

The Sisters of Charity Federation and the Vincentian Charism in North America

Extending the Reach of Charity

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Sisters of Charity

PART I: **The Vincentian Charism of Charity Takes Root in the New World**



St Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton

In the closing decades of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, a series of events occurred that would dramatically change the course of Catholicism in the United States, allowing it to take root and flourish. Indeed, in time, the history of the new republic would become inextricably intertwined not only with the American Church, but with the American expression of a congregation of Charity founded in France centuries before.

The beginnings, however, were slow. The new republic itself was formed in 1783 in the aftermath of a long and bloody revolution. The United

States was conceived by its founders as an experiment in a radical new way of being: democracy, with “liberty and justice for all.” But flaws in its original design led to serious consequences that persist to our day.

For many groups, including Catholics, Jews, atheists, and even some Protestant sects, religious liberty was not guaranteed as a fundamental right until it was incorporated into the Bill of Rights in 1791. Even then, individual states had Established churches until the 1820s.

Though freedom of religion provided for the separation of Church and State, this assurance did not necessarily make it easy for the Catholic minority to practice its faith. Intolerance, discrimination, and bigotry — often subtle, sometimes violent — abounded. But the young church was served well by visionary leaders whose presence, courage, and extraordinary skills enabled it to flourish and grow.

Without a doubt the greatest of these early clerics was John Carroll, ordained the first Bishop, later Archbishop, of the United States. When he was consecrated bishop in 1789, Carroll became head of a diocese encompassing the whole country. He had 22 clergy, many from Europe; few churches or church-owned property; and no active communities of religious women to assist in the work of tending to the spiritual and material needs of the largely immigrant, largely poor Catholic population.

Of his immediate concerns, the first was the establishment of a seminary to train American men for the priesthood. He asked the French Sulpicians for help; when they arrived in 1791 they began what would become St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. They would also be an important factor in the formation of the first American community of women religious in the United States. In Carroll's far-sighted view, the education of young women was key to the survival of Catholicism in an often-hostile environment. As wives and mothers, women constituted the moral and spiritual bedrock of their families. A community of religious whose ministries included education among other works of charity was essential to Carroll's vision.

The founding of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's, Emmitsburg, in 1809 launched an amazing — though not always easy — collaboration between clergy and religious that formed the nucleus of the parochial school system in the United States. Other works, including health care, and the care of orphans and the elderly, soon followed. In some places, the care of orphans preceded the establishment of a local parochial school.

The catalyst for this enterprise was a young widowed convert, Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton. Her story is well known. Born in New York in 1774, her parents were Dr. Richard Bayley, a prominent physician, and Catherine Charlton Bayley, who died when Elizabeth was three.

Elizabeth married William Magee Seton in 1794; together they had five children. By 1801 Seton's health had deteriorated —

tuberculosis was the “Seton disease” — and his considerable shipping business went bankrupt, due in part to piracy on the high seas and the effects of the British embargo during the Napoleonic wars. He, Elizabeth, and their young daughter sailed to Italy, in an attempt to restore his health. However, after spending thirty days in quarantine in the lazaretto at Livorno, William died on December 27, 1803.

The new widow stayed with her husband’s friends, the Filicchis, for an extended period of time, and was introduced by them to the Catholic faith. On her return to the United States, and after a year-long period of discernment, she was received into St. Peter’s Catholic Church, Barclay Street, on March 14, 1805.

Her decision to leave the Episcopalian church turned her into a virtual outsider among many of her family and friends. Hard pressed to earn a living to support her children, she counted on the unfailing help of the Filicchis, and new friends, lay and clerical, among the Catholic community. In his meetings with her supporters and herself, Bishop Carroll recognized in Mrs. Seton the talents and skills, spiritual and intellectual, that were needed to carry out his vision of an American sisterhood dedicated to the service of the poor. In a way that can only be described as the workings of providence, this vision resonated in Elizabeth’s heart as well, and though she had no experience of religious life, she had a deep and abiding trust that the will of God would bring her to a place she could call home.

Elizabeth moved her young family to Baltimore and started her first school in a little house on Paca Street. She was soon joined by a number of women who with her would form the beginnings of the first American sisterhood, and in 1808 moved with the fledgling community and a few students to Emmitsburg, fifty miles west of Baltimore. Samuel Cooper, a well-to-do convert and seminarian, gave money to buy the property and start the foundations of what would become the first Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity. The Sulpicians took on the task of directing the new community, a circumstance that Archbishop Carroll was not entirely satisfied with. However, strapped as he was for clergy, he acquiesced when presented with the *fait accompli*.

The new community was modeled after the Daughters of Charity, founded in 1633 by Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. Careful to distinguish their radical departure from the cloister, the only norm of religious life available at the time, the founders had crafted the Rule, the vows, their common prayer, as well as their dress and apostolic outreach in such a way as to ensure that the Daughters would never become an enclosed order of nuns. The Sulpician émigrés to the United States had worked with the Daughters in France, were familiar with their rule and its spirit, and were convinced that, with some modifications, it would fit the needs

of the American church and its people. In 1810, Bishop Benedict Joseph Flaget was able to procure a copy of the rule and carried it with him across the Atlantic. Elizabeth Seton translated it into English, and with some modifications to suit the American situation, the Sisters, who had lived its spirit, were now able to abide by its spirit-filled words as well.

From the beginning there were differences of opinion about the relationship between the American community and its French counterpart. Many of the Sulpicians were convinced that there should be a union with the Daughters in Paris, and were indeed eager to hand over the responsibilities for directing the community to others. Bishop Carroll and other clergy believed that the community should remain as it was, a separate, thoroughly American community. These differences would later come back in full force to change the original foundation and cause a three-way split in the congregation. By 1850, the Emmitsburg community had become a province of the Daughters of Charity of France. Prior to this union, an independent community had emerged in New York in 1846, and in 1852 a second one in Cincinnati.

Each community, under the leadership of women who had been companions of Elizabeth Seton from the beginning, felt strongly that the actions they undertook for the sake of the mission they had embraced was the right, indeed the only way of being faithful to the legacy of the founders, and their spiritual mother.

Eventually, five provinces of Daughters of Charity were established in the United States. And from the two offshoots of the original foundation, New York and Cincinnati, still other groups emerged, flourished, and grew to maturity. Local ordinaries, desperate for women religious to help with the needs of the increasing numbers of immigrant Catholics flocking to their dioceses, persuaded the leadership of the already established communities to send Sisters to replicate the works of charity for which these communities were already well noted.

In 1849, at the invitation of Bishop William Walsh, three New York Sisters traveled to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and formed a community that within a short period of time become international, with provinces in Canada and the United States. Another group of women religious, the Sisters of St. Martha, were started as an auxiliary order of the Sisters of Charity, and in 1894 accepted women from Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Their ministry would be to serve the domestic needs of the local seminary. In 1900, at the urging of the bishop of Antigonish, fifteen of these Sisters formed an independent community, retaining the name of the community they had joined, but formulating their own constitutions and rules.

In 1859, persuaded by Bishop James Roosevelt Bayley of Newark, nephew of Elizabeth Seton, the New York community also provided Sisters who, along with a small number of women formed in the novitiate in Cincinnati, began the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, Convent Station, New Jersey.

The Cincinnati congregation also sent Sisters to Greensburg, Pennsylvania, in 1870, to start the community known as the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. One of the first postulants of the newly-independent Cincinnati community, Sister Aloysia Lowe, became the first Mother of the Seton Hill community.

Thus, from the original community located in the rolling hills of Maryland, five additional congregations emerged, faithful to the spirit of the original charism, yet true originals in themselves, with a unique perspective on what it meant to be Charity.

But the Charity expression of religious life in the United States and Canada is larger than that of the foundations who trace their lineage to Mother Seton. It is interesting to note that for the most part the rule used by these other congregations was the one Elizabeth Seton had translated and adapted to fit the needs of the American experience.

As early as 1812, other such foundations sprang up. In that year Mother Catharine Spalding and her companions began the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky, under the impetus and direction of Father Jean Baptiste David, Sulpician and second superior of the Emmitsburg community, who had gone "west" with Bishop Flaget. Although there was talk of a merger with Emmitsburg, the community retained its independence. The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas, were founded in 1851 by a member of the Nazareth community, Mother Xavier Ross, to serve the needs of the people in Kansas, Montana, and other western states.

In 1829, Bishop John England of Charleston, South Carolina, appealed to Emmitsburg for a copy of the rule, and encouraged four women, including Theresa Barry, to start a community with education and the care of orphans as their main focus. Always a small community, the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy, Charleston, were unique in one respect: they operated in an arena that was for the most part suspicious of and hostile to the Catholic Church. Through their educational and child care outreach to all, they were able to allay the fears of their Protestant neighbors and win support for their works.

Bishop Thomas Connolly of Saint John, New Brunswick, journeyed to New York on several occasions in the 1850s to ask for help in overcoming the perennial problems of recently arrived, mostly Irish immigrants, including devastating bouts of cholera. In 1854, at a time when the numbers of Sisters at her disposal had been

reduced by half of what they had been before the separation from Emmitsburg, Mother Jerome Ely asked for volunteers from the New York novitiate to go with Bishop Connolly and form a new community. Thus the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception became one of the early communities of women to serve the needs of English-speaking Canadians. In 1924, a number of their French-speaking Sisters created a community of their own, *Les Religieuses de Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Cœur*, with a motherhouse in Moncton, New Brunswick. Their purpose was to establish a French-speaking novitiate to serve Acadian women who were seeking to enter the community; the enculturation of the charism to meet the needs of the people was once again evident.

In 1902, the Vincentian Sisters of Charity, a European community formed in the Vincentian spirit, came as missionaries to Slovak immigrants in the mining area of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Their story would add another chapter to the story of Charity in North America.

PART II: History of the Federation

In the mid-twentieth century, the historical period of expansion and separation gave way to one of gradual cooperation. In 1947, the apostolic delegate to the United States, Amleto Giovanni Cardinal Cicognani, suggested that the superiors of those congregations who claimed to be daughters of Elizabeth Seton work together toward the cause of her canonization. To this end the first meeting of the Conference of Mother Seton's Daughters was held in Emmitsburg, Maryland, on October 28-29, 1947. Sister Isabel Toohey, D.C., Visitatrix of the Emmitsburg Province, served as hostess for the meeting. Representatives of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of New York; Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth, Convent Station; Sisters of Charity of Mt. St. Joseph, Cincinnati; Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, Greensburg; and Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax were joined at the first meeting by a representative of the St. Louis Province of the Daughters and the auxiliary bishop of Baltimore. Some of the memories of the early breaks and the pain associated with them needed to be healed. Each congregation shared its founding story and historical roots, and the group began to work together toward the canonization of Elizabeth Seton. In addition to the General Superior of each congregation, members of the council as well as the vice-postulators of the cause attended subsequent meetings.

At these meetings concrete plans and strategies were developed to promote the cause. Each congregation committed its members to

special prayers and sacrifices on a different day of the week. They each worked diligently to foster devotion to Elizabeth Seton among their students, colleagues and patients. An official portrait was selected; plays and pageants were produced in her honor. In the process of these very focused endeavors, the Conference members became true collaborators.

Later, in response to the call of Vatican II, the focus widened. The decree on the renewal of religious life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, directed congregations with the same or similar charisms to unite or federate. In 1965 the name of the Conference was changed to the Federation of the Daughters of Blessed (later Saint) Elizabeth Ann Seton. Their stated purpose now included mutual support and development. What had previously been a by-product of their work together was now one of the reasons for the existence of the Federation. In 1966 the directors (mistresses) of initial formation were convened. They too sought support from each other and practical assistance in developing ways to form new members in the charism.

With the canonization of Elizabeth Ann Seton on September 14, 1975, the initial reason for the convening of the congregations had been accomplished. The members now could spend their energy on projects related to their common charism and heritage and in an effort to work together to alleviate injustice. They began to explore new venues for collaboration, and new insights into what it meant to be a Sister of Charity in the twentieth century.

They also began to revise their by-laws and structure. This re-examining of who they were and what they were about was encouraged by a series of requests from other religious congregations to join the group. The Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of New Brunswick, Canada, sought admission to the Federation in 1979. They shared the spirit of the charism and were linked to the other congregations by their foundress, who had left the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity of New York to begin the Canadian congregation. It took the Federation three years to revise its bylaws and write a handbook, so the New Brunswick community was not admitted until 1982. Les Religieuses de Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Cœur followed suit in 1986.

In 1989 the Federation received an application from a congregation whose history was radically different from the other members. This was not a congregation with North American origins, and did not trace its heritage in any way to Elizabeth Seton and the 19th century Americanization of the rule of the Daughters of Charity. The Vincentian Sisters of Charity of Pittsburgh, originally founded in Austria-Hungary, came to the United States in 1902. The Vincentian spirit was evident not only in their name, but in their lives and

documents. They were accepted as members of the Federation in 1989. Their acceptance was quickly followed by a request from the Vincentian Sisters of Charity of Bedford, Ohio. Some Sisters from the Pittsburgh congregation had moved to Ohio in 1928, at the invitation of the local Bishop, to serve the immigrant poor; they formed an independent congregation in 1939. They too were accepted. A new era had begun in the life of Elizabeth Seton's Federation.

Meanwhile the Formation Directors were meeting and planning a shared program called "Roots." In this program novices spent two weeks of intensive study on the charism together. Joining them for this program were the Formation Directors of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth and the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. Neither of these congregations was in the Federation yet. But during their time together, novices and directors experienced the value of sharing their experience of the charism with others in the same tradition.

In 1991 the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth joined the Federation. Begun in 1812, this congregation had followed the same rule that Elizabeth Seton adapted from the Daughters of Charity, and further adjusted it to fit pioneer life in Kentucky. They were followed into the Federation in 1994 by the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy. This congregation, begun in Charleston, South Carolina, had also received the American adaptation of the rule. While never having had a "sister" from Elizabeth Seton's congregation, they wore her black habit and widow's cap.

In 1995 the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas, joined the Federation. They had sprung from the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, and carried the same Vincentian spirit and tradition as well as the pioneering influence of their Nazareth foremothers.

Even as the Federation was expanding in numbers of member congregations, it was also providing programs for grassroots members to assist them in deepening their experience of the charism and the common vision among the congregations. Between 1988 and 1995, over 500 sisters took part in *Charity: a Shared Vision*, a week-long program for sharing and spiritual growth for sisters. Between 1992 and 2000 the Federation sponsored Seton Legacy, scholarly forums on the contribution of Elizabeth Seton to church and society. For its golden jubilee in 1997, the Federation commissioned the writing of a history. *A Vision of Service* by Sr. Geraldine Anthony, S.C. The resulting publication, traces not only the history of the Federation, but the legacy of the individual congregations who compose it.

Also in 1997, the Federation changed its name to the Sisters of Charity Federation in the Vincentian/Setonian tradition. The new name better described the composition of the membership.

The Federation was then incorporated as a non-profit organization in New York State. This incorporation was necessary for the Federation to receive NGO (non-governmental organization) status at the United Nations. The members had long desired to have a voice for the poor and oppressed not only in North America, but on the world stage. Members had missions in Central and South America, the Caribbean Islands, Asia and Africa. With a Federation NGO representative at the UN, the congregations would be able to express their concerns and to work together for justice and an end to poverty. The international dimension of the Federation members was a reality that was becoming more and more apparent to the members. It was indeed a new time for the congregations.

The criteria for membership in the Federation were clarified in 1996. Any congregation seeking membership would need to either trace their characteristic spirit and charism to the tradition of Charity of Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac and Elizabeth Seton, and/or trace the influence of the Vincentian Rule (Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity) in their documents and in their lifestyle. The new criteria were used in welcoming the newest member, the Congregation of St. Martha, in 2004. This congregation, originally formed by the Sisters of Charity of Halifax, had separated to form a new congregation in Antigonish. The charism of charity had always been obvious in their lives and ministry.

Also in 2004, the Vincentian Sisters of Charity of Bedford, Ohio, merged with the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, bringing with them new insights into ways the charism of charity can be expressed. Increasingly, that charism was becoming the source of the Federation's unity.

PART III:

The Federation Members Today

What is the lived reality of the Sisters of Charity Federation today? The spirit of Charity continues strong and vibrant in the thirteen member congregations. Approximately 4,000 vowed members and 700 lay associates/affiliates serve coast to coast in the United States and Canada, and in more than 30 other countries as well.

Like most women's congregations in North America, Federation members experience the challenge of keeping focused on mission for the future while resources of membership and finances diminish. Yet energy for the mission is evident as new ministry ventures emerge, ongoing ministries find creative ways to flourish, and gifted, generous women follow the Spirit's call to serve the poor as Sisters or Daughters of Charity.

Though strongly enculturated in the North American reality, with all its gifts and challenges, a number of Federation congregations have spread internationally. Some maintain a small but significant presence in Central and Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. Others claim an extensive and long-standing presence in Korea (Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, Pennsylvania), and in India and Belize (Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky). All experience the richness of being evangelized by the poor of many different cultures.

One of the Federation's goals is "to further understanding and expression of our common heritage rooted in Vincent, Louise and Elizabeth as expressed in the tradition of the various member congregations." This happens in many ways.

On their "Way of Elizabeth" tour of New York, Baltimore and Emmitsburg in St. Elizabeth Seton's footsteps, seminary sisters and novices learn about their common Vincentian roots, the stories of each other's communities, and current ministries. Women who entered a Federation congregation in the past 30 years find support and inspiration in the "70's and Beyond" gathering. Those responsible for initial and ongoing formation of vowed members and lay associates share ideas and programs at the annual spirit-filled gatherings of the Company of Charity Formation Personnel (CCFP).

The Federation began a major project in 1996 when it authorized a group of scholars to work on collecting and publishing the writings of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Sisters Regina Bechtle, S.C. (New York), and Judith Metz, S.C. (Cincinnati), were appointed co-editors; Ellin M. Kelly, Ph.D., served as manuscript editor. Federation archivists and their staffs, especially Sister Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., archivist of the Emmitsburg province, provided invaluable assistance. Federation representatives comprised an advisory editorial committee for the four-volume work, Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings (New City Press, 2000-2006). The volumes are marketed and distributed by the Vincentian Studies Institute at DePaul University, Chicago.

Member congregations, in their ongoing formation efforts, regularly sponsor retreats on the charism of Charity. Often they invite members of other Federation communities as speakers and retreat directors. Several members in the northeast United States have piloted a unique type of "Vincentian" directed retreat format that includes group spiritual direction and reflection on ministry with the poor.

Over time an awareness of the extended Vincentian Family has evolved along with the Federation's desire to strengthen intercongregational networking and collaboration. This desire echoes the commitment of the 39th General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission (1998) "to collaborate with the other members of the

Vincentian Family.” Federation members forged links with the Ladies of Charity of the United States (LCUSA) by appointing (1969) Sister Mathilde Comstock, D.C., to serve on the LCUSA national board. Currently Sister Mary Ann Daly, S.C. (New York), holds this position as the Executive Director of the Federation. Sister Theresa Capria, S.C. (New York), represented the Federation at the 1998 General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission in Rome at the invitation of then-Superior General Robert Maloney. Federation members have been active as presenters, planners, and participants at Vincentian Family Gatherings held in Belleville, Illinois (2005), Princeton, New Jersey (2006), and San Francisco, California (2007).

Members also serve as docents at the Seton Shrine in Emmitsburg. A special prayer service marks Federation Day, celebrated annually on March 15, feast of St. Louise. Since 1988, representatives from various Federation congregations have met as the Charity Connections group to share reflections and to write occasional essays on the charism. A first volume was published in booklet format as *Living the Charity Charism*; all the essays are posted on the Federation’s website, www.sisters-of-charity.org/, via the “Charism Reflections” link.

2009 will mark the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of Charity in the United States. To honor the planting of the charism of Charity in North America by St. Elizabeth Seton, celebrations will take place both in Emmitsburg and wherever Sisters and Daughters serve. Commemorations of this milestone for the North American church will be planned collaboratively wherever possible.

Other celebrations are on the horizon. The bicentennial of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky in 2012, and the 150th anniversaries of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas (2008) and the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, Convent Station, New Jersey (2009) will provide additional opportunities to spread the story of a shared heritage.

Another Federation goal is to “work collaboratively, sharing our traditions and gifts for the good of the Gospel.” The Vincentian spirit of “inventiveness to infinity” in mission takes flesh in numerous creative ways.

In one of the poorest counties in rural Pennsylvania, three Federation groups work together to serve the poor. Rendu Services provides a food pantry, after-school programs at nearby housing projects, a mobile health outreach, and numerous other services. At the invitation of the Northeast Province of the Daughters of Charity, who began the ministry in 2000, the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill and the Vincentian Sisters of Charity have collaboratively sponsored Rendu Services since November, 2006.

In August, 2007, vocation directors from seven SC Federation groups accompanied 23 young volunteers to the Gulf Coast to clean, scrub, and paint housing abandoned in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This collaborative service project expanded on the group's first trip in January, 2007.

The Federation's newly-adopted structure fosters rapid communication to support solidarity in mission. Its status as an NGO at the United Nations allows members to bring to a global forum their sense of the plight of the poor around the world. Sister Carol-jean Willie, S.C. (Cincinnati), currently serves as the Federation's NGO representative, a role which Sister Marie Elena Dio, S.C. (Halifax), pioneered and developed.

Members can also quickly circulate updates about natural disasters such as the 2004 tsunami in southeast Asia, the 2006 hurricanes in New Orleans and the Caribbean, or the 2007 earthquake in Peru, their impact on the poor, and concrete ways to help. Reports evoke a ready response of money, supplies, and abundant prayer.

In many of the SC Federation communities, lay associate programs are growing and thriving. Whether they are known as associates, associates in mission or volunteer ministry, Seton associates, the Seton family, or affiliates, over 700 women and men embody the Vincentian-Charity spirit and live the mission in their own lifestyles. The spirituality, enthusiasm, and commitment of these dedicated lay persons enrich the vowed members and act as leaven in the Church. Charity Associates have sponsored charism retreats in Emmitsburg and have been active in national conferences of lay associates.

Many SC Federation congregations sponsor or co-sponsor institutions that provide health care, social and family services, education, and spiritual development. In these places of ministry, mission integration is a major focus. Programs for employees at every level, from support services to senior management, seek to foster a sense that employees are our colleagues and partners in mission. They serve the mission by the way they nurture the Vincentian fire of Charity, and they share responsibility for spreading that flame.

Historically, communities tended to focus on one or more of the time-honored Vincentian ministries of health care, education, and social services. Today, members serve in a variety of ministries that give new meaning to providing "every service in their power." A quick look at each congregation's website (accessible through the Federation's website, www.sisters-of-charity.org/, via the "Members" link) will demonstrate this reality more fully than this brief essay can document.

The current Direction Statement of the Sisters of Charity Federation calls its members to:

“Embrace the international reality of our lives
both in context of membership and our mission.

And in solidarity with the poor,
[to] intentionally use our corporate energy
as Federation
for witness, advocacy and systemic change
on a global and local level.”

As a Federation rooted in the heritage of Vincent, Louise, Elizabeth Seton, Frederic Ozanam, Rosalie Rendu and our other Vincentian pioneers, we look forward to a future full of hope, abounding in new ways to embody the spirit of Charity in our church and our world.

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Note: For a thorough treatment of the history of the Sisters of Charity Federation and its Vincentian and Setonian roots, the authors recommend the article by Sister Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., originally published in The New Catholic Encyclopedia (Catholic University of America Press and The Gale Group, 2002) and available online at www.sisters-of-charity.org/, “History.”