



**Caldwell Hall**  
Catholic University Web Site

## **Chapter 38**

### **A Little Less Tilt on the Playing Field**

#### **Catholic U. and Sisters College**

Some of Falconio's first decisions on rules for American Catholic education were based on European models. To shift American parish schools to match, he ordered the immediate separation of girls and boys in all parish classrooms and informed the BVMs they were no longer to teach boys--much to the outrage of American pastors and bishops. "He just doesn't get our co-education tradition!" they concluded. Co-education not

only saved money but it was the American way of educating every child in “The Three R’s,” (Readin’, Ritin’ and Rithmetic). In many cases it cut the cost of a second teacher in parish schools.

“I can hire four good nuns for the cost of one man,” said a balding pastor loudly (and truthfully as all knew). “Sister Basil Mary teaches a grade of boys and girls together. With what she saves, I heat and repair a house for the Sisters and serve a hot lunch for the children.” Everyone at the meeting knew that was also true. The Roman collars in the room nodded, agreeing with a priest who had done just that for years. Had the Delegate decided too fast? skipping pastors and bishops?

No wonder Cecilia wrote in 1909, (in large print because of her eyes), **“You will see little of me.”** Her immediate goal in August was the group of 16 novices held back for a full year of novitiate. She considered how to fit their add-on year into her thin motherhouse budget. The 16 had been called home and now the motherhouse received no money for their teaching. Where once they taught in the parish as valued young Sisters, supplied by the parish convent with clothes and food, at the motherhouse in the novitiate, they shared in dwindling motherhouse budgets and supplies. Factor in their absence from the classroom and the loss of their salaries to the congregation and sense the tension at the crowded motherhouse on short rations. Cecilia’s note to the superior of Butte calls up a comic picture of a dignified but distraught Antonia Durkin with her pince nez perched on her nose, searching out every rag of clothes for the 16 young women held back.

In addition, these 16, trained to teach, were now over trained and underused, knew mission life and its responsibilities, were very needed elsewhere, and unimportant here at the motherhouse where they thinned the emaciated budget even further. Something like a revolt brewed among the young women. The 16 felt insecure, muttered to each other, complained about “wasting time.” In a frenzy of activity they cleaned their habits, sewed new headgear (*fine wash*), shined shoes, cleaned duties twice, waxed and stubbed the long oak corridors and classrooms until the course of studies for the Novitiate Junior College appeared on a message board outside Cecilia’s office. Then the Mount St. Joseph faculty returned from retreat and Antonia Durkin pinned up the first semester curricula for the Novitiate Junior College. The miasma lifted, tension dropped, and the motherhouse let out a long sigh.

Cecilia knew the novices would be bored with the novitiate after being in charge of a classroom of 60 or 70+ children and she was correct. “We endured it,” admitted Edwina Tansey to Doris Walsh in 1967 from her room in the infirmary—then went on to picture the first day of classes with The Mount instructors at Mount Carmel.

College textbooks lined the novitiate corridors at the motherhouse intended for new courses. The faculty sent books for in-depth reading to rooms in the novitiate corridor as well as the new library in Bertrand Hall. BVM Mount superior Bertrand Foley drove over from the other end of Grandview and closeted herself for an entire morning with Cecilia. An air of peace followed the purposeful swish of long-skirted women in black moving into classrooms to try out broad-arm student desks. Screwed onto runners, rows of these new desks moved as a unit. Sisters who heard about the raise the lid-variety sneaked into classrooms behind the sacristy to see. Quietly they lifted the lids on a large, enclosed space for books and notebooks. The 16 released a deep breath-- air freed finally from a tight ribcage, breathing easily without worry, anger or lack of purpose.

Once more, novices were at home with a goal, a mission and a meaning—in college to learn more to give to other women. The first of their kind in the novitiate junior college, they followed a course of study from Bertrand Foley. To achieve three- year college standing for The Mount, between 1899 and 1903 Bertrand raised the degrees among her faculty to BS, MA, or PhD. Her teachers responded eagerly. The 16 novices pursued teaching certificates and recorded credit hours with the registrar. The Mount Registrar opened a second office for the information

“That’s more like it!” said novices to themselves, and to Antonia, Cecilia, and Bertrand. In no time they became very busy about required courses. The fast walk of young women echoed through the motherhouse again and The Mount prepared to open the library and cafeteria in the new Bertrand Hall. In 1905, Mount St. Joseph College became the first four-year college for women west of the Mississippi.

According to an old proverb, “It’s an ill wind that blows no good.” Cecilia found herself turning back to plans she had thought about for nine years as novice mistress and almost six more as Mother—that of a house of studies to facilitate higher education for her Sisters. In 1899 The Mount became a three-year college awarding Normal certificates. College classes

gave meaning to the Novices' added year of novitiate at the motherhouse and inserted purpose into their activity. It was all new!

And it was only the start of Cecilia's dreams. Cecilia wanted degrees for her Sisters—college degrees. Normal certificates were not good enough! They would have to attend accredited schools—taught by men—if their credits were to mean anything in the world of higher learning. (She underlined the word men as she considered her notes on the FUTURE.)

So she inquired of the Jesuits at Marquette and St. Louis University, consulted the Chicago Vincentians who wanted her Sisters to establish a college for women backed by DePaul University. She sought out administrators at Catholic U asking for advice—asking eventually for help. Somehow Cecilia and Antonia Durkin (rumored to be the author of “The Letter to Catholic U” that finally opened the doors) and Bertrand Foley managed to persuade the priests to allow Sister-students into Catholic U—to provide classes for them and give credits for whatever courses in which they could pass the exam. Writing in 1910 of her Council's decision to send Sisters to Catholic U, Cecilia remarked, “We should have done this long ago. We shall have to catch up!”

Her attitude might be captured in a little ceremony carried out daily at Mount Carmel. Every morning after breakfast, followed by a novice carrying a footstool, Cecilia paced down the chapel corridor, turned left at the head of the main stairs and walked to the large grandfather clock, checked the time with her pocket watch, and stepped up on the stool to wind the clock and reset it if necessary. The little procession made the rounds of every Mount Carmel clock—some passing inspection, some requiring adjustment. The action has a parallel in Cecilia's attitude toward the education of BVMs.

How slow was the congregation running by the time she sent the six to Catholic U. in 1911? Slower than Cecilia but ahead of most American congregations of religious. Her idea of excellence meant the BVM clock had to be set right. One competed with oneself, not with others. The community had lagged in its own response to the world and to the needs of Sisters teaching in its schools. That it was ahead of others in no way excused it. It must be set right for its own mission, members and talent.

How long had Cecilia thought about college degrees for her Sisters? From the beginning. In her first term as Mother she introduced the Novitiate

Normal school, using Crescentia Markey, Maurice Duffy, Rosalia Ryan, Basil Healey, and Sebastian Courtney—master teachers who were members of her Council—to teach the novices. Following her experience at Council Bluffs with Antonia Durkin and the Jesuits from Creighton University, she kept her hand on the Normal certificate, but raised her eyes to college and university degrees. She knew that some states already demanded college degrees for high school teachers. From talking to the Creighton Jesuits who came across the Missouri river from Omaha to lecture at the Bluffs academy, she heard that universities were close to admitting women as students—even as teachers. (Antonia thought both would be soon.)

Beginning to see ways for bootstrap education, Council secretary Crescentia Markey and Agnes Burke, Iowa City superior, shared briefly about Catholic summer schools during Cecilia's 1894 meeting of superiors and principals at Mount Carmel. Given brief mention in RE as "hallway talk," it proved not to be just talk. Shortly afterward, Crescentia set up a series of weekend lectures on religion in Chicago (termed by one BVM interviewed "a trial run for summer schools.")

Preserved in the Archives at Mt. Carmel is a yellowed news clipping dated 1897 which reports a papal concession for an Italian order of Sisters to attend an Italian university. "They are not only allowed to attend the lectures in the public universities of Rome, mingling there with laymen and listening to lectures by professors of every mental order, but they doff their religious dress to do so," the clipping reported.

The same clipping contained a paragraph on a French order not so favored. "The head of the French teaching Sisters of the Sacred Heart, a very progressive woman, went before Vatican authorities not long ago with an educational plan by which the novices of the order were to be allowed to take a normal course outside their convent restrictions and taught by outside up-to-date professors." She was refused. The pope was Leo XIII in both instances. The clipping presented two novel ideas from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which someone, perhaps Crescentia, cut out and saved.

In 1899, Bertrand Foley, president at The Mount, toured colleges and universities in the eastern U.S. to compare admissions requirements, standards, and curricula. She inquired about registering her Sisters at Columbia and/or Catholic U for degree work. With the encouragement of Dubuque Archbishop John J. Keane, Bertrand chose several on her Sister

faculty at The Mount to be tutored at Columbia. In 1905, The Mount achieved college status becoming the “first four-year women’s college west of the Mississippi!”

While visiting at Catholic U in 1899, Bertrand contacted one of Catholic U’s priests, the Rev. Maurice Francis Egan, to arrange for Msgr. Conaty, Rector of the University, to give a series of lectures at The Mount and also at the 1899 Teachers’ Institute at Mt. Carmel. Father Egan wrote Mother Cecilia about this on May 17<sup>th</sup>:

Catholic University

May 17, 1899

My Dear Mother Superior

I promised ... that I would let you ... know when Msgr. Conaty will be in Dubuque. He will leave here soon after Commencement and be in your city about the 21<sup>st</sup> of June. If the Sisters desired me to inform you that he might be secured for a closing part in a series of lectures, definite arrangements may be made by addressing him here at the University. I am

Your sincere

Maurice Francis Egan

According to RE, Msgr. Conaty, Rector of Catholic U, “lectured at Mt. Carmel and at Mt. St. Joseph in June, 1899.” The Sister making the contact was Bertrand Foley. Lectures by Conaty at Mt. Carmel provide one of the first links in a chain of providential encounters by Mother Cecilia with the Catholic University faculty.

Shortly after Mother Gertrude’s 1900 re-election, Archbishop Hennessy died. The appointment of John J. Keane, CU founder and first Rector, to succeed Hennessey provided yet another link to Catholic University where the new Dubuque Archbishop was finishing his term as Rector. Bishop Philip Garrigan of Sioux City, former vice rector of the University and close friend of Bishop Keane, offered another avenue for BVMs to address the education of Sisters at Catholic U.

Slowly, the priests and bishops seemed to be waking up. Did women want to be educated? Did the Church need educated women, especially Sisters? And did the Church want to teach lay women? Affirmative, but when the educators looked about for women to educate, they found few

prepared. How could it be any other way? Not only was there no place to educate Sisters, there was nowhere for them to prepare for college work.

Eventually, bishops must hear the voices of Sisters and other women asking for college courses and for degrees. As Lambertina wrote (on a loose page in RE), “Our members are not lacking in intellect or talent. We have not had the opportunity.”

At every chance, Cecilia suggested degrees for Sisters: to priests at Catholic U, to Jesuits at Marquette and St. Louis University, and to the new Archbishop of Dubuque and his friend, Garrigan of Sioux City. All her contacts among priest educators must somehow be brought together. She had already spoken about educating Sisters to the Jesuits at Creighton. Now she encouraged Sisters to register for correspondence courses under their family names a la Antonia Durkin. And by 1910 Cecilia believed she would succeed at Catholic U.

During Gertrude Regan’s two terms from 1900—1906, the push to educate Sisters took a back seat to the building of St. Mary High School, Chicago, and the metamorphosis of The Mount from academy to college in Dubuque.<sup>2</sup> Rev Thomas Shields, head of the Education Department at Catholic U, continued his lectures every summer to the novices and the students at The Mount.<sup>3</sup> The Chicago Institutes begun in Cecilia’s time by Crescentia Markey continued, but no new effort radiated from Mother Gertrude or her Council: Gonzaga McLoskey, Cecilia Dougherty, Loyola Rutherford, Maurice Duffy, Baptist Seeley.

The congregation had not neglected the matter of novice education. It had simply put its recent efforts into additions for boarding schools, St. Mary and Holy Angels central high schools, raising The Mount from academy to college, expanding the campus and educating a faculty for the new school, meeting the push from Chicago pastors to hire BVMs for parish schools, keeping up with science and library needs, planning for a fine arts department and for two new buildings at The Mount, and meeting state teacher requirements. As Cecilia said, “We will have to catch up.”

If the community was behind in 1910 as Cecilia said it was, it was not her sense of educational time that had slowed it. Of course, she could not correct the thoughts of others as she could the clocks that lost time. Nor would she. But respect for persons did not blind her to the results of their

being “behind the times,” nor from pushing the hands of the community clock forward from time to time.

Lambertina Doran wrote of Mother Cecilia that she had a mind “devoid of all pretensions, humble, open, and, even to the last, willing to learn.” Her willingness to change, to learn, and to embrace the vision of others kept her eyes on the future. The need for Catholic colleges for women was critical. If the community went into higher education, she wanted her Sisters able to run an excellent school. That called for good teachers with degrees from a good university. The need for strong degrees was obvious to Cecilia and to Antonia Durkin, instructor in scripture and logic at Mt. Carmel. It was especially obvious to Bertrand Foley, as she raised the curriculum at Mount St. Joseph to a three year college in 1901 and by 1905 to a four year college. (See appendix for more on Mary Bertrand Foley.)



**Some of the first BVMs to study at Catholic U\* face a very strong sun.**  
**(Back row) Adora Caverly, Antonia Durkin\*, Evangela Henthorne\*,**  
**(Front) Carlino Guyton, Regina Lynch\***  
BVM Archives

It was clear to Justitia Coffey, Columba Heffernan, Crescentia Markey, Regina Lynch and Evangela Henthorne—Sisters who registered for degree work at Catholic University in the summer of 1911.

Teachers at the BVM Junior College like Isabella Kane<sup>4</sup> and Lambertina Doran were more than willing to carry Cecilia's footstool to set the educational clocks ahead—or to wind them up and move the hands.

Some things materialized because students wanted them. The college division at The Mount started as a two-year college in 1899 because their Academy graduates wanted to learn more. A plan for an affiliated college for women connected to an established university gradually evolved from discussions that went on with the priests on how to provide higher education for women. Both DePaul in Chicago and Marquette in Milwaukee proposed that the BVM congregation establish four-year colleges for women affiliated with them. The affiliated BVM colleges in buildings near the universities, financed by the BVMs, would share the university staff and library facilities, the cooperating universities to confer the degrees.

To begin the two affiliated colleges, priests at Marquette and DePaul advised Cecilia to send three women for each college to earn degrees in English and language, science, philosophy, and education. But where to educate the six? Bishops frowned on state universities; Catholic institutions excluded women; and existing women's colleges were weak in content and curriculum. Could they move into college work on a learn-as-you-go process as they had with grammar schools and academies? Here the essential difference between the new educators and the old school women shows itself clearly.

A page torn out of RE contains what might have been the winning argument to the Council for sending Sisters to study at a university. Lambertina was Council secretary so the page may have summarized the discussion at a Council meeting. Saved only because of the description of the cemetery transfer described on the back, this page preserves the final paragraphs on the affiliated colleges.

. . . Let us not have a sham. Either they know what education is, and if they do, they know a high school graduate is not ready to be a college teacher; or if they do not know what is meant by education, then why do they presume to conduct a university, the highest institution in the land!

Shall we help along a potential sham? To say that what we can now give unprepared is "good enough" is to allow falsehood or ignorance—it is either one or the other—to carry the day. The opportunity, facility, and stimulus for higher study have been lacking to us; our members have the mental endowment and the

good will; we must procure the means and appliances to use them or retire vanquished from the field of higher education, but we should not attempt to carry on a scheme or a system of delusion or imposture . . .

Knowledge is something more than a passive reception of scraps and details. What do we aim at? Where are we now in this accomplishment, what is needed for completion? What is to be expected from success?

Whoever the impassioned writer, it would take a strong answer to counter such an appeal to integrity. That it was not defeated, but rather made its point accounts for the concession gained by Cecilia for sending six Sisters on for study. The Council favored the BVM colleges affiliated with DePaul and Marquette. Cecilia had one year to prepare a faculty of six.

So when Msgr. Shanahan sent out word of Catholic U's summer school open for registration to women religious, Cecilia wrote immediately to him explaining the problem facing Sisters who were asked to prepare for a future apostolate in higher education for women. Must they obtain degrees from secular colleges since no Catholic university would admit them as students? Her earlier contacts with Msgr. Conaty from Catholic U encouraged her to turn to it as an institution interested in solving this problem.

According to Evangela Henthorne (the youngest of the first six Sisters at Catholic U) a unique plan had been conceived by Cecilia and Bishop Spalding of Peoria.<sup>6</sup> They suggested an actual branch of Catholic U. be established for Sisters, taught by the faculty of the University and not separate from its campus—in effect, Sisters College.

In 1910, such a request—practical but unprecedented—had first to receive the sanction of Rome as well as the members of the university's board of trustees.

When Shanahan received a yes from Rome and also from the trustees, horizons immediately broadened for women religious in the US and Canada.<sup>7</sup> Catholic U. would admit Sister-students, though the professors must conduct classes consisting of Sisters only and in a separate building nearby in Brooklyn. This last restriction was partly a consequence of the uncertainty about how much Sisters might need to complete a degree, and partly a 19<sup>th</sup> century protective device. Women were unknown quantities intellectually. How much could they learn in a semester? It was probably

also an attempt to prevent other women from breaking the gender barrier along with the Sisters. But it was too late. The girls were in the clubhouse.<sup>9</sup>

When the word went out in 1911 about Sisters College, women religious from all parts of North America converged on Washington, D.C., for the initial summer session in June.<sup>8</sup> Five BVMs boarded a train for Catholic U. after the 1911 NCEA convention in Chicago. Antonia Durkin met them in Washington. RE chose a non-emotional statement.

June 22, 1911. Today Srs. Mary Crescentia (Markey), Columba (Heffernan), Regina (Lynch), Justitia (Coffey), and Evangela (Henthorne) go to Washington D.C., to study in preparation for college work.

At first both the university professors and the hopeful religious communities fumbled a little with this new educational baby. Despite considerable community criticism over the time and expense, Cecilia and her Council granted the six students two summers and two full semesters—a period they considered generous enough to acquire a bachelor's degree. Amazingly, for four of the six it was more than enough. In June 1912, Crescentia, Antonia, Columba, and Regina were among the first women to receive a BA from Catholic U. Their majors included Latin, English, philosophy, education, and science.

Justitia Coffey also finished in 1912 at the end of the summer. Evangela Henthorne completed the science course four summers later since, unlike the others, she had no advanced standing or previous college courses. However, the professors did have a question in regard to Sisters. “How much can we teach in summer sessions?” During the first summer they presented the entire two-semester course in one semester.

A typical schedule for Evangela, a science and math major, offered astronomy, trigonometry, and religion in the morning and three hours of chemistry in the afternoon. Other departments carried schedules just as heavy. Every night after supper a French teacher held class for BVMs in the parlor. Each Sunday, the six BVMs trekked over to Georgetown (three hours away by streetcar) to teach a Sunday school of 700. Evangela loved describing her year at Catholic U.<sup>10</sup>

Some of the Sisters—Evangela among them—reached for everything offered: going to required courses for credit, auditing others in free time and taking extras like the French course, then at the semester's or year's end receiving credit for any course in which they passed the exam. It was, after

all, not the grade that mattered but the credits! Evangela, the youngest of the six, completed 180 hours in five summers and two semesters! An astounding build-up of hours.

One effect of Cecilia's letter to Catholic U was surely the widespread educational enrichment of Sisters of all congregations. From then on, more Catholic universities opened summer sessions to Sisters: Marquette, DePaul, St. Louis University, Creighton and the University of San Francisco among them.

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### Notes to Chapter 38

1. Much of the background on summer schools in Chicago was learned from interviews with groups of Sisters at the motherhouse in the summer and fall of 1967, making it hard to identify the exact source of each remark. This one received nods of assent from all Sisters present in the group.

2. See Coogan<sup>2</sup> 289, 290 on beginnings of Clarke College.

3. Father Shields began a summer institute at Catholic U. in 1911. His series of lectures also kept BVMs aware of new trends. BVMs may have inspired him with the idea for summer sessions. Coogan<sup>2</sup> 461, 462.

4. Isabella Kane was not only talented in art, but taught music and choir in the Novitiate Junior College. She ranked as the second highest eligible candidate in the 1912 election for Mother General and was selected in 1915 as one of the first four provincials. The Second Chapter elected her Mother in 1920.

5. Coogan<sup>2</sup> 414-417 for more details on the college affiliations.

6. Evangela Henthorne shared many details in a 1967 interview about Catholic U for which there is no other record. She also authored a book on Bishop Spalding which was accepted as her dissertation in history and printed at the University of Illinois, Champaign in 1932—The Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States.

Despite its title, it reads well. Evangela was the first Dean at Mundelein College (Chicago) under its first President, Justitia Coffey.

7. Coogan<sup>2</sup> 344-357 fills in the attempts of various Catholic universities to educate teaching Sisters and laywomen.

8. Coogan<sup>2</sup> 349 lists Sisters in other congregations at this first summer at Catholic U.

9. Actually a gift of \$300,000, a third of her inheritance, came from Miss Mary Gwendolyn Caldwell, a 21-year old heiress from New York. She delivered it to the Plenary Council of American bishops at the close of their session on starting a Catholic University in America. Caldwell Hall, the oldest building on campus, is named for her. It may have helped in the decision to open the University to religious women in the summer of 1911. Presently, women continue to support Sisters at Catholic U.

10. Evangela Henthorne laughingly described one result of BVM student attempts to live as frugally as possible. The six had only one book for spiritual reading, "How to Pray." In the course of the year, their twice daily half hour of shared reading took them through this book 40 times!

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### Appendix to Ch. 38

The Clarke College Labarum VOL. XXXV Dubuque, Iowa Summer, 1943 NO. 4

Sister Mary Bertrand, B.V.M.

ABOVE all else, she was a woman of vision. About the turn of the twentieth century, a period of great growth and development all over America, Sister Mary Bertrand, as superior of Mount St. Joseph Academy, realized that higher education for women would be a necessity of this new age, and planned accordingly. That was always her method: to plan for the future and to build for the present. And she was all-embracing in her method. Sister Mary Bertrand was the foundress of what is now Clarke College: it is to her that we are indebted for the quote "Clarke spirit" that she interpreted for the first collegians some forty years ago.

The College had been a dream of Sister Mary Bertrand. When, as Superior, she returned to Mount St. Joseph after having been Directress there some years before, she immediately started collecting the necessary funds for "the college building" as it was first called. It is characteristic of her that the money was raised quietly and efficiently—no frantic appeals for aid or publicity: like the real executive she was, she knew where the money could be secured, and within a short time, she had enough to begin building.

The new wing added to the Administration Building during Sister Mary Bertrand's superiorship included *the present dining hall, chapel, library, and several classrooms*.<sup>\*</sup> The College department was at once established, and in 1904, the first graduate, Miss Nina Esther MacElroy of Marshalltown, Iowa, received her diploma. Her history major and Greek and Journalism minors, indicate, from the very first, Clarke College inaugurated not only the contemporary cultural subjects, but also courses that were considered extremely modern. <sup>\*</sup>Destroyed in the fire of May 1984

The Chapel was Sister Mary Bertrand's delight. She had been educated by the Religious of the Sacred Heart in Chicago. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, that is especially characteristic of her teachers, was manifest throughout her own religious life. Thus it was in 1903, the Chapel that has since been the center of life at Mount St. Joseph and Clarke, was dedicated to the Sacred Heart. Every piece of material that went into its construction had been examined by Sister Mary Bertrand: nothing of inferior workmanship could be tolerated. From the very first, the present decorative scheme of soft grays was used. And, erected over the altar, Sister Mary Bertrand had the words: *O Cor Amoris Victima*.

Great as she was as an executive, however, Sister Mary Bertrand is best remembered by alumnae of Mount St. Joseph College and Academy as a teacher, an adviser, and a friend. At different times, Sister taught French, history, and English, and it was she who began publication of a college magazine *The White Sail*. But it was not even in teaching that Sister was most effective; it was in the personal contact that she made with every girl who went to Mount St. Joseph. Before the modern systematic filing of a multitude of personality profile charts had become popular, Sister Mary Bertrand managed in her own way to keep in touch with each student. Long conferences in the office across from the Chapel settled the problems of many a girl, or gave her the insight she needed to adjust herself to a more successful college or academy life. Sister Mary Bertrand was always quick to give praise when it was deserved, but she was equally frank and energetic in reproving faults. She could never tolerate mediocrity. If a girl were fitted to be a leader, she should be a good leader: if she were not so fitted, then she should be a good follower. There would be no question about either. From Sister's office, many a conference ended with a trip across the hall to the Chapel. The students were more often than not inspired by her personal spirituality rather than by any fear of what their own future would hold.

In these days of casual informality, the thing that strikes us most when we hear alumnae reminisce concerning Sister Mary Bertrand was her strictness about formal etiquette. The six-point bow (down—one, two three, four, five, six—up—one, two, three, four, five, six) was practiced assiduously by all the students and performed faithfully on occasion. For graduation, the feat was called the *Commencement Salute*, and given a few more flourishes. At specified times during the week, Sister met the girls and gave formal lectures on manners. The subject matter of Sister's discourses might include anything from Proper Parlor Etiquette to current infractions of the rules. The crucial test of this "course" came when William Jennings Bryan unexpectedly visited Mount St. Joseph's. He was a candidate for the presidency at the time, and was touring the country for campaign publicity. For a quarter of an hour, the Sisters shouldered the responsibility of entertaining the guest. In the course of those fifteen minutes, Sister Mary Bertrand notified the students, ordered a change into their black Sunday dresses, assembled them in the library, and coached one of them in a welcome speech. Six-point bows and ultra-proper decorum were a match for the gallant and courtly manners of Mr. Bryan that day. And ever afterwards, Sister Mary Bertrand spoke triumphantly of the "young ladies."

It was at Assembly, though, that Sister was at her dignified best. She had a talent for investing a scholastic occasion with solemnity and pomp. On such a day, she attained added height and superiority in the judgment of all the students. Her serious blue eyes

would sweep over the assembled throng; the syllables of her speech would become clipped; her charming voice, easily distinct in the hushed room, would be in perfect harmony with the words of understanding and wisdom that she uttered. The whole thing was made an EVENT, not so much by what was done as by the manner in which it was done. There she would stand before the awed group—a woman of culture—poised and recollected, holding them all, as it were, in the palms of her notably beautiful hands.

The deep spirituality of Sister Mary Bertrand, so evident in Retreats given to the novices at Mount Carmel, was apparent even in the earlier days, in the meditations she gave the Sodality before feast days such as the Annunciation and Corpus Christi, or during Advent, Lent, and Holy Week. Those who heard her, say that they have never forgot her manner of presenting sacred truths. She had a way of speaking that appealed to the girls—dramatic enough to hold their interest and yet, at the same time, simple. Her power lay in her unwavering sincerity; she herself *lived* what she said—the girls knew it.

Sister inspired the students with a loyalty to Mount St. Joseph that has been passed on to Clarke collegians. Affectionate regard for Alma Mater was a reality with them all. They realized that their success was the success of their school; their shame a blot on her name. That intense loyalty has become what is perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the true Clarke girl. That is as Sister Mary Bertrand would wish it.

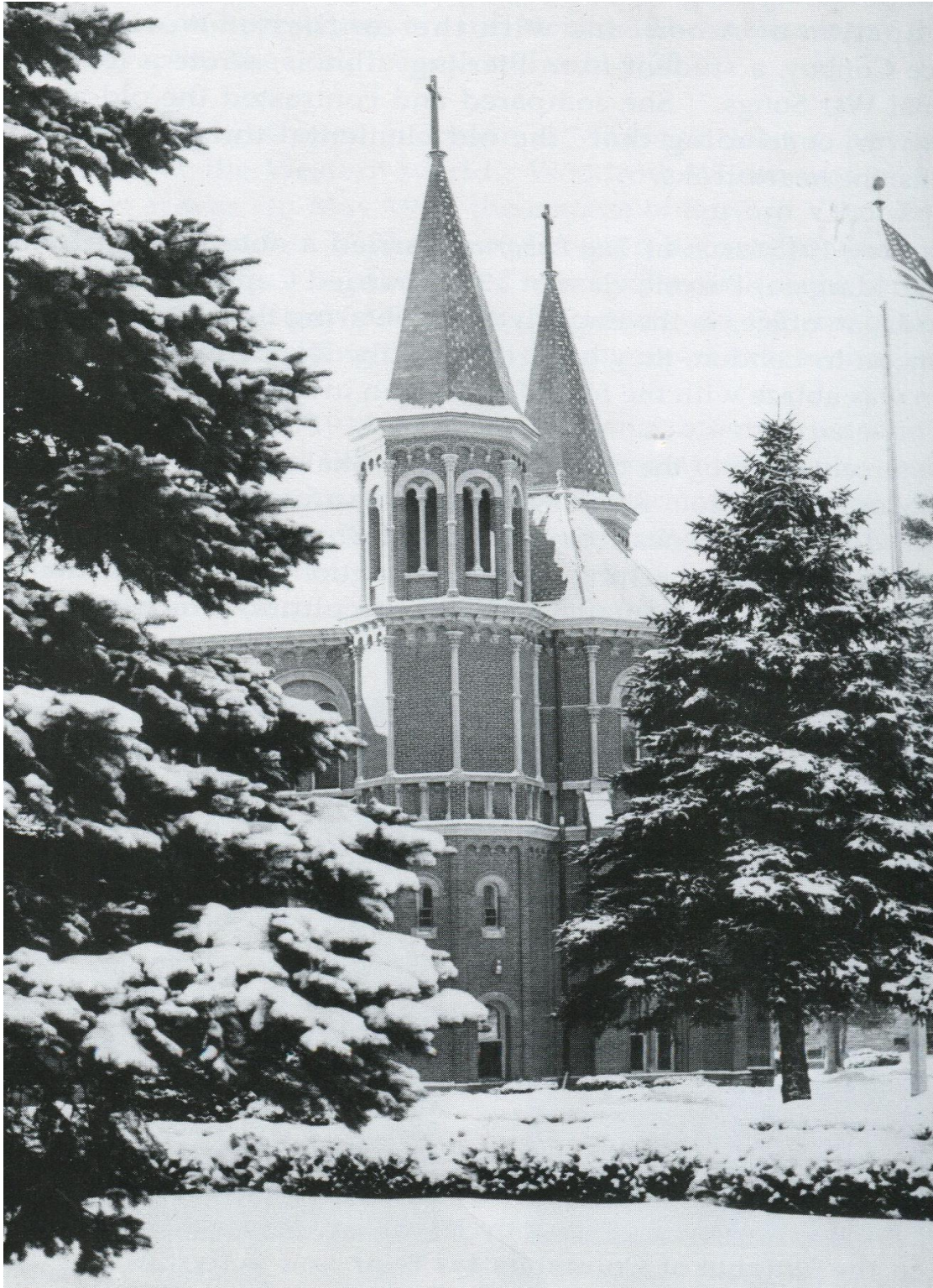
It was Sister Mary Bertrand's to live during the growth of great movements, and to die before they reached their fullest development. She contributed much of lasting value to the restless spirit of the twentieth century, by her pioneering in the field of higher education for women. Because of her far-seeing plans, there is today a Clarke College to round out a century of achievement; there are hundreds of Clarke women living the ideals she herself cherished and taught and lived.

MARY JANE McDONNELL, 1943

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**O felix culpa!**

Clarke College and University Archives does not have a photo or portrait of BVM first superior Mary Bertrand Foley. The in depth word portrait created by Mary Jane McDonell's Labarum feature on Bertrand creates an inner picture of the woman who raised Mt. St. Joseph to the college status. Her feature is one of the most perfect pieces of journalism the author has ever read.



Sacred Heart Chapel   Clarke College  
Clarke Lives! p. 68