

## **Bon Secours Mercy Health Foundation Day Celebrations**

As a Catholic health ministry, we stand in a rich and compelling tradition of the many founding congregations that started our various ministries. Remembering those legacies is an important part of our ongoing dedication to our ministry. In recognition of the three congregations that provide a foundation for our new ministry as Bon Secours Mercy Health, we celebrate three foundation days each year:

- **January 24: Bon Secours Day** – celebrating the date the first Sisters of Bon Secours professed their vows in St. Sulpice Church in Paris, France.
- **July 17: Humility of Mary Day** – celebrating the Feast of the Humility of Mary which is a central celebration for the Sisters of the Humility of Mary.
- **September 24: Mercy Day** – celebrating the opening of the first House of Mercy in 1827 in Dublin, Ireland by Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy.

### **Remembering Our Roots: Sisters of Bon Secours January 24**

On January 24, 1824, in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin in the Church of Saint Sulpice in Paris, France, twelve young women stood before the Archbishop of Paris to commit themselves to the work of ministering to people who were sick and dying. Archbishop de Quelen described them as the Sisters of Bon Secours, a name which means good help.

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, this group of young women believed they were called to reveal God's loving presence to all people, especially those who were sick and dying. At a time when nuns were not to leave their convents, the Sisters' responsiveness to their community's needs led them to confront the dangers of life outside the convent as well as attacks on their character for doing so. Yet they persisted in their ministry, remaining in the homes of those they were serving, even through the night, if needed.

The good help the Sisters provided soon attracted the attention of others. In 1861, four Sisters arrived in Dublin, Ireland from Paris. Like their ministry in Paris, the Sisters' work in Dublin represented an innovation in care. It was a new experience to see women religious walking the streets of Dublin alone or sitting a bedside vigil for a person dying in their home. Their care, not just for the physical but also the emotional and spiritual needs of people who were sick and dying, was appreciated by doctors and clergy, in addition to those they served. In 1915, they established their first hospital in Cork. Other hospitals and a long-term care facility were to follow.



In 1870, the Sisters arrived in Great Britain. Despite a difficult start involving the loss of support from their primary benefactor, the work of the Sisters was soon in great demand, especially among people who were poor. The Sisters' convent in London survived the bombing of the German Blitz during the Second World War, thanksgiving for which found expression in a statue of the Sacred Heart erected after the war. In 1948, the Sisters were invited to Glasgow, Scotland by Archbishop Campbell. There they continue to serve in parishes, ministering to people who are terminally ill, and providing pastoral care at hospitals, nursing homes, and through home visitations.

In 1881, Archbishop James Gibbons invited the Sisters to serve in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Risking the perilous trip across the Atlantic Ocean, they began a health care ministry which attracted new members to their community. By 1909, convents had opened in Washington, D.C., and Detroit, Michigan, extending the compassionate work begun in Baltimore. The Sisters established the world's first ever recorded home health care service, as well as the first daycare facility in Baltimore, to support working mothers whose only other alternative was to place their children in an orphanage. In 1916, they opened the first Catholic home for the physically challenged, St. Edmond's Home for Crippled Children in Philadelphia. They opened their first hospital in Baltimore in 1919 and their second in Grosse Pointe, Michigan in 1945.

In 1966, Sisters in Ireland were called to alleviate suffering while proclaiming a message of hope in Peru. Originally committed to providing care for mothers and children, the Sisters now pursue health care, social work, religious instruction, and numerous forms of support for those who are poor. The Sisters of Bon Secours in Peru continue to reveal the love of Jesus to those they serve.

Today, in cooperation with women and men inspired by the selfless dedication of the Sisters of Bon Secours, the Sisters continue to pursue their charism, "to bring God's healing, compassion, and liberation to people in need. Special attention is given to those who are poor, sick, or dying by helping to alleviate their suffering and bringing them a message of hope and assurance that there is a God who loves them."

