Chapter 39

Women's Colleges

1911—The Almost-Affiliation with Marquette and DePaul

The urgency of Cecilia's appeal to Catholic U. rested on the specifics of affiliation with DePaul University in Chicago (founded 1889) and Marquette University, Milwaukee, (founded 1881) and the establishment of colleges for women at both in September 1917. (Both universities were opened to women in summer school by 1909, but not as originally planned).

What happened to the plan? It was planted and watered while six Sisters studied for degrees at Catholic U. DePaul and Marquette were already committed to sharing both library and faculty with the Sisters. It looked as if women had been heard and responded to at last and as if the BVM Congregation were well on its way to teaching women in college. Father McCabe, CM, of DePaul remained committed to the plan until 1917 and awarded Lambertina Doran an honorary doctorate for her future role as dean of the DePaul/BVM Affiliate. Marquette and DePaul, both just starting as universities, found the Sisters' dream of educating women an inviting entre to university status. According to Coogan2, Marquette was anxious to fill up the campus with Sisters at a newly envisioned summer school for Sisters and other women teachers.

In a letter to one of the Sisters in 1911, Cecilia told of the decision to send six Sisters on to study. At that writing in April, Catholic U. had not yet answered the Cecilia-Spalding proposal for a Sisters College on the Catholic U. campus, and Cecilia does not mention the June Normal Institute at Catholic U. According to her letter in the BVM Archives, the BVM

community will send the six to Trinity College, a school for women nearby, but the affiliations are in place.

April 22, 1911

We have affiliated with Marquette and DePaul Universities and are to open a "Women's College" in connection with each—a year from next September. So—we are sending six Sisters—three for each college to Trinity College, Washington, for one year, to prepare for this college work. The degrees are to be conferred by both Universities. Now what think you!

We should have made this move toward higher education long ago. We are behind—but let you all pray that we may catch up for God's greater glory and the good of souls. (Underlining Cecilia's) Your loving,
S.M. Cecilia

As early as January 1911, RE notes: "The Vincentian Fathers (DePaul) wish us to open a College for Women." In February the BVM grapevine picked it up. "Much discussion about opening a college in Milwaukee (Marquette) and another in Chicago (DePaul)."

But not everyone set their clocks by Cecilia's pocket-watch. During the first year of released time for Sisters to study, she came under attack from BVMs listing very sensible reasons against Sisters studying:

1) There is no precedent for such time off from the schools for study. (Gertrudans rise again!)

2) It's not the right time. The schools have not recovered from the cutback in staff replacements resulting from Rome's order to bring back the novices for a full year.

3) We closed out the boarding sections in three schools at a loss of income to fill classrooms left vacant by calling novices home. The motherhouse is feeding novices that once ate on the missions where they earned money. All Sisters are back now and what are we doing? Sending them off to study!!!

4) We are smart enough for what our girls will be asked to do.

5) After women get the degree, who will let them use it?

The opposition made sense. How can one use a dream to parry such solid objections? And how did Cecilia fill parish classrooms with teachers? By sending superiors going out of office right back into classrooms. Shortly

after the six Sisters left for Washington to study, Cecilia wrote Matilda Lahiff, retiring superior of the busy Holy Family schools.

> My very dear Sister, July 9,1911
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> I know you are completely worn out and need rest; yet, I feel that you would not care to be off duty, my faithful Sister. Will you help me by telling what you feel able for—and would you like to remain in Chicago? This information will be of much help to me, for I want with all my heart to see you happy and satisfied.
>
> Your Loving,
>
> S.M. Cecilia

Cecilia's letter shows more than her need for teachers. There is a post-Vatican II flavor in her request that Matilda Lahiff help choose her occupation and location. Lambertina Doran knew this Cecilia well as a person who respected her Sisters, listened to them, asked their opinion and expected their support.

During that first year of released time for Sisters to study, Cecilia came under yet more criticism. Her critics now raised another point of protest—money! The expense of sending Sisters away for an entire year seemed to many of them a foolish waste.

The community had set aside $1,000 per Sister-student to meet expenses for the year. To women whose salary totaled $200 a year in parishes providing $20 per month for 10 months, the economics of a year at the university translated into five yearly salaries per Sister-student. Or, as one of the members of the Council was heard to remark before voting to send the six: "It will take a year's wages of 30 Sisters to support this group of six students." Cecilia retrenched, asked outgoing superiors like Matilda to make an additional effort to stay in the classroom.

However, she was short of money for more reasons than the six at the university. Having all the novices home added up to more spent on food and clothes at the motherhouse. At the same time, superiors on the missions failed to realize the increase in costs and sent in the usual money for the motherhouse expenses. Cecilia's letter (BVM Archives) to Gervase Tuffy, superior in Butte, (MT) explained why she could contribute nothing to help the parish after the fire in the Butte school.

Oct. 12, 1911

My own dear Sister—

> By all means send Father Thompson a check for $50—send it from yourself. I wrote him from the Bluffs to the Hospital and did long to put some money in the letter, but I hadn't it—nor have I it now. We are in awful straits for money these times—can't even pay our coal bill—nothing small, so my conscience would not permit me to send community money much as I like him and desire to help him out—but you send $50 right away.

Since the priests at Catholic U. charged little or no tuition and the Sisters used a nearby parish building for class, they only had to pay for food, a house which they rented, a cook, and $40 pew rent in the church across the street. Text books they shared and at the end of the year had money left to send back to Mt. Carmel.[4] Cecilia must have been grateful for their careful budgeting, though there is no indication she ever regretted the full expense of having them at Catholic U. To add to their purse, they taught public school religion on weekends at a Georgetown parish, riding the streetcar for an hour each way to get there.

A second letter to Gervase a few weeks after the first clarified the situation at the motherhouse. The congregation couldn't send the 74 novices out because the new Rule kept all novices at the motherhouse for the full two-year novitiate, so the motherhouse had to clothe and feed them. Before Falconio's ruling the novices had to have a full year at the motherhouse during their novitiate. Prior to the change in the 1914 Rule locating the entire two-year novitiate to the motherhouse, these same young women would have been placed in schools as apprentice teachers where the local house would have taken care of them and the local parish paid them a salary. With novices at the motherhouse plus those who entered in September, Cecilia had 74 novices and 43 postulants to feed and clothe on less money and in less space! "But God is good —we must trust Him—He has never failed us," she writes.

The same letter refers to property purchased in Milwaukee for the proposed college with Marquette before the advent of Bishop James J. Keane to the Dubuque diocese.[5] Because of the new bishop, Cecilia's almost completed plan for the two colleges had a short life. On September 13, 1911, James J. Keane was installed as Archbishop of Dubuque. He visited Mt. Carmel on September 24. On All Souls Day, Cecilia called on

the new bishop to be told he wanted more done at the Mount in his diocese and scuttled the whole affiliate colleges. As a result of her interview, she wrote the BVM community, "The project to open colleges in Milwaukee and Chicago was abandoned."

Archbishop Quigley of Chicago, apparently a supporter of affiliations, died suddenly and George Mundelein came in as the new archbishop. He spoke as if he regretted Cecilia's decision to give up the affiliations, but it sounds as if he and Keane were in agreement against the project, and Mundelein forbade McCabe's going ahead. It could only have been keenly disappointing to Cecilia, the writer of the April 22nd letter detailing how DePaul and Marquette will help set up the colleges and what the BVMs will do. In fact the two universities were eager to collaborate. DePaul had purchased the Doyle Apartment Building at 2244 Osgood (Kenmore) for the college and called it the Jeanne d'Arc College for Women.

Dubuque's new Bishop James J. Keane also had a dream for women, a local dream to which he contributed no money. He claimed priority for his plan and plunked it down on top of Cecilia's affiliate colleges for women saying the time was not right for them. The bishop wanted schools in his own diocese strengthened. "What about Mt. St. Joseph?" he asked after hearing Cecilia's ambitious plan for two women's colleges connected to two men's universities not in his diocese. The Mount, said he, could use more Sisters with degrees. With these words, poof! The plan for the colleges that seemed close to realization disappeared in wisps of fog, never to be revived.

Many plans had changed in the meantime. Marquette Jesuits were more worried about allowing co-education than having a woman's college. Teaching women they considered outside their tradition of educating only males. Coogan2 345 succinctly repeats their solution. "To avoid co-education at Marquette, they hoped to induce a congregation of women to open a Sisters' College. The University would hold itself responsible for the granting of degrees and the sharing of faculties. This presented a dilemma however. To get women's colleges they would have to open the doors to coeducation by admitting religious women to classes under the auspices of the University." A visitor to the campus, the Rev. Cornelius Shyne, SJ, proposed a solution:

> The nuns would be best able to study during the summer recess, while free from their grade school teaching duties; none of the boys would think of spoiling

> their vacation by taking classes at that time. Therefore bring in some willing Sisters when the campus was ordinarily deserted and rush them through their training, let them start the college for women and the problem would be solved.

An eight-week summer school started at Marquette on June 28, 1909, but when the nuns came, other women came too. Nevertheless, classes went on while an appeal went to the Jesuit Father General in Rome. The summer of 1910 arrived without any word from Rome and the women came again. In the meantime the university had affiliated with the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music with its many women students. In the summer of 1912, permission came for ladies and "even nuns" to attend.

DePaul also held an unexpected but successful summer school. In 1911, Catholic teachers from the public schools appealed to Archbishop Quigley for a summer session at DePaul. With his help this opened in 1911 with a full offering of summer courses. DePaul then continued during the year with extension classes three days a week: two 2-hour late afternoon and evening classes at the Fullerton campus. Coogan found records of 60 BVMs at after school and Saturday classes between 1911-1916.

Bishop Keane had effectively stopped the BVM Marquette/DePaul plans by veto. However, one half of Cecilia's dream came true! Despite the cancellation of part two (the affiliated colleges), a major break in the wall keeping higher education out of reach of women had occurred. Not just a chink, but a door had been opened for women religious, especially those in Cecilia's corps of gifted teachers.

But there was something more deadly working against the affiliations. An appalling menace reappeared among the young BVM Sisters—tuberculosis, killer of so many in the1880s and 1890s! There was no medicine for it. Only one cure worked at all, when any did—rest. At a time when it seemed no one could be spared, sickness placed another burden on Cecilia and her Sisters. She wrote of the threat during the second semester with the six at Catholic U. (Letters of Mother Cecilia, BVM Archives.)

February 1912,

> ...Do you know—I fear our community is going to bear the cross of tuberculosis again? We have 6 or 7 young members fighting it now—all ordered to Boulder—and no place for them there. May God help us!

With the reappearance of TB added to a growing list of problems, too much now worked against the affiliated colleges. When the plan was dropped, opponents of Catholic U. studies re-emerged, apparently vindicated in their distrust of the expense and number of Sisters involved. But time proved Cecilia right. BVMs needed degrees, credits, certification now!

In spite of the shortness of money, Cecilia sent others on to study after the first six. In addition, some of the six continued. Antonia Durkin received her MA in 1913; Crescentia Markey and Regina Lynch in 1914—degrees entirely completed in summer sessions. And the dream of a Chicago college never quite dissolved. As the years went by, the idea took clearer and clearer shape, until in 1932 under Mother Isabella Kane it materialized on North Sheridan Road as Mundelein College—its first president, Justitia Coffey, BA, Catholic U., 1912.

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Notes to Chapter 39

1. A news article on Antonia Durkin's career says it was she who sent the letter to Catholic U. and quite possibly handled the entire correspondence for Mother Cecilia. She had taken courses from Catholic U. in 1908 and '09. In 1910, she taught in the college department at Mt. St. Joseph.

2. The summer of 1912 found Sisters in summer sessions at DePaul. Marquette had opened summer sessions to them in 1909-1912. (Because some female students entered with many credits, some were allowed to matriculate as early as 1909, according to Matt Blessing, head of Special Collections at University Archives, Raynor Memorial Library, Marquette U. June 14, 2011 email). At Marquette at first, they could sit in class, but not recite or ask questions. During the regular school year, Sisters sat in the hall with the door to the class open since Jesuits could not teach women. Weekly papers and exams substituted for their classroom silence. Since there was nothing in Jesuit regulations against conferences with women, the Sisters plied their Marquette teachers with questions in one of the Holy Angels Academy parlors after weekly confession.

3. Mother Cecilia met real opposition from some on her Council; from clergy who demanded teachers; from superiors who needed Sisters in classrooms; and even from ordinary Sisters. Usually her critics mentioned “this waste of teachers.”

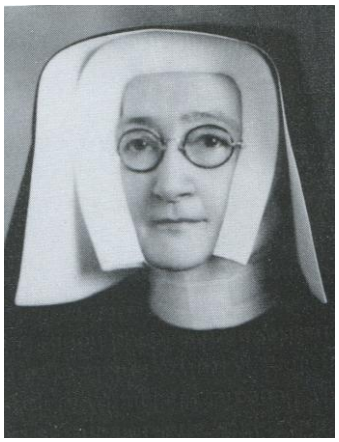
4. The six students returned $1,885 of the $6,000 given for expenses. From June of 1911 to July 1912 (15 months), their expenses totaled $3,885. Coogan2 349.

5. Letter to Gervase Tuffy

Oct. 29, 1911

My own dear Sister,

About your clothing, Sister dear —I could not get an atom worth sending on account of the crowd we have to support and clothe —43 postulants and 74 novices. Sr. M. Antonia uses every rag she can scrape up to help us save, and honestly—I have no money—we were never so short to my knowledge and such big houses to run...We have so much hired help and their salaries are so high that our income is considerably lessened. But God is good—we must trust Him—He has never failed us.



Mary Antonia Durkin, BVM
Clarke Lives! 90

I wanted to send Father Thompson some money! But God knows I did not have it. Every penny has gone on that lately purchased property and St. Mary's new wing. We have given out every penny—trying to keep from paying 6% interest on every penny borrowed. Now goodbye! love to all.

Your heavy hearted

Sr. M. Cecilia

The property in Milwaukee cost $50,000. Gertrude joined Cecilia and Lambertina in voting against buying it. But the rest of the Council (Loyola, Octavia, Ascension, Esther and DeChantal) voted in favor. It was never used for a Milwaukee women's college.

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Sisters at De Paul Summer School, Chicago, Illinois, 1922.
DePaul University Web Site

Appendix to Ch 39

By Lizzy
4/7/2010 11:17:00 AM
Bygone DePaul is a series highlighting DePaul's campus and how it has changed through the years.

DePaul has oft claimed to be the first Catholic University to admit women. Is the claim true? Like most historical questions, the answer gets complicated.

In 1911, DePaul began offering a degree-related teaching qualification summer school program to either Catholic nuns and lay women, or just Catholic nuns (historical sources differ). The program enrolled 125 women from five states. Two of the first women enrolled, Sister Mary Clemenza Leahy, BVM, and Sister Mary Teresita, BVM, received their degrees in 1912. The claim that DePaul University was the first to admit women in any capacity is therefore false; other Catholic universities (including Marquette) allowed women to attend summer schools starting in 1909. However, these programs were not degree-related and, in the case of Marquette, lasted only until 1911. This makes DePaul's claims partly true: DePaul is undeniably the first Catholic institution to offer sustained degree-related training to women. Women were admitted into the four-year liberal arts college in 1916 under the direction of President Francis McCabe. McCabe sought permission after the fact; he stated in a 1917 letter to Cardinal Mundelein, the Archbishop of Chicago:

"A number of applications have come in of late from young women who desire to be admitted to your classes in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. They prefer to come here rather than to enter one of the secular universities, but since it has not been our policy to admit them (except in Summer School, and in Extension Classes, 4:15-6:15 P.M. and Saturday mornings), they will in all probability go to Northwestern University, University of Chicago or University of Illinois. According to our charter, we can scarcely bar such applicants and we should be pleased to know what you think of the matter."

Cardinal Mundelein responded negatively to the request, saying: "I wish to reaffirm again the decision that I gave you before…to the effect that I do not desire DePaul University to accept any young women as students in your College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. You will readily understand that I have given this matter quite some thought…and that the decision is therefore final."

McCabe disregarded Mundelein's prohibitions. A separate college for women, conceived as a sister-school for DePaul, was in the planning stages at this time. It was to be called Jeanne D'Arc College for Women. Whether Mundelein refused his permission or the planning simply fell through, Jeanne D'Arc College never went beyond planning and women stayed enrolled at DePaul. Today, DePaul's student body consists of nearly 60% women.

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