

# Sharing Pauline's Vision



## History is Life

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History – a chronological record of events – plays an important role in the lives of all peoples: nations, institutions, organizations, families—and even religious communities. Mother Pauline was deeply aware of this. From 1849 to 1857 she, herself, kept a running history of our SCC Congregation. This period of foundation is especially important as we have the memories of the early Sisters and also the interpretation of this time through the eyes and heart of Mother Pauline.

One feels the personal love and affection that the founding Sisters had for one another. There was Sr. Elizabeth Schlüter who had transferred from a religious community in Munster to help in the founding of the Sisters of Christian Charity. She was trained in the care of the sick and had been Superior in her Order. The Sisters loved her and begged her to return but Sr. Elizabeth desired to follow the new call of the Lord. One feels the poignancy of her death from tuberculosis as Mother Pauline records this painful loss in 1851.

Sr. Maria Rath was the instructor at the blind school. She had been a teacher for twenty years before joining Mother Pauline. The people and staff offered many concessions in order to keep her as their teacher but Sr. Maria remained dedicated to the blind children. Though often in delicate health, she remained a support for Mother Pauline for many years.

Sr. Mathilde Kothe, the youngest of the founding Sisters, was already sent to Dortmund in 1851. One can follow her life history through the chronicles of the Congregation. She lived the longest of the four founding Sisters and became the first Provincial in North America. Similarly we can learn about many of the early Sisters and read Mother Pauline's loving evaluation of them.

The many building projects of the early foundations are described. The financial struggle to spread the word of God through the establishment of many schools is spelled out in detail. The ongoing and interspersed

narrative of the building of the motherhouse, as the need arose for more room in which the Sisters and the blind children could live, is a story of love and courage.

We are introduced to the many priests and bishops that helped Mother Pauline with advice such as Fr. Minoux, Fr. Lessmann, Bishop Drepper and Bishop Conrad Martin. Mother Pauline recorded successes and disappointments. For example, she relates about the time she tried to get the Christian Brothers to help with the education of the blind boys. Though the government would not allow it, Mother Pauline faced this and other difficulties as a way of following God's will.

The spiritual life of the community, the development of the Sisters' education, the ever-constant guidance by the Jesuits, and the formation of the blind children are all recorded. We are told of the pleasures and relaxation that were planned in order to help the Sisters combine the seriousness of religious life together with the pleasantness and comfort of home life.

So the chronicles of the Sisters of Christian Charity began. After 1857 various Sisters were appointed to continue the narrative. Today we have the history of the Congregation to which each year a new chapter is added. The writings bear the impressions of the Sisters who lived through the events of life so that we can look back and continue to build our congregation on the shoulders of so many Sisters who have gone before us. †



Title page of the Western Province's copy of the Chronicles of the Congregation, and part of a hand-written page.

