



Standing on the Shoulders

The American Experience – Part 3

Like the seed that slowly, unperceptively grows, the expansion of the Congregation happened slowly Eastward. By July, 1894, there were nine Nazareth Convents existing under different conditions and in varied locations. St. Joseph Convent (Chicago) was the center of Nazareth vitality in the American province, building up a family spirit among the Sisters with frequent reunions for days of recollection, retreats and special celebrations.

Upon the death of Mother Foundress in 1902, Mother Laretta assumed the leadership of the Congregation. The Congregation in America began experiencing a growth in new vocations broadening the influence of the CSFN charism.

Mother Foundress said: *“Nazareth must be like a sentry-observing where there is a need and proceeding there with help.”* The Sisters continued to respond to the ever-expanding needs around them. Early in the 20th century saw the Sisters assuming administration of schools in Ohio and Indiana followed by Connecticut, Massachusetts and Michigan. In Chicago, the Sisters, aware of the dangers working women faced while living alone, opened Holy Family Working Girls Home. Because the Nazareth Convents were so dispersed geographically, the administration of the province became increasingly more difficult. In 1918, as a result of a report submitted to the General Administration and with the approval of the Holy See, the houses in the U.S. were formed into three provinces to facilitate the effectiveness of operation. This also allowed for the expansion of the Charism in other fields of ministry.

The 1920's and 30's expanded their ministerial horizons further by accepting hospital administration in various small hospitals along the railroad lines in Texas and New Mexico.

The zeal of the first group of Nazareth Sisters who arrived in America in 1885 was effectively transmitted to the new generations who promoted further expansion. Other ministry opportunities presented themselves in Washington, D.C., New Jersey, Maryland, Montana, N. Dakota, Alabama, Puerto Rico, Wisconsin, Colorado, Florida and later, Peru. Sisters readily rendered services

to black children in several states, opened Youth Centers and added a Home for the Aged. These new geographical sites, precipitated the creation of two additional provinces for a total of five American provinces. What a rich field of opportunities in which to “spread the Kingdom of God’s Love!”

The Second Vatican Council, opened in 1962, would have long-range, far-reaching and lasting effects on the Church worldwide. As daughters of the Church, the Nazareth Sisters entered the process of renewal recommended by the Church.

One of the most important results of the Second Vatican Council was the encouragement of the laity to participate in ministries within the Church out of their baptismal commitment. Though there had always been zealous laity who worked side-by-side with the Sisters in ministry, this new insight from the Council initiated numerous opportunities for our lay brothers and sisters to become actively immersed in the ministries of the Church. At the same time, the Nazareth Sisters were engaged in evaluating their ministries, introducing new ways to meet the needs of the latter half of the 20th century. *“Nazareth must be like a sentry- observing where there is a need and proceeding there with help!”*

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

Integrating the Mission

- As I reflect on the expansion of the charism over time, how have I been called, chosen to serve in this CSFN ministry?
- In the ministry where I serve, what are my responsibilities in carrying on what has been passed on to me?

Next: Articulating the charism today and into the future

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofkmxXCEj5k>