

Living in Community

Since we tread along the same way let us extend a hand to one another to help surmount the difficulties which present themselves.

—Blessed Marie-Rose Durocher.

foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, in a letter to her sister, 11 March 1844

Writing to Sister Theresa of Jesus in April, 1848, Mother Marie-Rose reflected upon the nature of religious life. “If I had come into religion to lead a sweet and easy life, I should find myself greatly mistaken; but I find in it that which I expect,” she observed. Despite the great challenges she believed were intrinsic to religious life, Mother Marie-Rose viewed her vocation as “a joy which keeps on growing.” Succeeding generations of Holy Names sisters would agree with her assessment and share her delight in a life of dedication and service to God. From the earliest days of the congregation until Vatican II, the life of a Holy Names sister was one of strict routine, with an emphasis on spiritual perfection. It was also an era of remarkable growth, achievement, and fulfillment made possible by the shared vision and combined efforts of the entire community.

Mother Marie-Rose’s deep belief in the power of community in religious life was one of the greatest gifts she imparted to the Holy Names congregation. Throughout her brief years as a religious, she missed no opportunity to demonstrate the importance of collective action to further the end of the community. She encouraged her sisters to find strength in unison in their quest to meet the challenges of religious life. Even in her final illness, Mother Marie-Rose focused not upon her approaching death, but on the wellbeing of those around her. In her last hours, she sought forgiveness for her perceived failings toward her sisters. “I ask your pardon for having failed in kindness toward you...for having wounded your feelings...for having failed in charity toward you, by not having for you the heart of a mother.” Despite her premature death at the age of thirty-eight, Mother Marie-Rose endowed the Holy Names sisters with a shared vision of ministry and community that would guide their efforts well into the future.



Sister Cecilia Ranger as an Oregon novice, 1951



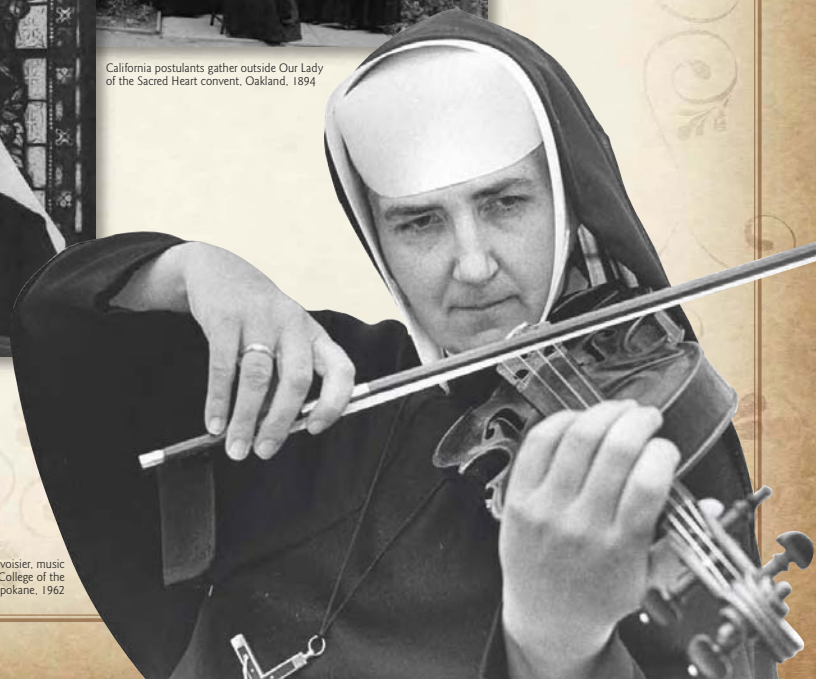
Oregon sisters Mary Alicia Alehoff and Mary Juliana Olwell on a visit to the former's home, c.1905



California postulants gather outside the Sacred Heart convent, Oakland, 1894



Sister Janina Kokorowski prays under the window of Mother Marie Rose at the Marylhurst chapel, c.1957



Sister Xavier Mary Courvoisier, music teacher at Fort Wright College of the Holy Names, Spokane, 1962