

THE PRESENTATION SISTERS IN SOUTH DAKOTA,

1880-1976

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PREFACE

This history of the Presentation Sisters in South Dakota relies heavily on materials in the Presentation Archives in Aberdeen, South Dakota, and interviews from the Oral History Center in Vermillion, South Dakota. It would not have been possible if the sisters had not possessed a keen interest in preserving their past and a willingness to allow an outsider to look at their files. The study concerns the order's contributions in education and health care, its adaptations to the environment, and its progress from a traditional to a modern religious community.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Presentation Sisters who arrived in Dakota Territory in 1880 labored to establish a permanent foundation, participated in education and health care activities, and endured internal struggles as they modernized their community. To put their story in perspective, a framework must be developed that includes three elements. Knowledge of the order's origins in Ireland sheds light on the background of the sisters who migrated to the frontier. An understanding of the status of the Catholic Church in the United States during the last half of the nineteenth century provides an explanation for many of the order's activities. Recognition of the environment in Dakota Territory, to which the sisters struggled to adapt during the 1880s, completes the historical framework. These three factors shaped the history of the Presentation Sisters in South Dakota.

Nano Nagle, born in Ireland, founded the first Presentation Convent in 1776. A member of a wealthy family that had managed to retain most of its property during English persecution under the penal laws, she received her education at an Ursuline Academy in Paris and enjoyed the refinements of the Court of Louis XV. Legend has it that she first began to question the value of her frivolous life when returning from a ball during the early hours just before dawn. Passing by a church, she noticed a crowd of faithful laborers waiting to attend mass before they

began their day's work. The image remained in her mind after she returned to Ireland.

By the 1760s Ireland had chafed under the English penal laws for more than fifty years. Enacted to prevent the growth of Catholicism, this legislation made it illegal for Catholics to acquire property, and it provided for the breakup of holdings upon the death of Catholic landlords. This caused the percentage of profitable acres remaining in Irish hands to shrink to less than 10 percent. The laws closed the professions to Catholics, and admission to civil and military offices was possible only when the applicant took an oath denying the Catholic faith. Education became the province of schools run by the government, and priests who illegally established parochial schools suffered severe punishment. The poor endured the greatest hardship because this group could not afford to send members' children to France to be educated. After many years the poor yielded to pressure forcing them to send their offspring to charter schools--institutions funded by the state--or charity schools--those supported by private contributions.¹

Aware of the great need for Catholic schools and heedless of the danger she courted by defying the law, Nano Nagle decided to devote her fortune to this cause. She established several small schools in Cork in the 1760s and then asked the French Ursulines to start a convent in the city. They arrived in 1771 and soon opened a school, but their observance of the rule of enclosure meant that students would have to come to them instead of their working in the poor neighborhoods taking education to the children. Therefore Nano Nagle labored to develop a community of Irish sisters who would dedicate themselves to the education of the very poor. Three young women from Cork joined her in the

apostolate, and they called themselves the Society of the Charitable Instruction of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. From its inception in 1776 the small community established poor schools throughout the city. The founder died in 1784, but her efforts had been successful, for the society grew. In the late 1780s members renamed the order the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in 1805 Pope Pius VII approved their rules and constitutions.²

Retaining their apostolate to educate the children of the poor, the Presentation Sisters spread their influence throughout Ireland, and they ventured to other lands. In the 1830s they established a convent at St. John's, Newfoundland, and one in Manchester, England. Both areas contained large settlements of Irish immigrants. The foundation at St. John's resulted from a visit by Bishop Michael Flemming of Newfoundland to the Presentation convent at Galway. He persuaded four sisters to start a school far away in North America. The motherhouse at Manchester was a gift of a wealthy Irish immigrant who bequeathed £2,000 for the establishment of the Presentation Sisters in that city. The order's first settlement in the United States occurred in California in 1854. The goldfields had drawn a large number of Irish laborers from eastern cities, and the Bishop of San Francisco, Joseph Sadoc Alemany, instructed his associate Father Hugh Gallagher, then in Rome, to visit Ireland on his return journey to find religious teachers for the diocese. The Presentation Sisters at Midleton agreed to send five of their members on the long journey to California.³

The Catholic Church in the United States between 1850 and 1900 experienced a period of rapid change. The flood of immigrants, especially Catholics from Ireland and Germany, added numbers to church membership

and created problems for the clergy in its role as helper for immigrants seeking assimilation. Education emerged as their chief concern. Taking the guidance of the Holy See, which condemned American public schools as irrelegious, bishops undertook the overwhelming task of establishing parochial schools in their dioceses. The clergy's grievances against secular schools centered around the complaint that they ignored religion and eliminated it "from the minds and hearts of the youth of the country."⁴

The need for more parish schools led to legislation enacted at several provincial councils. Between 1855 and 1884 delegates at Cincinnati and Baltimore urged the multiplication of religious teaching communities to staff the new schools. The Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith asserted in 1875 that divine and natural laws prohibited the attendance of Catholic children at schools where faith and morals were endangered. The sanction from Rome stated that

. . . every effort must be directed towards starting Catholic schools where they are not, and where they are, towards enlarging them and providing them with better accommodation and equipment until they have nothing to suffer, as regards teachers or furniture, by comparison with public schools.⁵

The third plenary council of Baltimore in 1884 published specific directives. Each parish church must support a parochial school, erected nearby, within two years of the parish's founding, and all Catholic parents were bound to send their children to the parochial schools unless--at home or in other Catholic schools--they could provide for the Catholic instruction of their offspring.⁶

Armed with such firm instructions, bishops in turn pressed the priests in their dioceses to make parochial education mandatory for parishioners. The priests raised funds for construction of buildings

and searched for nuns to staff the new schools. Knowledge of the Presentation Sisters' work in San Francisco spread to other regions, as did appreciation for the sustained interest among Presentation convents in Ireland in American parochial schools. Bishops notified various motherhouses, and before the close of the century eight congregations of Presentation Sisters had arrived in the United States to staff schools. They settled at St. Michael's, Mount St. Michael's, and Watervliet in New York, Fitchburg, Massachusetts, Dubuque, Iowa, Fargo, North Dakota, and Aberdeen, South Dakota. The nuns operated elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and homes for children as their communities expanded and the desire for parochial education spread among Catholic congregations.⁷

In the West the Catholic Church encountered both negative and positive situations. Paucity of population and the shortage of financial resources plagued bishops. The organization of the Church followed the frontier as diocesan divisions appeared according to the growth of Catholic population. Thus even though they had been instructed to insist on parochial education, it was difficult for churchmen to establish Catholic schools in areas where numbers were small and wealth was not available. The wide distances between farms and settlements further hampered their efforts, and anti-Catholic bigotry flared up occasionally to remind them of their minority status.⁸

In frontier areas that contained pockets of heavily Catholic population, the Church enjoyed more success. By cooperating with railroad companies that were anxious to see western lands settled to assure passengers and freight for their trains, bishops often encouraged the formation of Catholic colonies on acres furnished from landgrants the

companies had received. For example, John Ireland, Bishop of St. Paul, successfully established ten villages in southwestern Minnesota with Catholics from Ireland, England, Germany, and Canada. Bishop Martin Marty negotiated with officials of the Northern Pacific Railroad for 50,000 acres of land in Dakota Territory, but he had to abandon plans for Catholic colonization due to insufficient funds from the Irish group he had asked to underwrite the scheme. The expansion of the general population often exceeded the resources of the counties, and officials frequently found it difficult to build and staff sufficient public schools. Thus the Catholic effort in parochial education was an asset to many western settlements because it relieved some of the burden on secular educators.⁹

Dakota Territory in 1880 appeared to possess great potential for settlement. The land in the area between the Minnesota border and the Missouri River was rich and brown, though covered with a heavy layer of sod and prairie grass, and once this was removed the fertile soil yielded abundant harvests. The rains had been steady and plentiful since white settlement began in earnest in the 1870s so water supplies did not appear to be a problem. The prairies were treeless except along the banks of streams, and the wind was a constant companion, but optimistic settlers accustomed themselves to the open sky and incessant howl as they watched their crops grow. Winters were harsh as temperatures dropped below zero and blizzards occurred frequently, but the arrival of spring was glorious as the prairie grew lush with grass and flowers, and meadowlark songs welcomed farmers to the fields.

The Native American inhabitants of eastern Dakota Territory had been migrants themselves, long ago moving west from Minnesota as their

enemies the Chippewa, who possessed firearms, drove them from the woodlands. The Yanktonai and Yankton Sioux were members of a larger Dakota federation who roamed the grasslands following the buffalo herds. By the 1850s they began to feel pressure from advancing white settlement and soon bowed to efforts to persuade the tribes to relinquish part of their holdings and confine themselves to a reservation. A treaty with the Yankton in 1858 opened a vast area in present eastern South Dakota while limiting the tribe to a small section east of the Missouri River and north of the Nebraska border. As a tribe the Yankton did not participate in the uprisings of the 1860s and 1870s--proudly claiming that they never went to war with the white population--but the warfare had an impact nevertheless. The eastern Sioux had been resettled on reservations along the Missouri after the Sioux conflict in Minnesota in 1862-1863, and young warriors from the relatively docile tribes east of the Missouri River rode west to join the Teton Sioux in their battle against Custer in 1876.

One cause of the Indian attacks was the presence of white gold seekers in the Black Hills, a region previously designated part of a Sioux reservation by a treaty between the tribes and government of the United States. White settlers had been gradually moving into Dakota Territory, and the discovery of the precious ore increased the movement dramatically. Another impetus to settlement came from the railroad companies. Their officials recruited homesteaders in Europe and eastern portions of the United States, advertised the territory as a potential garden, and reduced rates for settlers. The companies cooperated with the territorial government and the Church to secure population because all three would benefit from increased settlement. They believed that

good citizens would also be good Catholics and frequent railroad patrons.¹⁰

As previously mentioned, Bishop Marty's own plan to form a Catholic colony failed, but he encouraged other groups to form settlements. During the ten years before statehood, population reached 100,000 as farms improved and harvests remained profitable. One of the first Catholic colonies in eastern Dakota Territory was founded in Brown County. The settlers came from Flint, Michigan, and their pastor, Father Robert Haire, offered the first mass in a sod shanty near the town of Columbia. They had planned to settle in Texas until news of the "Dakota Wonderland" advertised by the railroad companies persuaded them to set out for the northern prairies in 1880.¹¹

The framework into which the history of the Presentation Sisters of South Dakota belongs includes the following elements. The nuns had a long tradition of educating the poor; they possessed, as well, an early interest in expanding the number of their foundations; and they had been involved in parochial education in the United States since the 1850s. The clergymen who encouraged the order to settle on the frontier needed its members' services to staff the parochial schools they had been directed to build. The Catholic Church in the United States in the 1880s, with its large immigrant population, placed heavy stress on parochial education, and its leaders relied on nuns to provide instruction. Their support was much less expensive than the cost of hiring lay teachers even during the nineteenth century. The territory settled by the order in the 1880s possessed a sparsely settled rural aspect. The Indian population had either been pacified or had migrated further

west, and white settlers had been moving gradually onto the open prairies east of the Missouri River.

Bishop Marty must have felt confident as he persuaded the sisters at George's Hill in Dublin to undertake the burdens of mission work among the Sioux. The failure of his plan, plus other obstacles that appeared over the years, affected the path followed by the order in South Dakota, but the sisters presented a formidable force themselves. They exerted great influence as teachers and provided able leadership in health care while they made efforts to maintain a stable community, one that possessed a balance between tradition and modernity. Their history is, in many ways, the story of the settlement of eastern South Dakota, but it is also the record of the accomplishments of a remarkable group of women.

ENDNOTES

¹T. J. Walsh, Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1959), pp. 2, 8; Sister Rosaria O'Callaghan, Flame of Love (Milwaukee: Bruce Press, 1960), p. 30.

²Walsh, Nano Nagle, pp. 130, 1960, 175; O'Callaghan, Flame of Love, pp. 75, 90.

³Walsh, Nano Nagle, pp. 253-261; O'Callaghan, Flame of Love, pp. 141, 142, 162.

⁴Thomas McAvoy, A History of the Catholic Church in the United States (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), p. 294.

⁵Walsh, Nano Nagle, p. 265.

⁶John Tracy Ellis, American Catholicism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 102; Thomas McAvoy, The Great Crisis in American Catholic History (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1957), pp. 11, 69.

⁷Walsh, Nano Nagle, pp. 265, 266.

⁸McAvoy, Great Crisis, p. 70; Ellis, American Catholicism, p. 120.

⁹James P. Shannon, Catholic Colonization on the Western Frontier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. IX, 248, 190, 191.

¹⁰Herbert Schell, History of South Dakota (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), pp. 130-134, 159; Shannon, Catholic Colonization, p. X.

¹¹Diamond Jubilee Book (Aberdeen, South Dakota: Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1961), p. 25.

CHAPTER III

SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH DAKOTA, 1880-1896

When the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary first arrived in Dakota Territory in 1880, they could not help but compare their new home with the one they recently had left. The primitive two-story stone and sod structure, to which water had to be hauled in barrels from the Missouri River at a cost of \$.25 per barrel, was located at Wheeler between Fort Randall and the Yankton Indian Reservation more than ninety miles northwest of the nearest railroad station at the town of Yankton on the Missouri River. The building contained few pieces of furniture. On the first floor where school was to be conducted, some log benches, a small table, and a long board on sticks resting against a wall to serve as students' desks completed the inventory. The sisters' living quarters on the second floor consisted of five small sleeping and meditation cubicles (called cells) and three larger meeting rooms, all nearly empty of furnishings. The windows were poorly fitted, and the heat for the entire building radiated from an old wood stove in a corridor of the sisters' residence.¹ This new environment was vastly different from the sturdy stone convent in which the nuns had resided in Ireland. The Irish convent had been surrounded with gardens of blooming shrubbery, and it must surely have seemed like paradise in comparison to this rugged structure silhouetted against the limitless sky of the northern prairie.²

The sisters' arrival in the spring of 1880 occurred because of efforts of Martin Marty, O.S.B., newly appointed Vicar Apostolic of Dakota Territory.³ After President Ulysses S. Grant's "peace policy" of the 1870s had ensured that two reservations in Dakota Territory would be assigned to the Catholics (Standing Rock Reservation and Devil's Lake Reservation), the Bureau of Catholic Missions sent an appeal in 1876 to the Benedictine Abbey at St. Meinrad's, Indiana, requesting two missionaries to be assigned to Standing Rock Agency. Marty, newly arrived from Switzerland to become the first abbot of St. Meinrad's joined Father Chrysostom Foffe, O.S.B., also of St. Meinrad's, and in August the two undertook missionary work among the Sioux of Dakota Territory.⁴

Marty arrived in Sioux Country shortly after the Battle of the Little Big Horn in which the tribes had played such a prominent role. He labored to encourage the growth of Catholicism among the Indians and traveled throughout the southern part of Dakota meeting with Native American parishioners and making plans to establish churches, convents, and schools. In 1877 he negotiated with a group at Wheeler, the seat of Charles Mix County, located near the Missouri River 100 miles above the territorial capitol of Yankton. After receiving a donation of ten acres of land on which to build a church, Marty chose Father Jean Malo, a French veteran of mission activity among the Indians of Oregon, to direct the project and supervise the new parish.⁶

The two clergymen began building a church and looking for teachers for the school. Father Malo relied heavily upon his parishioners to provide material support. He asked Bruno Cournoyer, a Sioux-French trader who had donated the land for the mission, to help collect funds from other families in the area and to supervise construction of a

chapel with an attached kitchen and a fence to enclose a garden.⁷

Though Marty had tried with no success to secure a community of sisters to staff the school, the priest decided to go ahead with building in hopes that some nuns could be persuaded to accept an assignment in the near future.⁸

He did not have long to wait for while he was on a journey to Europe, Marty learned that he had been named Bishop of Dakota Territory. He received the news as he was visiting his brother, a chaplain of the Swiss Guards at the Vatican (Monsignor John Baptist Marty). The appointment began September 22, 1879.⁴ During his return to the United States, he thought of the need for religious communities to help educate the tribes in Dakota. Thus, the new bishop stopped in Dublin, Ireland, where he talked with the Presentation Sisters at George's Hill. Mother John Hughes responded to Marty's request for sisters to staff the school at Wheeler, and she persuaded her biological sister Mother Agnes Hughes of the Presentation Convent at Donerally, County Cork, and Sister Teresa Challoner of Manchester, England, to join her on the journey to Dakota Territory. She also recruited three young novices for the new foundation and planned to leave Ireland in the spring of 1880.¹⁰ The sisters would endure nearly fifteen years of uncertainty as they traveled from place to place in the territory, and their original intention of working with the Sioux would be diverted in another direction before they finally established a permanent foundation in South Dakota.

The nuns began their journey in March. A twelve-day sea voyage brought them to New York where they were met by Fathers Malo and Arthur Donnelly whom the bishop had sent to direct them to Dakota. After

receiving advice on teaching in American schools from a group of Presentation Sisters at St. Michael's Convent in New York City (established by Father Donnelly six years previously),¹¹ the missionaries traveled by train to Chicago, then Omaha, Sioux City, and finally Yankton. There they boarded the stern-wheeler Josephine and began passage up the Missouri to Wheeler. The steamboat encountered shifting sand bars and a spring storm which made the journey hazardous, and the nuns noticed the flat, treeless prairies beyond the high banks of the river. They saw no fences or tilled fields in the barren wilderness.¹²

After making themselves as comfortable as possible in their living quarters, the sisters prepared the school. They were disappointed that fewer than twenty children enrolled,¹³ mostly from the mixed-blood French and Indian families in the area. The large enrollment which Bishop Marty had envisioned never materialized because many tribesmen had moved further west or had fled to Canada with Sitting Bull after the Sioux War of 1876-1877.¹⁴ The small number of students was the chief reason that the little mission school at Wheeler, called St. Ann's, failed to become a permanent institution. At one point there were only five pupils for the nuns to instruct,¹⁵ and the classroom, which served as the chapel as well, was never crowded with students.¹⁶

Teaching the children, ranging in age from seven to seventeen, was a slow process. Problems of communication with those students who spoke no English contributed to the difficulty as did the inadequacy of materials of instruction. Bruno Cournoyer's daughter Emily, who had studied at a Catholic school in Kansas, provided some help as an interpreter for the Indian children, and the sisters used French, which they had studied in Ireland, to communicate with the mixed-blood

students. Thus, it was possible to communicate, but the nuns made limited progress.¹⁷ Paper was scarce so the pupils used slates in daily exercises. Discipline was strict, and the curriculum consisted of basic reading, writing, and arithmetic. There was some instruction in domestic courses for the few Indian girls who boarded at the school and earned their keep by helping with cooking, laundry, and cleaning.¹⁸

Though teaching proved difficult and the small enrollment was discouraging, the sisters adjusted to their new situation until the disastrous blizzard of 1880-1881 hit the prairies. From mid-October until the next April, storm followed storm, and temperatures fell below zero. The nuns lacked sufficient clothing for such harsh weather, and they suffered additionally due to the school's faulty heating system. Because travel--never easy even in the best of weather--was impossible, they faced food shortages, but neighbors occasionally shared newly butchered meat with them (one advantage of all the snow was that water no longer had to be purchased by the barrel, for it could be had easily merely by melting snow).¹⁹ Once spring arrived, problems did not abate. As the thaws began the Missouri River flooded the surrounding area, and the sisters dreaded the destruction of their home. The building already had been damaged by the snow thaw and spring rains, and one wall began to crumble, finally collapsing in June. The nuns had to seek refuge in huts abandoned by earlier settlers.²⁰

After Bishop Marty learned of conditions at Wheeler, he decided to abandon the school and look for a new home for the sisters. He had no funds for rebuilding, and the small enrollment hardly justified construction even if money could be found. He had hoped to provide a school for 200 students when he invited the Irish community to send

missionaries to Wheeler. Not wanting to lose the services of the nuns, he suggested they establish a school at Deadwood in the Black Hills. This mining center was still booming due to the gold rush of the late 1870s, and the Catholic priest there, Father Rosen, had written to the bishop requesting permission for a school and sisters to staff it. Marty encouraged Father Rosen to invite the Presentation Sisters at Wheeler to his parish. He believed the nuns could be of immediate help to Deadwood's white population and that in due time they could receive Indian children from the reservation south of the Black Hills.²¹

Mother John quickly accepted Father Rosen's offer, and the sisters apprehensively awaited their journey to the bawdy mining town where they hoped to begin school by September. They prepared to leave on the first boat up the Missouri River, but they were delayed three weeks until the steamboat finally appeared. The sisters gathered blankets and food, talked with their Indian neighbors who wished them a safe journey, and then left Wheeler. The three-day trip upriver to Fort Pierre proved slower than expected because the water level was low. From the fort, they traveled miles and miles by train and stagecoach across the plains. At journey's end one sister wrote of her relief at finally leaving the coach after being jolted from side to side for such a long distance.²²

Deadwood presented anything but a favorable impression to the Irish sisters. Built on the side of a hill, the town contained scattered buildings, and a large amount of the hillside soil had been washed into the streets due to heavy rains. Father Rosen cordially welcomed the nuns and took them to a private home for a rest. The next day he led them to a three-story brick building which he said would serve as their home and school. He explained that he could serve mass

there every day except Sunday, on which day the sisters would have to attend mass at the parish church a mile away. As the Presentation Sisters followed the rule of enclosure, by which they did not move about in public, they were greatly disappointed that they could not have Sunday mass in their convent.²³ The nuns also were appalled at the behavior of most of Deadwood's citizens. One sister commented that "conditions were against community life--in fact life at all."²⁴

As a result of both the inability to maintain their cloistered way of life and the less than pious environment, Mother John refused to remain in Deadwood. In fact, she and her small group began the return journey to St. Ann's by the next stage. They took shelter in Pierre at a hotel owned by a Catholic and boarded a steamboat for the trip downriver. Upon arrival at Wheeler, they slept in the ruined convent and the next day moved to a hut offered by an Indian neighbor. The priest soon settled them in an abandoned three-room log cabin which they inhabited for two months.²⁵

The sisters once again set up a school, but they had fewer pupils than before--sometimes only five children attended--an even more primitive dwelling, and scanty food supplies.²⁶ Mother John wrote to Bishop Marty and said it might be best if they returned to Ireland, and he replied that he would forward their passages and money for other travel expenses. The sisters then had a change of heart and decided to remain in Dakota a while longer hoping that a place might be made for them. Meanwhile, they decided to move to Yankton where the Sisters of Mercy conducted a boarding school. The Presentation Sisters remained there until June of 1882, and during their stay the bishop remunerated the community at Yankton.²⁷

The sisters' next move was to Fargo in northern Dakota Territory. Father Joseph Stephan, the parish priest at Fargo, had requested that Bishop Marty secure a community of nuns to open a school, and the bishop forwarded an invitation to Mother John, encouraging her to accept the responsibility of maintaining the school there with her small community of sisters.²⁸ The nuns traveled immediately by train to Fargo and stayed in the parish rectory until their living quarters could be completed. This did not prevent them from beginning instruction. They enrolled their first pupils in July and held catechism lessons several hours a day, using the church as a classroom. That fall they started regular academic instruction in what was the first school for non-Indian children in North Dakota.²⁹

Because the church was crowded, the parish needed a new building to serve as a school and convent. Parishioners held a fair to raise money, and the sisters sold tickets at \$1.00 each. They traveled as far west as Mandan but met with what one nun called indifferent success in their sales. She commented with some chagrin that the errand to sell tickets to the fair was little more than a begging tour and that she felt ashamed of the need to ask for charity.³⁰

By the summer of 1883 the small Presentation community in Fargo needed new members. The novices had returned to Ireland to make their final vows, and only three sisters remained to conduct the school. Mother John requested temporary help from the Presentation Sisters in San Francisco until she could secure more missionaries from Ireland. Four nuns from the convent in California served at the Fargo school until 1885 when they were replaced by four new Irish recruits: Sister Mary Clare Brown, Sister Mary Aloysius Criswell, Miss Nora Tanner, and

Miss Mary Ellen Butler. Now that the school and convent were firmly established, Father Stephan gave the deed to the convent property to Mother John. The Presentation Sisters, after five years of difficulty, finally had established a permanent community in Dakota Territory.³¹

In 1880, the same year that the Presentation Sisters arrived at Wheeler, the town of Aberdeen had been surveyed as a stop on the Milwaukee railroad line through central Dakota Territory. The area already had been settled by a small colony of Catholics from Michigan led by Father Robert Haire. Father Haire, after offering his services to Bishop Marty, had received a parish that encompassed the area between the Minnesota line to the Missouri River and from Huron in central South Dakota to Jamestown, North Dakota. With completion of the railroad, settlers moved rapidly into the area around Aberdeen, and because many of them were Catholic, Father Haire decided that a church and school should be built there. After Sacred Heart Church was completed, he turned his attention to establishing a school in the parish. A request to Bishop Marty for teachers to run the school led to the Presentation Sisters' final journey.³²

In October, 1886, three nuns from the Fargo convent traveled to Aberdeen to begin a school in Sacred Heart Parish. They were Mother John, Sister Aloysius, and Miss Mary Ellen Butler. Classes began that same month with an enrollment of fifty pupils, Catholic as well as non-Catholic. In addition to religion, the sisters taught English, history, reading, spelling, arithmetic geography, music, and art. A shortage of equipment, facilities, and classroom space was a handicap, and the teachers thus relied on repetition and memorization as techniques for instruction.³³ Father Haire helped the parishioners raise funds for a

convent/school. They held a fair and borrowed money to purchase land, and volunteers completed most of the construction work. By November of 1887 the new structure was ready for the sisters and their students, who by now numbered ninety. The sisters had expanded the curriculum to include teachers' training courses for the young nuns they hoped would join them.³⁴ They named their school the Presentation Academy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In a letter to the local newspaper, Father Haire thanked the people of Aberdeen for their support of the school, and he made special mention of the non-Catholic enrollment.

Difference of religious belief is no bar to the attendance of non-Catholic pupils inasmuch as such pupils are protected in their civil rights and their religion is not interfered with. Among our most diligent and successful pupils are found the non-Catholics . . .³⁵

Funds for the academy came from several sources. Loans and sale of bonds provided the bulk of the money, but parish fairs, private donations, and tuition (\$3.50 a week per pupil for board and fees) brought in additional revenue. The sisters also traveled widely to ask for alms after receiving a temporary dispensation from Bishop Marty to break their their rule of enclosure.³⁶ Father Haire published a statement of income and expenditure for the academy in the Aberdeen American News. He listed total cost of the building as \$7,546.60 with an additional \$1,062.54 for furniture and supplies. Operating expenses from October, 1888, to December 31, 1889, were \$615.00, and the sisters' household expenses were \$944.55. Sources of income brought in \$10,168.69, and this amount included the total spent on expenses (after Father Haire donated more than \$1,000 in order to balance the books).³⁷

In 1889 Dakota Territory entered the union as the states of North and South Dakota.³⁸ This separation of states was one reason for the

eventual division between the Presentation houses in Aberdeen and Fargo, but an internal problem led to the final split between the two communities. According to the Presentation Sisters' constitution, elections for reverend mother took place every six years. When Mother John's term at Aberdeen expired in 1892, an election was held, not excluding her from possible re-election, but Mother Aloysius Criswell was chosen. Mother John took offense at the result, considering it a personal insult, so she promptly returned to Fargo and further weakened connections with Aberdeen. Thus, the vicarate's division into two distinct dioceses following statehood--putting the Fargo and Aberdeen convents in different areas of episcopal jurisdiction--plus the tension due to internal troubles³⁹ led the sisters to decide that the two communities should sever their six-year relationship. The group at Aberdeen received clear title to its real estate and other property upon payment of \$2,600 to the Fargo membership. They financed the cost with a mortgage.⁴⁰

The 1890s brought drought and depression to the entire country, and the farming communities of the northern plains suffered a great deal. The sisters at Aberdeen were no exception. Enrollment at the academy declined as people believed that education was still a luxury to be dispensed with when money became scarce.⁴¹ Another problem during the early 1890s concerned a shortage of recruits for the community. Only five members lived at the Aberdeen convent, and in order to increase the numbers, Mother Aloysius asked for suitable novices from Presentation convents in Ireland. In 1894 she received five Irish women and the community's first American candidate, Miss Annie McBride of Iowa. Thus the total membership more than doubled. Mother Aloysius

served only two years as Reverend Mother before she died of pneumonia in 1894. Her successor, Mother Joseph Butler (previously Miss Mary Ellen Butler), immediately assumed office, one that she was to hold for more than twenty years.⁴³

With the succession of Mother Joseph to the leadership of the Presentation Sisters at Aberdeen, the uncertain years of their history in Dakota Territory came to an end. They had arrived fifteen years before in hopes of serving as missionaries to the Indians, but after several moves had found themselves, instead, teaching the children of European and American settlers in the farming country of northeastern South Dakota. They had endured hardship and confusion, but with independence from the community in Fargo and the strong guidance of Mother Joseph, the small foundation could look forward to a bright future as it participated in the settlement of other areas of the state. Bishop Thomas O'Gorman, who replaced Bishop Marty in 1896, saw the need for the sisters in other new settlements. Thus, he permanently dispensed the nuns from their rule of enclosure because they lived in a region where missionaries were needed to reach the scattered Catholic population. His action would have far-reaching impact on extending the scope of the Presentation Order in South Dakota.⁴⁴ By the mid-1890s, the sisters had a permanent home. Though the convent still could not compare with the beauty of their motherhouse in Ireland, they had gained security and a strong sense of the value in their mission to educate the children of Catholic settlers in South Dakota.

ENDNOTES

¹Letter from Sister Frances Menahan to Mother Joseph Butler, n.d., Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, p. 1; T. J. Walsh, Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters (Dublin: M. H. Hill and Son, Ltd., 1959), p. 280.

²Presentation Annals, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, n.d.

³Diamond Jubilee Book (Aberdeen: Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1961), pp. 21, 22.

⁴Sister M. Cabrini DeDonato, "A History of the Educational Work of the Presentation Sisters of Aberdeen, South Dakota." (unpub. M.A. thesis, Northern State College, 1966), p. 2.

⁵Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 21.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Cabrini, "Educational Work," p. 5.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Presentation Annals.

¹²Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 23.

¹³Letter from Sister Frances Menahan, p. 1.

¹⁴Presentation Annals.

¹⁵Letter from Sister Frances Menahan, p. 1.

¹⁶Presentation Annals.

¹⁷Cabrini, "Educational Work," p. 10.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 12, 13.

¹⁹Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 22; Herbert Schell, History of South Dakota (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), pp. 180, 181.

- ²⁰Letter from Sister Frances Menahan, p. 2; Presentation Annals.
- ²¹Presentation Annals; Schell, p. 152.
- ²²Letter from Sister Frances Menahan, p. 2.
- ²³Ibid., pp. 2, 3.
- ²⁴Collection of Personal Interviews, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, n.d.
- ²⁵Letter from Sister Frances Menahan, pp. 3, 4; Presentation Annals.
- ²⁶Letter from Sister Frances Menahan, p. 3.
- ²⁷Ibid., pp. 3, 4; Presentation Annals.
- ²⁸Presentation Annals; Walsh, Nano Nagle, p. 280.
- ²⁹Cabrini, "Educational Work," p. 18; Letter from Sister Frances Menahan, p. 4; "Summary Data for Encyclopedia Dictionary of Canonical States of Perfection, 1968," compiled by Sister Alicia Dunphy, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota.
- ³⁰Letter from Sister Frances Menahan, p. 4.
- ³¹Ibid.; Cabrini, "Educational Work," pp. 18, 19; Presentation Annals; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 24.
- ³²Presentation Annals; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 27; Cabrini, "Educational Work," pp. 20, 21.
- ³³Cabrini, "Educational Work," pp. 20, 21, 23; Walsh, Nano Nagle, p. 280.
- ³⁴Walsh, Nano Nagle, p. 25; Official Yearbook of Sacred Heart Catholic Church (Aberdeen: Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 1902), p. 18.
- ³⁵Aberdeen American News, January 2, 1890.
- ³⁶Cabrini, "Educational Work," pp. 26, 27.
- ³⁷Aberdeen American News, January 2, 1890.
- ³⁸Schell, South Dakota, p. 222.
- ³⁹Cabrini, "Educational Work," p. 28; Walsh, Nano Nagle, p. 280; Collection of Personal Interviews; Interview with Mrs. Aldea Cloutier by Sister DeSales, November 18, 1957, Presentation Archives, Aberdeen, South Dakota.
- ⁴⁰Presentation Annals.

⁴¹Schell, South Dakota, p. 223; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 28.

⁴²Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 28.

⁴³Presentation Annals; Cabrini, "Educational Work," p. 31.

⁴⁴Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 29; Walsh, Nano Nagle, p. 279; Summary Data, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota. Pope Pius XII gave final approval of Bishop O'Gorman's dispensation in September, 1946, when he accepted the revised constitution of the Aberdeen Congregation of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION, 1898-1961

Once the Presentation Sisters were permanently established in Aberdeen, they enjoyed considerable progress. They gained a dynamic superior in Mother Joseph Butler and extended their services to many communities throughout the Diocese of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Responding to requests from many pastors within the next sixty years to staff elementary and secondary schools, they consistently attempted to improve the level of education attained by their own membership. They saw their role in parish schools as one of support and deference to the position of local pastors, and they followed the priests' leadership in providing instruction. Only in the case of the Presentation Children's Home did the teaching sisters follow a more independent path. In the 1930s and 1940s the nuns extended their responsibilities to schools in the Archdiocese of St. Paul, Minnesota, and by the time of their seventy-fifth jubilee in 1961, they could include fourteen schools, a children's home, and a junior college among their areas of influence in education.

Mother Joseph Butler served as reverend mother for twenty-one years (1894-1915). She presided over the community's growth from four to eighty-four members and its extension into eight parochial schools in eastern South Dakota. Mother Joseph added to the Presentation membership by recruiting young women from places such as Canada and by making

numerous journies to her native home of Ireland. There she met with likely candidates and persuaded them to accompany her to South Dakota. One nun who followed Mother Joseph remembered her as patient, capable, and strong. She ably endured great hardships during the early years of the twentieth century.¹ Other sisters who remembered Mother Joseph commented that she was practical and had a good head for business. A firm disciplinarian, she nevertheless showed kindness for her charges and persuaded the priests in Aberdeen to help educate the young nuns.²

The hardship Mother Joseph consistently faced was the shortage of money and supplies. She often joined in begging tours to gain funds for the convent. In fact, she had left on just such a journey when she was informed that Mother Aloysius had died and that she was to be the new reverend mother. When the sisters did not have enough to eat, Mother Joseph put a flag out a convent window so that neighbors could see their plight and donate any surplus food they might have. Providing supplies for the schools was not the sisters' duty because they were owned and operated by the individual parishes, but the lack of instructional aids did make the job of teaching a difficult one.³

The first call to staff a school outside the city of Aberdeen came to the Presentation Sisters in 1898. Father John Hogan of Holy Family Parish in Mitchell, South Dakota, needed sisters to staff the parish school, Notre Dame Academy. The school had been operated since 1886 by the Sisters of St. Agnes from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, but they had been forced to withdraw because their motherhouse could no longer furnish teachers. Mother Joseph sent four sisters to begin the fall term so the school could remain open.⁴ The pattern that emerged in the case of

the Presentation Sisters at Notre Dame was to be repeated many times as parochial schools opened in other communities in eastern South Dakota.

Notre Dame Academy had been built in the 1880s at a cost to the parishioners of \$5,000. They had hoped, with the construction of the school, to induce the bishop to make his residence in Mitchell. It was a wooden structure and housed eight grades until 1912 when high school courses were added to the curriculum.⁶ Due to overcrowding and crumbling walls, Father Colman O'Flaherty decided to remodel and to enlarge the school. The nuns taught classes in the church basement while construction was taking place.

After Father O'Flaherty left Mitchell to serve as a chaplain in France during World War I, Father John M. Brady became the new pastor, a position he held for forty years. Father Brady and the sisters worked together to enlarge the school, improve curriculum, and develop a junior college.⁷ The priest added a new wing to the school in 1921 after he developed a one-year teacher training course, and this brought increased enrollment. The South Dakota Department of Public Instruction approved a second year of college courses in 1922, and Notre Dame Academy gained the stature of a junior college.⁸ Father Brady had seen the need for both Catholic higher education in the state and a teacher-training institution to provide instructors for the growing Catholic and non-Catholic population in rural areas and small towns. The Dean of Southern State Teachers' College, one of the accrediting officials for the academy, stated that by the 1930s, Father Brady's school ranked first among private teacher-training schools in South Dakota.⁹

The curriculum in the junior college provided preparation for several degrees. Students enrolled in the one-year teachers' course

earned first grade certificates and qualified to teach in rural schools. They could complete work for the state general certificate by attending summer sessions at Notre Dame. Those following the two-year teachers' course received the state general certificate and could transfer their credits to four-year colleges without taking an examination or losing units of instruction. The college also offered a two-year general course in arts and sciences in preparation for the junior year at the University of South Dakota at Vermillion. In the 1940s, a one-year pre-nursing course--approved by the State Director of Nursing Education ---and a two-year secretarial program, allowing transfer to the University of South Dakota in secretarial science, completed the curriculum.¹⁰

The junior college at Notre Dame served the eastern portion of South Dakota for twenty-nine years, graduating 1,376 persons before it closed in 1951. Besides educating lay people, Father Brady provided an avenue by which the Presentation Sisters could improve their own level of education. Many young nuns enrolled in the teacher-training courses and summer school classes in order to qualify for state certification and thereby upgrade the standard of instruction in Catholic elementary and secondary schools.¹¹ Most other students came from small towns and farms around Mitchell. Catholic and non-Catholic alike, they could board at the school or with families nearby while they attended classes. One woman commented that she paid \$100 tuition for the one-year teacher-training course and worked for her room and board in the home of the mayor. Thus, she was able to get the beginnings of a higher education even though she started school just after the depression while rural residents of South Dakota were still suffering want due to long years of drought. The daughter of a farmer, she expressed gratitude that

Father Brady and the Presentation Sisters who staffed the academy were able to provide a chance for rural people to obtain college educations.¹²

Notre Dame elementary and secondary schools, housed under the same roof as the junior college, grew in enrollment along with Mitchell's Catholic population. Admission to the school was free to day-scholars whose parents were contributing members of the parish as well as to those whose parents were too poor to contribute; tuition (\$50 a month) was charged to pupils who enrolled from outside the parish. Financial support for the school came from an offering of \$1.00 per family collected at mass on the first Sunday of every month.¹³ As the years passed, the curriculum in the high school followed the State of South Dakota Course of Study and emphasized college preparation with four years of English, history, and science required along with two years of Latin (another two years were electives). The sisters' intention was to make the students well prepared and accepted in the society of the Protestant majority but, at the same time, to instill a knowledge of Catholic religion and culture.¹⁴

The 1950s was a period of expansion and of change in leadership at Notre Dame. A new gymnasium and auditorium were added as were new classrooms which provided space for the rapidly multiplying post-World War II student population. By the time of the Presentation Sisters' seventy-fifth jubilee in 1961, Notre Dame High School had an enrollment of 194 with forty-two graduates, and the elementary school contained 623 pupils. Twenty-three sisters and five lay teachers staffed the school. The Presentation Sisters could count more than sixty-five of their number who had come from the high school and junior college at

Mitchell, and they had grieved with the rest of the city at the death of Monsignor Brady in 1959.¹⁵

Once the sisters had begun staffing Notre Dame Academy, they answered calls to work at other schools in the Sioux Falls Diocese. At the turn of the century the diocese contained more than 35,000 parishioners (Indian and non-Indian), and twelve parochial schools and four academies already had been established, educating a total of 1,803 students. Bishop O'Gorman encouraged other congregations to build schools, but he relied heavily upon the Presentation Sisters to staff those in the eastern part of the state even though thirteen other religious orders had establishments in South Dakota.¹⁶ Between 1900 and 1910 the nuns went to schools in Milbank, Jefferson, Bridgewater, Woonsocket, and Dell Rapids. They also opened short-lived schools at Elkton, Marion, and Bristol.¹⁷

St. Lawrence School in Milbank, first opened in 1885, had been run by Benedictine Sisters from Yankton until 1891 when they were forced to abandon the mission. Father John Wulf reopened the school in 1901 with three Presentation Sisters as teachers. The pupils studied in a frame building that formerly had been the pastor's home until 1910 when a new brick structure was completed. The second story served as a church for several years until a new church could be built. From an original membership of twelve families, the parish experienced slow but steady growth, and by 1961, 214 pupils in grades one through nine studied under a faculty of eight members.¹⁸

Father Charles Robinson of St. Peter's parish in Jefferson followed Father Wulf in asking Mother Joseph for sisters to teach in his school. The Yankton Benedictines previously had run this school just

as they had the one in Milbank, but they withdrew when the parish could not support them during the depression years of the early 1890s. In 1902 three Presentation nuns went to St. Peter's to teach grades one through six. A few years later several Presentation Sisters were asked to teach in the public school, an arrangement that continued successfully for twenty years because Jefferson was an overwhelmingly Catholic community. When the seventh and eighth grades were added to St. Peter's curriculum, the nuns withdrew from the public school.¹⁹ The parishioners, after earlier remodeling and enlarging the original school, finally built a new one in 1952 to accommodate an increasing enrollment. By 1960 St. Peter's had 165 students in eight grades.²⁰

The Catholic parishioners of St. Stephan's in Bridgewater opened their first school in 1901 in an old Protestant church building.²¹ Father Bunning persuaded four Presentation Sisters to staff the school in 1904, and their total enrollment was forty students. A new building, completed in 1922, housed the school, convent, and dormitories as up to seventy-five pupils boarded at the school each year until the rural bus system was introduced in the late 1930s. By 1961 enrollment had stabilized at 100 day-scholars with a faculty of three teachers for grades one through six.

St. Wilfred's Parish in Woonsocket, under the leadership of Father Haquin, a Eudist Father from France, purchased a house near the church in 1908 and asked for five Presentation Sisters to live there and begin classes. A new building--St. Joseph's School--was completed in 1910, and a high school program was added to the curriculum the next year. The high school and boarding facilities remained open until the mid-1920s when hard times caused by drought forced the parish to close

the high school and dormitories.²³ The entire school often had an enrollment of more than 200 pupils, of whom seventy-five were usually boarders. In August, 1932, the abandoned dormitories were used to house orphans from the Catholic orphanage at Turton which fire earlier had destroyed. The nuns cared for the orphans until the bishop moved them to a new residence in Sioux Falls in 1934. By 1961 enrollment at St. Joseph's had declined to 116 students.²⁴

The Irish and German Catholic families of St. Mary's Parish in Dell Rapids requested Presentation Sisters to staff their new academy in 1910. Six nuns taught 125 students in grades one through eight, and they added a high school, grade by grade, until the first class of seven students graduated in 1915. Many pupils boarded at the school until Father Walter Roche organized a bus system.

The flu epidemic following World War I hit the area around Dell Rapids with great force, and several of the sisters became ill because they were exposed to the germs while they helped nurse families who had contracted the disease. The pastor then closed the school for several months. One sister, remembering her experiences, commented that the hospital was full, and bodies could not be taken to the church because of the high rate of infection so funerals had to be held right at the cemetery. This young sister said she had no nursing experience but often went to care for rural families anyway. In one such venture the young daughter of a family died in her arms--there was absolutely nothing that could be done to save her. The sister became ill herself soon afterward.²⁵

The 1920s and 1930s proved difficult for St. Mary's, but the school nevertheless grew in academic excellence. The effects of drought and

and depression were felt in the small farming community, and one sister remembered that the nuns got no salary for a time in the 1930s. They received food in exchange for their services and often had to rely on charity. Father Roche's bus system provided some revenue. The parish bought the buses, and those families whose children used the service paid weekly fees. The school received state accreditation in 1924 with a curriculum that included four years of religion, English, science, and history, two years of home economics, commercial science, Latin, and one year of speech.²⁶

After World War II and returning prosperity, the parish began to expand again. A new church and rectory, completed in 1951, allowed the sisters to move to the old rectory so that their quarters in the school could be converted into classrooms. Monsignor Peter Meyer supervised the construction of a new \$300,000 high school in 1958, and plans were made for a new convent for the sisters. The graduating class of 1961 contained twenty-eight members, and the high school faculty consisted of twelve nuns, two lay teachers, and the assistant pastor. Because of Dell Rapids' large Catholic population and the influence of St. Mary's-- and the Presentation Sisters--more than thirty-five former graduates had entered religious life by 1961.²⁷ Other evidence of the Catholic influence in Dell Rapids appeared in the agreement between administrators of the public high school and St. Mary's to allow students to attend exchange classes. For example public school students wishing to study Latin could enroll for lessons at St. Mary's, and pupils at St. Mary's who wanted agricultural courses could get credit from the public school.²⁸

Located in Aberdeen was Sacred Heart School, the last school to be staffed by Presentation Sisters under Mother Joseph's guidance. The Presentation Academy, operated by the nuns since 1888, had by the turn of the century become crowded as membership in the order grew, and very little space remained for classrooms. The nuns needed the building for their expanding novitiate, and, faced with the choice of constructing a new academy or a much-needed hospital, they decided on the hospital.²⁹ The parish then assumed responsibility of providing a parochial school, but classes did not begin until September of 1914. Four Presentation Sisters staffed the first faculty with part-time help from three other nuns from the Academy, and enrollment totaled ninety-two pupils that year.³⁰ To facilitate the transfer of students to Aberdeen Central High School, the pastor added the ninth grade to the curriculum in the 1940s. The parish also built a youth center in the 1950s which provided a meeting-place for young people in the area around Aberdeen. By the 1960s the school's enrollment had reached almost 600 pupils who were taught by twenty-two faculty members. Eight priests and twelve nuns had entered religious life from Sacred Heart Parish.³¹

From 1915 to 1932 the Presentation community at Aberdeen was guided by Mother Aloysius Forest (1915-1921 and 1927-1932) and Mother Agatha Collins (1921-1927). They presided over the staffing of three more parochial schools, one at Humboldt, one at Huron, and another at Madison. Mother Aloysius has been remembered by many acquaintances as a good judge of human nature, a sensitive soul, and one always solicitous of her responsibility to provide well-prepared teachers for the parish schools the community staffed. She also sent several sisters to Catholic colleges to do graduate work in education.³²

The three schools which the sisters opened during the 1920s were St. Anne's (Humboldt), St. Thomas' (Madison), and St. Teresa's (Huron). The first enrollment (1921) at St. Anne's was nearly 100, and boarding facilities were maintained until the 1950s. In 1961 four sisters taught 144 students in grades one through eight.³³ Construction on St. Teresa's school began in 1921 but, because of difficulty in obtaining building materials, it was not completed until 1929. The first year's enrollment of 175 pupils in eight grades had increased by 1961 to 405.³⁴ St. Thomas' School also was delayed in opening as a result of construction difficulties. In 1928 three Presentation Sisters began holding classes for sixty children in the church basement. The sisters operated a high school department from 1933-1944, but failure to maintain state accreditation led to the decision to close operations. Elementary enrollment stabilized at approximately 100 students until the early 1960s when it increased to more than 170. The pastor then planned to build a new convent to provide more space in the school building for needed classrooms.³⁵

Mother Agatha's administration between the first and second terms of Mother Aloysius saw the community's transition from pioneer to settled conditions. She worked diligently to improve the order's financial situation. In earlier days the sisters had received meager salaries from the schools they staffed, and their living conditions were often crowded. Mother Agatha persuaded the pastors to increase the nun's earnings--though the cost of using sisters as teachers still remained much less than that of employing lay people--and to provide more comfortable living quarters. One sister remembered Mother Agatha as kind and friendly, a generous spirit who loved all people. Though

her own training was in the field of health care rather than education, she did not neglect the needs of the sister-teachers at the expense of the sister-nurses.³⁶

When Mother Aloysius died in 1932 her successor, Mother Raphael McCarthy, proved to be an excellent leader for the times of depression, drought, and war that marked the years of her administration (1932-1946). She managed to keep sending promising sisters to college during the financial crisis of the 1930s, opened a home and school for orphans, and extended the order's influence to parishes in Minnesota. Many nuns remembered her as energetic, practical, able to economize, and possessed of great determination. Her decision to set up a uniform bookkeeping system for the motherhouse brought about further improvement to the order's financial situation. Though the schools and hospitals the sisters staffed brought in little income, Mother Raphael pushed to keep the sisters working for higher degrees in school. She believed that the nuns must be as well qualified as possible to keep pace with changing techniques in education.³⁷

One of the first problems which Mother Raphael confronted was finding a place for the orphans whose home had been destroyed by fire in 1932. Bishop Mahoney put these eighty children under the care of the Presentation Sisters when the Sisters of St. Louis, their previous caretakers, withdrew to Canada after the fire at Turton destroyed their quarters. Mother Raphael saw to it that the orphans journeyed safely by train to Woonsocket where they occupied the old dormitories of St. Joseph's School. After two years in Woonsocket, the orphans moved to an old college (Columbus College), then to the bishop's residence, both in Sioux Falls, and to St. Stephan's at Bridgewater before their new

home in Sioux Falls, constructed under the Works Progress Administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, was completed in 1940.³⁸

The new children's home provided a haven for homeless children throughout the diocese. Since their arrival in South Dakota, the Presentation Sisters had cared for orphans in the parochial schools they staffed, boarding them with reliable families during summer vacations. Now that a large facility was available, the children were sent to live at the Presentation Children's Home. Numbers varied from sixty to ninety boys and girls between the ages of three and fifteen, several of whom were non-Catholic. The children studied grades one through eight at the home, then the boys went to Boy's Town in Nebraska, the girls either to Notre Dame in Mitchell or Mount Marty in Yankton.³⁹ Funding for the orphanage came from private donations, diocesan aid programs, and the state department of welfare. Many of the children were not strictly orphans but came from broken homes or those judged unsuitable by the department of welfare.⁴⁰

The sisters relied on charity for extra expenses and activities for the children. Parishes throughout the diocese donated clothing, toys, and school supplies to the children, and several charitable organizations in Sioux Falls carried out projects such as a biweekly sewing circle and a yearly Christmas party. One group called the Presentation Club contained eight couples who provided transport when the sisters or the children needed to run errands or visit the doctor or dentist. The members took the children on picnics or to movies-- for which many Sioux Falls theater operators provided free admission-- and held a lawn social to raise funds for special expenses.⁴¹

As the 1960s began, growing awareness by public welfare agencies of the special problems that children from broken homes endured led to state regulation of facilities such as the Presentation Children's Home. The sisters learned that a new law would require that the staff include a social worker with a master's degree to deal with counseling procedures. Failure to include such a professional would lead to loss of certification and subsequent loss of financial assistance. Withdrawal of public funds would surely mean that the home could not stay open long.

Another change caused a decline in the need for facilities like the children's home. Sociologists and psychologists had begun to question the value of orphanages to the development of the children placed in them. They began to encourage sending them to foster homes so that they could gain experience in family-style living situations. Thus, by the time the sisters closed the home in the mid-1960s, enrollment had already declined to less than fifty children. The sisters who worked at the home either as teachers or in the kitchen or laundry commented that they found a great deal of satisfaction in their duties and that the children were, for the most part, well behaved. Four girls and one boy who lived at the home became members of religious communities.⁴²

In the fall of 1939, Mother Raphael responded to a request from the Archbishop of St. Paul for nuns to teach catechetical classes in Mound and Willmar, Minnesota. Three sisters left Aberdeen and moved to the old rectory of Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Mound. They lived upstairs and held classes for more than 100 pupils downstairs. Their schedule followed an arrangement provided by the superintendent of

schools in the district, whereby students in public schools took release-time each week so they could receive religious instruction. Children from rural schools attended classes on Saturdays. A new convent completed in 1941 was followed by a parish school for grades one through eight in 1951. Located in suburban Minneapolis, the school grew rapidly from an enrollment of 280 pupils to nearly 500 within ten years. An additional eight classrooms and library were added during a building program begun in 1960.⁴³

Presentation Sisters taught catechism at Willmar for fifteen years before an elementary school was opened. They traveled throughout the Willmar area, contacting nearly 700 students in release-time instruction each week. When the new school, St. Mary's, opened in 1954, 219 students enrolled in grades one through six. The seventh and eighth grades were soon added, and in 1960, ninety-nine students graduated from the eighth grade. The school had nine classrooms while five sisters and four lay teachers were included in the faculty.⁴⁴ The Presentation Sisters' experience at catechetical teaching (the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine or CCD) in Minnesota would be of great value in the mid-1960s as CCD classes became a necessary substitute for increasingly expensive parochial school education.

Mother Raphael submitted information in the mid-1930s to a group organizing a report on the activities of religious communities in the preparation of elementary teachers. Some of her statistics provided insight into the progress the order had made since its arrival in South Dakota. In the twelve parochial schools in the diocese, there were fifty-seven sisters teaching elementary grades. They earned an average salary of thirty dollars per month. Those sisters working toward

advanced degrees usually attended Northern State Teachers' College in Aberdeen because of its proximity to the motherhouse and the low cost of tuition. Some of the handicaps the teachers endured in their classrooms were poor janitorial work, insufficient equipment, the demands of the pastors, and no opportunity for special instruction for slow pupils. The sisters taught classes that averaged thirty pupils in size. The procedure followed by practice teachers included submission of formal lesson plans, weekly meetings with advisers, and daily conferences with methods teachers. Before teaching, they observed the classes and gave written reports to their advisers. The main problems the community faced in training teachers concerned low finances and a shortage of new members.⁴⁵

Mother Viator Burns replaced Mother Raphael in 1946 and served as Reverend Mother until 1958. During her tenure the community staffed two more schools--at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Anoka, Minnesota--and conducted a progress report on their activities in education. Both a teacher and a hospital administrator, Mother Viator was the first native-born leader of the order.⁴⁶ St. Mary's Parish in Sioux Falls built a new school in 1949, and the Presentation Sisters counted sixty-nine students in grades one to eight in the first enrollment. By 1961 the faculty included ten sisters and four lay teachers, enrollment passed the 500 mark, and the congregation had built a large addition to the school.⁴⁷ The sisters moved into a new school at Anoka, Minnesota--St. Stephan's--in 1950. They had been teaching there since 1945, and already they had 300 pupils. The new building boasted such modern facilities as a gymnasium and a cafeteria for use in a hot lunch program.⁴⁸

From a report of parochial schools taught by the Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary completed in 1950, some basic generalizations could be made. In those schools with less than 100 pupils in grades one through eight, faculties consisted of four or five nuns and a pastor. No lay people had as yet been employed. All the sisters had state certificates, and the principal usually had a bachelor's degree. None of the schools still maintained boarding facilities, and most students arrived daily by bus. The buses were either owned by the parishes or were shared with the public schools, and no hot lunch programs as yet had been adopted. The teachers administered IQ tests and state achievement tests for those students in non-accredited schools to determine their pupils' abilities and performance. Textbooks came from a suggested list for courses in history, language, reading, and literature, but there was no uniform adoption of books. The decision rested with individual faculties in each school, but Catholic authors received preference. Libraries usually were limited to classrooms and contained Catholic newspapers and magazines. Extra-curricular activities included drama, music, and, in a few cases, basketball.⁴⁹

The larger schools (Notre Dame, St. Mary's-Dell Rapids, and Sacred Heart) employed lay teachers as well as religious, and a larger percentage of the nuns had earned bachelor's degrees. Other differences occurred only in the wider variety of athletic programs and clubs and in a larger number of non-Catholic newspapers and magazines in the libraries.⁵⁰

As their diamond jubilee approached, the Presentation Sisters could look with pride on their accomplishments in education. They had begun teaching when South Dakota was still a frontier region and had

helped to provide schools in ten small farming communities and two larger towns as well as in three cities in Minnesota. One hundred and fifty teaching nuns worked with 5,339 elementary and secondary school students, saving taxpayers in South Dakota \$1.8 million dollars in 1959. They based this statistic on multiplying the average cost of educating a pupil times the average daily attendance at their schools ($\$339.72 \times 5,339$). The sisters thus eliminated the necessity of the state's providing more teachers and facilities for students.⁵¹ The order also had progressed in sending members on for degrees. Many Presentation Sisters had attended Northern State Teachers' College in Aberdeen, and in 1960 they opened a residence in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at Marquette University so that the Presentation Sisters in school there could live in a community environment. The nuns studied such topics as philosophy, sociology, grammar, and psychology, and they welcomed members of the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of Holy Names.⁵²

The next sixteen years would be filled with much activity, trauma, and re-organization. The teaching nuns, as aids to the parishes and pastors who owned and supervised the schools they staffed, would find themselves in a position of uncertainty due to parishioners' demands for advancement in school facilities and declining numbers of sisters to work in the schools. Many of the schools they staffed would be closed, not always under the friendliest of circumstances, and the few new candidates often decided to enter other fields besides teaching. All of this was unknown to the community as the sisters gathered in Aberdeen in the summer of 1961 to celebrate seventy-five years of

service in South Dakota. Their pride was justified due to the accomplishments they had achieved, but their optimism was destined to be badly shaken.

ENDNOTES

¹Sister M. Martha, "Brief History of Presentation Community in Aberdeen 1886-1972," Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, p. 8; Interview with Sister Eucharika Kelly, August 12, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

²Collection of Personal Interviews, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota.

³Ibid.; Sister M. Martha, "Brief History," pp. 7, 8.

⁴Diamond Jubilee Book (Aberdeen: Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1961), pp. 29, 30.

⁵Mitchell Daily, May 30, 1886.

⁶Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 31.

⁷Ibid.; "Notre Dame Academy historical data," Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, p. 10.

⁸"Historical Data," p. 5; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 31.

⁹Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 31.

¹⁰"Notre Dame historical data," p. 5; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 31.

¹¹Interview with Sister Eucharika.

¹²Interview with Winnefred Peterson, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota, July 29, 1978; Interview with Sister Helen Freimuth, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota, August 5, 1976.

¹³"Notre Dame historical data," p. 12; Collection of Personal Interviews.

¹⁴Interview with Sister Martha Raleigh, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota, August 10, 1976; Interview with Sister Lynn Marie Welbig, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota, August 10, 1976.

¹⁵Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 31; "Notre Dame historical data," pp. 8, 10, 14.

- 16 Collection of Personal Interviews.
- 17 Sister M. Martha, "Brief History," p. 8.
- 18 Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 42; Jubilee Data, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota; Sister M. Cabrini DeDonato, "A History of the Educational Work of the Presentation Sisters of Aberdeen, South Dakota" (unpub. M.A. thesis, Northern State College, 1966), p. 47.
- 19 Jubilee Data; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 43; Cabrini, "Educational Work," p. 48.
- 20 Jubilee Data.
- 21 Sources disagree on the denomination. Some say Baptist; others say Methodist.
- 22 Jubilee Data; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 47; Dakota Catholic (October, 1922), p. 75.
- 23 Jubilee Data.
- 24 Ibid.; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 46.
- 25 Interview with Sister Auth, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota, August 5, 1976; Sister M. Martha, "Brief History," p. 10.
- 26 Interview with Sister Helen Freimuth; Sister M. Martha, "Brief History," p. 12; Jubilee Data, p. 6.
- 27 Jubilee Data, p. 6; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 44.
- 28 Interview with Dan Heinemann, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota, July 16, 1978; Cabrini, "Educational Work," p. 53.
- 29 Official Yearbook of Sacred Heart Catholic Church (Aberdeen: Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 1902), p. 19.
- 30 Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 48.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Aberdeen American News, March 30, 1932; Collection of Personal Interviews; Sister M. Martha, "Brief History," p. 10.
- 33 Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 52; Jubilee Data.
- 34 Jubilee Data.
- 35 Ibid.; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 52.

- ³⁶ Sister M. Martha, "Brief History," p. 11.
- ³⁷ Collection of Personal Interviews; Sister M. Martha, "Brief History," p. 12; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 58.
- ³⁸ Jubilee Data; Sister M. Martha, "Brief History," p. 12; Interview with Sister Edward Lucas, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota, August 6, 1976; Interview with Sister Mary Stephen Davis, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota, August 7, 1976; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 55.
- ³⁹ Jubilee Data; Interview with Sister Edward Lucas; Interview with Sister Mary Stephen Davis.
- ⁴⁰ Interview with Sister Mary Stephen Davis; Interview with Sister Edward Lucas.
- ⁴¹ Interview with Sister Edward Lucas; Jubilee Data.
- ⁴² Jubilee Data.
- ⁴³ Jubilee Data; Sister M. Martha, "Brief History," p. 12.
- ⁴⁴ "Brief History," p. 12; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 56; Jubilee Data.
- ⁴⁵ "Report of Activity of Religious Communities of Women in the Preparation of Religious Elementary Teachers," Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota.
- ⁴⁶ Bishop's Bulletin, December, 1966.
- ⁴⁷ Jubilee Data; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 65.
- ⁴⁸ Anoka Union, September 15, 1950.
- ⁴⁹ "Report of Parochial Schools Taught by the Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1949-50," Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Sioux Falls Argus Leader, January 8, 1961.
- ⁵² Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 71; Interview with Sister Kay O'Neil, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota, August 9, 1976.

CHAPTER IV

HEALTH CARE, 1901-1961

As the nineteenth century drew to a close the Presentation Sisters had established themselves firmly as educators in eastern South Dakota, fulfilling the traditional duties which nuns of their order had always undertaken. However, this did not remain the case, as pioneer conditions and an emergency in the Aberdeen area would cause them to depart significantly from serving as teachers in parochial schools. This major change would have far-reaching implications both for the order and the population of the region. The sisters would find themselves in a position of leadership which they did not achieve as teachers, and the people they served would benefit greatly from this leadership.

The departure from traditional Presentation activity in education occurred at the turn of the century as a result of several factors. As a pioneer community, Aberdeen had not progressed to the stage where the population could support permanent health care facilities. There had been a county hospital in the city in the 1880s, but its financial status was not secured, and it operated only a few years before closing its doors. Thus the city suffered from a shortage of hospital services for its rapidly growing population.¹

Coincidentally with this problem a new candidate for membership in the Presentation Order arrived and provided the sisters with the beginnings of expertise in health care. She was Charlotte Boyson (known

as Sister Dominic), a graduate nurse from Winona, Minnesota, whose training and ability served the order and community of Aberdeen during a diphtheria epidemic which struck the area in 1900, only a few months after her arrival.² The city was totally unprepared for the emergency, and the sisters offered part of their convent for use as a temporary hospital. Sister Dominic supervised the other nuns who cared for the patients, and city leaders noticed their efforts. Once the epidemic had passed, Father Robert Haire, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, Mayor J. E. Adams, and Dr. H. J. Rock, realizing the need for a permanent hospital and recognizing the abilities of the sisters, requested that Mother Joseph Butler, superior of the order, establish a hospital to be run by the Presentation Sisters.³

For the sisters to commit themselves to health care, several obstacles had to be removed. The Presentation constitution made no mention of nursing as an apostolate so that document would have to be revised and approved. Mother Joseph worked with Bishop O'Gorman of the Diocese of Sioux Falls to win the necessary approval from the Holy See for the change in the order's structure,⁴ thus clearing one major hurdle. The other had to do with finances. Neither the Presentation Sisters nor Sacred Heart Parish possessed sufficient funds to finance the construction of a hospital, and no aid would be forthcoming from the diocesan headquarters. Therefore, Mother Joseph secured a loan from Isaac Lincoln, president of a local bank, to underwrite the building of a fifteen-bed facility to be called St. Luke's Hospital. She served as first administrator of the hospital when it opened to the public in 1901,⁵ and Sister Dominic supervised the order's first school

of nursing which had an enrollment of three pupils, all Presentation nuns.⁶

In 1902 Father Haire described St. Luke's Hospital in an article for the parish's official yearbook:

It possesses all advantages of gas and city water. The Hospital [sic] is a three story building and basement, substantially built of brick and . . . Kesota [sic] stone. The floors . . . are doubled, with a layer of heavy felt to guard against transmission of noise. On the third floor are operating and sterilizing rooms, the boiler and ventilating systems are perfect. Everything pertaining to the comfort and convenience of the patient has been considered; bath and toilet rooms, electric call bells, telephone and elevator, etc. . . .

The Hospital [sic] has no medical or surgical staff, it is open to all reputable physicians who may desire to have their patients treated in the hospital. Should patients come who are not recommended by any physician they must abide by the decision of the Board of Directors.

Patients are admitted irrespective of religious belief and all are assured the same treatment without regard to creed or color. All clergymen have free access at all times to patients of their denominations . . .

Accommodations in the Hospital [sic] to either medical or surgical patients range from \$6.00 to \$12.00 per week, according to location of the room.⁷

Once the hospital opened, its major thrust during its first forty years concerned expansion of facilities and services. The original building proved inadequate by 1908 so the sisters built a new seventy-five bed structure. More wings were added in 1912, 1919, and 1928 as Aberdeen grew in population and emerged as a regional railroad center with twenty-four passenger trains arriving daily.⁸ The flu epidemic of 1918-1919, which spread throughout the entire country, added problems for the sisters as did outbreaks of typhoid, smallpox, and other forms of influenza. As nursing services and qualifications of the medical staff improved, the American Medical Association granted St. Luke's accreditation in 1924,⁹ and community involvement increased the

following year with the founding of an auxiliary association, a group headed by physicians' wives concerned with fund-raising duties to provide care for indigent patients.¹⁰

In 1940 the Presentation Sisters again needed more room at St. Luke's. Mother Raphael McCarthy, superior of the order since 1933, realized that new construction would severely weaken the community's financial status so she decided to purchase an already existing facility. One major problem needed to be solved before the building could be used: as it was located more than ten blocks away, she had to find a way to move it closer to St. Luke's. The four and one-half story brick and concrete structure earlier had served as a community hospital so little remodeling would have to be undertaken if the move could be accomplished without major damage. In September of 1940, amid local scepticism about her decision, Mother Raphael authorized moving the building. Many believed that the 5,000 ton structure could not be transported without crumbling, but the transfer was accomplished with damage limited only to one cracked window. The new facility had a capacity of eighty beds, and the sisters furnished it as a complete medical unit located north across the street from the main hospital building. The two were connected by a tunnel until 1947 when a covered crosswalk was completed. The medical annex, as the new building was called, would provide much-needed space during the Second World War.¹¹

After their initial success at establishing St. Luke's Hospital in 1901, the Presentation Sisters became involved in the construction and operation of three more hospitals within the next ten years. By 1911 they had founded facilities at Mitchell, South Dakota; Miles City, Montana; and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Each institution owed its

origins to the growing recognition the sisters received and the need for health care facilities in the no longer frontier-like environment of South Dakota and Montana.

In 1906 a group of citizens from Mitchell appealed to Mother Joseph for help in establishing a hospital there. Familiar with the Presentation Sisters because a group of them staffed Notre Dame Academy in Mitchell, the community was further encouraged about activity in health care because of the nuns' success in establishing St. Luke's Hospital only a few years before. As Mitchell had no hospital, physicians had to travel long distances to farms and small towns in the region. They performed surgery on kitchen tables or in their offices, often receiving food as payment for their services. A desire to improve medical care and to attract better doctors led Dr. Byron A. Bobb of Mitchell to contact the Presentation Sisters.¹²

Once Mother Joseph agreed to take on the responsibilities of another hospital, money had to be raised for construction of a facility. A citizens' advisory group sold bonds to contribute to the cost, and the sisters borrowed \$20,000. Local businessmen donated several lots in the eastern part of the city on which the four-story building was constructed. The new hospital opened in November, 1906, with a capacity of thirty beds. Townspeople contributed linens, towels, and small amounts of money to be used in purchasing furnishings. Five sisters comprised the first staff of the hospital, named after St. Joseph, and they opened a school of nursing during the first year of operation. The hospital's first water supply proved unusable because of a high degree of rust so the furnace man prepared a soft water system from steam in the boiler room. When water was sometimes scarce,

the nuns bought barrels full from a farm outside Mitchell. The hospital had a greenhouse, chicken house, and garden so that patients could be served fresh food, and the young sisters worked in the garden and gathered eggs as a part of their daily routine.¹³

St. Joseph Hospital, like St. Luke's, experienced steady growth, from 100 patients admitted in 1907 to more than 1,000 patients in 1921. A new structure was needed even though a second facility, Methodist Hospital, had been built in Mitchell in 1917. The flu epidemic of 1918-1919 had caused a heavy increase in patients and thus served to emphasize the city's growing need for improved health care centers.¹⁴ The driving force behind construction of a new St. Joseph Hospital was Dr. William A. Delaney. The Presentation Sisters had recruited Delaney in 1910 because Mitchell had no Catholic physicians to serve its growing Catholic population.¹⁵ Delaney received enthusiastic support from the nuns he worked with, and he and Father John Brady of Holy Family Parish organized a fund-drive to raise money so the Presentation Order could pay off its old debt and begin construction of a new hospital. The sisters undertook another loan, this one for \$225,000, and a Catholic women's group raised more than \$4,000 to pay for new furnishings.¹⁶

An article in the Mitchell Daily Republic described the new building which was completed in September, 1922. The structure, completely fireproof and soundproof, contained four stories and a basement which housed the kitchen, classrooms, and two isolation rooms. The first floor held offices, a lobby, several private rooms, a diet kitchen, and sun parlors. The second floor had private and semi-private rooms, while the third floor was devoted to the nursery and obstetric departments. The top floor was occupied by operating and anesthetizing rooms

and x-ray, bacteriology, and pathology laboratories. Special features included modern hospital beds, a switchboard, telephones in private rooms, an electric elevator, and fireproof stairways. The sisters planned to use the old hospital as a nurses' residence.¹⁷

Throughout the next two decades St. Joseph Hospital expanded and developed. In 1932 the hospital had received approval from the American College of Surgeons and gained membership in the American Hospital Association. Additions of a new chapel, classrooms, and an isolation unit were completed five years later.¹⁸ Under the ownership of the Presentation Sisters, the hospital was run by a sister-administrator. She held the highest authority and worked closely with the physicians who used the hospital. Stormy relationships resulted occasionally from conflicts over procedure, but the sisters always enjoyed a high rate of cooperation from their medical staff because both groups at all times had the welfare of the patients in mind. The sister-administrator devoted all of her time to the hospital, even on Sundays and holidays when, one former administrator remembered, she visited the critically ill patients and took care of office emergencies.¹⁹

The Presentation Order accepted another hospital in 1910 when it agreed to build a Catholic facility in Miles City, Montana. A year earlier two missionary priests from eastern South Dakota on vacation in Montana met Father John O'Carroll of Miles City who had been trying to find a community of nuns to build a hospital in his parish. They told Father O'Carroll of the Presentation Sisters' success in establishing St. Luke's and St. Joseph hospitals so he made a trip to Aberdeen and spoke with Mother Joseph in hopes of persuading her to construct a third facility. At about the same time, officials of the

Milwaukee Railroad Company became concerned that the existing hospital in Miles City was insufficient for the large railroad center that the town was becoming. Dr. A. I. Bouffleur, a surgeon for the railroad company, also took a delegation to Aberdeen to speak with Mother Joseph. The mother superior agreed to build a hospital at Miles City, thus in August, 1910, the Commissioners of Custer County, Montana, transferred management of the county hospital to the Presentation Sisters, and the order purchased land on which to build a new facility.²⁰

The Bishop of Great Falls welcomed the order's decision to build a hospital in a different diocese because Miles City served a large area which badly needed a good health care operation. Though Miles City was located several hundred miles west of Aberdeen, both towns were served by the Milwaukee railroad so communication and transportation would not be as difficult as one might assume. The sisters found loyalty and encouragement from the citizens of the town, and physicians who used the hospital rated it as high as many in metropolitan areas.²¹ The new hospital, constructed in 1910 and called Holy Rosary, was leased for several years by the order because county bonds had been sold to finance construction. In 1919 the Presentation Sisters became proprietors of the hospital after purchasing it from the county for \$25,000, and the facility gained recognition from the American College of Surgeons the same year.²²

After a decade of expansion the hospital entered several trying years as the depression hit Montana and brought grave worries. Drought and crop failure ruined many Montana ranchers who were forced to ship their cattle and sheep to other states for feed. Collections by the sisters fell off completely, and the hospital's deficit grew

alarminglly. Contemplating selling the hospital, the nuns contacted Bishop Edwin O'Hara of Great Falls for permission to do so. Though he could give no financial assistance, he did encourage the sisters to try to keep the hospital. Not until 1939 did the facility's status improve and the sisters begin to pay interest due on the mortgage, but financial troubles would plague the hospital during future years. As World War II raged, Holy Rosary would be in great demand, and problems would be compounded by a scarcity of doctors and nurses. Crowded conditions could not be alleviated until delayed construction plans could be put into effect after the war.²³

The last health care center which the Presentation Sisters founded was McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls. In 1911 the sisters received a request from Bishop O'Gorman to help in planning a new hospital for this city. Construction had been made possible by a bequest of \$25,000 in trust from the will of Helen McKennan, stipulated for

. . . construction and equipment of a public hospital within the city limits of . . . Sioux Falls . . . according to such plans as may be adopted by them [trustees] and their successors . . . The hospital shall be open to all regular and duly licensed and practicing physicians within the city . . . all [sic] of the revenue and income derived from the management of said hospital . . . shall be used for payment of expenses of conducting said hospital . . . and for no other purpose whatever.²⁴

Mrs. McKennan further asserted that charity patients should be admitted and that the hospital could receive gifts of money and property.²⁵ The order borrowed \$100,000 more in order to complete construction of a forty-five bed facility which opened in December, 1911. Mrs. McKennan's trustees had approached the bishop and he had recommended the Presentation Sisters. Controlling interest in the hospital would be vested in a newly formed corporation, McKennan Hospital, Inc.,

comprised of trustees of the will, Mother Joseph, and Dr. Edwin Perkins.²⁶

Like the other three hospitals under the care of the Presentation Order, McKennan experienced steady growth in its early years. Because Sioux Falls was the largest city in South Dakota, it was particularly hard hit by the flu epidemic of 1918-1919. Crowded conditions dramatized the need for an enlarged hospital as records showed that 173 cases of the flu were reported.²⁷ The greatest number of stricken people stayed home as entire families often fell ill. The strongest helped the weakest through the crisis, and a high rate of death severely taxed mortuary facilities in Sioux Falls. Symptoms struck the patients' respiratory systems, and death often occurred by the third or fourth day. Rainy, cold weather contributed to the spread of the epidemic as it hit the city in late summer, 1918, and lasted until March the following year. Further problems took place because many local doctors were still in military service due to World War I and thus were unable to return home to minister to the sick. The hospital became so crowded that beds were set up in corridors and all other areas where space was available.²⁸

During the 1920s and 1930s several changes took place. The hospital received two major additions and renovations so that bed capacity reached 185 by the early years of World War II. A reorganization of the structure of the corporation occurred because it had become difficult for the small group of trustees to borrow money for expansion. The Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company agreed to lend a sum to the hospital through the Presentation Order because it already owned several other hospitals and thus was financially qualified to assume a

large loan. Consequently, a new corporation, Presentation Sisters, Inc., was formed to assume full responsibility for operating the hospital. During the depression it became almost impossible to make payments on the huge debt the sisters had acquired along with title to the hospital, and they were forced to ask for a reduction in interest rates from officers of the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company. The lender graciously granted the reduction.²⁹

During World War II all four hospitals which the Presentation Sisters owned experienced many of the same problems. Facilities became overcrowded, but plans for expansion had to be postponed until after the emergency. The supply of doctors and nurses decreased drastically as young men and women entered military service. The sisters tried two solutions to counteract the shortage of medical personnel. First, in order to increase the supply of nurses, the Presentation hospitals began participation in the United States Cadet Nurse Corps program. Schools of nursing at all four institutions were centralized to ensure that the hospitals could participate. The plan provided for full scholarships awarded to young women who desired to become nurses in return for their promise to be available for military or other federal service for the duration of the war.³⁰

The second solution was participation in the American Red Cross Gray Ladies and Nurses' Aides. Members of the first group, many of whom earlier had been trained as nurses, left their duties as full-time homemakers to offer their services to the hospitals. They visited patients, wrote letters for them, or read to them. The Nurses' Aides did many housekeeping and nonprofessional chores that student nurses previously had done, and their help proved so valuable that, once the

war was over, many hospitals continued to train nurses' aides and then paid them a regular salary to do the routine work that Red Cross volunteers had done so well.³¹

Holy Rosary Hospital at Miles City was further involved in war-related activity because of its proximity to a prisoner of war camp. German soldiers imprisoned at the Custer County fairgrounds worked in the beet fields nearby. The hospital provided medical care and supplies for the prisoners, but the staff had little contact with the camp except in case of an emergency. One sister remembered such an incident. The POWs were transported to the fields by truck, and one morning a truck swerved off the road and overturned, injuring more than twenty prisoners. Many of those injured fell down a forty-foot embankment and, hurt badly, had to be rushed to the hospital for treatment. The nun added that the citizens of Miles City treated the POWs with kindness and that after the war several of them returned to the town for visits.³²

Domestic emergencies took place near Miles City that demanded all of the hospital's resources. Because the town was a railroad center, the sisters had to be prepared for possible train wrecks. One disastrous accident had taken place in 1938 during a rain storm that washed away part of a railroad track. Of 132 survivors, seventy-seven had to be hospitalized. The other accident which occurred in 1943 proved even more taxing to the hospital because more than 900 passengers had to be examined and treated. All available space was occupied with beds, and volunteers from the city helped the nuns to process the patients, some of whom had to be treated in chairs because there were not enough beds. More than seventy passengers were seriously hurt, and 150 received

treatment for minor injuries. The staff proved well prepared for the emergency due to civil defense training taken at the hospital.³³

Soon after the war ended the nation experienced an epidemic of poliomyelitis which struck the area around Aberdeen particularly hard. St. Luke's Hospital was one of the few midwestern hospitals to be supplied with the latest methods and equipment. As a member of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, the hospital possessed polio emergency quarters and was able to solicit aid from the Red Cross and other volunteer associations. In 1946 more than 100 patients received treatment for polio, and most of them recovered completely. The hospital contained an iron lung, hydromassage tanks, and pack heaters to assist in treatment.³⁴

Epidemic conditions continued for several years, and in 1948 the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis selected St. Luke's as a site for a permanent polio clinic. Local doctors studied a course in polio treatment, and Mother Raphael, superior of the Presentation Sisters during the epidemic, worked with the local college, Northern State Teachers' College, to arrange a study schedule for patients so they could keep up their educational work. A specialist from Denver, Dr. I. E. Hendryson, organized a therapeutic clinic which he visited monthly to work with therapists studying methods for controlling the epidemic and treating victims.³⁵

Another important event of the late 1940s which had great impact on all four Presentation hospitals was the passage of Public Law 380, an amendment to the Hospital Survey and Construction Act (commonly known as the Hill-Burton Amendment). In 1945 Congress had passed legislation which made federal funds available for the construction of

hospitals, but the amount had proved insufficient because only 10 percent of needed facilities had been completed before the original five-year program ran its course. A 30 to 40 percent increase in construction costs also had helped to make the law obsolete. Thus, in 1949 the amendment was passed, allowing extension of the program to June, 1955, and, more significantly, providing for an increase in the federal share in cost of construction. The government raised its limit from 33 1/3 percent to approximately 50 percent. The result of this increase was that many non-profit and county hospitals which could not afford the earlier federal subsidy of only one-third of the cost of construction now found the 50 percent level within their reach. The Presentation Sisters noted the passage of the amendment with interest.³⁶

The intent of the amendment was to provide "grants-in-aid for construction of hospital facilities, help local communities to obtain facilities fundamental not only to the provision of necessary . . . care but also to the development of local health programs generally."³⁷ Legislators also hoped to encourage regional coordination of large and small hospitals to provide various services--interns, radiology, consultation specialists, administrative programs--which would not be available to most small hospitals.³⁸ The amendment further instructed the Surgeon General to authorize grants-in-aid for research made in the interest of coordinating regional hospital systems.³⁹ The measure, extended and expanded several times in the 1950s and 1960s, made federal funds more readily available to the Presentation Sisters than they had been in the past.⁴⁰

In the ten years before the Presentation Sisters' diamond jubilee in 1961, their hospitals experienced a great deal of expansion and

development of services. Funds for construction came from several sources while existing programs were improved and new ones added. The advances in medicine developed during World War II found their way into hospitals throughout the country, and health care became a much more scientific procedure than in the past.⁴¹ The sisters, nevertheless, maintained their goal of complete patient care as illustrated by the following objectives of McKennan Hospital: to glorify God by ministering to the physical, spiritual, mental, and social needs of the sick and dying; to serve all creeds and races; to assist in the promotion of health education in the community; to strive to give individual quality care; and to assist in the rehabilitation of patient and family.⁴²

Finance remained a major consideration of the hospitals. In the mid-1950s three of the Presentation hospitals received gifts that enabled them to continue expansion from the Ford Foundation. From a \$200,000,000 award given to 3,550 private hospitals, St. Luke's, St. Joseph, and McKennan received grants from \$64,000 to \$97,000.⁴³ Holy Rosary was experiencing financial difficulties, and its future was then uncertain. A building debt, incurred after World War II when delays in construction and increased costs contributed to expenses, had accumulated to a \$65,000 deficit by 1958. Local citizens organized a fund-drive in which they raised \$70,000 to pay the debt and put the hospital on a more secure footing than it had been since the depression.⁴⁴

An addition to McKennan in 1955 was paid for through a variety of sources, and this procedure exemplified the means the sisters used to finance construction at all four hospitals. Increased costs and demand for services had made it necessary for the order to apply for

federal funds to assist in building programs. Federal money came to more than \$400,000, a mortgage loan totaled \$550,000, pledges from a local fund-drive added \$380,000, and the Ford Foundation contributed \$97,000. A Hill-Burton grant of \$125,000 from government sources to be matched by hospital funds, was included in the total. The grant-in-aid was allowed because a survey had shown that in Sioux Falls a shortage of hospital beds existed as well as a need for improved nurses' training facilities.⁴⁵

Besides nurses' training schools, all four Presentation hospitals developed other technical schools for health care. As early as 1947 McKennan had been approved by the American Medical Association for training interns in general practice. The interns studied surgery, orthopedics, obstetrics and gynecology, urology, pediatrics, radiology, and pathology on a rotating system.⁴⁶ Other training programs instituted in the hospitals were for x-ray technicians, medical technologists, laboratory technicians, and physical therapists.⁴⁷ The courses usually were affiliated with the Presentation nursing schools, Presentation Junior College, or a four-year institution. For example, the McKennan School of Medical Technology was affiliated with the University of South Dakota and offered a twelve-month internship after sixty semester hours of college credit had been earned.⁴⁸ The establishment of medical technical schools in their hospitals assured the sisters of a labor supply for their facilities because most students were likely to settle in the region where they received training.⁴⁹

As the Presentation Sisters neared celebration of their diamond jubilee, they could look with great pride at their achievements in health care. They had answered a cry for help during an epidemic more

than sixty years before and had become the owners of four hospitals in South Dakota and Montana. Because they bowed to no superior authority such as a parish pastor, they were forced to assume a position of leadership in their hospitals. Their facilities grew steadily over the years, providing the most modern equipment and attention available. Health care grew in complexity as scientific discoveries and technological advancements made medicine a more involved and costly undertaking in 1960 than it had been in 1900. The future of the order's hospitals would inextricably be tied to the sisters' ability to keep pace with innovations and to find adequate sources of funds. Dealings with the federal government would become increasingly complicated with the passage of Medicare legislation in the mid-1960s, and medical/moral questions would arise over such issues as abortions and sterilization. The next sixteen years would be ones of continued growth and adaptation by the Presentation hospitals.

ENDNOTES

¹Aberdeen American News, June 17, 1956. The hospital, referred to as both Brown County Hospital and Good Samaritan Hospital, did reopen for a time in the early 1900s but again failed to achieve permanence.

²Aberdeen American News, October 14, 1951; J. T. Walsh, Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters (Dublin: M. H. Hill & Son, Ltd., 1959), p. 281.

³Aberdeen American News, November 12, 1939; Walsh, Nano Nagle, p. 281; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 46.

⁴Final approval of the constitution came from Pope Pius XII in 1946. See Walsh, Nano Nagle, p. 281.

⁵Collection of Personal Interviews, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota; Aberdeen American News, June 17, 1956; Jubilee Data, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota.

⁶Presentation School of Nursing Bulletin, 1960-62 (n.d.), p. 8.

⁷Official Yearbook of Sacred Heart Catholic Church (Aberdeen: Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 1902), p. 22.

⁸Aberdeen American News, Scrapbook, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota.

⁹Ibid.; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 46.

¹⁰Jubilee Data, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, p. 15.

¹¹Ibid.; Aberdeen American News, June 17, 1956, Scrapbook; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 32.

¹²"History of St. Joseph Hospital," Manuscript, Office, St. Joseph Hospital, Mitchell, South Dakota, p. 1.

¹³Ibid., p. 2; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 38; "Sister Lelia Berford's Review of History of St. Joseph Hospital," Office, St. Joseph Hospital, Mitchell, South Dakota.

¹⁴"History of St. Joseph Hospital," pp. 3-4.

- 15 Interview with Dr. W. A. Delaney, June 6, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.
- 16 "History of St. Joseph Hospital," p. 4.
- 17 Daily Republic (Mitchell, South Dakota), September 23, 1922.
- 18 Jubilee Data; "History of St. Joseph Hospital," p. 4.
- 19 Interview with Dr. W. A. Delaney; "Letter from Sister Monica to Mrs. Maxine Horman," Office, St. Joseph Hospital, Mitchell, South Dakota.
- 20 Jubilee Data (Holy Rosary manuscript), p. 2; Miles City Star, Scrapbook, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota.
- 21 Jubilee Data (Holy Rosary manuscript), p. 1; Miles City Star, Scrapbook.
- 22 Jubilee Data (Holy Rosary manuscript), p. 3.
- 23 Diamond Jubilee Book, pp. 39, 40; Jubilee Data (Holy Rosary manuscript), pp. 1, 5, 6.
- 24 Copy of Helen McKennan Will, Heritage Room, McKennan Hospital, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Dolores Harrington, A Woman's Will . . . A Sister's Way, The McKennan Hospital Story, 1911-1961 (Sioux Falls: McKennan Hospital, 1961), pp. 5-10; Jubilee Data (McKenna manuscript), p. 1.
- 27 Harrington, A Woman's Will, p. 23. The total would have been higher if those cases listed as pneumonia had been included in the flu count.
- 28 Ibid., pp. 29, 34.
- 29 Jubilee Data (McKenna manuscript), p. 1; Harrington, A Woman's Will, pp. 30, 31.
- 30 Harrington, A Woman's Will, p. 35; Jubilee Data (Holy Rosary manuscript), p. 6.
- 31 Harrington, A Woman's Will, p. 60; Aberdeen American News, June 17, 1956.
- 32 Interview with Sister Irene Talbot, June 7, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

- ³³ Jubilee Data (Holy Rosary manuscript), p. 7; Interview with Sister Irene Talbot; Interview with Sister Fanahan Casey, June 20, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.
- ³⁴ Jubilee Data (St. Luke's manuscript), p. 10; Aberdeen American News, June 17, 1956.
- ³⁵ Ibid.; Jubilee Data (St. Luke's manuscript), pp. 13, 14.
- ³⁶ United States Code, Congressional Service, 81st Congress, 1st Session, 1949 (Washington, DC: West Publishing Co. & Edward Thompson Co., 1949), pp. 2192, 2198; U.S. Statutes At Large, 81st Congress, 1949, Vol. 63, part 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), p. 898.
- ³⁷ United States Code, p. 2192.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 2199.
- ³⁹ Ibid., p. 2201.
- ⁴⁰ Interview with Douglas Atkinson, July 12, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Jubilee Data (McKenna manuscript), p. 1.
- ⁴³ Sioux City (Iowa) Journal, December 13, 1955; Jubilee Data (St. Joseph manuscript); Aberdeen American News, June 17, 1956.
- ⁴⁴ Miles City Star (Scrapbook).
- ⁴⁵ Files of Newspaper Clippings, 1952-1960, Heritage Room, McKenna Hospital, Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Sioux Falls Argus-Leader, October 27, 1957.
- ⁴⁶ Sioux Falls Argus-Leader, October 12, 1948.
- ⁴⁷ Jubilee Data (St. Luke's manuscript), p. 13; St. Joe Happenings, August, 1976, p. 8; Files of Newspaper Clippings, 1952-1960.
- ⁴⁸ Files of Newspaper Clippings, 1952-1960.
- ⁴⁹ Interview with David Rykhus, June 2, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

CHAPTER V

PRESENTATION COLLEGE, 1951-1976

From the beginning of their settlement in South Dakota, the Presentation Sisters were greatly concerned about the higher education of their members. The early mother superiors had a high regard for preparing new candidates to teach in the parochial schools the order staffed, and as the years passed they emphasized additional education to encourage nuns to earn teaching certificates and college degrees. Thus Presentation Academy evolved into a school solely for new members of the order dedicated to training them as teachers.¹

This desire to improve their education prompted the Presentation Sisters to become involved in several higher education ventures, first at Notre Dame Academy in Mitchell and then at their own junior college in Aberdeen. Notre Dame closed in 1951, and the order immediately planned to continue the work of the school at their motherhouse. That same fall the order enrolled the first class at the newly established Presentation Junior College. Operating a successful college proved difficult, and from the beginning PJC underwent many changes as it took its place in the ranks of the nation-wide junior college movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

When Monsignor John Brady originally had opened the junior college division of Notre Dame Academy in 1922, the Presentation Sisters had served both as faculty and students. The order sent its best qualified

teachers to staff the institution, and many new members earned teaching certificates or business diplomas at Notre Dame. Through its years of operation the college offered several degree programs. Monsignor Brady and the sister-teachers developed a one-year certificate program for rural school teachers, offered the state general certificate for teachers, supported a two-year arts and sciences curriculum in preparation for the junior and senior years at the University of South Dakota, operated a two-year secretarial program, and scheduled a one-year pre-nursing course. Summer sessions allowed teachers the opportunity to upgrade their degrees, and the sisters frequently took advantage of this opportunity.²

In the years after World War II, the future of Notre Dame Junior College became questionable. The area population increased rapidly as young couples who had postponed having children until after the war started their families; Notre Dame's elementary and secondary divisions became crowded with students. As the size of classes increased, the junior college became less important and was relegated to the top floor of the building. Monsignor Brady considered expansion of the entire educational facility, but the parish was too poor to undertake the cost of building more rooms both for the school and the junior college. Moreover, many parishioners believed that any added classrooms should be reserved for use in the elementary grades where their children would benefit.³

Another problem concerned accreditation of the junior college. Those colleges in South Dakota which the North Central Association had not evaluated came under the jurisdiction of the University of South Dakota. The university's administrators established a committee to

visit the colleges, Notre Dame Junior College among them, and look at facilities, budgets, faculties, and library holdings. The committee then decided whether the university would grant the institutions temporary accreditation. On a visit to Mitchell in the late 1940s, committee members agreed that facilities were too crowded and that not enough faculty members were available to maintain accreditation. They recommended that the college be closed. Once he realized that Notre Dame would lose its accreditation, Monsignor Brady finally faced the declining enrollment problem. Those students still entering the college would be reluctant to remain and earn junior college credits that would not transfer to four-year institutions or study for teaching certificates from a college which was not accredited.⁴

Rather than close the college, Monsignor Brady and the Presentation Sisters devised a solution that involved the order in developing its own institution. Mother Viator Burns, superior of the community since 1946, agreed to allow the junior college to transfer its location from Mitchell to Aberdeen. The school would be operation in the motherhouse near St. Luke's Hospital for a short while, but because the sisters had purchased land north of the city and planned to build a new convent there, they decided to include facilities for the junior college in their construction plans.⁵ Once this course of action was agreed upon, Notre Dame Junior College was closed in May, 1951. In twenty-nine years of operation 1,376 persons had graduated as teachers or secretaries.⁶

Presentation Junior College opened its doors in the Fall of 1951. Enrollment exceeded 150 students, 127 of whom were part-time, and the college was housed in the convent, the hospital, and the parochial

school on the east side of the city. Those students who were not nuns boarded at private homes as no dormitories existed. The curriculum included three academic programs: a junior college diploma, the state general certificate, and the first grade certificate. Many of the part-time students were nursing pupils enrolled in nurses' training at the four Presentation hospitals in South Dakota and Montana. They attended PJC for non-nursing courses in sociology, psychology and religion.⁷

Curriculum development and accreditation decisions filled the school's early years in Aberdeen. Deciding to continue stressing teacher training and commercial courses as Notre Dame Junior College had done, the sisters also saw mutual benefit for the nursing schools and the junior college in developing pre-clinical courses for nursing students from the order's hospitals. Accreditation from the University of South Dakota could not be sought until the first class had finished completion of its freshman and sophomore years at PJC, and therefore it was 1953 before the college administration could apply to the university's accrediting committee. Faculty and administrators from the University of South Dakota toured the college every two years therefore to ensure that standards were being maintained and that recommendations were being followed. Because university requirements were similar to those of the North Central Association, compliance with the committee's guidelines would most likely ensure success when the time came to apply for membership in the NCA. One committee member supervised both the closing of Notre Dame Junior College and the opening of PJC. He commented that the sisters in Mitchell had been cooperative because they were eager to begin a college in Aberdeen, and he stressed that

his committee members and the faculties they investigated maintained cordial relations as the sisters willingly took recommendations in order to improve the quality of their institution.⁸

The early years of Presentation Junior College's existence were marked with difficulties due to space shortages and the work involved in transferring records from Mitchell to Aberdeen. Sister Anna Marie Weinreis, who was named dean of the college in 1953, remembered that an old wing of the convent in Aberdeen housed most of the school, including the first student dormitory facilities. There was very little office space, and few supplies were available, but in the interests of maintaining continuity between the old and new colleges, it was necessary to transfer copies of all student records. Several nuns were assigned the task of copying the grades from nearly 1,400 transcripts so that the new facility would have complete files and so that alumnae from Notre Dame could consider PJC their alma mater. During her seventeen years as dean, Sister Anna Marie saw many changes as the college gradually lost its temporary atmosphere and became a permanent addition to the list of Presentation areas of influence.⁹

In 1954 Presentation Junior College received a permanent home when the order moved to a new building on the north side of Aberdeen where the sisters had purchased 100 acres of land in the mid-1940s. Superiors Mother Raphael McCarthy and Mother Viator Burns took great care in planning construction of the new motherhouse and college. More than \$200,000 was spent before the single-winged structure was completed. Besides classrooms, it housed the convent, a cafeteria, a recreation room, a bookstore, an auditorium, a chapel, a library, a student lounge, and a dormitory. Designed for future expansion, the

new building allowed for growth in curriculum, especially in the sciences because excellent laboratory facilities had been included. This enabled students from the Presentation nursing schools to complete all pre-clinical classes at the college instead of taking science courses at NSTC as they had done in the past.¹⁰

Throughout the rest of the decade Presentation Junior College grew steadily while it gained the support of townspeople, developed traditions, and moved into allied health education programs. A group of Aberdeen women organized the Presentation Auxiliary for the purpose of promoting the college. They held fund-drives and conducted publicity campaigns to finance a school newspaper and to inform local people of the activities taking place at PJC. Among their projects, they held bridge luncheons, sponsored movies, and presented a fall festival. In 1958 students organized a homecoming celebration that commemorated the Presentation Sisters' Irish origins. They chose green and yellow as school colors and selected a leprechaun as their mascot.¹¹ In the same year the administration expanded the curriculum to include a course in medical technology, utilizing many of the pre-clinical courses that nursing students attended along with the facilities of St. Luke's Hospital for internship experience.¹² By September, 1960, when the college calendar was switched from three quarters to two semesters, enrollment had reached 212. Students included forty-seven in teacher training, twenty-nine in general education, twenty-one in secretarial courses, six in medical technology, and seventy-two in the pre-clinical nursing program.¹³

From 1960 to 1965 many changes occurred at Presentation Junior College. Curriculum emphasis gradually shifted from liberal arts and

teaching to technical and allied health care preparation. Because of the connection between the college and the order's nurses' training program this shift was unavoidable, but traditional sisters believed that the community's first emphasis should be teaching because that was the accepted work of Presentation Sisters throughout the world. Nevertheless a medical secretary course was developed in the business department, and plans were already being formed for reorganizing the nursing curriculum from a diploma to an associate degree program.¹⁴

Growing enrollment called for expansion of facilities and administrative changes so a northeast wing was completed in 1963. This addition enabled the sisters to triple the size of the library, enlarge the cafeteria, and increase dormitory space. A health center and several recreation areas were included, as well as a laboratory for the study of foreign languages. Adult education offerings were added to the college program in 1963, and these evening classes contributed to the growth of a strong bond between the townspeople and the college. Since its founding PJC had been presided over by the mother superior of the order. As the duties of running both the college and the community of sisters became increasingly complex, a full-time position of president of the college was created in 1964 to allow the mother superior more time for her primary responsibility to the order.¹⁵

Sr. Alicia Dunphy became the first president of the college. She remembered her early years as difficult because she had little experience to fall back on and felt like she "was starting from scratch."¹⁶ She tried to keep control of student discipline but at the same time allow pupils more of a voice in running the college than in the past by starting a student government association.¹⁷ In 1965

the word "junior" was dropped from the name of the institution, but Presentation College remained fully committed to the concept of two-year higher education.¹⁸

As Presentation College grew in enrollment, facilities, and course offerings, administrators began preparing to apply for accreditation from the North Central Association. Recommendations from the USD accrediting team had been followed and a self-study had been conducted from 1962-1964. The nuns submitted their report, based on the self-study, in July, 1964, but they were turned down for immediate accreditation and advised to apply for candidacy as a preliminary step to full membership. The association suggested that the administrators obtain a consultant to help in identifying weaknesses and planning for the future.¹⁹ Presentation College received NCA membership in 1971 as the board of directors, administration, and faculty corrected faults in organization, space utilization, and curriculum.²⁰

In the mid-1960s changing attitudes among students and a growing recognition by professionals that many fields needed technicians and paraprofessionals to provide specialized services contributed to the growth of junior college programs throughout the nation. Presentation College benefited from this trend. Many young people sought preparation for two-year technical degrees because of the excellent employment opportunities for graduates. Because the Presentation Sisters and Presentation College were so closely affiliated with St. Luke's Hospital and other medical facilities in Aberdeen, the college found itself in a unique position to offer two-year career programs in the health services. Not only nursing, but also dietetic technician, radiologic technician, laboratory technician, and administrator of

health care facilities associate degrees were made available.²¹

Along with the development of allied health programs, the sisters continued to strengthen the college's education and business offerings. They emphasized curriculum revisions, and, as state teacher certification requirements increased, PC discontinued the one and two-year certification programs. By 1969 they were replaced by two-year courses which led to transfer to four-year colleges in elementary and secondary education and by two-year preparation programs in child development technician and instructional aid associate degrees. The business curriculum was expanded to offer specialized one and two-year secretarial and administrative courses.²²

Another addition to the college, completed in 1969, allowed for expansion of the nursing program. A new, specially equipped nursing education building was funded in part by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare under the Nurse Training Act. Connected to the main building by a tunnel, the structure contained class and seminar rooms, offices, a lecture hall, and an audio-tutorial laboratory. This facility provided individual study carrels equipped with tape recorders, simulated hospital and nursing home settings, and audio-visual equipment. Renovations to the main college building included additional seminar rooms and a new residence area for fifty female students. The college officially had become co-educational in 1968, and male students lived in off-campus housing. The ratio of men to women leveled off at approximately one to two. Once the nursing facility was completed, the college was able to accept 100 nursing students per year. Sister Eleanor Joyce, college registrar since 1973, commented that if space permitted, the school could enroll 150

because the demand for nurses in northern South Dakota far exceeded the supply.²³

In the 1970s Presentation College experienced a growth in community relations, further changes in curriculum, and stabilization in enrollment. An advisory board (founded in 1966) with lay members from the Aberdeen area continued to serve as a liaison between the college and the townspeople, advised the administration in public relations, and assisted in recruitment and planning efforts. A tremendous growth in adult education programs further involved community members. Refresher courses for nursing, home health classes, and laboratory technician programs supplemented pre- and post-natal care series, and the sisters made areas of the college available to local groups needing facilities for workshops. Cooperation with the adult education department at Northern State College included participation in a higher education center at Eagle Butte on the Cheyenne River Reservation in western South Dakota under the guidelines of Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965. The sisters began planning a nursing program on the reservation as a satellite of PC's own nursing curriculum.²⁴

Early efforts in adult education paved the way for formation of the college's Office of Community Services, founded in 1972. This department supervised efforts to become more involved in the community of Aberdeen, to serve local educational needs, and to provide solutions to economic, cultural, and civic problems not met by formal collegiate training. The office developed four basic kinds of service: special programs coordinated by the college, contractual training agreements with other agencies, retraining or refresher courses, and use of facilities for workshops and meetings. During its first year of

operation the Community Services department coordinated the participation of more than 3,000 local people in programs it sponsored or directed. By 1975 the number exceeded 3,500 people in seventy-eight different workshops, training series, and conferences. All programs were offered at the lowest possible cost or free of charge, and much of the department members' time went to seeking sources of funds to continue expanding offerings. Projections for the future indicated growth for the office.²⁵

The conflict between liberal arts and technical training at Presentation College continued as administrators attempted to provide practical programs for the needs of the region and at the same time show students the value of education in the humanities. One solution appeared in the development of a general education core of classes required for all students. This inter-disciplinary program, which included courses in sociology, ethics, history, and literature, was developed by Sister Marie Patrice Moriarty as part of the plan of study for her doctorate in education. She recognized both the need for a person to learn more than technical skills and the reality of preparing students to perform well at jobs which were available.²⁶

One important consideration for the future of the liberal arts at Presentation College, despite declining interest as students leaned toward technical preparation instead of courses in humanities, led to the development of a new program. After hiring a lay person from Aberdeen to conduct the classes, the sisters offered an associate degree in dance and ballet. A well equipped practice room was prepared, and early response from the townspeople was enthusiastic as twenty-four students had enrolled by 1976.²⁷

Presentation College had matured into a stable, responsible institution as 1976 approached. Enrollment had climbed steadily from 150 in 1951 to more than 350 in twenty-five years. Tuition costs had increased from \$100 per semester to \$600 (\$50 per credit for part-time students) during the same time. Faculty members numbered fifty full- and part-time employees, of whom twenty-three were nuns, the rest lay teachers. Thus the cost of faculty salaries increased as the percentage of sisters on the faculty declined. To provide funding for future expenses the college joined the South Dakota Association of Private Colleges and the Foundation of Private Colleges in which member institutions shared fund-raising techniques, grant application procedures, and public relations programs.²⁸

As the number of candidates for the Presentation Sisters declined, and along with it a source of students for the college, the nuns had developed a new thrust for the institution they opened in 1951. First by taking on responsibility for nursing education and second by increasing its involvement in community needs, the college succeeded in ensuring a steady enrollment and thus an important place for itself in higher education in South Dakota. When PC celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1976, students could choose from sixteen associate degree, three certificate, and four university parallel programs.²⁹ The college stood as a monument to the sisters' great interest in education, their adaptability, and strength as they overcame obstacles and adjusted to the needs of the time.

ENDNOTES

¹ Collection of Personal Interviews, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota.

² Jubilee Data (Notre Dame historical data), p. 5; Diamond Jubilee Book (Aberdeen: Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1961), p. 31; Interview with Sister Eucharika Kelly, August 12, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

³ Jubilee Data (Notre Dame historical data), pp. 6, 19; Interview with Sister Alicia Dunphy, August 6, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Interview with Sister Eleanor McCall, June 23, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

⁴ Interview with Albert Harrington, June 14, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Interview with Sister Anna Marie Weinreis, August 10, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

⁵ Diamond Jubilee Book, pp. 58-59.

⁶ Mitchell Daily Republic, April 28, 1958.

⁷ Outline, Winter, 1975, p. 3. They attended Northern State Teachers' College in Aberdeen for science courses.

⁸ Aberdeen American News, May 2, 1976; Interview with Albert Harrington, June 14, 1978.

⁹ Interview with Sister Anna Marie Weinreis, August 10, 1976; Interview with Sister Eleanor McCall, June 23, 1978.

¹⁰ Aberdeen American News, May 2, 1976; Diamond Jubilee Book, pp. 58-59; Bishop's Bulletin, December, 1966; August, 1960. From 1954-1956 the sisters operated a high school for girls which shared facilities with the college.

¹¹ Outline, Winter, 1975, p. 3.

¹² Aberdeen American News, May 2, 1976.

¹³ Outline, Winter, 1975, p. 3.

¹⁴ Interview with Sister Alicia Dunphy, August 6, 1976; Interview with Sister Marie Patrice Moriarty, August 12, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Aberdeen American News, May 2, 1976.

¹⁵ Interview with Sister Mary Frances Dunn, August 5, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Outline, Winter, 1975, p. 4. A board of directors was created in 1964 as well.

¹⁶ Interview with Sister Alicia Dunphy, August 6, 1976.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Outline, Winter, 1975, p. 3; Interview with Sister Mary Frances Dunn, August 5, 1976.

¹⁹ Sister M. Cabrini De Donato, "A History of the Educational Work of the Presentation Sisters of Aberdeen, South Dakota" (unpub. M.A. thesis, Northern State College, 1966), p. 122.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 122, 119; Aberdeen American News, May 2, 1976; Outline, Winter, 1975, p. 4.

²¹ Aberdeen American News, May 2, 1976; Interview with Sister Mary Frances Dunn, August 5, 1976; Interview with Sister JoAnn Sturzl, August 5, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

²² Aberdeen American News, May 2, 1976; Interview with Sister Mary Frances Dunn, August 5, 1976.

²³ Interview with Sister Eleanor Joyce, August, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Aberdeen American News, May 2, 1976; Outline, Winter, 1975, p. 3; Interview with Sister Jo Ann Sturzl, August 5, 1976.

²⁴ Interview with Sister Mary Frances Dunn, August 5, 1976.

²⁵ Ibid.; Aberdeen American News, May 2, 1976.

²⁶ Interview with Sister Alicia Dunphy, August 6, 1976; Interview with Sister Marie Patrice Moriarty, August 12, 1976; Interview with Sister Eleanor Joyce, August, 1976.

²⁷ Interview with Sister Eleanor Joyce; Interview with Sister Mary Frances Dunn, August 5, 1976.

²⁸ Interview with Sister Mary Frances Dunn, August 5, 1976; Interview with Sister Eleanor Joyce, August, 1976; Outline, Winter, 1975, p. 4.

²⁹ Outline, Winter, 1975, p. 4; Interview with Sister Mary Frances Dunn, August 5, 1976.

CHAPTER VI

NURSING, 1901-1976

When the Presentation Sisters decided to extend their apostolate to include health care as well as education, it became necessary for them to develop schools of nursing at the four hospitals they operated. From 1901, when their first school opened at St. Luke's, until 1976, the tenth anniversary of Presentation College's offering the associate degree in nursing, the progress of nursing education among the Presentation Sisters paralleled the national development of the profession. New schools achieved recognition and regulation by the 1930s, when World War II intervened, and centralization resulted as schools attempted to provide more nurses. In the 1950s problems with expenses and accreditation led to decentralization, and the hospitals were forced to abandon nurse training efforts. Ultimately the sisters developed a college-related nursing degree program at Presentation College.

According to the constitution governing the activities of the Presentation Sisters, those members "assigned to the care of the sick shall have special and careful preparation for their duties so that their labors may insure both the temporal and the spiritual welfare of their patients."¹ Thus one of the first acts of the sisters when they opened hospitals was the establishment of schools of nursing to assure that each facility could have a well-trained staff. The school at St. Luke's opened in 1907, at St. Joseph in 1907, at Holy Rosary in 1911,

and at McKennan in 1912. Doctors taught most of the early classes which included anatomy and physiology, bacteriology, and medical diseases. The basic nursing course was handled by the nursing supervisors, who had no state guidelines to follow until 1917 when the first nursing practice act was passed in South Dakota.²

In the first decades of the twentieth century, nursing--one of the few non-domestic careers open to women--was more an art than a science. Drugs, therapy, and medication were limited, and the nurse had to rely on common sense rather than scientific knowledge. Careful hands, strength, and compassion characterized the well-trained nurse. She knew of few pain killing drugs to sooth her charges, and her chief duties included reading temperatures, giving baths, making beds, giving medicines, and fulfilling instructions for care given by the physician. Student nurses spent hours doing many domestic chores as they learned the techniques of patient care. They gave baths, poured drinking water, served meals, washed and wrapped dressings while senior students sometimes gave medications and prepared meals in the nurses' absence. The student nurses began their day at 7:00 a.m. and it lasted until their floor duty was over at 7:00 p.m., seven days a week. They then attended classes for three hours every evening.³

After the United States entered World War I, nursing became more sophisticated. The number of schools and students increased dramatically, and the first steps toward professional registration of nurses were completed.⁴ A cooperative system developed between hospitals and schools of nursing. The schools depended on the hospitals for support and financing, and in return students provided the labor to perform most of the nursing and cleaning duties. Because of demand, entrance

requirements were lowered, but the course of study was lengthened to three years. At the Presentation hospitals the total lecture hours given by doctors averaged 312 hours while those given by nurses and other hospital personnel averaged 117 hours. The rest of the three years were spent in the hospital learning and performing nursing techniques. As registration of nurses became a requirement in every state but Nevada by 1920, provisions allowed for earlier graduates to be registered by waivers. Accreditation of St. Luke's School of Nursing was granted by the South Dakota State Board of Nursing Examiners in 1920, while other schools received accreditation later.⁵

Between the end of World War I and the start of World War II, nurses' training kept pace with medical accomplishments. All four Presentation hospital staffs and nursing classes served valiantly during the trying months of the nation-wide flu epidemic of 1918-1919. Temporary wards filled as victims received attention from nuns, nurses, and students who assisted short-handed medical personnel during the emergency. Schools increased enrollment to between twenty and thirty students per class as hospital patronage mushroomed, and course offerings expanded to include chemistry, pediatrics, ethics, and social problems. The first curriculum for South Dakota schools of nursing, implemented in 1920, outlined all these subjects. Physicians still taught most of the courses, but as more nurses earned college degrees they became qualified to share lecturing chores with doctors.⁶

In the 1930s the schools of nursing at all four Presentation hospitals underwent examination from a national grading study, the state board of nurse examiners, and the national Catholic Hospital Association. The grading survey judged faculty and instruction, students,

residences, and number of registered nurses. The most serious weaknesses examiners discovered were in the schools' limited teaching facilities and in the small amount of time that heads of departments could devote to teaching. The survey listed such features of the schools as no tuition because the hospitals supported them and a \$6.00 to \$8.00 monthly stipend awarded to students depending on their years in school. After their first month students spent five hours a day in hospital wards practicing techniques, and this increased to eight hours by the fourth month. The state review was satisfactorily completed as was that conducted by the Catholic Hospital Association, but the schools were encouraged to try for more balance between theoretical and practical instruction and to employ more full-time instructors.⁷

With the outbreak of World War II the United States endured an even greater shortage of nurses than in the past. Because trained nurses were needed in military facilities, local hospitals underwent declines in staffs and faced great hardships if a supply of nurses could not be found. Thus in 1942 the federal government authorized the United States Public Health Service to establish a Cadet Nurse Corps for young women who desired to become nurses. They would receive financial aid much like scholarships, as well as textbooks, uniforms, and monthly allowances. Students promised in return to remain in some type of government service for the duration of the war. In order to be approved for receiving cadet students, nursing schools had to accelerate their curricula to provide the last six months of training for service in military or civilian hospitals that had the greatest need. Funds for cadet programs were granted to many institutions where educational and residential facilities were constructed for the new recruits.

Thousands of graduate nurses were then released for military service without danger of the collapse of nursing service on the home front, but shortages of qualified teachers plagued schools as many physicians and nurses left for the military.⁸

Because any hospital involved in the Nurse Cadet Corps program had a good chance of enlarging enrollment and improving facilities through government encouragement, the Presentation Sisters enthusiastically applied. Mother Raphael McCarthy sent Sister Conception of St. Luke's Hospital and Sister Viator Burns, bursar of the order, to Washington, D.C., to inquire about St. Luke's Hospital's chances of participating in the program. One requirement for hospitals seeking membership for their schools of nursing was a daily census of more than 100 patients. As only McKennan Hospital was large enough to meet that standard, officials of the United States Public Health Service suggested that the sisters combine all four schools of nursing into a central school. Thus with all of the hospitals' patient censuses totaled, the 100-plus requirement would no longer be an obstacle.⁹

Because the deadline for application was quite near, it was necessary for the sisters to act quickly on the suggestion for a central school. Mother Raphael called the directors of the four schools to Aberdeen, and they decided to follow the recommendation. They began reorganization plans for the nurses' training system to consolidate the course into two and one-half instead of three years and designated each school as a unit of the Presentation Central School of Nursing. In April, 1942, the school became the fourth in the nation to be approved by the Surgeon General for participation in the United States Cadet Nurse Corps program. In June a class of 105 students entered

training at the four units in the school. St. Luke's was designated headquarters of the school because college facilities at Northern State Teachers' College were available for science courses.¹⁰

The Cadet Nurse Corps operated from 1942 to 1948, and four classes graduated from the Presentation Central School of Nursing under its provisions. Student nurses completed pre-clinical studies in Aberdeen and then went to one of the four units for the rest of their training. Sister Richard Caron, an instructor at St. Luke's, remembered the students as quite patriotic and proud of the uniforms they wore as Cadet Nurses, but she believed that some of young women were not as well qualified as students had been in the past. The great need for nurses had caused the Cadet Corps to lower standards for admission in order to meet the demand. The Cadet Nurses enjoyed an eight-hour day instead of ten hours, and they also received more days off-duty than earlier student nurses. As the course of study began to stress academic classes over bedside training, some of the nurse-instructors showed concern that the Cadets would not get enough practical experience. This conflict would continue in the central school long after the war-time emergency had abated.¹¹

The central school developed as an independent nursing school which used the coordinated clinical facilities of all four Presentation hospitals. Controlled by a board of administrators comprised of the superintendents of nursing at each hospital and the director of the school of nursing, capacity of the central school neared 600 possible enrollees. As the first class contained more than 100 students, the sisters received more than \$30,000 in federal funds for the cost of training.¹² Benefits for nursing education at the Presentation hospitals appeared as a result of membership in the Nurse Cadet Corps.

Federal money was used at all four hospitals for improvements in facilities, either by expansion or acquisition of modern equipment, and new administrative techniques aided the sisters in running the school. An indirect benefit for the school was the added interest of young women in nursing as a profession.¹³

Advantages of the central school concept included a sound financial system. Improved budgeting practices enabled the director to know in advance how much money was available for administration and education. The faculty increased to nearly four times its previous size, and skills could be more effectively used. The idea of serving one's country during a military emergency gave nursing as a profession added status among young women and greater prestige within the general population. School spirit, spurred on by patriotism, stimulated the desire for professional growth and efforts to upgrade education techniques to achieve national accreditation. The central school enabled the small units to make advances in these areas through combined resources and fulfilled a need for administrative expertise for the areas that sometimes had inadequately prepared administrators.¹⁴

When the federal government discontinued funds for new classes in the Nurse Cadet Corps in 1946, the nursing schools at all four Presentation hospitals had changed significantly. Centralization had brought about more efficiency in administration and more skill in education as instructors became more interested in teaching larger numbers of students, stressing both quality and quantity of instruction. Increases in class size had led to the use of pre-entrance tests to limit the number of new students and to avoid a high rate of failure in the

program. The sisters decided to continue the central school, a decision they followed until the late 1950s.¹⁵

The Presentation Sisters also participated in two other nursing programs during World War II, both under the auspices of the national Red Cross. The Red Cross Reserve recruited graduate nurses for service in hospitals and public health offices. Those women who joined the Red Cross Reserve signified their willingness to be assigned either to civilian or military facilities, and the nuns encouraged earlier graduates of Presentation nursing schools to offer their services. The Red Cross Nurses' Aides were volunteers who completed a six-week training period before being assigned to assist nurses whose ranks had been thinned drastically by the needs of the armed forces. These volunteers performed many chores previously delegated to student nurses, and they were so successful that many hospitals maintained nurses' aide courses long after the war had ended.¹⁶

The central school participated in two domestic emergencies during the 1940s: the train disaster at Miles City, Montana, in 1943 and the polio epidemic in Aberdeen just after the war. The trustees of the Milwaukee Railroad Company praised the student nurses for the service they rendered during the emergency when 900 passengers had to be examined after one of their trains derailed near the city. In gratitude they donated \$200.00 to the nursing alumnae association. When a national polio center was established at St. Luke's Hospital in 1946, many nurses and students volunteered to work with the Red Cross. They learned how to use the new equipment and took courses from specialists who visited the center to train medical personnel in the latest techniques. One student nurse died from polio during the epidemic.¹⁷

In the 1950s the major concerns of the central school were finances and accreditation. Increasing medical costs and the discontinuance of federal funds for training nurses forced the sisters to charge tuition of new students, and they received subsidies from the hospitals in return for the services the student nurses performed while in training. It was no longer possible for hospitals to support the entire cost of educating nurses as they had done in the past. By mid-decade tuition had risen to \$400.00 for the three-year course of study, and this did not include the cost of books and uniforms. Students paid \$25.00 per month for room and board during the first six months of training. Tuition charges helped defray the expense of recruiting students, supplies, library maintenance, and instructors' salaries. The hospitals paid an endowment to the schools of nursing to help support them. For example, the total from St. Luke's was \$4,300 each month.¹⁸ The increasing costs were due in part to advances in nursing education which called for more modern techniques and equipment in classrooms and the use of instructors with academic degrees for clinical work. Physicians were no longer responsible for teaching formal courses as they had been in the past. Pharmacists, dieticians, physical therapists, and bacteriologists assisted instructors in nursing education.¹⁹

Accreditation of schools of nursing concerned affiliation with the South Dakota League for Nursing and the National League for Nursing. The state agency, founded in 1952, worked with the South Dakota Board of Nurse Examiners and encouraged modernization of nursing programs. Varied committees studied problems in health care, the status of nursing education in the state, a careers program which developed a list of approved health care schools, and preparation of schools for national

accreditation. A staunch leader of the SDLN and a member of the National League for Nursing Board of Directors was Sister Bonaventure Hoffman, Director of the Department of Nursing at Presentation College. She labored to keep the state organization viable, especially during a decline in interest in the mid-1960s.²⁰ The National League for Nursing included both nurses and lay people. It became the official accrediting agency for nursing education, but its approval was not legally mandatory for state approval. A school which possessed NLN membership, however, gained recognition as one with a superior education program.²¹ The association stressed relating nursing to the needs of the people as can be seen in the following criteria for League activity:

1. Responsibility is shared by more than one segment of the community.
2. Planning and programming are accomplished by the concerted action of participants from more than one segment of the community.
3. Performance requires human and financial resources in excess of those that can be supplied by any one occupational group.²²

Soon after the National League for Nursing established its accrediting service in 1952, the Presentation Sisters decided to apply for full membership. The order sought accreditation of its nursing program as a central school, but this was denied by the National League for Nursing in 1954 because the school did not meet all standards for a central school. The examiners informed the sisters that the units were too far apart geographically for shared faculty to function adequately, and thus the students were provided little comparable learning experience. Not enough planning went into elective course choices, and no supplemental plan existed for evaluating the nursing program. The

examiners concluded that the sisters appeared to have four separate schools with a centralized teaching program rather than a central school. The units thus became independent in 1957 with the former unit directors named administrators of the separate schools. Each school could then file on its own for accreditation if administrators believed that standards were being met.²³

The four schools were reorganized as a result of decentralization. The St. Luke's unit became a part of the Presentation School of Nursing in conjunction with the program at Presentation Junior College and achieved NLN recognition in December, 1957. The schools at McKennan and St. Joseph hospitals joined the public school systems of Sioux Falls and Mitchell, and facilities were used to train licensed practical nurses (LPNs). The programs included one year of study after which students took examinations to certify their training. Graduates joined hospital staffs as medical personnel whose duties included everything registered nurses (RNs) performed except administering certain medications. In most cases they worked under the supervision of registered nurses. Holy Rosary School of Nursing continued as a separate school until the mid-1970s when its program was reorganized under the administration of the community junior college located in Miles City.²⁴

By the 1960s nursing had progressed from an art to a science. Professional nurses administered medications, drugs, and healing aids with the physicians' orders, but they delegated much personal patient care to LPNs, aides, and orderlies. No longer did registered nurses make beds, give baths or read temperatures. Their training and orientation had to be upgraded to reflect the changing role of nurses in modern hospitals.²⁵ In order to keep pace with the national trend

toward college education--giving nursing students the chance to gain exposure to students in academic and professional disciplines--educators looked for ways to incorporate nurses' training into college curricula. Students would earn associate degrees rather than diplomas, but they would still sit for state examinations in order to become registered nurses. The associate degree program would contain an important advantage over diploma programs in that the course of study would be shortened from three to two years, plus providing nurses at a faster rate than in the past and helping to alleviate the national shortage of registered nurses. Those who earned associate degrees could return to college and apply much of their earlier course work to earning the BSN degree. This was an advantage as those with diplomas often discovered that they needed to repeat much of their earlier training.²⁶

The Presentation Order chose Sister Bonaventure Hoffman to develop the associate degree nursing program in 1965. She had received a Master's degree in education from the University of Minnesota to supplement her training as a registered nurse and had served as director of the four units in the central school and as chief administrator of McKennan Hospital. Sister Bonaventure conducted a survey of existing associate degree programs, and her findings were implemented with the help of consultants. The Presentation College administrators provided needed resources for the reorganized curriculum, and three other agencies in Aberdeen agreed to cooperate in the program: St. Luke's Hospital, Mother Joseph Manor (a nursing home), and North Eastern Mental Health Center. In 1966 the NLN gave the sisters assurance of accreditation, thus enabling them to apply to the Department of Health,

Education, and Welfare for funds to build a teaching facility. The structure, completed in 1969, was erected to serve existing curricula and provided an environment in which, Sister Bonaventure wrote, it was "a joy . . . to study and teach."²⁷

The curriculum which Sister Bonaventure and other faculty members developed underwent many changes in the first ten years. Faculty committees studied the course and reduced credits from seventy-four to sixty-nine, combined theory and clinical grades, added diet therapy, and incorporated the Presentation College general education sequences of English, sociology, philosophy, history, and ethics courses. They added a summer session, necessary for adequate clinical experience, to the second semester of the students' first year in the program. The sisters developed an innovative Learning Experience Guide which provided for individualized instruction, placing more responsibility for learning on the students. They studied prenatal education, community health, and long-term health care which involved the students in projects in the community of Aberdeen. By the summer of 1975 the faculty had received many favorable comments concerning the program. Faculty increased from four members in 1965 to thirteen in 1975, all with bachelor's degrees in nursing and nearly half with master's degrees. Faculty-student ratio was one to eight for freshmen and one to twelve for sophomores. Through participation in a consortium with Northern State College, members gained experience developing courses, and in 1975 the department began planning an extension program with the community of Eagle Butte on the Cheyenne River Reservation in western South Dakota.²⁸

In evaluating the associate degree program, Sister Bonaventure

stated that because junior colleges could not offer students baccalaureate degrees, the associate degree provided a workable alternative. Although students in the two-year course received less practical training than those in diploma programs, they did have definite objectives so their work had more structure. The students knew what they were expected to do and why. She commented further that earlier experience as part of the central school had enabled the college to make a smooth transition from the diploma to the associate degree curriculum. Nursing was the largest program at Presentation College, and it provided well-trained patient-oriented nurses to fill the great demand throughout the state.²⁹

By 1976 the Presentation Sisters' involvement in nursing education had resulted in the development of a modern, well-run training program. The nuns had participated in the several stages of nursing in the state --from forming schools to centralization, accreditation, and finally the associate degree--and had led in such activities as the Nurse Cadet Corps and support of the National League for Nursing. Nursing graduates consistently received high percentage scores on the state registration examinations.³⁰ The order's leaders had taken seriously the responsibility of training personnel for their hospitals. The result was a high level of competence that, coupled with the successful operation of the hospitals, designated the Presentation Sisters as leaders in health care in South Dakota.

ENDNOTES

¹Diamond Jubilee Book (Aberdeen, South Dakota: Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1961), p. 36.

²Sister Conception, "History of Aberdeen Presentation School of Nursing," Manuscript, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 32.

³St. Joe Happenings, May, 1976, p. 2; Dolores Harrington, A Woman's Will . . . A Sister's Way, The McKennan Hospital Story, 1911-1961 (Sioux Falls, South Dakota: McKennan Hospital, 1961), pp. 59-60; Elizabeth Jamieson, Mary Sewall, and Eleanor Suhrie, Trends in Nursing History (Philadelphia: W. B. Sanders Co., 1966), p. 267.

⁴Jamieson et al., Nursing History, p. 267; Sister Conception, "History"; Harrington, A Woman's Will, p. 59.

⁵Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 32; Harrington, A Woman's Will, p. 59; Jubilee Data (McKenna historical data), p. 1; Sister Conception, "History."

⁶Sister Conception, "History."

⁷Jamieson et al., Nursing History, pp. 293-295; U.S. Statutes At Large, 78th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 55, part 2 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942), p. 484; Jubilee Data.

⁸Harrington, A Woman's Will, pp. 35, 36; Interview with Sister Richard Caron, June 19, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Sister Conception, "History Jubilee Data.

⁹Jubilee Data.

¹⁰Interview with Sister Richard Caron, June 19, 1978.

¹¹Presentation Nurse, November, 1942, No. 1; Interview with Sister Richard Caron, June 19, 1978, Sister Conception, "History."

¹²Interview with Sister Richard Caron, June 19, 1978; Presentation Nurse, June, 1946, p. 7.

¹³Sister Conception, "History;" Interview with Sister Richard Caron, June 19, 1978; Jubilee Data (McKenna School of Nursing Tables), p. 3.

- 14 Jubilee Data (McKenna School of Nursing Tables), p. 3.
- 15 Presentation Nurse, March, 1944, June, 1964; Sister Conception, "History;" Interview with Sister Richard Caron, June 19, 1978.
- 16 Presentation Nurse, November, 1942; Harrington, A Woman's Will, p. 37.
- 17 Presentation Nurse, March, 1944, Fall, 1947.
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- 19 Ibid.; Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 40; Jubilee Data.
- 20 "Brief History of South Dakota League for Nursing," Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota.
- 21 Jamieson et al., Nursing History, pp. 327, 333; "Unique Role of National League for Nursing," Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota.
- 22 "Unique Role of National League for Nursing."
- 23 Sister Conception, "History;" Diamond Jubilee Book, p. 32.
- 24 Diamond Jubilee Book, pp. 32, 38; Jubilee Data (St. Joseph Questionnaire); Sioux Falls Argus-Leader, January 4, 1959; Jubilee Data (McKenna historical data); McKenna Tables, Exhibit III, Heritage Room, McKenna Hospital, Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Interview with Sister Bonaventure Hoffman, June 20, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Interview with Mrs. Frances Gresby, July 12, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.
- 25 Harrington, A Woman's Will, p. 61; Interview with Sister Bonaventure Hoffman, August 6, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.
- 26 Interview with Sister Bonaventure Hoffman; Interview with Mrs. Joan Kippeš, June 5, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Interview with Mrs. Frances Gresby, July 12, 1978.
- 27 Interview with Sister Bonaventure Hoffman, August 6, 1976; Sister Bonaventure Hoffman, "Associate Degree Nursing Program, a Ten Year Report," Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, p. 1.
- 28 "Associate Degree Program," pp. 12-19; Interview with Sister Bonaventure Hoffman, August 6, 1976.
- 29 Interview with Sister Bonaventure Hoffman.
- 30 Hoffman, "Ten Year Report," Appendix, exhibit I.

CHAPTER VII

CHANGES IN THE ORDER'S STRUCTURE,

1880-1976

During their years in South Dakota, the Presentation Sisters underwent many changes in community life. Their novitiate for new candidates, government, and apostolate all experienced gradual modification as the order grew and expanded, first adapting to frontier conditions and then achieving permanence as an important force in education and health care. By the mid-twentieth century the Presentation community contained more than 300 members, and the outlook for the future indicated more growth as throughout the nation the numbers of women going into contemplative life had been increasing rapidly since World War II.¹ However, changes were occurring which would have profound results for religious communities. The social upheaval of the 1960s and the influence of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI encouraged examination and revision of goals--referred to as renewal by religious communities within the Catholic Church--which led to significant changes in the organization of the Presentation Sisters. Members scrutinized all aspects of the order's structure and role and developed new methods for governing, training, and extending their apostolates in new, sometimes controversial, directions. The Presentation foundation that celebrated its diamond jubilee in South Dakota in 1961 almost disappeared within

the next fifteen years to be replaced by a profoundly different but still hopeful religious order by 1976.

The Presentation Foundation approved as a religious community in South Dakota in 1886 belonged to a large organization. Originating in Ireland in the 1770s, Presentation convents had been established in England and Canada before the sisters first arrived in the United States in the 1850s. Although the communities followed the philosophy of Nano Nagle, the founder of the first motherhouse in Cork, Ireland, they formed a loosely connected federation with other Presentation foundations. Each motherhouse maintained its own identity and developed its own procedures for bringing education to the poor. What they shared was a similar spirit and a dedication to the most needy people of the Church. Thus the sisters who journeyed to Dakota Territory in 1880 believed they were fulfilling Nano Nagle's intention when they decided to work among the Indians. They thought also that their eventual establishment among white settlers on the frontier also demanded a devotion to the poor because the people they worked with were, for the most part, nearly penniless and in great need of religious education.²

The practice of observing cloister or enclosure was common to all communities within the Presentation federation, but it presented problems for the foundation in South Dakota. Pioneer conditions called for the sisters to leave their convent at times and to travel widely if they hoped to succeed in staffing schools in the sparsely populated parishes of the Diocese of Sioux Falls. Bishop Martin Marty understood this, and because the order came under diocesan rather than pontifical law he granted the nuns temporary dispensation from cloistered living.

Bishop Thomas O'Gorman made the dispensation permanent, and when the order became a pontifical community in the 1940s Pope Pius XII gave final approval to this important adaptation to frontier conditions.³ This would be only one of the many modifications undertaken by the Presentation Sisters as they adapted to meet the needs of the people they served.

The sisters governed themselves under the guidelines of a constitution which included procedures for defining the order's system of government, training novices, and fulfilling their apostolate. The bishop supervised their activities because there was a diocesan order for nearly sixty years, and he gave final approval to their decisions to staff parish schools at the request of pastors and, after 1901, to establish hospitals. The mother superior presided over the mother-house in Aberdeen, and in the early years she exercised a great deal of control over the government, finances, expansion, and spiritual life of the community. Once the nuns began staffing parish schools, each convent was supervised by a reverend mother who cooperated with the pastor in running the school and caring for the sister-teachers. She maintained close contact with the mother superior and gave advice but deferred to her authority when decisions were needed in regard to the sisters' assignments, education, and other matters.⁴

The sisters saw the mother superior as the Lord's representative in their community. She guided them in his name, and they followed her directives willingly because they believed in the submission to God's will which she embodied. This framework had been in effect since the Middle Ages when religious communities of women first appeared, and the sisters seldom thought to question a superior's decision. The nuns did

have a voice in choosing their mother superior. Every six years they held an election in which the members voted for their new leader. It was just such an election that contributed to the final break between the Presentation foundation at Fargo, North Dakota, and the convent at Aberdeen. When Mother John Hughes lost to Mother Aloysius Criswell, she took the defeat as a personal affront and returned to Fargo. The procedure for selection allowed for consecutive re-election, necessary to achieve continuity in a growing institution. The strongest of the early mother superiors, Mother Joseph Butler and Mother Raphael McCarthy, each served at least two terms.⁵

The mother superior consulted with other leaders in the community. These were sisters who served as reverend mothers at convents where the nuns staffed parochial schools and administrators of their four hospitals. As the years passed these advisers as a group developed into a council. When the council grew too large to include all reverend mothers and administrators, the sisters limited its size to four and elected members for specified terms. The council and mother superior worked closely to supervise training novices, organizing finances, assigning duties, and governing the motherhouse. The mother superior retained final authority for decisions and enforcement of existing rules. For example, she decided whether a new candidate should be trained as a nurse or a teacher and where the young nun would be sent to work.⁶

As South Dakota progressed from frontier to settled conditions and the Presentation Order spread its influence throughout the eastern part of the state, the sisters decided to apply for designation as a pontifical congregation. This change would mean that the sisters would move from the bishops' to the Pope's jurisdiction and that they would follow

the regulations of Cannon Law. Pontifical congregations enjoyed more freedom than did diocesan congregations because they were not required to follow the dictates of the bishops. The order received pontifical status in 1946 after revising its constitution to follow more closely the directives of Cannon Law. The biggest change for the Presentation Sisters was that they could now elect delegates to represent them at annual chapter meetings and to vote for council members.⁷

An important segment of the order's organization concerned the training of novices. Until the late 1940s mother superiors journeyed frequently to Ireland to request candidates for the foundation in South Dakota. Often groups of up to ten young women returned with them. Candidates came from other sources as well, such as Notre Dame Junior College and parish schools, but for the first sixty years in South Dakota the majority of sisters were Irish. In 1948 Mother Raphael, after a recruiting visit to Ireland had secured few candidates, suggested that the community look more diligently for novices within South Dakota. Thus the sisters worked in the parochial schools and nursing schools they staffed to encourage young women to join the order, and within a few years the number of Irish sisters dropped to a minority. Sister Coleman Coakley was one of the last candidates from Ireland, and she arrived in 1948.⁸

Once a young woman decided to become a candidate, she entered a three-year period of observation, study, and discipline after which she took temporary vows. In her first year the postulant learned to submit to such regulations as silence periods, monthly letters home (which were subject to scrutiny by the novice mistress), no visits to her family, no financial allowance, and having to ask permission for

such minor activities as using the telephone. One sister commented that within the restrictions they led rather free lives with everything provided for by the community. By the second year the novice wore a habit with a white veil, and her study of religious life was supplemented with vocational training after the mother superior decided whether she would become a teacher, a nurse or a domestic worker in the motherhouse. During the third year she continued scriptural and spiritual study in preparation for temporary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Final vows came three years later.⁹

The novice mistress supervised training of new members. She tested their aptitude for religious life, their dedication, and their self-discipline. She taught them how to observe the community's rules, its history and customs, led daily exercises in prayer and work, and stressed the value of duty done with the "pure intention of serving Christ."¹⁰ The novice mistress helped the young candidates to overcome homesickness, to accept authority without question, and to understand the meaning of their vows. If a novice questioned the strength of her vocation and decided not to join the community, this was explained to the rest of the sisters as a sign of God's will rather than as a fault in the young woman's psychological make-up. Prayer and faith received much greater emphasis than psychology in the training of novices.¹¹

By the 1940s and 1950s the novitiate had developed into a much more rigid experience than in the early years.¹² The mother superiors and novice mistresses stressed external conformity and structure in training new sisters. Their schedule was strictly observed and the value of traditions was not questioned. For example, because prayer formed the basis of religious life, the sisters went to the chapel early every

morning before mass and at specific times throughout the day. The notion seemed to be that if a nun spent a great deal of time in the chapel she would naturally be praying all that time. Another tradition followed rigorously was keeping the sister busy with work, classes, and domestic chores. The motivation for this was to instill a sense of discipline, but questions would later be raised as to the purposefulness of all the time in the chapel and the value of some of the constant activity the sisters had to endure.¹³

The apostolate of the Presentation Sisters had been education since the days when Nano Nagle founded the order's first schools in defiance of the English penal laws in the 1770s. The leaders in Aberdeen had followed this tradition until circumstances forced them to add health care to their duties as teachers. The epidemic in 1900 and the sisters' decision to offer part of their convent for use as a hospital had precipitated the decision--a departure from the teaching emphasis of Presentation Sisters throughout the world.¹⁴ The revised constitution, approved by the Holy See in 1946, provided for both apostolates. It stated that in

. . . assuming the difficult but meritorious task of teaching, the Sisters, whom God has invited to perfection through this vocation, shall find courage and inspiration for their fervor and zeal in the example of the Divine Master Himself, who manifested always a tender affection for children, showed the greatest pleasure when children came to Him and declared that whosoever received such little ones in His name received Himself.¹⁵

and that

The Sisters to whom . . . Jesus Christ has granted the privilege of serving Him by serving the sick and the afflicted in hospitals, should have their hearts stirred with love and with gratitude at this spiritual

opportunity. The Sisters assigned to the care of the sick shall have special and careful preparation for their duties so that their labors may insure both the temporal and the spiritual welfare of their patients.¹⁶

The mother superior decided whether a sister should be trained as a teacher or a nurse and where she would serve. The nuns went without question where they were told to go, and they accepted the superior's directives. One young nun's experiences in the early twentieth century was typical. Sister Lelia Bereford had been assigned to teach grade school, but during summer vacation she was helping at St. Luke's Hospital and did a good job caring for an eye patient who made a rapid recovery. The doctor told Mother Joseph that Sister Lelia would make an excellent nurse so Mother Joseph transferred her to a nursing school. When asked if she would like to be a nurse, Sister Lelia replied that one was as good as another and that she would do what Mother Joseph decided. By the 1950s the mother superiors allowed the nuns to state their preferences, but they still retained full authority. More than a few sisters were assigned jobs which they did not desire but that they tried to do well nevertheless.¹⁷

A combination of events beginning in the 1950s and culminating with the decisions reached by the Second Vatican Council in 1965 brought great changes in religious communities throughout the United States, and the Presentation Sisters were no exception. Also affecting them were a directive which Pope Pius XII issued concerning religious habits, and suggestions for examination, experimentation, and reappraisal of contemplative life which Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI implemented. Events within American society also encouraged change from outside religious communities. Pope Pius XII suggested that communities of nuns

examine their modes of dress to ensure that they met health requirements and suited the services performed by those who wore them. This led to slight modifications in dress length, veil design, and fabric choice in order to provide a more acceptable habit, especially for sister-nurses who often in the past had been encumbered by yards of material and voluminous sleeves that could retard their efficiency.¹⁸

Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI presided over the Second Vatican Council during which bishops from throughout the Catholic world debated about issues pertaining to religious life. They encouraged communities to examine their systems of government, methods of training new candidates, and direction of apostolates. Orders then received permission to experiment with suggestions submitted by members under guidelines set down by Perfectae Caritatis--Decrees on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life. Pontifical congregations would then submit proposed changes to the Holy See for final approval, and constitutions would be revised.¹⁹ Bishops returned to their dioceses with instructions to observe the period of experimentation and provide encouragement or restraint, as need be, for the orders in their jurisdictions. His Excellency Lambert Hoch, Bishop of Sioux Falls, commented that during renewal he saw himself as a shepherd with a crook which he used to prod his reluctant charges and to restrain the more radical members of his flock.²⁰

Within American society events also were taking place that would have an impact on religious communities. The civil rights movement, educational advances, the rising cost of health care, and the appearance of social welfare groups such as the Peace Corps combined with decisions made at Vatican II to change the directions of orders like

the Presentation Sisters. Many priests and nuns joined the freedom rides and voter registration drives of the late 1950s and early 1960s and brought back to their communities a reawakened interest in the fight against discrimination. Sisters studying for advanced degrees came into contact with movements on various university campuses, and many of them expressed the desire to work with disadvantaged blacks instead of returning to their motherhouses to serve as teachers or nurses.²¹

Advances in education--increased use of audio-visual equipment, new counseling services, sophisticated athletic departments for example --contributed to a crisis for parochial schools as Catholic parents saw the greater variety of programs at public schools. Parochial school administrators attempted to upgrade their offerings to compete for students, but parishes found financing these programs a great burden. At the same time the number of sisters available to staff the schools began to decline, and it became necessary to hire lay teachers at much higher salaries than the nuns had required. This contributed even more expense to running the parochial schools, and many parishes in eastern South Dakota faced the possibility of losing their schools.²²

In hospitals sisters faced rising costs and complex government regulations which had to be followed if they were to receive federal funds. The declining number of nuns on the staffs of their own hospitals as administrators and department heads forced them to spend most of their time in administrative roles. Gradually lay people were hired to run the hospitals, and the corporate structure of the Presentation Sisters was revised to incorporate these changes in the hospitals. By the end of the 1960s the four Presentation hospitals--all run by male

executive administrators by this time--had lost much of their religious atmosphere as the number of sisters visible in the institutions decreased.²³

Religious communities' inability to staff schools and hospitals came about in part because of a decline in religious vocations. The number of new candidates fell off drastically in the 1960s as young women who in the past might have become sisters found other outlets for their desire to help people. One Presentation sister commented that if the Peace Corps or VISTA had been available when she joined the community, she might not have become a nun but a volunteer instead. Other nuns, when asked about the decline in vocations, pointed out that many potential nuns found satisfaction as volunteers in community development programs or social work. They no longer had to make the permanent commitment of religious life to be of service to their fellow human beings.²⁴

Within the Presentation Order the effects of renewal could be felt in all aspects of life but especially in reorganization of government, training novices, and the apostolate. The sisters formed not always agreeable factions when the changes were discussed, and much tension characterized their chapter meetings. The controversy over habits illustrated the factions that appeared: traditional, modern, and moderate. The traditional sisters chose to wear the old habit, and the modern nuns began to wear secular clothing, with a ring as their only identification as members of a religious community. The largest group fell between the two extremes. These sisters wore modified veils and street-length dresses of conservative color and style. They believed

that nuns should be identified by some sort of uniform, and the veil was a symbol many of them retained for the benefit of lay people who seemed quite resentful of changes in the sisters' mode of dress.²⁵

The change in habit became a crucial issue in the Presentation Order. The older, more conservative sisters were troubled by the diversity in dress worn by their more moderate colleagues. They found security in uniformity, and this was further shaken by anxiety that the community might not be translating correctly the directives from the Holy Father. Varying interpretations of the meaning of "habit" led to confusion and frustration for the older sisters. They feared also that wearing secular clothing would lead to an increase in materialism as sisters became preoccupied with clothes and fashion, thus taking attention away from their internal commitment to the Lord. The younger, more modern sisters saw the habit as an obstacle in their dealings with lay people and as a superficial sign of commitment that allowed nuns to hide behind the veil and not come to terms with their motivations.²⁶

These three groups were in conflict over other changes as well. In reorganizing community government, they held a chapter of affairs in 1968 which allowed for experimentation in such areas as election of mother superior, a title they changed to superior general. The sisters decided to allow direct election as had been done before designation as a pontifical order in 1946 but to retain delegates to select council members. The Vatican, however, refused to allow the change so the order returned to using delegates to select the superior general. Some of the sisters resented the loss of a chance for a direct voice in selecting the superior, but they bowed to the decision from Rome. The property the sisters controlled was organized into six active

corporations and two that were inactive. The six active corporations included the four hospitals, Presentation College, and the Presentation Convent. The two inactive corporations--Presentation Children's Home and Presentation Academy--remained on the books because they were still named in wills by sisters and other benefactors.²⁷

Innovations were made in the sisters' personal finances. The community budgeted amounts every spring for each residence. Cost of rent, food, and transportation plus medical insurance and personal allowances were tallied. Sisters received \$20.00 per month to pay for clothing, cleaning, stationery, entertainment, and personal telephone calls. Retirement for the sisters included a pension program and social security provisions. The pension plan allowed sisters over the age of seventy to receive \$100.00 a month (increased to \$130.00 in 1974). Under social security the community was called the employer, and amounts paid in were figured according to salary and living costs. Retired nuns lived at Presentation Heights or at St. Luke's Hospital if they needed medical attention.²⁸

The general council underwent some changes. It contained four members who advised the superior general. The members served four years for staggered terms and limited to two terms. The councilors shared responsibility for health, education, finances, the corporate board, admission and dismissal of sisters. Elections for the council took place every two years at chapter meetings where delegates met to examine the community's religious life and work and to decide on future directions. This was the group that revised the constitution in 1969 and again in 1976. Then they sent the revisions to a canonical lawyer for decisions on their acceptability before final submission to

Rome for approval. The chapter developed as a representative meeting of the order, and delegates were elected every two years prior to the sessions.²⁹

As the number of novices declined and the sisters felt a need for modernization of the novitiate, great changes occurred in the training of sisters. The title of novice mistress was changed to director of formation after the novitiate became known as formation. During their first phase, new candidates, called associates, lived in local Presentation communities for at least six months, received spiritual direction, and attended workshops on religious life. In the next stage of training associates experienced a year of integration in which they lived in a community according to the norms of the Church, studied traditions and constitutions of the congregation, and underwent more intensive spiritual direction. In the third step of formation temporary commitment, community living, and spiritual direction were supplemented with workshops on formation in religious life, sessions before renewal of temporary and final vows, and supervision of the associates' program in her chosen ministry.³⁰ Formation fostered the Presentation spirit, a belief, according to one formation director, that involved a commitment to the oppressed and to community life, and to living and dying among people. She encouraged traits of compassion, gentleness, justice, zeal, detachment, humility, and simplicity while developing devotion to the Sacred Heart, the Passion, the Eucharist, and the Blessed Sacrament, all elements found in Mary as Our Lady of the Presentation. Asceticism developed through evangelical counsels, prayer, penance, and the daily practice of the associate's ministry.³¹

The new program provided for the associates to advance toward vows at their own speed, sometimes allowing up to ten years before final commitment. Once a candidate decided she was ready, the formation director evaluated her in three areas: relationships in ministry with those she served, with co-workers, and with supervisors; relationships with community in attitudes toward members of the community and toward peers; and personal development through evaluating her self-acceptance and personal relationships. The new formation program placed greater emphasis on self-knowledge and introspection and the development of a more independent sister than in the past. The trend evolved partially due to the declining number of women in formation classes. This had caused new candidates to have to do without the support of several others in their classes. In 1976 only three candidates were in formation, and they were at varying levels so there was little peer support to aid them.³²

One final area of religious life drastically changed during renewal was the Presentation Sisters' apostolate. Traditionally serving as teachers or nurses, the sisters had accepted their assignments to schools or hospitals without question. Now they received permission to experiment with new possibilities, and the extended apostolate developed, offering the nuns a wide variety of ministries. Cautioned not to lose track of their community spirit, the nuns at the same time were allowed to leave the motherhouse to serve in duties not usually associated with the Presentation apostolate.³³

Examples of the extended apostolate included variations on nursing and teaching roles as well as radical departures from tradition. For example, in health care, the sisters helped to establish a mission

hospital in the province of Chiapas, Mexico, while in education they joined adult education efforts in a black ghetto in Chicago and a bilingual school in Milwaukee. New ministries developed in working as home visitors on an Indian reservation in South Dakota, serving as co-pastors of a parish in Montana, and staffing a religious center at a college in Minnesota. Sisters left the motherhouse in small groups or alone to fill these ministries which they selected themselves and then received permission to accept after presenting proposals to the superior general and her council.³⁴

The community's general attitude toward the extended apostolate followed the same lines as those in the controversy over habits. The more conservative sisters worried that the nuns who lived so close to the secular world, with little opportunity to share in community life, would lose the strength of their commitment to religious vocations. The nuns who supported the extended apostolate argued that the Presentation heritage of working with the poor could no longer be carried out in the largely middle-class parishes and well equipped hospitals of the order's traditional apostolate. They believed that their individual efforts in Mexico, in the black ghetto, and on the Indian reservation came closer to the original role of Presentation Sisters. The nuns who received permission to leave in the extended apostolate were allowed to go reluctantly but with an eye to the future by leaders of the order as in the late 1960s they realized that the traditional apostolate might not be available in the future, especially because such a large number of parochial schools were closing in eastern South Dakota.³⁵

As the bicentennial celebration of the foundation of the Presentation Sisters approached in 1976, the order in South Dakota had weathered

the shocks and confusion of renewal and adaptation to changes in American society. The sisters had endured great turmoil during the years of experimentation, but as a degree of stability developed within the order they could observe modifications in government, training of new members, and the apostolate that appeared to be more successful in drawing the community closer to modern life than it had been in the past. A decrease in membership had taken place, but the sisters believed that those who stayed were the strongest, most able, and most committed to religious life in a rapidly changing world.³⁶

ENDNOTES

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⁴ Interview with Sister Alicia Dunphy, August 6, 1976; Interview with Sister JoAnn Sturzl, August 5, 1976; Interview with Sister Eleanor Joyce, August, 1976; Interview with Sister Helen Freimuth, August 5, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

⁵ Interview with Sister Helen Nemmers, August, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Interview with Sister JoAnn Sturzl, August 5, 1976; Sister M. Cabrini DeDonato, "A History of the Educational Work of the Presentation Sisters of Aberdeen, South Dakota" (unpub. M.A. thesis, Northern State College, 1966), p. 28; Collection of Personal Interviews, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota; "Chapter Decisions," p. 6.

⁶ Interview with Sister JoAnn Sturzl, August 5, 1976; Interview with Sister Mary Stephen Davis, August 7, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

⁷ Walsh, Nano Nagle, p. 281; Interview with Sister JoAnn Sturzl, August 5, 1976; Interview with Sister Helen Freimuth, August 5, 1976.

⁸ "File on Mother Raphael McCarthy," Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota; Interview with Sister Coleman Coakley, August 7, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.

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- ¹⁰"Brochure on the Founding of the Presentation Sisters."
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- ¹²Interview with Sister Helen Freimuth, August 5, 1976.
- ¹³Ibid.; Interview with Sister JoAnn Sturzl, August 5, 1976; Interview with Sister Lynn Marie Welbig, August 10, 1976, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.
- ¹⁴Walsh, Nano Nagle, p. 281.
- ¹⁵Diamond Jubilee Book (Aberdeen, South Dakota: Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1961), p. 37.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 36; "Sister Lelia Bereford's Review of History of St. Joseph Hospital," Office, St. Joseph Hospital, Mitchell, South Dakota.
- ¹⁷Interview with Sister Edla Billing, July 12, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Interview with Sister Madonna Pierret, July 13, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.
- ¹⁸"Chapter Decisions," p. 23; Interview with William A. Delaney, June 6, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.
- ¹⁹"Chapter Decisions," p. 4; Interview with Sister JoAnn Sturzl, August 5, 1976; Sister Joyce Meyer, "Notes from Classes Given to Professed Sisters and Sisters in Formation," Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, p. 46.
- ²⁰"Notes from Classes Given to Professed Sisters and Sisters in Formation," p. 46; Interview with His Excellency Lambert Hoch, Bishop of Sioux Falls, June 28, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota.
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- ²³Interview with David Rykhus, June 2, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Interview with Keith Fitzpatrick, June 5, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Interview with David Patton, June 26, 1978, South Dakota Oral History Center, Vermillion, South Dakota; Interview with Sister Coleman Coakley, August 7, 1976.

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²⁷ Interview with Sister JoAnn Sturzl, August 5, 1976.

²⁸ Ibid.; "Chapter Decisions," p. 37; Interview with Sister Mary Stephen Davis, August 7, 1976.

²⁹ Interview with Sister Mary Stephen Davis; Interview with Sister Coleman Coakley, August 7, 1976; Interview with Sister JoAnn Sturzl, August 5, 1976; Interview with Sister Marie Patrice Moriarty, August 12, 1976.

³⁰ Sister Joyce Meyer, "Notes from Classes," p. 1.

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³² Interview with Deana Butler, June 20, 1978; Sister Joyce Meyer, "Notes from Classes," pp. 41, 42.

³³ Interview with Sister Lynn Marie Welbig, August 10, 1976; Interview with Sister Eleanor Joyce, August, 1976; "Chapter Decisions," p. 26.

³⁴ Interview with Sister Lynn Marie Welbig, August 10, 1976.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE EXTENDED APOSTOLATE, 1964-1976

After the turbulence of renewal subsided in the Presentation Order, one significant change had become firmly established. The extension of the sisters' traditional role of parochial school teaching and nursing to include variations of these two occupations breathed new life into the community. Moreover, these new activities led to other areas of service, particularly opportunities for the nuns to work more closely with the poor. This feature of Presentation life had faded gradually as the farmers and small town dwellers they served became middle-class as the extreme poverty the early pioneers had endured on the frontier three generations before generally ended. Mother Myron Martin observed that the sisters most likely to be interested in what became known as the "extended apostolate" were those in their forties and fifties. Younger nuns still had a great desire to live in a community environment, and those in their sixties were ready to return to larger group living as their thoughts turned toward retirement. Thus, the order had a relatively large number of sisters who expressed an interest in departing from traditional Presentation vocations.¹

The options they chose varied from merely leaving South Dakota to teach or nurse in another region to participating in activities previously closed to sisters--such as ministries in large parishes or on college campuses. Some nuns returned to school to learn new skills to

equip them for more specialized educational or nursing duties than they had performed in the past. The entire community involved several parishes and the bishop in staffing a hospital mission in Mexico in response to a request from Rome that non-mission oriented religious orders send 10 percent of their membership into the field in Latin America.

Several Presentation nuns gained positions in parishes where they served as members of team ministries and performed many duties which parish priests previously handled unassisted. One such sister was Sister Shiela Schnell. She had earned a BA and a MA in theology and had always wondered how she could best serve the people of God. When another Presentation sister heard of a position in Moline, Illinois, for Director of Adult Enrichment and Family Life for the three parishes there, she informed Sister Shiela who then applied for the job. After the community in Aberdeen approved her proposal, Sister Shiela directed adult experiences in faith development. She concentrated on prayer guidance, Bible study, and retreats for adult groups such as singles, senior citizens, and widowed and divorced parents. In cooperation with the Catholic Board of Education and a lay advisory committee, she planned programs in liturgy study and parish renewal. Sister Shiela lived with another Presentation nun in a duplex, and their guiding principle was simplicity in furnishings and food as they shared prayer and supported each other in their ministries. Because her job required only a ten-month contract, she spent summers at the motherhouse in Aberdeen. She commented that this position was the first one she had held that helped her to feel like she was in the right place or at least headed in the right direction in her service to God's people.³

Another Presentation Sister who held a position traditionally filled by a priest was Sister Kay O'Neil. Sister Kay, after education in library science and a master's degree in psychology and counseling, applied to share the Campus Ministry Office at Southwest Minnesota State College in Marshall, Minnesota. She felt some resistance as a nun in a priestly role, but she was excited to be involved in a national movement as more and more sisters took up youth-related work on college campuses. Her co-workers were Protestant ministers, and more than a third of her schedule was spent in spiritual and career counseling of students. She also devoted much time to worship preparation in which students joined in planning masses that were more meaningful to them than those celebrated in the traditional manner. Another activity she coordinated was an outreach program to involve more people from the city of Marshall in the Campus Ministry. Sister Kay lived with another Presentation sister in an apartment near the campus and visited Aberdeen frequently. She felt emotionally close to the motherhouse even if she was not physically nearby, and she commented that she got enough support from the other sister she lived with and did not need the entire community for love and encouragement. In a final statement Sister Kay said that the early tradition of religious women has been apostolic, not cloistered, and that perhaps the Church should go back further than the monastic tradition in the renewal begun with Vatican II.⁴

Sister Mary DiPazzi was another Presentation nun who departed from the order's traditional apostolate. Trained as a nurse, she supplemented her BSN with a course in pediatric nursing and served as a community health officer on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation in western South Dakota. Sister DiPazzi oversaw the maternal child health

component of the community health department in the Indian Health Service. Her duties included administering physical examinations to newborn babies before discharge from the hospital and monitoring preventive health programs for all children on the reservation up to age five. Her case load reached approximately 750 children for whom she made annual assessments of their physical, behavioral, and psycho-social needs, and she worked closely with tribal and federal health programs such as Head Start. Sister DiPazzi's position had been created with the approval of the Presentation Sisters and the Indian Health Service's nurse consultant. She received government housing in the town of Eagle Butte on the reservation and visited the motherhouse monthly.⁵

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the Presentation Sisters' commitment to the extended apostolate was their decision to participate in mission activity in Latin America. From 1964 to 1976 the order contributed nurses, supplies, money, and moral support to the effort to build and equip a hospital in the province of Chiapas, Mexico. They cooperated with Presentation Sisters and Dominican Fathers from San Francisco, California, who had been investigating a possible mission project since the early 1960s. Spanish Dominicans had Christianized the region of Chiapas centuries before, and the order retained an interest in the area. The first group of three priests left for Mexico in January, 1963, where they met with Mexican physicians and drew up plans for a central hospital in the mountains of southern Chiapas.⁶

The project had to be broken down into stages, the first of which was the construction of a dispensary, and the Dominicans requested help from volunteers within religious life and the secular world.

They contacted the Presentation Sisters in San Francisco who then asked for nuns from other motherhouses throughout the Presentation federation to offer their services. The sisters in Aberdeen decided at first to send one of their group to participate in the project. She was Sister Elizabeth Remily, RN, who had been working as a surgical nurse at St. Joseph Hospital in Mitchell. She would join three sisters from the San Francisco foundation for language training and orientation before leaving for Chiapas. Two other sisters from Aberdeen would later join Sister Elizabeth in the project: Sister Janice Mengershauser and Sister Marilyn Meninga. The Dominicans also asked for help from the Sonoma County, California, Medical Society which in November, 1963, sent six doctors to Chiapas to study the health level of the people who lived there. They discovered that life expectancy fell below forty years of age, that undernourishment was widespread, and that ignorance of hygiene and new agricultural methods was common.⁷

Before the sisters arrived the Dominicans already had begun their medical program in the mountain town of Ocosingo. They received assistance from Pat Arca, a lay volunteer registered nurse, in training infirmarians to work with villagers and in encouraging the construction of dispensaries in outlying areas of the province. Miss Arca had few diagnostic instruments and could only treat symptoms. Most of the ailments she encountered dealt with malnutrition and parasites. Though she had a large supply of drugs donated by parishes in the United States and adequate equipment for minor emergency work, she badly needed more medical personnel and more sophisticated instruments for basic laboratory work. A government hospital in Ocosingo provided little help for the medical problems of Indian villagers because the staff there

preferred to work with Ladinos. The hospital contained no facilities for bed patients and often had no running water due to clogged pipes, and the physician would only see Indian patients between ten o'clock and twelve o'clock daily. Thus the Americans saw a great need for an improved medical facility in the region.⁸

Meanwhile, the four Presentation Sisters began their training period. They spent two months at the Summer Institute of Linguistics at the University of Washington studying with Dr. Benjamin Elson. The sisters concentrated on information that would help them to communicate in the Tzeltal dialect, the most widely spoken Indian tongue in Chiapas. Then in August, 1965, they journeyed to Cuernavaca, Mexico, to do intensive work at the Intercultural Formation Center. They participated in workshops and retreats until January, 1966, when they finally left for Ocosingo. Sister Elizabeth's job would be to operate the dispensary there while the other sisters--Sister Mary Reginald, Sister Mary Raymond, and Sister Mary William--would serve as teachers in catechetics and adult education. They had combined cultural, linguistic, and religious study during their orientation period, hoping that adjustment to the new environment could be speedy and painless.⁹

When Sister Elizabeth wrote to the motherhouse after her first month at Ocosingo, she described the area in which she was working. The town, located in a valley between high mountains, was served by no roads except for a dirt trail from Comitán, which was only passable during the dry season, from February to July. Most people traveled by foot and a few by horseback. The sisters served Indians who lived in colonies of from 100 to 200 people scattered throughout the mountains,

the closest settlement being an hour away by horse. The climate was cold and damp during the rainy season, and the Indians had no heat in their homes. Constructed of bamboo and mud with grass roofs and earthen floors, these one-room structures had no windows or chimneys, and family members all lived, ate, and slept in the same room. Sister Elizabeth commented that the missionaries had no immediate plans for building a school or hospital. They would concentrate instead on teaching nutrition, agriculture, sanitation, and catechetical classes in the colonies which they visited.¹⁰

The sisters began a program of training Indian infirmarians to help them in educating the villagers. They chose capable men to come in from their colonies for two-day courses in learning how to care for the sick. After the training period, the Indians returned to the mission for monthly meetings. The infirmarians received instruction in basic sanitation and disease prevention as well as detection and simple treatment of ailments. One sister commented that the infirmarians were mostly uneducated but possessed intelligence, were well versed in jungle life, and were eager to learn. Most of them spoke only Tzeltal and a little Spanish so the missionaries occasionally encountered language problems as they taught the men about simple cleanliness and the need for protein in their diets.¹¹

In 1967 a combination of events led to the construction of a hospital at Altamirano, a settlement even more isolated than Ocosingo. Genami, an Indian organization in Mexico, received a donation from a group of German Catholic bishops to finance construction, and the Indians in the area contributed land for the building. They began work on a four-bed structure which would also house an examination

room, surgery rooms, and laboratory facilities. The building was made of native materials, and the villagers at Altamirano joined in working to complete the facility. Using two brick-making machines, the workers also carted materials, laid bricks, and made door and window frames. In July, 1968, Sister Elizabeth and Sister Janice moved to the newly completed hospital. They received aid from Dr. Marcos Antonio Castillo, a recent medical graduate who was appointed resident physician for the facility, named Hospital San Carlos. The sisters and Dr. Tony carried a heavy load in setting up the hospital, teaching infirmarians, and running the pharmacy. They gained assistance from local people who helped to run the office, make repairs, do laundry and cooking, and maintain electrical equipment. Sister Elizabeth commented in a letter to the motherhouse that working with the villagers was slow but that it was necessary to teach them how to run the hospital.¹²

Once the hospital was completed the sisters received visitors who offered their services for short periods of time. Three plastic surgeons from Stanford University did surgery on cleft palate victims, and a dentist from Seattle performed extractions and taught classes in tooth decay prevention. The Mexican government sent several Student Social Service doctors to study with Dr. Tony and the sisters because the governor of Chiapas had visited the hospital and had been impressed with the facility. Even Bishop Lambert Hoch of the Diocese of Sioux Falls made a visit to the mission in 1970. He offered a donation of a landrover for the hospital's use, and the sisters made plans to return to South Dakota and drive it back to the hospital. A group of young volunteers from a parish in Sioux Falls, who remained for two weeks, scrubbed and painted hospital rooms, dug ditches for a new central

water system, and tore down an old building to make room for a hostel for the families of patients.¹³

One physician who had contact with the Presentation Sisters at St. Joseph Hospital in Mitchell made four visits to Hospital San Carlos. Dr. William Delaney, who had worked in surgery with Sister Elizabeth, impulsively agreed to make a trip to the hospital. He was curious about the operation there and wondered if he could function in primitive medicine. On his first trip he realized he could do little because he was new to the situation so he returned later three more times for two-week stays. His duties included teaching surgical techniques to Dr. Tony, performing surgery himself, and doing skin grafts. Dr. Delaney described the hospital as a one-story Mexican style structure. The well constructed facility contained a dispensary, a minor surgery room, two examination rooms, a large surgery room, a laboratory, an x-ray room, and an intensive care unit. He explained that entire families stayed at the hospital if one of their members was ill, and that they received no charity. Nothing was free: patients paid for their care either by performing tasks around the hospital grounds or by barter if they had no money. Expenses for patients came to approximately eighty cents a day for room and board and facilities for families. Physical examinations had no cost, but patients paid for all medications they used. Dr. Delaney further commented that Dr. Tony and the sisters ran an efficient operation that at the same time took into consideration the need to instill responsibility in the people who helped them and in those who were patients.¹⁴

During their stay at Altamirano, the sisters tried several projects to improve the health of the Indians. They set up an experimental

garden in which they grew lettuce, radishes, peanuts, potatoes, and soybeans in hopes of persuading the villagers to use them to add more vegetables to their diets. They tried to raise chickens, hogs, and goats to provide more protein, and they offered means for the Indians to earn money with which they could buy animals. They worked at the hospital cutting fence posts, growing feed and doing other chores. The sisters also got involved in a milk program whereby colonies would first agree to join the project. The nuns then gave the children medication for worms and showed the mothers how to mix the powdered milk--donated by a Mexican company and paid for partially by contributions from children in the parochial schools in South Dakota in which Presentation Sisters served. They weighed the children, recorded the weights and distributed monthly supplies of milk. After six months the sisters weighed the children again and found that some of them had gained as much as ten kilograms. Other children, however, became ill from the milk due to sensitivity to lactose, and their mothers refused to feed them the milk. Thus the milk project had mixed results as did most other experiments. Sister Elizabeth stated that persuading people to change, even for their own improved health, was a very discouraging process, for generations of custom had to be overcome, and nutritional improvements were not dramatic enough to keep the Indians' interest.¹⁵

During their stay at Hospital San Carlos, the sisters encountered problems ranging from visa troubles to travel difficulties. The nuns needed their tourist cards renewed every six months, which they accomplished by traveling to Guatemala for a few days to have their passports stamped and their medical records checked. On one such trip in 1969 they forgot their medical certificates and were chagrined to find

that they must pay a small bribe of five pesos to the customs officials in order to re-enter the country. The itinerary they followed was to fly from Altamirano to Comitán and then take the bus to the border. Other travel difficulties arose when Sister Janice returned to South Dakota to drive the landrover donated by Bishop Hoch back to Altamirano. She filled the truck with supplies for the hospital and drove to El Paso, Texas, where she was delayed in crossing the border because of failure to acquire a permit to bring medical equipment into Mexico. After several days she was allowed to cross, but problems arose again because the landrover was weighted too heavily, and this led to engine trouble. On the last leg of the trip the roads became impassable so Sister Janice had to abandon the truck in Tuxtla, fly to Comitán and secure a driver to help bring the landrover over the swollen rivers and muddy trails. Each time a river had to be crossed, the truck was unloaded and then loaded again on the other side. Finally, with help from passersby, Sister Janice drove the much-abused landrover into Ocosingo and then on to Altamirano.¹⁶

Other problems plagued the sisters in the daily operation of the hospital. Getting supplies into Altamirano was usually a gamble, and poor mail service often led to delays. This problem grew even worse until the local postman was discovered stealing from the mail, and postal inspectors removed him from his position. In the process of cleaning out his office, the officials found several boxes of books, books, letters, and sample drugs that had been sent to the sisters as long ago as six months before. Water shortages also caused difficulties. During the dry season the hospital often ran short of water, and Sister Elizabeth remembered one instance in 1972 when the hospital

did not have even enough water for the nurses to use in pulling a young girl's decayed tooth. She had to ask for a bucket of water from some townspeople. Dry weather also caused fires in the jungle, and smoke became such a hazard that planes often had to be grounded due to accidents in the haze.¹⁷

Records kept at the hospital from 1967 to 1975 showed that the mission filled a growing need and that improvements were being made. The staff vaccinated more than 500 children for such diseases as diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, smallpox, tuberculosis, and polio in 1967 with serum donated by the Mexican government. By 1969 the number had increased to more than 2,000 from twenty-seven colonies in the area. From March, 1969, to March, 1970, approximately 5,000 people were admitted for treatment for tuberculosis, meningitis, diarrhea, tumors, malnutrition, impetigo, and pneumonia. In the next year the census grew to more than 6,000, and by 1975 the nurses counted 7,000 patients a year. A dental unit, completed in 1970, aided doctors as they extracted, filled, and repaired teeth. By 1971 a road built to connect Altamirano with Ocosingo improved communications and assured a constant source of electricity. Up to that time the hospital had been supplied by a generator.¹⁸

By 1975 the Presentation Sisters at Altamirano began negotiating to transfer their operation to a group of Mexican nuns, the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul. Their original goal of establishing the hospital had been achieved, and they welcomed the Mexican sisters who first began to arrive in 1976. They would be able to help their people in a way the American sisters could never have done. Within a

few months the transfer had been completed, and Sister Elizabeth wrote that

. . . our work has been accomplished. The idea of a mission is to help the local people to own independence and decrease dependence on foreigners. The seed has been planted, and through the help of many, many people at home, that seed has been watered for twelve years.¹⁹

After an eight-month transition period the American nuns left the hospital but promised to keep collecting money and supplies for the mission. After the Sisters of Charity had been at Altamirano for more than a year Sister Elizabeth was gratified to learn from an American family who took their sick child there that the quality of care and the dedication of the Mexican nuns remained as high as in the years that the Presentation Sisters had built and nurtured the mountain hospital. The nuns returned to South Dakota and began to search for other ways to work within the extended apostolate of their order, much changed by their experience and hopeful of finding new ways to minister to the poor.²⁰

During the 1970s the Presentation Sisters' apostolate, though still overwhelmingly concerned with education and health care, had expanded to include many options for the nuns to follow in their quest for meaningful vocations. Besides serving as principals and elementary and secondary teachers, sisters in the education apostolate could be found teaching on the college level, working in parish and community adult education programs and organizing diversified educational activities. In the health care apostolate nurses were joined by members working in nursing homes, organizing pastoral care departments for the hospitalized and their families, training in allied health care fields-- and establishing diversified health care roles.²¹ The order also had

accomplished its goal to help establish a mission hospital in Latin America, and the sisters who had lived there deserved much credit for broadening the horizons of the motherhouse in Aberdeen. The adaptations of their traditional roles to allow for more diversification had been a significant change and one which allowed the order to remain active and adjust, on one hand, to the changes within American society and the Church but, on the other, to keep the spirit of their founder alive in their desire to serve the poorest of the poor.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹⁷ Letter from Sister Anrita Bruno, May, 1971, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, p. 1; Letter from Sister Kathleen, June, 1972, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, p. 1.
- ¹⁸ Letter from Sister Janice Mengenhauser, September 29, 1969, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, p. 2; File on Mexican Mission; Letter from Sister Elizabeth Remily, September, 1975, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, p. 2; Letter from Sister Anrita Bruno, October 6, 1970, Archives, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota, pp. 2, 3.
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CHAPTER IX

EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE, 1961-1976

The combination of renewal within religious communities and changes in American society had a great impact on the Presentation Sisters' education and health care roles between 1961 and 1976. Rising costs and declining numbers of sisters available to teach caused pastors to re-evaluate their parochial schools and develop new methods for providing religious education for their parishioners. More communication and cooperation between parishes and within the diocese were called for as many communities faced the possibility of losing their Catholic schools because of inadequate financial support. Parents no longer readily accepted the burden of paying both the public and private school systems, and students noticed the attractions of sophisticated curriculum and athletic programs frequently not offered in parochial schools. The Diocese of Sioux Falls developed several solutions to these problems, and the Presentation Sisters participated in the changes because their support continued to be vital to the success of Catholic education in eastern South Dakota.

In cities with large enough populations to support parochial education, parishes combined their resources for the joint funding of high schools. O'Gorman High School in Sioux Falls and Roncalli High School in Aberdeen both opened their doors in the early 1960s, and their financial base was strong enough to allow construction of

modern, well equipped buildings. Faculties of religious and lay teachers were well trained and offered courses of study that rivaled those of the public schools in both cities. By 1969 Roncalli had an enrollment of more than 430 students taught by fourteen priests and nuns and thirteen secular teachers, all of whom had earned bachelor's degrees. Eight hundred and thirty-five students attended O'Gorman, and they received instruction from twenty-six religious and twenty faculty members, of whom nine had master's degrees. Tuition ranged from \$120.00 plus fees at Roncalli to \$190.00 at O'Gorman. Inter-parish school boards coordinated operations and received support from the Diocesan Office of Education. Presentation Sisters served on the faculties of both schools and provided leadership in the drive for quality education. The parish councils financed the sisters' living arrangements and paid their salaries which still remained several thousand dollars lower than those of lay teachers.¹

As the need to coordinate educational activities on a diocesan level arose, the bishop organized an office of education in Sioux Falls in 1964. The new council included fifteen members: five priests, five sisters, and five lay people elected by the various parish councils or school boards. The members served as advisers to the bishop and set policies for the diocese in his name. In its attempt to provide more uniformity of education throughout the region, the office offered training workshops for teachers, a central bookkeeping system, and coordination of pre-school education and catechetical classes. Members established guidelines for teachers' salaries and studied parishes threatened with having to close their schools, but they did not

interfere with internal school operations. Sister Lynn Marie Welbig served as an officer for six years, and she commented that the office's effectiveness depended on cooperation between members and between pastors and the office. Some conservative priests saw the Diocesan Office of Education as a threat to the authority, and they did not welcome the board's recommendations. This resistance then often spread to their parishes, and she believed that many did not use the services provided for them by the office. Sister Lynn Marie concluded, however, that the creation of the Diocesan Office of Education was a necessary advance in the bishop's efforts to modernize parochial education in eastern South Dakota.²

The Office of Education for the diocese conducted a survey of the status of Catholic education and presented its findings to the bishop in 1969. Members investigated faculties, finances, and curriculum and offered recommendations for the schools. The diocese contained thirty-three elementary and nine secondary schools with total enrollments of 7,871 and 2,346, respectively. Faculties consisted of thirty-three priests, 313 nuns, and 228 lay people. Of the 313 nuns, more than ninety were Presentation Sisters. The final report recommended that because Catholic parents no longer automatically sought out parochial schools, educators needed to present their schools as genuine centers of religious formation, truly Christian in their orientation toward charity and service to all people. They must stress the religious nature of Catholic education as an advantage over public school systems. The report further recommended that the schools provide younger religious women with newer forms of the teaching apostolate and a renewal of enthusiasm for Catholic education among the clergy in an

attempt to slow down the numbers of sisters who left religious life because they found teaching unfulfilling. Another suggestion was that religious orders commit certain numbers of sisters each year to the diocese for assignment rather than to individual parishes. These appointments would be made through the Diocesan Office of Education. The report proposed the establishment of area centers to deal with education and religious formation of all children with the most efficient use of available personnel and materials. Catechetical classes (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine or CCD) centers were to be opened in areas where schools were no longer feasible or already had been closed. Thus the diocese would contain twenty-one centers, seventeen with schools and four with CCD programs.³

The findings gathered in the report of the Diocesan Office of Education led to reevaluation of several schools staffed by the Presentation Sisters. In 1967 the schools in Bridgewater, Woonsocket, and Humboldt closed operation due to inability of the parishes to continue financial support. St. Peter's in Jefferson and St. Thomas' in Madison remained open, but the report encouraged the pastors to upgrade their faculties and allow parish boards of education to take greater responsibility in directing education activities. The school at Dell Rapids--St. Mary's--needed enrichment courses such as music and modern languages added to its curriculum, but the economic feasibility of keeping the high school open was questionable. In Mitchell the two parish grade schools appeared secure, but the future of Notre Dame High School was bleak.⁴

The events leading to the closing of Notre Dame High School illustrate the issues involved when Catholic parishes faced the question of

whether to maintain their parochial schools. Notre Dame claimed an enrollment of 283 students in 1969. Students from Holy Family Parish paid no tuition because the school got its financial support from parish collections, and students from Holy Spirit Parish--created in 1961--paid only \$50.00 a year. The Office of Education recommended that both parishes support the school equally and that administration should be made separate under a joint board of education rather than the responsibility of only Holy Family Parish. The office further recommended that the diocese provide a subsidy until the school's financial difficulties could be resolved. Making Notre Dame's future even bleaker, a new public junior high school had been completed recently in Mitchell, and its advantages such as a swimming pool, language laboratories, and an auditorium attracted many Catholic students who would tend to remain in the public school system instead of transferring back to Notre Dame for high school.⁵

Relations between both high schools in Mitchell had always been cordial. During the early 1960s when a new public high school was completed, the city sold the old building to Holy Family Parish, and it was remodeled to serve as the new Notre Dame High School. The two school systems offered shared time courses whereby students enrolled in classes taught at both schools. Two examples were home economics and physical education courses for which the public school had much better facilities. The superintendent of schools explained that the public school system benefited financially by the availability of the parochial school. The 283 students who did not attend the public school full-time were counted as part of its average daily attendance, and this brought several thousand dollars extra from state funds which

were spent on teachers and supplies. The superintendent commented that because of this and for many other reasons the public school administrators wanted the parochial school to stay open as long as possible.⁶

During the school year 1969-1970, Holy Family parish leaders investigated ways to avoid closing Notre Dame High School. They asked members of both parishes for donations and tried to organize an inter-parish committee to run the educational program. Opinions grew emotional, and accusations from Holy Family parishioners claimed that the members of Holy Spirit were not willing to share fairly the burden of supporting the school. Holy Spirit, however, was heavily in debt due to an ambitious building program for its own elementary school and new church, and parishioners resented the implication that they were not prepared to make sacrifices for Catholic education. Inability to cope with rising costs and the parochial school's lack of a varied curriculum or modern facilities led finally to the decision to close the school.⁷

The procedure was carried out smoothly once the decision was made. The school boards met together and worked closely with the superintendent and both principals to set policies. The public school administrators provided whatever help they could during the transfer, and by the time that classes began in the fall of 1970, the process had been completed. Dr. Robert McCardle, superintendent of schools at the time, commented that most people in the community reacted favorably to the smooth transfer of students, and the frayed tempers of members of Holy Family Parish calmed as they began to realize that, in Mitchell's case, the lack of financial support had hurt the quality of education provided by the parochial school. It was no longer acceptable for a Catholic

school merely to exist. It had to provide excellence in education along with its religious atmosphere in order to offer a workable alternative to a public school system.⁸

By the mid-1970s the Presentation Sisters, whose original apostolate in South Dakota had been teaching, had seen their area of influence grow and then shrink as four schools they staffed had closed, and the future of others remained uncertain. At the same time, advances such as the inter-parish schools in Aberdeen and Sioux Falls were evidence that Catholic education and the nuns' role as teachers were still strong in eastern South Dakota. Many of the sisters commented that a choice of parochial schools provided healthy diversity in American society. They believed that an education system bequeathed a society's culture to its children and that religion was a very important segment of that culture. Catholic parents deserved the opportunity to send their children to schools where religion was not ignored, but along with the opportunity should exist the responsibility to maintain high quality education in the alternative system.⁹

Several changes in other areas of the sisters' responsibility also occurred between 1961 and 1976. In both cases new responsibilities, reorganization of corporate structure, federal regulation procedures, and new apostolates evolved as the Presentation Order strove to deal with rising costs and declining numbers of sisters to staff their facilities. In 1958 the Diocese of Sioux Falls had begun construction of two nursing homes which the bishop requested that the Presentation Sisters operate. Completed in 1961, Brady Memorial Home in Mitchell and Mother Joseph Manor in Aberdeen resulted as part of a drive throughout the state to improve facilities for care of the aged. The

structures each would accommodate fifty-eight residents and contained dining, cleaning, and recreation facilities as well as physical and occupational therapy departments. The sisters welcomed this new apostolate and set about hiring qualified lay people to serve as nurses, aides, cooks, resident services' director, and therapist.

Because both centers were built with federal grants through Hill-Burton legislation, the sisters came under regulation from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The department designated the nursing homes as skilled care centers and required that a professional nurse be on duty at all times. Money for operating the facilities came from residents' fees and some subsidies from the diocese. Patient costs stood at more than \$20.00 a day by 1976, and because many residents received Medicaid benefits the South Dakota Welfare Department served as the designated agency to supervise the homes and assure that the nuns followed government guidelines. Open both to Catholics and non-Catholics, Brady Memorial and Mother Joseph Manor achieved high ratings from government surveys and from families of patients who appreciated the clean, professional and caring atmosphere that the sisters provided.¹⁰

As the number of Presentation Sisters available to serve as hospital administrators decreased and the procedures for running modern hospitals grew more complex with each new year, the sisters reorganized their corporate structure to provide an efficient plan for operating their four hospitals. The nuns elected a corporate board which oversaw the health care council. Each hospital then selected its own board of trustees which in turn supervised the activities of the hospital's executive director. The health care council assisted the corporate

board in reviewing programs and providing consultative services. The boards of trustees contained members of the corporate board as well as lay people from the cities the hospitals served. The boards of trustees met monthly and maintained close contact with both the health care council and the corporate board. The corporate board approved property acquisitions, fund-raising plans, and writing of by-laws for the corporation.¹¹

By 1970 all four Presentation hospitals had acquired lay administrators to serve as executive directors. The sisters believed that secular people could become more involved in community affairs and thus better represent the hospitals to the public than nuns had done in the past. Another reason for the decision to hire lay administrators was a declining interest among the sisters in shouldering the duties that modern hospital directors had to accept. As administration grew more and more complex, the sisters felt themselves pushed far away from the patient. Many of them missed the personal element in hospital care and resisted devoting their years to the impersonal job of running a hospital. The administrator coordinated financial operations. Under the corporate board budgeting procedures for the four hospitals followed the same general pattern. Because the fiscal year began October 1, the executive director began preparing the budget in the spring. He met with department heads to make cost and revenue projections; next the board of trustees finance committee reviewed his proposed plan. They then presented it to the health care council for final approval.¹²

A factor contributing greatly to the increasing complexity of hospital administration was the impact of federal regulations. In the 1960s Medicare and Medicaid legislation contained guidelines that must

be met if hospitals were to participate in the program. Before those regulations were established, federal reimbursement for the Presentation hospitals had been relatively small--confined chiefly to Hill-Burton funds for construction of expanded facilities--but by the 1970s that had changed. For example, nearly 50 percent of St. Luke's Hospital's operating costs came from government sources, and 52 percent of the facility's patients received Medicare or Medicaid subsidies. The National Health Planning and Resource Development Act of 1974 established a board to survey professional standards, health needs, and cost containment procedures. By the 1980s each state would be required to develop a long-range plan which would be supervised by the state health department. Consequently, a certificate of need was required before any hospital construction costing more than \$150,000 could be undertaken to ensure that health care operations actually met the needs of the population.¹³

Administrators of all four hospitals expressed concern that increased federal supervision might result in a loss of autonomy for Catholic hospitals. Their stand against sterilization and abortion was threatened by arguments that hospitals receiving government funds must provide services which citizens demanded. Holy Rosary Hospital and the Presentation Sisters became involved in a lawsuit over this issue in 1974. A physician on the hospital's staff, Dr. James Hamm, requested permission to perform tubal ligations, but he was turned down by the corporate board because such procedures were forbidden by the Catholic Church. After trying to persuade the sisters to change their policy, he decided to force the question. Dr. Hamm accepted a patient due for a caesarean section who also wanted a tubal ligation.

The two then filed suit against the hospital, she claiming that her civil rights were being denied, he asserting that his right to practice his speciality was being thwarted. Because they filed suit at the time that she was ready to deliver her baby, the court issued an injunction requiring that the tubal ligation be performed.¹⁴

The hospital fought the injunction but to no avail. The administrator, David Patton, then talked with his staff and said that if any members had moral or ethical reservations they could rule themselves out of participating in the procedure. Upon consulting with the Bishop of Great Falls, Montana, and the community's executive council, he decided to allow the tubal ligation. After the operation was completed the Montana Supreme Court handed down a summary judgment in favor of the hospital, and although Dr. Hamm appealed the decision the sisters won the appeal. The court ruled that a private hospital had the right to establish its own rules and regulations, and because the tubal ligation was an elective procedure the patient could have been cared for at another hospital that did not forbid tubal ligations. Public reaction generally favored the sisters' position. People in Miles City sympathized with the physician and his patient, but they believed that the nuns should not be forced by the government to go against their ethical standards. Patton commented that even though the hospital won in this fight to preserve its autonomy, he feared that in the future such a victory might not be possible.¹⁵

Another problem plaguing the Presentation hospitals since the mid-1960s was a shortage of doctors. Miles City and Mitchell suffered a shortage of general personnel while Aberdeen and Sioux Falls needed more specialists. All four boards of trustees instituted recruitment

programs to find young physicians to replace retiring older doctors, to supplement current medical staffs, and to provide coverage in speciality fields. The creation of a family practice residency at McKennan Hospital in conjunction with the state medical school at Vermillion eased this problem for Sioux Falls somewhat, but the other three cities continued to search for doctors. Medical students appeared reluctant to settle in these semi-rural areas, and even offers of guaranteed incomes did little to attract the much needed physicians. Thus several doctors in their mid to late sixties found themselves over-worked at a time when they should have been relaxing their pace, and patients complained about crowded clinics as they often had to wait three to four hours to see a doctor.¹⁶

As the sisters moved away from hospital administration, they developed a new apostolate that gave them a chance to maintain close contact with patients, something many of them had sorely missed. They established pastoral care departments in all four hospitals to ensure that spiritual and emotional needs were being met along with medical requirements. They provided counseling for hospital personnel and medical staffs and coordinated all religious activity. They ran educational series for local clergy to prepare them for participation in the pastoral care programs, and they established public relations activities with the communities and surrounding areas. They concerned themselves with the families of patients during times of crisis, administered sacraments and prayer to patients at their request, and provided follow-up visits after patients left the hospital. The sisters worked enthusiastically to support active pastoral care programs at all four hospitals. The order had always been concerned with total

patient care so members saw the new program as a valuable adaptation to their traditional apostolate in health care. Patients commented that they were gratified to see sisters working in the hospitals again after several years when it seemed that the Presentation Community no longer staffed its own facilities.¹⁷

The future of the Presentation hospitals appeared secure in 1976. All four institutions had completed ambitious construction projects and possessed modern, up-to-date equipment. The corporate structure was financially sound, and though federal funds had strings in the form of regulations and rules attached to them, they nevertheless were available to help defray the rapidly rising costs of hospital operation. The pastoral care program helped to maintain the religious atmosphere of the facilities, and the nuns enjoyed a reputation for providing excellent care for the total patient: physical, spiritual, and emotional needs were met in clean, well managed hospitals. Like the schools they staffed, the Presentation Sisters' health care institutions had undergone significant changes since the early 1960s, but the order had met the challenge of rising costs and declining numbers of sisters, and the nuns could look proudly on their accomplishments in the health care atmosphere.¹⁸

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

In 1976 Presentation Communities throughout the world celebrated the bicentennial of their first foundation. In the United States the combination of this celebration with that of the country's independence caused a renewed interest among the Presentation Sisters of South Dakota both in their past and future. They had first arrived in Dakota Territory in 1880, established themselves at Aberdeen in 1886, and joined staffs of schools in several parishes by 1900. They ventured into health care--founding four hospitals between 1901 and 1912--and became leaders in nursing education. During the first sixty years of the 20th century, their areas of influence expanded as the schools they staffed included elementary and secondary levels and a junior college. The hospitals they owned underwent several phases of construction to keep pace with rapidly increasing patient censuses. The 1960s brought changes within religious life and American society that profoundly affected the Presentation Sisters. Their numbers declined, and this, along with rising costs, led to reevaluation of their role in education and health care and to the development of an extended apostolate in hopes of making religious work more fulfilling than teaching and nursing had become by the 1960s.

The Presentation Order, during its ninety-six years in eastern South Dakota, had adapted to the new environment in several ways along

with exerting an influence on the region in which it settled. The nuns' roles in teaching and nursing developed differently primarily because of the low or high degree of leadership that was needed in each apostolate. Within the community itself the sisters progressed from traditional to modern methods of training novices and fulfilling apostolates as they attempted to keep sight of their founder's vision of serving the poorest of the poor. The Order in 1976 was, on one hand, profoundly different in many ways from the small group that had left Ireland in 1880, but, on the other hand, members believed that basic attitudes and goals remained the same.

The nuns who came to Dakota Territory at the request of Bishop Marty underwent several years of adjustment to their new environment. Besides the harsh winds, severe winters, and blistering summers--a far cry from the mild, humid weather of their homeland--the sisters encountered an unsettled frontier that possessed a small population. One of the first adaptations they had to make was the decision to work with Anglo-American and European Catholic settlers rather than the Sioux Indians. The sisters arrived before the tribes had been pacified sufficiently to call for mission schools with enrollments large enough to justify asking orders to send teachers to staff them. Only two alternatives remained for the nuns: to return to Ireland or to establish a school among white settlers in the territory. After considering the first, they instead remained and opened schools at Fargo and Aberdeen. The convent at Aberdeen separated from the one at Fargo after statehood was granted to South and North Dakota and began its independent development in 1892.

A second adaptation the Presentation Sisters achieved was the

removal of their order from the rule of enclosure. The Irish communities had followed the restrictions since the early 1800s whereby they stayed within the walls of their convents and severely limited nuns' contacts with the outside world. Once the motherhouse at Aberdeen was established, the sisters realized how impractical cloistered living was in a frontier region where settlements were scattered over a large area. If they hoped to extend their influence they would have to travel more freely throughout the state. Both Bishop Marty and his successor Bishop O'Gorman agreed that the rule of enclosure should be lifted, and because the order came under their jurisdiction as a diocesan congregation they had the authority to grant the dispensation. Pope Pius XII gave final support when the Presentation Sisters became a pontifical order in 1946.

The environment influenced another adaptation the sisters made when they decided to extend their activities into health care. The city of Aberdeen experienced a diphtheria epidemic in 1900, and the order responded to calls for help from the townspeople because no adequate facilities for caring for the sick existed. Their success at founding and running St. Luke's Hospital led to requests from three other cities for similar operations, and the nuns rewrote their constitution to include nursing as an acceptable apostolate. The majority of Presentation foundations concentrated solely on teaching. Thus the departure of the foundation at Aberdeen into health care made it a unique community within the Presentation Federation. The two apostolates--teaching and nursing--had different images within the motherhouse. Nursing was done because the sisters saw that it was needed, but

teaching remained the favored choice, most likely because of its central position in Presentation tradition.

One other significant adaptation to the environment that the order accomplished was the development of the extended apostolate. In response to changes in American society, the sisters saw their roles in education and health care dwindle as several parochial schools in the diocese closed and nursing grew more and more complex and distant from the patient. Through attempts to fit their apostolate more closely to the needs of the people they served the sisters got involved in parish ministries, community health service, and foreign mission work to name a few. The extended apostolate provided nuns with opportunities to search for and develop new occupations that would allow them to offer their services where they would be most needed. That had been the order's original intention in 1880 and 1901, but times had changes and their traditional teaching and nursing roles no longer proved the most useful.

Not only did the Presentation Sisters undergo change due to the environment during their tenure in South Dakota, but also they exerted an impact on the region by virtue of their education and health care apostolates. In response to requests from many parish priests they agreed to staff parochial schools in the small farming communities of eastern South Dakota. In those schools over the year they taught three and four generations of Catholic children, providing them with religious instruction and basic elementary and secondary education. Their relatively inexpensive services made it possible for Catholic parents to chose between public and private school systems, and their commitment to the faculty of Notre Dame Junior College enabled more

than a thousand students to gain the beginnings of higher education at a time when the four-year colleges in South Dakota were too expensive for many rural students to attend.

In health care the Presentation Sisters' impact was even more significant because it was not confined mostly to the Catholic population as it was in education. Their hospitals and schools of nursing served large numbers of non-Catholics as their reputation for providing excellent care and training encouraged Protestants to use their services regardless of their religious affiliation. In fact, many people preferred the Presentation hospitals over other denominational or public facilities just because of their religious atmosphere. The nuns' concern for the total patient instead of solely for physical ailments contributed to their high reputation in health care. The Presentation Sisters had an impact in nursing education as well. Their development of the associate degree program in an attempt to alleviate the shortage of nurses by training RNs in two instead of three years and provide the students with exposure to college curricula contributed to a national trend.

Although the nuns had an impact in education and health care, the levels of leadership they attained in both apostolates differed. They never displayed a high degree of leadership in the schools they staffed, but they did evolve as leaders in health care. This difference came about due to the roles they served in each apostolate. As teachers they went to schools upon invitation and worked under the guidance of local pastors. They did not own any of the schools they staffed (except Presentation College after 1951); so, no opportunity for them to rise to positions of leadership existed. Because the parishes

financed the schools, the sisters had no responsibility to provide funds, and the priests retained final authority in establishing curricula and setting other school policies. With the creation of the Diocesan Office of Education, potential for leadership on the part of the sisters did appear but whether or not they succeeded depended on how well the office was accepted by the parishes within the diocese.

In health care the Presentation Sisters did become leaders chiefly because they owned the four hospitals they operated and bowed to no authority other than the bishop's. They developed financial programs, organized plans for construction of expanded facilities, coordinated nursing education curricula, participated in the Nurse Cadet Corps during World War II, and competed for federal grants. Thus through the years many sister-nurses developed organizational and supervisory skills that enabled them to achieve leadership positions. Even after the sisters no longer served as executive directors of their hospitals, they retained leadership as members of the order's health care council and oversaw the continued high level of care provided at their facilities. The innovative associate degree nursing program developed at Presentation College by nursing educators exemplified the leadership the sisters enjoyed in health care. The success of the course along with continued efforts to improve and upgrade elements such as class offerings and faculty qualifications were achieved due to dynamic solidly based leadership. This ability developed during years and years of encouragement in the health care apostolate.

The differences in levels of leadership between the two apostolates could be explained, but an irony remained. The main ingredient needed for the sisters to become leaders was opportunity. Because nuns

traditionally stressed humility as a positive trait, it was unthinkable for them to defy parish priests or circumvent their authority so even if opportunity had existed in the teaching apostolate the sisters most likely would not have recognized it as such. In health care, however, because they retained ownership and final authority in their hospitals, the sisters need not fear a lack of humility, and the opportunity to achieve leadership existed in all areas of the apostolate, perhaps because no counterpart to the parish priest served to exert leadership for them. The irony in the different levels of leadership existed in the preferred position that teaching retained even though the sisters never achieved the high degree of leadership as educators that they did as health care providers. A myth, related to the traditional Presentation emphasis on teaching, evolved that caused the nuns to designate one apostolate as the most desirable while they excelled in the other.

During their ninety-six years in South Dakota the Presentation Sisters saw a great deal of change within their community. They progressed from traditional to modern positions in training novices, governing themselves, and developing apostolates. The typical sister of the order's early years in the region underwent a rigid schedule of preparation, progressing from temporary to final vows by following specified time limitations and subjects for study. External conformity and tradition received high emphasis during the novitiate, and the young nun could expect to assert little if any of her own opinion in choosing her apostolate. By 1976 much of this had changed as the novitiate became more individualized and candidates enjoyed great flexibility in choosing their occupations. Most of the tradition for

tradition's sake had fallen by the wayside.

In the early years of the order's government the reverend mother retained final authority even though a sister always had a voice in her election. Over the decades she developed an executive council--also elected--to advise her, and as the order's structure and responsibilities became more complex the council took on more and more duties. By the 1970s the concentration of power belonged to a group of nuns instead of resting in the hands of one sister, and earlier separation of the reverend mother (now called superior general) had evaporated as she shared her responsibilities and encouraged a high level of participation in decisions for the order as a whole and for individuals within the community.

The development of the extended apostolate best illustrated the modernization of the Presentation Sisters. In the early years the nuns expected to serve as teachers or nurses with very little say in their placement. By the mid-1970s they could make their own decisions in education and occupation and even received encouragement to develop their own careers within the limits of gaining approval for their proposals by the community's leaders. The pattern that actually evolved in the extended apostolate was that most new positions were modifications of the traditional teaching and nursing roles rather than complete departures, but the most significant change was the high level of individual nuns' participation in decisions about their own futures. This demanded a degree of personal sense of responsibility not earlier allowed in the community, and although it frightened some sisters and contributed to defections in the 1960s and 1970s, those who met the challenge of thinking more for themselves than nuns had done in the

past benefited from the sense of satisfaction they enjoyed in occupations of their own choosing.

As the Presentation Sisters celebrated their bicentennial in 1976 their thoughts turned naturally to the future. Would the community survive and continue to have an impact in eastern South Dakota? The answer depended on the number of new candidates who joined the order. Vocations had declined in number during the turbulent years of renewal, and for several years the nuns actually lost membership because professed sisters were leaving the community. From a high of more than 300 members in 1961 the total had fallen to 271, and the average age gradually increased as no young women were entering to lower the statistic. Some degree of optimism could be felt during the celebration, however, because for the first time in several years there were three candidates for membership undergoing formation. The sisters realized that the large classes of novices they had accepted in earlier years were a thing of the past, but they believed that the young women who entered the community had a high level of commitment and thus would be more likely to remain in the order than many earlier novices had been. They developed a preference for quality over quantity in their position on numbers of new candidates.

If a steady though small number of young women continued to enter the order, its future appeared assured. Financially secure and organizationally sound, the community possessed a balance between tradition and modernization that would enable it to maintain order as well as flexibility. The sisters had a long history of combining adaptation to the environment with their ability to influence the areas in which

they labored. Whether order continued to have an impact in education and health care or moved into entirely different apostolates, it nevertheless would remain a significant institution in eastern South Dakota. The six Irish sisters who arrived in the territory in 1880 had begun a long and positive contribution to the development of the society and culture of the northern plains.

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