



Mission Moments
No. 37

Standing on the Shoulders

The American Experience – Part 2

Charism refers to the gift which the Holy Spirit gives to an individual or group to inspire the founding of a new religious institute in the Church. This gift is handed on to members through the years and is enriched by all who are called to live it. In 1885, there were no Charism or Mission Statements. The charism was written on the heart of Mother Foundress and on the hearts of the Eleven Sisters. Mother passed on this legacy through conferences, individual formative meetings and later, her letters.

The seed of the charism germinated in the mind and heart of Mother Foundress as she faithfully listened to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who encouraged her over the years to formulate in words what she felt in her heart.

In coming to America, Mother wrote specifically about the purpose of the Congregation: “From the first day of our arrival here (USA), God allowed me to grasp our sacred task...work for the glory of God and for the extension of His Kingdom”. Already embedded in the hearts and actions of the early Sisters was what was articulated in the Constitution of 1887: “The purpose for which this congregation exists is...the spreading of the Kingdom of God.... This Kingdom is to be cultivated and spread within the congregation and to others, particularly within families.” To this end, Charism inspires and informs mission and is actualized in ministry.

The early days found the Sisters settling into a regular religious schedule which grounded the young religious in the familiar amidst the unfamiliar and unknown. Adapting to a foreign environment, language and culture disheartened some at first however, this soon passed in the flurry of ministry and the welcoming spirit of the families in the parish. The first Sisters motivated by this dynamic charism to spread the Kingdom of God, reached out in ministry initially in schools, an orphanage and a small hospital in Chicago.

Two-hundred children were enrolled in St. Josaphat's school and five hundred children in St. Adalbert's.

Influenced by this charism and addressing the needs of the people, they also began evening classes and Sunday classes for working girls consisting of religion, literature, composition, practical mathematics and useful arts. Parish clubs and societies of girls and women started under the direction of the Sisters.

The Sisters truly fulfilled the qualifications in Fr. Barzynski's request to Fr. Lechert that the sisters were: religious according to the Heart of God, equipped with above average education, self-sacrificing, valiant women...."

Satisfying results at the schools and good relationships in the parishes brought the Sisters eastward to Pennsylvania and New York. Schools were entrusted to their care in Scranton, Nanticoke, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania and Brooklyn and Elmhurst in New York. This was just the beginning of the expansion of the Congregation in America and we are the beneficiaries of this great legacy! An African proverb demonstrates this point: "If we stand tall, it is because we stand on the shoulders of our ancestors!"

Integrating the Mission

The Sisters originally came to minister to an immigrant population. Today, we struggle in our attempts to aid the immigrants coming to our country.

- Do you see any similarities or differences?
- What inspired the work of the founding Sisters? What inspires my ministry and how am I renewing this commitment over time?

I pray God continues to bless you and your family in the coming weeks.

In the Holy Family,
S. Barbara Jean, Director of Mission Integration

CSFN Charism Statement

We, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, are called to spread the Kingdom of God's love among ourselves and others by living the spirit of Jesus, Mary and Joseph whose lives were centered in the love of God and one another. We witness to this love through dedicated service to the Church, especially in ministry to the family.

Next: [The Charism in Action](#)

https://youtu.be/Zuqo3_xnWx0