



Shown are the crucifix grouping featuring Christ, St. Dominic, and St. Catherine of Siena as well as the Venetian glass mosaic featuring many Dominicans, all in the Dominican motherhouse chapel in Springfield.

Submitted photo



A reason to rejoice!

Dominican Sisters of Springfield celebrate 150 years of service

By DIANE SCHLINDWEIN
Managing Editor

The Dominican Sisters of Springfield certainly have countless reasons to celebrate this year. That's because it has been 150 years since a small group of religious sisters from Kentucky moved to their tiny first home in Jacksonville. And from those humble beginnings, they went on over the decades to expand their ministries far and wide.

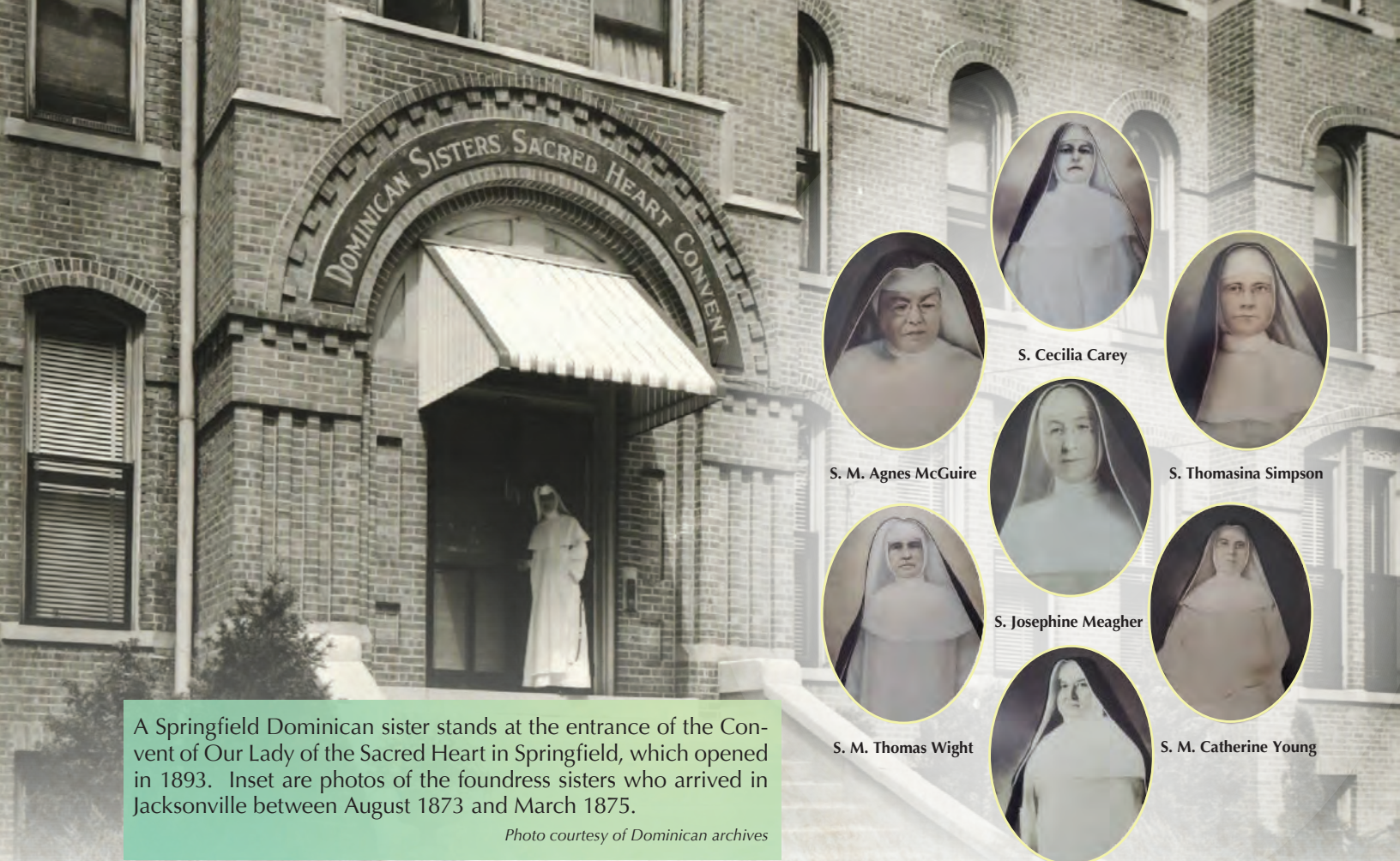
The Springfield Dominicans formally opened their celebration on Aug. 19, 2022, with a Mass for sisters and associates presided over by Bishop Thomas John Paprocki. Then just last month on April 22, the Dominicans celebrated those first days in Jacksonville with three events that honored their founding sisters and their rela-

tionships with the people of Jacksonville.

The day started with a ribbon cutting and mayor's proclamation at the Jacksonville Area Museum, where the public heard from historian Sister Susan Karina Dickey, OP, and enjoyed an exhibit of Jacksonville-related artifacts from the archives of the Dominican Sisters. (You can experience the interactive exhibit which remains on display at the Jacksonville Museum through July 30.)

The sisters also took part in a flower-laying ceremony at Calvary Cemetery, where they remembered four founding members of the community who are buried there — and

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A Springfield Dominican sister stands at the entrance of the Convent of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Springfield, which opened in 1893. Inset are photos of the foundress sisters who arrived in Jacksonville between August 1873 and March 1875.

Photo courtesy of Dominican archives

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the man who was the sisters' first and perhaps greatest benefactor, Charles Routt. Finally, the Dominican Sisters joined parishioners at Our Saviour Church for their regularly scheduled Mass, which was concelebrated by Father Adam Zawadzki and Father Alan Hunter. "We are thankful for the Dominican Sisters who have been our guides and our friends," said Father Zawadzki. "We are thankful for what they have taught us and how they have formed us to be disciples of Christ."

Sister Beth Murphy, OP, director of Communications for the Springfield Dominicans, said it was important for the sisters to "return together to the place that welcomed and sustained our founding sisters through their earliest years and most challenging moments."

At the close of the liturgy, Sister Rebecca Ann Gemma, OP, prioress general of the Dominican Sisters, addressed the congregation. "With gratitude, we sisters ... unite our voices in thanksgiving to our loving God who continues to call us forth to preach the word, even when there is sorrow. We thank you for how you have touched our lives ... we say thank you to you and to your ancestors who welcomed us into this community of faith."

After the Dominican sisters and associates blessed the assembly with Springfield Dominican Sister Mary Jean Traeger's musical version of the 13th century Dominican blessing, the group was welcomed to Routt Catholic High School for a meal and to remember the 142 years of Dominican presence in the parish.

Indeed, those founding sisters met many challenges in their early years in Jacksonville. It was in August 1873, in the scorching heat of summer, when six sisters were sent from the Convent of St. Catherine of Sienna, near Springfield, Ken., to Jacksonville, to teach a large population of Irish immigrant children at St. Patrick School, whose fathers were building the railroad.

With just a few days' notice, the sisters traveled mostly by train to find that their home was a tiny, poorly lit cottage, along with a two-story, four-room schoolhouse that was to serve 400 Irish children of all ages. The sisters slept on tiny pine cots with scratchy straw mattresses that were contributed by local farmers. Despite dealing with their difficult circumstances, the sisters moved forward with their task, subdividing the students: big girls and little girls; big boys and little boys. Then they began teaching.

The original sisters were under the impression that they were meant to stay in Jacksonville for just a few years, but finally discovered that the plan all along was for them to establish a completely new congregation separate from their sisters in Kentucky. The sisters were saddened, but once again, moved ahead.

So, in 1875, with the help of their priest, Father Peter Joseph Macken, the sisters moved from their little cottage into the former rectory, putting their home under the patronage of St. Rose of Lima. A few more women joined them there, beginning their novitiate. Another priest, Father Timothy Hickey, arrived in Jacksonville in 1879 and

became the congregation's lifelong friend and spiritual advisor. By 1885, 28 sisters were in the community.

Of course, Routt, their friend and benefactor, helped the sisters immensely, both in Jacksonville and when they eventually moved to Springfield in the early 1890s. A few years later, in 1895, the Springfield Dominicans opened Sacred Heart Academy, which in 1988 became Sacred Heart-Griffin High School.

Over the decades that have followed, the Springfield Dominicans have gone on to expand to more than 300 ministry sites worldwide. Over time, those ministries began thanks to the 975 faith-filled women who have been in the community over the years, said Sister Beth.

Nearly a third of those ministries happen within the boundaries of their home Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. The ministries of the Springfield Dominicans are too numerous to mention here, but some of the more well-known in the Springfield diocese are Sacred Heart-Griffin High School, Little Flower Parish, St. Patrick School, Cor Unum House, and St. John's Hospital, all in Springfield; Jubilee Farm in New Berlin; St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Chatham; the Cancer Care Center of Decatur; and St. Jerome Parish in Troy.

They serve not only in Central Illinois, but in Northern and Southern Illinois, Indiana, Mississippi, Iowa, South Dakota, and Peru. Through it all, the current sisters, like their founding sisters, have followed where the Holy Spirit has guided them.

"What I see unveiled in the story of the Dominican Sisters of Jacksonville is complete trust in God's providence," said Sister Susan Karina. She points out that God has guided and continues to guide the community as they make corporate stances for justice, share their financial resources, work to dismantle racism, and care for creation. "These are visible manifestations of the com-

mitment we Dominican Sisters vow to God and to each other," she said.

With all this rich history behind them, and still much more to accomplish, the Dominicans will formally conclude their year-long celebration with a public celebration of the Eucharist on Aug. 19, 2023 at 10:30 a.m. at Sacred Heart Convent in Springfield. ❖

Editor's note: Special thanks to Sister Beth Murphy, OP, who contributed to this article.

Celebrating 150 Years For the Life of the World



Photo courtesy of Dominican archives

Shown in this vintage photo are Sacred Heart Academy and the Springfield Dominican motherhouse in Springfield.

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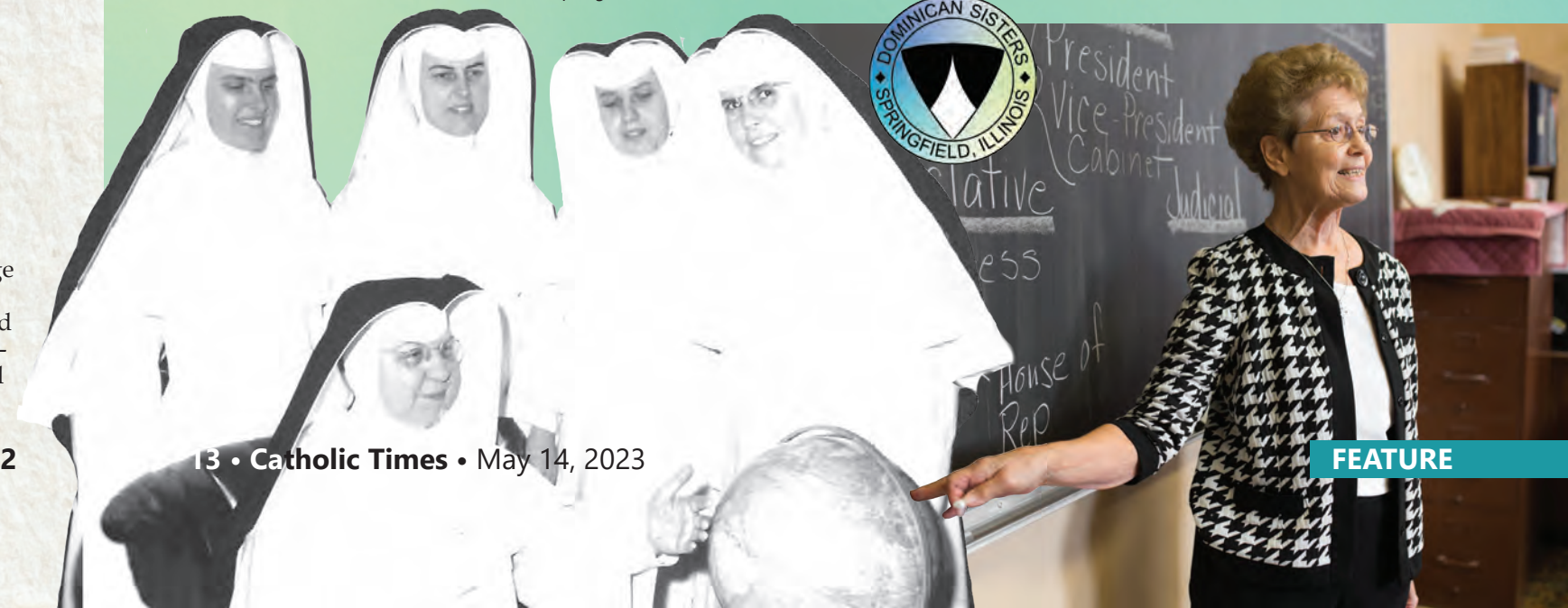
Mission Statement says it all

Called by God into right relationship with all creation and graced by Dominican life and mission, we compassionately preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

— Mission Statement, Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Illinois

At left, pictured in a diocesan archive *Western Catholic* photo in 1964 is Mother Ida Marie Adams with four Dominican Sisters who were preparing to leave for Puerto Rico to study Spanish before beginning mission work in La Oroya, Peru. At right is a modern-day Dominican, Sister Jane Ann Beckman, teaching citizenship at the Dominican Literacy Center in Aurora.

Submitted photos



150 YEARS

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Kind words show how sisters touched lives

"The very idea of thanksgiving is certainly woven into the lives and ministry of the Dominican Sisters, especially as it has been woven into the lives and ministry of the Vann and Jones family, and all those in Springfield whom I know and remember with great love. ... My memories of the Springfield Dominicans still form the foundation for my life and ministry. They helped me to make the connection and friendship with the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose here in California."

— Bishop Kevin Vann, Springfield native, diocesan priest, Bishop of Orange in California

"Scripture teaches us that we are brothers and sisters, commanded to love one another as we love ourselves. In reaching out to the vulnerable and marginalized in our society, in condemning and striving to eradicate the sin of racism, and in caring for our environment, the Dominicans are living out the faith that they teach."

— Rabbi Barry Marks, rabbi emeritus of Temple Israel in Springfield

"Perhaps the single most impactful ministry of the Dominicans in my lifetime is their commitment to the work of antiracism. Mom and Dad were with them from the beginning, nearly 20 years ago, when the sisters made the binding decision at their general chapter to commit to becoming an antiracist institution. It's difficult to see the fruits of antiracism work, and for that reason many people give up before they start. But I like to tell everyone who will listen that if the sisters

Come to the ordination Mass of three of our seminarians becoming deacons

Show your support for our future priests as Daniel McGrath, Jayke White, and Alex McCullough will be ordained to the transitional diaconate May 26 at 6:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. You are invited to the Mass. If you cannot make it, pray along by watching the ordination live at youtube.com/diospringfield.

can make the commitment to do the personal and institutional work to dismantle the structure of hate in our society, so can they. ... Mom and I are deeply grateful to the sisters for their presence in our lives and their commitment to being in relationship across boundaries, education, and community building."

— Lorelean Jordan, Springfield native and daughter of Johnetta and the late Leroy Jordan, gospel ensemble director at Church of St. Peter Claver in St. Paul, Minn.

"During my 33 years in Springfield at Sacred Heart-Griffin and Little Flower, I have treasured my work alongside Sister Mary Paul McCaughey (too briefly), Sister Kathleen Anne Tait, Sister Margaret Joanne Grueter, Sister Marilyn Jean Runkel, and Sister Katherine O'Connor. Along the way I have been mentored by Sister Maristella Dunlavy and Sister

M. Joan Sorge. As the current principal of Little Flower School, I have the great privilege of following the outstanding leadership of Sister Pauletta Overbeck, Sister Noel Plummer, Sister Francene Harbauer, Sister Rose Miriam Schulte, Sister M. Joan, and Sister Paul Mary Janssens. I definitely regard Little Flower School as a Dominican school as well as a diocesan school, and we honor the legacy of 113 Dominican Sisters who served here over the years. ... I would never have envisioned the personal and professional interconnectedness between me, my family, and the Springfield Dominicans over the years. I certainly hope that my blessed relationship with the Springfield Dominicans will continue for many years to come."

— Dr. Bill Moredock, principal of Little Flower School in Springfield and a licensed clinical psychologist

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