

# ACADEMY OF HOLY ANGELS

## *~ A History ~*



ENDEAVORING TO 'DO ALL THINGS WELL' SINCE 1877



The mission of the Academy of Holy Angels is to educate and nurture a diverse student population so that each student, as a whole person, may achieve full potential to excel intellectually, to live spiritually, to lead responsibly, to act justly and to serve selflessly.



# Foreword

**ON THE DAY HOLY ANGELS OPENED** the doors at its Richfield campus, a new history textbook entitled *The American Nation* was being prepared specifically for Catholic high schools, academies, and junior colleges. Its author, Professor Richard Purcell, graduated from the University of Minnesota and taught for a time at St. Thomas College. Dr. Purcell dedicated his work to the memory of John Ireland, the pioneering Archbishop of St. Paul. Along with his sisters, Ellen and Eliza, Ireland was among the first students to attend parochial schools in Minnesota Territory. That experience inspired the three Irelands to spend their lives building more and more schools, including the original Holy Angels Academy, to serve the growing number of Catholic families making their way to the Upper Midwest.

I keep a copy of that old textbook on my desk to remind me where it all began. From time to time, I turn to a particular passage in which Purcell described the challenges that Catholics in America faced during the latter half of the nineteenth century. He portrayed it as “a time of Herculean exertion, a day of great sacrifices and extensive building. But the people were loyal; there was scarcely a cloud in the sky.”

Anyone who is familiar with the history of Holy Angels knows that great sacrifices and extensive building have characterized this community from the start. Countless individuals—religious and lay alike—have labored mightily to make this great school what it is today.

This publication commemorates two very special anniversaries—130 years since the founding of the Academy of Holy Angels and 75 years at its Richfield campus. A written record of any institution that has thrived for over a century is bound to be incomplete. There are simply too many wonderful stories and too little time to tell them. What follows is an attempt to make the Academy’s history readily available so that we can all share and celebrate it as one community.

I therefore dedicate it to everyone, past and present—founders, students, staff, alumni, parents, and friends—in whose generous hands Holy Angels has always endured.

To future AHA graduates, I offer Walt Whitman’s profound advice: *Think of the past . . . from precedents you come.*



Steve Werle  
AHA History Teacher

SEPTEMBER 2006



*John Ireland, above.  
Mother Seraphine Ireland  
(right), with her sister,  
Mother St. John Ireland  
(left), and their cousin Mother  
Celestine Howard (center.)*

Photos courtesy of Sisters of St. Joseph  
of Carondelet, St. Paul Province.

The Legacy, 4

The Beginning of Holy Angels, 6

The Thirties, 8

Confident, 11

The Forties, 12

The Fifties, 14

Prepared, 17

The Sixties, 18

Connected in Faith, 21

The Seventies, 22

The Eighties, 26

Timeline, 28

1990s to Present, 30

Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, 32



# The Legacy

*But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.*

MATTHEW 13:23

**THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF CARONDELET** have many wonderful treasures tucked away in their St. Paul archives. Among them is a handwritten commencement address delivered by an 1899 graduate of Holy Angels Academy. The school was just north of downtown Minneapolis then, and there were merely a handful of young girls marking the end of one important journey and the beginning of another.

It was indeed a different time and a different place. But the sentiment expressed on that glorious summer day sounds strikingly familiar. It speaks, as if by prophecy, to the continuity that has sustained Holy Angels for one hundred and thirty years: The ceremony, the sense of community, and the confidence—each reminiscent of traditions established long before our own humble beginnings. And, God willing, each indicative of what the future holds for those still to come.

Here is part of what the valedictorian said in 1899:

*My dear Friends,*

*With each recurring June that brings its flowers and perfumes—the promises of fruition of later summer—comes also*

*that time that marks the June of a school girl's life. Commencement brings to her the flower of graduation in which is hidden the germ of the future . . .*

*Added to all this comes the "unwritten wisdom" imparted by our dear teachers, whose kindness and care have been unceasing. I was going to speak of their patience also, though just what opportunity they had for exercising that virtue is not at present apparent to me . . . With Maud Gauman, Gertrude Arper, Nellie Griffin, Katherine Mooney, and Mary Cole—Lovely characters! – Each more angelic than the other! What need of patience? . . .*

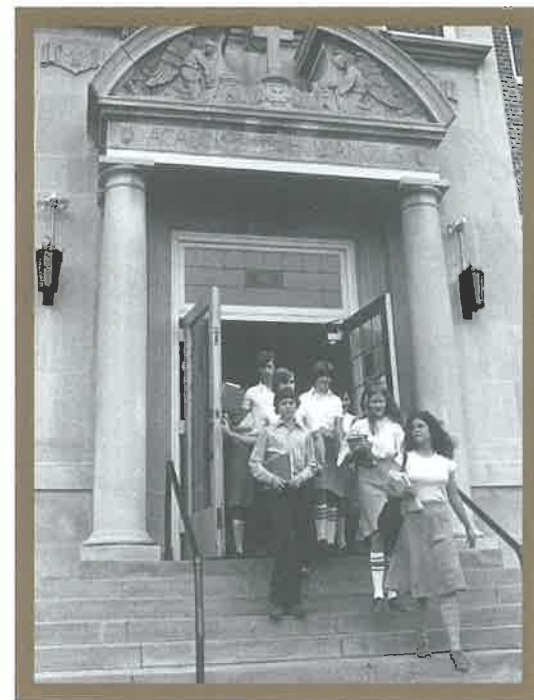
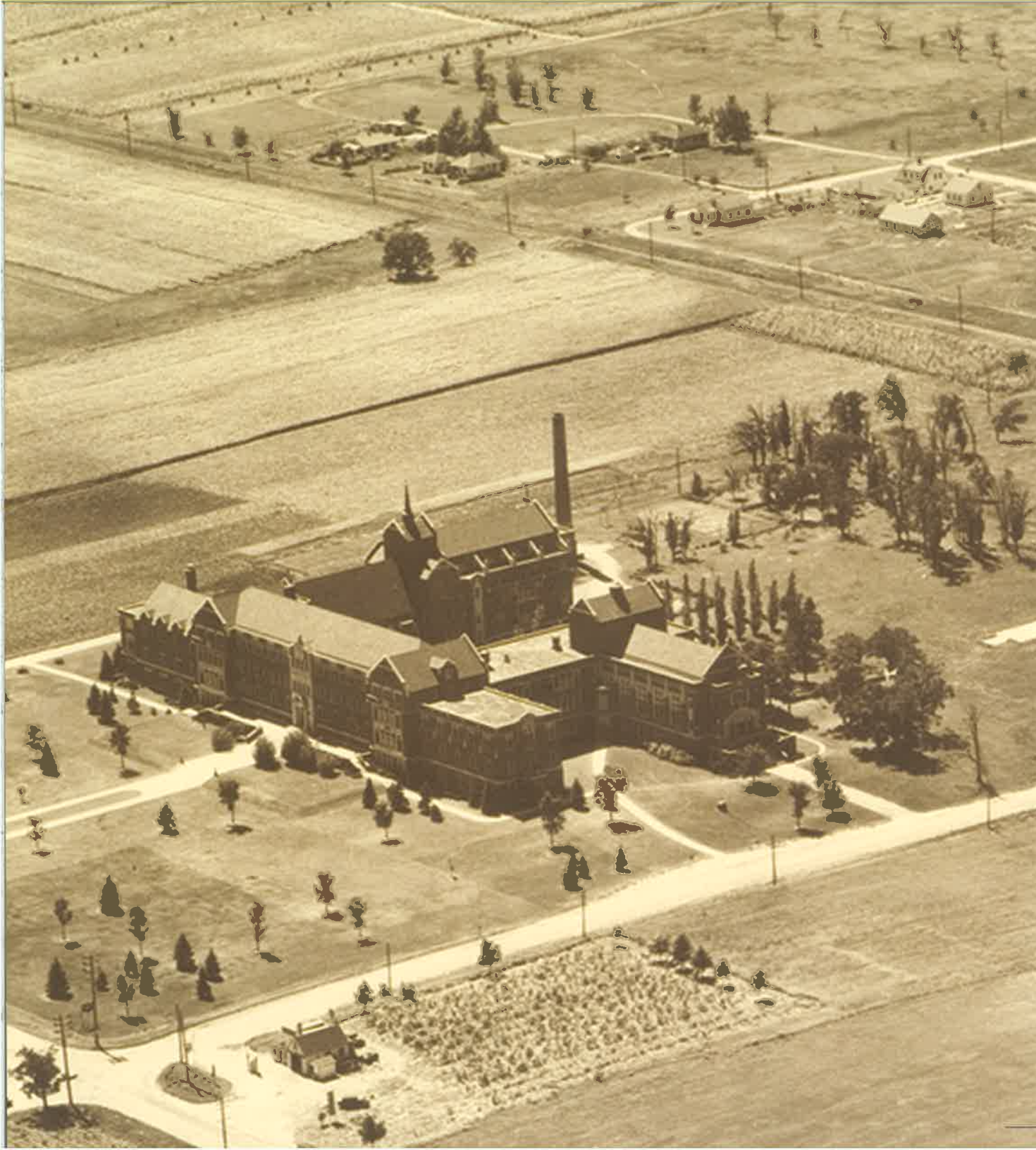
*In later years, when you look to the heights and perceive a few who are eminent among the famous, it will not be necessary to inquire who they are, for I shall tell you now, they are the five 1899 graduates from Holy Angels.*

And so the seeds were planted, the community grew, and the harvest continues to this day. It is a beautiful metaphor; one that was clearly not lost on the Sisters of St. Joseph. Next time you are at Holy Angels, take a good, hard look at the building, inside and out. Note the splendor of its design—from the hand-carved, wooden doors in the chapel to the ivy-laden walls outside the commons—all meant to inspire growth, change, and maturity. When they erected this new school in 1931, the CSJs overlooked no detail because they knew that educating children is too important to be left to chance. What a wonderful legacy! How proud they must be to know that it echoes still in these halls and in our hearts. ❀



Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society. Photo by Norton & Peel, 1931.

The AHA front doors.



*Students leaving school circa 1980.*

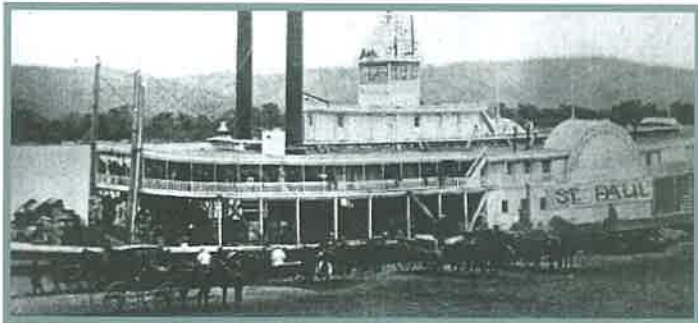
The most recognizable sign of our heritage at Holy Angels has stood for seventy-five years at the corner of 66th and Nicollet. This building has become for thousands of graduates a literal and figurative doorway to the future. And it remains today the place where we make our essential mission manifest—to nurture, to educate, and to serve. However, the school's roots extend much deeper into history. If there is one thing we can do to honor our founders it is to remember this: *the small group of women who opened the first Holy Angels in 1877 were as committed to establishing a unique vision for the future as they were to preserving traditions of the past.* ✠

*Aerial view of AHA, 1930's.*

# The Beginning of Holy Angels

*May you walk worthily of God and please him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.*

COLOSSIANS 1:10



*The steamer St. Paul brought the Sisters of St. Joseph from Carondelet, Missouri, in 1851 to St. Paul.*

*The little log chapel, (right) was the first Cathedral in St. Paul.*



## An Errand in the Wilderness

In 1836, a half-dozen young Sisters of St. Joseph left the south of France and set sail for America. They were headed to New Orleans and then up the Mississippi River to Carondelet, a small village just shy of St. Louis. The Sisters intended to teach children, care for the sick, and help spread the spirit of Christ on the American frontier. They were carrying on a legacy established nearly two hundred years before in the French city of Le Puy. There, in 1650, six women gathered around a humble hearth and dedicated their lives to prayer and service for the poor. These “Daughters of St. Joseph” quickly distinguished themselves through “spiritual acts of mercy” and by living “always in union with God and with others.”

## To Minnesota

The Sisters’ reputation in America spread far and wide. In 1851 Bishop Joseph Cretin, head of the newly formed Diocese of St. Paul, invited the Sisters to teach native and immigrant children in Minnesota Territory. Monsignor James H. Moynihan recounted the spirit of the times: “Soon the wilderness would blossom like a rose . . . and to Minnesota, as to a land of promise, families were pouring in from all parts to seek their fortune on a virgin soil.” Cretin rightly anticipated a tremendous growth in population for his nascent diocese and hoped the Sisters would join him in serving the needs of the community.

On a blustery November evening in 1851, four intrepid Sisters from Carondelet stepped off a Mississippi riverboat at St. Paul. They went to pray at the city’s first Cathedral, a little log chapel built ten years earlier and “so poor that it recalled the stable at Bethlehem.” On this site and in the Lord’s Holy presence, they built a spiritual foundation rooted in the faith-filled sacrifices of their predecessors. They established a school—St. Joseph’s Academy—and helped form St. Joseph’s Hospital. This first group of CSJs, pioneers one and all, had only begun to fulfill God’s will in St. Paul. There was a great deal more to be done.

## Holy Angels Academy

On October 2, 1877, the Sisters of St. Joseph established a new day school for girls and named it in honor of the Feast of the Holy Angels. Classes first met in a house located on Third Street North in Minneapolis, just a few blocks west of St. Anthony Falls. These were modest beginnings for Holy Angels, but the school advanced steadily with guidance from Mother St. John, the former Eliza Ireland. Like her brother, the young Bishop from neighboring St. Paul, Sister St. John Ireland proved an inspirational administrator. Her fellow CSJs described her as “a woman of granite mould, strong mind, deep faith, and great charity,” under whose leadership “every educational and religious project was accelerated.”



*Sisters of St. Joseph, 1893*

Propelled by “the unquenchable urge for progress and expansion,” the school changed sites several times in order to accommodate its growing enrollment. In 1882 the Sisters of St. Joseph decided to make a substantial investment in the future of Holy Angels. With encouragement from the head of their St. Paul Province, Mother Seraphine (Ellen Ireland), the CSJs purchased Joel Bassett’s three-story home at 643 Fourth Street North in Minneapolis. The facility offered ample space for music and art departments, a chapel, a library, outdoor recreation, and living quarters

for both teachers and student boarders. Although its high school merged with the newly founded St. Margaret’s Academy in 1907, Holy Angels retained its reputation as the pioneer boarding and day school for young girls.

A catalogue distributed to prospective families in 1909 reminds us just how far women have come in the past century. Part of it reads: “Thoroughness of work has always been a characteristic of the school, its motto being, ‘Do all things well.’ Every pupil is prepared for the position in life to which she may aspire and all are taught to cultivate the Christian virtues and the womanly graces indispensable to the true mistress of the home.”

Room, board, and tuition for a ten-month course of studies totaled \$160. Day students paid about \$25 to attend regular classes, and all the girls could take piano, violin, guitar, mandolin, and/or vocal lessons for an extra fee. Anyone reading the catalogue closely enough doubtless noted, “Plain Sewing, and every article of Fancy Work, Domestic Economy, Vocal Music in class, and Drawing in class are taught without additional charge.”

By 1922, the Sisters’ vision once again surpassed the school’s physical environment. (In fact, eventually the “Bassett’s Place” building and location



*Old Holy Angels’ Academy, 1882-1928.*

were no longer suitable for a school, and the Academy of Holy Angels closed its doors in 1928.) The CSJs purchased nearly thirty acres of land in the farming community of Richfield, a world away from the hustle and bustle of Minneapolis during the Roaring Twenties. On the afternoon of March 22, 1923, the Sisters of St. Joseph made it official. Sister Clara, Mother Superior of the school, along with four other provincial members, signed formal articles of incorporation for “Holy Angels Academy.” The easy part was done. Now the CSJs set their sights on raising enough money to build an academic institution befitting their dreams for the future. ❁



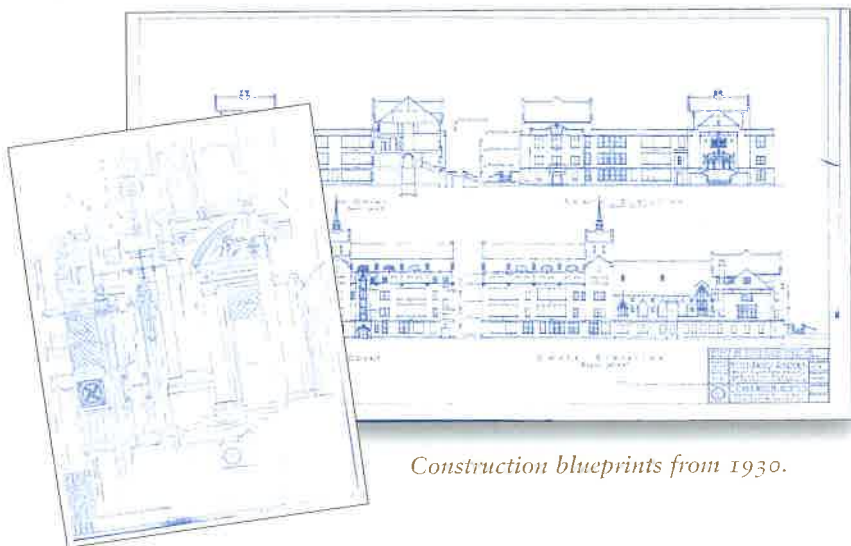
*Four graduates from 1895 with one of their teachers.*

Photos courtesy of Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Paul Province.

# The Thirties



AHA's new home in 1931.



Construction blueprints from 1930.

## A New School with an Old Name

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1931. First day of school.

That the temperature outside reached a blistering 104 degrees only added to the extraordinary nature of it all. More remarkable still, especially to those of us perched atop the next century, is that the Sisters of St. Joseph built a million-dollar school in the middle of the Depression. Prayer and hard work had a lot to do with it. So did debt. But more than anything, the Sisters relied upon the faith that had sustained their community since the mid-17th century. They lived by the CSJ motto, *Possumus*, which is Latin for “We can.” They envisioned a new and bigger Holy Angels standing majestically among the rich fields south of Minneapolis, and they made it happen.

Construction began in earnest during the fall of 1930. As many as 400 carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, electricians, painters, and common laborers raced against the clock to make sure the school was ready for students the following September. Designed by St. Paul architect J.H. Wheeler, the building made quite an impression upon passersby. The structure was unique in both scale and style, particularly in light of its rural surroundings. Not long before opening day, the *Minneapolis Tribune* lauded its distinctive characteristics. “The exterior of the building presents a striking example of English Gothic architecture. The roof is of mottled green English tile; the face brick is Persian, red tones, with Flemish bond laying and the ornamental stone is Indiana limestone. The entrance to the building is ornamented by carved angels.”

Despite its outward appearances, few besides the Sisters fully appreciated what the building had cost in time, money, and sacrifice. Nor was there general agreement as to how many students it would accommodate. The *St. Paul Daily News* estimated construction costs would approach \$750,000, well above original projections but likely still short of the final tally. The paper also announced that there would be adequate space for 200 students, while the *Catholic Bulletin* boldly proclaimed that Holy Angels would serve “approximately 1,000 boarding and day pupils to whom it will open its doors next September.” One thing is for certain. Although the CSJs were in fact helping to stimulate the local economy—a new St. Joseph’s Academy was being built in St. Paul at the same time—they were also accumulating unprecedented amounts of debt. With no end in sight to the Depression, the time had come to begin anew the story of Holy Angels and pray for the best.



*Grade school in 1934.***Tough Times**

Shortly after Franklin Delano Roosevelt became President in 1933, Sister Gregory Sanger, CSJ arrived at Holy Angels. She had been assigned to teach at Holy Name in Minneapolis, but because there were no living quarters available at that school, she joined the forty-two other Sisters who called Holy Angels home. Sister Gregory recalls, "These were very hard times. The Sisters were told not to buy anything new, but to wear out what they had. There were a number of boarders, and these needed board and room. There were times when the Sisters went to bed hungry. There just was not enough to go around." Such was the spirit of sacrifice that permeated the halls of Holy Angels in those early days. The Sisters, like millions of other Americans, no doubt found inspiration in President Roosevelt's Inaugural Address. He said, "Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort . . . These dark days, my friends, will be worth all they cost us if they teach us that our true destiny is not to be ministered unto but to minister to ourselves and to our fellowmen."

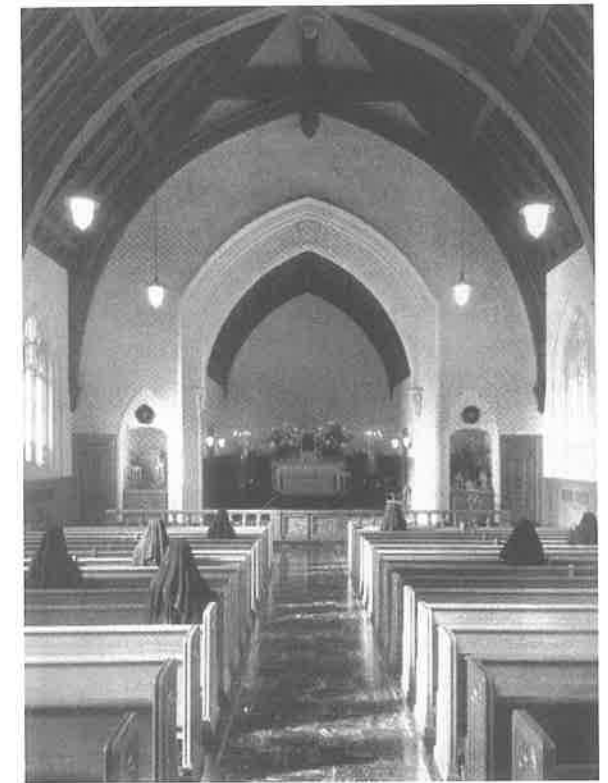
The Sisters worked extremely hard and under difficult circumstances to provide an exceptional learning environment for their students, ranging from kindergarten to twelfth grade. Money was scarce, so the CSJs assumed every possible role affiliated with a young girl's education—academic instructor, nursemaid, music teacher, cook, disciplinarian, recreation director, role model and virtuoso in the finer points of manners and decorum. Under the leadership of the school's first principal, Sister Eugenia Maginnis (affectionately known as the "Empress Eugenia"), the Sisters served as janitors, took in laundry, hosted fundraisers and grew as much of their own food as



they could. Hardships notwithstanding, Sister Gregory remembers much to be thankful for, including a healthy sense of humor. She recalls, for instance, the day she and Sister Mary Elizabeth Grady were walking down Nicollet Avenue in the bitter cold because the nearest bus line in those days was over a mile away. A generous farmer picked them up in his truck, estimated the temperature was nearly forty degrees below zero, and dropped them off directly outside the Holy Angels kitchen. Upon entering the building they encountered Mother Grace Aurelia who said, "You didn't hitchhike home, did you?" Sister Mary Elizabeth quickly replied, "On a day like this, Mother, I'd ride with the devil." According to Sister Gregory, "Mother's coffee cup did a bit of a dance, but she said no more." ❀

*Amen, amen I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

MATTHEW 18:19-20

*The AHA Chapel in 1932.*

# The Thirties continued



*Elizabeth (Betty) Weller 1934*



*The Academy coat of arms, designed by Reverend Father Leo Gleason.*

## 'Happy to Have Been There'

When Sister Hubert Marie Weller, CSJ ('34) talks about her memories of Holy Angels, her broad smile and twinkling eyes light up the room. One senses, if only for a short time as she reminisces of friends and teachers long since passed, that she is Betty Weller once again—a sixteen-year-old boarder from



*Sister Hubert Marie Weller, today.*

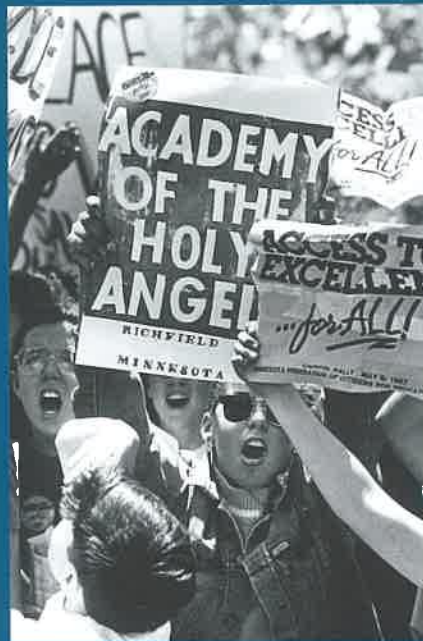
Hopkins for whom Holy Angels became a literal home away from home. Nearly ninety now, Sister Hubert Marie was among the 107 girls who started at Holy Angels in the fall of 1931. She vividly recalls waiting on tables for younger students and “Day Dogs” (that’s what the boarders called girls who lived nearby and attended classes during the day) in order to help pay for her room and board. She remembers learning much from Sister Laurent Cantwell, CSJ—a young, inspiring history teacher who Betty begged to have as an advisor. And she revels in memories of dramatic performances directed by Sister Charitas Farr, CSJ and held in the theater named for Mother Seraphine Ireland.

The first class of 13 women graduated in 1932. They carried red roses, the start of a wonderful custom at Holy Angels. Sister Hubert Marie’s class was the first to



*The graduating class of 1932.*

wear white caps and gowns at graduation. It represents yet another tradition that has survived so much change in the intervening seven decades. The building and grounds have undergone many renovations since Betty Weller’s day. Tuition and enrollment have both increased dramatically, and the sight of boys at Holy Angels took some getting used during her subsequent tenure as principal next door at St. Peter’s grade school. However, none of that changes how Sister Hubert Marie feels about her old school. “I love every brick in that building,” she told a *Minneapolis Star* reporter in 1981 as part of AHA’s 50th Anniversary celebration. She still ponders just how different things would have turned out had she not attended Holy Angels. After graduation, she followed Sister Laurent’s example, joined the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, and dedicated her life to Christ by educating youngsters in Minnesota and North Dakota. Asked today what Holy Angels has meant to her, she modestly admits that words cannot begin to tell the tale. “I am happy to have been there,” she responds in a low, understated voice. And then that smile! ❀



# CONFIDENT



Confidence. It's difficult to describe, but you know it when you see or hear it. It is located in the laughter of young schoolgirls who promise to be friends forever. It is in the raised arms and collective roar of victorious athletes. It echoes off the gymnasium walls at the conclusion of the school song. It sparkles in the eyes of actors as they assemble for the curtain call amidst thunderous applause. And it shines like the sun in every senior's smile on graduation day.

'We can' has always been a familiar refrain at Holy Angels. Student interests have varied from one generation to another, and the opportunities for participation in activities have increased substantially. But the essential desire to be active, to grow, to belong, and to contribute to something larger than oneself is an integral part of the Holy Angels tradition.



# The Forties



"Yearbook girls" 1946.

*And if riches be a desirable possession in life, what is more rich than Wisdom, who produces all things? And if prudence renders service, who in the world is a better craftsman than she? Or if one loves justice, the fruits of her work are virtues; for she teaches moderation and prudence, justice and fortitude, and nothing in life is more useful than these.*

WISDOM 8:5-7

## Silent and Single File

It is difficult for current Holy Angels students to imagine what these halls looked and sounded like during the 1940s. Asking them to put themselves in someone else's saddle shoes or penny loafers probably does not make it any easier. Empathy is a wonderful virtue, of course, but it can only be taken so far. The mere thought of walking between classes silently and in single file lines is enough to make a modern sophomore weep, but the Sisters strictly enforced this policy sixty years ago.

A schoolgirl's stay at Holy Angels was quite regimented, particularly if she was a boarder. A typical day for those who lived on the 4th floor at the Academy began with a wake-up bell at 6 a.m. An optional daily mass began in the chapel promptly at 7 a.m. After mass, a full breakfast was served in the boarders' dining room, which is now the Commons. Meals were always a formal affair, complete with china and silver and impeccable manners to match. After breakfast, the boarders joined the day students for class. In the afternoon, boarders had a social hour during which they listened to the radio, played piano, sang and danced, or just talked. They had two study hours in the library, from 5 to 6 p.m. and from 8 to 9 p.m. Dinner was at 6 p.m., followed by free time. The girls were expected to go to sleep by 10 p.m., but voices occasionally echoed through hallways well after the lights had gone out. If the girls carried on for a long time or got too noisy, the Sisters signified their displeasure by knocking on the walls.



AHA dining hall in the 1940's.

Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society, 1941

Courtesy Richfield Historical Society



—Courtesy Minneapolis Morning Tribune  
 Helene Mangan, senior, was crowned Academy of the Holy Angels War Bond Queen, February 15 as the climax of the 4th War Loan Drive during which students invested \$16,479.45 in stamps and bonds. In the picture Marjorie Bender, sophomore, who was second in the queen contest in which votes were purchased by stamps, is crowning Helene while Nancy Baker, freshman, third place holds the gift of a silver medal and chain which was presented to the queen.  
 Class contributions to the War Loan Drive were: seniors, \$5,118.65; sophomores, \$2,588.20; juniors, \$2,546.45; freshmen, \$1,116.10.

*The "Angies" do their part for the war effort.*

## The War Years

World War II utterly transformed the way Americans went about their daily lives, and Holy Angels was no exception. From ration cards to war bonds, the "Angies" did their part because, as all the newspaper ads said, it was "the patriotic thing to do." They made do without nylons by wearing mesh or rayon stockings and saved gas by driving in car pools. They hosted an assembly featuring representatives from the WAC, WAVES, SPARS, Marines, and Cadet Nursing Corps who acquainted high school girls with "life, work, and fun in the armed forces." In February of 1944, the student body crowned Helene Mangan "Holy Angels War Bond Queen" in honor of the school's 4th War Loan Drive, which raised over \$16,000!

**Casts  
Murder  
Play**

Academy senior  
picked out a  
whose "Mur-  
" for their  
and Sunday  
school audi-

a convent  
and the pupils  
Holy Angels,  
the plot veers

down the bar-  
the suspect,  
pills are deep  
the murderer,  
ther, a sharp  
step ahead of

double cast,  
ht. June Kool  
play the Rev.  
Regnier, and  
her Peck, her  
include a cast  
ie part of sle-  
id four De La  
ho play the  
clara

head of the  
department  
directing the  
eights in a  
productions  
by Yvonne



MARY REGNIER COSTUMED FOR ROLE  
She'll play in "Murder in the Nunnery"

Newspaper clipping from the 1944 play,  
"Murder in the Nunnery".

The end of the war brought other changes at AHA. In 1946, Holy Angels closed its elementary school when St. Peter's Church established a grade school next door.

It is reassuring to know that certain facets of school life continued uninterrupted by the specter of war. Sister Charitas and the members of the Drama Club, for example, continued to turn out one production after another, establishing a theatrical tradition of excellence that lives on today. One wonders, however, how many raised eyebrows or muffled chuckles greeted the 1944 performance of "Murder in a Nunnery." If ever there was a plot made to thicken, this was it: "Murder strikes down the baroness, Sliema, at the convent, and sisters and pupils are

deep in the search for the murderer, with the Rev. Mother, a sharp sleuth, always a step ahead of Scotland Yard." The cast featured girls from Holy Angels and boys from De La Salle, a common practice in the days before the schools went co-ed. The performances must have been wildly successful because members of the Drama Club produced the same play again in 1949 and 1954. Outfitting the girls with costumes for a play about crime-solving nuns was no doubt a piece of cake, which suggests that in theater, as in life, old habits die hard!



Holy Angels  
circa 1940s.

**'Hallowed Halls'**

When LaVerne Slagel Lewis ('48) visits Holy Angels today, there are always plenty of memories accompanying her. She has belonged to the AHA community as a student, a teacher, and a parent since the mid-1940s but readily acknowledges that she was reluctant to come at first. LaVerne attended public schools prior to ninth grade and originally regretted her parents' decision to send her to Holy Angels. Looking back now, however, she realizes that her formative years as a high school student essentially became the springboard for the rest of her life. Regrets are few and far between, overshadowed by images of inspiring teachers, enduring values, and a profound understanding of her relationship with God. LaVerne talks fondly of the school's "hallowed halls" and the sense of peace that never fails to come over her in the chapel. She credits Holy Angels with helping to instill a deep sense of religious conviction in her and ultimately in her children as well.



LaVerne Slagel 1948

When she returned to AHA as a teacher in 1954, LaVerne Slagel was thrilled at the prospect of imparting her love of language to students in much the same way her favorite teachers had done for her. She recalled learning Latin from Sister Virgil and developing the ability to write crisp essays under the watchful eye of Sister Marion. Fresh from college and ready to teach Spanish and English, LaVerne was unprepared for her first post-graduation encounter with the school's legendary librarian, Sister Avila. She assumed that teachers were welcome to use the library at their discretion and was thus surprised when Sr. Avila told her to sit down and be quiet! Like many new teachers, LaVerne learned to interpret it as nothing more than a pleasant reminder of her youthful appearance. ❧

# The Fifties



The "Hub", 1950s

*Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where thou art going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me."*

JOHN 14:5-6

## Via Et Veritas Et Vita

By the early 1950s, the Academy of Holy Angels had become a revered and recognizable fixture in a suburban community teeming with post-war growth. New houses, new roads, and an impressive new shopping center right across 66th Street produced many changes for Richfield and its burgeoning population. Yet despite its altered surroundings, Holy Angels continued to do what it had always done—pave the way for the future by honoring tried and true principles of the past. A Program of Studies from the era clearly defines

the school's objective: "Holy Angels . . . aims to develop in its pupils attitudes, abilities, habits, interests and skills that will enable them to grow after the pattern of the Christian ideal in harmony with their physical, mental and moral capacities and to live in the world of change as well adjusted, cooperative, and contributing members of society."

The school took its new motto from the Gospel of John, Via Et Veritas Et Vita ("The Way, the Truth, and the Life"). The phrase had great significance, particularly in light of the school's



Resident sisters of Holy Angels, 1950s.

Catholic roots and commitment to Christian service. Girls planning to study Spanish or French in eleventh and twelfth grade were encouraged to complete two years of Latin first. By the time she graduated from Holy Angels, a young woman would have taken four religion courses titled Christ in History, Christ in the Soul, Christ in His Church, and Christ the Way of Life. Even ninth graders received their first introduction to the Social Studies Department in a yearlong class called Foundation and Development of Christian Culture. Dogma played a substantial role in the school's effort to provide "a stimulus for the acquisition of those natural virtues that are basic to growth in Catholic culture." The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet most assuredly immersed their students in the faith traditions and religious symbolism that define Catholic identity.

Nevertheless, many alumnae from the 1950s recall a more subtle form of moral education. Marge (Carlson) Zieska ('56) is one of them. She remembers practical, meaningful lessons that constantly reinforced the virtues her parents modeled at home. She and her husband sent all five of their children to Holy Angels because she loved the camaraderie, the loyalty, and the tremendous sense of belonging that typified her high school experiences. Marge also knows that good, kind-hearted people emerge from Holy Angels with a diploma in one hand and an overriding sense of responsibility in the other. It is perhaps the lesson she remembers learning most at AHA: justice and service go hand-in-hand.



Marge (Carlson) Zieska ('56)

Zieska continues to tout the teachers and classmates who led her to spend so much of her life giving back to the community from which she came. Many former students remember Marge from when she worked in the AHA Alumni and Development offices during the 1970s and 80s, laboring mightily to preserve the school's history and to keep graduates in touch with its rich heritage. Holy Angels English teacher Christine (Hunt) Anderson ('71) recently noted, "Marge's long dedication to the school is unparalleled. Her personal warmth encouraged alums to return to AHA, inspired parents to become involved, and exemplified Christ's hospitality and generosity to students. She clearly understood the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the school's founders, and dedicated many years to ensure that the mission was carried out at Holy Angels."

## The Fifties continued



*Sister Constance Marie DeFoe, CSJ*

Mary Jo “Johanna” Giesen ('57) has been connected to Holy Angels in one way or another—as a student, faculty member, coach, advisor, department chair, parent, trustee, and substitute teacher—since 1953, the final year for boarders at AHA. Johanna (“Doc” to her former students) has accumulated a wealth of memories in the past half century, a fact she rarely neglects to share with future alums. She is fond of recalling, for instance, that the school was so crowded in her day that administrators designated some stairways for one-way traffic only. She has vivid memories of mixers at St. Thomas Academy and Friday night dances at De La Salle. Walgreens at the “Hub” was a common hangout for the “Angies,” as was the Catholic Youth Center in South Minneapolis. Teaching at Holy Angels for over twenty-five years no doubt helped keep many of these recollections fresh in her memory.

Whenever “Doc” Giesen speaks about “the spirit of Holy Angels,” the conversation invariably comes back to people. She remembers the adults in the building for whom teaching was a way of life. She adored the way Sister Karl taught biology, and she sat spellbound in Mrs. Elaine Carlson’s American History class. She describes Mrs. Margaret Lewis as a dynamic teacher who “lived history” by drawing students into the subject matter and making the pages of seemingly boring textbooks come alive. And after all these years, Johanna still holds her principal, Sister Constance Marie DeFoe, CSJ, in the absolute highest regard. Caring, fair-minded, just, and humorous—that’s how Johanna remembers her. When she missed a considerable portion of her senior year because of an illness, Johanna recalls that ‘Connie Mack’ inspired her to do her best to make up the missing work. These and a host of other influential women “Doc” admired at Holy Angels have a great deal to do with her belief that one special person can make a world of difference in another person’s life. ❀



*Mary Jo “Johanna” Giesen ('57)*



*Physics class, circa 1950s*





# PREPARED



Holy Angels students are prepared for whatever life has in store for them. That has been the school's ultimate goal since its founding. Mottos change with the times and mission statements are revised to meet current needs, but communities dedicated to preparing young people for the road ahead matter forever.

We have indeed come a long way from teaching girls to cultivate "the womanly graces indispensable to the true mistress of the home." Schools after all reflect the values of society as much as they form them. Thankfully, Holy Angels continues the tradition of preparing students intellectually, physically, and spiritually. For it is in the mind, the body, and the spirit that they will find the courage to face life's many challenges with dignity. And by the grace of God, they will follow in the footsteps of so many others who have shared their gifts in the service of humankind.



# The Sixties

*One generation passes and another comes, but the world forever stays. The sun rises and the sun goes down; then it presses on to the place where it rises. Blowing now toward the south, then toward the north, the wind turns again and again, resuming its rounds. All rivers go to the sea, yet never does the sea become full. To the place where they go, the rivers keep on going.*

ECCLESIASTES 1:4-7



## A Sign of the Times

In many respects, Holy Angels experienced a golden age of sorts in the early 1960s. Enrollment had never been higher (nearly 800 girls in 1961), tuition was still relatively low (\$200 per year), and many of the conflicts that would eventually rock the foundations of American society were still simmering safely beneath the surface.

Few could have foreseen it at the time, of course, but the school would one day be faced with a tremendous financial challenge resulting from increasing labor costs and an unanticipated decline in enrollment. The first sign may have come in May of 1963. The school's principal, Sister St. Gertrude, CSJ, sent parents a letter that put the situation in very stark terms. Though the modern reader might be tempted to scoff at the numbers, one cannot help but perceive how difficult it must have been for Sister St. Gertrude to write it. She began:

*Dear Parents,*

*This is a letter that we do not enjoy sending but one which necessity and reality tell us we must send. It is a letter to inform you that beginning in the fall of 1963 the tuition rate at the Academy of Holy Angels will be \$250 a year. This change is necessitated by the fact that our income during the past years has been considerably below our expenditures. No institutions can withstand the shock of such monetary imbalance for any protracted period. Our last tuition change was in 1957...*

She went on to explain that since the school's inception, most of the costs associated with educating young girls had been quite literally borne by the CSJs who lived and worked at the school. But with fewer members of the religious community available to meet the school's day-to-day needs, administrators naturally had to begin hiring more lay staff members. What students regarded as a subtle change in the look and feel of Holy Angels was actually an early indication of hard times to come.



### The ABCs: Annual Regina Tour, Brown Jug Tournament, and Carnival!

Sister Susan Hames, CSJ ('62) proudly admits that even though boarders no longer existed at Holy Angels when she attended, she “practically lived at the school.” For her, Holy Angels is, was, and always has been a place filled with opportunities. Susan jumped at the chance to participate in intramural volleyball and basketball programs, and she is grateful for the time she spent in the Glee Club and preparing for school musicals. Like so many other graduates from AHA, Sister Susan knows that her life was enriched by the unique “sense of community” that infused every waking hour she spent at school. She lauds her teachers for challenging her to become a more serious student and for planting the seeds of Christian Service in her heart and mind. Today in her role as Campus Minister at the College of St. Catherine, Susan refers back to many of lessons she learned at Holy Angels. She knows that the community of believers at AHA formed and nourished her desire to serve others in the CSJ tradition. And she marvels at both the wonderful changes Holy Angels has undergone since her high school days and the core values that remain, strong as ever.

Susan Hames also has fond memories of the Annual Regina Tour to New York City and Washington, D.C. So does



Katie (Carroll) Johnson ('69). The trip became a rite of passage for hundreds of young girls for whom travel would become a lifelong passion. In Katie's estimation, the trip represented one more remarkable example of how Holy Angels expanded her horizons—intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. She remembers learning to appreciate the Catholic liturgy. Katie especially enjoyed the outdoor guitar masses held in the north courtyard between the library and the theater. They strengthened her faith. Only later did she come to realize how prepared she was for college and the tremendous challenges life has in store for all of us.



*Catherine Marie Carroll*



*Early 1960s Regina trip. Note Minnesota's two senators—Hubert Humphrey and Eugene McCarthy—in background.*

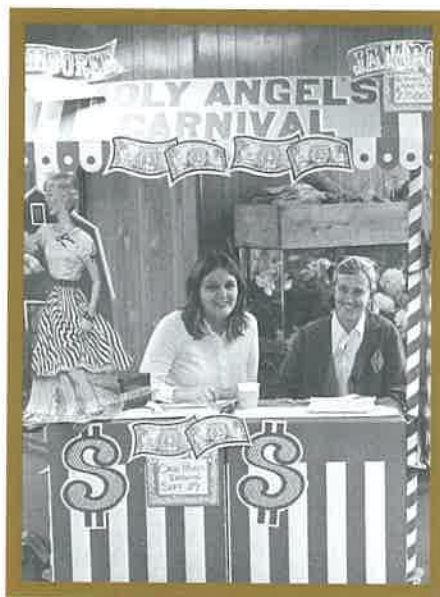
## The Sixties continued



Katie's two sisters also graduated from Holy Angels—Ann in 1963 and Mary Jane in 1971. Suffice it to say, the Carroll sisters are no strangers to competition. The Brown Jug Tournament afforded them and their classmates with many opportunities to hone their athletic skills. The events were

fun but fiercely contested. Nearly thirty years later Katie still revels in the glory of winning the coveted Brown Jug twice during her basketball career, much to her younger sister's dismay!

Both Katie Johnson and Susan Hames, along with their former teacher Rosalba (Garza Davila) Murray, reminisce frequently about the good ol' days of Carnival—the school's annual fall festival. When Sister Susan was a senior, proceeds raised from Carnival were earmarked for mission work in South America. Appropriately, she was determined to bring a live llama to Carnival that year. She begged officials at Como Zoo to help, but in what became a valiant effort to make Carnival history, Susan never succeeded in securing the four-legged guest.



*Holy Angels Carnival*

### Winds of Change

Sister Kay Egan, CSJ, co-principal at Holy Angels from 1969 until 1976, brings another interesting perspective to the era. She reminds us that the tumultuous issues associated with life in the late 1960s – civil rights, Vietnam, feminism, and Vatican II – forced people to confront new ideas. “Vatican II did not just mean dropping old practices, though that got lots of attention in the press, but a time of moving from a focus on God and my piety—saving my soul—to God revealed in us—the community—the people of God,” she says. “There was a new emphasis on the ministry of Jesus and our responsibility to continue that ministry. It was a time of admitting our questions. It was a time of ecumenism when we opened our minds and hearts to other faiths.”

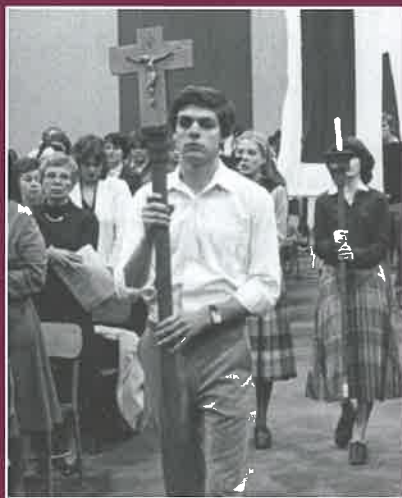
Change was in the air, and it was coming to the Academy of Holy Angels faster than anyone had anticipated. ✿



*Los Angeles Angels outfielder Ken Hunt visited Holy Angels in 1961. Student at left is Dianne Nelson Haag*

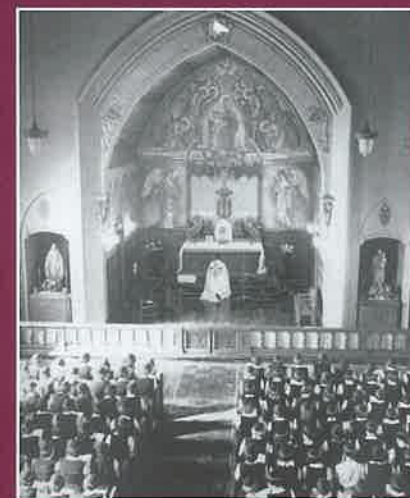


# CONNECTED IN FAITH



Not long after Holy Angels moved to Richfield, Thornton Wilder produced his most popular work—*Our Town*. In the final act of the play, one of his characters says, “We all know that something is eternal. And it ain’t houses and it ain’t names, and it ain’t earth, and it ain’t even the stars . . . everybody knows in their bones that something is eternal, and that something has to do with human beings . . . There’s something way down deep that’s eternal about every human being.”

That is a wonderful way of thinking about our relationship with God. Members of the Holy Angels community encourage one another to explore their faith, to understand its many dimensions, and to act upon one’s belief in the eternal salvation of God’s love for humanity. What we teach, how we teach, and where we teach changes by degrees because that is the nature of man. That the spirit of Christ’s example continues to permeate all that we do and all that we are is the nature of God.



# The Seventies

*Hear, my son, and receive  
my words, and the years  
of your life shall be many.  
On the way of wisdom  
I direct you, I lead you  
on straightforward paths.  
When you walk, your step  
will not be impeded, and  
should you run, you will  
not stumble. Hold fast to  
instruction, never let her  
go; keep her, for she is  
your life.*

PROVERBS 4:10-13

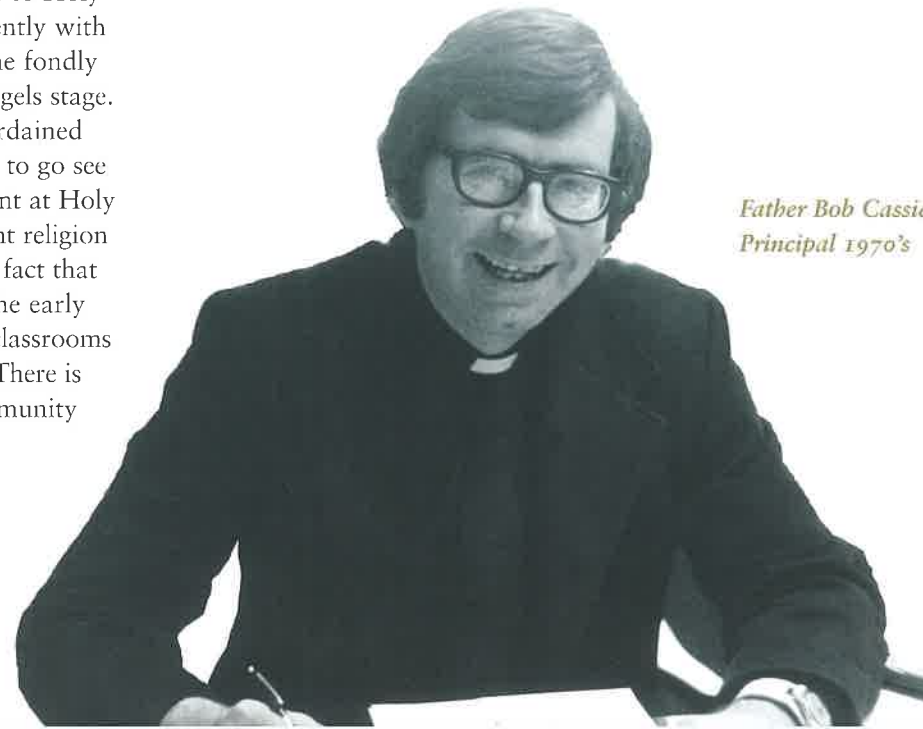


## Challenges

Like so many other Catholic schools, Holy Angels faced the very real possibility of closing its doors for good in the early 1970s. Declining enrollment, increasing labor and energy costs, and low tuition made for a bleak financial picture. By 1971, school administrators knew that a crisis was nearing. With only 365 students registered in the fall (less than half of what enrollment had been ten years earlier), the AHA community rallied to find creative solutions in the midst of seemingly insurmountable economic and demographic challenges.

Father Bob Cassidy knows all too well the harsh realities of that era. A native of south Minneapolis and a graduate of St. Thomas Academy, Cassidy was no stranger to Holy Angels. He attended dances and socialized frequently with “Angies” during his own high school days, and he fondly recalls performing in several plays on the Holy Angels stage. In 1959, Archbishop Brady assigned the newly ordained Father Cassidy to Incarnation Parish and told him to go see Sister Constance Marie about a teaching assignment at Holy Angels. For the next seven years, Father Bob taught religion one day a week at AHA. Cassidy can attest to the fact that the school’s enrollment approached 800 during the early sixties. He remembers the one-way stairwells and classrooms virtually overflowing with as many as thirty girls. There is no denying the school was crowded, but the community was vibrant and hopeful about the future.

So in 1969 when he returned to Holy Angels to assume co-principal duties with Sister Kay Egan, CSJ, Father Cassidy was surprised to find fewer than 500 students enrolled. He says the writing was on the wall, and officials at the Archdiocese advised all of the area Catholic schools to figure out what to do with “too many desks and not enough kids.” Within a year, the provincial council of the Sisters of St. Joseph directed the administrators at Holy Angels to initiate a process for closing the school. Sister Egan and Father Cassidy strenuously objected and requested the opportunity to reach out to area parishes and to families in the hopes of revitalizing the school community. In hindsight, Kay Egan knows that the odds were against them, but she held firmly to the CSJ motto, *Possumus*—We can!



*Father Bob Cassidy  
Principal 1970's*



*Long time Holy Angels supporters  
Joe Lapensky and Frank Riley.*

### **Co-Stars**

Joe and Joan Lapensky believe in Holy Angels. They always have. They sent their two daughters and two sons to AHA, a feat that would not have even been possible prior to 1972. The Lapenskys, like many other dedicated families unwilling to lose Holy Angels without a fight, spent countless hours trying to keep the tradition alive in what was no doubt the school's darkest hour.

Joe Lapensky and his good friend Jim O'Meara helped form AHA's first Board of Trustees, and they drummed up support for the school's first fund drive in 1971. Joe still revels in the knowledge that the Holy Angels community pulled together and exceeded the original goal by over \$25,000. It was a promising sign but only a beginning. School administrators had already started investigating the prospects of going co-ed, and momentum began to build for admitting boys to the school.

*AHA students enjoying the fall leaves.*

The idea of becoming a co-educational institution after nearly one hundred years as a female academy took some getting used to. There is no denying that. However, the staff members who were struggling to keep the ship afloat—Sister Kay Egan, CSJ, Father Cassidy, Sister Susan Oeffling, CSJ, Sister Susan Hames, CSJ, and Rosalba Murray among many others – ultimately knew that the school's very survival depended upon the change. Therefore, with the blessing of the Sisters of St. Joseph's Delegate Assembly on December 18, 1971, school officials began preparing to welcome freshman and sophomore boys the following fall.



*Spanish teacher, Rosalba Murray.*



## The Seventies continued



*Commencement Speaker,  
Jerry Willenburg, class of 1974.*



### **'Put a Man on Your Team'**

One of the most important lessons Jerry Willenburg ('74) learned in high school is that it pays to be persistent. Jerry was a sophomore at De LaSalle in the spring of 1972 when he first caught wind of the changes taking place at Holy Angels. Three of his older sisters—Joan ('65), Joyce ('67) and Jill ('68)—graduated from AHA, and Jerry was determined to be among the first group of boys to attend the school. The Willenburgs lived at 58th and Garfield, so Holy Angels was much closer than De LaSalle. Jerry also wanted to be a part of AHA's strong theater program. Unbeknownst to his parents, he contacted administrators at Holy Angels to begin the enrollment process. Father Bob Cassidy recalls his initial meeting with Jerry Willenburg. Although he was heartened by the boy's enthusiasm, Cassidy reluctantly turned him down. The problem of course was that Jerry would be a junior in September of 1972, and school officials had committed to adding only ninth and tenth grade boys during that first year.

Meanwhile, the entire AHA community prepared for a new and exciting chapter in the school's history. Though most accepted the inevitability of having boys at Holy Angels, some remained apprehensive about the implications of such a dramatic shift in the school's identity.

Administrators began working to establish a new athletic department and a physical education program to meet the needs of boys. There was talk

of changing the name of the school to "one with fewer feminine connotations." Father Cassidy remembers a rather contentious all-school meeting when a girl suggested that boys would take over all the leadership positions in the school.

Cassidy wisely deferred to the president of the student council who assured her classmates that no such thing would occur *unless* girls in the school let it happen. That same student council president subsequently summed up her feelings on the subject like this: "It's not really so important that a school should be for boys or for girls. It's the kind of school, the kind of educational program that is really important. I guess I don't like the word 'co-ed.' Holy Angels is a school for people." Her name was Kathy Blatz, and twenty-six years later, she became the first woman to serve as Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court.



*The Little Brown Jug, 1970s.*



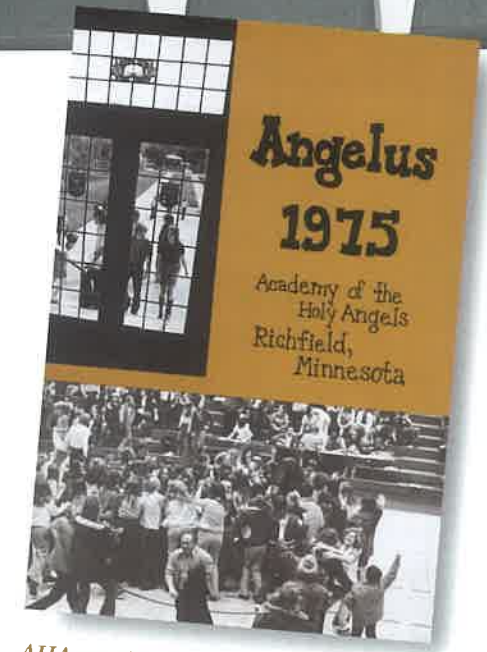
*AHA goes to the Quiz Bowl, 1977.*

Holy Angels had not heard the last of Jerry Willenburg. He returned a second and then a third time to plead his case. Father Cassidy finally told Jerry that if he could find a few more friends who were willing to join dozens of girls in the junior class, then the school might reconsider. So much for challenging assignments! Willenburg promptly returned with five names and the rest is history. Jerry still remembers receiving a phone call from AHA junior Annette Margarit during his last term at De LaSalle. She invited him to run for the student council, so Jerry spent a whole day at Holy Angels that spring getting to

know his future classmates. He threw his hat in the ring for Communications Coordinator and ran on the slogan "Put A Man On Your Team." Winning that election is still a source of pride for Jerry, but his greatest honor came two years later in 1974 when his classmates chose him to give the commencement address at their graduation ceremony. He does not remember everything he said on that sunny June day, but he does recall one last minute change as students lined up to receive their diplomas. He switched positions with one of the other nine boys in the senior class (who wore red rose boutonnieres, the start of another Holy Angels tradition) so that he could be the first man to graduate from Holy Angels. He figured he had earned it. ✿



*Anita McNair, class of 1974*



*AHA yearbook cover from 1975.*

# The Eighties



*Jeff and Gina Meaham, 2005  
(top).*



*Sister Mary Walter in the 1980s  
(bottom).*

## AHA Spirit

Jeff ('79) and Gina (Schullo) Meacham ('80) know that there is something extraordinarily special about the era during which they attended the Academy of Holy Angels. It has to do with people. What the school lacked in financial resources, updated facilities, and cutting-edge technology, it more than made up for in spirit. Jeff equates it with the feelings you get rooting for underdogs. You know the odds are against any team that lacks size, speed, and skill, but that is exactly why you want them to win. It's that extra something special underdogs are able to muster when they need it most that makes their successes so darn satisfying. The Meachams have never drifted from that essential community—teachers, coaches, friends, parents, and teammates—for whom the term Co-Stars shall always be sacred.

By the late 1970s, the shock of having boys in the school had given way to a sober reality. The Sisters of St. Joseph had clearly demonstrated unique vision in 1931 when they included a gymnasium in an all girls academy. However, the time had come to modernize the campus and a first-rate athletic facility topped the list of priorities. Discussions about a new gym began in earnest during the fall of 1977, but money was scarce and the prospect of another major fundraising campaign concerned school administrators. Moreover, Holy Angels was not the only Catholic school in the area finding it a challenge to make ends meet. In March 1978, Archbishop Roach weighed in on the issue. He wrote, "The recent history of fund drives in the area would indicate that money is tight and if Holy Angels is going to be dependent on the money raised, it would



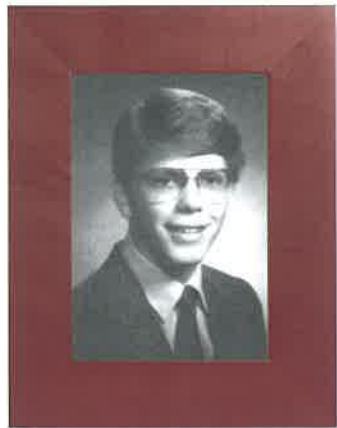
*Social Studies Teacher  
Mike Sack, 1985*



*AHA dance team, late 1980s.*

be very important that they have a good deal of it on hand before they begin construction."

The Academy of Holy Angels was, in fact, at a crossroads of sorts, and no one understood this better than the Sisters of St. Joseph. The rationale for new facilities was sound: If families are going to invest their financial resources and their children's futures in Holy Angels, they have to be convinced that Holy Angels has a future of its own. And the best way to demonstrate that commitment is to invest in the one aspect of the school that is most outdated—the physical structure. Nevertheless, the Sisters could not sustain the sort of capital improvement expenditures and daily operating costs that the institution now required. The prospect of closing the school loomed large once again.



*Jim Dunn, 1985*

In 1980, the Sisters of St. Joseph officially turned the governance of Holy Angels over to a lay board of directors. The CSJs retained ownership of the grounds and buildings, but the board assumed responsibility for the school's financial needs as well as providing for AHA's long-term success. A new 15,000 square-foot gym followed shortly thereafter. Gary Rufsvold, who was hired as the school's first

athletic director in 1972, remembers how important that event was. "Getting the new gym in 1980 was a godsend. The feeling of pride the kids had for that new gym was incredible. It gave us a home. It was significant for the school. It's like your first car, you know you're going to get another one down the road, but you always remember your first car."

Other changes came too. Sister Mary Walter Duvall, SSND arrived to assume duties as co-principal with Mike Donlin in the fall of 1981. She succeeded Sister Susan Oeffling, CSJ who had taught classes and served as an administrator at Holy Angels since 1965. The appointment of a School Sister of Notre Dame as principal represented yet another significant milestone at AHA. It marked the first time in the school's history that a CSJ had not held a leadership post at Holy Angels. Other milestones included the establishment of a middle school at Holy Angels and the Holy Angels Theater School in 1989. Money continued to be scarce during the

1980s, but school spirit, unity, and old-fashioned hard work sustained the community through yet another period of financial uncertainty.

That is the Holy Angels Jim Dunn ('85) remembers most. He has kept close ties with the school since graduating, and he is encouraged by many of the physical changes that have occurred in the past two decades. But for Jim, like many of his contemporaries, Holy Angels has always been about people making a difference. He knows that a number of his most deeply held beliefs and values came from here. He reminisces about concerned staff members who looked after both the intellectual and emotional needs of their students. He recalls that Sister Mary Walter managed to balance her reputation as a strong disciplinarian with an unremitting sense of fairness. Most of all, however, he reflects upon the overriding sense of community and pride that accompanied his experiences at Holy Angels. It's what keeps him coming back. ❁



*Glory be to Him whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.*

EPHESIANS 3:20



*Athletic Director Gary Rufsvold, English Teacher Pam Boston, Science Teacher Gayle Bari, 1980s.*

# AHA through the years

1851

Four Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (CSJs) travel from Carondelet, Mo. to St. Paul, Minn., arriving on Nov. 3, 1851. Two weeks later they open a school in the vestry of a log chapel.



1877

The CSJs open the Academy of Holy Angels on October 2, 1877, on the feast of Holy Angels as a day school for girls in the Merritt House ("the white convent") on Third Street North near Immaculate Conception Church in Minneapolis.

1882

The Academy of Holy Angels moves to the Bassett property on Fourth Street North. Holy Angels is both a boarding school and a day school for grade school and high school girls.



1907

Holy Angels is outgrowing its structure. The Holy Angels high school merges with St. Margaret's. Holy Angels retains its boarding and day school for grade school girls.

"The Bassett's Place" building and location are deemed no longer suitable for a school, and the Academy of Holy Angels closes its doors in 1928.

1931

On September 15, 1931, the CSJs open a new Academy of Holy Angels with 107 students in grades 1–12 on its current site at 66th Street and Nicollet Avenue, Richfield. Holy Angels has both a day school and a boarding school.



1932

Holy Angels is formally accredited on May 2, 1932. The 13 women are the first graduation class. They wear white formals and carry long-stemmed roses.



1989

A middle school is established. Holy Angels also establishes a theater school and wins star rating in the state One-Act Play festival, the highest rating possible, and goes on to win the rating again in 1993, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005.



1994

The boy's golf team wins the Class A state tournament.

1996

Holy Angels builds the StarDome and begins the Writing Across the Curriculum Program.

Holy Angels begins the process of repurchasing, from St. Peter's Church, the playing fields behind the church grounds.



1997

Holy Angels offers its first Advanced Placement (AP) class. The Academic Letter is established. Enrollment surpasses 650 students.



1998

Holy Angels is named a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education. The first Campus Ministry Team (CMT) is formed. The Service Letter is established for students who volunteer. AHA's middle school closes. The boys' golf team wins the state Class A tournaments in 1998 and 1999.

2000

AHA receives the Ethics in Curriculum Award from the Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation and the Archdiocesan John Ireland Award for service programs. The Theater School's Starlight Productions participates in The Fringe Theater Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. The girl's softball team wins the Class AA state championship.

1934

The white cap and gown worn at graduation is the start of another tradition.

1935

The Holy Angels Alumnae Association is established.

1946

The Holy Angels elementary school (K-8) closes when St. Peter's Church establishes a grade school adjacent to Holy Angels.

Holy Angels closes its boarding school in 1953 and remains a day high school.

1972

The Academy of Holy Angels becomes coeducational, serving students in grades 9-12.

The school welcomes 84 freshmen boys, 38 sophomore boys and six junior boys.



1974

The first co-educational class graduates with 10 men who wear red rose boutonnieres at graduation, the start of a new tradition.

1975

The girls basketball team wins the first Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) basketball tournament.

1976

The first four-year, co-ed class graduates.

1980

The Sisters of St. Joseph turn governance of the school over to a lay board of directors but maintain ownership of the school. A new gymnasium is constructed.



Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society. Photo by Daniel W. Zintzmaster, 1937



2001

St. John the Evangelist Chapel is refurbished, and the greenhouse is added to the Science Department.



2002

The boys hockey team wins the Class AA state championship.



2003

Holy Angels purchases the school's campus from the CSJs and builds and dedicates a new 70,000-square-foot addition that includes a Convocation Center and classrooms. The girls soccer team wins the Class A state championship. The competition cheerleading team wins the state championship and does so again in 2004 and 2005.



2004

Enrollment reaches 850 students.

2005

The girls hockey (Class A) and boys hockey (Class AA) teams win the state championship, the first time in Minnesota that the boys and girls hockey champions are from the same school.



2006

Holy Angels serves more than 860 students and offers 12 Advanced Placement (AP) classes. The school announces a new one-on-one personal laptop computer program that will begin with ninth graders in 2007.



# 1990's to present

*To whom much is given,  
much is required.*

LUKE 12:48



*AHA graduates.*

The Meachams have stayed very close to AHA over the years. Gina has worked in the school's counseling department for over a decade, and Jeff served six years on the Board of Trustees and nearly as many on the Booster Club. Like many other parents who have experienced the gifts of Holy Angels first-hand, Jeff and Gina sent all three of their children to the school as well—Jessica ('99), Maria ('03), and Thomas ('08). It is as much a matter of principle as it is pride for the Meachams. Having their children graduate from the same high school they attended certainly sounds nice, but it goes much deeper than that. They believe strongly in the fundamental goodness of the school, and they have never stopped wanting their children to be a part of it.

By the time Jessica Meacham started at Holy Angels, there had been another change in leadership at the school. When Dr. Jill Reilly began her tenure as president in 1995 enrollment was on the decline. It was beginning to feel like 1980 all over again. Many parts of the building needed refurbishing, and the school found itself approaching another financial crisis. According to Gary Rufsvold, the turning point came in 1996 with the building of the StarDome, a \$2 million, year-round athletic facility. "Holy Angels had struggled with enrollment and facilities," he says. "When we built the dome, we made the statement that we are here to stay and it brought football on campus, along with homecoming."

*Convocation Center  
Construction 2003*



## **That was just the beginning.**

New academic initiatives, including the school's first Advanced Placement courses, were launched in 1997, and renovations for the commons, courtyard, chapel, and several classrooms followed close behind as did the replacement of 979 windows. Holy Angels was named a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education in 1998, and the middle school closed. Enrollment increased year after year, and administrators began considering the need for additional space.



*Skating*

*AHA graduation.*

In the spring of 2003, the Academy of Holy Angels purchased the entire 22-acre campus from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. Two months later school officials broke ground for the construction of a 70,000-square-foot addition that includes a Convocation Center, new athletic facilities, student-gathering space, and several state-of-the-art classrooms. AHA enrollment reached a record peak of 863 students in the 2006-07 school year.

The changes that have taken place at Holy Angels in the last decade have helped to secure a strong future for this academic institution. Today's students are learning with the newest forms of technology and competing in some of the best co-curricular facilities in the state. They are paving the way for the next generation of Holy Angels students for whom tomorrow will come sooner than any of us can imagine.

But there is plenty of yesterday to go around. The history of the Academy of Holy Angels is closer than we know. It's alive and well in the nooks and crannies of this wonderful old building; it bursts forth from the tattered, black and white photographs we cherish; and it speaks to us in the treasured stories we share with one another time after time because our memories are what enrich and unite us. They track our progress and keep us grounded.

We are equally blessed that people who come to work at Holy Angels often make their careers here. They are essential to the fabric that binds past, present and future. Currently, 17 of our staff and faculty members are in their twentieth year of service or beyond. They include teachers Mike Sack, Mike Karlson, Sister Jeanne Lieser, Kate Hanson, Gayle Bari, Pam Boston, Kathy Hanley '71, Gregg Sawyer, Dianne LaScotte, May Ginder, Donna Poshusta, Chris Anderson '71, Dan Woods, and Randy Nelson; Assistant Principal Mark Melhorn; Facilities Manager Doug Vinge; and Media Center Director Sheila Brennan.

And of course, the school's history is preserved in every edition of the yearbook, *Angelus*. It was customary in the 1930s to produce annuals that highlighted student literary and artistic works. Intermingled amongst the candid snapshots and formal portraits are various essays, reflections, and charming, little drawings. And lots of poems. Poems about the chapel, flowers, reverence, seasons, nature, mothers, dreams, friendship and God. In short, poems about things that eventually have significance for all of us, no matter where we come from or where we are going. My favorite one is titled "Memory" by Margaret Wilder, AHA class of 1934:

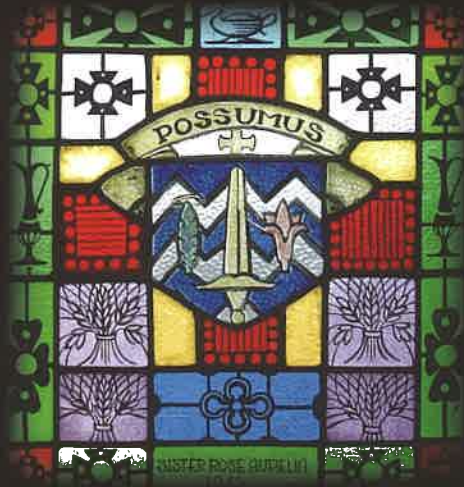
*Memory,  
Intangible sprite,  
Ever and anon appearing—  
In a soft spring breeze,  
In a child's face,  
In a rose petal  
Fallen on a book.*

*Memory,  
Bringing a tear of yesterday,  
A smile of yesternight,  
Made sweeter  
In perspective.  
Memory,  
How sweet! How bitter!*

*Margaret Wilder '34*



I sometimes wonder if Ms. Wilder ever imagined that her words might inspire someone seventy years later. Probably not. But they do, and that's what really matters. Likewise, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet who built the Academy of Holy Angels had no way of knowing—except by faith—that their prayers and sacrifices and good works would pay glorious dividends for generations to come. It is a magnificent legacy and one that only memory and imitation can keep alive. ❀



# Tomorrow Yesterday



He taught me, and said to me:

*“Let your heart hold fast my words: keep my commands, that you may live!*

*Get wisdom, get understanding! Do not forget or turn aside from the words I utter.*

*Forsake her not, and she will preserve you; love her and she will safeguard you;*

*The beginning of wisdom is: get wisdom; at the cost of all you have, get understanding.*

*Extol her, and she will exalt you; she will bring you honors if you embrace her.”*