

Mission Moment for the Villa Newsletter



When the VMA Advisory Board became a Board of Trustees, one of the priorities was to educate the Board members on the charism of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. At the beginning of each Board meeting there is a brief Mission Moment sharing an aspect of the history or charism of the IHMs.

This past year we decided to focus our attention on getting to know the special qualities of the Co-foundress of the IHMs, Mother Theresa Maxis, since our new Student Union Building is called the *Mother Theresa Maxis Center*.

Mother Theresa Maxis was a woman of courage, boldness and trust, qualities we want our Villa Maria Academy young women to emulate. Mother Theresa did not have an easy life. Born in Baltimore she was the daughter of a Haitian refugee and a British military officer. Her parents were not married; she never knew her father. Theresa was raised in the African Community by her mother's guardians who provided education for her as they did for her mother. She attended a school established for Haitian refugee children in Baltimore. In 1829 the three women who conducted the school along with Theresa formed a Religious Congregation. The primary work of the Congregation was to teach children from Haitian and African descent. That Congregation, the Oblates of Providence, still exists today and considers Theresa a founding member. In 1845 Theresa left Baltimore and the Oblates at the invitation of Fr. Louis Florent Gillet to establish a Religious Congregation in Monroe, Michigan. It was there in Monroe that Theresa began the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Along with three other members, Theresa began a school for young women. This path to education resulted in more schools to open in Scranton, PA and eventually

West Chester, PA. The IHM Congregation flourished. By 1872 Villa Maria Academy was founded continuing the legacy of Theresa Maxis who knew that women were destined to hold leadership and service roles in the Church and in the world.

It is our hope that our new Student Union building, as well as each Villa Marian, will be a reminder of the qualities that Mother Theresa Maxis exemplified in her life: courage, conviction, persistence, prayerfulness and always trust in Divine Providence.