



Vision

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF NEW YORK

VOL. 25, ISSUE 2 *Now in Our Third Century of Living Lives of Love* SPRING 2021

IT IS A STORY OF THOUSANDS OF LIVES OF LOVE AND SERVICE,
a story of passion for God's poor, a story of caring and compassion.
It is a story of needs met, difficulties faced — mostly, with little or no resources.
It is a story of the marvelous mission of Charity — and without you,
our partners in ministry, the story would not be complete.

2009 Journal, *Only for Your Love*

From the President

Dear Friends,

Some might consider that I was unusual as a child because I do not remember ever having a real hero or heroine. Yes, I liked television and movie actors and even sports figures, but no one that I considered my hero. It was difficult at Halloween to know who I wanted to be for trick or treating.

As I grew older, I always had trouble with the frequently asked essay question: "If you could have lunch with anyone at all, living or deceased, who would it be and why?" I always knew what I wanted to order for lunch, but not with whom I wanted to share it!

I am happy to tell you that I now have heroes. In the past few decades I have come to know many men and women who work with our sponsored ministries or serve as administrators or trustees. Their commitment, dedication, expertise, compassion and embodiment of the charism of charity make them heroic in my eyes. I invite you to read in this issue about some of our heroes and heroines who partner with us in our ministries.

Our sisters join me in thanking you, our other heroes, who provide us with the financial and spiritual support to continue our ministries. We are grateful to you.

On another note, I think we are all happy that spring has finally arrived. May it be the dawning of a new year filled with light and the promise of good things to come. I share one of the poems about spring that I find inspirational.

Spring

By Gerard Manley Hopkins

Nothing is so beautiful as spring —

When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;

Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush

Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring

The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;

The glassy pear tree leaves and blooms, they brush

The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush

With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?

A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning

In Eden garden. — Have, get, before it cloy,

Before it cloud, Christ, Lord, and sour with sinning,

Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,

Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.

Blessings,



Sr. Donna Dodge, SC



VISION enables the Sisters of Charity of New York to make a cohesive statement about how we reveal God's love in our lives and the many and varied ways in which we respond to the signs of the times.



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Cover: Mount Saint Vincent Campus; photo courtesy of the College of Mount Saint Vincent



Above: Photojournalist Jacob Riis captured this photo of Sister Mary Irene Fitzgibbon, a nurse and several "Foundlings," circa 1889.

The Foundling Story— First Board Members' Impact on the Early Days

By Mary Mc Cormick, SC

The plight of abandoned children in the aftermath of the Civil War was acute. Desperate mothers unable to care for their children would leave them on church steps, at convent doors, at times on the streets of New York City's slums.

Archbishop John Mc Closkey was determined to do something for the children, and in early 1869 asked Mother Mary Jerome Ely to undertake their care. She, in turn, chose Sr. Mary Irene Fitzgibbon to open a house for them, who "for her encouragement was given five dollars and Sr. Teresa Vincent..." (Paul Blakely, SJ, *America*).

Sr. Irene was a well-seasoned teacher and principal by this time, but a long-standing passion of hers was to provide loving care for abandoned children. She felt her appointment to this work was a long-awaited sign from God.

As a spiritual daughter of Vincent de Paul and Elizabeth Seton, Sr. Irene knew that she would need the help of concerned and professionally qualified religious and laity if the enterprise were to succeed.

Along with Sisters Teresa Vincent and Mary Frances Wallace, she visited infant asylums conducted by the Daughters of Charity in Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington to assess best practices.

Then, on October 8, 1869, Mother Mary Jerome and six sisters, including Sr. Irene, met with lawyer Mr. John Develin to sign the Foundling's Articles of Incorporation, which he had secured from the New York State Legislature.

On October 11, 1869, the mission was officially launched in a house located at 17 East 12th Street. They received their first child later that rainy night, a baby girl, Sarah H.

To supplement the community's meager resources for the institution's maintenance, Sr. Irene organized The Foundling Asylum Society, composed of some of the most distinguished and involved members of New York's Catholic laity. Its first officers were Mrs. Paul Thebaud (whose husband was the first consulting physician of the Foundling), Mrs. Terence Donnelly, Mrs. John Fox and Mrs. Frank Otis.

By 1870 it was clear that the Foundling had outgrown its original quarters. Mrs. Richard Connolly persuaded her husband to apply to the New York State Legislature for a grant to erect a larger building, able to house between 500 and 600 children.

The State Legislature empowered the Common Council of the City of New York to grant a site for the Foundling and appropriate \$100,000 towards its construction on the condition that another \$100,000 be raised by private contributions.

A Building Committee was formed by the business and professional men of the city to oversee the project. They included Joseph O'Donohoe, John D. Crimmins, William Lummis, John Mullaly, Charles O'Connor, David Develin, T. Glover Barry, Jeremiah Quinlan and John Fox.

Their first fund-raiser, held in conjunction with the Ladies' Society, realized the sum of \$71,000. The remaining \$29,000 came from private contributions.

From the Building Committee formed in 1870 grew a permanent Lay Advisory Board, organized in 1874 under the direction of Msgr. Thomas Scott Preston, who served

Continued, see page 12, bottom left

Carrying the Mission Forward

The Sisters of Charity Ministry Network (SCMN) was created by the Sisters of Charity Board in March 2015 to strengthen the Congregation's sponsored ministries and provide for their best possible future. Continuing the mission with the Sisters of Charity values is essential. The Sponsorship Advisory Council worked with board chairs, CEOs, and professional consultants to restructure member institutions in accordance with civil law and church (canon) law.

The SCMN consists of a board of trustees that includes Sisters of Charity and lay professional colleagues. The responsibilities of the SCMN Board include assuring that the mission is carried out, appointing board members and making decisions about the final disposition of property and assets of each member organization.

Included in the SCMN are Elizabeth Seton Children's Center, Elizabeth Seton Children's Rehabilitation Center and Elizabeth Seton Children's School (formerly the John A. Coleman School), and Elizabeth Seton Children's Foundation; The New York Foundling; Saint Joseph's Medical Center, which includes St. Vincent's Westchester; and Seton Ministries, Inc., established as a new entity in 2020. Seton Ministries is the parent board for Elizabeth Seton Women's Center, Life Experience and Faith Sharing Associates (LEFSA), Sisters Hill Farm, and Sisters of Charity Multiservice Center (Casa de Esperanza).

At present, there are 166 Trustees serving on the local and Network boards, consisting of 143 laypersons and 23 Sisters.

Mindful of the steady decline in the number of Sisters of Charity available to serve as trustees, the member organizations have increasingly added "other than Sisters of Charity" to their boards. These professional colleagues are committed to support and maintain services in the spirit of the Sisters of Charity. To ensure that the spirit of the Congregation continues, the SCMN has invested in a leadership engagement program for board members. The program provides reflection time individually and in groups for them to become better informed about the history and values and the tradition of service that the Sisters inspired at the outset of these organizations' founding.

Therefore, trustees' education focuses on personal transformation that develops gradually from experiences, reading and



By Teri Tynes
with Karen Helfenstein, SC

reflection. The goal is to give trustees a sense of confidence in speaking about the mission to a variety of audiences—donors, civic leaders, Church leaders, patients, students, staff and volunteers—as they exercise leadership in the spirit of the Sisters of Charity. Furthermore, lay leaders are literally entrusted to extend the charism of the Vincentian tradition and the Sisters of Charity into the future.

To fulfill these goals, in 2020, the Sponsorship Advisory Council (SAC) developed a course of study, *Keepers of the Flame: An Orientation for Trustees*. The material for the orientation drew on the materials prepared in 2015 for SC Associates. Maureen Russell, the Coordinator of the Associate Program at the time, and Stephen Sweeny, Associate of the Sisters of Charity, played essential roles in adapting the materials for trustee reading

and reference.

As with associate formation, *Keepers of the Flame* presents an in-depth examination of three foundational values of the Sisters of Charity: Mission, Charism, and Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation. Sessions were originally designed to be held in person, but the arrival of the pandemic forced the organizers to restructure the course for online learning. Now, trustees meet together with sisters via video conference to learn the material. They then gather in "breakout sessions" for discussion with a skilled facilitator and design-team members. The design team functions as a work group that considers any changes or revisions to improve the program. The team includes Sr. Regina Bechtle, John Caruso, Sr. Jean Flannelly, Sr. Karen Helfenstein, Maureen Russell and Steve Surprenant, who also serves as facilitator.

Sponsorship Advisory Council members are Sr. Carol Barnes, Jennifer Coffey, Esq., Sr. Carol De Angelo, Eric Feldmann, Sr. Jean Flannelly, Sr. Karen Helfenstein, Steve Korf, Maureen Russell, Steve Sweeny and Maureen Tomkiel.

The Sisters of Charity Ministry Network Board of Trustees consists of Sr. Donna Dodge, Chair; Jennifer Coffey, Esq., Secretary; Sr. Margaret Sweeney, OP, Treasurer; Sr. Sheila Brosnan; John Caruso; Sr. Andrea Dixon, Sr. Karen Helfenstein, Sr. Mary Mc Cormick; and Sarah Stevenson.

More than 35 trustees are in the first two cohorts of *Keepers of the Flame*. Charity is rising in Sponsorship!

SPOTLIGHT: Partners in Ministry

“Keepers of the Flame”

For over 200 years, partnership with the laity has been a hallmark of the Sisters of Charity mission. Today, this partnership is more important than ever.

In this first of a series, the Sisters of Charity are honored to spotlight individuals who so generously give their time, expertise and experience to carry the mission forward.

How did you become involved with the Sisters of Charity?

What does it mean to you to serve as a trustee?

Jennifer Coffey, Esq.,
Secretary, SC Ministry
Network Board Member,
Sponsorship Advisory Council



I started working in the Legal Department at St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan in 2003. I met Sr. Jane Iannucelli who represented the Sisters of Charity as well as one of Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers' corporate members. I got to know the mission while working at the hospital and met many Sisters of Charity during my tenure there. It was a wonderful place to work, as the sisters and my colleagues were all dedicated to providing quality and compassionate

health care to underserved patient populations. The Sisters of Charity of New York is a community of educated, talented, intelligent, passionate and dedicated women who are motivated to help those in need, especially those who live in poverty. They are a unique group of women religious who never cease to inspire me through their continuous compassion, acts of kindness, and faith. It is refreshing to be around such selfless individuals whose primary mission is to serve the most disadvantaged people in our communities without expecting anything in return.

Throughout my years of service, I have learned more about the Congregation's sponsored ministries. My family and I participated in a few events throughout the years and loved being around such dedicated, empathetic people.

Even in small part, serving with the Sisters of Charity provides me with unique and lovely experiences that are incredibly refreshing and inspirational, especially during these challenging times.

Brian Doran
Member, SC Housing Development Corporation Board

Following my college graduation in 1980, I had the great privilege and opportunity to work with the sisters at the former St. Vincent's Hospital on Staten Island. I was part of the community relations team and worked with Eric Feldmann, the hospital's Director of Community Relations. Subsequently, I served on the hospital's Advisory Board. Then, in the 1990s, as the SCNY mission continued to evolve in senior housing, I was asked to serve on the founding board of St. Vincent's Manor and the additional housing development fund boards established for the Staten Island senior housing locations. More recently, Sr. Donna Dodge asked me to serve on the Housing Development Corporation Board.

I feel honored and blessed to be a small part of the continuing and evolving mission of SCNY in giving to those

less fortunate, those who, but for the sisters' intervention and care, might be forgotten or neglected. That mission is more than providing care and services; in the case of housing, the mission is more than just providing a roof and walls around the person. It is about providing spiritual and loving care and support to those in need. It is about living the life of Jesus, St. Vincent and St. Elizabeth in doing more for others, particularly those who may have little or nothing. The years may continue to pass, but my appreciation of the mission of the Sisters of Charity of New York also continues to grow.



Peter McKeever

*Member, Elizabeth Seton Children's Center Board,
Elizabeth Seton Children's Foundation*



My relationship with the Sisters of Charity began 64 years ago—at the time of my birth. At that time, my natural mother placed me with the sisters at the New York Foundling. I remained in their loving care for five months before they found a wonderful mom and dad to call my own. Four years later, my parents would also adopt my sister. My aunt was also a Sister

of Charity who taught at Cathedral High School and the College of Mount Saint Vincent for many years. I attended

St. Gabriel School in Riverdale, which the Sisters of Charity also staffed. The sisters had a powerful influence on my life. I have been a constant beneficiary of their ministries; they provided me with a safe home when I was born, placed me with a loving family, and provided me with an excellent education.

I've had the privilege of serving as a board member of Elizabeth Seton Children's for the past 21 years and was board chair for six of those years. During that time, I had the opportunity to serve alongside many outstanding and dedicated professionals. The most valuable experience has been learning about the importance of "mission" from the sisters. It's at the core of everything we do. At Elizabeth Seton Children's, not only do we provide essential services to those most vulnerable in our society, but we do so with love and compassion. For over 200 years, this is the legacy passed down from St. Elizabeth Seton and St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac before her. To play a small part in that ministry is a great personal reward.

Maureen Russell

*Member, Sponsorship Advisory Council
Keepers of the Flame Design Team*

I graduated from the College of Mount Saint Vincent and later worked there for 32 years. During much of that time, I coordinated events and use of campus facilities, which brought me into close contact with many Sisters. After I retired from the College, I became an Associate of the Sisters of Charity, then served as Coordinator of Associates for five years.

While I was still at the College, I was asked to serve on a sponsorship task force for the Sisters of Charity's varied ministries. The task force evolved into the Sponsorship Advisory Council; I have served on the Council since its inception almost ten years ago.



I find the work I do for the Sisters of Charity to be rewarding, meaningful and enjoyable. Like other Sponsorship Advisory Council members, I am passionate about our ministries' work and their continuation. Even more important is the future of the mission of the Sisters of Charity. It is vital to ensure that trustees are not only grounded in that mission but prepared to pass it on to future generations of ministry leaders and trustees. It is a privilege to have participated in the design of *Keepers of the Flame* and participate in its implementation.

join us

SISTERS OF CHARITY NEW YORK

unstoppable charity

A VIRTUAL TRIBUTE TO
OUR FRONTLINE WORKERS

THURSDAY, MAY 20, 2021
7PM EST

For additional information, please contact
Anne Marie Gardiner, Director of Development
718-879-5262 or amgardiner@scny.org





Jackie Wright
(left) and Gladys
Calderon, Mount
Saint Vincent
Convent Staff

Fratelli Tutti— On Fraternal and Social Friendship

By Bill Hurley, Associate

Pope Francis published the third encyclical of his papacy on October 3, 2020. It was not a coincidence that we celebrate the feast of St. Francis of Assisi on this date. *Fratelli Tutti* were the words of St. Francis when he proposed to his brothers and sisters a way of life marked by the Gospel. Wherever Francis of Assisi went, he sought peace and dignity for those to whom he ministered: the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast.

In his encyclical, Pope Francis asks us to treat each human being with dignity, and he asks us all to dream together of a world of peace and friendship. Our Pope uses the Parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of the choices we face to live life as followers of Jesus. He tells us, “the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.” We are them, and they are us.

At Assembly 2019, the Congregation re-claimed as a ministry the working and praying for peace, justice and the integrity of creation. Little did we know then that Pope Francis would soon be asking all citizens of the world to live these values by action and prayers in these troubled times.

In our own Ministry of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation, we find a partnership of sisters, associates, companions and volunteers who are educating, advocating, and praying for systemic change. They work to cultivate change in the attitudes and habits of countries in the areas of immigration, climate change, treatment of the poor, racial injustice, white privilege, voter rights and pandemics. Through this ministry, we simply seek dignity for all.

Working hand in hand to affect system change, sisters, associates, companions and volunteers strive to directly impact the lives of the poor and vulnerable. Within the SC Seton Ministries, the Elizabeth Seton Women’s Center provides educational opportunities and discussion groups to help women live the dignity Pope Francis tells us we each deserve.



Assisi, Italy — October 3, 2020: Pope Francis celebrated Mass at the tomb of St. Francis inside Assisi’s Basilica of St. Francis, and then signed his new encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. Vatican Media/CNA

Life Experience and Faith Sharing Associates (LEFSA) truly assist their neighbors and those who fall along the roadside. This group of formerly homeless individuals works tirelessly to lift their homeless sisters’ and brothers’ spirits. Their dedication and understanding provide those they serve with a sense of trust they often do not feel elsewhere.

The leadership and staff of our Sisters Hill Farm dedicate themselves to sustainably grow healthy, nutritious vegetables and to teach others how to do the same. Their distribution of vegetables has been a blessing to the increasing numbers of people who have lost their jobs and seen their lifestyle change so drastically because of our nation’s health crisis.

Casa de Esperanza, the Sisters of Charity Multiservice Center, operates in Southwest Yonkers. Many newly arrived in America learn English, receive vocational training, family care education, and individual services, providing hope and dignity for today and their future.

To ignore the message of *Fratelli Tutti* would be to deny our Mission. The Pope’s message brings expanded life to Charity Rising. As Pope Francis’s words are words for today, our commitment continues to provide ministries for today. Our ministries of prayer and service allow us and those with whom we journey to dream together of a world of peace and friendship.

From the 1953 Brooklyn Dodgers to a Sister of Charity

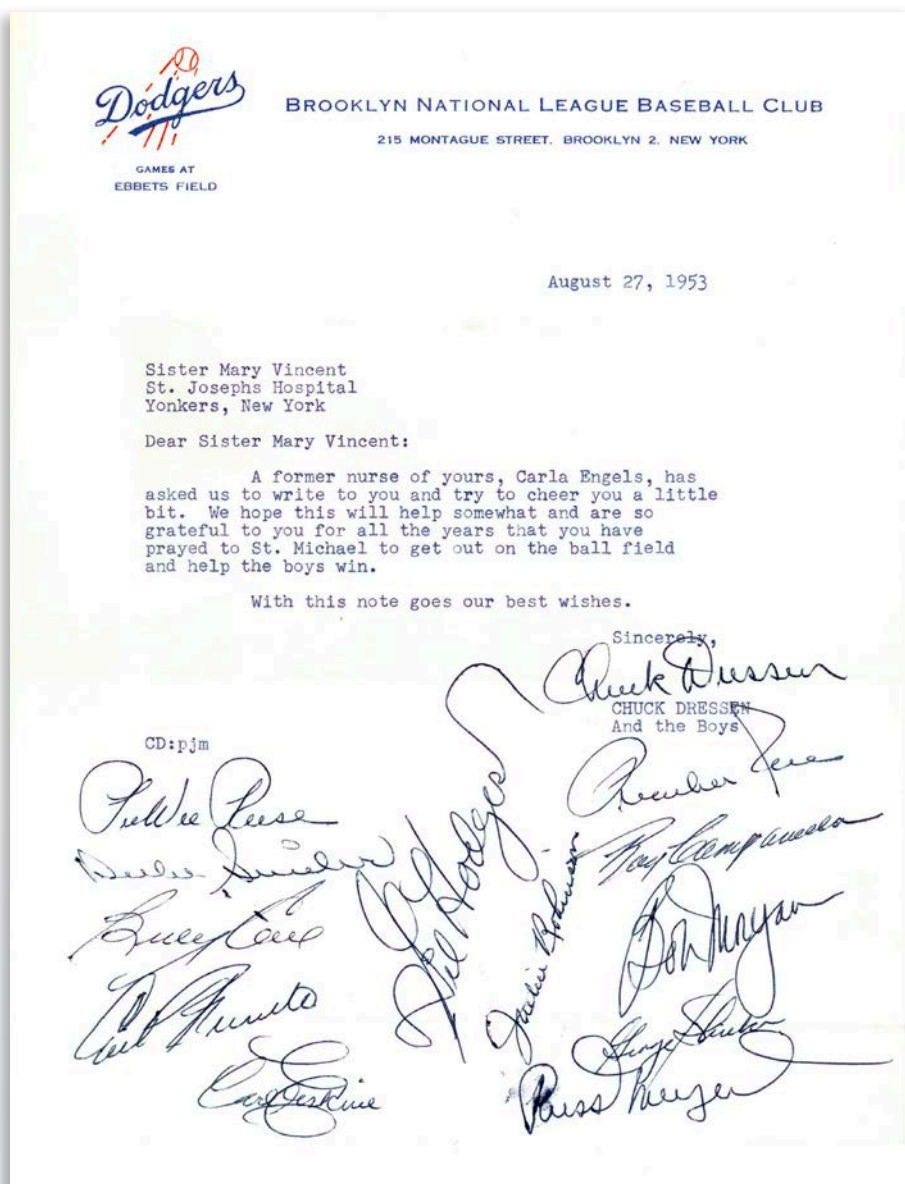
By Mindy Gordon, Archivist

It's a statement often repeated in the world of archivists, "You never know what you are going to find." Last January 2020, while researching a question in documents from St. Mary's Hospital, Brooklyn, two misplaced letters were discovered on Brooklyn National League Baseball Club "Dodgers" letterhead. The letters were both written on Sr. Vincent Maria O'Brien's behalf, a beloved staff member at St. Joseph's Hospital in Yonkers, who was quite ill at that time. Incorrectly addressed to "Sr. Mary Vincent," a letter dated August 27, 1953, was signed by Chuck Dressen,¹ Manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, "And the Boys," referring to the baseball players on the team that year. An interesting story emerged as this curiosity was further investigated.

Although the name of the addressee, Sr. Mary Vincent, was incorrect, the sentiment was sincere. When Sr. Vincent Maria's health declined, Carla Engels, her nurse at St. Joseph's Hospital, wrote to the Dodgers, informing them that Sr. Vincent, a loyal fan, was ill. In the response letter, Mr. Dressen wrote, "We hope this will help somewhat and are so grateful to you for all the years that you have prayed to St. Michael to get out on the ball field and help the boys win." The letter also included signatures of 12 players: Pee Wee Reese, Duke Snider, Billy Cox, Carl Furillo, Carl Erskine, Gil Hodges, Jackie Robinson, Preacher Roe, Roy Campanella, Bob Morgan, George Shuba and Russ Meyer.

Unaware of Ms. Engel's outreach to the team, Dr. Michael J. Lynch, a St. Joseph staff doctor, also wrote to the Dodgers club on behalf of Sr. Vincent Maria and mentioned her poor health. The response letter from Fresco Thompson² states, "Please tell Sister Vincent that the players on the Dodgers feel very confident that this is their year to destroy Yankee supremacy."

In view of the historical interest and potential market value, the letters were brought to James Spence Authentication for appraisal. The company reported that while the letterhead



is genuine, the signatures, unfortunately, are inauthentic. The appraiser explained that it was common practice at that time for office staff to pen requested autographs. Some, it was revealed, "had become very good at it." These signatures were often written by the same office staff, most likely the women, who also typed the dictated correspondence. In the center of the letter the initials "CD:pjm" indicates the letter was authored by Chuck Dressen and typed by an employee, "pjm," who may have also contributed some of the signatures on the page.

The inauthenticity of these signatures, however, does not diminish the historical value or the sentiment conveyed. The letter's informational value is significant as a part of Community history and reveals an aspect of personal interest and regard. In addition to Sr. Vincent's career as a devoted Sister of Charity who served in three metropolitan area hospitals, she was apparently held in high esteem by her coworkers, who were inspired to contact the Dodgers club, hoping to rejuvenate her spirits.

Continued, see page 12, bottom right



“WE/US”: An Ever-Widening Circle

By Regina Bechtle, SC



OUR MISSION AS SISTERS OF CHARITY IS
TO SHARE IN THE ONGOING MISSION OF JESUS

by responding to the signs of the times
in the spirit of Saints Elizabeth Ann Seton,
Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac

by revealing God's love in our lives
and in our varied ministries
with and for all in need,
especially those who live in poverty.

December 2020

December 2020 Sisters of Charity Mission Statement

“People are hungry, and one good word is bread for a thousand.” As David Whyte reminds us in his poem, “Loaves and Fishes,” and as many events of recent months attest, *words matter*.

The Sisters of Charity of New York recently completed a three-year process of reviewing and revising our Constitution and Directory, the documents that describe our life and mission. [Note: Timothy Cardinal Dolan formally approved these documents in the name of the Church in December 2020.]

We took a fresh look at the last revision (1984) and the words we used to speak about God, humankind, creation and the scope of the Congregation's mission in light of new needs. This and subsequent articles will highlight some new and revised emphases.

At a December 2020 video-conference meeting of the Congregation, President Sr. Donna Dodge asked, “What call are we hearing during this season of a global pandemic? How can we best respond in Charity to promote justice? What new partnerships are being called forth at this time? What structures can we put in the service of Charity through our Boards, institutions, investments, prayers, and actions?”

Her questions impel us to imagine new and creative ways of collaboration.

Our 1984 documents recognized the need for partnerships with lay colleagues in ministry and welcomed them. Our statements consciously reflected the teaching of Vatican Council II that the laity *are* the church; the decisions and circumstances of the intervening decades have propelled us to put flesh on those words.

Today, Pope Francis repeatedly urges us by his deeds and words (see his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*) to create networks of relationship and to enlarge our understanding of “we/us.” Lay leadership is now the norm rather than the exception in all our ministries.

Our revised 2020 Constitution and Directory build on and extend the 1984 statements. Following are some examples that express our beliefs and hopes about collaboration:

... Our Christian living is to be shared with the larger community of Church and society; in the measure of our sharing, the vitality of our community life is strengthened and renewed.

(*Constitution, Life in Community*, #3.8, 1984 & 2020)

Recognizing that every Christian has a vocation to ministry, we work together with others to develop new channels to further the reign of God.... We also work with others to identify new needs and to advocate for changes in social, economic and environmental systems to improve the lives of the most vulnerable.

(*Constitution, Ministries*, #5.3 & 5.5, 2020)

As we witness to our belief in the principles of Christian stewardship, we are often called to deeper conversion by the example of persons in all walks of life who are committed to living these same principles.

(*Constitution, Stewardship*, #7.6, 2020)

Through the Associate Relationship program, the Congregation offers women and men who are committed to another state in life the opportunity to share in our charism and mission and to enrich us with their vision of Christian life...

(*Directory, Membership*, #5.6, 1984 & 2020)

In addition to collaborations with our colleagues in ministry, other forms of relationship are available to those who wish to share our mission and community life, such as Companions in Charity, temporary residence and volunteer opportunities.

(*Directory, Membership*, #5.7, 2020)

Continued, see page 12, top right



Dr. Susan R. Burns Named New President of College of Mount Saint Vincent

By Patrice Athanasidy

The Board of Trustees of the College of Mount Saint Vincent appointed Dr. Susan R. Burns president effective January 1, 2021. She comes to the Mount from Clarke University in Iowa where she most recently served as vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty. She succeeds Charles L. Flynn, Jr. as president.

"I am humbled and honored to be selected as the next president of the College of Mount Saint Vincent and I am delighted to join a community committed to providing transformational student-centered learning opportunities in and beyond the classroom," said Dr. Burns in accepting the appointment as the College's sixth president.

As Chief Academic Officer at Clarke University, Dr. Burns shaped key initiatives for the institution. She helped reorganize the university's 19 academic departments and expanded its portfolio of undergraduate and graduate offerings. While chair of Clarke's strategic planning task force, Dr. Burns worked to restructure the university's budget.

Most recently in 2019, Dr. Burns served as interim president of Clarke. During her short tenure, she led the university through a presidential transition and created successful strategies to increase enrollment and reduce the institutional budget.

Dr. Burns sees many parallels between Clarke and Mount Saint Vincent. "They were both founded by sisters, originally a prep," says Dr. Burns. "As I did a little more investigation, I had a true heart, mind, and soul feeling that I needed to look at this opportunity further. Then I found I fit with the community and the culture of the Mount too."

Dr. Burns points to the Sisters of Charity as one of the reasons she was drawn to the Mount. "The Sisters are incredibly intelligent, compassionate



and passionate. The impact of their presence has been really powerful." She adds, "I so appreciate how this institution is Catholic with the big 'C' but also Catholic with the little 'c.' I saw it from a distance and now it is palpable."

Referring to the pandemic, Dr. Burns says most of the interview process happened remotely. She says the feeling of community came through even on the computer screens, and now that she is on campus, it is even more evident.

The parent of college-aged students, Dr. Burns has hope for the future. "I am a realist, but an optimist." She believes the Mount's concern for community is beneficial in these times because everyone focuses on the safety and health of all in the community and that benefits everyone.

"Susan Burns possesses the talent, experience, and enthusiasm to continue to build this extraordinary and important institution, ensuring it remains among the finest, most authentically inclusive liberal arts colleges in the nation," says Dr. Flynn, President Emeritus. "Her dedication to students and to the values inculcated by a Mount education—knowledge, competence, civic

responsibility—dovetail beautifully with the College's mission. In this time of extraordinary cultural, economic, and educational change, we are confident that we have made an inspired choice for our next president, and that she will boldly and effectively guide the Mount into its next chapter."

Susan R. Burns received her bachelor's and master's degrees in experimental psychology from Emporia State University and her Ph.D. in social/personality psychology with an emphasis in child development from Kansas State University. Prior to her tenure at Clarke, Dr. Burns was associate dean for academic affairs at Morningside College, where she held the rank of full professor. She is the recipient of several awards for faculty excellence from Morningside College and received the Distinguished Faculty Award from the American Association of University Women. Dr. Burns is widely published, authoring numerous articles and research papers for peer reviewed journals as well as several books and book chapters.

As Dr. Burns looks to the future of the College, she says, "The Mount lives its mission and values in a manner that not only welcomes all dreams, but transforms the lives of its students, their families, and generations that follow through its commitment to excellence in the liberal arts tradition and in all academic programs. The College's deep commitment to Vincentian service, social justice, and authentic inclusivity align with my personal and professional commitment to the common good and Catholic intellectual tradition. I look forward to working in partnership with the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and the Sisters of Charity of New York to sustain and build upon the success Mount Saint Vincent has achieved under the leadership of Charles L. Flynn, Jr."



Left: Sr. Rita King holds porcelain wedding miniature of Elizabeth Ann Seton, Boyle Hall, 1992.

Sister Rita King — Teacher, Archivist and Community Historian

Second in a series highlighting the contributions of Sister Archivists

By Mindy Gordon, Archivist

As an educator and archivist, Sr. Rita King's career has been steeped in the pursuit of history. A Yonkers native, Sr. Rita attended St. Mary's Elementary School and St. Barnabas High School. She earned a bachelor's degree in History from the College of Mount Saint Vincent, and a master's degree in American History from Catholic University of America. She entered the Community in 1948.

Sr. Rita, formerly Sr. Rita Regina, taught elementary grades at Seton Academy for ten years. She then taught history at Bishop McDonnell Memorial High School, later becoming the Chair of the History Department and then Assistant Principal. Afterwards, she served as Assistant Principal at St. Joseph by-the-Sea High School in Staten Island, then as library administrator at Trinity High School in Shiremanstown, Pa. She also served as Assistant Principal at St. Barnabas High

School in the Bronx. Her last teaching assignment was at Cathedral High School in Manhattan.

Sr. Rita was inducted into the Hall of Fame at St. Barnabas High School in 2008, when she was honored for her

years there as a teacher and later as a volunteer. Sr. Georgette Dircks, in tribute to Sr. Rita, said, "We admire Sr. Rita not only for her competence, but for her wealth of knowledge, her generosity, her genuine interest in the students and her altogether fine character." These same qualities define her role as Archivist.

In 1990, Sr. Rita was selected by a search committee to work as an intern to Congregation Archivist, Sr. Anne Courtney. During this time she avidly pursued coursework in archival education and quickly adapted to her new professional role. By 1993, Sr. Rita was directing a comprehensive agenda to mentor Sr. Melrose Hajduk, OSF, a Bernadine Franciscan, for an intensive one-week internship at the Archives. When computers became essential in the Archives, Sr. Rita pioneered creating a database of records, entering information for over 4,000 sisters' records. Sr. Rita demonstrated a lively approach to teaching during her tenure as Archivist, serving as in-house Museum tour guide to school groups and to freshmen during orientation week at the College of Mount Saint Vincent.

Continued, see page 14, bottom



Sr. Rita King created history panels for display, Boyle Hall, 1996

— Letter to the Editor —

Dear Editor:

I read with delight the article on page 13 of *Vision* Winter 2021, *Family of Faith, Donachie Family* by Sr. Margaret Donegan. The story is about my family. My mother, Emma Donachie Keating was the only daughter to marry and she had eight children. My name is Gerarda Keating Brown and I am the sixth in Emma's family of eight. After sharing this article with some of my siblings, the family is a-buzz about it. The Donachie Family was one-of-a-kind, for sure. Growing up, my grandparents lived "upstairs" and we had the privilege of seeing "the nuns" whenever they went home to see their parents. A special arrangement was made as my grandparents aged (and there were five sisters in the order) to allow my aunts to come home to visit. They were very special people and very special times. How happy they all were to get together.

I want to thank Sr. Margaret Donegan for writing such a beautiful account of the Donachies. I was happy to pick up a few specific dates from the article as to entry into the Convent. My sister Mary and I had put together a small photo album of the family but we were missing some of those dates. Please thank Sr. Margaret for me. I am going to try to make copies of the article for my own children. My husband and I had nine children, all married now, and we have 43 grandchildren, (and two greats). I want to keep the story alive for all of them! Maybe we'll get a few more Sisters of Charity out of the bunch.

Thank you for all that you do. I always enjoy reading *Vision* and keeping up on the works of the Sisters of Charity.

Gerarda Brown

PS I should mention that all nine of my children graduated from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School, Shrub Oak, N.Y., with Sr. Gabriel Miriam at the helm for almost the whole time. A number of our grandchildren also went to Seton. God bless Sister and all the wonderful years she gave to educate children in the faith.

WE/US

Continued from page 9

Associates in the United States, the Bahamas, and Guatemala serve on committees and task forces and live the mission of Charity in countless ways. Companions witness to the strength of community through their prayer and service.

Trustees, administrators and staff in SC ministries give 150% of their energy, seeking to provide compassionate and competent service, ensure fiscal stability and maintain a just workplace, all in the name of the mission of Charity. We celebrate them, outstanding lay leaders who shepherd the ministries that serve as the hands and feet of Charity for thousands.

To our staff at the Sisters of Charity Center, Mount Saint Vincent Convent and all our retirement and care facilities, we say a heartfelt "thank you, gracias, merci!"

In theory and increasingly in practice, may we recognize and celebrate the many ways that the circle of "we" and "us" keeps expanding—truly a sign of God's creative Spirit in our day.

Early Foundling *Cont'd from page 3*

as chair. Officers were John Quinlan, John Develin, Joseph O'Donohoe and William Lummis. Its purpose was to assist the Board of Managers, all of whom were Sisters of Charity.

The Board of Managers and the Advisory Board remained until September 1974 when the Sisters of Charity created the Board of Trustees.

Today the Board of Trustees of the New York Foundling consists of 19 lay and four Sisters of Charity trustees who continue the excellent, compassionate work begun by their forbears. By their commitment, they acknowledge the truth of a recent statement by Bill Baccaglini, current President and CEO of the Foundling:

"The New York Foundling has led the way in effective management and investments for 150 years, thanks in large part to the Sisters of Charity and the Board of Trustees."

Material taken from the *History of the Sisters of Charity* by Sr. Marjorie Walsh, SC

From the 1953 Dodgers...

Continued from page 8

Sr. Vincent Maria O'Brien was born Delia Agnes O'Brien on October 24, 1879, on Long Island. She entered the Sisters of Charity on April 15, 1901 and pronounced Final Vows on July 24, 1929. Sr. Vincent Maria had two siblings who were also Congregation members: Sr. Mary Gregory (1874–1965) and Sr. Mary Ellen (1867–1923). Sr. Vincent Maria was a health care worker at St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan from 1902 to 1905 and at St. Vincent's Hospital in Staten Island from 1905 to 1940. She was assigned to St. Joseph's Hospital in 1940, where she passed away on September 25, 1953, one month after Nurse Engels wrote the first letter and one day after Dr. Lynch wrote the second. Hopefully, she was aware of the receipt of the letter with players' signatures.

The Dodgers played in the World Series in 1941, 1947, 1949, 1952, 1953, 1955 and 1956 at Ebbets Field, and finally won in 1955. Sr. Elizabeth Vermaelen, president of the Congregation from 1995 to 2003, remembers sitting in the stands as a young child next to her father feeling the excitement of watching the Dodgers play at Ebbets Field. Home to Brooklyn's Dodgers from 1913 to 1957, the field was demolished in 1960 and replaced by apartment buildings. Shea Stadium, home of the new National League New York team, the Mets, was built in 1964 and replaced in 2009 by Citi Field, which incorporated the architectural style of Ebbets Field. Certainly, Sr. Vincent Maria, like other Sisters of Charity Dodgers' fans, would have followed the team from Brooklyn to Queens.

1. Charles Walter Dressen (September 20, 1894–August 10, 1966), was a third baseman, manager and coach, best known as the manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers of 1951–1953.
2. Lafayette Fresco Thompson (June 6, 1902–November 20, 1968) was a second baseman and executive. In 1946, he became an assistant farm system director for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Pandemic Response:

Service with the Medical Reserve Corps

By Lisa Shay, SC Associate

Partnership with the laity has been a Sisters of Charity model from the very beginning, since the first three sisters founded St. Patrick's Asylum in 1817 at the behest of laymen Robert Fox and Francis Cooper. Usually, that partnership involves laypersons serving in Congregation-sponsored ministries, but sometimes the opposite is true. Sr. Jean Flannelly is an example of the latter case: a Sister of Charity who felt called to offer her expertise as a psychologist in a secular organization, the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC).

The MRC is a national volunteer organization founded in the aftermath of 9/11 to help communities with emergency preparedness and disaster relief. Sr. Jean first responded to a call to volunteer with the MRC in the family-support center for victims of 9/11. It was a great use of her Ph.D. in psychology

and 28 years' experience as a psychologist. When COVID hit last March, she responded to a new call. The Dutchess County MRC was searching for volunteers to help assemble 3D-printed personal protective equipment. After a few Fridays of volunteering, she was so impressed with the organization, its culture, and the leadership of Coordinator Joe Ryan that she eagerly responded to the next call for contact tracers. Sr. Jean attended the four-hour training for contact tracing and additional hours of training for the MRC orientation and ongoing professional development. She spent the summer and early fall serving as a contact tracer. Then the MRC called for volunteers to complete case investigations. Once again, Sr. Jean responded, attending several more hours of training.

Since November, Sr. Jean has devoted every Monday to case investigations, often working eight hours each day. Case investigation requires skill in formulating open-ended questions and sensitivity when asking them. The case investigator calls people who have tested positive for COVID and seeks to learn the extent and severity of their symptoms. The

investigator then explains the requirements of isolation, determine their recent contacts, and ask what their needs might be as they isolate. Sr. Jean has been impressed with the array of support services that she can offer. Dutchess County has many services to help people safely accomplish the ten days of isolation, including food shopping, counseling, social services and medical assistance. Isolation requires staying at home, restricted to one room of a shared home. Unlike quarantine, there is no exception to go shopping for essentials.

One might expect people to be reticent about providing such personal information, but Sr. Jean has been amazed at how forthcoming her cases have been. Sometimes the conversations are particularly difficult: one woman revealed that her father had died from COVID the day before.

With the arrival of the vaccine, Sr. Jean has said "yes" to yet another call: assisting with distribution points. Joe Ryan invited



her involvement because "she is a delight to work with and has an air that brightens everyone's day. She has a knack for making others feel welcome, a part of the team."

Whether laypersons serve in Congregation ministries or sisters serve in secular organizations, the Charism of Charity is inventive to infinity.

Above: Sr. Jean and Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro and (above left) with two women who just received their COVID vaccine at the Dutchess County Point of Distribution.

grounds, or by private conveyance on the turn-pike.”

The riverfront area was described in *A Descriptive and Historical Sketch of the Academy of Mount St. Vincent on-the-Hudson, New York City, 1847–1884*, “... picturesquely situated on the southern point of a small headland, running out opposite the castle and extending northward from the landing are large bath-houses for the convenience of the pupils; the water being quite brackish, many of the advantages of regular sea-bathing resorts are enjoyed here. The little cape, covered with trees, is separated from the Academy lawn by the track of the Hudson River Railroad. Over the cut of the railroad, which is thirty feet in depth, is thrown a strong foot and carriage bridge, thus connecting the beach with the grounds.” The railroad frontage on the Campus would have allowed the sisters and the students at the Academy to view the funeral train carrying Abraham Lincoln back to Springfield, Ill., as it passed by the campus on April 25, 1865.

Cornelius Vanderbilt purchased the Hudson River Railroad in 1864, soon after he bought the parallel New York and Harlem Railroad, today’s Harlem Line. He merged these and other short



Mount Saint Vincent Station House; ca. 1890

line railroads to form the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad in 1873. A third track was added along the line between Spuyten Duyvil and Sing Sing prison in 1893.

A mutual understanding between the rail company and College administration to remove the station was reached to increase security by limiting access to the campus from the rail line. The Mount Saint Vincent railroad station was closed by Metro North on June 3, 1974, when usage fell to less than 50 passengers daily.² Subsequently, the Sisters

of Charity granted permission to the College to occupy and use the land area to construct docks and/or bulkheads along the river as well as provide facilities for educational purposes. Today the area can be seen from the river by boat, or while traveling by rail.

1. Barrett, Lawrence and Forrest, Edwin. *Edwin Forrest*. Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1881.
2. Rails Vie for More Commuters: Bus Train Combination is New Lure. *The Riverdale Press*. June 3, 1976.

Sister Rita King — Teacher, Archivist and Community Historian

Continued from page 11

During an oral history interview in 2018, Sr. Rita described her days as Archivist: “It was very interesting, ... researching requests, putting together information; it was a day-to-day process. I put together an internship program. I wrote down everything that should be taught to an archivist: appraisal, arrangement and description, acquisition, provenance, original order, finding aids, preservation, conservation and reference services. I taught this class at workshops.”

Sr. Rita served an organizational role in Catholic archivist groups. She joined the first meetings that led to the establishment of the Archivists of Congregations of Women Religious (ACWR) and was elected Vice President/President Elect. Speaking at the plenary session in 1997, at the ACWR Second National Conference in Sinsinawa, Wis., she stated, “Archives... ACWR will provide us with the opportunity to share ideas, and establish a network of colleagues from across the U.S. and Canada.... Most of us have come from years of

experience in the field of education, social work, health care; we bring these skills to the administration of our archives—to our dual role of preserving the past and documenting the present.” During her two-year tenure as president she presided over the ACWR National Conferences and contributed a column to its newsletter.

In recognition of her expertise as a religious congregation archivist, Sr. Rita was asked to be a consultant to the U.S. Catholic Documentary Heritage Project in 1998. The program sought to provide access to Catholic history online to congregations and diocesan and academic institutions. Simultaneously, Sr. Rita served on the board of the New York metropolitan area group, Archivists of Religious Institutions.

Prior to her retirement in 2008, Sr. Rita mentored her successor, Sr. Constance Brennan, (profiled in *Vision* Winter 2021). Now enjoying her retirement at Mount Saint Vincent, Sr. Rita welcomes questions about Congregation and Mount Saint Vincent campus history. She is *the* vital institutional memory.

With Love and Appreciation We Remember...

Visit our website at www.scny.org/news for complete biographies

Sister Grace Thérèse Murray, SC

Entered: 1950 + Date of Death: December 26, 2020 + Age: 93

Sr. Grace Thérèse's 57 years of ministry were primarily in education. Her years of high school teaching included Holy Cross Academy and Cathedral in Manhattan, St. Barnabas and Cardinal Spellman in the Bronx, and Trinity in Shiremanstown, Pa. She spent 15 years in classrooms in Sullivan County serving the Hispanic Community. She provided home-bound instruction in the Monticello School District and was a classroom teacher in Tri-Valley Middle School in Grahamsville, and Glory to God Christian High School in Liberty. Upon retirement, she volunteered in Monticello schools.



Sister Maria Goretti Wieser, SC

Entered: 1951 + Date of Death: February 5, 2021 + Age: 89

Sr. Maria Goretti's 48 years of ministry were in elementary and high school education, as well as a specialty in hearing impairment education, which she achieved later in her career. She taught elementary grades at St. Peter in Staten Island, St. Agatha in Nanuet, and St. Stephen and St. Emeric, both in Manhattan. On the high school level, Sr. Goretti taught at Academy of Mount Saint Vincent in Tuxedo Park, St. Michael in Manhattan, and Cardinal Spellman in the Bronx. In 1988, after receiving an MS in the education of the hearing impaired, she began 21 years of ministry at St. Joseph's School for the Deaf in the Bronx.



Sister Mary Therese Hannaway, SC (Sr. Marian John)

Entered: 1950 + Date of Death: March 3, 2021 + Age: 88

Sr. Therese's 54 years of active ministry were served in elementary education as classroom teacher and administrator. Her first 28 years of teaching were at St. Francis Xavier in Manhattan; Ss. Peter and Paul, St. Barnabas, and Blessed Sacrament in the Bronx; St. Mary of the Snow in Saugerties, and Resurrection in Rye. Sr. Therese ministered 14 years in administration at St. Peter in Staten Island, St. Joachim in Beacon, and St. Lucy in the Bronx. She returned to the classroom at Ss. John and Paul in Larchmont for 12 years as teacher and then substitute teacher. In her early retirement years, Sr. Therese delighted in knitting and crocheting items to gift or to offer for sale in fundraisers.



Thomas Cornell—Early Friend & Benefactor

Thomas Cornell was a key adviser to the Sisters of Charity of New York at crucial times in our history. Without him the Congregation probably wouldn't have Mount Saint Vincent to call our home today.

On March 19, 1855, the Sisters' newly built Chapel was dedicated at Mount Saint Vincent, McGown's Pass, near Fifth Avenue and 107 Street. Shortly before, Mother Mary Jerome Ely had been informed that their entire property was to be confiscated by New York City for its planned Central Park. Elected in December 1855, Mother Mary Angela Hughes and her Council quickly had to find a new home.

After their first unproductive house-hunting expedition, they focused on the area between Spuyten Duyvil and Dobbs Ferry on the Hudson River. Fr. Edward Lynch, pastor of St. Mary's, Yonkers, the only parish in the area, consulted his parishioner, Thomas Cornell, a civil engineer with the Hudson River Railroad. Cornell, who had negotiated with property owners on behalf of the soon-to-be-built railroad, knew that Edwin Forrest, owner of "Font Hill," a prime piece of real estate, was looking for a buyer.

In early October 1856, Cornell and his wife accompanied Mother Angela and Sister Mary Williamanna Hickey to see the sweeping 55-acre estate on the Hudson. They came, they saw, and Font Hill was conquered. Even Archbishop John Hughes, Mother Angela's crusty brother, approved. Forrest drove a hard bargain; he asked \$100,000 for the property. The sisters were prepared to pay half that amount. Forrest was persuaded to shave off \$5,000 as a gift. In the end, the sisters paid \$20,000 cash, with a \$75,000 mortgage at 6% interest, a staggering debt for the young community that had to build—again—from scratch.

Thomas Cornell and his family bought four and a half acres adjoining Font Hill and built "The Pines" as a home for his family. In Sr. Marie de Lourdes (Marjorie) Walsh's three-volume history of the Congregation, Cornell appears several times as a benefactor of an orphan asylum in New Haven that the Congregation staffed for a time, and as a key player in securing the former Vark property in Yonkers, first for St. Aloysius Academy for Boys, and ultimately for St. Joseph's Hospital.

Today, this faithful friend and adviser is remembered at the Thomas Cornell Academy, a Yonkers public school that bears his name. And, to close the loop of Cornell's many connections with the Sisters of Charity, the Academy now occupies the property of the former St. Mary's School, where the Sisters taught until 2011.

Regina Bechtle, SC



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Then & Now

SISTERS OF CHARITY ARCHIVES

Mount Saint Vincent Station House and St. Vincent's Point

By Mindy Gordon, Archivist

During the summer months on the Mount Saint Vincent Campus, access is permitted to St. Vincent's Point, a secluded, grassy area at the edge of the Hudson River. To reach St. Vincent's Point, pedestrians use a footbridge over the railroad tracks to enjoy views of the majestic Palisades, George Washington Bridge and, directly south, the western skyline of Manhattan. Although the building no longer exists, the Mount Saint Vincent train station on the Hudson Line stood on the west side of the railroad tracks for over one century.

When Edwin Forrest, renowned Shakespearean actor, purchased the 55-acre Riverdale estate in 1847 that



Academy of Mount Saint Vincent-on-the-Hudson illustration, southbound train with the Academy and castle in background; ca. 1880

later became Mount Saint Vincent, he was unaware that the railroad along the Hudson River would soon be built. It was Thomas C. Cornell, a civil engineer and Forrests' neighbor to the north, who persuaded the actor to sell 1.5 acres of riverfront property to the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company.¹ Although Forrest originally intended to build his castle home by the river, he instead chose a site eastward on the hill. Mr. Cornell was instrumental in the negotiation when the Sisters

of Charity purchased the estate from Edwin Forrest in 1856.

After the Academy of Mount Saint Vincent relocated from McGown's Pass in Manhattan to Riverdale in 1857, the railroad station's direct proximity to the campus served to increase enrollment at the private girls' school. An announcement in the Freeman's Journal of July 1859 noted: "Visitors can reach the Academy... by the river, steamers, touching at Yonkers, by the Hudson River [railroad] cars, which will stop on the

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