

# History of Our Community Bell

by  
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## OUR COMMUNITY BELL

Far out in the reaches of Heaven,  
on shimmering waves sublime,  
has sounded this bell's clear chiming  
offering praise from restraints of time.

From the chrismed hands of our Founder,  
while the ancient rites he said,  
flowed alchemy of pontifical blessings,  
sacramental grace o'er the bell was spread.

Archbishop Gross, we lovingly thank you  
for this gift and the hundreds more --  
you made firm this foundation to Mary,  
set high aims to be striven for.

May God's angels attend the passage  
of the soul of each humble nun,  
as she flies free, with the bell's solemn tolling --  
a Unity of Beauty, "Well Done."  
Her Sisters in heaven give welcome  
repeating again, "Well done !"

Inscription on Bell:

VENITE EXULTEMUS DOMINO  
JUBILEMUS DEO SALUTARI NOSTRO

(Psalm XCIV)

Presented to the Convent of Our Lady of Perpetual Help  
by Mr. and Mrs. Bruno Boedigheimer

August 15, 1898

#### OUR CONVENT BELL

#### **Gift**

The first unit of the Motherhouse had been completed and was dedicated by Archbishop Gross on January 18, 1894. However, no bell was rung on that occasion, for none hung in the tall new belfry. It was four years later when Sister Mary Cecilia's parents, Bruno and Mary Boedigheimer, presented a beautiful new bell to the Sisters.

#### **Baptism of the Bell**

The Church sets aside bells and blesses them in a solemn ceremony performed by a bishop. In the prayers of that ceremony, the bishop asks that the sound of the bell may excite devotion and drive away storms and evil spirits. The bell is then washed with holy water, anointed with oil, and incensed. By this baptismal ceremony the bell is consecrated to religious purposes.

#### **Date of Christening**

Most Reverend Archbishop Gross blessed our new bell on the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, 1898, naming it for Our Lady of Perpetual Help. After the blessing was completed he paused before the gray-haired donors, kneeling humbly by, and placing his hands on their heads gave them a solemn blessing. He then officiated at the ceremonies of reception and profession. This was the last occasion on which the much loved founder of our Congregation officiated in those ceremonies. It was also the first chiming of the new bell.

## **Historic Occasions on Which the Bell Rang**

1898 - August 15: Ceremonies of Reception and Profession:

Receiving the holy habit - Sister Mary Catherine Bernards and Sister Mary Josephine Grant.  
Pronouncing the vows - Sister Mary Alphonsa Riehm, Sister Mary Louise Jansen, Sister Mary Veronica Jenck, and Sister Mary Hildegard Gergen.

1898 - November 16:

The death of Most Reverend William Hickley Gross, the founder of the Congregation.

1899 - June 23:

Installation of Most Reverend Alexander Christie in the diocese of Oregon City.

1903 - April 6:

The death of Sister Mary Lucy Vandal who had made her vows on her deathbed.

1906 - July 6:

The dedication of the chapel in the west wing of Saint Mary's Institute.

1911 - March 25:

The Silver Jubilee of the two foundresses, Sister Mary Wilhelmina and Sister Mary Cecilia, professed on March 25, 1886 in Mariazell Convent, Sublimity.

1924 - June 29:

The death of Mother Mary Theresa Heuberger. She had accomplished much in a short space of years as the Superior General of the Congregation.

1926 - August 26:

The installation of Most Reverend Edward D. Howard as fourth metropolitan of Oregon City. Most Reverend Archbishop Edward J. Hanna of San Francisco presided and gave him the pallium on the same occasion.

1926 - December 11:

The signing of the Decree of Praise by Our Holy Father Pope Pius XI which had been studied and accepted by the Sacred Congregation of Religious.

1930 - July 6:

The blessing of the cornerstone of Saint Mary of the Valley by Most Reverend Archbishop Howard.

1930: September 28:

Dedication of the Motherhouse and academy wing of St. Mary of the Valley to which the bell had been removed and hung high above its Romanesque roof. This marked a new era for the congregation.

1934 - May 1

The signing of the Final Decree of Approval of the Congregation and confirmation of the Rules and Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon by Our Holy Father Pius XI. This constituted the congregation a Pontifical Institute.

1936 - October 25

Dedication by Most Reverend Archbishop Edward D. Howard of the Chapel wing of the Motherhouse.

1942 - February 6

Mother Mary Wilhelmina, the heroic leader, who in 1886 had ventured forth, penniless and untrained, into the unknown region pointed out by Most Reverend Archbishop Gross, passed to her eternal reward, her task completed.

1937 - May 9

The solemn commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Congregation (which had been postponed a year awaiting the completion of the new chapel) was solemnized with a Pontifical Mass offered by Most Reverend Archbishop Howard. Following this was a reception for the friends and benefactors of the Congregation.

On the preceding Sunday a beautiful Pageant portraying the earliest history of the Sisters of Saint Mary of Oregon, which was written and directed by Sister Mary Eugenia, S.S.M.O., was produced in the Benson Auditorium in Portland. The participants had been drawn from the various schools staffed by the Congregation.

1951- November 25

The dedication of the east wing of the Motherhouse brought to a close the building plans of the Congregation. It had been completed under the supervision of Mother Mary Colette Lorch, S.S.M.O. Most Reverend Archbishop Howard officiated on the occasion.

1961- July 9

On Precious Blood Sunday the Diamond Jubilee of the Congregation was commemorated. The seventy-five years of growth and expansion were religiously celebrated. Most Reverend Archbishop Howard celebrated a solemn High Mass and Reverend Joseph Perri, S.J. gave an inspiring eulogy. Sister Mary Johanna, ninety-two years of age, was the sole surviving member of the ten foundresses who had solidly laid the foundation stones in Mariazell Convent in 1886.

1967 - February 6

Most Reverend Robert Joseph Dwyer was installed as the sixth archbishop of Portland, Oregon.

The Apostolic Delegate, Most Reverend Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi, representing Pope Paul VI, officiated and bestowed the sacred pallium, which was symbolic of spiritual authority of the new archbishop. Most Reverend Archbishop Howard closed his years of long and successful administration and quietly retired to a cottage on the grounds of St. Mary of the Valley.

## EPILOGUE

The beautiful bell named Our Lady of Perpetual Help by our holy founder, Most Reverend Archbishop Gross when he blessed it in 1898 still rings for the joys and sorrows and glories of Our Lady and three times each day recalls them at the sweet sounds of the Angelus bell.

## AVE MARIA BELLS

At dawn, the joyful choir of bells,  
In consecrated citadels,  
Flings on the sweet and drowsy air  
A brief, melodious call to prayer;  
For Mary, Virgin meek and lowly,  
Conceived of the Spirit Holy,  
As the Lord's angel did declare.

At noon, above the fretful street,  
Our souls are lifted to repeat  
The prayer, with low and wistful voice:  
"According to thy word and choice,  
Though sorrowful and heavy laden,  
So be it done to thy Handmaiden";  
Then all the sacred bells rejoice.

At eve with roses in the west,  
The daylight's withering bequest,  
Ring, prayerful bells, while blossom bright  
The stars, the lilies of the night:  
Of all the songs the years have sung us,  
"The Word made Flesh had dwelt among us,"  
Is still our ever-new delight.

Charles Warren Stoddard