



PRESENTATION ROOTS

Answering the Call



There are many foundation stories to mark the Sisters' 160-year history. In keeping with the pioneering spirit theme from the previous issue of *Roots*, we include stories of the Sisters going beyond California borders to Washington and New Mexico, and even further into the remote areas of Ocosingo, Chiapas, Mexico (see feature on Page 4).

Photos, beginning clockwise from the left: Sisters providing entertainment at a reception for Sisters leaving for the missions in Latin America; ground-breaking ceremony for Saint John Vianney School; laying the cornerstone at Saint John the Baptist School in San Lorenzo; Sisters holding the "key" to Presentation College in Los Gatos.

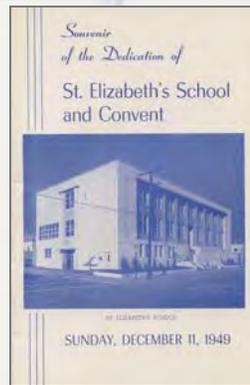


"Even though most of it was still in the finishing stages it was easy to see it would be a beautiful school. Father's original plan was to open two first, second and third grades right away, but because of the scarcity of Sisters this plan was abandoned. Even the three Sisters he obtained were a product of 'Share the Sisters' plan." ~Saint John the Baptist Convent Annals

PBVM, SF Timeline: 1947 ~ 1965



1954 Saint John Vianney School, San Jose, California.



This issue's timeline begins in 1947, and takes us to the precipice, in 1965, of the fundamental changes to Religious Life brought about through Vatican II. During this time period, the Presentation Sisters continued to broaden their extended family through the founding of a novitiate and schools in California, Washington, and New Mexico. The Sisters also established their first Latin American mission in the jungles of Ocosingo, Mexico. These years also saw the implementation of a new habit and the first steps towards revising the very tenets of their community life to better align with the newly laid foundations of the Catholic Church as it is known today.



Southern California

1947 Saint Mary Magdalene School, Los Angeles

1949 Our Lady of Loretto High School, Los Angeles

1950 Holy Trinity School, San Pedro



1963 Saint Catherine School, Morgan Hill



1956 Nativity School, Menlo Park

Presentation Centennial Festival
February 18, 19, 20, 1955

P B V M, S F Timeline: 1947-1965

Washington

1954 Our Lady of Fatima School, Seattle

1956 Blanchet High School, Seattle

1964 Holy Rosary School, Edmonds



Green Street
1854

1952 Saint John the Baptist School, San Lorenzo, California

1957 The Presentation Sisters establish Presentation College, Los Gatos in the Santa Cruz mountains. The novitiate provides training and spiritual formation for women entering religious life.



New Mexico

1951 Saint Anthony School, Pecos

1951 Saint Charles School, Albuquerque

1956 Presentation Sisters open Saint Pius X High School in Albuquerque

1962 Presentation High School, San Jose

"It was discovered that only 90 desks and 50 chairs had arrived. Which meant, much to the joy of the teachers, that 60 children would have to sit at tables and 100 on folding chairs. The chairs were well named since they folded up when you least expected it or when you least desired it. But happily the missing desks and chairs arrived about two weeks later, that is, all but the teachers desks which were still on their way." Excerpt from the annals describing the opening days of the brand new Saint John the Baptist School, San Lorenzo.

1965 Presentation Sisters modify their religious habit as shown here on the right.



Pres... al Festival
0, 1955

Beginning in 1965, the Presentation Sisters have worked to improve and nurture the health, education, and spiritual needs of the populations in remote regions of Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru. Over the course of time, their work involved opening hospitals, clinics, and schools, engaging in pastoral and social works, organizing an association bringing together all Presentation Sisters from all congregations working in Latin America, and even the founding of a new order for indigenous Sisters. During their tenure, these countries experienced a myriad of social and political upheavals and brutal violent conflicts including the Zapatista Uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, the Contra war in Nicaragua, and the civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala. These conflicts only served to cement their passion for the work and people they served and drove many additional works in the areas of social justice and liberation theology. Presentation Archives has a rich collection of records, photographs, audio-visual materials, textiles, and artifacts from the Latin American missions spanning nearly 50 years, some of which are featured here. ~ Rachel Foote, former intern at Presentation Archives and processor of the Presentation, San Francisco Latin America Collection.



On a visit to the Chancery Office before leaving for Mexico, Presentation Missionary Sisters pictured in The Progress Library, are: in front, Sister Mary Reginald, Superior and Sister Mary Reymund; back row, Sister Mary Laurence and Sister Mary Mildred.
— [Progress Photo by W. C. Heib Jr.]

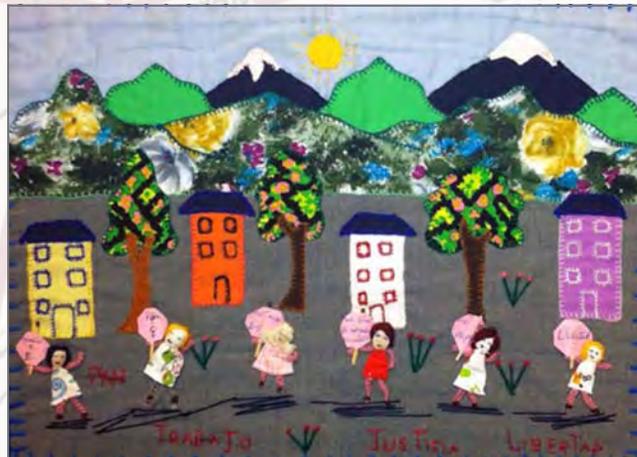
Presentation Sisters Going Mexican Way



“When we travel, we like to go in teams as much as possible. (There are 3 Dominican Fathers from the California Province for our 10,000 square miles and 30,000 people.) So one of the priests, the Sisters, usually one of the teachers and myself, the nurse, go. ... We take our bedrolls and enough food for the journey only as the people provide for us when we reach the village. How do we go? On horseback! ... We always use a saddle, of course, and these are the native saddles of wood. They are not so bad after you get used to them (they say). The Sisters dress in riding pants with boots we bought in the States and brought down with us, and a cowboy hat on our heads. Yes, at first we thought we could ride in skirts or even culottes, but after one ride through the jungle vegetation, we soon changed our minds, and laughed at ourselves for being so naïve.” ~ Sister M. Laurence, Chiapas, 1966



"The vision of the Nicaraguan people is that they will build a new society in which the poor will have their just share of resources. The people will be subjects of history and will live their future in dignity and peace . . . Although the revolution has not fulfilled the vision. It can truly be said that July 19, 1979 was the first step in the "exodus" from dictatorship and the first step in the journey toward a new and just society. The euphoria of the revolution has long passed. The people are living a "desert" experience of survival with all the human responses of complaints, miracles, dreams, discouragement, and hope which accompany their revolutionary process. Yet this vision is clearly present in their midst, calling them forth on the way to its fulfillment." ~ Sister Rachel Pinal's reflection on the tenth anniversary of the Nicaraguan Revolution.



"Hello from the windy, dusty town of Santa Clara! The gusty winds have been so strong that they even ring the church bell! The people say that it is the beginning of the real cold weather. With these first two months in our medical mission, we have once again come to appreciate the life of the Indian woman in the Third World. One night, we were awakened by a bang on the door. It was a young man asking us to come with him to check his sister who was in labor. We quickly got dressed and grabbed the backpack that is always ready for a home delivery. With a flashlight and few working streetlights we were able to cross town, kicking up dust the whole way as we hurried to the humble home." ~ Sisters Elizabeth Remily and Joanna



GUATEMALA

Superior Spotlight: Mother Reginald Leahy



Sister Mary Reginald Leahy was born Madeline Leahy in Limerick, Ireland, on January 31, 1872. On August 15, 1891, Sister Reginald entered the congregation in Berkeley. She received the habit on February 4, 1892, and was professed on February 6, 1894.

Because of her own well-rounded schooling, she began her teaching career at Saint Joseph School in Berkeley in 1891. Throughout her years as an educator, she spent twenty-five years or more as the principal and sole academic faculty member of Saint Joseph High School. Sister Reginald taught a wide variety of subjects – religion, history, English, French, Latin, algebra, geometry, and physics and by so doing earned the justified title of a “one person school.”

Her teaching career was interrupted in 1916 when she was elected the Mother General of the Sisters of the Presentation of California and was re-elected on June 19, 1919.

A strong educator, Mother Reginald as Mother General began to send the Sisters to school for teaching certificates. In 1917, Presentation High School, Berkeley was accredited to the University of California. Mother Reginald also began sending Sisters for university course work and degrees.

After her first term of office, Mother Reginald was appointed Superintendent of Catholic Schools and the local superior of Saint Agnes Convent in San Francisco. She taught special classes in French and other subjects and helped train the young teachers.

Elected Mother General for another six-year term in 1928, Mother Reginald began the negotiations for a new high school in San Francisco, the Academy of the Presentation. This educational institution which opened with 293 students, August 25, 1930, continued providing instruction of young women in both academic and business subjects until its closure in June, 1991. In 1934, Mother Reginald became principal of the Academy for one year before being transferred to southern California.

From 1935 to 1941, Mother Reginald served as the superior

“There are 378 pupils enrolled and they are still coming. We have refused about 200 pupils. Work here keeps me busy. The school is crowded and there is much to be done everywhere. ... God must help us all. I sit sometimes.” ~ From a letter Sister M. Reginald wrote while principal of Our Lady of Lourdes Grammar School, November 20, 1936.



“Among some of the children here there is an amusing ‘Racket’, as the boys call it. They go to Sister Superior and say ‘Sister, I don’t understand my arithmetic, do you think Mother would take me?’ Sister tells that Mother cannot take them, she has too many pupils. If possible, I take them. How readily the little creatures avail of a situation. I enjoy them immensely.” ~ Mother Reginald, 1947

of Our Lady of Lourdes School in Los Angeles. At the age of sixty-nine, Mother Reginald founded Saint Benedict School in Montebello, California in 1941. In 1945, she became ill and asked to retire to Saint Mary Convent in Gilroy. Here, she continued to teach social studies and tutored children. She died on February 5, 1948. The Motherhouse Annals recorded the following:

“Many hearts were rent with sorrow on the announcement of the unexpected death of our beloved Mother Reginald Leahy... [She] received a superior education to which her remarkable retentive mind added daily, even to her last illness. Her comprehensive knowledge of the trend of the times, supplemented by her greater insight into things other-worldly, gave her easy access to ecclesiastical and educational circles..”

To read more about Mother Reginald Leahy and over 300 additional biographies of the Presentation Sisters, check out Presentation Women, available for purchase [online](#).

For comments or questions about the newsletter, contact
Presentation Archives at
presarchives@pbvmsf.org.

