

THE VIEW FROM THE BLUFF

DECEMBER 2019

SISTERS OF CHARITY OF OUR LADY OF MERCY

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

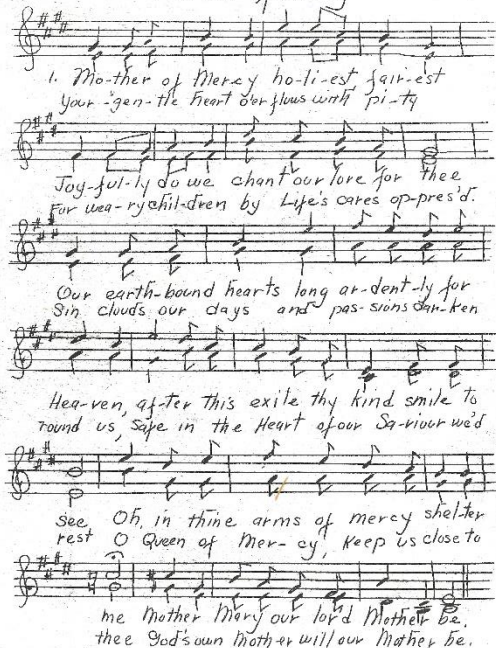


Sister Anne Francis Campbell

Mother Mary
Loretto Reynolds
1946 - 1952

Recessional

Mother of Mercy



Composed by: Sr. M. Loretto Reynolds, O.C.M.

Mary Frances Reynolds, born in Charleston, SC, on September 13, 1899, was baptized in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist on October 7, 1899. She received her elementary and secondary education in the Academy of Our Lady of Mercy from which she graduated in 1917. Two years later, on December 8, 1919 she entered the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. At her Reception Ceremony, May 29, 1920, she received the name, Sister Mary Loretto, and, was professed on June 23, 1922. For the next eight years she taught in the Academy of Our Lady of Mercy. From 1930 to 1936 she served as Local Superior and Principal of St. Angela Academy, Aiken, SC, and was Principal of the Cathedral School in Charleston from 1938-1939. Sister Loretto received a BM degree from Marywood College, Scranton, PA, in June 1927, and, an AB degree from The Catholic University, Washington, DC, in 1929. A gifted musician, Sister Loretto composed the hymn, "Mother of Mercy" for the Community. She was elected General Secretary in



Mother Loretto, Bishop Griffin, Sr. Ignatia, Sr. Michael Joseph, Sr. Mary Charles, Sr. Agatha, Sr. Marie Cecilia

1941 and Mother Assistant in August 1944. Two years later, on August 19, 1946, Sister Loretto was elected Mother General and re-elected for a second term in August 1949.

Mother Loretto was very interested in establishing an OLM Mission in the Northeast. When efforts to do so in Boston failed she contacted the Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Trenton, NJ, about the possibility of the OLMs establishing a mission in the Diocese of Trenton. Bishop William Griffin of Trenton suggested she visit to discuss particulars with him. During the visit Bishop Griffin proposed that the OLMs staff the Regional Catechetical Center in Hightstown, NJ.

On March 5, 1947 Mother Loretto informed Bishop Griffin that the OLM Council and the Bishop of Charleston,

HIGHTSTOWN REGIONAL CATECHETICAL CENTER
Established—September 8, 1947

Staffed by:

Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy
(Bishop England Foundation)
Charleston, S. C.
(four Sisters)

Stations:

(Hightstown
(Cranbury
Hightstown (Center) (Windsor
(Roosevelt

(Englishtown
(Perrineville
Englishtown (Robertsville
(Millhurst

REGIONAL CATECHETICAL PLAN
(For Catholic Public School Children in Rural Areas)
Inaugurated by the late:
Most Rev. W. A. Griffin, D. D.,
Bishop of Trenton

1. Establishment of a Regional Convent (non-Parochial)
2. Staffed by Sisters (number varying according to demand)
3. Expenses borne by the Pastors of the area being served.
4. Monthly requisition made out by the local Sister Superior; sent in to the Chancery and prorated through that office to the Pastors. (The Pastor of the main Center signs this requisition together with the local Superior)
5. Our Region covers two Parishes. Hightstown bears 55%; Englishtown, 44%.
6. The Regional Convent is directly subject to the Bishop, who employs a Rev. Director of Confraternity. They plan and issue directions.

Note: There are eleven such centers in the diocese of Trenton. Some cover six parishes with well over a thousand children.

DAY	STATIONS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
Monday	Roosevelt Perrineville	11 22
Tuesday	Cranbury Windsor	42 16
Wednesday	Englishtown (Choir) Millhurst Robertsville	7 9
Thursday	Visitation (all day)	
Friday	Englishtown	98
Saturday	Hightstown	101
Sunday	Hightstown (Peddle Boys)	306

Notes:

We have no released time in the schools.

The Classes are held:

Perrineville {	Robertsville {	in the schools
Robertsville {	Roosevelt {	

Cranbury {	Windsor {	in the homes
Windsor {	Millhurst {	

Hightstown {	Englishtown {	in Church
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Peddle Boys not counted as Diocesan charges.

Reverend Emmet Walsh, approved the offer. Sisters Ignatia Gavaghan, Michael Joseph Niggel, Agatha Sloan, and Marie Cecilia Ferro arrived in Trenton on September 8, 1947 and began their work in the Hightstown Center on October 6, 1947. In the mornings the sisters visited homes and prepared a census of the Catholic families in the area. In the afternoons they gave religious instruction to the Catholic children who attended public schools in Windsor, Cranbury, Roosevelt, Englishtown, Perrineville and Hightstown. The OLMs served in Hightstown throughout Mother Loretto's administrations.

While negotiations concerning the Hightstown Mission were in progress Bishop Walsh asked the OLM Community to resume ownership of Divine Savior Hospital in York, SC. The hospital, founded by the OLM Community in 1938, had been managed by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Augustine since 1943 when the OLMs were recalled to Charleston for duty in St. Francis Xavier Infirmary where they were needed due to the pressures of World War II. Mother Loretto agreed to the request. The OLMs resumed ownership of the property and assumed a debt of \$20,000 which was cleared by March 1952. On September 1, 1947 the OLMs returned to York. The Sisters on the staff during 1947 were Sisters Margaret Mary, Gertrude, Xavier, Felicitas and Anthony.

C O N S T I T U T I O N S
of
THE SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF OUR LADY OF MERCY
regularly
known as
THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF MERCY
of
CHARLESTON, S. C.

Founded by
MOST REVEREND JOHN ENGLAND,
FIRST BISHOP OF CHARLESTON
1829

Among Mother Loretto's goals was the revision of the Constitutions which governed the OLM Community. With the approval of Bishop Walsh and the assistance of Reverend Michael Harding, OFM, a Canonist, work began in March of 1948. In February 1949 Mother Loretto informed Bishop Walsh that the revision was completed and enclosed a copy for his examination. The revised Constitutions, approved by the first OLM General Chapter, received Bishop Walsh's formal approbation and went into effect on June 16, 1949. Significant changes included the inclusion of the word "Charity" in the Community name, provision for perpetual vows, and elimination of the office of Ecclesiastical Superior. The General Chapter elected Mother Loretto for a second term the same day.

During Mother Loretto's second term, the School of Nursing Building was added to St. Francis Xavier's facilities. Located on the northeast corner of Ashley Avenue and Mill Street, it provided classrooms, administrative offices, an auditorium, library and Chapel,



as well as much needed housing for the student nurses and Sisters. In keeping with its growth the facility's name was legally changed from "Infirmary" to St. Francis Xavier Hospital on December 31, 1951. The following year, the Community purchased the eleven acre Elbert Estate on Berrie Road, in Aiken. St. Angela Academy moved to the new site and became a four year high school. Elementary school students were transferred to St. Mary, Help of Christians, parish school.



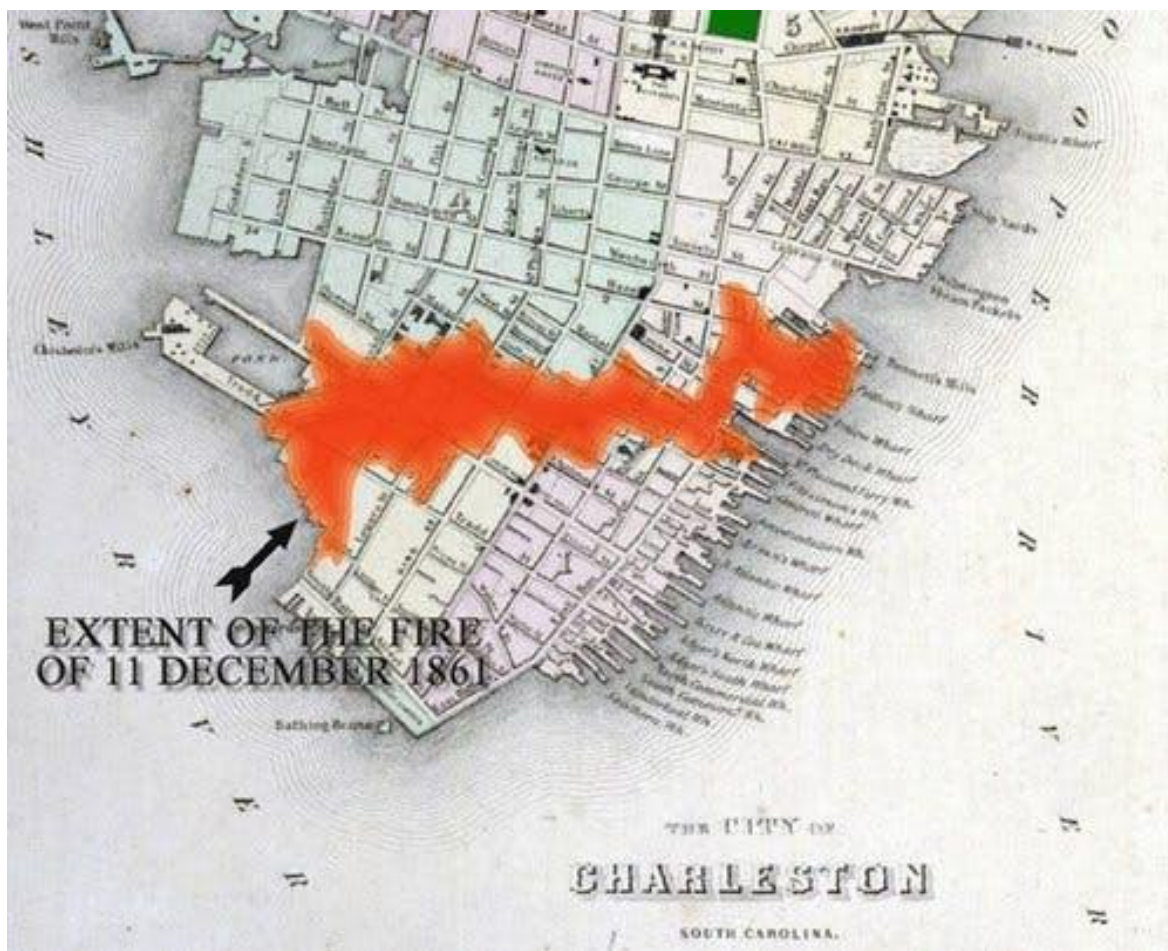
At the conclusion of her six years as Mother General, Sister Loretto joined the Bishop England High School Faculty and headed the Language Department from 1952 to 1962. Simultaneously, she served as a member of Council and General Secretary, a position she filled for fifteen years. She retired in 1974. Sister Loretto died at the Motherhouse on February 10, 1981 and is buried in Holy Cross Cemetery.



Moments In Ministry...Moments of Great Change for the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy

The Great Charleston Fire of 1861

Sister Carol Wentworth



On the evening of December 11, 1861, as a cold front bearing high winds swept into Charleston from the northeast, a fire started near the intersection of East Bay and Hasell Streets, about where Harris-Teeter is now located. The origin is not for certain. There were those in the North who called it the Lord's retribution for the proud old city's role in unleashing the dogs of war in America. Some in Charleston thought it the work of Yankee saboteurs.

Others said disaffected slaves were to blame. History records it as the Great Fire of 1861.

Whatever the origin, the fire soon got completely out of hand and spread with amazing speed and intensity, pressed by high winds, across the peninsula in a southwesterly direction. General Robert E. Lee was staying at the Mills House Hotel as he and some of his staff watched with alarm (either from the front balcony or the roof) as the fire approached their location rapidly. The General was hustled away to safety (after he had helped a lady with her children and luggage, according to one account) and taken to the Edmonston-Alston House on East Battery. **Fourteen houses on Queen Street were blown up to create a fire block and save the Marine and Roper hospitals, the Medical College, and the Roman Catholic Orphan House.** By noon on December 12th the fire had cleared the peninsula and was beginning to burn itself out. The City Market area and a large section of Meeting, as well as the north side of Queen, much of Broad, and the north side of Tradd Streets, were devastated.



The fire burned over 540 acres, 575 homes, numerous businesses, and five churches. The cost in property was estimated to be between \$5 million and \$8 million. Officially no deaths were recorded, but there must have been some. When you see photos taken of Charleston in 1865, you see a devastated, ruined city. The impulse is to assume the destruction in these photos was caused by the Union bombardment of the city for 545 days from 1863 to 1865. That's not the case. The vast majority of damage and destruction to Charleston during the Civil War was caused by The Great Fire of 1861, the worst in its history.

NOTE: Most of the above information is taken from the book, *Charleston! Charleston!* by Walter J. Fraser, Jr. (1991).

A timeline of the fire:

"This morning dawned drearily upon a night of terror and disaster," The Charleston Mercury reported. "About nine o'clock last evening the alarm rang out, calling the citizens to quell the beginnings of a fire which, in the subsequent extent and rapidity of its ruinous sweep, will compare with the most terrible conflagrations which have ever visited the American continent. The wild work of the flames, and the immense destruction of property which has thus far taken place, is chiefly attributable to the sudden and unfortunate change in the weather, which occurred almost simultaneously with the breaking out of the fire. The mild and spring-like calmness of the atmosphere during the last fortnight was broken by heavy gusts of wind, which swept the dust and smoke and sparks hither and thither in blinding clouds. Great flaming bits of wood were borne in dense showers for a distance of nearly a mile in a southwest direction, and the whole city was brightly lit up by the dreadful and widening glare. ...



"Toward midnight the fire had assumed proportions of appalling magnitude. ... From the precincts of Market, East Bay and State-streets, the conflagration had now reached Meeting and Queen-streets, The terror of the families (in many cases without their usual protectors, owing to the military exigencies of the times) was contagious, and much farther up into the city the work of packing up valuables and getting ready to desert their homesteads became general. ...

"Twelve o'clock — Meeting-street, from Market to Queen, is one mass of flame. The Circular Church and Institute Hall are burning. The Mills House is thought in imminent danger, while the fire seems stretching its red arms around the Charleston Hotel. ...

"Three o'clock – The steeple of the Circular Church has just toppled and fallen with a heavy crash. ... In the lower part of the city the fire has done its work in thorough style. Its path is now burned out, and nothing now remains to mark where it has passed, save smoldering piles of cinders and gaunt and smoking walls and chimneys. The Charleston Hotel is safe, and Hayne-street, too. The wind has swept the danger off, farther to the south. Although the fire rages on three sides of the Mills House, that fine structure has not caught [fire]. ...

"Four o'clock — A change in the wind has bent the course of the fire toward Broad-street. ... The Cathedral seems now in exceeding danger. The buildings on the west side of Friend-street, near the corner of Queen, are burning fiercely. St. Andrew's Hall is on fire, and the noble spire of St. Finbar's glitters with a splendor of portentous import. ...

"Quarter-past five o'clock [the newspaper's deadline] — As the clock of St. Michael's tolls the quarter, the Cathedral steeple has fallen, with a tremendous crash. The Cathedral is burning furiously, likewise, St. Andrew's Hall. ... The flames have now crossed Broad Street, and, as the wind has not lulled, it is impossible to say where they will stop, short of the river. ...

"Great indeed, has been the calamity which has fallen upon our noble old city. But let us, with unfailing hope and courage, bestir ourselves at once to amend the losses we have sustained, and to relieve, each one according to his means, the great suffering which the fire must entail upon its poor victims." — The Charleston Mercury, Dec. 12, 1861.

It would take many years, many heartbreaks and much sacrifice to restore the damage done by the Great Fire and the destruction destined to come. Union guns would use St. Michael's steeple as an aiming point during the bombardment that covered the peninsula from just north of Calhoun street to The Battery.

No federal aid would support Charleston's rebuilding when the war ended.

R.L. Schreadley is a former Post and Courier executive editor. He is the author of "Valor and Virtue: The Washington Light Infantry in Peace and in War," from which much of the above has been taken.



The *Charleston Courier* carried an obituary for the Cathedral on Broad Street that had only been completed eight years prior, crowned with a gold cross that rose almost 300 feet in the air. "All of a sudden it was announced that beautiful architectural structure, St. John's and St. Finbar's Cathedral, was in flames. The pride of that portion of our city was doomed to destruction, and its beautiful spire soon fell with a terrific crash, sounding high above the noise of the devouring flames." Unfortunately, many believed the structure to be fireproof and had moved their possessions inside for protection. Doubly-cursed, the Cathedral's insurance policy had expired a week prior; but in the end the fire bankrupted all but one insurance company, anyway.

DREADFUL CONFLAGRATION.

The hand of God has fallen heavily upon our city, and the calamity, with which she has been visited, is such that perhaps only one resembling has occurred since her foundation.

On Wednesday night last, a fire broke out at the end of Hasell St., and by the agency of a powerful wind which arose soon after, was borne across East Bay, State Church, Meeting, King and other streets, marking its rapid progress by fearful devastation. Human skill was paralyzed by its awful swiftness, and had fuel not failed at last for its devouring jaws, its path of ruin would have extended for miles and leagues. It was only stopped at last, when it could no further go, by the waters of Ashley river.

Whole blocks were destroyed by its ravages: churches, public halls, academies of learning, elegant private residences to the number it is said, of 600, lie mouldering in ashes, or with nothing left but crumbling walls to remind the passer-by of their former pride and magnificence. Among these were temples, where generations have knelt to pray; lofty edifices attesting the spirit of enterprise and industrial progress, and the architectural taste of their founders; ancestral mansions hallowed by years and associations, that had witnessed the indolent ease of colonial dependence, and the stirring events, gloomy or glorious, of the days when Liberty dawned upon the land.

the Apple
St. Mary's Free School of the Sisters of Mercy in Queen St., was a total loss. It was lately built at a cost of \$9000, and was in successful operation up to the day of the fire. The tables, desks, seats and books, which it contained, were all consumed. These fixtures were new and valuable, and will prove a serious loss to the good Sisters of Mercy.

Sisters of Mercy.
Their large Institution at the corner of Queen and Mazyek was saved by the almost superhuman exertions of their friends, some of whom were present on duty, others with volunteered assistance. The Sisters feel a debt of everlasting gratitude, and have requested us to express their heartfelt thanks to the Firemen and citizen soldiery, (many of whom had come from the Race-course,) for their gallant and thank God! successful efforts in rescuing their home from the flames. Their Orphanage with the Chapel, being of wood, was in constant imminent danger, and took fire more than once; but there were willing hearts and ready hands, on each occasion to repel the destroyer. The building was mined, and more than once the order was about being given to blow it up; but the efforts of its defenders grew with each emergency, and it was saved at last. Its preservation saved the Roper Hospital and other valuable public buildings on the adjoining square. It was found necessary however to blow up the Sisters' Kitchen and the Orphan's Refectory.

Articles from the
Charleston Catholic Miscellany
December 1861.

the noblest work of art in our city, the pride and boast of all our citizens of every denomination? We have neither the heart to write of it, nor words adequate to express the feelings we share, in common with others, at its loss. The prevailing sentiment was disclosed in the tears of many who beheld unmoved the destruction of their own homesteads, but wept bitterly when they saw the Cathedral spire wrapt in flames.

Amidst all the havoc wrought by the devouring flames in this noble edifice, there yet stands, almost uneffaced, on the chancel wall, the image of St. Finbar one of its patron Saints, looking calmly down on the smoking ruins beneath his feet! A happy augury we trust, that the building sacred to his name is to rise majestically once more from its ashes! And may none of us have cause like the Israelites of old, to exclaim in weeping, that the glory of the second temple is not like that of the first.

The residence of the Bishop and clergy, adjoining the Cathedral, the Library of St. John the Baptist, and the Hall of the Catholic Institute in the rear of the Cathedral, were also destroyed. Many books of the Library are known to be safe, thanks to the exertions of friends, whom may God reward a hundred fold!; but, alas! it is also known that some of them, and the most valuable, have perished in the flames. Among these we may mention the magnificent Polyglott of Le Jay, the Polyglot Psalter of Card. Juistini (1516), De Rossi's Variant Readings, the Medicean Arabic Testament, and many other treasures of Biblical Literature. The whole contents of the Catholic Institute Library have been destroyed, comprising books to the value of several thousand dollars; among them the Library file of the Catholic Miscellany, perfect up to date

THE ORPHANS' FRIENDS.—The Commissioners of Public Schools, on hearing the pitiful conditions of the Sisters' Orphans, who were compelled to leave their home at midnight, during the late fire, kindly offered several rooms in the Normal School, St. Philips St. for their accomodation. The children have remained there ever since, but will soon return to their home. They will never forget in their prayers those kind benefactors.

Charleston
Catholic Miscellany
December 1861

Our Sisters were spending a quiet night at home getting ready to say goodbye to those Sisters going to the Military Hospital at Montgomery White Sulphur Springs, Virginia. They were to leave the next morning. Below is an account of the evening from the Annals 1841-1892 of Sister Mary Charles Curtin.

-3-

During that whole day the people of Charleston were in the utmost state of excitement. The battery and every other spot where they could get a view of the gunning were thronged. Major Anderson no longer able to hold out surrendered with his 80 men and was permitted to march out with all the honors of war. There were no men killed or wounded on either side. The Battle of Fort Sumter took place on the 12th of April, 1861. The next day Mrs. Anderson called on the Sisters at the Convent. I found her an elegant lady and a good Catholic. Towards the end of the first year the Bishop ordered the Sisters to take charge of a hospital in White Sulphur Springs, Va. The selection was made and the day fixed for their departure. The Superioress, Mother Teresa was to accompany them. All preparations being completed, the starting was to take place early in the morning, so the Sisters enjoyed themselves together longer than usual, thinking it would be a long time ere they would be together again, and when they did go they actually never were reunited. A little before retiring to rest the fire bell rang and we saw the fire in the lower part of the city. The Bishop came to the gate and told us there was going to be a big fire, that nearly all the men were in camp and there was not sufficient force in the city to fight the fire. The wind blew high and about eleven o'clock we saw the fire advancing steadily towards us. Some thought of blowing up the houses, but there was no one to act as the major was not to be found. Some said afterward that he was drunk. At last the men came from the camp and their most earnest efforts seemed to be directed towards saving the convent. Never was more devotion shown than that which actuated the men of Charleston that night. The best and highest of them, Protestant and Catholic alike, if anything Protestants predominated in their earnest unselfish sympathy. They moved all our furniture to the normal school, a fine, new building, out of range of the fire, took down shutters, blinds and everything that might catch the sparks that fell in showers as though they might come from the lower regions. They took the law into their own hands and blew up the surrounding buildings. The beautiful Cathedral went without an effort to save it. Perhaps the greatest loss that night was the fine library of Bishop England, then the greatest learned and literary treasure in the country. Some men were heard to say, "let us try to save the Church". Others replied, "We cannot save both and the Sisters have the first claim." Another said, "We can do without a Church, but these ladies cannot do without a house." The Church being stone, the people thought it would not burn, and filled the basement with beds and other light things that caught the sparks. Some thought that this helped to do the mischief, but the surrounding element was so strong, that nothing would have saved except the timely blowing up of the surrounding buildings. In a few days we were back, settled in our house, and we suffered less from the fire than any of our neighbors.

Then the Sisters went on their intended trip to Virginia. The blockade of the city continued, the luxuries of life becoming more and more scarce. The bombardment which lasted for 542 days was for some time only distantly heard and seen. We had a fine boarding school when the war started but it was soon smashed so as never since to gain its ascendant...

HELP FOR VIRGINIA.—Six of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, intended to leave this city on Thursday last, on their way to nurse the sick and wounded soldiers at the

Hospital of White Sulphur Springs, near Lewisburg in Western Virginia. But the calamity of Wednesday night, retarded their departure. They will leave on Thursday next. Rev. L. P. O'Connell, Chaplain C. S. A., will accompany them to their place of destination, and unite his sacred ministry with their labours, for the benefit of the afflicted. The names of the Sisters are as follows: MOTHER MARY TERESA BARRY; Sisters MARY IGNATIUS CLARKE, M. DE SALES BRENNAN, M. STANISLAUS COVENTRY, M. BERNARD FRANCK, and M. HELENA MARLOWE. Their tender solicitude will bring relief to many a sufferer; their gentle offices will soothe many a death-bed, where, but for their presence, there might have been nought but anguish and despair. God speed them in their pious undertaking!

Charleston
Catholic
Miscellany,
December
1861



December 8, 2019

Happy 190th Anniversary of the Founding of the
Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy!!

