor and needy of all ethnicities who



turned to them for help. Their sentiments were well reflected in the words that Mother Mary Theresa Dudzik, their foundress, wrote in her *Chronicle*, **“I felt the misery and suffering of others and was constantly occupied with the thought of how I could be of service to the needy and the poor.”**