

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH

*125 years of sharing
hearts and hands*



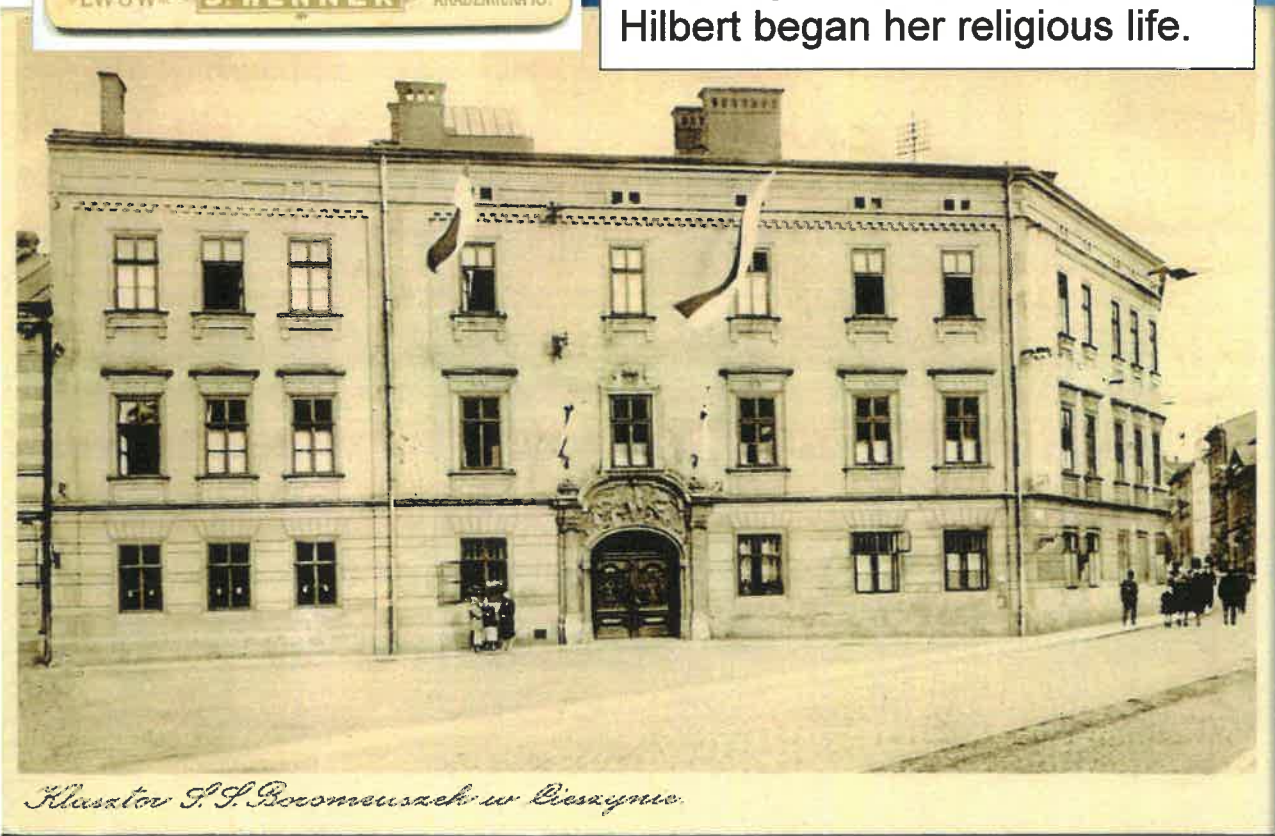
1889

Leap of Faith



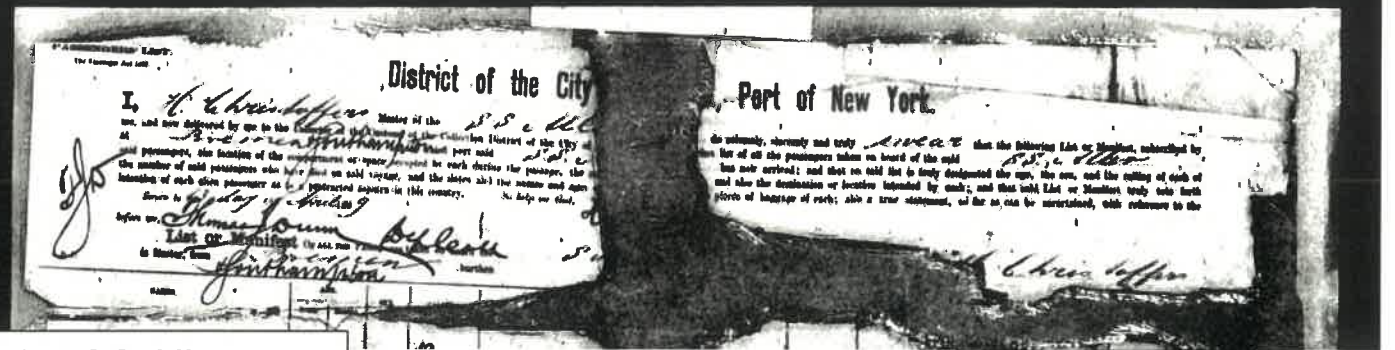
Missionary Sister Colette Hilbert leaves her beloved Poland with 4 other Charity Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo and travels to America.

The convent of the Charity Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo in Cieszyn, Poland where Agnes Hilbert began her religious life.



Klasztor S.P. Boromiszek w Cieszyńcu.

Manifest of the SS Aller on her voyage from Bremen to Hoboken April 3-13, 1889.



Sister Marina (Fuchs)
Sister Apronia (Brand)
Sister Theodora (Sentenski)
Sister Coletta (Hilbert)
Sister Bernadine (Tlach)



The SS Aller at sea

NAME	AGE	SEX	RELIGION	REMARKS
101. Mrs. Fider Mayer	35	f	more	Germany
2. Louise Gerlach	35	f	.	.
3. Jacob Kamm	29	.	.	Austrian
4. Minna Spaengel	27	.	.	.
5. Sister Mariona	28	.	.	.
6. Apronia	28	.	.	.
7. Theodora	25	.	.	.
8. Coletta	24	.	.	.
9. Bernhardine	27	m	merchant	U. S. A.
10. John Fuchs	30	.	.	.
11. Ernest Kiechle	43	f	wife	Germany
12. Mrs. Leckhardt	25	m	merchant	U. S. A.
13. Paul Leckhardt	31	.	farmer	Germany
14. Aug. Wierke	30	.	merchant	Germany
15. Edw. Becker	30	.	.	.
16. Maria	26	.	.	.
17. Anna	26	.	.	.
18. Maria	26	.	.	.
19. Maria	26	.	.	.
20. Maria	26	.	.	.
21. Maria	26	.	.	.
22. Maria	26	.	.	.
23. Maria	26	.	.	.
24. Maria	26	.	.	.
25. Maria	26	.	.	.
26. Maria	26	.	.	.
27. Maria	26	.	.	.
28. Maria	26	.	.	.
29. Maria	26	.	.	.
30. Maria	26	.	.	.
31. Maria	26	.	.	.
32. Maria	26	.	.	.
33. Maria	26	.	.	.
34. Maria	26	.	.	.
35. Maria	26	.	.	.
36. Maria	26	.	.	.
37. Maria	26	.	.	.
38. Maria	26	.	.	.
39. Maria	26	.	.	.
40. Maria	26	.	.	.
41. Maria	26	.	.	.
42. Maria	26	.	.	.
43. Maria	26	.	.	.
44. Maria	26	.	.	.
45. Maria	26	.	.	.
46. Maria	26	.	.	.
47. Maria	26	.	.	.
48. Maria	26	.	.	.
49. Maria	26	.	.	.
50. Maria	26	.	.	.
51. Maria	26	.	.	.
52. Maria	26	.	.	.
53. Maria	26	.	.	.
54. Maria	26	.	.	.
55. Maria	26	.	.	.
56. Maria	26	.	.	.
57. Maria	26	.	.	.
58. Maria	26	.	.	.
59. Maria	26	.	.	.
60. Maria	26	.	.	.
61. Maria	26	.	.	.
62. Maria	26	.	.	.
63. Maria	26	.	.	.
64. Maria	26	.	.	.
65. Maria	26	.	.	.
66. Maria	26	.	.	.
67. Maria	26	.	.	.
68. Maria	26	.	.	.
69. Maria	26	.	.	.
70. Maria	26	.	.	.
71. Maria	26	.	.	.
72. Maria	26	.	.	.
73. Maria	26	.	.	.
74. Maria	26	.	.	.
75. Maria	26	.	.	.
76. Maria	26	.	.	.
77. Maria	26	.	.	.
78. Maria	26	.	.	.
79. Maria	26	.	.	.
80. Maria	26	.	.	.
81. Maria	26	.	.	.
82. Maria	26	.	.	.
83. Maria	26	.	.	.
84. Maria	26	.	.	.
85. Maria	26	.	.	.
86. Maria	26	.	.	.
87. Maria	26	.	.	.
88. Maria	26	.	.	.
89. Maria	26	.	.	.
90. Maria	26	.	.	.
91. Maria	26	.	.	.
92. Maria	26	.	.	.
93. Maria	26	.	.	.
94. Maria	26	.	.	.
95. Maria	26	.	.	.
96. Maria	26	.	.	.
97. Maria	26	.	.	.
98. Maria	26	.	.	.
99. Maria	26	.	.	.
100. Maria	26	.	.	.
101. Maria	26	.	.	.
102. Maria	26	.	.	.
103. Maria	26	.	.	.
104. Maria	26	.	.	.
105. Maria	26	.	.	.
106. Maria	26	.	.	.
107. Maria	26	.	.	.
108. Maria	26	.	.	.
109. Maria	26	.	.	.
110. Maria	26	.	.	.
111. Maria	26	.	.	.
112. Maria	26	.	.	.
113. Maria	26	.	.	.
114. Maria	26	.	.	.
115. Maria	26	.	.	.
116. Maria	26	.	.	.
117. Maria	26	.	.	.
118. Maria	26	.	.	.
119. Maria	26	.	.	.
120. Maria	26	.	.	.
121. Maria	26	.	.	.
122. Maria	26	.	.	.
123. Maria	26	.	.	.
124. Maria	26	.	.	.
125. Maria	26	.	.	.
126. Maria	26	.	.	.
127. Maria	26	.	.	.
128. Maria	26	.	.	.
129. Maria	26	.	.	.
130. Maria	26	.	.	.
131. Maria	26	.	.	.
132. Maria	26	.	.	.
133. Maria	26	.	.	.
134. Maria	26	.	.	.
135. Maria	26	.	.	.
136. Maria	26	.	.	.
137. Maria	26	.	.	.
138. Maria	26	.	.	.
139. Maria	26	.	.	.
140. Maria	26	.	.	.
141. Maria	26	.	.	.
142. Maria	26	.	.	.
143. Maria	26	.	.	.
144. Maria	26	.	.	.
145. Maria	26	.	.	.
146. Maria	26	.	.	.
147. Maria	26	.	.	.
148. Maria	26	.	.	.
149. Maria	26	.	.	.
150. Maria	26	.	.	.
151. Maria	26	.	.	.
152. Maria	26	.	.	.
153. Maria	26	.	.	.
154. Maria	26	.	.	.
155. Maria	26	.	.	.
156. Maria	26	.	.	.
157. Maria	26	.	.	.
158. Maria	26	.	.	.
159. Maria	26	.	.	.
160. Maria	26	.	.	.
161. Maria	26	.	.	.
162. Maria	26	.	.	.
163. Maria	26	.	.	.
164. Maria	26	.	.	.
165. Maria	26	.	.	.
166. Maria	26	.	.	.
167. Maria	26	.	.	.
168. Maria	26	.	.	.
169. Maria	26	.	.	.
170. Maria	26	.	.	.
171. Maria	26	.	.	.
172. Maria	26	.	.	.
173. Maria	26	.	.	.
174. Maria	26	.	.	.
175. Maria	26	.	.	.
176. Maria	26	.	.	.
177. Maria	26	.	.	.
178. Maria	26	.	.	.
179. Maria	26	.	.	.
180. Maria	26	.	.	.
181. Maria	26	.	.	.
182. Maria	26	.	.	.
183. Maria	26	.	.	.
184. Maria	26	.	.	.
185. Maria	26	.	.	.
186. Maria	26	.	.	.
187. Maria	26	.	.	.
188. Maria	26	.	.	.
189. Maria	26	.	.	.
190. Maria	26	.	.	.
191. Maria	26	.	.	.
192. Maria	26	.	.	.
193. Maria	26	.	.	.
194. Maria	26	.	.	.
195. Maria	26	.	.	.
196. Maria	26	.	.	.
197. Maria	26	.	.	.
198. Maria	26	.	.	.
199. Maria	26	.	.	.
200. Maria	26	.	.	.

1897

Embracing God's Call



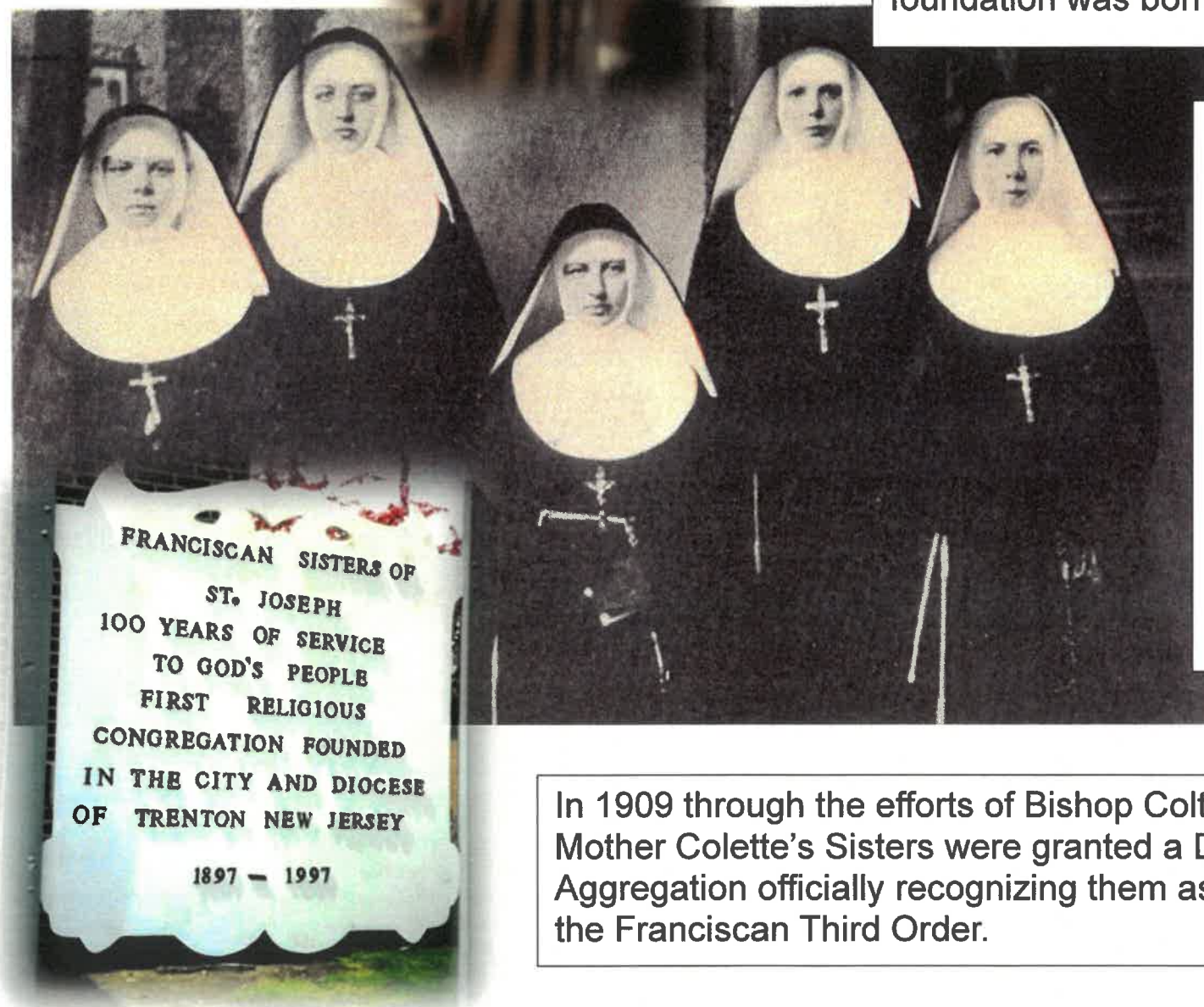
The Very Rev. Hyacinth Fudzinski, O.F.M., Conv.,
Co-Founder of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph

Mother Colette and Father Fudzinski were kindred spirits, inflamed with love of the Lord and their countrymen, a Christ-like love that expressed itself in action, regardless of the cost involved.

Father Hyacinth Fudzinski, O.F.M. Conv. was instrumental in establishing this new Franciscan foundation. When he was unsuccessful in gaining the support of the Borromean Sisters to continue their presence in America, he asked Sister Colette, "Would you be willing to exchange your Borromean habit for the Franciscan habit? It is our intention to establish, in time, a Polish Province of the Franciscan Conventual Fathers. In all our parishes you would have schools to staff, for you would be our Sisters."

Torn between her love of Poland and her maternal love for the novices, Sister Colette prayed fervently for Divine guidance. Miraculously the Sacred Heart statue she prayed before, nodded His head in favor of the new paths to which He was calling her in America. A new community would be born out of the pain of this supreme sacrifice she was called to make.

On September 8, 1897, at St. Stanislaus Parish in Trenton, New Jersey, the five Borromean Sisters were vested with the Franciscan habit and a new Franciscan foundation was born.

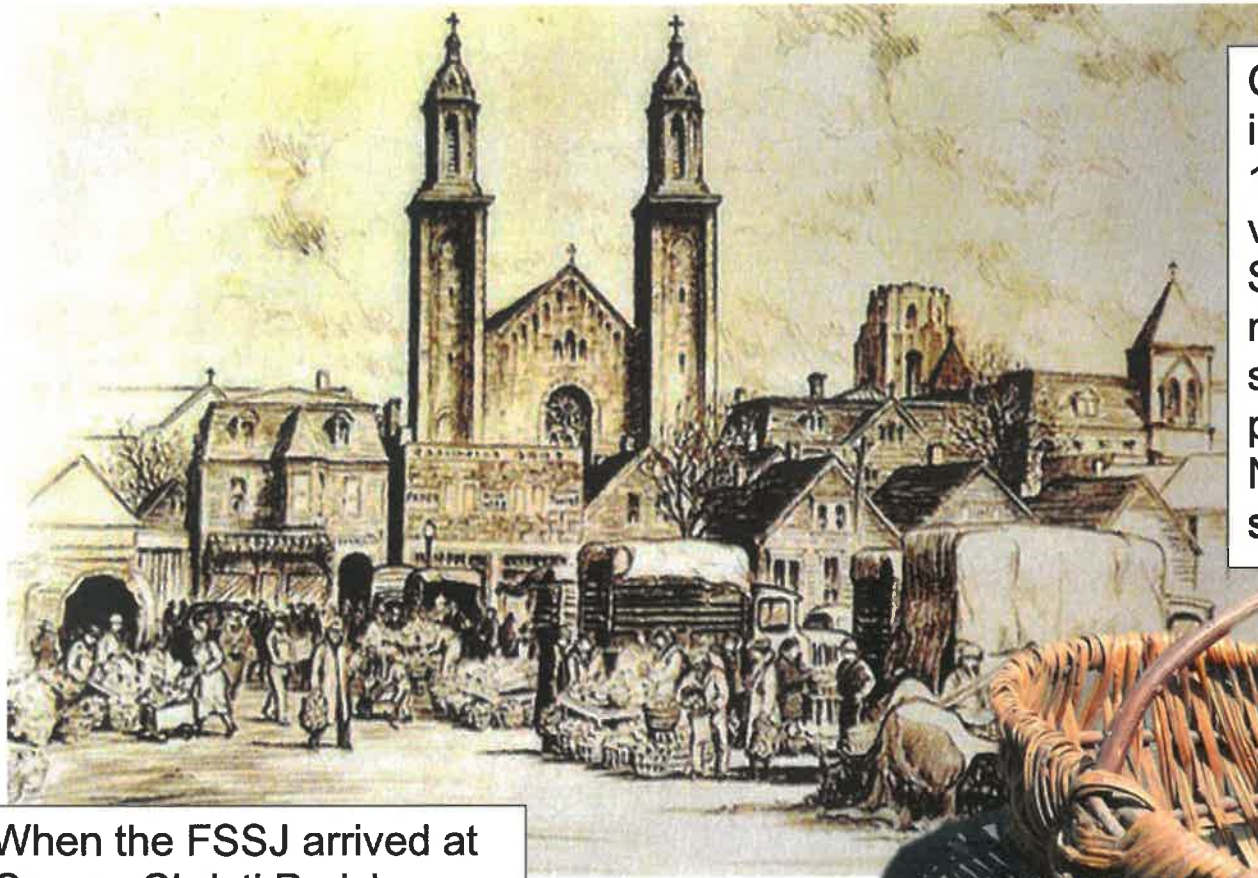


The four pioneer Sisters with founder Mother Colette shortly after the reception of the Franciscan habit in 1897. (Left to right) Sister M. Charles, Sister M. Stanislaus, Mother M. Colette Hilbert, Sister M. Philomena, and Sister M. Aloysius.

In 1909 through the efforts of Bishop Colton of Buffalo, Mother Colette's Sisters were granted a Diploma of Aggregation officially recognizing them as a branch of the Franciscan Third Order.

1898

God Will Provide



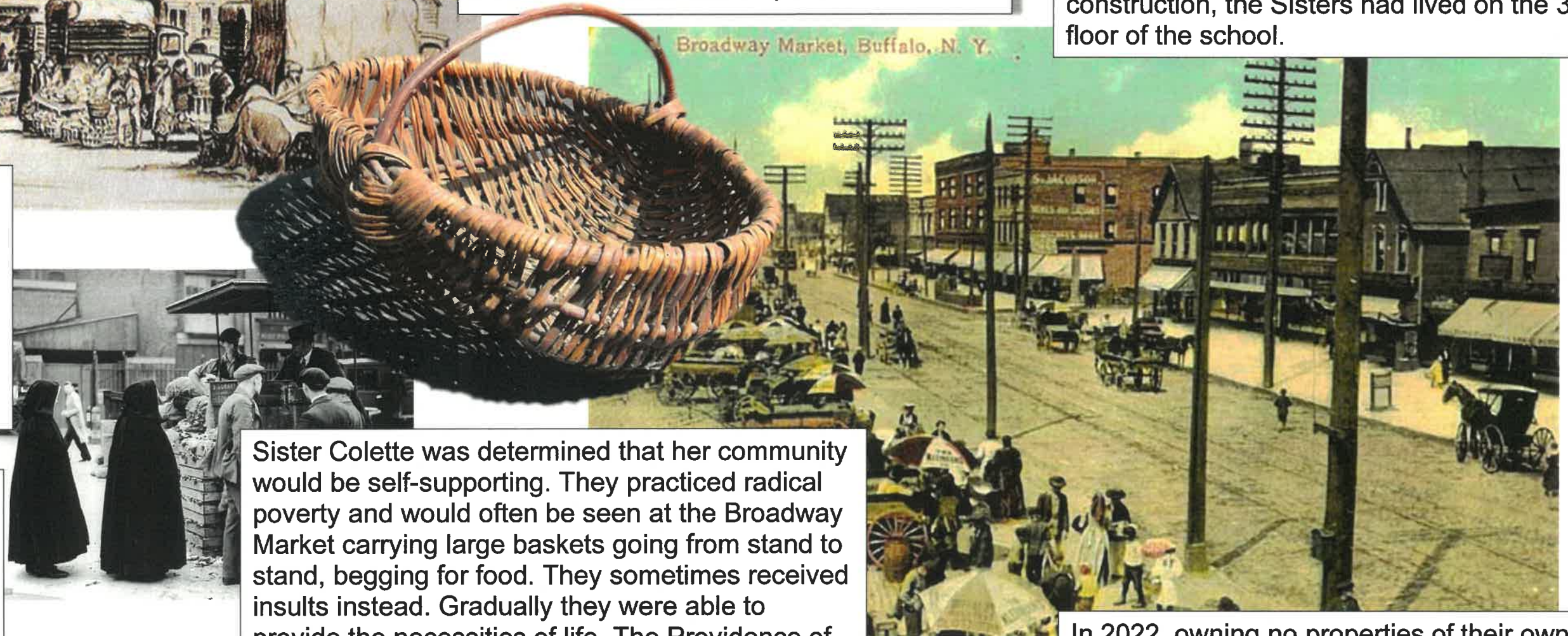
When the FSSJ arrived at Corpus Christi Parish on July 29, 1898 their convent would be two wood frame houses with no running water, but leaking roofs. Construction of a school had not yet begun.

But by November of that year a three-story brick building was erected: 1st floor was the church, 2nd floor, the school, 3rd floor, meeting room/ social center.

On August 24, 1898, two new novices were invested in the habit and on September 8, 1898 the four original novices took their vows after nine years of formation. On September 3, 1898, the school opened with no doors, no windows, but 400 eager students. Without enough sisters to teach, postulants taught. But God provided. By New Year's 1899 the FSSJ had 4 professed sisters, 2 novices and 11 postulants.



By 1907 a 4-story brick convent is completed and becomes the first Motherhouse. During construction, the Sisters had lived on the 3rd floor of the school.



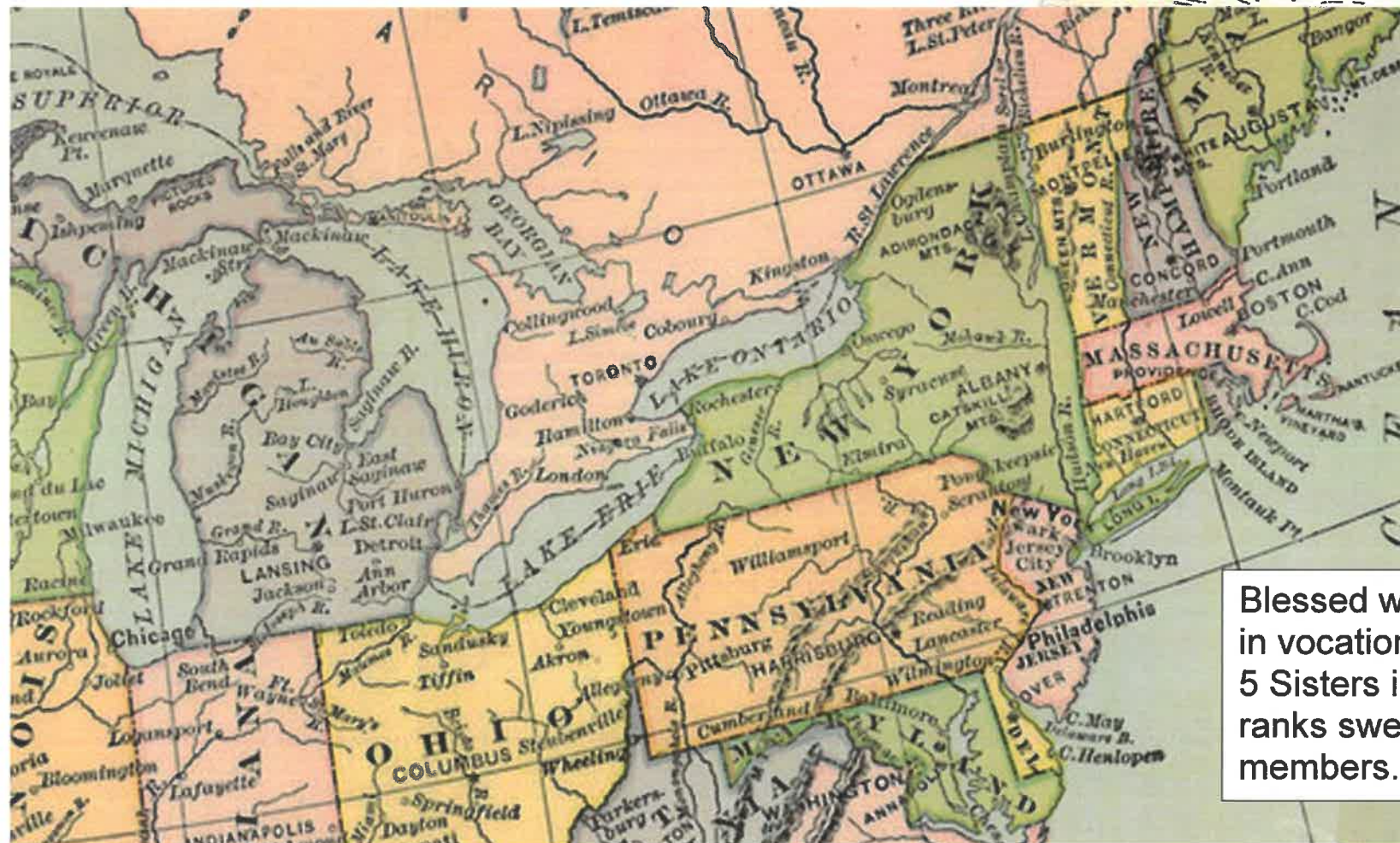
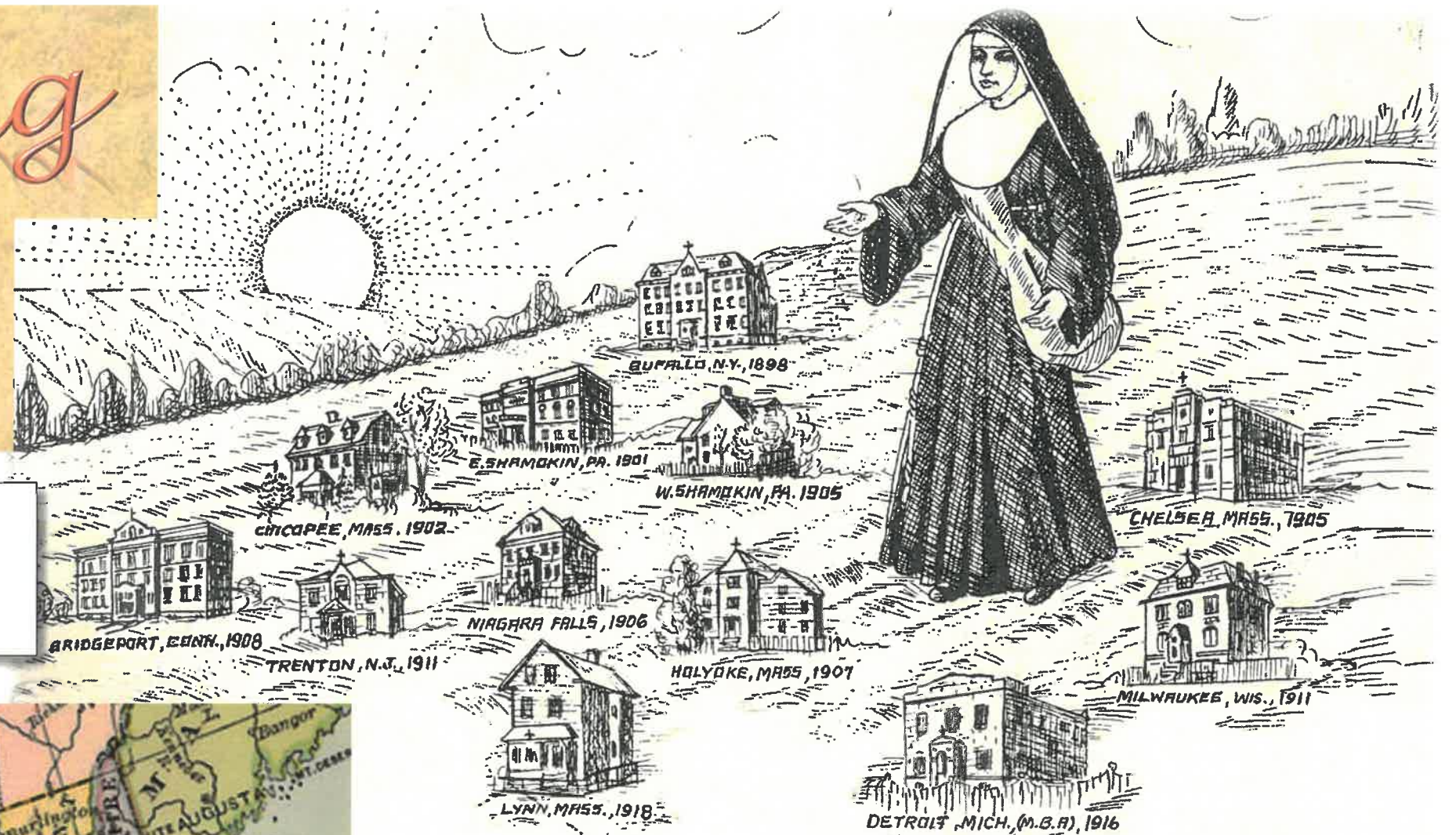
Sister Colette was determined that her community would be self-supporting. They practiced radical poverty and would often be seen at the Broadway Market carrying large baskets going from stand to stand, begging for food. They sometimes received insults instead. Gradually they were able to provide the necessities of life. The Providence of God kept the Congregation in existence and blessed it with growth.

In 2022, owning no properties of their own, the FSSJ continue to provide for their own needs as well as for those of others.

1910-
1920

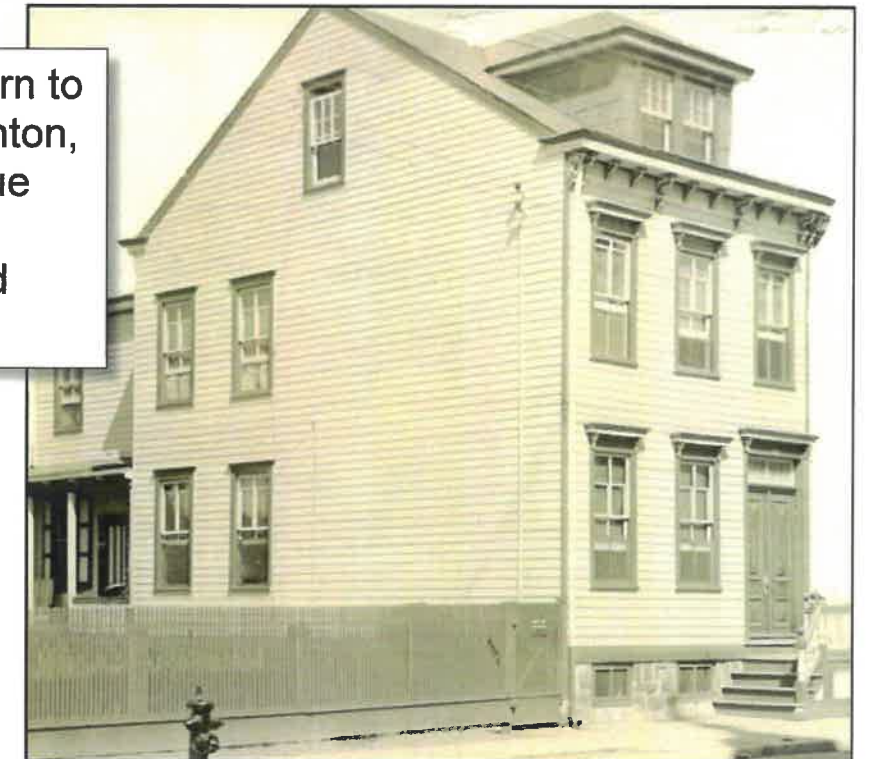
Trusting in God

In the 2nd decade of the 20th century the FSSJ took the risk of thinning their ranks at their schools to establish new missions throughout the northeast United States.



In 1911 the FSSJ return to their birthplace in Trenton, New Jersey to continue their ministry at St. Stanislaus School and Parish.

Blessed with a marked increase in vocations, beginning with just 5 Sisters in 1897, by 1920 their ranks swelled to almost 300 members.



1916-1932

Harvesting the Gifts of the Earth

The Gardenville Farm

In 1916 a parcel of farmland was donated to the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph by the Franciscan Conventual Friars. The farmhouse was converted into a convalescent home for ailing sisters. Sisters were assigned to care for the home and to do farm work. Mother Colette was not experienced in managing a farm. A heavy initial investment resulted in outstanding debts. Despite these difficulties, the farm endeavor did result in a generous yield of garden and dairy products.



The farm produce was used not only for the benefit of the Sisters but also for the poor of Corpus Christi Parish.

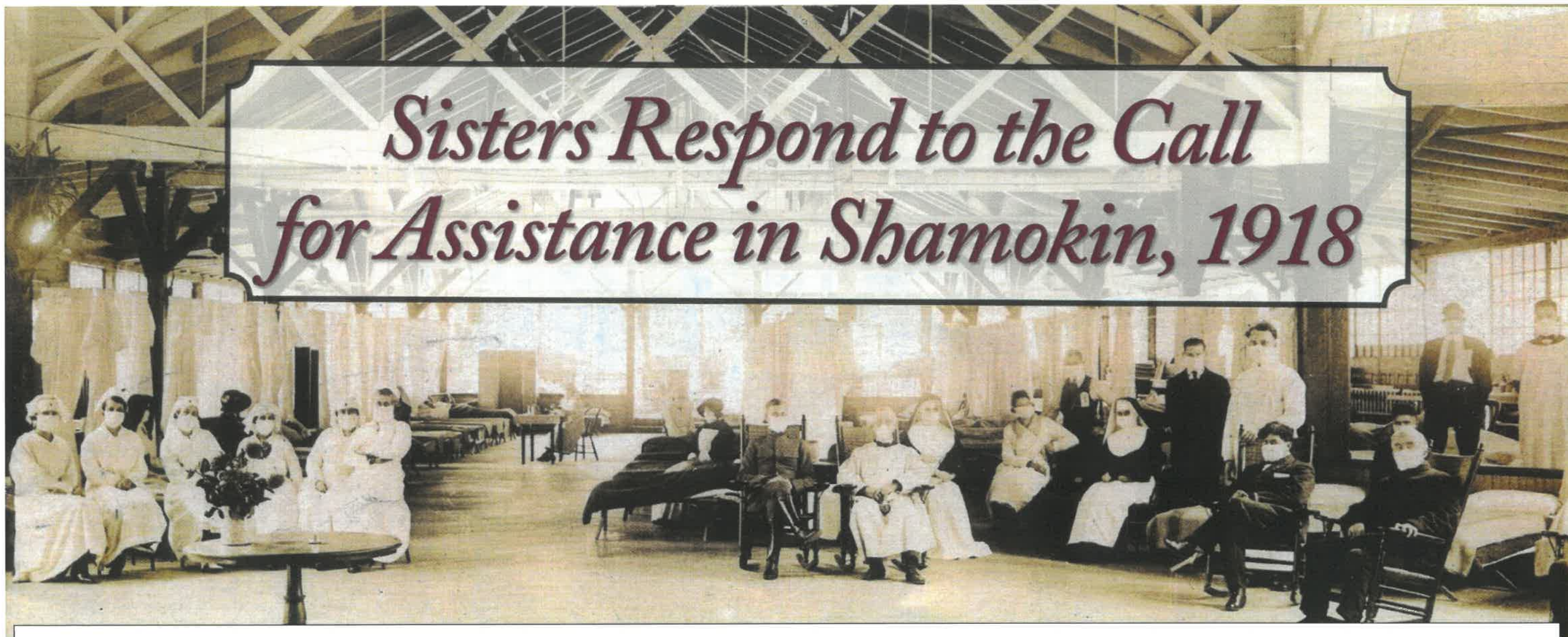
Sprawozdanie finansowe z farmy - Francis Park Roku Pańskiego 1923	
Dochody roku Pańskiego 1923	
Mleko i masłanka	996 33
Masło	309 50
Ser	172 90
Jajka	359 84
Drób i gołbki	791 49
Świnie	164 74
Krowy	427 23
Krowy i owce	116 00
Wół	190 86
Łodzie i małe dochody	330 18
Podatki	243 15
Poboczne dochody	295 04
Różna praca	5991 44
	261 48
	41 00
	810691 18
Dochody domowe R.P. 1923	
Chleb do wigilii domowej i gospo.	466 81
Ryby, ser i t. d.	96 88
Wino	598 74
Certyfikaty karne	284 13
Owoce i jarzyny	107 03
Soda	23 20
Sól	53 20
Włosy i obuwie	345 26
Książki i materiały do pisania	49 92
Wydatki na potrzeby świąteczne	112 07
Leżenie	147 40
Marki, paczki i porto	173 50
Sprawy	258 51
Pranie i czyszczenie	28 52
Na dobre cele	93 50
Pracownia	86 95
Pracownia	2 43
	82930 07
Dochody gospodarcze R.P. 1923	
Telefon	52 09
Światła i lampki elektryczne	272 99
Woda	78 55
Węgle	50 00
Gas i nafta	203 23
Bydło	36 00
Krowy	279 45
Świnie i robotnicy	2294 25
Drzewo	305 40
Inwentarz ruchomy	228 00
" nieruchomy	417 50
Pasza i siano dla koni, krow, baranów	2483 08
Pastwisko	225 00
Leżenie dla zwierząt	20 50
Haprawy	255 08
Plumber	50 00
Podatki	18 42
Własności	314 90
Drabne wydatki	77 79
	87662 53
Restauracje	
Dochody domowe	2930 07
" gospodarcze	7662 53
	10592 60
Dochody Rorem	
Roku 1922 zostało	10691 18
	6 18
	10697 36
Dochody Rorem	
	10592 60
Dochody Rorem	
Dotyczy dług 1 stycznia 1923 wynosił	10357 30
W lipcu dług wynosił	8324 07
Spłacono więc	2033 23
Nowy dług na miesiąc	1097 77
Dotyczy dług 1 stycznia 1924	9431 84

When Mother Colette was no longer in administration, she withdrew to Gardenville. As a result of mounting debts, Gardenville was sold by the Franciscan Conventual Friars in 1932.

1918

Courage to Enter In

Sisters Respond to the Call for Assistance in Shamokin, 1918



An epidemic of *Spanish Flu* swept the nation and in September 1918 the Bishops called for volunteers from religious orders to nurse the disease stricken. Mother Colette encouraged her Sisters to respond to this request. *No doubt this was in keeping with the 4th vow she took as a Charity Sister: "to serve the poor, the sick, the abandoned without recompense."* Many of the Sisters volunteered their services in the tent hospitals, working 12 hour shifts, and in the homes of the suffering. Although this mission was undertaken at great risk, Mother Colette felt that we had been blessed since only one sister contracted the flu. Unfortunately, Sister Placid, who was only 20 years old, died as a result.

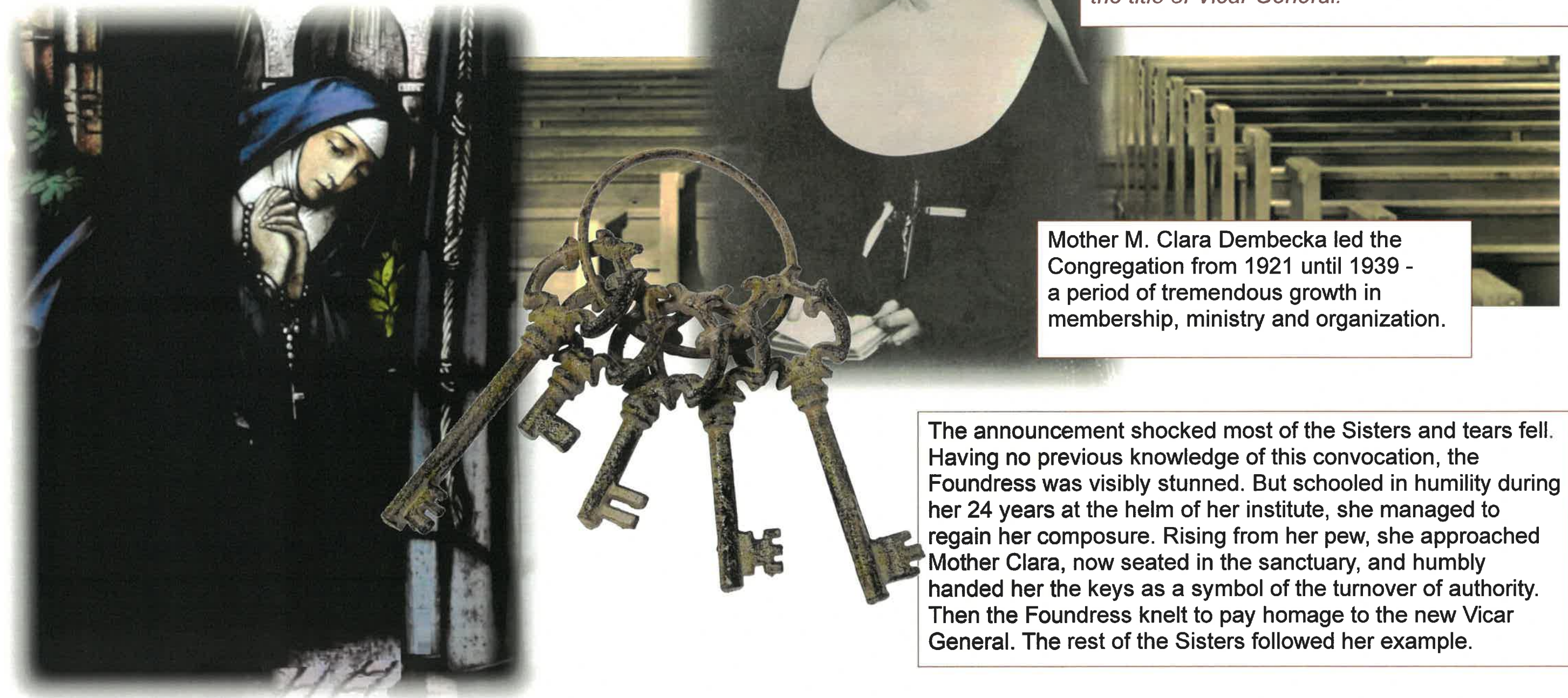
1921

Crown of Thorns

In Buffalo, on January 6, 1921, the professed Sisters were unexpectedly summoned to Chapel, where the Provincial Father Eustace Bartosiewicz, letter in hand, addressed the convocation:

"We announce, by the authorization of the Most Reverend Minister, Dominic Tavani, a change of administration in your Community. Reverend Mother Colette, who until now has been the Mother General, will retain the title of Mother General-though she can be titled the Foundress-until the coming Chapter of the Congregation."

Sister Clara, the present Mistress of Novices, is appointed to govern the congregation with full authority until the Chapter. Mother Clara will carry the title of Vicar General."



Mother M. Clara Dembecka led the Congregation from 1921 until 1939 - a period of tremendous growth in membership, ministry and organization.

The announcement shocked most of the Sisters and tears fell. Having no previous knowledge of this convocation, the Foundress was visibly stunned. But schooled in humility during her 24 years at the helm of her institute, she managed to regain her composure. Rising from her pew, she approached Mother Clara, now seated in the sanctuary, and humbly handed her the keys as a symbol of the turnover of authority. Then the Foundress knelt to pay homage to the new Vicar General. The rest of the Sisters followed her example.

1925

Grace Roots Our Lives

Purchase of Hamburg Property



1960 Healing Touch

Opened in 1960 by the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph, **St. Joseph Hospital** has been serving Cheektowaga and Western New York's eastern suburbs for more than a half-century. In the 1990s the FSSJ wisely joined with other Catholic hospitals sponsored by various Women Religious in the Buffalo area and formed the Catholic Health System which now directs the mission of Sisters Hospital at St. Joseph Campus.

St. Joseph hospital converted to COVID-19 treatment center

By [Mike Desmond](#)
Published March 19, 2020

Catholic Health will convert its St. Joseph Campus of Sisters Hospital into a facility dedicated entirely to treating the coronavirus. There is widespread belief the current numbers of diagnosed patients will rise significantly.

The building on Harlem Road in Cheektowaga was once a standalone hospital until conversion to a branch of Sisters on Main Street in North Buffalo. At a news conference Thursday, CEO Mark Sullivan said it's the right building at the right location.

"Right now, as we're sitting here, the teams are retrofitting the rooms to have this happen," Sullivan says hospital staffers have volunteered to work in the new treatment center.

Sisters' Motherhouse Fund Donated for New Hospital

The Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph have shelved their dream of a new motherhouse in Hamburg, and have contributed their building fund of \$170,000 to the campaign to raise money for construction of the St. Joseph Intercommunity Hospital in Cheektowaga.

The nuns' donation—one of the largest of its kind ever made by a religious order to a hospital construction program—represents a treasury built up slowly through the years from the modest pay the Sisters receive as teachers and hospital employees; from small gifts by relatives, and from other sources.

Mother M. Leona, superior general of the order, announced the nuns' self-sacrificing decision. She said she had received the unanimous consent of her general council to forego the new motherhouse, and contribute the funds to the hospital which, when completed, will be operated by the order.

"This is the greatest story of self-sacrifice I have ever heard," said Chester H. Peterson, general chairman of the campaign to raise \$1,700,000 for the new 100-bed hospital to be built on Harlem Rd. He added:

"By their action, the Sisters have not only dedicated their lives to caring for the sick and injured of the community, but are willing to use their hard-earned savings for the benefit of the people they will be serving.

The action of these dedicated women, which closely parallels the action of the Good Samaritan of old, is certainly a modern lesson in being our 'brother's keeper.'

"As we begin our advance gift campaign next week, seeking the support of business, industry, foundation and individuals, I am sure we will all measure our generosity against the sacrificial giving exemplified by the Sisters themselves."

The gift of the nuns—which represents 10% of the hospital fund goal—makes possible the memorializing of the main entrance and foyer of the new hospital to the deceased Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph.



Ministry at **St. Mary's Hospital** began in 1940 just before the U.S. entered World War II. During the war years many doctors and nurses entered the military for service overseas and the Sisters remained to continue St. Mary's service to the people in one of the poorer sections of Brooklyn. In 2003 the Sisters left the ministry at St. Mary's realizing what a great gift, blessing and privilege it was to grow and share with employees and patients while serving the people of God in an environment dedicated to the poor and those in need.

1940

1965

Forging a New Tomorrow

In 1965 FSSJ missionaries left for Rio Verde, Brazil. Sisters taught nursing and ran a free pharmacy for the poor, sponsored by the mayor's office. With the opening of a daycare center, and assistance of public health, children received necessary vaccinations, proper nutrition, and social development skills. Parish ministry and catechesis rounded out the Sisters' service, going wherever there was a need, answering the call of Vatican II to respond to the signs of the times.



Missionary - House of Prayer – Retreat Director – Executive Director of the Franciscan Federation – Spiritual Director – Pastoral Minister – School Psychologist – Catholic Charities Outreach – Environmental Educator – Campus Minister – Director of BOYS HOPE – Prison Ministry - Addictions Counselor - Executive Director of the Allegany Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse - Executive Director of Boys Hope of Florida, Inc. - Assessment Counselor for the Wyoming County Chemical Abuse Treatment Program - Counselor at the Wyoming County Jail



SISTER WALBURGA

Sister Walburga teaches mathematics at the Red Cloud Indian School on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota in 1978.

Sister Loretta visits the homebound.



Sister Emily Therese tutors at Gerard Place.



Sister Benedicta provides comfort as hospital chaplain.



Sr. Rayneld, serving as a nurse at the end of the Vietnam War, assisted in the air-lift evacuation of children from this war-torn country.

2010

Believing in the New



When the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph decided to build a new Motherhouse, uppermost in their minds was that the process reflect their Franciscan call to care for creation. Throughout the building process the mantra for the Sisters was “Low, Wide and Green.” Their concern, care and commitment to remain ecologically friendly resulted in being awarded the first platinum rated senior housing project in the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for home programs as well as the first platinum rated project for women religious orders in the United States. (Based on criteria set by the U.S. Green Building Council)



In 2018 the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph sold their Motherhouse to Catholic Health. The facility was renamed St. Francis Park, a unique Senior Living Experience. Here, the Sisters reside alongside the lay residents, *embracing a ministry of presence.*

2022

The Road of Trust

I wish you, my beloved spiritual daughters, may our Redeemer bestow upon you bountiful graces. May He bless your every step. And may He grant you robust health and added strength to labor for His honor and glory.

Lastly, may you be happy and valiant spouses of the Lord who do not yield to discouragement in difficulties, but always maintain peace of heart and soul in both joys and sorrows.

In conclusion, I once again extend to you my wishes for a Blessed Easter.

Sincerely and lovingly yours,
Mother M. Colette of the Divine Redeemer

obdarzy zdrowiem czerstwem i dodaje
siły do pracy na cześć i chwałę Jego.
W końcu bądźcie prawdziwie szczęśli-
we i meżne Oblubienice Pańskie które
się trudnosciami nie zrażają ale zaw-
sze się cieszą pokojem duszy i serca
w radości i cierpieniu.
Więc jeszcze raz życzę Wam "Wesołego
Alleluja".

Szczerze Was kochająca,

*Mateczka M. Colette
od Boskiego Ojca*



Excerpt from an Easter letter written during Mother Colette's later years

