

Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union, Central Province

The Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union, Central Province, are members of a worldwide community whose lives and mission are rooted in the Gospel of Jesus and the spirit of its foundress, St. Angela Merici. Grounded and empowered by their relationship with God and with one another, the Ursulines seek to be a compassionate, reconciling presence of God in the world.

Angela Merici, a visionary and practical woman, founded this company of women in 1535 in Brescia, Italy, to renew the church from within during the religious conflicts of the 16th century. In an age when women had only two options—marriage or the cloister—Angela showed women a new way to dedicate their lives to God in contemplation and service of others.

The Ursulines grew and extended their presence to France, Germany and other parts of Europe. They established a strong identity as educators and founded communities and schools for the education of girls wherever they went. Pioneer educators in North America, the Ursulines arrived in Quebec in 1639 and New Orleans in 1727. Many other educational institutions were established throughout the United States and Canada.

The Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union, Central Province, are one of three U.S. provinces. They have ministries in Missouri, Illinois, Louisiana, Texas, Minnesota, Massachusetts and Maine but also serve in other parts of the United States and around the world. As members of the Roman Union, the Ursuline Sisters of the Central Province are a branch of the worldwide family of St. Angela Merici, which serves on six continents.

At the request of Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick, the Ursuline Sisters came to Missouri from convents in Austria and Germany in 1848 to establish a convent and school in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. They opened the Ursuline Academy and Convent at 12th and Russell in St. Louis, beginning the long tradition of Ursuline education in Missouri. The convent and school moved farther out of the city to Kirkwood, Mo., in the early 1900s, where Ursuline Academy continues to educate young women today.

Although education has been the hallmark of Ursuline ministries, contemporary social conditions have called the sisters to service directed to unmet social needs. Ursulines have responded in the spirit of St. Angela according to current circumstances. Today they also are involved in spiritual and social services fields with outreach to immigrants, the dying, elderly, homeless and other disenfranchised populations.

Above all, the Ursulines strive to fulfill the commitment of St. Angela to peace and reconciliation among people in a multicultural society.