



# FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHICAGO

## 125 YEARS OF LOVING, JOYFUL MINISTRY

### DECEMBER 8, 1894— DECEMBER 8, 2019

#### PART SEVEN— THE SEVEN PERIOD, 1975 to 1984

The seventh period of the history of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago covers the years of 1975 to 1984. At the beginning of this period President Ford pardoned former President Nixon for any crimes he may have committed. The Vietnam War ended with the fall of Saigon and the United States rejoiced in its celebration of its bicentennial. Happily Soviet/American relations had improved and the Apollo-Soyuz Project marked the beginnings of united efforts in space exploration.

Two major changes were now occurring in the United States. The automobile industry which had its centers in Detroit and in the Steel Belt which stretched from New York, through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and ended in Wisconsin and eastern Iowa, was in decline. As the Steel Belt metamorphosed into the Rust Belt due to the high cost of domestic labor and the use of expensive and outdated machinery, foreign car manufacturers began to build plants here. By 1979 Chrysler was in bankruptcy and requested a government loan to revive.

The second major change was the beginnings of home computer technology. The first home computer, the Commodore, was released, and shortly thereafter Bill Gates founded Microsoft, and Steve Jobs with Steve Wozniak began Apple Computers.

As time passed, Soviet/American relations deteriorated again and the United States boycotted the Summer Olympics in Moscow to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In Washington state, the Mount St. Helens volcano erupted after two months of earthquakes and steaming episodes, killing 57 people. An eruption col-

umn rose 80,000 feet into the atmosphere and deposited ash in 11 U.S. states and five Canadian provinces.

Later in this time period the Reagan Administration created the Strategic Defense Initiative, nicknamed Star Wars, to block nuclear missile attacks.

Sadly at the end of this period, the drug problem intensified as crack (a smokable form of cocaine) was first introduced into the Los Angeles area.

In the history of the Catholic Church, this brief ten year period saw three different popes: Pope Paul VI ended his term, Pope John Paul I died within 33 days of his election, and Pope John Paul II, the former Cardinal Karol Wojtyla of Poland, was elevated to St. Peter's throne on Oct. 16, 1978. The *Chicago Tribune* reported, "The man who would visit 129 countries on more

than 100 international trips and change the very nature of the pope's relationship with the world chose to ... come to the United States and visit Chicago." The pope offered a special outdoor Mass for the city's Polish community at Five Holy Martyrs Catholic Church which was staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago.

In 1978 the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago held their Chapter at which they continued to put into place the reforms of Vatican Council II. One outcome of

this Chapter was the adoption of the Roman Franciscan Christian Book of Prayer, a revised Liturgy of the Hours with a strong link to Franciscan spirituality.



The Franciscan Sisters of Chicago staffed Five Holy Martyrs School when Pope John Paul II visited the parish in October, as commemorated on this parish bulletin cover.

Another outcome of the Chapter was the adoption of a monthly day of recollection whose program was to be decided by each local home. The Sisters exercised considerable creativity in planning these days, and shared prayer services and speakers with each other.

For the first time the Sisters were allotted a small monthly allowance to purchase personal items. The Sisters were also able to take a vacation for a maximum of three weeks per year, a change which was particularly welcomed by those Sisters whose families lived far away.



Sister M. Sponsa Bajorek wears the official emblem as a lapel pin which she designed for the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago.

Yet another outcome of this Chapter has had a significant place in the hearts of the Sisters — the adoption of an official emblem for the Congregation. The crest shown at the top of this page was designed by Sister M.

Sponsa Bajorek, who, at that time was the art teacher at Madonna High School. In Sister Anne Marie Knawa's scholarly history of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago, *As God Shall Ordain*, she offered this interpretation of the emblem:

"The Franciscan Sisters of Chicago have chosen as the basis of their emblem the ancient *Chi Rho*, the Greek symbol for Christ whose Holy Gospel they have

promised to observe. The letter *M*, with its ulterior or curved lines, rises from the stem of the *Chi Rho* and symbolizes Mary, the Mother of God, whom Saint Francis of Assisi chose as patroness and advocate of his Order for all times. The Madonna lily represents Mary under her title, the Immaculate Conception, to whom Mother Theresa Dudzik had a profound and fervent devotion, and to whose patronage she entrusted the congregation from its foundation.

"Transversed at the base of the *Chi Rho* are the pierced hands of Jesus and Saint Francis whose ardent love for the crucified Christ resulted in the impression of the stigmata on his body. The crossbar and stem of the *Chi Rho* for the *Tau*, a T-shaped cross, sometimes called the Old Testament cross, sign of God's love and salvation for his Chosen People. The *Tau* engendered in Saint Francis a great reverence for its mystic significance; consequently, he placed it in his writings and used it as his usual signature. These graphic symbols ... identify the Sisters as members of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis of Assisi.

"...The essence of Franciscan spirituality is contained in the constant aspiration of Saint Francis, "My God and my All," which the congregation has accepted as its motto. This motto best expresses the ideal which the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago strive to imitate."



Back in 1894 Mother Theresa Dudzik had responded to the needs of the Church in caring for the homeless elderly and poor. In this time period of 1975 to 1984 the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago responded anew to these needs with a Visitors Program in changing neighborhoods where the Sisters visited elderly and disabled residents who felt abandoned. Sister M. Mildred Bieda began the Community Outreach Program at St. Rose of Lima Parish which was so successful that it brought her a commendation from the mayor of Chicago.



Collaboration with other organizations was a hallmark of Sister M. Mildred Bieda's ministry to the poor.

Meanwhile the ministries of the previous period continued despite the lack of new vocations. Thus, at the end of this decade the total ministries of the Sisters were: teaching at 10 elementary schools and one high school; directing religious education at two parishes; and ministering at three eldercare facilities, one hospital, and two child care facilities.