

Holy Family School (Seattle, Washington) records

Collection Finding Aid

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OVERVIEW OF RECORDS

Repository: Providence Archives, Mother Joseph Province, Seattle, Washington

Creator: Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province; Holy Family School's staff and students

Record Group Name: Holy Family School, Seattle, Washington

Record Group Number: 146

Dates: 1925-2000

Scope and Content: This collection comprises primarily chronicles, correspondence, local community records, and financial ledgers, with a small amount of supporting materials. Records date from 1925 to 2000, with the bulk from 1927 to 1972. The records document both the school and the convent, providing a good overview of the academic program and student activities through the years, as well as changes in the sisters' community and religious life.

Extent: Approximately 1.5 linear feet (3 document boxes) plus three oversized ledgers

HISTORICAL NOTE

Abstract: A few years after the Sisters of Providence moved their Provincial Administration from Vancouver, Washington, to Seattle, they were pleased to extend their education ministry to Holy Family School, which opened in 1927. Over the next sixty-five years, more than one hundred and fifty sisters taught at the school, establishing a deep and lasting bond between the parish and the religious community.

Early in 1926, the Sisters of Providence accepted administration of the new Holy Family School at the request of the Reverend John F. Gibboney, founding Pastor of Holy Family Parish. Located about five miles south of the sisters' new provincial office, novitiate, and residence at Mount St. Vincent, Holy Family became the community's first parochial school in Seattle. In gratitude to the community and to express his own faith in Providence, Father Gibboney selected the sisters' motto, *Caritas Christi Urget Nos* (The Charity of Christ Impels Us), to guide the new school.

Holy Family School opened September 6, 1927, with 110 students enrolled. Five sisters were assigned to the school: Sisters Ignatius of Jesus, Superior and teacher of the fifth and six grades; Judith, first grade; Celine Marie, second grade; Dorothy Raridan, third and fourth grades; and Mary Afra, music. As a postulant, Sister Raridan's assignment was temporary, and she was replaced after a few months by Sister Elenita.

During the first year, the sisters lived at Mount St. Vincent, commuting to the school by city bus. In the fall of 1928, they happily moved into the original parish social hall, which had been remodeled as a convent. Given the demands of the school day, the difficulty of the commute, and their schedule of prayer and spiritual reading, they found it much more convenient to live on the school grounds.

Holy Family Parish was one of the city's poorest, but the parishioners were steadfast in their support of the school. The sisters worked with the parents and outside benefactors to assure that all students had proper nutrition, clothing, and medical care. Soon, Holy Family was offering a well-balanced education, with the normal academic and religious program enhanced by music, orchestra, drama, physical education, and vocational training for the older boys. Enrollment grew steadily, so that by the fourth year, there were 172 students in eight grades.

The effects of the Great Depression were felt strongly in Holy Family Parish, and for a time it was feared that the school would close. Classes were grouped together on the first floor, so that the entire building would not have to be heated, and the community agreed to a temporary reduction in the sisters' salaries. In their chronicles, the sisters give credit to the intervention of St. Joseph, as well as many earthly benefactors for the survival of the school.

When the Reverend Ailbe M. McGrath was named pastor of Holy Family Parish in 1936, he asked the sisters to move back to Mount St. Vincent and negotiated a new contract with the community. The sisters' return to the Mount eased the financial burden of the parish and made it possible for Father McGrath to remodel the vacated convent for his own residence. (Previous pastors had lived in cramped quarters behind the sacristy of the church.) The sisters rode the school bus in the mornings, but it was necessary to arrange a special city bus to take them home at the end of the day. Although this change was difficult for the sisters, they soon realized that Father McGrath was committed to saving the school and to reducing the crushing debt of the parish. Within a few months, he was able to begin paying the sisters' full salaries in advance, "an unheard of precedent," according to the chronicles. As soon as the debt was paid, Father McGrath began planning for construction of a new convent, but it was not finished until March 17, 1949.

Because of the school's proximity to Mount St. Vincent, many young sisters did their student teaching at Holy Family. The postulants and novices made regular visits to both the old and the new convent, and the girls were invited to visit the sisters at the Mount. In 1941, Margaret Charboneau was the first alumna to make her vows as a Sister of Providence, becoming Sister Joan Frances. She was followed by several other young women over the years, further strengthening the bonds between the sisters and the school.

Enrollment at the school increased rapidly during the war years, due to better financial conditions, an influx of defense workers into the parish, and new government housing projects in the area. Classrooms were added in the basement and then in two portable buildings to accommodate hundreds of new students. By the 1954-1955 school year, Holy Family School comprised 736 students, fifteen crowded classrooms, and a staff of thirteen sisters and four lay teachers. The decade also saw construction of a new residence for the priests and a beautiful Romanesque church with its landmark bell tower.

In the early 1960s, enrollment fell to a more manageable level with the opening of parochial schools in nearby St. Bernadette and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parishes. Gradually, with fewer young sisters available and many experienced teachers retiring or moving into other ministries, the religious community began reducing the number of sisters assigned to the school. Holy Family seems to have avoided much of the conflict experienced in other parish schools during the post-Vatican II era, and the transition to a lay principal in 1969 was relatively smooth. The convent closed in the summer of 1972, when the sisters chose to move into smaller living situations. Although this marked the end of the formal staffing arrangement, individual Sisters of Providence served on the faculty at various times into the early 1990s.

Guided now by a dedicated lay staff, Holy Family School continues to evolve with the times to meet the challenges and further the mission of Catholic education within a vibrant, multicultural community.

ARRANGEMENT

The record group is divided into eight series: *history, administration, personnel, local community, curriculum, financial, reports, and subject series.*

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Restrictions: Providence Archives is a private repository. Access to some records is at the discretion of the archivist.

Preferred Citation: [Title of cited item]. [Series Name]. Holy Family School, Seattle, Washington.

Record Group 146. Providence Archives, Seattle, Washington.

Acquisition Information: Records were transferred to Providence Archives from Holy Family School staff.

Related Record Groups and Other Collections: Following the closure of the convent in 1972, the activities of the sisters teaching at Holy Family School are documented in the Chronicles of the Southwest Seattle/Olympia Region and, after 1987, in the chronicles of the local communities to which the individual sisters belonged. These entries focus on the sisters' personal ministry rather than on the general school program.

The records of the education apostolate and the Education Division of Sacred Heart Province contain related correspondence, reports, and the annual "school bulletin," a detailed record of enrollment statistics, student involvement in ancillary groups (e.g. Sodality, safety patrol), and special programs (music, vocational preparation, etc.). Holy Family School's Personnel and Works Reports for the period 1953 to 1972 are found within the records of Sacred Heart Province: SP Personnel.

See separate index for articles on Holy Family School printed in the periodical Caritas, published by the Sisters of Providence, Sacred Heart Province.

A small but interesting collection of photographs is stored and inventoried separately.

Processing Information: Records arranged and described by Terri Mitchell, Assistant Archivist; completed on December 27, 2000.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

History

This series includes the chronicles and one brief compilation of historical notes and statistics (taken primarily from the chronicles). The two sets of chronicles are bound in four volumes, all in English, spanning the period 1927 to 1972. The chronicles are unusually complete and well written, offering an excellent summary of school activities and the community life of the sisters. The narrative traces the growth and evolution of the school and documents the close bond that developed between the Sisters of Providence and Holy Family Parish. The impact of external forces, such as the Great Depression and World War II, is also noted in detail. Although sisters continued to teach at the school into the 1990s, the chronicles end in 1972 with the closure of the convent. (See Related Materials for subsequent chronicle entries.)

Box	Folder	Title
1	-	Chronicles, 1927-1972 (2 sets)
2	1	Historical Notes/Statistics, 1927

Administration

The administration series is primarily correspondence, with one additional folder containing the sisters' contracts with the parish, signed in 1931, 1936, and 1939. The correspondence consists of the original foundation request and approval documents (1925-1926); letters between the various pastors of Holy Family Parish, primarily the Reverend Ailbe M. McGrath (pastor from 1936 until his death in 1969), and the Provincial Superiors and members of the Education Board of Sacred Heart Province (1933-1978), regarding staffing and financial arrangements; and a folder of general correspondence (1928-1936). The contracts and correspondence shed particular light on the financial difficulties experienced by the school during the early years, as well as on the delegation of responsibilities between the sisters and the pastor.

Box	Folder	Title
2	2	Correspondence, Foundation Request/Approval, 1925-1926
2	3	Correspondence, General, 1928-1936
2	4	Correspondence, Pastor/Provincial Superior, 1933-1969
2	5	Correspondence, Education Board, 1967-1978
2	6	Agreement with Parish, 1931-1939

Personnel

Personnel records are scanty, but include a list of all Sisters of Providence who taught at the school, 1927-1972, 1974-1981, and 1991-1993. There are no official faculty or student records in the collection.

Box	Folder	Title
2	7	Sisters, 1927-1993

Local Community

Local community records, which concern the governance and administration of the convent (local community), span the entire period 1928 to 1972, including the twelve years the sisters lived at Mount St. Vincent. Although during that period (1936-1949), the sisters lived within a larger community house, they formed a separate local community, with their own council, financial accounts, and daily schedule. The records include a list of local superiors; minutes of the annual visits of the provincial superior (proces verbal); internal correspondence regarding the selection of the local council; the daily schedule (horarium); an inventory of books in the convent library; and an apostolic blessing.

Box	Folder	Title
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2	8	Superiors, 1928-1972
2	9	Proces Verbal, 1929-1958
2	10	Proces Verbal, 1938-1968
2	11	Correspondence, 1957-1970
2	12	Horarium, 1963-1967
2	13	Library Accession Register
2	14	Apostolic Blessing

Curriculum

Curriculum records are limited to two folders, one containing the daily schedule of subjects for grades one through six, 1964-1965, and the other containing information about the Reading Resource Center established by Sister Laura Volkomener in 1974. (The chronicles are the best overall source of information about the school curriculum; see also the schedules included in Reports: Criteria for Evaluation of Catholic Elementary Schools, below.)

Box	Folder	Title
2	15	Daily Schedules, 1964-1965
2	16	Reading Resource Center, 1974

Financial

Financial records are limited to an incomplete set of provincial and local council Acts of Council regarding loans and purchases (1936-1966); an internal audit report (1958); several expense and receipt ledgers (covering most of the years from 1928 to 1968); and a music lesson receipts ledger (1957-1958).

Box	Folder	Title
2	17	Local Council Acts of Council, 1936-1966
2	18	Annual Audit, 1958
2	19	Expense/Receipt Ledgers, 1928-1930
OS	-	Expense Ledger, 1928-1953
OS	-	Receipts Ledger, 1928-1953
OS	-	Expense/Receipt Ledger, 1934-1952
2	20	Expense/Receipt Ledgers, 1967-1968
2	21	Music Lesson Receipts, 1957-1958

Reports

This series contains an incomplete set of the Personnel and Works/Semi-Annual and Annual Financial Reports compiled for the religious community, which provide valuable statistical and financial data from 1928 to 1953. (See Related Materials for the location of subsequent Personnel and Works reports.) Also found here are several brief reports from the 1960s, and one section of the Criteria for Evaluation of Catholic Elementary Schools, which was conducted throughout the province in the late 1960s. From the attached correspondence, it appears that the school chose not to participate in the full evaluation.

Box	Folder	Title
3	1	Personnel and Works/Semi-Annual and Annual Financial Report, 1928-1953
3	2	Criteria for Evaluation of Catholic Elementary Schools, 1970-1971
3	3	Miscellaneous Reports/Evaluations, 1960s

Subject Series

The folders in this series are arranged in alphabetical order. Of greatest interest are the historical summaries found in the 1927 Dedication Souvenir and in the various school and parish anniversary programs and newsclippings. Also documented here is the continuing involvement of the Sisters of

Providence in the school through sponsorship of a Language Arts Award for a graduating eighth-grader and an annual tuition scholarship for a student in need.

Box	Folder	Title
3	4	Anniversary, 25th, 1946
3	5	Anniversary, 50th, 1977
3	6	Anniversary, 70th, Sisters of Providence Day, November 25, 1996
3	7	Anniversary, 70th, Mass of Celebration, February 2, 1997
3	8	Awards, Sisters of Providence Language Arts Award, 1995-1997
3	9	Awards, Sisters of Providence Scholarship, 1996-?
3	10	Benefactors, 1948-1949
3	11	Dedication of School, 1927
3	12	Holy Family Parish, Anniversaries, 1972-1997
3	13	Holy Family Parish, Bazaar, 1946
3	14	Holy Family Parish, Church Dedication, 1954
3	15	Holy Family Parish, Church Consecration, 1961
3	16	Holy Family Parish, The Reverend Ailbe M. McGrath, Pastor, 1936-1969
3	17	Newsclippings - Originals
3	18	Regina Coeli Study Club
3	19	School Programs/Operettas, 1930-1945
3	20	Stationery