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HOLY CROSS SISTERS IN UTAH: THEN AND NOW

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By Sister M. Jeanne Finske, C.S.C.
Congregational Archives
Saint Mary's
Notre Dame, Indiana

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The story of how, when, and why the Sisters of the Holy Cross came to Utah was told in a scholarly manner by Sister Miriam Ann Cunningham at the CSC History Conference held at Moreau Seminary in 1983. She used as her source material Utah Historical Quarterly Journals, and the Centenary Chronicles of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. I will briefly summarize these years of the Sisters in Utah and develop in more detail the work of our Sisters in Utah today.

Blessed Basil Moreau founded the Congregation of Holy Cross to work for the education and sanctification of Catholics in rural France after the ravages of the French Revolution. Priests of Holy Cross assisted pastors with confessions, Sunday liturgies and missions. Father Edward Sorin was a member of this new Congregation. Moreau founded Holy Cross College in LeMans; Holy Cross Brothers were teachers; Holy Cross Sisters provided for the care of the resident students. As the Congregation grew in numbers, Father Moreau was able to send

members to locations far from France—Algeria, East Bengal, and eventually, North America, where Father Sorin and seven Brothers were sent at the request of the bishop of Indiana for teachers to found a college. Notre Dame du Lac in present-day South Bend came into existence in 1841.

Father Sorin asked Moreau to send Sisters to Notre Dame in 1843 to help in the kitchen, laundry, on the farm, and to care for the little boys who were orphans and resident students. Their convent was located in Bertrand, Michigan, ten miles from Notre Dame, because the Indiana bishop did not give permission for a second order of Sisters to establish a novitiate in the diocese. (The Sisters of Providence had located in Terre Haute, Indiana, several years earlier.) The Sisters' community grew from its first establishment—Saint Mary's Academy at Bertrand, relocated a mile from Notre Dame in 1855—under the direction of gifted women who were attracted to the Congregation. It spread out to the east and to the west eventually becoming autonomous as the Congregation of

the Sisters of the Holy Cross, closely associated with the Priests and Brothers of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

During the Civil War many Sisters volunteered to nurse injured soldiers in hospitals they set up and organized at the request of State officials. After the war the Sisters continued in this new ministry.

The Sisters of the Holy Cross arrived in Utah in 1875 to serve the needs of the small Catholic population in a predominantly Mormon community. Irish immigrants had come to Utah to work building the railroad and laboring in the mines. The schools and hospitals the Sisters founded for the immigrants also attracted many Mormons in this area with few public institutions. The success the Sisters experienced may be attributed to their effectiveness as educators, nurses, and administrators, and especially to their real concern for the good of the families they had come to know and respect as they served in this newly developing part of the country.

Irish immigrants, chiefly railroad builders and miners, arrived in Utah in the 1860's. The Catholic Church had established a diocese that included the territories of Utah and Nevada. In 1866 Father Edward Kelly was sent from California to make a census of the Catholic population and plan a permanent residence and chapel in Salt Lake City. There were approximately 90 Catholics in Salt Lake City and Ogden, and several hundred Catholics in mining camps and railroad centers. Fewer than ten years later that number had more than tripled. In 1873 Father Lawrence Scanlon replaced Father Kelly.

Father Scanlon had labored to prepare children for the sacraments, but he was not able to make much progress. His decision to request the services of Holy Cross Sisters to found a school resulted in the arrival of Sister Augusta Anderson and Sister Raymond Sullivan in Salt Lake City on June 6, 1875. The Chronicles state "Through the summer months the Sisters labored. [Their labor consisted of visiting mining camps and other settlements to raise money for the building of the school] The work of excavation on the school commenced on the 21st of June. The

cornerstone was laid in August. The new academy was named Saint Mary of the Assumption, and the first session opened September 6, 1875.” Sister Augusta requested five more Sisters to complete the staff. By the end of the first term there were 100 day students and six boarders.

In response to requests from miners and smelters, Father Scanlon secured Holy Cross Sisters to open a hospital in the area. Mother Angela sent Sister Holy Cross and Sister Bartholomew to undertake the founding of Holy Cross Hospital. It opened on October 25, 1875, with 12 beds in a small brick building on Fifth Street in Salt Lake City. This was the only Catholic hospital in Utah for many years. The miners paid a dollar a month that entitled them to necessary hospitalization—an early form of health insurance. It covered hospital stays and major surgery. A new hospital was built eight years later to accommodate 125 patients. Holy Cross Hospital had been in the forefront of progressive health care and community service for many years when it was sold in

1994. This was six years before Holy Cross Health System was transferred to Trinity Health System.

In 1878 more Sisters were sent to Ogden, where they founded Sacred Heart Academy, opening with 150 students. This number included 15 boarders. It flourished for more than fifty years. The Sisters also taught at St. Joseph Elementary School in Ogden until 1979.

In 1879 St. John's Hospital was staffed by Holy Cross Sisters in Silver Reef, Utah, a mining boomtown. Classes for children were taught in the basement of the church. The closing of the mine resulted in the withdrawal of the Sisters six years later.

St. Ann's Orphanage was opened in 1891 in an old adobe home, which had been occupied by the Bishop and his priests. Sister Kathryn Callahan will tell you about its illustrious history in her paper.

Father Scanlan requested Sisters for a school in another mining settlement in Park City. St. Mary's School was staffed by Holy Cross from 1882 until 1933, and also St. Joseph's School in Eureka from 1885. until 1941.

A Holy Cross School of Nursing was founded in 1901 in Salt Lake City. It continued in service until 1975. Saint Mary of the Wasatch College was added to the Salt Lake City Academy in 1925, and it continued to serve the Catholics of the Intermountain Area for 34 years.

In 1927 Holy Cross in Salt Lake City staffed two more schools: Cathedral Grade School and Judge Memorial High School. In Ogden the Sisters staffed St. Joseph High School from 1954 until 1977. Also in Salt Lake City the Sisters taught in Bishop Glass School from 1955 to 1980, and Our Lady of Lourdes School from 1955 until the present.

For the first one hundred years of the Holy Cross Sisters in Utah more than 900 Sisters served in academies, schools, and hospitals.

Today Holy Cross Sisters are involved in Diocesan programs as Superintendents of Catholic Schools, principals, classroom teachers, campus ministers, seminary instructors, and Parish Ministers. Sister Bernadette Mulick is a licensed Physician Assistant at Rocky Mountain Hospice in Salt Lake City.

In 1996 two Holy Cross Sisters were sent to Draper, Utah, to organize the schools at the Skaggs Catholic Center. Three years later St. John the Baptist Elementary/Middle School opened with Sister Karla McKinnie as principal, Sister Celine Dounies as fourth grade teacher, and Sister Patricia Riley as Campus minister at Juan Diego Catholic High School. When St. John the Baptist School was opened it was expected that there would be one classroom per grade, but by the first day of school they filled three classrooms per grade. They had to move the upper grades to the high school. Even so, there were still 1700 students on the waiting list!

After Vatican II the number of religious vocations became smaller as women were welcomed into other professions in the Church and elsewhere. Our service to the Church as religious has evolved into reaching out more indirectly to those in need.

Today we find the same dedication and effectiveness demonstrated in services organized by the Sisters of the Holy Cross to meet the needs of families that have settled in Utah within the last twenty years. In 1994 the Sisters organized **Holy Cross Ministries**, described in their recent Strategic Plan as “**a contemporary expression of their mission to respond to the unmet needs along the Wasatch Front.**” The section of this plan on Utah Demographics states that the Hispanic population in Utah grew by 138% during the 1990’s while the total population grew by 30%. Hispanic immigrants settled mainly in Salt Lake and Weber Counties.

Holy Cross Ministries are clearly described in their Web site :

www.holycrossministries.org. Most of the information given in this

paper was derived from this excellent source. There are five main components of **Holy Cross Ministries**: Outreach Program; Immigration Services; Parish and Community Health Program; Education Programs; and Counseling. I will describe each and tell how Holy Cross is fulfilling its mission in Utah today.

The Outreach Program depends on the “Promotoras”—Hispanic persons who are trained to provide informal counseling and social support, and culturally appropriate health education. These persons serve as advocates for individual and community needs. They assure that people get needed services that are available to them in the area, and they also provide direct services. In 2007 the Promotoras served 447 clients with instruction, referrals for well-baby checks, immunizations, food, housing and clothing. They also provide needed services such as language translation, assistance with budgeting, paying bills, housing, and referrals to other agencies or emergency services. An example of how Promotoras come to the aid of Hispanic immigrants is the story of Paula; she had been living with domestic violence for many years, but she

didn't realize it. She had married very young and she believed that the way her husband treated her was normal. When Paula attended a class offered by Holy Cross Ministries the topic was Domestic Violence. She was stunned as she listened to the Promotora describe the different types of domestic violence; she felt her life was being related in front of all the other women. Paula realized she had been a victim of domestic violence all of her married life. The Promotora referred her to a local domestic violence shelter and to counseling. Her life was changed as a result of this help, and the many other services she received through Holy Cross Ministries.

Immigration Services: "Building Bridges to a New Life." Holy Cross Ministries has two attorneys who are able to assist immigrants overwhelmed by the problems and challenges they face in trying to improve life for their families. The goal is to assist these people toward self-sufficiency. This past year the attorneys have had 2,500 onsite contacts and 2,108 open cases. They have held more than 600 immigration clinics in five cities. The experience of Margarita Cabrera

and her family tells how Holy Cross Ministries helped her. Margarita was a high school teacher in Colombia who taught her students that the armed groups currently devastating Colombia and terrorizing the people are committing evil, and that violence is not a solution to problems. She wanted her students to learn to work for peace. As a result Margarita began receiving threatening telephone calls from one of the Colombian guerilla groups. Not satisfied with that, they kidnapped, beat, and raped her. She fled Colombia with her husband and children and settled in Salt Lake City. An attorney with Holy Cross Ministries was able to work with her and determined that she might be eligible for asylum. With this help Margarita and her family members were granted asylum status.

Community Health Program: This is clearly a continuation of the Sisters' experiences in hospital ministry. At the present time the Parish and Community Health Program serves in five parishes whose congregations are chiefly Hispanic. It focuses on helping individuals, especially the elderly, to help them reconnect with families and friends

and secure needed health, social and spiritual resources. Those involved in this program conduct health screenings and clinics for diabetes and blood pressure, and provide flu immunizations. They make individual visits for persons in isolation, anxiety, and stress related circumstances. The experience of Eduardo is related in his letter to the Sisters at Holy Cross Ministries: "I write this letter dedicated to the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Through them I became aware of an illness I have by means of a screening test for diabetes at the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. After this I began taking medicine to control it and I began a nutritional diet to stabilize the level of my sugar. And now I feel very well. For this reason I give thanks to the Sisters of Holy Cross Ministries."

Education Programs: Activities in this program focus on after-school and summer programs, and English as a Second Language. These courses are taught in Park City and Wendover. This past year 420 children were served in after-school and summer programs. One of the volunteers in the Wendover program tells of her experience in promoting recreational reading by taking books out of the public library.

“The first two nights no one came. On the third day two brothers from our program walked in with their mother! Both boys, excited to step through the doors and explore the new environment, eagerly began searching for books and videos. However, their mother was obviously less excited. Rather, she seemed nervous and slightly intimidated by the predominantly English-speaking environment. I greeted her in Spanish, and we began filling out the necessary forms for her sons to receive their library cards. I watched her struggling to write her own address and I realized, for the first time, the courage it must have taken to step inside the library. She struggles to read and write in Spanish, and only knows basic English phrases. Surrounded by books she cannot read and greeted by a librarian who speaks only English, the library must seem an extremely frightening place. However, just like the other parents who continued to walk through the door with their children that night, she did so out of love and dedication to her children. Allowing them to have their own library cards and access to a literary world she does not understand, she took one of many steps towards ensuring a more positive and successful future for her sons. Thus, as each child left with

beaming smiles, an armful of books, and a prized library card of his own, I marveled at the courage and love of the parents who followed them out the door.”

Counseling: Holy Cross Ministries Counseling Program has licensed counselors working in schools in Salt Lake City and in Wendover, and in the afterschool programs in Park City/Heber and Wendover. The program provides family and individual counseling in English and in Spanish, and teaches safety programs such as “Good Touch/Bad Touch,” violence prevention programs, development and self-esteem groups and anti-bullying programs for middle school boys and girls. Victims of violence are referred to the counseling staff from the immigration program. The staff also includes interns from the University of Utah School of Social Work. Last year the program served 1138 students and 92 adults. An example of the counseling services is the experience of Susan, a 5th grade student at one of the elementary schools where Holy Cross Ministries provides counseling services. Susan’s teacher approached the Holy Cross Ministries counselor with concerns that

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Utah. In round numbers this subsidy amounts to over \$800,000 for the past eighteen years. There are at present 16 Holy Cross Sisters who serve the needs of Utah residents in the Holy Cross Ministries. Meeting the needs of the Church remains the motivation for our assignments of Sister personnel together with the necessary income to support a local community of Sisters. Fortunately, the sale of hospital and college property in Utah has provided funds for these Sisters to continue the 124 years of our ministry in Utah.