



Sisters Of Mercy Motherhouse, Blossom Road, Rochester

Century Of Devoted Service To Diocese

Diocesan Sisterhood staffs over 25 institutions, teaches 11,500 pupils

Community started by Irish-born Sisters at St. Mary's, Rochester, in 1857

ONE HUNDRED YEARS of teaching, nursing and social service in the Diocese of Rochester will bring congratulations and prayerful thanks to 358 members of the community of the Sisters of Mercy this weekend.

For it was June 8, 1857, that five Mercy Sisters, led by Mother Francis Xavier Warde, their American superior, and Bishop John Timon, of Buffalo, entered Rochester and took up residence on South Street next to Old St. Mary's Church.

Next morning Bishop Timon celebrated Mass for them and with the blessing of God upon their destiny the works of Mercy began in Rochester.

Today in the 12-county Diocese of Rochester, the Sisters of Mercy are teaching in 21 elementary schools and 2 high schools, besides owning and staffing two other major high schools. They conduct a junior college, a nurses' training school and a reading clinic.

They are directly in charge of the instruction of 10,074 grammar school pupils and 1,421 high school boys and girls.

During the regular school year the Sisters give catechetical instruction to approximately 1,500 public school pupils in the diocesan Released Time program.

During the summer months they conduct 13 Religious Vacation Schools with an enrollment of nearly 1,000 pupils, staff the kitchen and housekeeping departments of the diocesan Camp Stella Maris for boys and girls and run four Reading Laboratories with a registration of over 200.

ROCHESTER'S MERCY Sisters trace their origin back to Dublin, Ire-

land, to a "House of Mercy" opened on Baggott Street by Catherine Elizabeth McAuley in 1831.

The foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, who won papal approval for her community in 1840, did not live to see the spread of her community to America nor did she dream that in 125 years her spiritual daughters would number 24,000 and would be scattered around the world as the second largest religious community of women in the Church.

Mother Francis Warde, collaborator of Mother McAuley, was the leader of the courageous band of six Sisters who left their native Ireland to inaugurate in Pittsburgh, in December, 1843, the first American chapter

of the Mercy apostolate to "the poor, sick and ignorant."

Bishop John Timon, first Bishop of Buffalo, which then included all the present Diocese of Rochester, early in 1856, appealed to Mother Warde at the Mercy Convent in Providence, Rhode Island, to send Sisters to Rochester for opening a school and performing works of mercy for the sick and poor.

Plans were made with the Rev. Thomas McEvoy, pastor of St. Mary's Church in Rochester, to receive the Sisters and to house them in a convent adjacent to the church which had been vacated by the Bridgetine Sisters who had briefly labored in the village.

The Rochester foundation, in June of 1857, made up of Irish-born Sisters from the Rhodé Island convent was the fifth of 32 American convents established personally by Mother Warde in the 53 years of her religious life. She died in 1884.

IN SEPTEMBER of 1857 the Sisters converted spare rooms in their convent and opened a "select boarding school" for girls of elementary and secondary levels, the Academy of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady of Mercy.

They also took up teaching in the first parochial school in St. Mary's parish in the basement of the church. Boys in the school were taught by the Christian Brothers.

Hand in hand with the teaching began the daily visitation of the sick in the parish and care for the dying.

In the early part of 1859 a "House of Mercy" adjoining the South Street convent was opened. Here "women of good character" out of employment were given a suitable home and board until they could find jobs.

At this same time a "soup kitchen" was set up in the convent to feed the unemployed and unfortunate. This work of charity became a vital civic asset in the hard times which hit Rochester as a result of the Civil War.

Other social welfare activities of the Sisters in those days included a day nursery for the babies of women who worked during the day and an employment bureau for securing jobs for poor women.

As the parochial work of the Sisters increased and demands were made for help from other dioceses,



Modern day Mercy Sisters follow spiritual footsteps of Dublin Foundress Mother Mary Catherine McAuley

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