



LIGHT *of* HEARTS VILLA

*A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System*

# Mission and History

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## Light of Hearts Villa

Light of Hearts Villa was established in 1989 by the Vincentian Sisters of Charity of Bedford, Ohio. It operated under their sole sponsorship until August, 2001 when they formed a 50/50 Partnership with the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine. This endeavor offered additional benefits to the residents of the Villa. In June, 2004, the Vincentian Sisters of Charity merged with the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. The active support and sponsorship of these two communities of Women Religious enhanced and strengthened the mission and vision of Light of Hearts Villa.

In 2009 the management of Light of Hearts Villa came under the auspices of the Sisters of Charity Health System of Cleveland, Ohio. Then, 2015 opened with Light of Hearts Villa being under the sole ownership of the Sisters of Charity Health System.

Light of Hearts Villa is a 501(c)3 Licensed Residential Care Facility open to seniors of all faiths who are 60+ years of age. A dedicated staff provides person-centered care based on the needs of the residents, within the limits of our licensure. The Villa provides assisted living, respite and memory care.

## The Vincentian Sisters of Charity (1928-2004)

The Congregation of the Vincentian Sisters of Charity of Bedford, Ohio was established in September 1928 by Bishop Joseph Schrembs of the Diocese of Cleveland for the needs of a large Slovak population in the area. By the 1960's that need lost its dominance and the Sisters expanded their ministries.

In addition to education and nursing, the sisters ministered to the poor, built Lumen Cordium High School for girls (1963-1987), participated in the Diocesan mission team in El Salvador (1976-1986), sent sisters to minister to the poor of Pineville, Kentucky, spent summers working with migrants and inner city youth, engaged in pastoral ministry and related works while faithfully living the spirit of their founders Saints Vincent DePaul and Louise de Marillac. As stated in their constitutions, "Relying on the Providence St. Vincent dearly loved, we give our lives simply to those needs which God lets us see."

The Vincentian Sisters of Charity merged with the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati in 2004 for the sake of the mission. The combined Congregation experienced new life and an expansion of efforts for the sake of the Gospel.

## "Light of Hearts Villa ~ Born of a Dream"

The birth of anything begins with a dream ~a deep inner hope ~a vision of something not yet ~a desire for good that will benefit others. Dreams take shape when people enter into relationships that allow the dream to come to life. From a dream Light of Hearts Villa came to be.

The Vincentian Sisters closed Lumen Cordium High School in 1987. Immediately they took the words of St. Vincent DePaul, "be open to the needs that God lets us see" and dreamt of a ministry to those whose needs were not being met. The concept of an independent and assisted living residence was unheard of in 1987 – unless connected to a nursing home. The Sisters knew there were seniors for whom a supportive environment was essential, whose health needed some monitoring, but whose spirits were far too vibrant for a nursing home. On Sept. 1, 1989, *that dream came to life* when the first residents moved into Suite #1.

Companion dreams also existed. The Sisters envisioned Light of Hearts Villa as "**the best**" in senior living. They wanted the residents to be "light of heart" and to thrive in their new home. They wanted their families and the greater community to know the Villa stood for something special and would not settle for less. They wanted to attract the best people to staff the Villa and to nurture the treasured lives of the residents. They wanted the Villa to be of service and to be



known for its expertise. They wanted to be good neighbors in the community. With God's help *these dreams have become hallmarks over the years.*

## **A Rich Legacy**

Faith based organizations inspire excellence. The history of Light of Hearts Villa has a multi-faceted legacy of the: Vincentian Sisters of Charity of Bedford, Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine and the Sisters of Charity Health System of Cleveland.

Their mission statements identify the underlying foundation of Light of Hearts Villa.

### **Mission Statement of the Vincentian Sisters of Charity**

We are women called to live the gospel of Jesus as servants of the poor in the spirit of our founders, St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac.

We are servants of the Word of God, discerning its direction for community and proclaiming its Presence wherever we are called. With this awareness, we commit ourselves to the promotion of justice and non-violence and to the ever-growing vision of faith as leaven in society.

We are servants of charity knowing that "God's love is made visible through our compassion and our willingness to be one with the world-family," and our readiness to risk all in order that others "...may have life and have it more abundantly."

Relying on the Providence St. Vincent dearly loved, we give our lives simply to "those needs which God lets us see."

The Vincentian Sisters of Charity (1928) merged with the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati in 2004.

### **Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati**

Urged by the love of Christ, and in the spirit of our founder, Elizabeth Ann Seton, we Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, strive to live gospel values. We choose to act justly, to build loving relationships, to share our resources with those in need, and to care for all creation.

### **Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine**

We participate in the mission of the Church by living out the charism of charity in our life of apostolic service. In our openness to the needs of others and in our willing response, we attempt to reflect as a Congregation a unity of purpose achieved through our ministry in health care, social service, and education.

### **The Sisters of Charity Health System**

#### **Our Mission**

In the spirit of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, our mission is to extend the healing ministry of Jesus to God's people.

#### **Our Vision**

The Sisters of Charity Health System is a beacon of hope devoted to healing and addressing the unmet needs of individuals, families, and communities through a network of innovative services.



## SISTERS OF CHARITY HEALTH SYSTEM

“One loving heart sets another on fire.” — Adapted from writings of St. Augustine

The Sisters of Charity Health System was established in 1982 as the parent corporation for the sponsored ministries of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine in Ohio and South Carolina. The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, founded in 1851, continues a faith-based legacy of high-quality, compassionate care in partnership with its co-ministers, who are the heart and hands of the ministry.

On September 14, 2022, the Sisters of Charity Health System and St. Vincent Charity Medical Center announced the vision for the [St. Vincent Charity Health Campus](#). The vision extends the Sisters’ healing ministry established in 1851 to serve unmet needs in our community. The new ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System is transforming the Sisters of Charity’s property on East 22nd Street, including St. Vincent Charity Medical Center, into a vibrant hub to promote holistic health and wellness through health care and services that address the social determinants of health.

The Sisters of Charity Health System also oversees three grant-making foundations located in Cleveland and Canton, Ohio, and Columbia, South Carolina. Each foundation sponsors significant community initiatives and collaborations that address causes and consequences of poverty.

The Sisters of Charity Health System includes other health and human services and education-related organizations: Joseph’s and Mary’s Home, the only homeless service provider in Northeast Ohio exclusively focused on medical respite care; Early Childhood Resource Center for those working in childcare in all settings in Stark County; Healthy Learners, a health care resource for children from low-income families in South Carolina; and the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families, a state-wide organization supporting initiatives to reengage fathers in the lives of their children.

The Sisters of Charity Health System also provides skilled nursing/assisted living at Regina Health Center in Richfield, Ohio, and assisted living at Light of Hearts Villa in Bedford, Ohio.

**[Complete Histories are found in the Extended Versions Below](#)**



## Our Founders: The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine

Long before the American workplace widely accepted women in professional roles, the [Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine](#) (CSA) were directing major health care institutions, teaching in schools and developing new programs to provide needed human services. The first CSAs in America served as the first public health nurses in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1851, they began an enduring legacy of responsive ministry, creative stewardship and an ongoing quest for social justice that lives on today.

The health and human service ministries of the CSA Congregation are now overseen by the Sisters of Charity Health System. The health system embodies the values and philosophy of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine and their mission to continue the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. To learn more visit the congregation's website at [www.srs charity.org](http://www.srs charity.org).

### LIVING IN LOVE:

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, 1851-2010

#### PIONEERING LABORS: 1851-1901

Mademoiselle Louise Brulois, who became Sr. Augustine

“Surely I can do this for God. I am free. No earthly tie binds me. Yes, I will go to America and care for the little Indians,” reasoned 24-year-old Mademoiselle Louise Brulois, a postulant in the Augustinian Sisters at Saint Louis Hospital, Boulogne sur Mer, France. No matter that Cleveland, Ohio, in 1851 was nearly as devoid of Indians to convert as it was full of immigrants with ship fever and forgotten orphans to be cared for, Louise had finally decided to leave her beloved country and go with her superior to America.

The Most Reverend Amadeus Rappe, first Bishop of Cleveland, long aware of the need for establishing a hospital staffed by Sisters, had tried unsuccessfully in his native France to obtain Sisters. Finally directed to Sister Bernardine Cabaret, superior of Saint Louis Hospital, he found her an enthusiastic volunteer. Though the Sisters at the hospital were reluctant to let her go, they responded to Sister Bernardine's spirit of sacrifice and unanimously remitted the remainder of her term as superior. Having earlier secured the assistance of Sister Françoise Guillement, she had now convinced Louise Brulois and another postulant, 20-year-old Cornélie Muselet, to join in the missionary venture. Beginning their two week trip across the Atlantic on the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy, September 24, 1851, the four missionaries, with little more than chapel furnishings and boxes of linen destined to be made into sheets and bandages, spent their stormy trip learning the rudiments of English.

#### EARLY HARDSHIPS

Bishop Rappe, eagerly awaiting the Sisters' arrival, had written in the spring, “Come, my children, I have now prepared a place for you. On it is good spring water and good fresh air.” The house on the eight acres, though, was still occupied on October 10 when



the Sisters came to Cleveland. However, the Ursuline Nuns, who had come to the city from Boulogne just the year before, received them as guests and provided religious training for the postulants.

Within two weeks, Sister Bernardine and Sister Françoise, advised by the Bishop, began living with individual families so that they could better visit the sick and poor in their homes. Cleveland's first public health nurses were soon a familiar sight in the city, and people called them "angels" because of their white habits.

By March 1852, the Sisters were able to move into their small, two-story frame house in the fresh air of the country, Ohio City. In August, they opened Saint Joseph's on the same site, the first public hospital in what later became part of the city of Cleveland. The encounter with the hardships of a pioneer land, an unfamiliar language, a historically severe winter and failing health were perhaps the reasons why Sisters Bernardine and Françoise obtained permission to return to France in September 1852. Cornélie and Louise, who had become Sister Saint Joseph and Sister Augustine, strengthened themselves with the Scriptural injunction that those who put their hand to the plow and look back are not fit for the kingdom of Heaven and decided to remain in Cleveland.

## FIRST AMERICAN SUPERIOR

Sister Ursula Bissonette, an Ursuline novice, who at the age of 35, became the first superior of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine.

Bishop Rappe then turned to Sister Ursula Bissonette, an Ursuline novice, for assistance in continuing the work he had begun, which had already attracted two more young women. As a laywoman, Sister Ursula was well known to Bishop Rappe from her work in the Sandusky area, particularly instructing First Communion classes. In addition, she had worked with the cholera victims in the epidemic of 1849, gathering orphans and widows and caring for them in an abandoned house until the disease passed. Sister Ursula made her profession as a Sister of Charity in the chapel of the Ursuline convent on October 21, 1852—adding a fourth vow to devote herself to works of charity—and in the afternoon became, at age 35, the superior of the new American community.

Under her direction, the Sisters continued their work with the sick, and in order to care for children left by deceased patients, built an addition to the hospital. To support the orphanage, the boys were taught tailoring and carpentry and, with the Sisters, weekly pulled their wagon to deliver suits and cassocks for the clergy and furniture to the West Side Market.

## HOSPITALS AND ORPHANAGES

Sisters Caring at their First Orphanage: By 1856, a number of considerations forced the closing of Saint Joseph Hospital, and the entire building was used by the orphans until Saint Vincent Orphanage was completed in 1859. Later, additional room was again needed for the orphans and 100 boys and several Sisters moved to Saint Louis Orphanage, Louisville, Ohio.

The original convent continued to house a few patients and the elderly remaining from the hospital until the present Saint Vincent Charity Hospital was opened in 1865.



The hospital had long been discussed by Mother Ursula; Doctor Gustave E. Weber, a prominent retired Army surgeon; and Bishop Rappe, who finally purchased the property for \$10,000.

Though Mother Ursula did not live to see the building completed, her spirit of sacrifice remained with the Sisters who willingly gave their pillows to furnish the hospital while they slept on straw. "Charity toward the poor," said Bishop Rappe at the dedication, "was ever to be the motto of the hospital."

To continue this charitable service, the hospital added a school of nursing. To staff the pharmacy, two Sisters became the second and third women in Ohio to be certified by the State Board of Pharmacy. Sister Augustine, long since aware of more than Indians in America, headed the hospital while Sister Saint Joseph continued to direct the orphanage.

On a cold winter's night in 1873, a widow about to deliver a child was taken in and the Sisters began Saint Ann Hospital and Infant Home, first near Saint Vincent Charity Hospital and later on Woodland Avenue. Encouraged by Bishop Richard Gilmour, the Sisters cared particularly for unmarried mothers and neglected infants.

"Donation Days" for this new work were added to the continual door-to-door begging trips of the Sisters, which the people of Cleveland and the surrounding areas gave to generously; however, the money never seemed quite enough to meet the growing demands for the care of the sick and needy.

### EXPANDING MINISTRIES: 1901-1951

Though by the turn of the century, Sister Saint Joseph, the last of the pioneer Sisters, had died, she had lived long enough to see a community of more than 100 Sisters of Charity of Saint Augustine establish a new motherhouse in Lakewood, Ohio. From this center, the expansion of the works of health, education and social services in Cleveland and other areas continued during the next 50 years, even though the requests for the Sisters' service far exceeded their ability to respond. Nevertheless, the Sisters made significant contributions in the development of the health care field.

Providence Hospital, Sandusky, and its nursing school were staffed by the Sisters from its beginnings in 1902 until 1922 when Sandusky became part of the Toledo diocese. A bequest from a wealthy woman and her brother, who had seen the need, led to the opening of Mercy Hospital in Canton in 1908. Later, another donor provided for the establishment of Little Flower Hospital for Children near Mercy.

In 1916, Bishop John Farrelly, desiring a school of nursing at Saint John Hospital on Cleveland's west side, requested the Sisters to assume administration and staffing of the 26-year-old hospital, which had just been rebuilt.

Prior to the opening of Saint Thomas Hospital, made possible by the financial contributions of the people of the area, Akron was the largest city in the country without a Sisters' hospital. In addition to directing and staffing the hospital and nursing school in 1928, the willingness of the Sisters in 1939 to respond to a new need caused St. Thomas to be the first general hospital to open its doors to Doctor Bob Smith, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, when he brought his first patient there.





About the same time, Bishop Emmet M. Walsh of Charleston, South Carolina, had traveled more than 120,000 miles trying to get Sisters to operate the sole Catholic hospital in the state, which was being built after much effort in Columbia. Circumstances led him to the Sisters of Charity, who extended their service to South Carolina and Providence Hospital was opened in 1938.

## BEGINNINGS OF THE EDUCATION MINISTRY

Although the education of orphans had been undertaken from the early days and was under the supervision of the diocesan superintendent of schools, other elementary and high school education was not begun until 1922 when Bishop Joseph Schrembs formally requested the Sisters prepare themselves to staff schools. Saint Augustine Academy, enrolling students from kindergarten to sixth grade, was established on the Motherhouse grounds in 1925 and classes extended to high school the next year. By the time the Sisters celebrated the 75th anniversary of their coming to Cleveland, grade schools in Cuyahoga Falls, Ashtabula, Amherst, Harrisburg, Maximo and Cleveland were part of their apostolic ministry.

## INITIAL EXPANSION INTO SOCIAL SERVICES

Established to organize the charitable services of the diocese on a sound financial basis, the Catholic Charities Corporation freed the Sisters from the constant struggle of trying to raise sufficient funds while caring for the sick and unfortunate. One of the first acts of Catholic Charities in 1925 was to relocate all the orphans cared for by the Sisters at Saint Vincent and at Saint Louis Orphanages on 180 acres in Parma, Ohio, which became known as Parmadale, the nation's first cottage-plan home for dependent children.

The years surrounding the centennial of the Community witnessed the expansion of Saint Vincent Charity and Saint Thomas Hospitals; the building of Timken Mercy Hospital and subsequent consolidation of Little Flower Hospital with Mercy; and the development of a new Saint Ann Hospital separate from De Paul Infant Home. In addition, Sisters continued on the faculty of Saint John College School of Nursing; engaged in Confraternity of Christian Doctrine work in parishes and missions; and cared for preschool children at Saint Edward Home, across from Parmadale. The growing needs of the Community were met by the purchase of 350 acres in Richfield for a new Motherhouse, completed in 1957, to train the young Sisters and care for the retired.

## WIDENING HORIZONS: 1951-2010

If the first 50 years of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine were those of birth and beginnings, the second half century saw growth and expansion. Amid the complexities of the late twentieth century and the twenty-first century, these 62 years were marked by maturity and evaluation.

Pope John XXIII, in opening the Second Vatican Council in the fall of 1962, called the whole Church to renew itself in order "to be found increasingly faithful to the gospel of Christ." The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, like all religious communities, revitalized themselves by returning to the original inspiration of its founders, making necessary adjustments in their living and service, adapting to the conditions of the times.



## VATICAN II TAKES ROOT

Through frequent prayer and countless meetings, the painful, but often times illuminating struggles of the Community brought forth changes in internal governmental structure and policy, lifestyle and spirituality initiated to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ to others. Much of the discussion and experimentation ultimately found expression in the new Constitutions of the Community, approved in 1985, which have been revised and updated to reflect a deepening understanding of mission and ministry. Faithful to Vatican II directives to renew and update in the mid-1960s, the Sisters began intensive continuing education in pastoral and sacramental theology, spiritual renewal, psychology, ethics, canon law, leadership training and communication skills.

Efforts to carry out the principles of collaboration and subsidiarity were seen in various structural changes in the selection and election of Community leaders, in committees and commissions, open forums, assemblies, chapters, community weekends and newsletters designed to solicit the views and ideas of the Sisters to work toward consensus on major issues. While some of these structures and experiences were designed for the internal renewal of the Community, others (such as a process developed in 1985 to take a corporate stance on public issues, the statement on ministry to people with AIDS issued in 1988, and the stance for peace in 1990) helped open the Community to new needs.

## RENEWAL OF COMMUNITY LIFE

To “encourage and promote the continued integration of prayer life, community living and ministry,” Sisters also began experimenting with various ways to live a healthier, more integrated community life. Some Sisters moved away from large residences directly connected with their place of ministry and lived with smaller community groupings in ordinary homes or were part of intercommunity living. Others remained in the convents connected with their apostolic service, but all worked to develop and enhance a community life that “provides an environment of faith, simplicity of life and responsible stewardship, thus witnessing to the integration of Gospel values in life and ministry.”

Recognizing the mutuality between the Sisters and lay people who share the CSA charism (gift) of charity, an Associate program was initiated in 1985. Open to lay women and men, married and single, Associates participate in a variety of ways in the life and charism of CSA. The Sisters and Associates believe that by uniting with others in prayer and ministry, they share more deeply in the Kingdom of God.

## REDIRECTING MINISTRIES

“Nourished by a long tradition of meeting the needs of the Diocese of Cleveland,” the Sisters, in their philosophy, recommitted themselves to works of health, education and social service, but “sought to direct their energies to those existing and emerging needs that are most critical.” For example, changing social patterns no longer required a large home for unwed mothers; thus, in 1973, De Paul Home was donated to the Bishop of Cleveland to be used for continuation of social services.



The declining birth rate and consequent financial difficulties, which resulted in the sale of Saint Ann Hospital in 1973, provided a unique way of preserving the original purposes of the founding Sisters while meeting new needs. The Saint Ann Foundation, a public foundation, was created from the sale. All income generated from the original \$8.2 million principal and from new donations and bequests is used for grants to support programs that improve the quality of life, particularly in Northeast Ohio. As the Saint Ann Foundation celebrated its 25th anniversary, a major funded project was on kinship care, which focused on invited proposals to assist grandparents in caring for children. From 1974 through 2005, Saint Ann Foundation awarded more than \$32 million in grants and, most notably, in 2002 launched a Collaboration in Ministry Initiative involving religious communities seeking to strengthen their ministries into the future.

Seeking to maintain secondary education for girls on Cleveland's west side, yet aware of limited Sister personnel, the Community in 1975 arranged a transfer of the operation and administration of Saint Augustine Academy to the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, who leased the buildings until 2005. In 1987, the academy convent was leased to the same community for use as an early childhood learning center. The CSA presence remains through the ownership of the property and ongoing planning for the best utilization of the facilities, which today houses Lakewood Catholic Academy, an elementary school formed by the merger of three Lakewood Catholic schools and Centering Space, a CSA ministry offering prayer, listening and direction.

The shift of students out of Catholic schools together with the recognition that children were not the only ones in need of religious instruction caused the Sisters in the 1970s to begin to work full time in parish school of religion programs and total parish religious education. In some places, Sisters collaborate in team ministry approaches to respond to parishes' various needs. Sisters are involved in parish ministry and religious education in several parishes in the Diocese of Cleveland. Support of education continues through donations to various secondary schools and to the Catholic Educational Endowment.

## EXPANDING GLOBAL AWARENESS

Beginning in 1976, when the Chapter approved a motion to support in prayer and to investigate the possibility of a CSA going to the diocesan mission in El Salvador, the Sisters expanded their vision to embrace global issues. Experiencing Third World conditions, supporting refugee families, writing letters to government officials about life issues, sending medical supplies and financial aid to disaster areas, establishing CSA properties as peace sites, educating about ecological concerns and supporting the abolition of the death penalty have been a few of the activities of the Sisters. Locally, following the Hough riots in the Cleveland inner city in the 1960s, Sisters worked in housing and other social services projects there, which continue under dedicated lay people. A CSA Sister who served on the diocesan mission team in El Salvador returned to start a Catholic Worker house in the Akron area, which today has added additional homes and support services.

Within the Community, a gift and donation committee was established in 1976, with funds now budgeted annually. The Sisters are able to request monies for various small projects that improve the quality of life or support evangelization efforts. These funds



have financed in whole or part everything from a teenager's drug rehabilitation costs to food and supplies for victims of natural disasters. In addition, the generosity of many benefactors to the Sisters has enabled monies to be expended for services at Catholic Charities' institutions, special ministry needs of the Sisters, and social justice issues related to health, education and social services. Also, Community funds have been invested in projects such as Cornerstone, with the interest going toward low-income housing and Partners for the Common Good.

In some cases, the recommitment of Christian service to people called for by Vatican II demanded an evaluation and redirection of institutions. Thus, increasingly aware of the religious, moral, legal and financial responsibilities and complexities in sponsoring institutions, especially health care facilities, the Community began in 1969 to include lay men and women on the boards of trustees, to hire lay people to fill administrative positions when qualified Sisters were not available, and to develop a formal sponsorship statement, which included a focus on the importance of pastoral care. With changes in nursing education, Timken Mercy Medical Center, now Mercy Medical Center, merged its diploma school of nursing with Walsh College in 1981, and St. Vincent Charity Hospital merged its nursing program with Ursuline College in 1985, thus strengthening Catholic nursing at the bachelor's degree level. Both hospitals continue to provide clinical experiences for the nursing students.

## HEALTH SYSTEM CREATED

The most significant development in the health care facilities was the 1982 establishment of CSA Health and Human Services, a system created to strengthen each of the CSA-sponsored facilities and to ensure that the charism and philosophy of the Sisters are implemented and enhanced in the institutions and programs within the system. The mission of CSA Health and Human Services is to "promote stronger collaboration, cooperation and sharing of resources among the sponsored hospitals and organizations, as well as encourage the development of new programs and services in response to unmet health and human services needs."

In an effort to carry out this mission in the challenging and rapidly changing world of health care, the CSA Health System (now called the Sisters of Charity Health System) in 1995 established three 50-50 partnerships with an investor-owned health system. Though this sale of 50% interest, which fully continued the Catholic mission of the CSA hospitals, has now been dissolved, it enabled Sisters of Charity Foundations to be established in Canton, Cleveland and South Carolina with total assets of more than \$200 million. These three foundations, along with the Saint Ann Foundation, reaffirmed and expanded the Sisters' mission and ministry of service to the poor and vulnerable. In 2006, the Saint Ann Foundation merged with the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland, where it continues to live on through the annual Saint Ann Legacy grant program focused on the needs of women and children. Each foundation has a unique local perspective on addressing the root causes of poverty. Affordable housing, early childhood education and fatherhood engagement are areas of significant investment by the foundations, which seek to make long-term change in the communities they serve.

Among other initiatives in each respective community, the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland has championed the Housing First approach, which provides housing



stability as a first step so that residents are better able to address their other needs. The Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton has championed the belief that every child deserves a good start in life and that all families should have access to high-quality early education and care. And, the Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina has championed supporting communities that strengthen the engagement of fathers with their children and families as they improve the emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of fathers and subsequently that of their children.

In addition to the hospitals and foundations, the health system has also developed social service outreach ministries in each geographic area to provide services and programs for the underserved, including the Early Childhood Resource Center, Healthy Learners, Joseph's Home, and the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families.

### MULTI-PURPOSE MOTHERHOUSE

In the ongoing evaluation, which marked all the Community's ministries, the Sisters examined their own resources and beginning in 1971, Mt. Augustine, the Motherhouse, opened its facilities and grounds for religious, cultural and educational activities, and increased the Sister staff to serve these individuals and groups. The facilities, programs and 230-acre grounds—part of several natural resource conservation plans—have been especially conducive to prayer. A House of Prayer functioned there in the 1970s, and a Hermitage dedicated to prayer for justice and world peace was erected in 1982, marking the 25th anniversary of Mt. Augustine.

In the 1980s personal, psychological and physical pre-retirement and retirement planning; a financial needs analysis; studies on the use of CSA properties within the Community; and inter-congregational discussions at the diocesan level all contributed to the decision to redirect the purpose of Mt. Augustine.

When the 140th anniversary of the Community was celebrated, construction began for Regina Health Center, a \$7.5 million innovative health care and assisted living facility for priests and lay persons who wished to live in a God-centered environment. The renovation of a portion of the existing motherhouse building and others provided an 81-bed skilled and intermediate care nursing unit and a 73-bed assisted living unit that opened in 1983 with a full range of geriatric services for retired female and male religious. Additional nursing beds and other services have been added more recently. A unique aspect of this project is the collaboration with other religious communities and diocesan officials in the assessment and planning for this intercommunity residence. As the diocesan newspaper editorial stated, "The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine have once again demonstrated the foresight, careful planning and compassion that have made them a model of health care ministry."

The center of the spiritual life of both the Sisters and the residents of Regina Health Center is the Holy Family chapel. In 2005, a major renovation of the chapel was completed by the Congregation, which not only incorporated changes to accommodate liturgical changes of recent years, but also improved the lighting, sound system and seating for the residents, many of whom are wheel-chair bound.

The mission of Regina Health Center continues as a ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System. Similarly, in 2001, the Sisters of Charity Health System and the Sisters



of Charity of Cincinnati began an innovative collaboration to enhance elder services in Bedford, Ohio at Light of Hearts Villa, a residential care center founded by the Vincentian Sisters of Charity in 1989. Today, Light of Hearts Villa provides a supportive residential environment for seniors.

## THE MISSION CONTINUES

Although the number of Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine may be smaller, their vitality and initiative for establishing new services continues the long tradition of meeting emerging needs. Examples include the Open House in Cleveland for persons with AIDS and their families, now merged into other programs; the Interfaith Wellness Center in Irvine, Kentucky, for health needs in Appalachia; the Catholic Worker House in Akron, particularly for Spanish-speaking immigrants; Joseph's and Mary's Home, a short-term residence for homeless men in the Cleveland inner city who have been released from the hospital; and Centering Space for spiritual reflection—all of which were begun by the Sisters and their collaborators in the last few decades.

Aware of the unique contribution of dedicated lay women and men who minister with the Sisters, the Caritas Service Award was established as part of the 150th anniversary celebration of the Community to honor an “individual who embodies and exemplifies the CSA charism to an outstanding degree” and is given every four years.

For the Sisters of Charity, the years since 1851 have been times of constant evaluation and overwhelming efforts to be faithful to the Lord in the midst of change. As the numbers of Sisters decline and ages increase, as institutions once firmly planted close or shift direction, and as responsibilities for community life and ministry often overwhelm, the Sisters have tried to see this period of frequent darkness as a special gift. This grace strengthens them to be true sharers in Christ's ministry, which to all earthly eyes seemed to be a failure of what had held so much promise. In spite of the difficulties and struggles, responsible and creative stewardship of Community resources, increased collaboration with others in ministry and an expanded world vision have been the hallmarks of these past decades. The Sisters of Charity, extending their gift of charity, continue to consciously plan for the future, setting goals with compassion toward the needs of people and a mature faith in the providence of the Lord.

More than 170 years of the history of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine record founders' names, significant firsts and completed buildings. Service since 1851 reveals loving women firmly committed and freely giving, who have attempted to extend the work of Christ on earth. Underlying both the history and the service have been the physical hardships of the beginning, the material sacrifices of the growth and the spiritual struggles of the maturity of the Community. Yet, the call of the Father, which is reflected in Christ and nourished by the Spirit, continues to find a response in the Sisters of Charity, who, out of the traditions of the past, find meaning for the present and hope for the future.



## HISTORY: THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF CINCINNATI

### EARLY YEARS: From Maryland to Cincinnati, Ohio 1809-1852

The Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati originated in Emmitsburg, Maryland where Elizabeth Seton founded the first community of women religious native to the United States in July 1809. These women devoted themselves to the education of children, care of orphans, the poor and the sick.

Shortly after its foundation the community began receiving requests from bishops around the country for sisters to serve in their dioceses. Such a request resulted in four Sisters of Charity arriving in Cincinnati, Ohio in October 1829 to open St. Peter's school and orphanage for girls. This foundation was the first permanent establishment of a women's religious community in the diocese of Cincinnati. By the late 1840s the number of sisters increased to 13 and the school and orphanage served a population of 300 young women.

At this time the sisters in Cincinnati learned that their superiors in Emmitsburg had arranged to affiliate their community with the French Daughters of Charity. Seven sisters, under the leadership of the local superior, Sister Margaret George, refused to participate in this change since they felt that it violated Elizabeth Seton's vision for the community. With the encouragement and assistance of Archbishop John Purcell, they formed the diocesan community of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati March 25, 1852.

### GOOD SAMARITAN HOSPITAL

In 1852, Archbishop John Purcell recognized the need for a hospital to provide care to people who couldn't afford medical treatment. He bought a 21-bed hospital and turned it over to the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. The hospital, named St. John's Hotel for Invalids, was the first private hospital in Cincinnati.

Within three years, the sisters cared for more than 1,500 patients, and needed a larger facility, so they moved to a former mansion at Third and Plum Streets. St. John's Hospital, as it became known, cared for many injured men and women during the Civil War from 1861-1865.

In 1866, Joseph C. Butler and Louis Worthington bought a large building at Sixth and Lock Streets, and gave the facility to the sisters with two conditions: that no one be excluded from the hospital because of color or religion, and that it be named "The Hospital of the Good Samaritan," to honor the sisters' kindness. The 95-bed hospital opened in 1866.

### MEETING THE NEEDS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Within a few months their work expanded to include a boys' orphanage. They opened a novitiate, and as their numbers grew, expanded geographically. Their first mission outside Cincinnati was in Dayton, Ohio in 1857.



When the Civil War broke out, the sisters volunteered as nurses. Over one-third of the community, by then numbering more than 100, saw active service both on the eastern front in Ohio, Maryland and Virginia, and on the western front in Mississippi, Kentucky and Tennessee. Sister Anthony O'Connell became widely known as the "*Angel of the Battlefield*" due to her outstanding medical work as well as her dynamic personality.

Immediately following the war, four sisters went to Santa Fe to open St. Vincent's, the first hospital in the New Mexico Territory. Other sisters soon followed as the work expanded to include an orphanage, industrial school for girls, care for the indigent poor and other social needs. The sisters supported themselves and their works by begging at the railroad and mining camps throughout the west.

Soon other western missions were accepted until by the 1880s the community has sisters in cities and towns along the front range of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado and New Mexico. The most colorful and well known of the sisters to serve in the west during the early period was S. Blandina Segale. Her letters and journals became the basis for a book, *At the End of the Santa Fe Trail*, and subsequently for articles, movies and plays.

As the community continued to grow it was able to offer assistance in the establishment of two additional branches of Sisters of Charity: the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth at Convent Station, New Jersey (1859), and the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill in Greensburg, Pennsylvania (1870).

Meanwhile the sisters widened the expanse of their work in the Midwest. Many new parish schools were accepted in the Cincinnati area and throughout Ohio. The first sisters sent to Michigan in 1872 were the beginning of a long and substantial commitment by the congregation in that state. In Cincinnati, the hospital grew and became known as The Good Samaritan. What began there as a service to unwed mothers and their babies grew to become St. Joseph Infant and Maternity Home in 1873.

The community relocated its motherhouse in the 1880s when they purchased property in Delhi Township, an area west of Cincinnati. It was here that the present motherhouse, Mount St. Joseph, was built in stages over a 15-year period. This complex sits on a bluff overlooking the Ohio River and serves as the administrative, educational and retirement center for the community.

By the end of the nineteenth century the community became involved in work with Italian immigrants. The Santa Maria Italian Educational and Institutional Home was incorporated as the first Catholic settlement house in the United States and became the foundation for an Archdiocesan social services program.

As the scope of education expanded the Sisters of Charity responded. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, schools of nursing were opened in hospitals sponsored by the congregation.

## EXPANDING MINISTRIES 1900-1960

In the early twentieth century the community assumed responsibility for running a boarding school for deaf and hard of hearing students. The establishment of parish,





diocesan and community sponsored high schools required the involvement of more and more sisters. In 1920 the College of Mount St. Joseph was founded to respond to the increasing demand for higher education for women.

In the 1920s the community decided to change its status from a diocesan to a papal community. This led to the adoption of new Constitutions and a change of habit.

China became the first Sister of Charity foreign mission. In 1928 six sisters arrived in Wuchang, a city about 750 miles up the Yangtze River from Shanghai. They opened a hospital and dispensary, cared for the aged and orphans, ran a school for young children and a training program for nurses. By the early 1930s young Chinese women began to join the community and in 1934 a novitiate was opened in China. The sisters worked through the Japanese invasion and occupation during World War II and the Chinese civil war but left in 1949 in the wake of the Communist takeover. Other foreign involvements include running an orphanage in Rome in the 1950s and 60s, missions in Peru from the 1960s to the 1990s, and a sojourn in Africa during the 1970s.

With the passing decades the community experienced continued growth. By 1925 there were nearly 1000 members; by 1951 the number had grown to 1300. By the end of the decade most sisters taught while others engaged in works such as health care and social services. Membership reached its highest at just over 1600 in the mid-1960s.

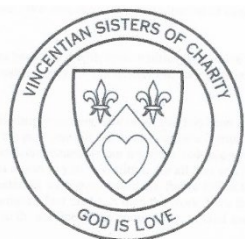
## CREATIVITY in MEETING AND READING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The change within the Catholic church resulting from the Second Vatican Council resulted in the community reassessing its ministry, lifestyle, sponsorship of institutions and internal governance. An Associate program, initiated in 1975, invited friends and co-workers to share in the mission of the community. That same year Elizabeth Seton was named the first American-born saint by the Catholic church.

In 1979 all Sister of Charity sponsored health care institutions were brought together in the Sisters of Charity Health Care Systems under the leadership of Sister Grace Marie Hiltz. This became one of the largest Catholic health care systems in the United States until it joined with other systems to form Catholic Health Initiative in the 1990s.

Today 199 Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati serve in 16 U.S. dioceses in 9 states. Sisters minister in elementary, high school and university education, justice education and advocacy, health care, retreat work, parish and pastoral ministry, social services, counseling, earth and sustainability ministry, spiritual direction, formation ministry, congregational services and the ministry of prayer. The congregation also sponsors grants and low-interest loan programs to assist community development and social justice organizations and projects.

The Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati are joined by 200 Associates, lay women and men, who reside throughout the United States. The relationship was established in 1973 so that individuals could partner with them in responding to the Gospel in the spirit of St. Elizabeth Bayley Seton.



## HISTORY OF THE VINCENTIAN SISTERS OF CHARITY

The Congregation of the Vincentian Sisters of Charity traces its foundation to Paris, France where St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac founded the Daughters of Charity. In the year 1835, Caroline Augusta, daughter of Franz I, Emperor of Austria, invited the Sisters of Charity to begin a new foundation in Vienna, Austria. The congregation continued to grow and extended its mission work from Satu-Mare, Romania to Pittsburgh in 1902.

The Congregation of the Vincentian Sisters of Charity of Bedford, Ohio, began on September 4, 1928 when five sisters arrived in Bedford from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in response to the invitation of Cleveland's Archbishop Joseph Schrembs. The sisters were asked to help establish a Diocesan Congregation that would minister to Cleveland's Slovak immigrants.

The Pittsburgh Vincentians supported and nurtured this fledgling community until February 19, 1939. On that day forty-four Sisters took vows in the now autonomous diocesan congregation of the Vincentian Sisters of Charity. When the Cleveland diocese was divided in 1948, the Sisters continued to serve in both the Cleveland and Youngstown dioceses. By 1965 the community numbered 150 Sisters.

### MEETING THE NEEDS "GOD LETS US SEE"

Since its inception, the Vincentian Sisters of Bedford expanded its ministries in accord with the needs of the people of God. By the 1960's that need to educate Slovak immigrants lost its dominance and the Sisters expanded their ministries. Historically, they primarily engaged in elementary education, health care and domestic service. In response to Archbishop Edward F. Hoban's request, the Sisters built a community owned all girls high school, Lumen Cordium, in 1963.

Over time, the Sisters participated in the Diocesan mission team in El Salvador from 1976-1986. Sisters ministered to the poor of Pineville, Kentucky. Some spent summers working with migrants and inner city youth. When a man came to the convent doors one evening, desperate for help with his wife who had cancer and would be coming home the next day, the Sisters set up St. Joseph Ministry to the Terminally Ill with others who volunteered to help. They engaged in pastoral ministry and related works.

### SHARING SPIRITUALITY

The Motherhouse grounds housed the Shrine of Our Lady of Levocha, Patroness of the Slovak people. Thousands of pilgrims came to pray over the years asking Mary's intercession. The Way of the Cross wound through a hillside area and was modeled on a similar path in Slovakia. They reconfigured smaller buildings to form Tabor Center for Spirituality and the Poustinia that provided individuals and small groups to come for retreat.



All the while they faithfully lived the spirit of their founders Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. As stated in their constitutions, “Relying on the Providence St. Vincent dearly loved, we give our lives simply to those needs which God lets us see.”

## LIGHT OF HEARTS VILLA

Lumen Cordium closed in 1987 due to low enrollment. The Vincentian Sisters of Charity immediately dreamt of a ministry to those whose needs were not being met. They established an advisory committee to consider possibilities. The Sisters knew there were seniors for whom a supportive environment was essential, whose health needed some monitoring, but whose spirits were far too vibrant for a nursing home. The concept of an independent and assisted living residence was unheard of in 1987 – unless it was connected to a nursing home. On September 1, 1989, *that dream came to life* when Light of Hearts Villa opened and the first residents moved into Suite #1.

Light of Hearts Villa operated under the sole sponsorship of the Vincentian Sisters until August, 2001 when they formed a 50/50 Partnership with the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine. This endeavor offered additional benefits to the residents of the Villa. The Vincentian Sisters of Charity merged with the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati in June, 2004. The active support and sponsorship of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati and the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine enhanced and strengthened the mission and vision of Light of Hearts Villa.

In 2009 the management of Light of Hearts Villa came under the auspices of the Sisters of Charity Health System of Cleveland, Ohio. Then in 2015 Light of Hearts Villa came under the sole ownership of the Sisters of Charity Health System of Cleveland.

Light of Hearts Villa is a 501(c)3 Licensed Residential Care Facility open to senior of all faiths who are 60+ years of age. A dedicated staff provides person-centered care based on the needs of the residents, within the limits of our licensure. The Villa provides assisted living, respite and memory care.

## A NEW BEGINNING

The Vincentian Sisters of Charity merged with the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati in 2004 for the sake of the mission. The combined Congregation experienced new life and an expansion of efforts for the sake of the Gospel. The year before, the Vincentian Sisters celebrated their 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Bishop Anthony Pilla said, “The gift, the life, the love and the memory of you as Vincentians will make a discernible impression, an identifiable seal, through which the world will view you and your lives as Sisters of Charity.... These 75 years have been about the firm commitment to make love visible in many different and constantly changing circumstances. The constant has been the loving impression that you have made and continue to make as servants of the Word, the poor, and of Charity.”