

Chapter 2: Our Congregation Roots

HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION

The following pages contain a collection of pictures describing the history of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. This collection was created to celebrate the “145th Year Anniversary: “145 Year Anniversary: Serving God, Serving Community” in 2011 and hung in the Joliet Library. It has been updated to reflect the changes up to and including the 150th Anniversary in 2015.



Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate

Imagine leaving behind your family and your home to answer a calling. Armed with a knowledge of math and music, art and architecture, and the ability to speak English, French, German and their native Luxembourg language, Maria Catherine Moes, who would go on to become Mother Alfred Moes, and her sister Catherine, the eventual Sister Barbara, took a leap of faith in 1853 and traveled to the United States to begin a new life of service to God and community.



Mother Alfred and Sister Barbara's House in Luxembourg
(third house on the left)



Sister Barbara Moes, OSF



Mother Alfred Moes, OSF
First General Superior of the Congregation



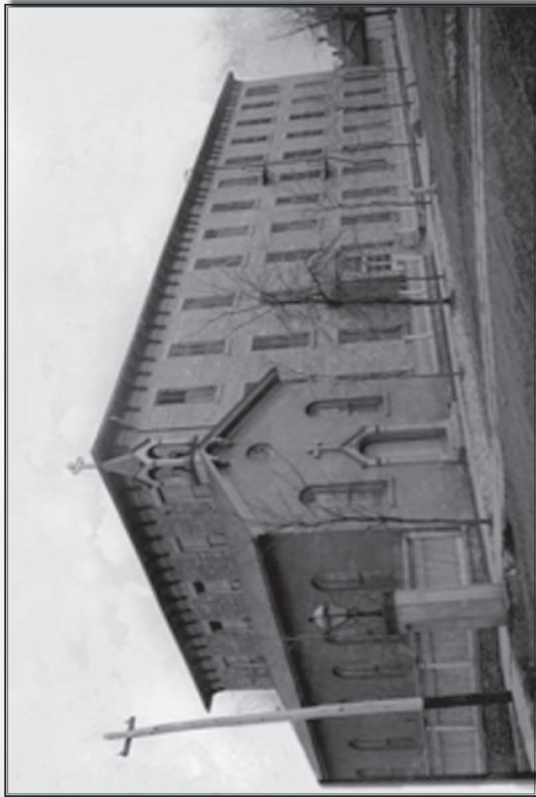
Traveling first to Wisconsin and spending time in Milwaukee before going to Indiana where they lived with two other Congregations, the Moes sisters, along with two companion sisters, were accepted into the Franciscan Third Order Regular in 1863. Within months, this small group of Sisters had begun teaching at St. John the Baptist School in Joliet. In 1865, Mother Alfred traveled to Allegany, New York to meet with Father Pamfilo da Magliano, where on August 2nd he named her as the first General Superior of this new congregation, the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.

Beginning of the Congregation

*A*s the congregation grew during her years as General Superior, Mother Alfred answered the call to send Sisters wherever the need arose. She opened St. Francis Academy in Joliet. She provided aid to the victims of the Chicago Fire in 1871 and traveled to Tennessee during the yellow fever epidemic to help the Sisters there, but arrived too late as some had already died.



A young Bishop Thomas Foley,
Bishop of Chicago around 1870

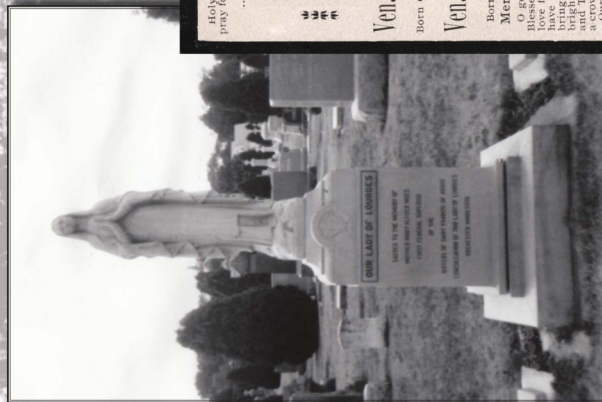


St. Francis Convent and Academy in 1871 located on the corner of Broadway and Division Street in Joliet. Sold to the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, it was eventually demolished in 1964.

*W*hen Bishop Foley of Joliet demanded that she be replaced as General Superior, she was commissioned by Mother Alberta, the new superior, to build a new academy in Rochester, Minnesota at the request of their local bishop. After the opening of the Academy of Our Lady of Lourdes, Bishop Foley of Joliet ordered Mother Alfred's separation from the Joliet Franciscans. Twenty-five Sisters went with Mother Alfred to begin a new Congregation in Rochester while ninety-nine remained in Joliet.

A New Beginning

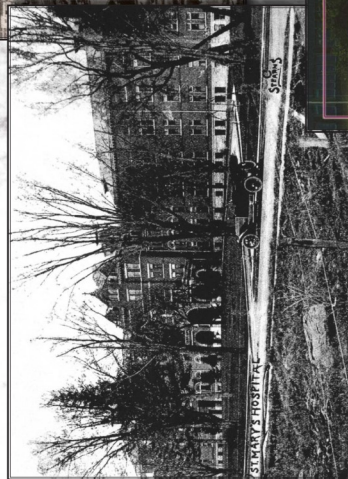
Mother Alfred's schools in Rochester flourished. When an 1883 tornado devastated the area, the schools were opened to the victims. Mother Alfred immediately recognized the need for a hospital. Dr. William Mayo was asked to plan and staff a hospital at the Sisters' expense. St. Mary's Hospital opened in 1889 and today is part of the Mayo Clinic.



Gravestone of Mother Alfred Moes.



Prayer card given at Mother Alfred's funeral.



St. Mary's Hospital opens in 1889



Ruins left by the Tornado in 1883



Statues of Mother Alfred and Dr. William Mayo at the entrance of the Clinic.

Mother Alfred returned to Joliet for a visit in 1898 — the only visit since her separation from the Joliet Franciscans. She died on December 18, 1899, having lived a life of service to God and to community. Mother Alfred Moes and her sister, Sister Barbara, who died on November 23, 1895 are buried side by side in Rochester, Minnesota.

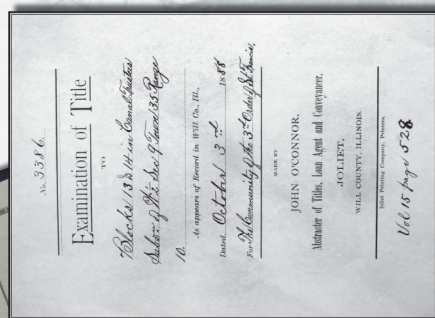
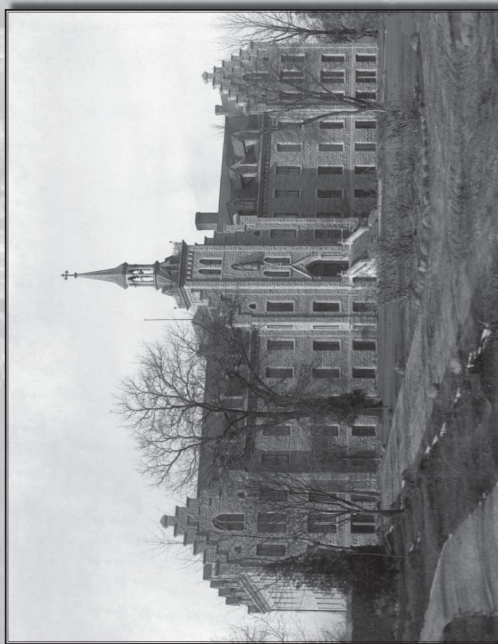
The Motherhouse : 520 Plainfield Road

It was the late 1870s, and the Joliet Franciscans needed more space to accommodate the growing Congregation and the St. Francis Academy students. Mr. William Strong offered to sell a piece of land on Plank Road (bordered by Taylor, Douglas and Wilcox Streets) to the Sisters for \$3,425 if they would guarantee the building of an educational institution on the property. With the necessary approval obtained, the Sisters became the owner of the property in November, 1879.

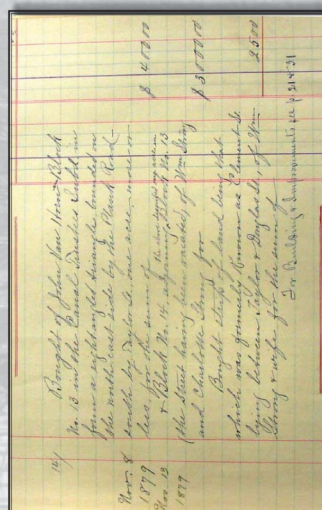
The groundbreaking took place on October 4, 1880. The cornerstone was laid on May 15, 1881, and work progressed steadily. By the second week of August, 1882, Mother Celestine Sontag led the Congregation into the new Motherhouse. The Sisters left their former Motherhouse to the Sisters of St. Francis of the Sacred Heart where it would eventually become St. Joseph's Hospital.

As the needs of the Congregation changed over the years, expansions and improvements to the original structure continued.

The official opening Mass was celebrated on August 15, 1882, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



The examination of the Title for the property was done by the Will County Title Company on October 3, 1888.



Above: The Congregation's Annals record the purchase of the property on November 8, 1879 for a total of \$3,425.00



Above: Major renovations are completed in 1898-99 in St. Joseph Chapel.



Right: New flooring was placed in 1931. By 1948, major renovations were completed on the altars, ceiling and lighting.

Transformation of the Chapel

With fewer Sisters and with older members of the Congregation now living at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, the Joliet Franciscans first sold the Taylor Wing and then the remainder of the building to the University of St. Francis in 2004.

The Sisters have fond memories of their Motherhouse, especially St. Joseph Chapel, which is still used for many Congregation celebrations.



St. Joseph Chapel as it appears today. Sisters gather for the Installation of the 2008-2012 Central Administration.

Sisters Begin First Ministry in Joliet

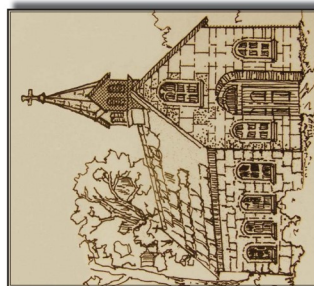
The Sisters did not choose Joliet. Joliet chose them. In 1863, they received a request from Father Carl Kuemin, pastor of St. John the Baptist to teach in the school he had just opened. St. John's was founded in 1852 – the same year the city of Joliet was incorporated - to serve the needs of German speaking Catholics. Being fluent in German and English, Mother Alfred taught her students in both languages.

By 1865, the Sisters were teaching at St. John the Baptist in Joliet and St. Mary/St. Patrick in Kickapoo, Illinois. The congregation was growing as were the requests for teachers at more schools, not only in Joliet and Chicago, but in communities elsewhere in Illinois and other states. At the end of Mother Alfred's term as General Superior in 1876, the Sisters were teaching in twenty-three locations in Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

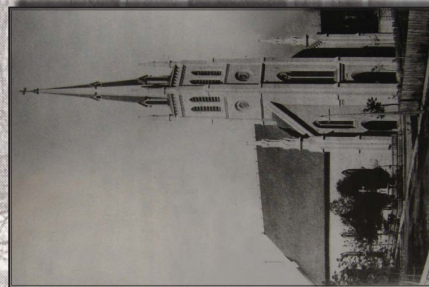
In the years from 1880 – 1890, the United States population saw enormous growth with the addition of two and one-half million immigrants. People from Poland, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia and Bohemia were among the many who were making their way to what they hoped would be a better life in this country of ours, little more than a hundred years old at the time.

A Church struck by Lightning
---Five Persons Killed.
 During the severe thunder storm on last Sunday, about half past eleven o'clock, the Catholic Church located in the north part of the city, was struck by lightning. The electricity first separated the steeple and passing splintering the timbers in various directions, and the church was filled to its utmost capacity with worshippers.

News article from the 1864 Joliet Signal Newspaper, which tells about the lightening hitting the church steeple and starting the fire that killed five parishioners.



Sketch of St. John's circa 1852, which was hit by the lightning bolt.



In 1866 the new St. John Parish was completed up to the tower, and on August 15, the cornerstone was laid.

The Franciscan Friars came to St. John's in the Spring of 1877.



St. John the Baptist School in Joliet was the first ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. Mother Alfred and Sister Bernarda began teaching here on November 4, 1863.

This picture is of the second St. John School, built in 1885 at a cost of \$16,000. It was later torn down and a third school was built to accommodate the increase in enrollment.

Responding to Immigrant Growth

The growth of the country brought new challenges. Many of the immigrants were Catholic, a faith they lived deeply – a faith in which they wanted their children to be educated. Teachers who spoke languages other than English were needed in many schools where English was spoken little, if at all. Sisters were sent to St. Wenceslaus, the first Czech school in Chicago, and St. Procopius, also a Czech school. Working side by side with a pastor or lay teacher who spoke the Czech language, the Sisters provided the education the children needed.

As the Czech immigrant population continued to grow in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, so did the number of Czech schools. And the Joliet Franciscans were with them every step of the way. This fact was not lost on the Archbishop of Chicago, Patrick Feehan, who said on one occasion that “many...Bohemian children” would have been lost if not for the Joliet Franciscan Sisters.



Sr. Vita Zeman ministered at Czech schools and authored a series of four readers (above) that were published in 1931 and were used where the Sisters taught.



The Sisters began the “first Slovak parochial school in the Western Hemisphere” at St. Stephen’s in Streator, Illinois. The Irish-born principal, Sister John Rooney along with another teacher opened the school in 1889 for fifteen pupils. Working with the pastor, Father Erwin Gellhof and a lay member of the parish, teachers and pupils overcame the language barrier.

In Joliet, St. Joseph’s was a Slovenian parish and school. Sister Ferdinand Stalzer would be taught the Slovenian language by the pastor and she would go on to lead the school as its principal for 35 years. So important was Sr. Ferdinand to the school that when she was to be transferred to Bayfield, Wisconsin to work with the Native American students, St. Joseph’s pastor asked that she remain in Joliet. His request was granted and Sister Ferdinand remained at St. Joseph’s until poor health intervened. Stalzer Hall at St. Joseph’s commemorates her devoted service to the parish.



Sr. John Rooney was the first Irish-born Principal. She was also one of the original Sisters in Memphis during the Yellow Fever Epidemic.



Beloved by many in Joliet, Sr. Ferdinand Stalzer spent 40 years at St. Joseph School. When she died in January, 1936, it was written that “crowds and crowds of people came to view her and to pray for her at her funeral.”

Sisters Continue to Influence



Sister Chrysantha was a member of the faculty and administration of the College of St. Francis for 37 years.

In 1963, Sister M. Chrysantha Hoeft wrote of the Sisters' contributions to the education of the immigrant population by adapting a statement from the Congregation's Annals. She quotes the Annals: "There never had been a national spirit in the early years, nor is there now. The Sisters were and are, not German, not Irish, not Czech, Slovenian, French or Slovak; they were and are simply the children of our common Father, the dear St. Francis, helping one another and those entrusted to their care to become loyal American citizens without losing their own national identity, to become brothers and sisters under the Fatherhood of God. This has ever been our goal."

The Joliet Catholic schools were greatly influenced by the Joliet Franciscan Sisters throughout their long history. Every parish in Joliet has been impacted by their presence. The Sisters have ministered in thirty states, as well as other countries, particularly Brazil.

Today, Joliet Franciscans are still teaching in all levels of education from preschool to higher education in many areas of the United States, as well as Brazil. They serve as administrators, teachers, campus ministers, tutors and librarians. They continue to teach English as a second language (ESL) and assist in preparing individuals for their High School Equivalency Diploma (GED).

The Joliet Franciscans continue to serve and educate the student in each of us.

Mother Angela Rosenberger was the first novice of the Congregation. Her phonics charts and booklets were copyrighted as early as 1910 and are still extolled today.



Sr. Alcantara Held's Civic Course, published in 1923, was used in each grade wherever our Sisters taught.



Sr. Edna Hans spent six decades in education beginning in 1917. "Sister Edna's seat work" became part of the vocabulary of elementary school teachers describing her spiraled books of daily worksheets for their children.

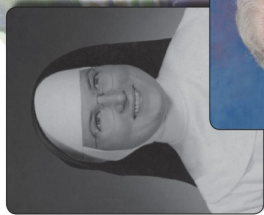
Sisters Begin Teaching Outside of Illinois



Sister Paula Bingert (left), a native of Mansfield, Ohio, is a life-long member of St. Peter's Parish. She is pictured here with Sister Bernard Marie Campbell, who has given 57 years of service to St. Peter's.

Ohio became the first state outside of Illinois where the Sisters began a teaching ministry. Sent by Mother Alfred, the Sisters arrived at St. Peter in Mansfield in 1871. At the time, the parish was only ten years old when the Joliet Franciscans became a part of its history. In 2011, the Sisters celebrated 140 years of continuous service. 401 Sisters served at St. Peter's for a total of 1,857 years and still counting! Sister Bernard Marie Campbell and Sister Paula Bingert continue to serve the parish today.

In 1961, the Sisters helped establish Cardinal Gibbons High School located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Sister Marie Schramko became the girls' principal when the school first opened. She still serves as an assistant principal today. Sister Janet Reiden, who arrived in 1963, also currently serves as a member of the Cardinal Gibbons' High School faculty.



Sister Marie Schramko, OSF



Sister Janet Reiden, OSF



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The Joliet Franciscans continue to serve and educate the student in each of us.

Watercolor by Catherine Newack
St. Peter Church - Mansfield, OH

Beginnings of Guardian Angel Home



The original Guardian Angel Home was located on the grounds of the Motherhouse, 550 Plainfield Road in 1897.

The care of children has always been at the core of the Sisters' work. So, when John Hartmann - who had lost his wife in the 1864 fire at St. John the Baptist Church - asked the Sisters to care for his children, they said, "Yes" without hesitation. This simple act of compassion and caring was the beginning of the Congregation's commitment to the care of orphaned children.

Over the years, the Hartmann children would be joined by others, always living in the Motherhouse with the Sisters. In 1897, a cottage behind the Motherhouse became the first Guardian Angel Home.



One of the Hartman children who was orphaned in 1864, Sister Cecilia Hartman joined the Congregation in 1873. She died on June 16, 1921 at the age of 64.



In 1897, Leander Thompson, age 1 year and 5 months, was the first baby admitted into the Orphanage on the Motherhouse grounds.

Expansion of Guardian Angel Home

As the number of children grew, the need for space grew as well. The next year, the Fox Estate on Buell was purchased and within a year fifty children were in residence. The need for additional space continued until in 1925, ground was broken and the cornerstone laid for the building that still stands today on Theodore and Plainfield. His Eminence, George Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago dedicated the building on May 16, 1926.



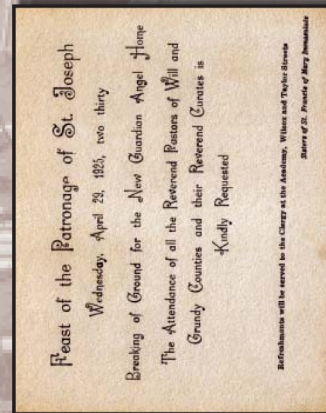
The Fox Mansion was purchased in 1898.



Almost finished, Guardian Angel Home still stands today on Theodore and Plainfield Road in Joliet.



Dedication Ceremony took place on May 16, 1926. Cardinal Mundelein blesses the new building.



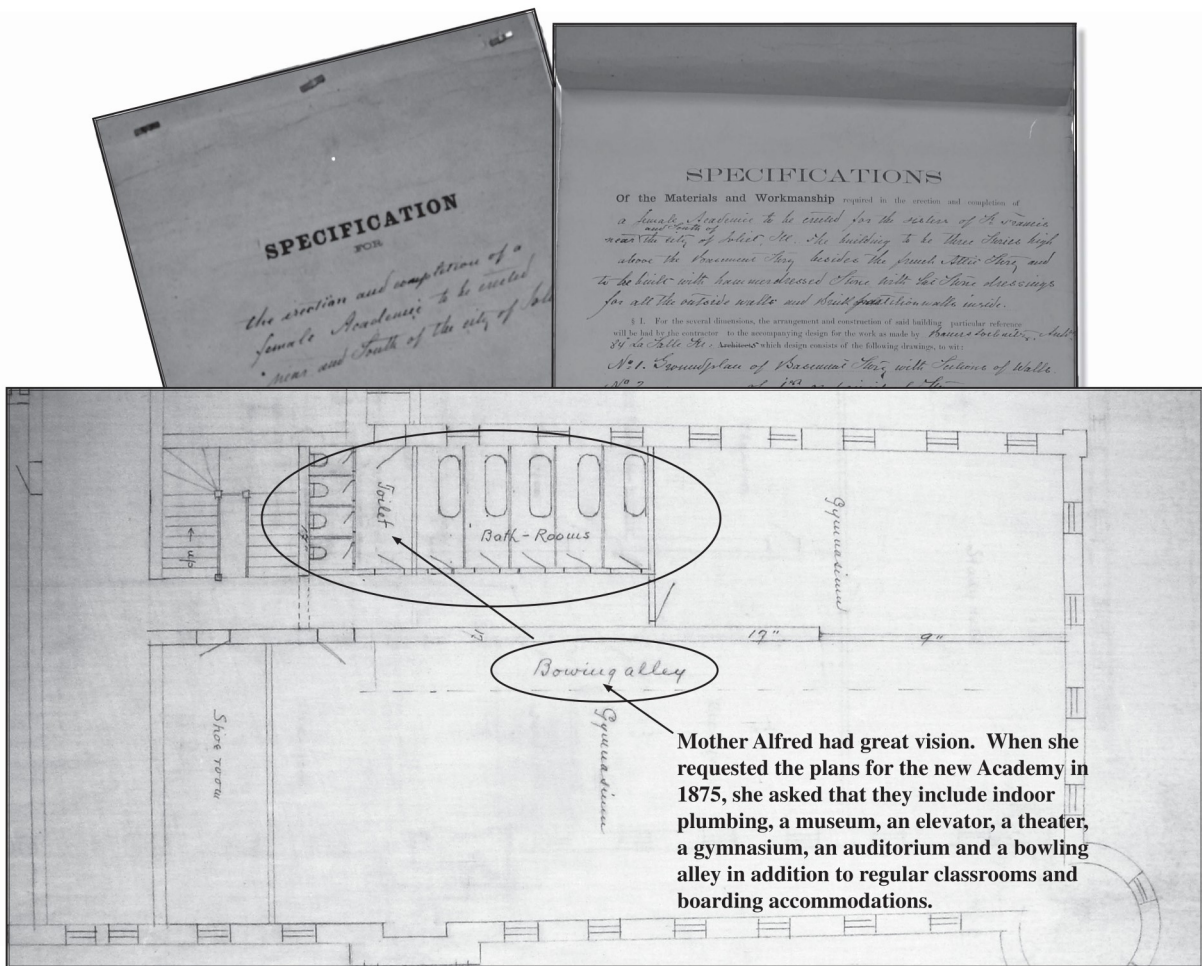
Invitation to the Ground-breaking Ceremony.

St. Francis Academy

In 1869, Mother Alfred Moes realized one of her dreams to begin an academy for both boarding and day students. St. Francis Academy became a reality and was located with the Motherhouse. As both the congregation of Sisters and the student body grew, they needed to provide more space. Mother Alfred purchased land and additions were built in 1869, 1870 and 1871 using money raised at the eleven mission houses in existence at the time, as well as the inheritance received by Mother Alfred and her sister, Sister Barbara Moes.

In 1874, Mother Alfred acquired the Oak Hill Nursery, where Nowell Park stands today. Her hope was to have a building separate from the Motherhouse for St. Francis Academy. Plans were drawn up for an E-shaped four-story stone building complete with elevator, gymnasium and a museum. In 1876, bids were taken from contractors and work was ready to begin. The landscaping was already completed.

Deciding that a change in leadership was needed, Bishop Thomas Foley called for an election of a new general superior for the Congregation. As a result, the Sisters shelved plans for the new academy.



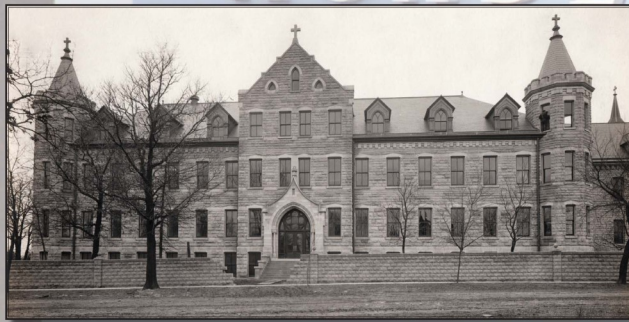
Evolution of St. Francis Academy

In 1880, Mother Francis Shanahan purchased 13+ acres on Plank Road (the predecessor of today's Plainfield Road). The groundbreaking took place on October 4, 1880 and the cornerstone laying on May 15, 1881. In September 1882, classes began. The Taylor Wing and Tower Hall became home to St. Francis Academy in 1915 and 1923 respectively.



St. Francis Academy remained on the grounds of the Motherhouse until 1956 when the Sisters built a new academy on Larkin and Ingalls in Joliet. In 1990, St. Francis Academy and Joliet Catholic High School merged to become a co-educational Catholic high school, Joliet Catholic Academy.

Joliet Catholic Academy is a co-sponsored institution of the Joliet Franciscans and the Carmelites.



Top photo: Small Chapel was used as the first St. Francis Academy from 1869-1871. The building next to the chapel was built to accommodate the growing student population. This building was used from 1871-1882.

Academy students' classes were held in the Motherhouse on Plainfield Road from 1882-1904. However, more space was again needed. The addition of the "Taylor Street Wing" to the Motherhouse was used as the Academy from 1915-1923.



Continued growth meant more space was needed. Thus, the Sisters built "Tower Hall," the new St. Francis Academy. This was used from 1923-1956.

Property on Larkin & Ingalls (GAH farmland owned by the Sisters) became the site of St. Francis Academy (1956-1990) and eventually, Joliet Catholic Academy (1990 - present) was established.





College of St. Francis

Education of children was the predominant ministry of the Sisters. By 1920, they were teaching in almost 40 elementary schools and three high schools in four states. So it is no surprise that ensuring the continued education of their Sisters, who were teachers, became very important. So important, in fact, that the Congregation began a college for just that purpose.

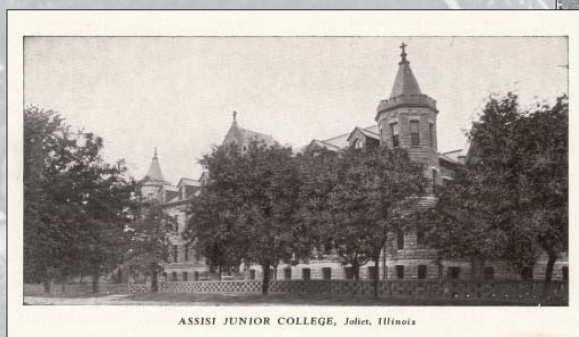
- 1920: A college predominantly for the education of the Sisters begins.
- 1925: Assisi Junior College opens offering college courses to the public.
- 1930: The school began to operate as the College of St. Francis, a four-year liberal arts college. The first graduation class numbered nineteen.
- 1962: The College of St. Francis is incorporated.
- 1971: The College of St. Francis becomes a co-educational institution.
- 1998: The College of St. Francis becomes the University of St. Francis.



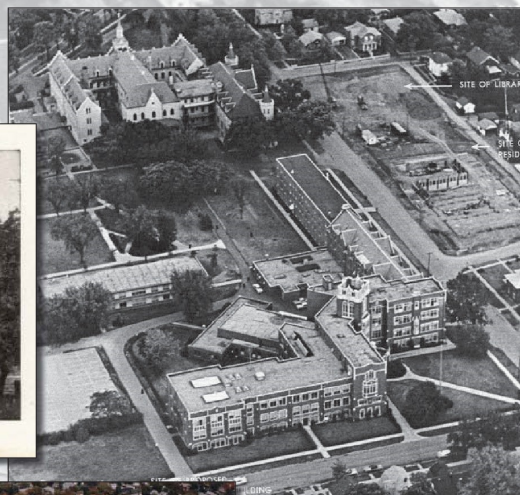
From 1926 - 1938, Mother Thomasine Fryewska was the first President of the College.

The College was originally located in the Taylor Wing of the Motherhouse, but building continued in order to accommodate the growing student population. From 1930 through the early 1990s, additions were made to Tower Hall and several new buildings were constructed.

Evolution of The University of St. Francis



ASSISI JUNIOR COLLEGE, Joliet, Illinois



Top Left: Assisi Junior College.

Top right: Expansion at the College of St. Francis.

Bottom: Aerial view of the University of St. Francis.

The University of St. Francis is a sponsored institution of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.

Brazil: A Service of Presence

In the early 1960s, Pope John XXIII asked congregations of women religious throughout North America to send 10% of their memberships(*) to Latin America. Latin America was predominantly Catholic, although there were not enough priests and Sisters. Mother Borromeo Mack, General Superior of the Joliet Franciscans at the time, said “yes.” She originally considered Peru as the country in which the Sisters would begin their Latin American ministry, but accepted the invitation to Brazil.



First Novitiate Class in Brazil (1967-1968)



Pictured with Mother Borromeo (center) are Sisters Norma Clare (Ruth Ann) Berry, Miriam David (Susan) Balme, Gretchen (Grace) Straub and Lawrence (Mary Ann) Glascott.

And so it began. On December 18, 1963, four North American Sisters arrived in Santa Helena de Goiás, covered in red dust from a day-long journey, mostly on dirt roads. They were unable to speak but a few words of Brazil's native language, Portuguese. Santa Helena is where the first mission school was established. Today in Santa Helena, there is a pre-school, elementary school, high school, a home for seniors, a community center and a children's home. These pioneering Sisters charted their course as teachers, catechists, and ministered in the ways presented to them by the people they were sent to serve.

(*) At the time of Pope John XXIII's request, the Joliet Franciscans had 800 members. Had Mother Borromeo fully honored His Holiness' request, 80 Sisters would have been sent to Latin America.

Assessing the Needs

The Archdiocese of Goiânia provided thirty-six acres of land, which was where the Center House and Novitiate were built. The Sisters visited every family in the area to learn what the needs of the community were. By far, the greatest need was a school. So, in February, 1970, San Damiano School was opened with 100 students. Today, the school provides an education for over 900 children.

But education didn't stop with the children. Through the years, many education courses were offered for the local people. Literacy courses were joined by a variety of courses including sewing, cooking, mechanics, cattle vaccination, bricklaying and soil conservation.



The Congregation in Brazil continues to grow. Pictured here are four North American and sixteen Brazilian members. Sister Ruth Berry (top row, fourth from left) is one of the original sisters sent to Brazil in 1963.



San Damiano School in Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil opened in 1970.



Irmã (Sister) Maria Diniz Gomes is a professor at the San Damiano School. She is also the Congregation's Regional Treasurer in Brazil.

Today, more than 46 years after its Brazilian beginning, Joliet Franciscans, both from North America and Brazil, serve in the States of Goiás and Tocantins in a variety of ministries.

Jail Ministry

As early as 1877, the Sisters worked with women prisoners in caring for the Chapel at Stateville Penitentiary. By 1924, the Sisters taught elementary school subjects, music fundamentals and shorthand to incarcerated women at Stateville. Twenty-one women were in the first class.



Sisters leaving Stateville Prison in 1954.



With the arrival of Fr. Gervase Brinkman, OFM, more Sisters became involved in the jail. (Fr. Gervase is pictured at the bottom center.)

The Sisters also composed music for the prison liturgical services. Sister Raphael Wand's Mass in Honor of Our Lady, which was later used nationally, was composed for singing at Stateville and bore the original title, "Mass of Our Lady of Joliet-Stateville." Banners were created for the prison chapel by one of the Sisters.

Father Gervase said, "The influence of the Sisters was greater than was at once apparent. They were objects of curiosity and memory. Seeing a Sister meant so much to a man who had not been to church for years. It recalled to him his grade school years and what the Sisters had taught him."

When Father Gervase Brinkman arrived as chaplain in the late 1940s, the Sisters' choir was formed to sing the Mass at the Stateville Prison. Eventually, choirs both in English and Spanish were formed from the prison population.



Sister M. Raphael wrote a Mass in honor of Our Lady of Joliet - Stateville in 1953 at the request of Fr. Gervase.

Ministry to the Incarcerated Continues

*T*he Sisters also became involved with youth in detention homes. Students were tutored in math and reading at the Youth Center on McDonough Street. At the Cook County Juvenile Detention Home, Sister Meg Guider counseled young Catholic girls two evenings a week. "I am present to these girls," she said. "I help them find out what they are afraid of and what they should be afraid of."



Sister Vivian Whitehead began the Center for Correctional Concerns at the Will County Jail in 1979.

*I*n 1979, Sister Vivian Whitehead, with the blessing of the Congregation's Governing Board, established the Center for Correctional Concerns at the Will County Jail. Since its beginning, more than 1,800 residents have received their (GED) High School Equivalency Diploma while incarcerated. Now in its 30th year, the Center provides counseling, education and social services for the incarcerated residents, assists them after their release and provides citizens with opportunities for education and action relating to the criminal justice system.

*R*egardless of who we are, where we come from or what choices we make in life, we are all children of God. Throughout their history, the Joliet Franciscans have ministered to people wherever they are called to do so. This includes ministering to the incarcerated.

*S*ister Juanita Ujcik recently received the Pax Joliet Award from the Diocese of Joliet for her work at the Center for Correctional Concerns. In her acceptance speech, Sister Juanita said, "I accept this award on behalf of all the people who have served the incarcerated through the years, especially our Sisters who started preparing the altars on Collins street in the 1890s, the Sisters who taught on McDonough street, who sang at Stateville, to the Sisters who prayed and provided services at the Center for Correctional Concerns, and for the other men and women who have worked in this diocese for many years."

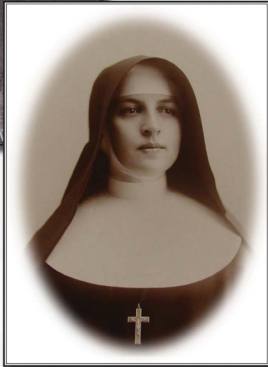


Sister Juanita Ujcik helps an inmate at the Will County Jail.

Mother Alfred's Dream Realized



Sister Victoria stayed in the Red Cliff area for 68 years, arriving there in 1890. She returned to Joliet in 1958 because of sickness and died in 1962 at the age of 94.



When Mother Alfred came to the United States, her hope had been to work with the Native Americans in Wisconsin. Although she herself would never achieve this goal, beginning in 1879 and continuing still today, Joliet Franciscans have committed themselves to serving the people of the Bayfield and Red Cliff area of Northern Wisconsin.

Sister Victoria was 23 years old when she made her first profession.

In 1879, the Sisters were invited to join the Franciscan Fathers of the Sacred Heart Province of St. Louis in establishing the first Catholic school in the Bayfield-Red Cliff area. A small two-room log cabin located halfway between Bayfield and Red Cliff served as both the school and the Sisters' home. Over the next few years, the Sisters would open more schools in the area.

In 1880, the Congregation took charge of the government-owned Indian Day School at Buffalo Bay, which was on the Red Cliff Reservation. Two of the earliest teachers at the school were Sister Seraphia Reinick and Sister Victoria Steidl, who served in Red Cliff for 37 and 68 years respectively. In appreciation for their many years of service, the Sisters were adopted into the Chippewa tribe in a special ceremony.



Sister Johanna Albert taught sewing at St. Mary's Institute in Bayfield.

Ministry in Bayfield Continues

From the very beginning, maintenance of the Indian Day School depended on the kindness of others. The school was sold in 1893 and a new school was built and paid for partially by a government contract. The government also provided books and much of the furnishings. The Sisters needed to find the means for other necessities. Eventually, the government abolished the Indian Day School, but the people agreed to work with the priests and Sisters to find ways through fundraising to keep the school open.



Sister Josepha Redlinger's class at Holy Family School in 1904.



On March 29, 1947, St. Francis of Assisi Church, school, convent and rectory all burned to the ground in Red Cliff. In 1960, after much prayer and deliberation, a decision was made by the Congregation to consolidate St. Francis of Assisi School in Red Cliff and Holy Family School in Bayfield.

Some Sisters were born, lived and died in the Bayfield area. The first Native American Sister was Sister Cordula Neveaux who was educated by the Sisters in Bayfield and joined the Congregation in 1891. Today, another Native American, Sister Grace Ann Rabideau, can be found working in the same Bayfield area.

Looking back to the beginning of the Congregation's history in Bayfield, the Sisters have collectively ministered to the Native American population for over 900 years and counting!



Top: Sr. Cordula and Sr. Grace Ann in 1966.



Left: Sr. Grace Ann working in the soup kitchen at Holy Family in Bayfield.

St. Clare House Of Prayer

The St. Clare House of Prayer first opened in 1968 in Kankakee, Illinois. Over its 40-year history, it became a place where Sisters and others could renew their spirits in peaceful surroundings. Although it closed in the summer of 2008, by the end of the same year it reopened in Joliet on Indianwood Lane, returning to its original roots as a contemplative community. On August 25, 2011, St. Clare House of Prayer moved to the Village at Our Lady of Angels. The St. Clare House of Prayer is a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.



Sr. Dorothy Clare Zuleski, Sr. Albert Marie Papesh,
Sr. Anita Beloin and Sr. Helen Vahling

Our Lady of Angels Village

In 2008, the Joliet Franciscans opened Our Lady of Angels Village, the only faith-based independent living community within Joliet. It is designed specifically for seniors who are able to live independently in the comfort of their own private home.

Our Lady of Angels Village is owned and operated by the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.



Franciscan Learning Center

Education remains an important ministry of the Joliet Franciscans. In 1979, the Sisters opened the Franciscan Learning Center which provides a faith-based pre-school and kindergarten education. Some of the Center's earliest students now send their own children to the school.

The Franciscan Learning Center is a sponsored institution of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.



Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home

Like Mother Alfred, Mother Borromeo Mack, the General Superior from 1960 – 1968, was a woman with an eye to the future needs of the Congregation.

In the early 1960s, with many of the Sisters aging, Mother Borromeo made the decision to build a new facility that would serve as a retirement home for the Congregation, as well as for lay seniors. There was sufficient land near Guardian Angel Home and St. Francis Academy (now JCA) to build upon. Our Lady of Angels opened its doors in January 1962, and the Sisters were moved from the Motherhouse's infirmary to their new home.

Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home is a sponsored institution of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.



St. Mary's School *Fairfield, Alabama*

In September, 1945, the Joliet Franciscans began a teaching ministry in St. Mary's all-black school in Fairfield, Alabama. Two small rooms at the rear of the church were set up by the pastor. Not a single Catholic child was enrolled at that time. By the end of 1962, the school was operating in a newly-built, two-story brick building in a parish of over four hundred baptized Catholics.

The Sisters served at St. Mary's School until 1980. A total of forty-eight Sisters, many still in active ministry today, were part of St. Mary's history over the years.



Reflecting on the Congregation's History

As you review the pages of our Congregation history, what themes emerge?

How do some of these themes relate to your own life experience?

What contributions have the Sisters made, over the years, to the needs of the world in which they found themselves?

How have the needs changed in the present day?

Which of these ministries attract and/or inspire you?

What questions might you ask of the Sisters in those pictures?



Artwork by Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

SYMBOLS OF THE CONGREGATION

The Seal of Our Congregation



The official Congregational seal was designed in 1922 and remains the same in almost every detail. The crest is encircled with the official title of the Congregation: *Congregation Tertii Ordinis Sancti Francisci Immaculatae + Jolietensis* +. (The seal is shown here with the title translated into English: *Congregation of the Third Order of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate + Joliet* +.)

The Latin inscription around the crest, *Prima unctio et Postea Speculatio*, was interpreted by the Rev. James Meyer, O.F.M., in reply to a letter of the Secretary General of the Congregation in 1932, as "The first thing in importance is unction (with the grace of God and a good life); after that (and only after that) let our attention turn to study." This motto has its origin in the very life of St. Francis. It is contained in his Rule of 1223, Chapter 10.

A symbolic representation of the Congregation is expressed in the crest. An explanation of the four sections of the crest is as follows:

Lower Left: Traditional coat of arms of the Franciscan Order: crossed hands of Christ and St. Francis surmounted by the cross.

Lower Right: The Word, the Book of the Gospels, with the prayer of St. Francis: *Deus Meus et Omnia* ("My God and My All").

Upper Right: The *fleur de lis* symbolizes the Virgin Mother Mary; the crescent, distinguishing her as the "Immaculate."

Upper Left: The two-arched bridge spanning the Des Plaines River, representing the city of Joliet, the site of the Congregation's original foundation. (Taken from the official seal of the city of Joliet.)

In the fall of 1971, the Congregation had the crest cast in metal. The 1972 General Chapter inaugurated its use as an official symbol which, when worn as a pin or a medallion, identifies a Sister of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet, Illinois.

Reflecting on the Symbol of the Congregation

Reflect on the symbols on the shield and the surrounding text on the Congregation seal. The text is so Franciscan! When more and more brothers who were educated came to join Francis, he was faced with what he thought was an enormous threat to the Poverty that he embraced. How could they imitate the poor Christ and own books? If they had books they would have to have houses- - it went on and on. But finally, he gave in, on one condition" Prima unction, postea speculation! First love, then study! What kind of meaning does this have for you in your day to day life, for your work or volunteer ministries?

ADMINISTRATION AND STRUCTURE

Central Administration

The Central Administration of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate is composed of the elected officers who form the Governing Board, namely the President, who is the General Superior, and no fewer than three nor more than five Councilors and appointed members, namely, the General Secretary, the general Treasurer, and any other appointed officer(s) approved by the general Chapter.

Governing Board

The Governing Board is composed of the President and the Councilors. They bear the responsibility for implementation of the norms of the General Chapter, the coordination of the Congregation activities and development programs: the establishment of policies, the appointment of necessary personnel in various offices and of committees; the maintenance of the financial stability of the Congregation and its temporal goods; guidance of the mission direction of the Congregation in terms of the needs of the Church and society; continual concern for the growth and development of the individual Sister, the local community, and the Congregation as a whole; the coordination and ratification of the ministry activity and living situations of the Sisters.



*"Assisi City Square"
Artwork by Associate Karen Kietzman*

President

The President is the general Superior of the Congregation and President of the Governing Board, exercising the highest authority during her term of office. She must be perpetually professed for at least six years. She is the legal President of the Congregation according to the laws of the Church, the spirit and traditions of the Congregation, these Constitutions, and the norms of the Chapter.

Coordinator

A Coordinator is appointed as the immediate superior by the President in consultation with the Councilors. She is the official liaison with the major superior, the President of the Congregation. A Sister serving in ministry as a Coordinator has a term of four years, renewable once. A Councilor may serve as a Coordinator.

Reflecting on the Administration of the Congregation

In the early course of your orientation you may meet some of the Sisters in Administration. At some point you may be able to visit the Joliet Franciscan Center with your Companion. There you will find two halls in which the pictures of all the former Mother Superiors, now called Presidents, of the Congregation are hung. It makes a wonderful “station walk” to start with the picture of Mother Alfred and move forward to the present. There is also an archive room carefully preserving the story of the Sisters with photos, artifacts, books and other pertinent memorabilia.

General Chapter

The Sisters, as Franciscans in a state of ongoing conversion, continue to ask: “Who are we? How are we doing the work of God’s Kingdom? What are the needs of the times? How can we do better?” So they put a lot of time into prayer, reflection, communal study and discussion as they prepare for and convene the General Chapter every four years. The Chapter is reserved for vowed members who are elected as delegates by the Congregation. Non-delegate Sisters and Associates may come as observers. What comes out of the Chapter deeply affects and enriches Sisters, Associates and the world!

*Who are we? How are we doing
the work of God’s Kingdom? What
are the needs of the times? How
can we do better?*

During the Chapter of 2012 several Chapter Commitments were proposed and confirmed by the Chapter delegates:

“Desiring to be attentive to the Spirit of God in our lives we commit ourselves to:

-living mindfully,

-developing relationships that are reverent and reconciling,

-embracing the ministry of presence, and

-journeying courageously together into our unfolding future,

- i. To continue deep conversation about significant matters and Franciscan/Clarean spirituality wherever we gather.
- ii. To create conditions in which people find their way to the Gospel and in which they can be Gospel.
- iii. To creatively pursue collaborative possibilities with others to further the Reign of God.
- iv. To explore ways to be Franciscan/Clarean peace-makers and bridge builders within the institutional Church.

Reflecting on the 2012 General Chapter

You will notice that the 2012 Chapter committed us to ways of “being attentive to the Spirit of God”. These commitments each became the focus of a year through weekly reminders, prayer services, and large and small community gatherings. Through the monthly newsletter, *Staying Connected*, and the quarterly magazine, *Confianza*, we read stories of Sisters and Associates who are experiencing and carrying out these commitments.

As you consider these 2012 Chapter goals, which ones stand out and challenge you? Which can you relate to in your personal life?



FORMATION IN RELIGIOUS LIFE TODAY

People continue to be called to religious life. These pages are offered as information about Sisters in general. Following are the steps required to become a Joliet Franciscan Sister.

Initial Contact: A woman discerning religious life as a Sister spends time getting to know the Congregation.

Candidate: A candidate is a woman who, after seriously discerning the call to religious life, decides to apply for admission into the Congregation.

Affiliate (Pre-Novice): An affiliate lives with the Sisters while together they determine if the religious life is a good fit for her.

Novice: The Novitiate stage lasts for two years. Time is spent in prayer, reflection and study, as well as exploring different ministerial options.

Temporary Profession: Temporary Profession means that the novice enters into initial membership in the Congregation, for a designated period of time, by professing vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as a Sister.

Final Profession: At final profession, a Sister makes a permanent commitment to God and to religious life by professing the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience for life.

It could take twelve or more years from the initial contact to final profession before becoming a member of the Joliet Franciscans.

Nun...Sister...What's the Difference?

There isn't one, you say? Actually, there is. Although the word "nun" is commonly used to describe all "women religious" in the Catholic Church, there is a difference between the terms "nun" and "religious sister."



- ◇ A Catholic nun lives a cloistered or semi-cloistered life. Her life is devoted to prayer and ministry within the monastery. There might be hours each day spent in silence. She professes vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. Nuns are addressed as "Sister". An example of a cloistered order of nuns is the Poor Clares.
- ◇ A Catholic Sister lives, works and ministers within the general population of the world. She is also addressed as "Sister." She professes vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. An example of a Congregation of Sisters is the Joliet Franciscans.

Reflecting on Your Experience with Sisters

What experiences have you had with Sisters?

What words come to mind when you think about Sisters?

What has a Sister been for you?

What positive message did the Sisters give to society when they no longer wore habits?

How might we, as lay people who value and believe in Franciscan spirituality also the same positive messages to others?



Artwork By Associate Elizabeth Bach Luong