After 165 Years, Daughters of Charity Leave Lasting Legacy at Sisters of Charity Hospital

Community Calls Sisters to Serve in Areas of Greatest Need

James Polk was president of the United States, the California Gold Rush was underway and the American Flag contained just 30 stars, when eight Daughters of Charity, then known as Sisters of Charity, first came to Buffalo. The sisters arrived in 1848 at the request of Bishop John Timon, the first bishop of Buffalo, to serve in education, social ministry and healthcare, establishing the area’s first hospital – Sisters of Charity Hospital – on Pearl Place.

Today, 165 years later, the Daughters of Charity are turning a page in their healthcare ministry in Buffalo, entrusting their rich legacy to the doctors, nurses, support staff and management team, who will carry on their healing work at Sisters of Charity Hospital on Main St. in Buffalo and its St. Joseph Campus in Cheektowaga.

“Entrusting these ministries to others gives us the opportunity to place our sisters where there is great need, as well as provide sufficient numbers for our life together in each local community,” said Sister Louise Gallahue, D.C., Provincial of the Province of St. Louise. “It is clear, the Buffalo sisters are leaving Sisters Hospital in very capable hands and know the healthcare ministry will continue to serve the people of Western New York for years to come.”

Ascension Health, a national health system sponsored by the Daughters of Charity and the Sisters of St. Joseph, will remain a corporate sponsor and member of Catholic Health, ensuring that the health system’s mission – to reveal the healing love of Jesus to those in need – will remain a strong presence in Western New York. The sisters will also maintain a residence and ministry in Niagara Falls.

“From the moment the Daughters of Charity arrived in Buffalo in 1848 to begin their hospital ministry, the lives of countless people have been improved, both physically and spiritually,” said Bishop Richard J. Malone, Bishop of Buffalo. “The legacy of the selfless service of these grace-filled women of God lives on through generations of Western New Yorkers who will always remember how the Daughters were present to them. I am thankful to God that the Daughters’ presence and ministry in our diocese will continue in their work in Niagara Falls.

“On behalf of the entire Diocese, I am profoundly

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In 1848, eight Sisters of Charity were sent by the Daughters’ Province of the United States, based in Emmitsburg, Md., to Buffalo to serve in education, social ministry and healthcare. As the Sisters – Ann de Sales Farren, Ursula Mattingly, Hieronimo O’Brien, Anacaria Hoey, Clare McDurby, Mary Aloysia Lilly, Mary Eliza Dougherty, and Agatha O’Keefe – arrived, three were sent to establish Sisters of Charity Hospital on Pearl Place, where the first patients, six sailors, were admitted on October 1, 1848. From that date forward, Daughters of Charity have served at Sisters of Charity Hospital.

Over the next 165 years, the Daughters ministered to the residents of Buffalo in healthcare and social services, including St. Vincent’s Female Orphan Asylum in 1849; St. Mary’s Infant and Widow Asylum in 1854; Providence Retreat (Insane Asylum) in 1861; Emergency Hospital in 1902; Louise de Marillac Maternity Hospital in 1943; and the Buffalo Diocese Catholic Charities in 1970.

In 2011, four of the five Daughters of Charity’s U.S. Provinces came together to form the Province of St. Louise. Since that time, the Province has been engaged in a study to guide the future alignment of the Daughters of Charity in their missions and ministries, which are spread throughout the country. Several factors were considered, including the number of Daughters; their ability to sustain sufficiently sized communities in local missions; and their confidence in the lay leadership to carry on their works. The results of this assessment were used in the discernment process concerning the future of the Daughters’ community at Sisters of Charity Hospital, where they plan to entrust their works to others.