

Associate Partnership

PRESENTATION HERITAGE



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Conversation Two Presentation Heritage

Welcome

God is manifest in the day-to-day ordinary and extra-ordinary experiences of our lives. If you are willing, share a happening or insight from life during the past month.

Prayer

Light a lantern and enter into prayerful meditation:

You will need four readers and a leader before beginning the prayer.

Presider

Let us take a few moments to be aware of God's abiding presence ...

Close your eyes ...

Be aware of your breathing ...

Breathe in ... Breathe out ...

Be still within and without ...

Pause

Reader 1

God of our lives, we affirm and acknowledge your presence within and among us and in all who have gone before us. Grateful for our Presentation heritage, we prayerfully recall the history of the Dubuque Presentation Sisters.

Reader 2

Mother Vincent Hennessy with the help and commitment of Alice Howley, Ellen Ahearn and Kate Reide courageously left Mooncoin, Ireland, to carry the vision of Nano Nagle over the sea to Dubuque, Iowa, on the shores of the Mississippi.

Silence

Reader 2

Grace us with similar courage and commitment as we seek to live out the mission of Jesus and Nano.

All: Amen.

Associate Partnership

.....

Reader 3

Because the Archdiocese of Dubuque was not ready for them, the Visitation Sisters provided hospitality to Mother Vincent and the three postulants for their first three months in the new land. They moved to their first drafty and small convent and school in Key West in January of 1875. A new motherhouse and school became their home in 1879. It was named St. Vincent Academy in honor of Mother Vincent who died in 1880.

Silence

Reader 3

May we grow in understanding and embodiment of the hospitality offered by the Visitation Sisters and modeled by Mother Vincent and those who have followed her.

All: Amen.

Reader 4

In 1908, the community purchased property on Mt. Loretta Avenue which served as a new motherhouse. With the growth of the community, a new building was added in 1952. In 1969 this building was sold to the Archdiocese of Dubuque and the sisters purchased what had been St. Bernard Seminary at 2360 Carter Road. This remains the home of the Sisters of the Presentation and is often referred to as Mount Loretto.

Silence

Reader 4

Pilgrim God, grateful for your presence with the Dubuque Presentation Community over the years, we marvel at your unfolding mystery. Like our forbearers, may we continue to build a community of love and compassion in our midst.

All: Amen.

Read Together.

Feasting on courage
Mother Vincent
and pilgrim companions
sister-ed each other
across an ocean and half a continent
to fan into flame
Gospel values and Nano's vision.

(Corine Murray, PBVM, Sprouting, Page 12)

All: Amen

Associate Partnership

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Read together, Mother Vincent Hennessy and Companions Leave Ireland

(Excerpts from Chapter III of the Community Annals found in the Appendix at the end of Conversation 2)

View Timeline ([On Presentation website under Who We Are - Heritage section](#))

(Choose from the following questions.)

- What thread do you see woven through this history? How does this give you energy?
- What impressed you about Mother Vincent's early experience in Dubuque?
What characteristics do you admire about Mother Vincent and her companions?
- In what ways does Mother Vincent carry out the mission of Nano?
What similarities do you see between the two women?
- How was your heart touched as you read the story of our Dubuque foundation?
- Based on what you have read and learned about Nano Nagle and Mother Vincent what characteristics do you feel are present in someone who seeks to live as a Presentation person (sister, associate, friend, benefactor)?
- How do you see the founding spirit as living today? Why do you want to be part of this vision?
How might you carry it forward?

Note: If your group is able, schedule a visit to the Archives at Mount Loretto and Mount Olivet Cemetery where Mother Vincent and the Presentation Sisters are buried.

Associate Partnership

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Associate Partnership

Presently there are 84 Dubuque Presentation Sisters. About half of them live at Mount Loretto, either receiving care in Nagle Center or living in community prayer and service. Many of those sisters, while retired from active ministry, are involved in volunteer ministries in the local community and help in a variety of ways around Mount Loretto. The rest of the sisters live and minister throughout the United States and in Bolivia.

The Associate Partnership began in 1998 and has grown and evolved over the years. There are currently 124 Presentation associates, both men and women, living in 14 states.

Closing Prayer

Reader 1

Fifteen billion years ago the universe flared into being. In the beginning there was only the fire of uncontainable creative love. This holy fire was poured into hydrogen and helium, galaxies and stars, planets and earth, sun and moon, oceans and deserts, mountains, trees, flowers, birds, fish, animals and human life. All that exists is ablaze with the fire that is God.

All

God of the cosmos, we acknowledge your enlivening presence within each of us and in all of creation as it is and as it comes to be. Draw us more deeply into your transforming love that we might recognize your call as it emerges and live it more fully as your children and as Presentation people.

Reader 2

As Presentation people (sisters, associates, friends and benefactors) help us to follow the example of Nano and Mother Vincent to reverence relationships, celebrate unity, engage contemplation and foster unity.

All

Jesus, light to the world, flaring forth of the divine among us, you embody the spirit poured into the whole creation from the beginning. May your spirit, alive in us now, flare forth to empower us to live as your beloved children. May we be signs of your love as we, like Nano and Mother Vincent, take up our lanterns and move one pace beyond. Amen.

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Preparation for the Next Gathering

- Determine next gathering date and time
- Look ahead at the next section on Charism
- Upcoming gatherings or events at Mount Loretto or other venues

(An important piece of the associate partnership is to make connections with sisters and associates and to continue to grow in understanding of the Presentation mission. When possible you are encouraged to participate in the various opportunities that are offered.)

Additional Resources to Consider

- Invite one or two sisters to share their Presentation story and how they are presently ministering.
- *Tending the Light: An Informal History of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Dubuque, Iowa, 1874-2008* by Joan Lickteig, PBVM

Associate Partnership

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Appendix

Excerpts from Chapter III of Community Annals Mother Vincent and Companions Leave Ireland

Four years of anxious, hopeful waiting ended when a letter of final instruction from Bishop Hennessy regarding the proposed establishment of the Presentation Order in Iowa reached Mooncoin, Ireland. This rent in the veil of silence disclosed Mother Vincent ready to go forward with the heroic undertaking of establishing a house of the Presentation Order in Dubuque, as entrusted to her by Bishop Hennessy.

Three young Irish women, hearing of the proposed foundation of Nano Nagle's daughters in the distant new world, begged her to permit them to join her in the brave endeavor. Since she was intimately acquainted with them and knew their sterling qualities of heart and mind, she gladly accepted their assistance in the mightily task confronting her.

The addition of such capable, generous volunteers as Miss Alice Howley, Miss Ellen Ahearn, and Miss Kate Reide lent courage to the intrepid leader of the band, and she faced the future more boldly. The days ahead seemed less ominous, less uncertain; and with absolute trust in Divine Providence, the brave Mother led her colony in its preparation for the destiny awaiting it beyond the wide Atlantic.

October 29, 1874, was the date of departure from the sheltering seclusion of loved Mooncoin. Unabashed tears were shed that day when valorous Mother Vincent passed from among her cloistered Sisters, assembled to wish her Godspeed, safe voyage, and Heaven's blessing on her work in fields afar. She was immediately joined by Miss Alice Howley and Miss Ellen Ahearn, with whom she journeyed to Kilkenny, where Miss Kate Reide awaited their arrival. Continuing their journey, they proceeded to Queenstown, the port from which they were to sail. Misgivings, if any haunted our inexperienced travelers, were allayed when that beautiful seaport was reached. Bishop Hennessy having provided for their every comfort and convenience in this coastal harbor whence they sailed.

The following day, October 30, our Irish emigrants embarked for America. Not unlike thousands of other outbound Irish travelers, who with yearning hearts have watched the homeland fade from sight, were our first four sisters. They had looked for the last time upon their loved and ever cherished Erin. For well nigh two weeks the ocean was their home. The ocean can be forbidding; and our wayfarers were indeed lonely, this being their first time aboard a steamship and that ship bound for shores afar. Small wonder, then, if their faces bespoke the feelings of their hearts.

Other fellow passengers were cordial and helpful, showing many kindnesses to Mother and her little band. Especially helpful were some priests who, like our exiles, were bound for America. One priest, a Father Quinn, was particularly interested and proved to be a genuinely good friend in more than one respect. He was returning from a visit to the homeland, on his way to the South, where he had a pastorate. A happy disposition and jocund manner made him cost companionable. Practical as well as vivacious, he taught Mother Vincent to understand the difference between English and United

Associate Partnership

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States money. So well did she learn her lesson that on reaching New York she understood perfectly the correct exchange of her foreign currency into the coin of this republic.

Land! Land! Always a welcome message to the travelweary, was doubly so to our selfexiled sisters as on November 9 they first sighted the shores of their adopted country. The clamorous din and commotion of the great Empire City must have quite bewildered our timid immigrant pioneers. However, they gladly welcomed a brief rest after their eleven days at sea. Writing messages of their safe arrival to loved ones at home in dear Ireland and anticipation of their trip still ahead somewhat diverted attention from the bustle and hubbub of the great eastern metropolis for at least a brief space of time.

Our missionaries' next stop was Chicago, not so populous then as now, yet it was quite a sizable place, and it is to be remembered that it was just recovering from the effects of the disastrous fire of 1871, which all but swept it out of existence. Again our valiant found found themselves speeding onward, this time through the state of Illinois. At last the Key City of Iowa was sighted. Proudly crowing the hills that overlook the mighty Father of Waters, reposed the future home of our selfexiled first Sisters. Imagine, if you can, the emotions filling their hearts at the end of their long, wearisome journey.

Arriving at the station they cast hurried, anxious glances about hoping that someone with directions for the next step would quickly appear. No one came forth with the wished-for information. Practical Mother Vincent lost no time in wishful waiting, but promptly hiring a cab, asked the driver to go to Bishop Hennessy's residence. At the Bishop's house, Mother sent Miss Howley to inquire the way to the Presentation Convent. The housekeeper, none other than the Bishop's own sister, admitted her. Not knowing that Miss Howley represented the newly arrived Presentation Sisters, the housekeeper dismissed the young lady with the disappointing information that there was no such place in Dubuque. When the Bishop's brother, Mr. David Hennessy, having overheard his sister's abrupt dismissal promptly appeared, spared the little company the dismay such circumstances would certainly arouse. Mr. Hennessy directed the Sisters to the Visitation Convent, which at that time was located near St. Raphael's where the Bishop lived.

Greathearted Mother Juliana received the Irish strangers with open arms. She herself had come from St. Louis but a few short years before to make an establishment of the Visitation Nuns in this city of the upper Mississippi Valley, to find, like our own Iowa foundress, no permanent abode awaiting her.

The unbounded gratitude of Mother Vincent for the sisterly welcome of the gentle Visitations found expression in tears. Words were inadequate to convey her heartfelt thanks for the hospitality of this religious community, itself still struggling in the infancy of its existence. None too large for their own and their pupils' requirements, yet the Visitation Convent harbored our pioneer band for the space of well nigh two months. The larder, which most likely in those early days was never overstocked, was so ingeniously managed that it provided amply for the wants of all. Small wonder that ties of sincerest affection united the members of these two great congregations throughout the lifetime of the members who met and mingled closely during the early days of both orders.

Associate Partnership

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An amusing incident happened when the strangers' baggage came. A young lady boarder was delegated to direct the drayman where to place one swift glance. Quickly scanning the label on each piece, she rushed back exclaiming, "Oh Sister, one of them is a widow! She has the name Mrs. Vincent Hennessy on her trunk." This alert young lady was none other than the present Sister Mary Gertrude of the Visitation Order, then known as Miss Ann Louise Henry.

The appellation "Mrs." was a remnant of penal days, when a price was on the head of anyone daring to profess Catholicity. A sentence of great magnitude was imposed on teachers, male or female, if found explaining the Catholic doctrine. The English government doomed it such capital offense that transgressors were imprisoned if of the poorer class, or sentenced to pay heavy fines if property holders. As a measure of safety against such tyranny, sisters disguised themselves in, secular dress and used the appellation "Mrs." instead of the title "Sister." So common was the custom during the time of England's injustice that it remained in practice long after Catholicity ceased to be a legal offense. It was no novelty for Mother Vincent to receive mail labeled "Mrs." even after reaching Key West.

Returning to Dubuque about Thanksgiving time, Bishop Hennessy hastened to welcome Mother Vincent and her companions to Iowa. This call being merely an act of courtesy, nothing of serious nature was discussed. His Lordship, however, did remark about a letter Mother had sent to inform him of the time of her arrival, but not having been forwarded, it was still on his desk when he reached home after a brief Confirmation tour. Hence, the absence of his representative with carriage to meet them on their arrival.

Subsequent visits were frequent. Almost every day he found time to talk about plans for the future and lend encouragement to the new missionary band who at his invitation had come to labor in the diocese of Dubuque.

Emphasizing the great need of religious instruction, he did not underestimate the importance of regular school subjects. He advised a careful study of the American system of education, which not necessarily superior to old world methods, would, nevertheless, be the practical one to follow. Farsighted Mother Vincent readily understood the significance of the Bishop's viewpoint and promptly acceded to his plans. The time spent with hospitable Mother Juliana and her gentle Visitation daughters was fast drawing to a close. Bishop Hennessy had told Mother Vincent to prepare to move to Key West early in January. A new residence being built by Father Ward would soon be ready for occupancy and he intended it to serve as the convent of the first Iowa Presentation Sisters until such time as a better location and more fitting conventual quarters could be provided.

News of removal to their new home was happily received by Mother and her faithful band of three. Preparations for the auspicious event were begun forthwith. The eager anticipation of occupying a convent of their own filled to overflowing the hearts of Iowa's first Presentation Sisters. Not long after their arrival in Dubuque, Bishop Hennessy, with fatherly solicitude, proposed the reception of the three aspirants as novices, considering their leaving a home and friends and crossing the Atlantic as sufficient proof of their vocation. They declined the privilege, however, begging that the favor of donning the livery of Nano Nagle take place in their own Presentation convent.

Associate Partnership

Valiant Woman

A saint walked among us
and graced us with her life.

In God's good time
she pursued a dream
that could not be deferred.

In Cork City
this servant of Divine Providence
defied penal oppression
to plant hope.

With undaunted courage
she stood her ground with the poor
the uneducated and the disadvantaged
and attracted kindred spirits
in the ready
to spend themselves
for what could yet be.

Through her words and by her deeds
in her living and her dying
Nano, herself,
became the lantern.

*Celebrating the 225 anniversary of Nano's death
(Corine Murray, PBVM, Sprouting, Page 5)*

