



# St. Angela School

today's learners, tomorrow's leaders

All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.

*Julian of Norwich*

MAY 2020

## A look at our very beginnings!

Very early in March, just before our world tilted, throwing us all a bit off balance, I visited the campus of St. Mary of the Woods in Terre Haute, Indiana, the home of the Sisters of Providence. It was the Sisters of Providence who opened St. Angela School and staffed it until the mid to late 1980s.

I went there to learn what I could about the storied teachers who fill our alumni memories. I was intrigued by the great respect and love apparent in the messages engraved on the bricks in our garden and wanted to learn more about these women. My host was the dedicated and welcoming archivist, Sr. Janet Gilligan, S. P. She provided me with access to the story of St. Angela as told by the sisters—the sisters who returned each August to welcome back the hundreds of children who

made St. Angela their school home—and she helped me connect with some of the sisters who live at St. Mary of the Woods and once taught at St. Angela.

The archives tell our story, but more than that, they bring to life the women who built a community here in Austin, a community which endured much in the sixty years of their service, changing utterly in the final fifteen.

Something remarkable happened here. Because of these sisters, this same community has had the resilience to endure many more challenges, and ultimately get to where we are now: our Centennial year.

Our space here is far too limited to do the sisters' story justice. Please visit our website for more.

*Lynn Fredrick  
Director of Advancement*



Left: 1932, back left to right: Srs. Rose Ann, Mary Albertina, Mary Lurina, Mary Clement, Ignatius, Florena Marie, Hermione. Center: Margaret Rose, Veronica, Claire. Front Anna Rose, Catherine Ann. Right: 1964, from left: Srs. Edwardine McNulty, Marie Clairice Toomey, Marie Corina Sullivan. Frances Alma McManus. Below: St. Angela in the late 40s after two additions. The original building is the right hand section of the wing on the left, the section that includes the smaller door.



## Mahoney Fund to Provide Summer School Scholarships

We hope that you and your family have weathered this odd year, and that perhaps by the time you are reading this we have passed the worst of it—and have begun the long, slow process of economic recovery. Most of us have taken a hit, either leaving us without work for months or leaving our retirement fund less healthy than it was.

Ideally, we'll be in summer school toward the end of June, and all through July. We know that our boys and girls will benefit from being back in the classroom, learning in community with others.

We're in the midst of a special funding initiative to help keep the cost of summer school as low as possible for our families. Please, if you are able to help, use the enclosed envelope to contribute to the Mahoney Fund for Scholarship. This fund, named for dear friend and philanthropist Pat Mahoney, who passed away five years ago this spring, will be restricted to this special cause.

On behalf of our boys and girls and their families, thank you and God bless!

Education then,  
beyond all the other devices  
of human origin,  
is the great equalizer  
of the conditions of men,  
the balance-wheel  
of the social machinery.

*Horace Mann*

# The Sisters of Providence at St. Angela

In a letter dated June 24, 1927 to Msgr. Thomas P. Bona, Chair of the Archdiocese of Chicago School Board, Rev. Joseph Fitzgerald, the first pastor of St. Angela parish wrote: "Herewith is a report of the housing conditions of the Sisters... at St. Angela Convent." The report describes the situation in a private house on Massasoit Avenue 1/2 block from the school which housed eighteen sisters. They slept in two porches with four beds each, two private bedrooms, and four bedrooms with two beds in each. These eighteen Sisters of Providence shared two bathrooms. Recommendation? A new convent.



Ground was not broken for two years, however, so it was January 25, 1931 when the new convent was dedicated. By then, there were twenty religious sisters serving the parish, teaching 820 students.

The story of the life the sisters led at St. Angela is contained in the carefully typed pages of a small, three ring note book called: "Chief Events in the History of the St. Angela Convent and School." Each page is a synopsis of a year; the date the sisters arrived; the date they left to return to Terre Haute for the summer. The notebook lists the number of children who graduated, and the number who received sacraments. In addition, some interesting facts.

In June 1935 at the closing exercises a fee of 50¢ was charged. (Tuition!) The enrollment was 962. (This is the only

mention of tuition in the diary.)

An extensive building program was launched in 1937 to move the rectory from Massasoit to the corner of Potomac and Menard and to construct an addition to the school. Due to an outbreak of polio Chicago schools did not open until the end of September but even then the addition was not ready so children attended school in half-day shifts until October 15.

The first Mass in the new church was held on December 23, 1951; the class of 1952 was first to graduate in the church.

Kindergarten classrooms were closed in 1952 to make additional space for first and second graders. And in 1959 the cafeteria was repurposed for use as two additional classrooms. School enrollment: 1,252.

In 1959 the front side of the school (Massasoit side) was refaced in lannon stone to match the church.

In 1960-61 St. Angela reached a student population of 1,353. The following year there were twenty teaching sisters and seven lay teachers managing 27 classes. Second grade was split again into half-days because of demand.

In 1963-64 a new addition on Massasoit was opened to contain three eighth grade classrooms. And in 1965 a gym program began for fourth through eighth graders.

Sixty years in the St. Angela story, as narrated by the sisters. More notable than the facts, though, the little book sings with their faith and love, and their commitment to each other, and to the parish they served.

## Sr. Francis Maureen, McGrory, S.P., Remembered

The archives are full of the story of St. Angela under the leadership of Sr. Francis Maureen McGrory, principal from 1965 to 1981. It was a time of rich exploration of what was possible in the "new church" and Sr. Francis made certain that her children had access to as much of the world as she could put in front of them.

When Sr. Francis Maureen died in March 2011, Sr. Nancy Nolan gave her eulogy, and said of her "Francis was what we call in community a 'real school woman.' She kept up on all the new school trends and implemented them. Francis knew how to hire good teachers, coach them, and how to handle the students and parents....

Monsignor Daniel Cunningham was pastor at Angela's when Francis arrived. He was also the superintendent for many years. He knew he had a good one in Francis..."

Sr. Francis was the oldest of twelve children. She received her bachelor's degree from St. Mary of the Woods College, her master's from Indiana State University. In her 65 years as a Sister of Providence she spent 48 years in ministry to the schools of Indiana and Illinois, including 27 as principal. In 2007 she returned to the motherhouse in Indiana where she gave herself to the ministry of prayer. St. Angela thrived under the leadership



of Sr. Francis. She united school families, parish leaders, faculty, staff and students to one end: the creation of a vibrant educational community. Her legacy remains in the hearts of all who knew her.

## Chatting with Sr. Jeannette Marie Lucinio, S.P.

Sr. Jeannette arrived at St. Angela in 1964 and taught there until 1971. This may not seem like a long assignment but Sr. Jeannette reports that it was the happiest time in her life—and the years that had the greatest impact on her future.

“We had a houseful in the convent then, and there were six or so of us in our 20s,” says Sr. Jeannette. “A lot depended on us but with the responsibility came many opportunities.” This was, of course, the time of the Second Vatican Council when tremendous change was felt throughout the Catholic Church. All information was filtered through the priests of the parish, however Fr. O’Brien and Fr. Jack Ryan were very open and eager to share what they knew. “They would meet with us in the evening to tell us everything they had heard about the change that was coming. It was so exciting for all of us.”

Sr. Jeannette and the three other first grade teachers (Sr. Mary Alfred, Sr. Mary Tarasita, and Sr. Laurence Ann) had the chance to take a Saturday class to learn

more about the Council documents. “I was invited to stay on,” she says, “and to update other teachers. This opportunity changed my life.”

She began work on her master’s degree and was called to write for Paulist Press which was working on a new religion curriculum for schools. “The series was called *God’s Mighty Deeds* and I was writing the second grade section, *Come to the Father*. Sr. Francis Maureen was principal at the time, and she allowed me to test the material on my students even though they were in first grade. We saw the value of the program immediately. American teachers were still teaching religion as a subject; this curriculum changed that focus to one of relationship: “I’m going to tell you about Jesus.”

Sr. Jeannette went on to teach at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago for 25 years where she served in the Department of Word and Worship. Although she lives now at St. Mary of the Woods in Terre Haute she retains many of the friendships that she made at CTU with leaders of the

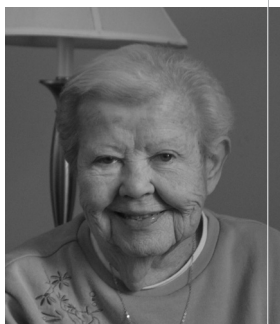


Church in Chicago.

Before we finished our conversation Sr. Jeannette had one more memory to share. “In the seven years at St. Angela we went from full habit to modified habit to secular clothes. The first day we were ‘secular’ my first graders walked past me, not knowing who I was until I spoke. When I did speak it was clear that truly ‘the sheep know the shepherd’s voice!’”

## Sr. Nancy Nolan, S.P.

Sr. Nancy (formerly Sr. Jean Paula) arrived at St. Angela in 1965, working closely with Sr. Francis Maureen. She was called to move on from St. Angela, though, and her service has been wide and varied. Sr. Nancy spent a year at the Sisters of Providence mission in Taiwan. She served as the 15th general superior of the Sisters of Providence (1986-96) and enjoyed a distinguished tenure as the President of Mother Theodore Guerin High School in River Grove (subsequently Guerin Prep), leaving that role in 2009. When Sr. Nancy returned to St. Mary of the Woods, where she lives now, she began a new ministry, working with volunteers who visit the Federal Prison in Terre Haute. Sr. Nancy is still in touch with former St. Angela colleagues. She says, “What I really value is the relationships through the years: the relationships with the sisters I lived with and the relationships with the students and parents. I don’t think there is any place I have ever been that I have not continued some relationships.”



The St. Angela convent community in 1993 included, front row from left: Sam, faithful watch dog; Kathleen Smith, Sr. Francis Marita Schuler (volunteered in the library and school office); Sr. Mary Magdalen Schwartz (Development Office at Providence-St. Mel.) Back row, Sr. Joseph Ellen Keitzer (a member of St. Angela parish staff and still active in ministry to the Austin community); Sr. Loretta Picucci; Sr. Norene Golly (Development Office at Providence-St. Mel.); Sr. Ann Lucille Mortell (taught remedial reading at St. Angela School.)

ST. ANGELA SCHOOL

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## Remembering the Sisters of Providence

*Included in the archives of the Sisters of Providence is a letter written to an unknown sister by a former student. It is a beautiful tribute to the sisters and a statement of what they meant in his life, and doubtless the lives of many others. We include some excerpts.*

“**T**his time of year I always think about the Sisters returning to St. Angela’s convent after summer vacation. You would begin to see them walking through the neighborhood ‘two by two.’ When we were younger we would run to meet them, and crowds of children would walk with them, just for the honor of doing so. And if they knew your name, well, you were on top of the world for the rest of the day....

You seemed surprised when I could remember all the names of the Sisters who taught me at St. Angela. My answer to you is, how could I forget them? These were the women who were there during the most formative period of my life.

My first grade teacher was Sister Elizabeth Rose, a gentle woman, with the face to rival Ingrid Bergman...My second grade teacher was Sister

Joan Clair, a small woman with the energy of an athlete....My fourth grade teacher was Sister Providencia, a tall woman of quiet dignity, who stood so straight that I sometimes thought she would break...My sixth grade teacher was Sister Rose Helene, a feisty little woman with a rapier wit and eyes in the back of her head... My seventh grade teacher was Sister Marion Loretta, a tough woman who taught me the meaning of the phrase ‘you are only fooling yourself’... My eighth grade teacher was Sister Theresa Mary, a pretty young woman, my first real crush. She taught me respect for women.

The Sisters of Prividence at St. Angela School taught me the value of learning. The value of praying. The value of saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’...I wish I could tell you that I have lived my life as they had taught me to...I can honestly say...the times things went wrong for me, were the times I forgot some of the basic rules these women tried to drive through this thick Irish skull.”

“...how could I forget them? These were the women who were there during the most formative period of my life.”