

*From the IHM Archives...*

## **June, the Month Dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus**

*Miraculous stories from our IHM Community History ...stories connected with a strong devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

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Each year we dedicate the month of June to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In keeping with this tradition, we share two such miraculous accounts:

*The Rediscovery of Father Gillet through an early Sister dedicated to the Sacred Heart*

*The Miracle of the Outdoor "Sacred Heart Statue" at Villa Maria by-the-Sea*

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### **The Rediscovery of Our Co-Founder, Father Louis Florent Gillet**



As we have all learned, Father Gillet, a Redemptorist priest from Belgium was assigned to the missions in Monroe, Michigan during the mid nineteenth century. Very quickly he discerned the Monroe mission was in great need of sisters to teach the children their faith. When he could not find a community of teaching sisters, he said, "If I cannot find sisters, I will make them."

***"If I cannot find sisters,  
I will make them."***

Through divine providence he had recently met Mother Theresa and Sister Ann, as well as a third young woman who wished to become a sister. And thus fulfilling his plan to educate the children of Monroe, he co-founded our community on November 10, 1845. Not long after though, due to an accusation against him (an accusation from which he was eventually cleared), he was recalled by his Redemptorist Community and returned to Europe.

Eventually he became a Cistercian monk in France. His attempts to find information about his little community in Monroe proved fruitless, given the fact that his foundation, the Sisters of Providence, were now known by a different name, the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and they were eventually wearing blue habits rather than the original black.

At a time in France when Religious were living under the threat of persecution, a French cloistered nun went to confession to a priest, now known as St. John Vianney, the Cure of Ars. When she, Sister M. Clotilde Rouillet, expressed her concern about the persecution, he told her that someday she would cross the ocean and join a religious congregation in BLUE. Eventually she

did cross the ocean, and joined our IHM Community at Villa Maria Motherhouse in West Chester. A continued correspondence with a Cistercian sister, Sister Marie-Stephanie in France, gradually revealed valuable hints. Sister Clotilde often wrote of their Redemptorist founder, Father Gillet, as Sister Marie-Stephanie wrote of their Cistercian chaplain, Pere Celestin.

## *Their correspondence led to a miraculous solution of a long-time mystery*

### *...what happened to Father Gillet?*

Sister Clotilde, with Mother de Chantal's permission, began a letter-writing crusade to her nephew, a Cistercian monk in France. Meanwhile, for their 45<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary of Foundation, the Monroe sisters published in the Michigan Catholic, December 25, 1890, a short account of their founding with sketches of the log cabin and Father Gillet. Mother de Chantal procured one of these accounts, and gave it to Sister Clotilde to send to her Cistercian nephew in France. "The Master Hand of Divine Providence completed the mosaic." (*Mother Maria Alma Ryan, IHM*)

Pere Celestin (Father Gillet) penned a beautiful letter to Mother de Chantal, revealing how he rediscovered the community which he had founded, including a very informative account of the foundation of the community. Unable to travel back to America, he died and was buried in France, but eventually his body was brought to America and buried in the Monroe, Michigan IHM sisters' cemetery.

Having read this story, find here an artistic rendering created by Sister M. Clotilde Rouillet, the very same sister mentioned in the above account.

When we found this photo in the Archives, it had the following description:

***"Painted by Sister M. Clotilde Rouillet in the 1890s for one of her music pupils, Ellen Clotilde Kelly, who kept it in her bedroom all her life, and whose daughter, Marguerite Walsh (I.C. 1931) returned it to the Sisters after her mother's death."***



This painting invites us to reflect on Sister Clotilde's obvious devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as we read the words curved around the top:

***"Sacred Heart of Jesus,  
be my Guide in Life and Death."***

We can only surmise! Perhaps this deep devotion gifted her with the grace to be such a blessed instrument in the rediscovery of Father Gillet.

**The Miracle of the Outdoor Sacred Heart Statue  
at Villa Maria by-the-Sea**



Information for this article gathered from:

Ryan, Mother Maria Alma, IHM. Sisters. Servants  
of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Lancaster, PA:  
The Dolphin Press, 1967

Contributions to this article from:

The staff of the IHM Archives-Villa Maria House of  
Studies, Malvern, PA. Information included  
current as of June, 2022.

Along with this photo, found in the Archives,  
we found the following description:

*“In a severe storm at Stone Harbor, the  
outdoor Sacred Heart Statue was destroyed.  
After the death of Tom Dougherty, the brother  
of Mother Maria Pacis Dougherty, his family  
found a Sacred Heart badge in every pocket of  
every one of his suits. This incident prompted  
the family to have the statue renewed in  
memory of his family.”*

Having pondered these two stories, may you  
be filled with a deep trust in the Sacred Heart of  
Jesus, as we pray the aspiration...

*“ Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my  
trust in Thee!”*