

*A publication for friends of the  
Congregation of the Humility of Mary*



## The Sisters of Humility Move to Iowa

*by Sister Mary Rehmann, CHM*

*[This is the third article about the 150-year history of the Sisters of Humility in the U.S.\*]*

Earlier articles in this series described how the Sisters of the Humility of Mary were founded in France in 1854 by Father John Joseph Bégel and Marie Antoinette Potier, a parishioner who had inherited property from her aunt. Marie, her housekeeper and women in other of Bégel's parishes opened schools for girls. At their request, Bégel gave them a "rule of life" and they were approved in 1854 by the local bishop as the Sisters of the Holy Humility of Mary.

In 1864, at the request of the Bishop of Cleveland, the entire community—11 sisters—and Bégel came to the United States to be missionaries in his diocese. They could only afford property in

western Pennsylvania that had already been abandoned by communities of men and of women. After much effort, and suffering, the community succeeded there.

Four sisters were sent in 1870 from Pennsylvania to the diocese of St. Joseph, Missouri, where Bishop John Joseph Hogan wanted to open schools in rural areas. Several years later they separated from the Pennsylvania community. They established a motherhouse in Liberty under the leadership of Mother Mary of the Angels, the one member who had come from France. She soon realized that rural Missouri lacked the spiritual, educational and financial resources to meet the needs of a growing religious community.

This chapter will tell the story of the pilgrim sisters in Iowa, from 1877 until the turn of the century.

With the community in dire financial straits, Mother Mary and another sister travelled along the railroad line being laid north from Missouri and begged the workers for money. Railroad workers had been generous to the sisters in Pennsylvania who, in turn, had treated injured workers. In Ottumwa, Iowa, the two sisters met Father John Joseph Kreckel, pastor of St. Mary's Church. He gave the sisters permission to solicit funds in the parish and arranged for them to stay with the Visitation sisters who had established a school for girls in 1864. Upon learning that the Humility sisters also educated boys, Kreckel invited them to open a school for boys as the Visitation sisters, by their rule, taught only girls.

The entire western community—seven sisters, one novice and four postulants—moved to Ottumwa the summer of 1877. On September 8 they opened the school with 15 boys. Within a year they had opened schools in Marshalltown and Fairfield, to be followed by schools in Neola, Georgetown and Fort Madison. The process of opening new schools kept pace as the community grew in numbers through more than half of the 20th century.

Having the determination to stay, the sisters were incorporated in the state of Iowa on May 11, 1878, "to afford greater opportunity...in the establishment and management of hospitals, schools, asylums and other institutions for the relief, education and

*-150th continued on page 3*

*Photo: 1878-1890  
St. Joseph's Convent and Tally Hospital, the  
1st Motherhouse and hospital of the Sisters  
of Humility of Mary in Ottumwa, Iowa.*

# Summer 2014

## Volume 12 Issue 2

The Flame is published three times a year for the Congregation of the Humility of Mary and its friends.

Our Mission: We, the members of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary, call one another to live the Gospel with simplicity and joy following the example of Mary.

Like our founders, we strive to be attentive to the call of the Spirit in the signs of our times, especially the needs of the poor and the powerless.

We commit ourselves as individuals and as a congregation to work for justice within the human family and to care for the earth itself.

*Deuteronomy 2:7*

*"For the LORD your God has blessed you in all that you have done; He has known your wanderings through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have not lacked a thing."*

### Congregation of the Humility of Mary

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*Bishop Martin Amos, Sister Johanna Rickl and Sister Toby Lardie, HM, at Christ the King Chapel, St. Ambrose University.*

Dear Friends,

What a delightful weekend we had celebrating the legacy of our CHM community's 150 years in the United States of America! We have been blessed during the past month to receive a thoughtful gift from our Sisters of the Humility of Mary (HM) in Villa Maria, Pennsylvania. Their archivist, Sister Joanne Gardner, has prepared a 10 week series of short paragraphs describing the daily happenings in the lives of our founders from the time they left France until they arrived at Villa Maria. It is amazing to be able to look back 150 years and discover what they experienced, starting on May 23, 1864.

This issue of *The Flame* features another installment of our history as some of the sisters who were sent to Missouri experienced a call that separated them from the group in Pennsylvania. Those sisters included Sister Mary of the Angels, one of the original band of sisters from France. She was to lead the sisters who became the CHM community into Iowa. The presence of 13 members of the HM community at our 150th celebration is a reminder of the strong bond we share with our sisters in the east despite the early pain caused by the formation of the new community.

The second part of our 150th anniversary theme is to "pursue the vision." The story about Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat is but one example of how the "Search" dimension of the CHM community helps to mold the ministries that respond to current realities and needs of people. Mary Costello's recollections about an earlier CHM ministry demonstrate the fruit of listening "to the call of the spirit in the signs of our times."

The community spent time during these days of CHM Assembly and Jubilee celebration sharing stories of the past, celebrating joys of the present and exploring directions for the future. We rejoiced with many of you—our coworkers, supporters, families and friends—during an Anniversary Mass and the dinner following. We could not have such a legacy without you. Thank you, thank you, and thank you!

We need and invite you to continue being our "companions on the journey" as we CHMs move forward to "pursue the vision."

*Anniversary blessings,*

*Sister Johanna Rickl  
CHM President*

-150th continued

care of the poor and needy, the distressed, the orphans, and ignorant." The sisters were soon providing services to "poor and needy" children and adults in education, health care and social services as was expressed in their original rule.

In Carrollton, Missouri, the sisters had befriended Mrs. Mary Tally and her niece, Mary Shields. Tally was a wealthy woman from New York who, at the request of her cousin, retired Civil War General James Shields, had paid for the construction of the new St. Mary Church in Carrollton where the sisters taught. In fact she moved to Missouri to supervise the construction herself and to see it dedicated in 1872.

When Mary Tally and Mary Shields came to Ottumwa, the sisters were living in two cottages on 5th Street which they called "paradise houses," no doubt in contrast to their living quarters in Missouri. However, Mrs. Tally concluded that their housing was still inadequate. She bought property on Court Street hill complete with a two-story brick home suitable for a convent. In July 1878 the sisters moved in. Mrs. Tally and Mary Shields also made their home there—Mrs. Tally until she died in 1880 and Mary Shields until her marriage in 1885.

Upon their arrival in Iowa, the sisters nursed ailing people in their homes but the need for a hospital was well known. At the time, hospitals served primarily travelers, injured railroad workers, strangers, and the homeless poor. Mrs. Tally donated money for property north of the convent and the new Tally Hospital opened in late 1879. It was to be a "city hospital," not Catholic or Protestant, with the object to "...do good to all irrespectively."



An emergency need arose in May 1878 when Wapello County officials were notified that incurable, mentally ill residents from the county, housed in the Mt. Pleasant asylum, would be returned to the county because of overcrowding there. The sisters housed the men on the 3rd floor of the convent, an attic with dormer windows, until they could be moved to Tally Hospital when it opened. The sisters continued to care for these men until the new county home opened in 1882.

The boys' school had quickly outgrown its quarters in the St. Mary's rectory and, in 1882, Fr. Kreckel built Sacred Heart School on the corner of Fifth and Court Streets. The Visitation sisters were having difficulty getting a chaplain to offer daily Mass for them in their chapel; as cloistered sisters the rule prohibited their attending Mass in the parish church. They offered to sell their school and convent to the Humility sisters. In 1890 the CHMs bought the school and convent on Fourth Street and renamed the buildings St. Joseph Academy and Convent. The Visitation sisters moved to Nebraska. The boys and girls continued their schooling in separate classes until after the death of Fr. Kreckel in 1899. Then the two schools were reorganized so that boys and girls were taught in the Sacred Heart School up through 7th grade. Grades 8 through 12 attended St. Joseph's Academy.

From the beginning, too, the sisters took care of orphans and neglected children. The children lived with them in the Court Street convent and moved with them to Fourth Street. When the sisters accepted the administration of St. Vincent Orphanage in Davenport in 1895, the children moved with them to Davenport.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the Congregation of the Humility of Mary was well established in Ottumwa, Iowa, where the motherhouse of the Midwest branch of the community would remain for more than a century. But the movement west did not stop in Ottumwa. Early in the 20th century there was one more call and a third foundation of the Sisters of Humility was made in Great Falls, Montana. That story will be told in the next issue.

\*Sources:

CHM archives: Correspondence and other documents related to Missouri and Iowa histories.

Cusack, Sr. Marie Clemente, CHM, "Good Seed," 1969.

Schmidt, Sr. Madeleine Marie, CHM, "The History of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary in Wapello County, Iowa 1877 - 1966," No date.

"The Iowa Story, Origin of Motherhouse at Liberty, Missouri and Relocation to Ottumwa, Iowa," published by Sr. Joan Sheil, CHM, Archivist, from research and writings of Sr. Eulalia Warin, CHM, 2002.

*Photo: 1890-1902 St. Joseph Convent & Academy, the 2nd Motherhouse and 1st academy of the Sisters of Humility of Mary in Ottumwa, Iowa.*

# Faith in the Countryside

by Kathleen Storms, SSND, Director, Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat

The 35-year history of Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat began with a dream to help adults grow in faith and prayer. In June of 1979, The New Horizons of Faith Board was established after considerable research and consultation. At that time adult religious education, especially in rural areas, was not a priority of the Davenport Diocese. The purpose set forth in the articles of incorporation included religious educational programs for adults. An evaluation in 1980 showed a great interest in prayer and liturgy, spirituality, Scripture and personal relationships. Over 40 parishes and clusters of parishes in all six deaneries of the Davenport Diocese sponsored courses by New Horizons of Faith.

By 1987 the Davenport Diocese was again emphasizing adult religious education, particularly by providing training of catechists for parishes. People began to ask for a retreat center and Father Vincent Fabula, OSCO, recommended the possibility of establishing a spirituality center in the Davenport Diocese. He envisioned a farm with some timber and a house for the director and a few guests, with the

*This card is loaded with endless thanks for all you do to create such a warm, loving and beautiful environment for all who come to "retreat"! As for the meals, one could travel the "universe" and not find anything as tasty as your meals! When asking you what's all in your recipes, you forgot to mention the overflowing ingredients of love and joy!*

future possibility of several hermitages. The center would be available for individual solitude, prayer and spiritual direction plus small group meetings, workshops and short courses and experiences.

It took years and examination of 47 different properties before the 208 acre Dierickx farm near Wheatland, Iowa, was purchased using funds raised by Fr. Fabula. The fields were planted with prairie grass, the Victorian House was restored, a wing was added for a chapel and library, another wing with two bedrooms and bath. The place was named Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat.

Everything was in place when Fr. Fabula became ill in the spring of 1997. He lived at The Prairie almost until his death in July 1998. Since he was a member of the New Melleray Community, Peosta, Iowa, the property belonged to the Trappist community. On August 5, 1999 the Congregation of the Humility of Mary purchased the land, buildings, furnishings and equipment from the Trappists to continue the spiritual work of The Prairie. CHM Sisters Joann Kuebrich and Cathleen Real were appointed as the first staff of The Prairie. In May 2000 Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat opened with summer and fall offerings. In 2003 the Prairie Heights addition was completed, allowing space to accommodate 14 overnight guests and up to 35 individuals for day programs.

During the ensuing decade, the labyrinth was created, stations of the cross from the former Marycrest College were erected, the Cosmic Walk's 22 stone markers were placed along the walking paths to tell the story of creation, and the gazebo and other meditation areas were built. The natural beauty of the rolling prairie was augmented with the planting of prairie grasses and wildflowers, the



*Prairie Retreat Director, Sister Kathleen Storms, SSND, with Prairie board member Brian Nauman and his wife Sherry.*

harvesting of mature and downed trees and the planting of almost 500 native species trees. This year, pollinator strips of prairie grasses and flowers have been planted along the grassy lanes to attract bees and butterflies. A passive solar greenhouse and covered raised-bed garden adds to the growing power of a well-established vegetable garden.

In 2011, Kathleen Storms, SSND, was named the new director of the Prairie with Kathleen Henneberry, CHM, as assistant. In 2012 the New Horizons of Faith board of directors was dissolved as The Prairie was placed under the umbrella of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary ministries. Sr. Storms is currently assisted by CHM Sisters Marcia Eckerman and Rae Elwood. With Sisters Kathleen and Marcia residing in the Victorian House, The Prairie is able to accommodate guests and programs the entire year. The 2014 calendar of events boasts of 64 programs while hosting 80 guest groups and almost a constant flow of private retreatants. Besides offering a spiritual presence in the countryside, The Prairie offers locally grown, naturally raised foods to all its guests.

(Much of the content of this article was taken from *A Sketch of the Past* written by Sister Bernadine Pieper, CHM, August 1999)

# Giving Back

by Karen Brooke, CHM Development Director

Mary Aubry Costello was a graduate of St. Mary's High School, Moline, Illinois in 1943 and had applied for a scholarship to Marycrest College. She was the first in her family to aspire to a college education, and her parents couldn't afford to pay for her tuition. Mary was surprised and delighted to learn she had been granted a full scholarship. At that time tuition was \$200 per semester, and her scholarship would continue as long as she maintained honor roll status. Mary recalls, "My area of interest at the time was fashion design, and the art professor at Marycrest was Sr. Mary Clarice Eberdt, PhD. She had done post graduate work at the University of Iowa, Notre Dame University, the Vogue School of Art in Chicago and many other prestigious schools, and was wonderful. I remember the first class I attended, 'Introduction to Art,' I couldn't take my eyes off Sr. Clarice. She was so knowledgeable and I was learning so much. Never having taken art classes before, a whole new world was opening up to me. I was like a sponge, learning the rules and principles of art, absorbing everything she said. Sister was humble, extremely bright and had had so many art experiences which she generously passed on to us. She taught classes in fashion design, interior decoration, mechanical drawing, art appreciation,

sculpture and many more. We learned to express ourselves—to be original. Sr. Clarice was a beautiful woman inside and out, and deeply spiritual. She addressed God in all her artwork, and her whole life was devoted to her Maker. Life for the sisters in the early years at Marycrest wasn't easy. There wasn't a 'convent' or residence for them. Sr. Clarice slept in her art classroom for at least some of the years I attended and the four years before. Most of us overlooked the rollaway bed that was folded up in the corner.

*My life was transformed by Sister Clarice, her classes and what I learned from her.*

Dorothy Barto O'Donnell was another freshman art major, and we became great friends during our four years at Marycrest, taking most of the same classes. Dorothy was very talented (far better than I) but I persevered! Sr. Clarice was very encouraging, and I enrolled in all her classes. In 1947 Dorothy and I became the first art major graduates from the college. Marycrest was founded in 1939, so we were the end of the second four-year class.

I had almost given up the idea of fashion design for a career because it was very challenging to break into, and I was taking education classes as a backup. 'Just in case,' I told myself. It was a great decision as art teachers



Mary Aubry Costello

were in demand at the time. During my senior year and the year following, I taught art and home economics at the two Bettendorf schools, Washington and Lincoln. The next year the art instructor at Immaculate Conception Academy, an all girl's high school in Davenport, broke her leg and I took her place. As a single young college graduate I was employed in a variety of art related positions: office work in a private agency, Tri-City Ad Art; advertising manager for Block and Kuhl, a department store in Rock Island (doing advertising layouts); and finally selling ads and designing layouts for *The Moline Dispatch*.

In 1951, I married Ken Costello. We moved to Davenport, and when I was expecting our first child, I quit working. Through those years I kept in close contact with Sr. Clarice whom I then considered a dear friend. By 1968 all six of our children were in school, so I began teaching art full time at McKinley School in Davenport, and continued there for nineteen years. My life was transformed

by Sr. Clarice, her classes and what I learned from her. Without her influence I would never have been involved in art, chosen teaching as a career, worked at a newspaper or had the confidence and ability needed to author and illustrate two books—volumes that explore each of the 222 bridges across the Mississippi River. I also wrote and illustrated a novel about the Quad City region in the 1850s.

Sr. Clarice was my mentor, friend, guide, inspiration and model. She was a gifted artist, who in her later years was physically challenged and limited by Parkinson's disease. Rarely complaining, she always thanked God for the gifts she had been given. Her legacy continues today, in her artwork, in my life, in the lives of so many who were inspired by her teaching, and in the Congregation of the Humility of Mary."

Mary recently gifted copies of her books, *Climbing the Mississippi River Bridge by Bridge, Volumes I and II*; and *Mississippi River Dreams: Coming of Age in the 1850s* to the Humility of Mary Center Library.

# A Time of Planning and Celebration

by Lisa Martin, CHM Communications Director

A weekend of meetings and special events occurred during the annual CHM General Assembly which took place June 26-29, 2014, at the St. Ambrose University Rogalski Center. More than 100 sisters and associates attended the annual meeting, with many traveling from across the United States and Mexico to be present.

The CHM General Assembly is a time for community business, sharing among members, and celebration. This year's theme was "Growing in the Spirit of Our CHM Founders" and featured key note speaker Sister Helen Garvey, BVM. Special events during the weekend included:

- A welcoming rite for new associates
- A memorial service for sisters and associates who died since the assembly last year
- A celebration marking 150 years of CHM service in the United States
- A Jubilee Mass celebrating sister anniversaries within the community



CHM President Sister Johanna Rickl addresses the assembly of sisters and associates.



CHM Sisters Mary Ann Vogel, Catherine Linnenkamp and Regina Mary Cratty get creative with yarn during an exercise in "weaving community."



CHM Sisters Mary Bea Snyder and Barbara Kopel celebrated their 50th Jubilee during a Mass of Celebration in Christ the King Chapel.



Many people helped in the planning of the entire weekend of activities including CHM Sisters Marie Vittetoe, Kathleen Tomlonovic, HM Sister Paulette Kirschensteiner, CHM Sisters Marilyn Berger and Kathleen Henneberry.



*Dan DeVries and Harriett Ping, CHM*

*CHM Associates Olivia Ortega, Sue Witte, Jan Pullella and Evalee Mickey welcomed guests to the 150th Anniversary Mass held in the Christ the King Chapel on the St. Ambrose University Campus in Davenport, IA. A dinner was held after in the Rogalski Center.*



*CHM Sisters Kathleen Hanley and Lynn Mousel*



*Marian Smith, CHM, and Mary Elizabeth Earl*



*Gary Lane and Jude Fitzpatrick, CHM*



*Miriam Ehrhardt, CHM, and Russell Sellers*



*Paul Krzmarzick, Marcia Eckerman, CHM, and George Straetker*



*BVM Sisters Helen Garvey and Mira Mosle*



**Welcome CHM Associate Patti Norris**

Patti is a native of Moline, Illinois and is interested in deepening her spirituality and helping the CHM sisters in carrying out their ministries.

*Resting in Heavenly Peace*

Selma Hanley  
CHM Associate

January 22, 1923 -  
April 25, 2014





## *The Spirit of the Prairie*

**Sunday, August 24, 2014 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.**

*Join us for a spirit-filled afternoon at*  
**Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat**  
2664 145th Avenue  
(near) Wheatland, Iowa

**Summer Buffet ~ Spirits ~ Live Music**  
**Locally produced food, wines and beer!**  
**\$40 per person**

For more information and to register online go to  
**www.chmiowa.org**

*Proceeds benefit Prairie Retreat programs*

Driving directions can be found at  
**www.chmiowa.org**

or for your convenience, park at  
the Humility of Mary Center,  
820 West Central Park Avenue, Davenport,  
and take a shuttle directly to The Prairie.  
Please call **563-323-9466** for shuttle and  
additional party information.

### **Cosmic Walk Level Sponsors:**



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