

A Grateful Remembrance **FROM THE FOOT OF THE CROSS**

Passionist Nuns, 8564 Crisp Road, Whitesville, Kentucky 42378



Spring 2006

60 Years of Passionist Life



The Love of Christ Impels Us!

*With a clear call from God
and the love of Christ Crucified flaming in their hearts,
five Passionist Nuns set out from their monastery
in Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1946
and started the long journey to Kentucky.
It is with profound gratitude to God
that we dedicate this 60th anniversary year
to celebrating the marvels He has done.*

Kentucky Bound!

Five valiant Nuns
consecrated to Christ Crucified
brought Passionist life
to Owensboro, Kentucky,
planting the spirit of
St. Paul of the Cross firmly
in Western Kentucky soil.

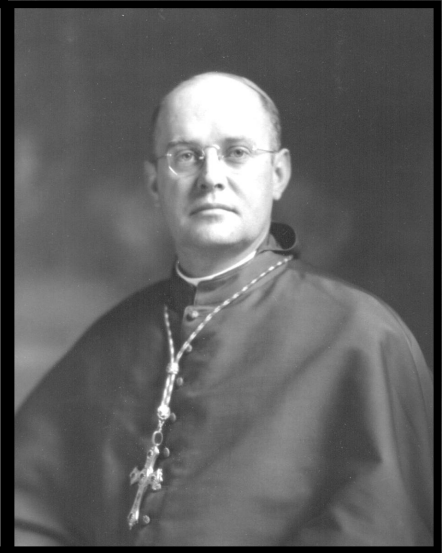
The tiny seed of those early days
has grown and borne fruit
as winter, spring, summer and fall
recurred over the course of 60 years.

Come with us now as we recount the story
of those first beginnings....

*Bishop Cotton was
a true Shepherd
after the
Heart of Christ.*

*He watched over
the growth and
development
of our new
monastery
with fatherly
care and concern.*

*Truly the Nuns
felt at home in
"the land of Cotton".*



"Your letter of May 1st comes as a great surprise to me. I am wondering how you even knew there was an Owensboro Diocese..." So began a letter of Most Rev. Francis R. Cotton, Bishop of Owensboro. In early May, 1946, he received a letter sent by the Passionist Nuns of Scranton, Pennsylvania to 21 bishops. Bishop Cotton's speedy response on May 3rd—the first favorable answer the Nuns received—proved to be decisive. **God** knew there was an Owensboro diocese, and that's exactly where He was going to lead the founding nuns!



The community of Passionist Nuns in Scranton, PA in early 1946. The Superior, Mother Mary Agnes Roche, is seated second from the far right. The five foundresses together with the first postulant Mary Dunnigan are circled.

From Scranton to Owensboro

During the 1930's and early 1940's, the Scranton community was blessed with so many vocations that they began planning a new foundation. The superior, Mother Mary Agnes Roche, hoped to open the new monastery in Boston, or perhaps Trenton or Camden, New Jersey. Although the bishops in these cities responded graciously, none was able to consider a new monastery in his diocese. Mother Mary Agnes then searched the Catholic Directory for dioceses that had no contemplative monasteries, or at least none that engaged in retreats.

"Meanwhile, let us cry to the Lord continually, since this holy work must be the fruit of prayer." (St. Paul of the Cross to Mother Mary Crucified, the first Passionist Nun) Mother Mary Agnes and her Scranton community understood this very well, and so they backed up all these efforts by earnest prayer.



Mother Mary Agnes and her dear friend Saint Joseph

Under the Patronage of St. Joseph

Realizing the gravity of the enterprise, and her need for divine guidance, Mother Mary Agnes sought the powerful intercession of St. Joseph, the Patron of the Interior Life and the Guardian of Virgins. Here is her own account of the "long talk" she had with him one day:

"I said to him, 'What am I to do? They want me to make a new foundation and I don't know where to go or what to do. But, dear St. Joseph, if you take over, I'll follow the counsel of those who have a right to advise me.'"

Subsequent events throughout our 60 year history show how seriously St. Joseph took this conversation!



This large pre-Civil War home at one time overlooked the Ohio River. This would be the Nuns monastery for 24 years.

Later Mother Mary Agnes wrote that she had visited Owensboro *"with great confidence in St. Joseph...as we had so specially placed our difficulties before him."* She added that *"St. Joseph manifested his care by donations sent in his honor or in his name. This happened so frequently that we decided on dedicating the new monastery to his patronage."*

Choosing a Site

Arriving in Owensboro for a visit, the Nuns found that Bishop Cotton had already picked out the Benita Avenue property for the new monastery. He did, however, suggest that the Nuns inspect a few other possible sites. In the end, Benita Avenue was chosen and Mother Mary Agnes expressed her satisfaction in a letter:

"We secured a very nice piece of property at Owensboro. The grounds are in good condition and are considerably larger than our place here in Scranton. There are two houses and a garage. The main building is a large...eight room residence with four massive white columns along the front. The other is a little four-room cottage. Both



This four room cottage served as the first novitiate and the altar bread department. The novitiate members walked from this cottage to the chapel through snow and bitter cold, or wind, rain and lightning.

places are in perfect condition so we will not have to spend anything on repairs, just for alterations necessary to adapt them to our needs. We shall have to get our enclosure wall erected and later when we have grown and can think of building the convent and chapel, the present house will be excellent for retreats."

The Founding Nuns

The Scranton community next set about to choose the Nuns who would make the new foundation. Besides Mother Mary Agnes, four others were chosen: Mother Mary Bernadette Rohling, Mother Mary Cecilia Taylor, Mother Jeanne Marie Wehmhoefer, and Mother Frances Marie Livoti. (Note: at that time, all the nuns two years after final vows received the title "Mother")

The foundresses had little more than a high school education, yet each was filled with love for Christ Crucified and a contagious spirit of generous self-sacrifice in His likeness. Each one, blessed with gifts of nature and grace, added something unique to the founding group.

All five foundresses were living examples of good community persons, each offering a distinct contribution to the formation of a warm, caring and generous spirit so crucial in the building up of a new foundation. The newcomers to the fledgling community could look to them as models of adapting with a willing and loving heart to whatever life in the cloister asked of them.

Mother Mary Agnes, a born leader, an administrator and a "builder", was above all a person steeped in spirituality and able to lead others in prayer as well as in the self-sacrifice so greatly needed in establishing a new foundation. She was ahead of her time in forming the community's spiritual life on a solid Scriptural basis. The writings of Blessed Dom Columba Marmion, O.S.B., were a favorite source of Mother's teaching, as she grounded



Founding Superior
Mother Mary Agnes Roche, CP

the young community in treasuring the riches of their baptism so that it would flower in their consecrated life as religious. Mother Mary Agnes sought to instill the Gospel attitude of a childlike trust in our heavenly Father as the Nuns strove to follow Jesus lovingly along the daily way of the cross. In

expressing the ideals of St. Paul of the Cross, the founder of the Passionist Congregation, Mother often quoted one of his own favorite passages from St. Paul the apostle, *"I live now, not I but Christ lives in me; I still live my human life but it is a life of faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."* Galatians 2:20

The other founding Sisters also offered their unique gifts in the spiritual and temporal building up of the community. From the very beginning, **Sister Mary Cecilia's** musical talent enabled the community to sing praise to God in the sacred liturgy of the Mass and the Divine Office. Sister's contagious sense of humor added greatly to the daily community recreation which was so important to St. Paul of the Cross. She established and supervised the Altar Bread department and served as Novice Directress. Although Sister loved the pipe organ in the Scranton community, she received with childlike joy the tiny organ the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth donated to the new community. One Sister of Charity who was present when the organ was delivered wrote the following: *"When I saw Sister Mary Cecilia emerge from the house, skipping the 'light fantastic toe,' I said 'I would nominate her for the Russian ballet.' Sister skipped to the organ sitting in the yard, threw back the cover, and began to pedal and we had a tryout. She was delighted."*



Sister Mary Cecilia showing a straw mattress to Mrs. Thomas Doudican and Mrs. James Russell with her 2-year-old son, Jimmy

Sister Mary Bernadette, our only surviving foundress, now 93, is proof that hard work accomplished with a generous heart and joyous spirit, doesn't injure one's health! Sister was the Assistant Superior, chief gardener, and in charge of the kitchen and all that pertains to the food. She had the patience of Job in working with new members to get the grounds looking more like a monastic garden. She had a "green thumb" which some of the younger ones entering the monastery had been denied when God distributed his gifts and talents. Often mistaking for a weed a



Sr. Mary Bernadette shows vestments made by the Passionist Nuns to diocesan priests Msgr. Peter Braun and Fr. Martin Nahstoll

beautiful flower-to-be, her helper would pull it up! Each time this happened, Sr. Mary Bernadette, suppressing her regret, and to the astonishment of a postulant or novice, would muster all her detachment of spirit and say, *"Blessed be God!"* Throughout the years Sister was known for her great love for Passionist spirituality and St. Paul of the Cross. Now in her weakened state, Sister continues to inspire the new members simply by her gentle, courteous and respectful attitudes. A long life of faithful love and commitment to Jesus Crucified is bearing much fruit in her golden years.

With her quiet and unassuming ways, **Sister Jeanne Marie** was an invaluable asset to the new community. Her prayerfulness, silence and recollection drew great respect and admiration from the younger Sisters. One might best describe her role in those early years as the PR person behind the scenes. Her love for the Passionist family throughout the world moved her to correspond with other Passionist Nuns in the U.S. and abroad. She was known for being quite comfortable with "writing on her knee" as she dashed off a note while chatting with community members outside at recreation. Whenever a Passionist passed to eternal life, Sister made sure they received the prayerful remembrances to which they were entitled. This devotion to the world-wide Passionist community left a deep impression on new members. Likewise, her delicate care and concern for the Sisters in her own community showed itself in small acts of thoughtfulness that might have been overlooked in the time pressures of those early days. Later, she would be called to serve as Superior, Assistant Superior, Novice Directress, Council member and Retreat Hostess. She faithfully remembered friends and benefactors, making sure each one received a word of gratitude in the name of the Superior and all the Nuns. Although Sr. Jeanne Marie felt very much at home in Kentucky with its large families and warm hospitality, she laughingly wondered

why she never lost her New York accent. In her first days in Owensboro, she wrote to her parents in New York, describing the "live cows" she saw at the farm of the Maple Mount Ursuline motherhouse. What a treat for someone from Jamaica, New York!

Sister Frances Marie was our loving and exuberant Sicilian, who had emigrated with her parents and most of her siblings to New York when she was sixteen. Having learned the art of sewing at a pre-school age in Sicily, she worked as a professional seamstress in New York before entering the Scranton monastery. Her skills as a seamstress proved to be a great blessing as the newly-founded Owensboro community struggled to earn a livelihood. Almost immediately, she began to fill orders for Mass vestments, altar cloths and other altar linens. Motivated by the thought that she was adorning the dwelling place of her Eucharistic Lord, Sister lovingly made of each vestment and altar cloth a work of art. Known also for her charity to the other Nuns, Sr. Frances Marie often served as assistant to the novice directress. The new members assigned to work with her hoped that her skill with needle and thread would rub off on them. Some of these learners recall having to rip a badly done piece of embroidery and then being amazed at how easily Sister Frances Marie's nimble fingers literally flew to re-stitch their poorly done work. Towards the end of her life, after the community moved to Crisp Road, Sister seemed to be at her best as she enjoyed the natural beauty surrounding our new monastery. "Oh, what heaven must be like!" Sister was an example for all who desire to live with love in God's presence.



Students from St. Francis Academy help Sr. Jeanne Marie and Sr. Frances Marie sort the donated food

Thank you, to our beloved foundresses for bringing Passionist life to Kentucky. We don't know what heaven will be like, but it certainly will be brighter when we are all together again in the eternal presence of the Most Holy Trinity. Our dear Sister Mary Bernadette longs for the day of that happy reunion.

St. Joseph's Helper's in the Foundation Plans

As soon as the plans for the new foundation were made public, donations poured in from retreatants, relatives and benefactors. These people gave not only of their treasure, but also of their time and talent, sponsoring raffles, socials and other fund raisers for the new monastery.

The Passionist priests and brothers likewise offered much support and encouragement, besides enlisting for us new benefactors. Fr. Jude Mead, C.P., ordained in 1946, became a close friend of Mother Mary Agnes, procuring donations for the chapel furnishings, and the large outdoor crucifix. This crucifix was lit at night and could be seen from Highway 60 (4th Street) far below the "monastery on the hill," as the Benita Avenue monastery began to be known. Relocated near our Crisp Road entrance gate, this same crucifix is still lit at night.

Meanwhile, Bishop Cotton was enlisting the good will of the priests of the Owensboro diocese. Writing to them in early October 1946, he said:

"These Sisters who had invitations to make their foundation in other dioceses where materially things would have been much more attractive, have chosen our diocese as they said ... it is a missionary one and because we here are poor....All of us should appreciate the sacrifices and prayers these enclosed nuns will offer for us, and we should appreciate also having a retreat house for women in our diocese."

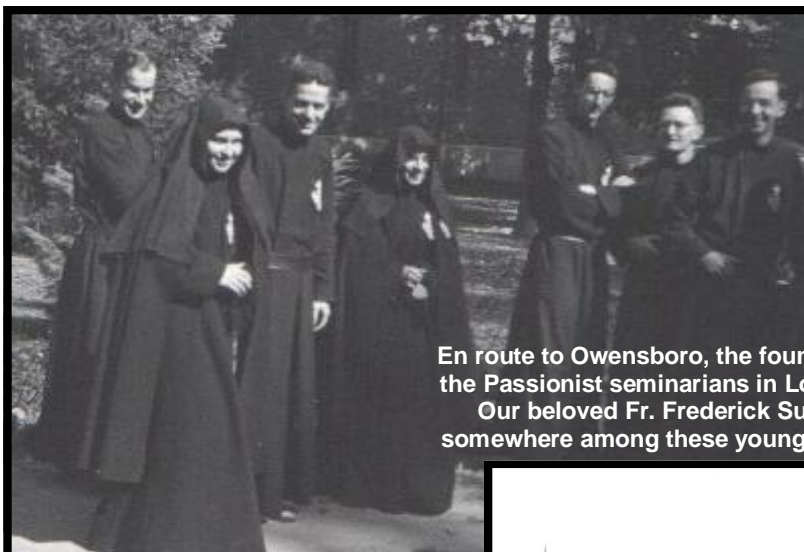
A Passionist stationed in Louisville, Brother Gabriel Redmon, met the founding nuns on their way to Owensboro, and became their devoted friend. He, together with Fr. Roger Mercurio, established St. Gemma's Guild, (later to become St. Joseph's card party guild) a group of Louisville Catholics whose contributions assisted in our material needs. Every year they sponsored a card party for our benefit. Who could forget names such as Mary Black, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. J. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Meinrad Bisig, Eddie Mueller, Joseph Spanyer, and so many others too numerous to mention who helped in these early years. The rector of the Passionist monastery in Louisville, Fr. Joseph Gartland, continued for years driving to Owensboro with supplies for our empty pantry shelves.

Kentucky Hospitality

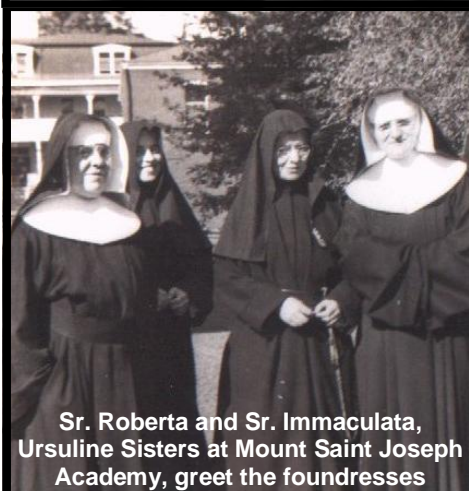
In Owensboro, Bishop Cotton was also busy enlisting people to prepare food and household furnishings, and to clean the house after the Nuns arrived. He arranged for the Nuns to meet the Ursuline Sisters at Maple Mount where Mother Laureen Sheeran cordially received them on Oct. 5th for an overnight stay.

Bishop Cotton's official welcome to the Nuns took place at the Cathedral on Sunday, Oct. 6th. An account of this ceremony was recorded in the St. Francis Academy student paper as follows:

"Following a hymn by the choir, Bishop Cotton welcomed the nuns who will devote their lives to prayer and penance and later to the directing of weekend retreats for women. Bishop Cotton in his talk reviewed in detail the



En route to Owensboro, the four
the Passionist seminarians in L
Our beloved Fr. Frederick Su
somewhere among these young



Sr. Roberta and Sr. Immaculata,
Ursuline Sisters at Mount Saint Joseph
Academy, greet the foundresses



Open
Octo



Our five foundresses standing with Sister Francis
Borgia, S.C.N. in front of St. Francis Academy.



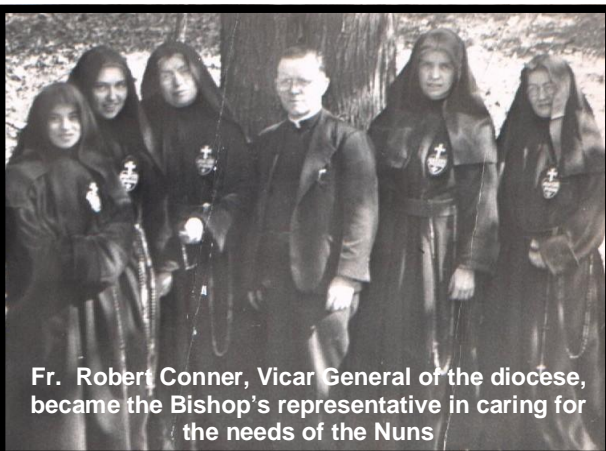
Jimmy Thielen and Bobby Wathen proudly display the tightly
stuffed straw mattress. Bobby put his name in each one!



Jimmy Th
Hayden v
stuff



addresses met
ouisville, KY.
cher was
Passionists



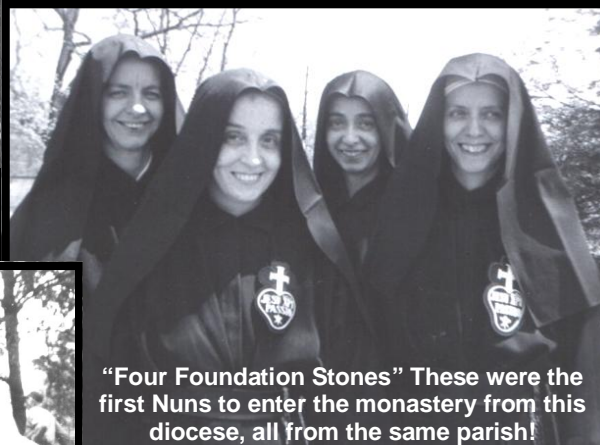
Fr. Robert Conner, Vicar General of the diocese,
became the Bishop's representative in caring for
the needs of the Nuns



House Day,
ber 7, 1946



Sr. Mary Dunnigan of the
Agonizing Heart of Jesus—
the community's
first new member



"Four Foundation Stones" These were the
first Nuns to enter the monastery from this
diocese, all from the same parish!



Thielan and Robert
Hayden working hard to
stuff a mattress



Sister Joseph Imelda (2nd from right) and other
Sisters of Charity stuffing the straw pillows

events leading to the foundation in Owensboro. When asked by someone, who had engineered the foundation, the Bishop replied: 'God himself whom we might call...the greatest Engineer, who brought the nuns here.' The bishop pledged the assistance and devotion of the people saying, 'Our people are a good type of Catholics with faith in their hearts, and I am sure they will make the life of the Sisters here a happy one.' Bishop Cotton also expressed the hope that God might give to some of the young ladies of the diocese vocations to the life of the Passionist Nuns."

That evening, five weary but very happy Passionist Nuns were the guests of Sr. Francis Borgia and the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth at St. Francis Academy.

Early the next morning, October 7th, 1946, the five foundresses took possession of their new home. St. Joseph's Monastery in Owensboro was officially established! Mother Mary Agnes later wrote: "We came to live in this blessed spot on the feast of the Holy Rosary." Sr. Francis Borgia brought the senior boys and girls from St. Francis Academy to assist the Nuns in unpacking and cleaning and settling into their new home. Homer Barton, Robert Hayden, Jimmy Thielan and his brother, together with Bobby Wathen, Dick Roby and many others remained friends for years. The Nuns were getting a good dose of Kentucky hospitality!

The next day, October 8th, the first Mass was offered in their tiny improvised chapel and then open house day began. Curious visitors, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, many of whom had never before seen cloistered Nuns, filed through the new monastery during the day and into the night.

Vocations

Among the many visitors was a group of students led by Fr. Robert Whelan, pastor at St. William's parish in Knottsville. Father's zeal in promoting religious vocations was rewarded by the eventual entrance into the Passionist community of four of his students who accompanied him that day. These Sisters are sometimes referred to as our four "foundation stones," and they are: Sr. Rose Mary Boteler, (R.I.P.), Sr. Marie Michael Aull, Sr. Margaret Mary Mattingly, and Sr. Rita Marie Boteler. Four Passionist Nuns from one parish! And all because of the devotion and zeal of a priest! These young women were shown around what would eventually be their new home by Cleon Oberst, the niece of Fr. Bonaventure Oberst, C.P.

The very first postulant, however, to enter the new community was **Mary Dunnigan**, a 40 year old former Army Sergeant, from Hazelton, Pennsylvania. She had wanted to enter religious life at a younger age, but stayed home to care for her mother. Finally, the way opened for Mary to enter, and she took the name Sr. Mary of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus. Her gentle Irish eyes revealed her deep union with God and her sincere interest in others. Sister was assigned to work with the retreatants, in addition to fulfilling clerical duties in the community. When she entered the Passionists after such a long wait, Sr. Mary said she would be grateful if God would give her just 20 years of religious life. He heard her prayer, for Sister Mary died 20 years later, on July 19, 1966!

St. Joseph's Helpers Keep Going!

Throughout our history, St. Joseph has shown his watchful care of us by sending wonderful people willing to help. So many people came forward to help! Principal among them all was Mr. Theodore Rohling, the father of Sr. Mary Bernadette. A fine carpenter who lived in Covington, KY, Mr. Rohling spent his vacation that first year helping the Nuns turn their new house into a cloistered monastery. Besides crafting the chapel altar, the pews, and pedestals for statues, he also made desk tables for the Sisters' cells and the retreatant rooms and many other pieces of furniture. Until his death, Mr. Rohling continued to use his carpentry skill for our benefit. His



Sr. Mary Bernadette with her father,
Mr. Theodore Rohling
of Covington, KY in October 1946

daughter, Sr. Mary Bernadette, taking after her father, made many pieces of furniture for the altar bread department and other rooms of the monastery. She was often seen with a saw in her hand, or sanding and varnishing some piece of furniture.

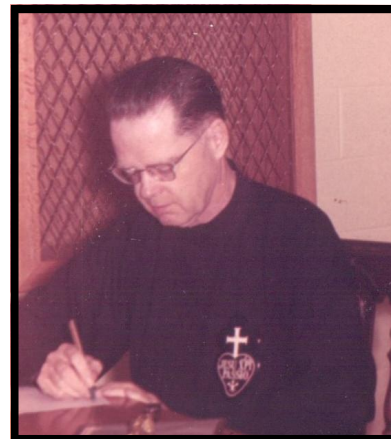
In March of 1948, St. Joseph worked one of his many prodigies for the new community. The construction of the enclosure wall was begun in August of 1947 and was completed on the vigil of the feast of St. Joseph, March 18,

1948. During the course of his work, the contractor found that the expense was greater than anticipated. As the meager resources of the Nuns could not afford the additional \$2000.00, Mother Mary Agnes turned to heaven for help. She placed the situation in St. Joseph's hands, encouraging the other Nuns also to ask his intercession with God. The very next Wednesday (the day of the week traditionally dedicated to honoring St. Joseph), a benefactor previously unknown to the community sent a check for \$2000.00! No one outside the community knew the amount they needed. The benefactor was Mr. Raymond Montgomery of Louisville, whose children have continued as benefactors of our community. Mrs. Montgomery later donated one of our first sewing machines.

Laywomen's Retreats

Writing of the Passionist Nuns, St. Vincent Mary Strambi said that *"the life of the Nuns of the Passion was to be one of simplicity, meek love and spiritual repose. They were not to be content, however, with the nourishment which they themselves received from the five precious wounds; they were to have very much at heart the extension of the devotion to the sufferings of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary."*

One of the ways our community has lived this out is through our retreats which were first only for lay women. In March, 1947, the Nuns began to host retreats. The attic was converted into dormitories for the Nuns, so that the second story could be used for the retreatants. This second floor also served as community work and recreation rooms when retreatants were not in. The basement became the Nuns' dining room (refectory) during women's retreats. Fr. Alfred Shalvey, C.P. who conducted many retreats during the first few years, would arrive early so that he could spend time renovating the attic for dormitories.



Fr. Alfred Shalvey, C.P.

Our space has run out! This story of the wonderful works of the Lord will be continued in our next issue. Beneath the surface of all the details of our history, is the reality of our call within the Church. Each Passionist Monastery is both an Upper Room and a little Calvary where Jesus celebrates His Passover with His disciples. We are grateful not only for the countless joys of these 60 years, but also for the ways in which we have been called to experience the Crucified One in the mystery of His self-giving love. In union with His eternal sacrifice in the Mass, we give thanks for all that has been and for all that is yet to come. Don't miss our next issue of "From the Foot of the Cross"!

**Editors note: The Sisters who wrote this brief account did not live through these events. We apologize for any names we may have omitted.*



One of our early groups of retreatants, crowded into the tiny chapel

Sister Mary Agnes, CP - Silver Jubilarian



This picture of Vickie and Barbara with their mother Lois was carried by their dad during World War II. What appears to be ribbons in her mother's hair is a set of holes made each time her dad tacked the photo up on the wall of his barracks

years later, and time to celebrate her Silver Anniversary of Passionist Profession!

Those who knew Vickie as office manager at Harry Holder Motor Company or as head bookkeeper at First Home Federal Savings and Loan, were shocked by her decision to enter a monastery. Others who knew the faith she had inherited from her mother, Lois Towery Higgs, remembered that Vickie had wanted to become a nun after high school graduation. Contact with the Maple Mount Ursuline Sisters Rose Emma Monahan and Dolores Robinson had deeply impressed Vickie, inclining her to want to become a Nun.



The whole family on vacation together in the Smokey Mountains (l-r): Barbara, Lois, Arthur and Vickie

At the three o'clock hour on a Friday afternoon, a well dressed young woman prayed alone in our chapel on Benita Avenue. Unexpectedly, a ray of understanding filled her soul with quiet conviction of what she must do: *"The One who died for you is here."* She knew He was calling her to enter our monastery, and said to herself, *"I'd better talk to the superior about entering."*

This young business woman was Vickie Higgs, known in the Passionist community as Sr. Mary Agnes. It is now many

Vickie had already spoken with the Superior General at Maple Mount and was ready to be measured for her postulant outfit, when her father stepped in, pressuring her to go to college or to work. He said that after she had some experience, if she still wanted to become a nun,

he would not then stand in the way. But by the time she had built her career and was making money and partying, Vickie easily left aside any notion of becoming a nun.

Life was exciting for Vickie, as she climbed the ladder of success, did car ads on T.V., sang and played her guitar with bands and at the policemen's ball and at parties. But the *"One who died for her"* and chose her to be a Passionist was patiently faithful. His providence was watching over her.

Vickie joined the Legion of Mary and became friends with Ellene Snyder (now Sr. Joseph Marie) and Ruby Westerfield. Both of these friends in the Lord would play a part in getting Vickie into the monastery. Ruby (not known to underestimate) told Vickie and Ellene that the Passionist Nuns were starving and that they would go three days before asking anyone for something to eat. Most of us **were** quite thin at that time, but we didn't realize we looked **that** bad!! At any rate, this tale of woe prompted Vickie and Ellene to start bringing groceries to the monastery and sending in donations for food.

This was not Vickie's first contact with the Passionist Nuns. Her aunt, Charlene Armendariz, had entered the Passionists in the early 50's, and though she found that it was not her vocation she



Vickie singing with Boots Randolph and his band around 1965



Friends in the Legion of Mary on their way to Louisville: (l-r) Ellene Snyder, Vickie, Ruby Westerfield, and Vickie's sister Barbara



Vickie in 1974 as she opened a bookkeeping and tax service of-
fice in her own home

Ellene Synder, her best friend, **did** enter the cloister in 1978, but Vickie still had no desire to enter. She did, however, get involved with the community by taking the Sisters to the doctor. She remembers Sr. Mary Elizabeth asking, "*Didn't you ever think about being a nun?*" Her face dolled up with make-up and her hair a different color each time, Vickie would arrive at the back door to pick up a Sister. Sr. Margaret Mary jokingly remembers looking at her and thinking to herself, "*No, she's too worldly.*" But God had other plans.



Aspirant Vickie, along with Sr. Marie Michael
and Postulant Ellene
enjoy music at recreation



New novice, Sr. Mary Agnes of the
Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary

always remained close to the foundress, Mother Mary Agnes Roche (R.I.P.). Vickie would tag along when her aunt visited Mother Mary Agnes at the monastery. She made several retreats on Benita Avenue during her high school years, and Mother Mary Agnes would always take time to visit with her personally. But at that time, nothing was farther from her mind than entering a cloister!

Little by little, the Holy Spirit drew Vickie to attend 3 p.m. Benediction at the monastery on Fridays, and then to come to daily Mass. As she heard us praying the Divine Office before Mass, she decided to come earlier so she could pray it with us. Then the episode recounted at the beginning happened—Our Lord revealed His love for her and extended His invitation to her to become a Passionist Nun, and Vickie said yes.

After completing her aspirancy, she sold all her belongings and entered the postulancy in 1979. Over the years, Vickie worked in the monastery kitchen, the garden, the altar bread department, and then was assigned as bookkeeper. Having served as assistant superior, Sr. Mary Agnes was elected superior in 1992. She will always be remembered for her leadership during the construction of the new monastery and the move to Crisp Road. All her book-keeping experience together with her mechanical abilities gave her a facility in reading and understanding blueprints and specification manuals and this served her well as she worked with architects and contractors.

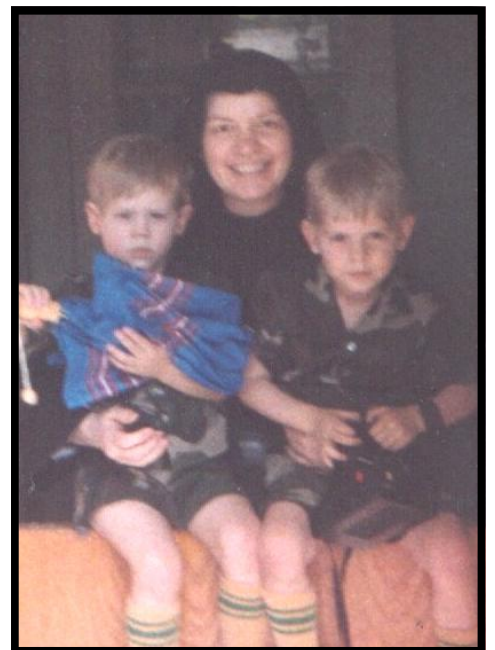
When Vickie received the name "Mary Agnes" little did she realize that one day she would walk in the footsteps of Mother Mary Agnes Roche who built two wings of the Benita Avenue monastery. Someone remarked, "*I'll bet it will be a long time before anyone else wants to take the name 'Mary Agnes'!*"

Recently, Sr. Mary Agnes was asked what stands out in her mind as she looks back over 25 years as a vowed Passionist Nun. She replied, "*The fidelity of God. He is worthy of complete trust no matter what He asks you to do, no matter how impossible it seems. If God wants it, He will make it happen.*" She said that many times during the relocation, she wondered where in the world the money would come from to finish the project, and she would remember Jesus' words, "*Fear is useless. What is needed is trust.*"

Here is her advice to any young woman thinking about becoming a Passionist Nun: "*Don't wait. If you feel called, the only way you're going to know is to try it. Otherwise, you're never*



Sr. Mary Agnes cutting the bread
she had baked



Sr. Mary Agnes and her twin nephews,
Ben and John Golden at the back enclosure door
at Benita Avenue

going to know. Pray and find a good spiritual director whom you can trust, who shares your values. Let this person lead and guide you in listening to what the Lord is saying to you."

Sister Mary Agnes continued, "Looking at the direction my life was going, I was really on a slippery slope. I feel the Lord had mercy on me and gave me the opportunity to take His values and turn my life around. I pray it has been my salvation and the salvation of others through my life of prayer."

We leave you with this final thought from our Silver Jubilarian: "Although I had always had devotion to the holy wounds of Jesus, I found that after I had entered, it was the realization of the pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary that opened up to me. Jesus and Mary suffered together the agony He would undergo. The sword of sorrow pierced her Heart also. Jesus and Mary were united in suffering the Passion not just on Calvary but throughout their whole lives."

The Silver Jubilee Mass for Sr. Mary Agnes and Sr. Joseph Marie will take place at 2 p.m. Central Time on Sunday, May 7, 2006. (Sr. Joseph Marie's vocation story appeared in our Fall 2005 newsletter)



"Don't wait. If you feel called, the only way you're going to know is to try it." Words of wisdom from a Silver Jubilarian

Remembering our Faithful Departed



Katherine and Red, married 60 years, are pictured here after a Mass in honor of their 45th Wedding Anniversary

Thomas "Red" Saltsman, brother-in-law of Sister Mary Elizabeth, C.P. went home to the Lord Thursday, December 8, 2005, after multiple health problems and a lengthy stay in the hospital. Red and Katherine were the owners of the famous "Red's (Fish) Place" in Sorgho, KY. He was also famous for the annual political picnic held there. Red was an excellent cook and enjoyed his work. In what has been called a "fatherless" society, Red, who had no sons of his own, became a mentor to many young men, instilling in them high values and a spirit of generous service. A good listener, Red had the gift of intuiting the needs of others.

Knowing that Red had often shown signs of openness to becoming Catholic, Sr. Mary Elizabeth visited him in the hospital and asked if he wanted to join the Catholic Church. When Red responded, "Absolutely!", Fr. Ray Clark, our chaplain who accompanied Sister, was so stunned that he spilt the holy water! Red's joy on this occasion was profoundly shared by his loving wife Katherine, and daughter Kathy who had prayed for many years that Red would become a Catholic. May Katherine, Kathy, and all the family look forward to an eternal reunion with Red and may he now enjoy his eternal reward.

Would you like to help us move into the next 60 years?

Pray for good vocations to our community

PRAYERFULLY CONSIDER
SENDING US DONATIONS AND
REMEMBERING US IN YOUR WILL.

Although we try to earn our own living,
we do depend on free-will offerings.
God bless and reward you.

Please consider making a retreat this year!

For more information contact
us at (270) 233-4571
or email us
retreats@passionistnuns.org.

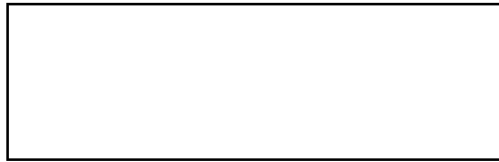
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In this closing photo, Sister Mary Bernadette, our last living foundress, enjoys a visit with the Sisters who have entered our monastery since the relocation to Whitesville.

"The community shows the aging nuns appreciation and esteem for the heritage received as the fruit of their faithful work."

Rule & Constitutions #81

Grateful remembering leads to prayer and deeper commitment. As we celebrate the wonderful works of God in the history of St. Joseph's Monastery throughout 60 years we are grateful for all of you who continue to make our Passionist contemplative life possible through your free-will offerings. We ask God's abundant blessings upon you and your family. May He reward all who have generously contributed of their time, talent and treasure to the Passionist Nuns. If you would like to join us for our Holy Week services please call us at (270) 233-4571. Our prayers are with you for a Happy Easter.

Mother Catherine Marie and all the Nuns