

## **Sisters of Loretto in Archdiocese of Saint Louis**

The Sisters of Loretto, one of the first religious communities of women founded in the United States, began on the Kentucky frontier in 1812. From this beginning, the Loretto charism of loving service, rooted in Jesus on the cross and Mary at the foot of the cross, has shaped and formed this community and keeps it alive today.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Loretto followed the Westward migration to Missouri and the Southwest. In 1823, three years after Missouri became a state, Bishop Dubourg invited Sisters of Loretto to open a school in Perryville. From there, Loretto went south to Cape Girardeau in 1838 and north to Florissant in 1847. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Loretto staffed more than twenty parish schools in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, notably St. Ferdinand (113 years), Immaculate Conception/St. Kevin (94 years), and St. Pius V (91 years). Private academies were established in St. Louis in 1874 and Webster Groves in 1897, which led to the founding of Webster College in 1915 and Nerinx Hall High School in 1924.

Called to global mission in the twentieth century, Sisters of Loretto in Saint Louis were among those who responded by going to China in 1923 and to Latin America in 1960. As part of the celebration of the United States bicentennial in 1976, a variety of short-term mission projects took Loretto around the world. Sister community relationships in Ghana and Guatemala were developed in the 1990s, and Sister Ann Manganaro, a graduate of St. Louis University Medical School, established a people's clinic in El Salvador. In 2009, three Pakistani Sisters of Loretto who had studied for several years in Saint Louis established a mission in their homeland.

Since Vatican II, Loretto in Saint Louis has developed a variety of ministries in education, pastoral ministry, health and social services, peace and justice projects, retreat and spirituality ministries, interfaith initiatives, and environmental advocacy. Today some 40 sisters and co-members in the Archdiocese continue to live the Loretto charism of loving service.