



Mission Moments

No. 35

Standing on the Shoulders

The American Experience - Overview

“To stand on someone’s shoulders” is a common phrase used to signify that we are **who** we are because of the hard work of the people who came before us. We all stand on the shoulders of those who have come before us and hopefully, in time, there will be those who will stand upon our shoulders.

Over the next several months, we will reflect upon those broad Nazareth shoulders on which each of us stands. To do this, we must begin at the very beginning of Nazareth in America. We know the basic facts about the pioneer Sisters coming to America with Mother Foundress and the cost of sending half of the Congregation to a foreign land. Placed alongside the historical, political, social and religious background of the late 19th century America, the arrival of the Nazareth Sisters was “very much needed”. The influx of immigrants from many European countries relied on religious and priests from these same countries to accompany the new arrivals and help to gradually assimilate the immigrants in this new land.

Lest we forget, the decision to come to America changed the fledgling Congregation. The American experience stretched the Nazareth charism, broadened the young Congregation’s outreach in the world, and enlarged and advanced the Congregation’s mission of spreading the Kingdom of God’s love.

Responding to the needs of the Polish immigrants in Chicago, and armed with much good will and little experience, the Sisters began the daunting task of formulating plans for the school and orphanage at St. Josaphat Parish. Almost immediately, they were invited to assume direction of an additional nearby school. Unmindful of their own adjustment to the culture, language and surroundings, the Sisters committed themselves to the mission entrusted to them. But the underlying feelings, attitudes in their hearts expressed in courage, faithfulness, dedication to service, openness to new possibilities, fear of the unknown and the courage to face whatever is asked in a new land cannot be overlooked.

Integrating the Mission

You and I are now part of this Nazareth legacy! As you and I stand on the shoulders of those who came before us, these words from the song “Standing on the Shoulders” may help us to ponder and reflect:

*“I am stronger for their courage;
I am wiser for their words.”*

(“Standing on the Shoulders” c1995 Rouse House Music (ASCAP))

- How do stories of our pioneer Sisters inspire you to live the mission each day? Are there any in particular you wish to share?

I wish you the blessings of renewed fervor in the integration of the mission in which you participate.

In the Holy Family,

S. Barbara Jean

Director for Mission Integration

“...I saw our Nazareth in America, taking roots in the spirit of the Holy Family, a spirit of love and of the liberty of the children of God. It seemed clear to me that Jesus willed to transplant our work even there, so far away.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSMFM_MRdVY

