



FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHICAGO

125 YEARS OF LOVING, JOYFUL MINISTRY

DECEMBER 8, 1894— DECEMBER 8, 2019

PART FIVE — THE FIFTH PERIOD, 1965 to 1974

The fifth period of the history of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago covers the years of 1965 to 1974. At the beginning of this period President Johnson instituted numerous programs to eliminate poverty and racial injustice, calling his program “The Great Society.” Throughout this time period, however, the United States was involved in the Vietnam War. This costly war sabotaged “The Great Society” by taking away the funding from the educational and social programs that could address poverty and racial injustices.

In the wake of injustices violence burst out in the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965 and of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King in 1968. Racial injustice spurred riots in segregated cities nationwide, notably in Detroit.

Opposition to the Vietnam War spread on college campuses to young people opposed to the draft, and exposed the nation to the shocking massacre of students at Kent State University in Ohio in 1970.

On a positive note, this time period saw the fulfillment of President John F. Kennedy’s dream to have a man on the moon. In July 1969 the nation sat glued to their televisions watching astronaut Neil Armstrong walk on the moon in a live broadcast by CBS.

Another positive move of the period was in reaction to the unbelievable tragedy of the Cuyahoga River catching on fire on June 22, 1969, in Cleveland, Ohio. The establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency by the executive order of President Nixon in 1970, and the addition of the Clean Water Act in 1972, gave this agency the clout to set and enforce national health-based standards for air pollutants, standards for auto emissions, and to eliminate the discharge of untreated waste water from municipal and industrial sources.

At the end of this time period were two sad events, the

Roe v. Wade Supreme Court ruling overturning state laws against abortion, and the Watergate scandal which led to the resignation of President Nixon from his second term as president.

In 1968 the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago held an Extraordinary Chapter of Affairs as mandated for all religious by the Vatican, to put into place the reforms of Vatican Council II. The first outcome of this Chapter was the change of congregation’s name from Franciscan Sisters of Blessed Kunegunda to Franciscan Sisters of Chicago.

A second outcome was enacted as the assembly of Sisters considered the principle of respect for the individual and her right to pray as the Spirit leads her. This led to the relegation of the former abundance of vocal prayers to private devotion. The new focus of vocal prayer as a community now centered on liturgical prayer — the Liturgy of the Hours and Liturgy of the Eucharist. To support the Sisters’ growth in prayer a House of Prayer was established on the Motherhouse grounds in Lemont, Illinois.

Vatican Council II had recommended that the Sisters examine their dress and adapt it to better foster their health. Thus another change adopted by the Sisters was



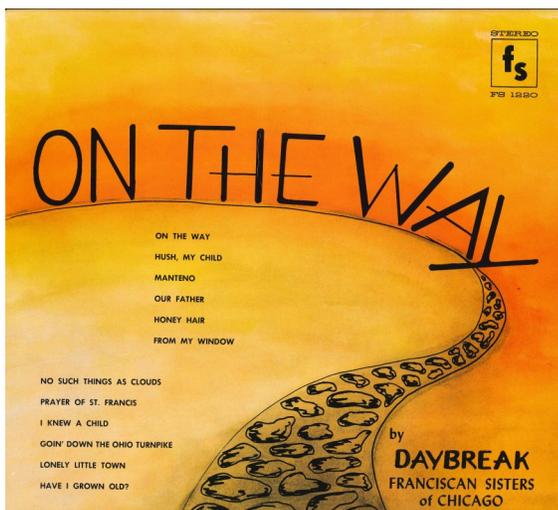
Wearing modified habits Sisters Jean Therese Jarosz and Victoria Valerie Smagacz join in prayer at the Eucharistic Liturgy.

the modification of their habit to a simple brown or beige suit, skirt or jumper and white blouse, or knee length brown dress. The veil was also modified and the Sister's hair showed for the first time.

Sadly during this total time period the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago experienced an alarming reduction in their membership. Twelve Sisters transferred to other congregations and over 120 Sisters simply left religious life. Because of these losses, less Sisters were available for the work of the ministries. Consequently the number of ministries in which the Sisters served were reduced and lay people were invited to work in the various remaining ministries beside the Sisters.

Vatican Council II had placed a strong emphasis on Scripture, so the congregation held numerous study days and weekend retreats to strengthen the Sisters' knowledge of Scripture. Vatican Council II also had placed a strong emphasis on authority based on the principles of solidarity and collegiality. The congregation complied by encouraging more grassroots participation of the Sisters in governance.

Back in 1894 Mother Theresa Dudzik had recognized and responded to the needs of the Church in caring for the homeless elderly and poor. In this time period of 1965 to 1974 the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago responded to newer needs that were surfacing. Sisters volunteered to study the new methods of catechesis and become religious educators in parishes, to learn new languages and go to foreign missions to provide



The Franciscan Sisters of Chicago, inspired by their own talented composer, Sr. Kathleen Melia, formed the group *Daybreak*, who released an album of original music entitled "On the Way" in 1971.

healthcare instruction, to overcome their fears and volunteer to teach prisoners in jails, to serve college students in campus ministry, and to become Eucharistic Ministers in the various parishes, chapels, and schools where they served.

At the end of this decade the total ministries of the Sisters were: teaching at 17 elementary schools, two high schools, and one jail; campus ministry at one university; directing religious education at two parishes; and ministering at 3 eldercare facilities, two hospitals, and two child care facilities.

As much as the ministries of this era were changing and growing, vocations to the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago were coming to an end. Unknown to the Sisters, there would be no future vocations who would persevere after this period.

By 1974, the end of the fifth period, the United States was growing in its

engineering and science capabilities, yet mired in its ignorance of environmental issues. As the nation became increasingly connected through the visual medium of television, social justice inequities became public knowledge and national disgrace, as racial inequities boiled over into riots, and violations of workers' rights culminated in boycotts of farm products by poor field workers.

In the midst of a time of great social unrest, the following women, like Mother Theresa before them, answered the call of Jesus to a vowed life of service to the poor and vulnerable:

1965

1966

1967

1968

S. Diane Marie Collins
S. Paula Frances Howard

1969

1970

1971

1972

1973

1974

S.M. Bernadette Bajuscik
transfers to the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago