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U.S. Catholic Historian, Volume 31, Number 2, Spring 2013, pp. 51-74 (Article)

Published by The Catholic University of America Press
DOI: 10.1353/cht.2013.0013

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The Daughters of Charity as Cultural Intermediaries: Women, Religion, and Race in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles

Kristine Ashton Gunnell

As Catholic nuns and sisters ventured into the American West during the nineteenth century, they became important links between cultures and classes in the diverse communities they served. As Anne M. Butler argues, Catholic sisters made religion a significant part of the western experience by actively participating in cultural exchanges. These French, German, Irish, Spanish, and American sisters ate new foods, learned new languages, and lived in conditions that many would have previously thought unfathomable. They established hospitals and schools where Native Americans, Mexicans, Asians, and European immigrants received valuable social and educational services.[1] Importantly, Catholic sisters constructed their institutions as *community* services, thereby mitigating some of the religious tensions that characterized eastern cities at the time and fostering cooperation between Catholics, Protestants and Jews. Religious women acted as lynchpins in complex social structures, connecting the middle-class and the elite with the poor from many racial backgrounds. And although

1. Anne M. Butler, *Across God's Frontiers: Catholic Sisters in the American West, 1850–1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). For more on Catholic sisters' experience in the American West see Carol Coburn and Martha Smith, *Spirited Lives: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836–1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Michael E. Engh, S.J., *Frontier Faiths: Church, Temple, and Synagogue in Los Angeles, 1846–1888* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1992); Barbra Mann Wall, *Unlikely Entrepreneurs: Catholic Sisters and the Hospital Marketplace, 1865–1925* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005); Sioban Nelson, *Say Little, Do Much: Nurses, Nuns, and Hospitals in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); M. Ursula Stepsis, C.S.A. and Dolores Ann Liptak, R.S.M., eds., *Pioneer Healers: The History of Women Religious in American Health Care* (New York: Crossroad, 1989); Susan Carol Peterson, *Women with Vision: The Presentation Sisters of South Dakota, 1880–1985* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

religious tensions increased as western cities grew, one community of religious women, the Daughters of Charity, maintained their position as cultural intermediaries in Los Angeles well into the twentieth century.

The social landscape in which the sisters operated changed dramatically in the early twentieth century. Los Angeles had shed its reputation as "Queen of the Cow Counties," and the city's population increased from 100,000 to 577,000 between 1900 and 1920. Ten years later, its population reached 1.24 million.[2] Although white Protestants remained in control of most of the city's economic and political institutions, the influx of Mexican, Japanese, and African American migrants created some uneasiness in the white middle class. The economic chaos produced by the Mexican Revolution contributed to a fivefold increase in the city's Mexican population. Its size and immigrants' assumed connections to political radicals like the Flores Magón brothers made Mexicans targets both for racial restrictions and altruistic reform.[3]

World War I further heightened fears of national disunity and sparked Americanization movements throughout the United States. As Judith Raftery and Gayle Gullett have shown, California clubwomen spearheaded the state's Americanization movement under the auspices of the Home Teacher Act of 1915. Organizers sponsored courses to instruct Mexican women in the English language, citizenship, and Anglo-American values. Stephanie Lewthwaite notes that instructors encouraged the production of Mexican handicrafts, ostensibly celebrating immigrant culture while essentializing and racializing the programs' participants.[4] While riddled with contradictions and questionable results, Americanization programs did gain

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2. Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 78–83; Michael E. Engh, S.J., "Practically Every Religion Being Represented," in *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s*, ed. Tom Sitton and William Francis Deverell (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 202–203. By 1930, 14.2 percent of Angelenos were considered nonwhite, giving Los Angeles the distinction of having the second largest proportion of nonwhites of any major city in the U.S. (second only to Baltimore). Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 83.

3. Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 30; Douglas Monroy, *Rebirth: Mexican Los Angeles from the Great Migration to the Great Depression* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 217–221.

4. Gayle Ann Gullett, "Women Progressives and the Politics of Americanization in California, 1915–1920," *Pacific Historical Review* 64, no. 1 (February 1995): 71–94; Stephanie Lewthwaite, *Race, Place, and Reform in Mexican Los Angeles: A Transnational Perspective, 1890-1940* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 95–119; Judith Rosenberg Raftery, *Land of Fair Promise: Politics and Reform in Los Angeles Schools, 1885-1941* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 68–86. See also Frank Van Nuys, *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890–1930* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002).

some political currency in the late 1910s and early 1920s. U.S. bishops took note and incorporated Americanization into diocesan charitable efforts.

Conscious of Protestant overtones associated with the movement, Bishop John J. Cantwell embraced Americanization as a "Catholic responsibility" during World War I. In doing so, he adopted the approach of the National Catholic War Council (later renamed the National Catholic Welfare Conference), which emphasized patriotism and assimilation to counter charges of Catholic disloyalty. Cantwell encouraged clergy, religious women, and lay charity workers to establish Americanization programs in Los Angeles. He endorsed a training course in Americanization techniques sponsored by the University of California Extension Division in 1919, including English instruction and citizenship. The diocese invested considerable resources in the Mexican community by sponsoring religious education classes, providing charitable relief, and endorsing social service programs for immigrants at the Brownson House and *El Hogar Feliz* settlements. The diocese also recruited Spanish-speaking sisters for the parochial school at the Plaza Church, appointed Spanish-speaking priests to establish "Mexican missions" in some parishes, and sought to build a church dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe.[5] For their part, the Daughters of Charity continued their efforts to offer unconditional charity to the city's newcomers, particularly to the Mexican immigrants living in the shantytowns near their orphanage in Boyle Heights.

This article examines the ways that the Daughters of Charity employed their religious identity as Catholic *sisters* to cross cultural boundaries, acting as intermediaries between the city's charitable establishment and immigrant communities. The Daughters participated in Catholic Americanization programs but shaped them according to the spirit of their vocation. The religious community's founders, Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, emphasized respect for the individual and human dignity. Applying these values counteracted some of the most pernicious aspects of Americanization, which often denigrated immigrant cultural traditions and minimized their potential contributions to American society.

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5. Michael E. Engh, S.J., "Female, Catholic, and Progressive: The Women of the Brownson Settlement House of Los Angeles, 1901–1920," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 109, no. 1 (1999): 113–126; "For Extending Work of Americanization," *Los Angeles Times*, December 14, 1919; "Many Attend Course on Americanization," *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1919; Jeffrey M. Burns, "The Mexican Catholic Community in California," in *Mexican Americans and the Catholic Church, 1900-1965*, ed. Jay P. Dolan and Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 155–175; Robert E. Wright, O.M.I., "Mexican-Descent Catholics and the U.S. Church, 1880–1910: Moving Beyond Chicano Assumptions," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 28, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 87–88; Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 141–146.

The Daughters of Charity and the Mexican Community in Boyle Heights

Industrial expansion in the southwestern United States combined with the economic disruptions of the Mexican Revolution to produce one of the most dramatic migrations in U.S. history. An estimated one million people—approximately ten percent of Mexico's population—migrated to the United States between 1910 and 1930. By then, George J. Sánchez notes that the Los Angeles barrio had become the "largest Mexican community in the world outside of Mexico City."[6] Many recent Mexican immigrants gathered in shantytowns, or "Boxcarvilles" along the banks of the Los Angeles River, while others lived in the flood-prone areas of Fickett Hollow and Bernal Gully, near Boyle Heights.[7] Russians, Jews, Italians, Japanese, Greeks, and African Americans also claimed the neighborhoods of Boyle Heights as their home. The Daughters of Charity's Los Angeles Orphan Asylum sat on the bluffs overlooking the river, in the heart of one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the city.

There the Daughters of Charity actively worked with Californio-Mexican children and their families throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Between one-third and one-half of children living in the Los Angeles Orphan Asylum had some Mexican or Native Californian heritage in 1880, and the diocesan newspaper, *The Tidings*, reported that one-third of the children were Mexican in 1919.[8] Because of the "revolving door" system that characterized Catholic orphanages, children often had brief stays at the institution. Most children lived there one or two years before returning to parents or relatives, and some may have had several short visits. Many children continued to interact with parents or relatives, thereby giving the sisters the opportunity to assist these families. Even when a child was placed out, the sisters often required adoptive or foster parents to report on his or her welfare.[9] The sisters' social services provided an avenue for

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6. George J. Sanchez, "'Go After the Women': Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Woman, 1915–1929," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois, vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 1994), 284–297.

7. Wild, *Street Meeting*, 27, 31.

8. "Our Diocesan Charities: The Los Angeles Orphan Asylum," *The Tidings*, October 17, 1919; *U.S. Census, Los Angeles, 1880*.

9. For example, when a young girl was placed with a family in Los Angeles after what Linda Gordon has called the "Great Arizona Orphan Abduction," the Sisters of Charity of New York required the adoptive family to report to them every six months. This was a common practice. Thomas J. Conaty, D.D., to Dr. W.J. Davis, May 18, 1905, Conaty Papers, 535, D-1905, Archives of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles; Teresa Vincent, D.C., to Thomas J. Conaty, D.D., April 24, 1905, Conaty Papers, 777, V-1905, Archives of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles Orphan Asylum, 1896 (Courtesy of Archives of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris).

greater involvement in the Mexican community. Immigrants regarded the sisters as a source of support, whether they needed food, clothing, or medical assistance. When Sister Cecilia Craine died in 1940, one mourner remembered, "She did not know how to say 'No' and would always find a way to help the situation, were it the petty worries of a child or those of a jobless man or a hungry family, and that without question."[10]

The Daughters of Charity often worked informally with the Mexican community in Los Angeles, but the 1914 flood inaugurated a new phase in the sisters' activities. Beginning on February 18, a fierce rainstorm inundated the city. The deluge lasted four days and flooded gullies and boxcarvilles on the banks of the Los Angeles River. Wind and water scattered the contents of homes into yards, soaking clothing and bedding. Everything was covered in mud. During a break in the storm, Craine and another sister "ventured out, carrying bread, potatoes, and soup to the sufferers."[11] With the gully flooded and bridge washed out, the sisters carefully crossed a narrow

10. "An Account of Sister Cecilia Craine's Illness and Death," c. 1940, Maryvale Historical Collection, Box 2, Folder 12, Maryvale, Rosemead, California (hereafter MHC).

11. "California," *Annals of the Congregation of the Mission: Letters from the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity* 22, no. 1 (1915): 51–57.

wooden plank separating them from the residents, carefully protecting their pots from the rushing current below.

Other groups also offered assistance to the flood victims, but racial antagonism fostered suspicion between Mexican immigrants and Anglo relief organizations. Between 1913 and 1918, nativists reacted to the surge of Mexican migrants by scapegoating them as the cause of the city's economic problems and by heightening public suspicions about immigrants' political radicalism. Particularly after Pancho Villa's raid in New Mexico in 1916, nativists convinced city officials to increase the police presence in Mexican neighborhoods and to place an embargo on sales of guns and liquor to Mexican residents.[12] In addition, the Salvation Army, the Presbyterian Church, and other Protestant missionary groups actively proselytized the Mexican community. These organizations offered charitable assistance and social services for the needy, but the aid came with strings attached. Accepting Protestant charity often meant attending religious services and opening one's home to "friendly visitors," who may not have fully appreciated immigrants' culture or traditions. Charity workers often equated "Americanization" with "Protestantization," and some immigrants saw their actions as unwarranted intrusions into their families.[13]

In contrast, the Daughters of Charity sought to support Mexican immigrants' religious traditions. Readily identifiable in their blue habits and cornettes, the sisters acted as symbols of Catholic identity and community. Commitment to serving those living in poverty regardless of race or creed made the Daughters of Charity less judgmental than their Protestant counterparts. When approached by Salvation Army representatives in 1914, the Mexicans in Boyle Heights declined their help, saying "the Sisters were taking care of them." Flood victims also rejected the Municipal Charities Commission's efforts to provide temporary shelter, and they even turned away white Catholic women offering food and dry clothing, confusing them for "Salvation Lassies."[14] The sisters had to intervene before the residents would accept the women's help. Apparently, these residents equated whiteness with Protestantism, and an organization that did not necessarily serve their best interests. Admittedly, Mexican immigrants' responses are filtered through the sisters' voices. So far, Mexican accounts of their interactions with the Daughters of Charity have not

12. Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio*, vol. 1 (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1983), 89–111, especially 101–102.

13. Derek Chang, "'Brought Together Upon Our Own Continent': Race, Religion and Evangelical Nationalism in American Baptist Home Missions, 1865-1900," in *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America*, ed. Alex Stepick, et al. (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press [Rowman and Littlefield], 2005), 36.

14. "California," 52–55.

surfaced. However, the sisters' records demonstrate their conscious use of religious identity to act as intermediaries among racial groups.

Building on the work of multiracial feminists, Henry Goldschmidt argues that race, nation, and religious identities are co-constituted, meaning "they are constructed in and through each other, and through other categories of difference."[15] Although Mexican flood victims appear to have conflated whiteness with a Protestant religious identity (i.e. the "Salvation Lassies"), race did not necessarily determine residents' decisions to reject aid from charity organizations. Nearly all Daughters of Charity serving at the Los Angeles Orphan Asylum in the 1910s were also white.[16] Though it is unclear how many sisters spoke Spanish in 1914, they visited families and provided food and other necessities for their struggling neighbors even before the flood, thereby bridging cultural differences through acts of service. Sister Leonide Bowling, a German American from Pennsylvania, took special notice of Mexican families living along the river. She brought food and medicine to the sick and elderly, providing comfort and sustenance to their families. At age thirty-eight, Bowling died of a sudden illness, and the Mexican community mourned her passing. Sister Mary Cain remembered Bowling's funeral as an outpouring of love:

> It was not the *rich* who filled the Chapel at Boyle Heights, but one half of it was *filled* by the *poor lowly Mexicans,* and as the casket was carried down the aisle, their sobs, cries, and aspirations, would touch your very heart. She loved her poor Mexicans, and her kind acts were many and frequent and now she is reaping the reward of her charity to-day [*sic*] at hands of the God of Charity for devotion to His own poor in general. Her death was a shock to all.[17]

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15. Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth A. McAlister, *Race, Nation, and Religion in the Americas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7.

16. In 1910, fourteen out of twenty sisters either emigrated from Ireland themselves or their parents had. By 1920, that number rose to eighteen. According to the census data, two sisters appear to have Hispanic backgrounds in 1910; Sister De Sales's parents were born in Spain, while Sister Carmelito and her parents were all born in California. Two other sisters were born in Germany, while the remaining two were German-American. *U.S. Census, Los Angeles, 1910*; *U.S. Census, Los Angeles, 1920.* A majority of entrants to the community during the first century of its history (known as the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's from 1809-1849 and the Daughters of Charity, Province of the United States, after 1850) were born in the United States (55%). Twenty-four percent of entrants were born in Ireland, but many of the American sisters may have had Irish heritage. Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., "Demographics of Entrants: Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's, 1809–1849 and Daughters of Charity, Province of the United States, 1850–1909," *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 31, no. 1 (April 2012): 85.

17. Mary Cain, D.C. to Eugenia Fealy, D.C., Los Angeles, May 26, 1919, MHC. Copy consulted in Maryvale Collection at St. Vincent Medical Center Historical Conservancy (hereafter SVMCHC); "Sister Leonide," c. 1919, MHC. Copy consulted in Maryvale Collection at SVMCHC. Emphasis in the original.

Such instances suggest that the Daughters built cooperative relationships by extending humanitarian service, rather than letting racial or national prejudices dominate their interactions with others.

Disaster relief comprised one aspect of what a sister described as their "settlement work."[18] While the Catholic settlement movement has received attention for expanding laywomen's opportunities outside the home, the Daughters of Charity engaged in similar types of activities. In Chicago, the Daughters operated two settlements: the Catholic Social Center opened in 1914, and the sisters took over operations at the De Paul Settlement and Day Nursery in 1916. These settlements primarily provided daycare services and kindergarten classes, but the DePaul Settlement also had an information bureau for those seeking to provide or secure employment. In 1911, Sister Brendan O'Bierne started an outreach program that included home visits and emergency aid to some Mexican residents in Dallas, and Sister Cecilia Craine worked at the Guardian Angel Settlement in St. Louis before taking the reins of the Los Angeles Orphan Asylum in October 1913. Under Craine's leadership, the sisters in Boyle Heights developed a comparable program offering religious education and material assistance as needed.[19] Even before the February flood, the sisters opened a "supply-station" in the quarantine cottage at the orphanage, which provided food, clothes, and other donated supplies for the struggling Mexicans, Italians, and others residing in the surrounding neighborhoods.

While the Daughters of Charity extended helping hands to impoverished immigrants with different cultural traditions, they also acted as intermediaries among people of varying class backgrounds. Since their arrival in 1856,

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18. "California," 51.

19. Daniel Hannefin, D.C., and Vincentian Studies Institute (U.S.), *Daughters of the Church: A Popular History of the Daughters of Charity in the United States, 1809-1987* (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1989), 197–199; Deborah A. Skok, *More Than Neighbors: Catholic Settlements and Day Nurseries in Chicago, 1893–1930* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), 126–163, 190; "Death Takes Sister Cecilia, Head of Orphanage 26 Years," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 1940; "Minutes, October 9, 1913," Maryvale Historical Collection, Book 32, Los Angeles Orphan Asylum Minute Book, 21 June 21, 1869–July 13, 1940, MHC. See also Deirdre M. Moloney, *American Catholic Lay Groups and Transatlantic Social Reform in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). The literature on the activities of Catholic laywomen is growing, which Skok reviewed in 2008. See Deborah A. Skok, "The Historiography of Catholic Laywomen and Progressive Reform," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 1–22. Other examples include Michael E. Engh, S.J., "From the City of Angels to the Parishes of San Antonio: Catholic Organization, Women Activists, and Racial Intersections, 1900–50," in *Catholicism in the American West: A Rosary of Hidden Voices*, ed. Roberto R. Treviño and Richard V. Francaviglia (Arlington, TX: University of Texas at Arlington, 2007), 42–71; Kathleen Sprows Cummings, *New Women of the Old Faith: Gender and American Catholicism in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

the sisters chose to cross cultural borders in order to build cooperative relationships with the city's elite Spanish-Mexican, Irish, German, and French families. These benefactors donated funds to purchase land for an orphanage and school, and also supported the orphans' fairs and other fundraising projects. The Daughters maintained their relationships with many Spanish-Mexican families for at least two generations.[20] These relationships signified *californios'* ongoing importance within the Church when, as a group, their economic and political influence diminished in the aftermath of the American conquest.[21]

The Daughters of Charity continued to reach out to benefactors from several different ethnic groups in the early twentieth century, notably the middle- and upper-class immigrants who fled the war-ravaged regions of Mexico. After the 1914 flood, four young women from St. Vincent's Parish visited the orphanage, offering their services and support for flood victims. As one sister described, Emilia Taylor, María Armendáriz, Ana McManus, and María de Jesús Espinosa "were anxious to form a society of the Ladies of Charity to work among the Mexicans." Sister Cecilia Craine gave each young woman a rosary and a Miraculous Medal, and the sister-author hoped

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20. The family of Ygnacio and Ysabel del Valle provides a good example. The del Valles hosted the Daughters of Charity when they first arrived in Los Angeles in 1856. Ysabel donated almond trees to the orphanage in 1870. Ysabel and her daughter, Josefa del Valle Forster, donated time and funds to the orphanage fundraisers in the 1870s and 1880s. Forster and her sister Ysabel del Valle Cram also donated to the new St. Vincent's Hospital in 1927. Mary Scholastica Logsdon, D.C., to Ysabel del Valle, January 26, 1870, Del Valle Collection (1002), Document 814, Box 6, Seaver Center, Los Angeles; Kristine Ashton Gunnell, "Women's Work: The Daughters of Charity Orphans' Fairs and the Formation of the Los Angeles Community, 1858–1880," *Southern California Quarterly* (January 2012): 373–406; "St. Vincent's Hospital Donor Plaque," 1927, SVMCHC, Los Angeles.

21. *Californio* and *californiana* are regional terms for those born and raised in the territory during the first half of the nineteenth century. After Mexican independence in 1821, *californios* tended to identify more with the land of their birth than with a far-off government in Mexico City. Those who belonged to the elite *ranchero* class owned large tracts of land and wielded considerable economic, political, and social power. After the American conquest in 1848, many of these families sought to preserve their social status by retaining their identity as *californios,* thereby distinguishing themselves (and their descendants) from Mexican immigrants who arrived in the state after 1880. Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, eds. *Lands of Promise and Despair: Chronicles of Early California, 1535–1846* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2001), 485; Douglas Monroy, "The Creation and Re-creation of Californio Society," in *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush*, eds. Ramón A. Gutiérrez, Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley, CA: Published in association with the California Historical Society by University of California Press, 1998), 173–195; Eileen V. Wallis, "Keeping the Old Tradition Alive: Spanish-Mexican Club Women in Southern California, 1880–1940," *Southern California Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (2009): 133–154. For more on the economic consequences of American conquest on Spanish-Mexican families, see Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-speaking Californians, 1846–1890* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970); Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850–1890: A Social History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979).

that "God might grant them the grace of vocation."[22] The young women founded a sewing circle, offering poor Mexican women an opportunity to sew clothing for their families at the orphanage, while also encouraging them to practice their religion.[23]

The society grew slowly until Armendáriz met several granddaughters of General Luis Terrazas who happened to be staying at the same hotel in 1919. Revolutionaries had expelled the long-time governor of Chihuahua and patriarch of the family's economic empire from Mexico in 1912. Of Terrazas' fourteen children and seventy-one grandchildren, many fled to Los Angeles to avoid capture and violence.[24] The Terrazas family had extensive experience in charity work in Chihuahua, and their interest reinvigorated the Ladies of Charity. Daniel Riofrio, C.M., arranged a tour of the orphanage for the Mexican young women who belonged to St. Vincent's Parish, and afterwards, they reorganized the association as *Las Señoritas de la Caridad,* or Young Ladies of Charity. They elected María Armendáriz as president, and Riofrio became their spiritual advisor. Ninety-five young women enrolled between August and December 1919, including fifteen of the Terrazas granddaughters, of whom one, Ester Urueta, served as secretary. Like the Terrazas family, the other young women of *Las Señoritas* were born in Mexico, and all those identifiable in the census had immigrated to the United States since 1913. All but one young woman were between the ages of sixteen and thirty-one. Many lived with widowed mothers, a few had household servants, and all could read and write.[25] As Sister Cecilia Craine noted, these middle- and upper-class young women "have time and money at their disposal, which they are happy to employ for the benefit of their countrywomen."[26]

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22. "California," 56.

23. Ibid.; "Las Señoritas de La Caridad," *Tidings*, December 12, 1919.

24. Luis Terrazas was governor of the Mexican state of Chihuahua from 1860-1873, 1879–1884, and 1903–1907. Terrazas used his political connections to amass an economic empire that included 3.5 million acres of land, a large cattle-raising operation, textile manufacturing and food processing plants, banking, and other enterprises. He was related either by blood or marriage to the state's wealthiest families and his sons and sons-in-law managed his vast empire. Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 27–32,43–70, 165.

25. Estela Yberri, the oldest member at age thirty-one, lived with her widowed mother, two sisters, and her sisters' children. Yberri came to the United States in 1918. Margarita Gaxiola, the youngest at age ten, was likely admitted because her two older sisters, Beatrix (age eighteen) and Graciela (age seventeen) were also members. The Gaxiolas also came to the United States in 1918. "Mexican Young Ladies Heed the Voice of Charity," *Tidings*, August 29, 1919; "Las Señoritas de La Caridad," *Tidings*, December 12, 1919; *U.S. Census, Los Angeles, 1920*; *U.S. Census, Los Angeles, 1930*; Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution*, 167–170.

26. "Letter of the Sister Servant of the Orphan Asylum at Los Angeles California to Our Most Honored Mother, October 30, 1919," *Annals of the Congregation of the Mission: Letters from the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity* 27, no. 2 (1920): 280.

Las Señoritas functioned as a charity organization and a social group. Each member paid twenty-five cents per month, which, along with other donations, bought fabric for the Mexican women who wished to come to the orphanage on Wednesday afternoons and sew clothing for themselves or their children. In October 1919, about fifty women from the neighborhood participated in the project, and *Las Señoritas* taught catechism to seventy-five children at the same time. Craine noted that the young women taught the children their prayers *in English,* suggesting that some, if not most, members of the society were fluent in the language.[27] Besides the sewing circle, the association also sponsored a choir, and they may have participated at the Mass celebrating the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Vincent's Church.[28] *Las Señoritas* gave recent immigrants an opportunity to demonstrate their respectability, display their talents, and practice their faith. As Timothy Matovina demonstrates, pious societies like *Las Señoritas* also provided culturally acceptable venues for socializing and space for women to develop leadership skills and a degree of autonomy.[29] The Daughters of Charity encouraged *Las Señoritas* to provide direct service to the poor, interacting with the women and children who attended sewing circles and catechism classes, rather than just donating money. In this way, the Daughters acted as intermediaries between individuals who shared a common religious and cultural heritage, but different class backgrounds.

Ethnic rivalries remained prevalent within the U.S. Catholic Church during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although adherents shared a commitment to Catholicism, other loyalties competed for attention and members had to negotiate the varying claims of ethnicity, language, nationality, and class as they practiced their faith. Historically, U.S. bishops organized ethnic or "national" parishes to accommodate the needs of immigrants who sought to preserve their language and culture. Some congregations of religious women also founded hospitals, orphanages, and schools to serve particular ethnic communities.[30] Susan S. Walton and Deborah A. Skok

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27 "The Spanish Ladies of Charity," *Tidings*, October 31, 1919; "Letter of the Sister Servant of the Orphan Asylum at Los Angeles California to Our Most Honored Mother, October 30, 1919," 280.

28 "The Spanish Ladies of Charity," *Tidings*, October 31, 1919; "Festival of Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebrated," *Tidings*, December 19, 1919.

29. Timothy M. Matovina, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio, from Colonial Origins to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 112, 114. See also Roberto R. Treviño, *The Church in the Barrio: Mexican American Ethno-Catholicism in Houston* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 70–71, 127–153, 168–171.

30. George C. Stewart, *Marvels of Charity: A History of American Sisters and Nuns* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1994), 270–308; Stephen Joseph Shaw, "The Cities and the Plains, a Home for God's People: A History of the Catholic Parish in the Midwest,"

also illustrate the complicated interplay of religion and class in Catholic charitable endeavors. In Boston, Walton claims that class biases crept into the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, as "they preached not just Christian love, but middle-class respectability."[31] Leaders sought to promote Catholic unity and strengthen Catholic identity through their charitable network, but they also looked outward, wanting to demonstrate that Catholics had a distinct, yet equal, place in society. These dual goals often had contradictory results and could lead to an ambivalent attitude towards the poor.[32] In contrast, Skok asserts that settlement work in Chicago demonstrates that cross-class cooperation boosted the fortunes of the Catholic community as a whole. Settlement leaders relied on the labor of upper-, middle-, and working-class women for institutional survival, and leaders often parlayed their experiences into professional opportunities in government welfare agencies to continue aiding Catholics in need.[33] As these scholars suggest, relationships between nation, religion, and class are intricately linked, but an individual's response to these differences could vary based on their relative importance in a given set of historical circumstances.

Furthermore, a woman's identity as a consecrated member of a religious community could also shape her perspective on social differences. In her study of the *Petites Franciscaines de Marie* (PFM), Florence Mae Waldron argues that these women selectively used their individual national identities as Americans, Canadians, or French Canadians as needed to serve their community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Unlike Father Joseph Brouillet, who fiercely defended what he saw as French Canadian Catholic interests in Worcester, Massachusetts, Waldron argues that for the PFM "such national allegiances in and of themselves were not a direct route to power, influence, or the ability to make a difference in either Quebec or New England at the time."[34] Their identity as Catholic sisters retained the utmost importance; other allegiances were subsumed underneath this

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in *The American Catholic Parish: A History from 1850 to the Present*, ed. Jay P. Dolan (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 306–317, 333–345; Maureen Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion: Irish Catholic Nuns and the Origins of New York's Welfare System, 1830–1920* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 156–162; Dolan, *In Search of American Catholicism*, 90–99, 136–146. See also Stephen Joseph Shaw, *The Catholic Parish as a Way-station of Ethnicity and Americanization: Chicago's Germans and Italians, 1903–1939* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Pub., 1991); Dolores Ann Liptak, R.S.M., *Immigrants and Their Church* (New York; London: Macmillan; Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1989).

31. Susan S. Walton, *To Preserve the Faith: Catholic Charities in Boston, 1870-1930* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 100.

32. Ibid., 1–7, 106–108, 127, 145–152, 162–168.

33. Skok, *More Than Neighbors*, 4–9.

34. Florence Mae Waldron, "Re-Evaluating the Role of 'National' Identities in the American Catholic Church at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The Case of Les Petites Franciscaines De Marie (PFM)," *The Catholic Historical Review* 95, no. 3 (July 2009): 535.

umbrella. National identities served as tools employed as needed to accomplish their mission.[35] While not applicable for all sisters, Waldron's assessment provides a lens from which to view the "co-constitution" of identities for communities of religious women founded in the United States. Race, cultural heritage, and citizenship matter, but not as much as one's commitment to Christ and service to and through the religious community.

In evaluating the actions of the Daughters of Charity in Los Angeles from the foregoing perspective, mission comes first. These women committed to assist those in temporal or spiritual distress, whether sheltering flood victims or teaching children the fundamentals of their faith. The sisters fostered the charitable impulses of *Las Señoritas* and encouraged others to put personal differences aside in order to better serve poor persons. However, these conclusions must be qualified. The sisters' accounts cited here were intended for *public* consumption, at least among Daughters of Charity serving in the United States. An unnamed sister, most likely Sister Cecilia Craine, reported these activities to James J. Sullivan, C.M., the director of the Daughters of Charity Western Province of the United States (1910-1927). An edited version of the letter was reprinted in *Annals of the Congregation of the Mission: Letters from the Missionaries and Daughters of Charity,* a quarterly publication printed at St. Joseph's House in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Distributed throughout the United States, the publication aimed to edify and strengthen other members of the religious community. Editors selected narratives that reflected ideal attributes of a Daughter of Charity, particularly a commitment to aid those in poverty, regardless of race or creed. Accounts of individual sisters struggling to live up to these standards seldom appear. Nevertheless, the sisters' published reports demonstrate that they chose to cross cultural and racial boundaries, emphasizing their responsibility as *sisters* to serve all who were in need.

Interestingly, the unpublished letter suggests that the dualities Walton identified in Boston also existed in Los Angeles in the 1910s. Certainly, Daughters of Charity looked inward by caring for Mexican Catholics, providing relief for their physical and spiritual needs. But they also looked outward, considering Catholics' overall place within the city's charity circles. The letter suggests that the sisters felt a degree of satisfaction—perhaps, even triumph—when flood victims preferred their ministrations to those of their Protestant counterparts. The author also expressed surprise when Dr. Milbank Johnson, director of the Municipal Charities Commission, asked the Daughters to house flood victims and offered to reimburse their expenses, since he led the "honorable board that has been giving us so much

35. Ibid., 535, 539–541.

trouble and annoyance the past few months inspecting us and everything around here."[36] Someone excised this comment before the letter was printed in the *Annals,* but it indicates that some friction existed between city charity leaders and the Daughters, and that at last, Johnson recognized the valuable contribution that sisters made to the city.

Americanization and the Japanese Community

Consistent with their philosophy to serve poor persons regardless of race or creed, the Daughters of Charity did not limit their work to Mexican immigrants. Between 1915 and 1920, the sisters also became involved with Los Angeles' Japanese community. After the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Japanese immigrants started to fill California's insatiable demand for labor. As Ronald Takaki notes, the Japanese population in the United States grew from 72,257 to 138,834 between 1900 and 1920, and most lived on the Pacific Coast. According to Brian Hayashi, the Japanese community in Los Angeles also grew dramatically, from less than 200 in 1900 to more than 11,000 two decades later. He notes that Los Angeles County had the largest Japanese community in the contiguous forty-eight states by 1930.[37] *Issei* (first-generation immigrants) and *Nisei* (second-generation) found economic niches in agriculture and established small businesses, including hotels, restaurants, laundries, poolrooms, and grocery stores. Because the Alien Land Laws (1913 and 1920) limited the ability of those deemed "ineligible for citizenship" to lease or own property, *Issei* farmers tended to specialize in short-term crops like berries or vegetables, which they trucked from El Monte and other outlying regions to sell in the city's markets.[38] Although these farmers formed an important part of California's agricultural economy, Japanese residents often struggled against social and legal discrimination. Japanese were regularly called names, spat on in the streets, and

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36. Unnamed Sister to J.J. Sullivan, C.M., February 22, 1914, 3, Maryvale Historical Collection, Box 2, Folder 13, MHC. In October 1913, Johnson started to develop a plan to consolidate the funding for charity organizations in Los Angeles, and he intended to investigate all charitable institutions and learn about their operations. "Public Session Today: Municipal Charities Commission to meet at City Hall to Discuss Betterment Plans," *Los Angeles Times,* October 14, 1913. Earlier in the year, County Health Officer E.O. Sawyer called for inspections of all orphan asylums in Los Angeles County located outside the city limits (of which the Los Angeles Orphan Asylum was the most notable), charging that "Conditions are bad," and that they improperly handled the adoption of babies. See "To Regulate Orphanages," *Los Angeles Times,* February 4, 1913.

37. Brian Masaru Hayashi, *For the Sake of our Japanese Brethren: Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism among the Japanese of Los Angeles, 1895-1942* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 3-4; Ronald T. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, updated and revised ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998), 180-181.

38. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 186, 189–194, 203–212.

refused services. Like Mexicans and the Chinese, public health officials regarded the Japanese as potential sources of disease. According to officials, this new "yellow peril" could be more dangerous than the Chinese because Japanese farmers were intimately linked to the city's food supply.[39] Along with other non-whites, Japanese immigrants struggled to create a place for themselves in an Anglo-dominated society.

Even so, missionaries, settlement workers, and other "Americanizers" sought to include Japanese immigrants and their children in their pluralist vision. Although tacitly understood that non-whites would remain in a subordinate position, Mark Wild argues that missionaries and settlement workers "all hoped to incorporate immigrants … into a larger 'American society' anchored in Anglo-American traditions, language, living standards, patriotism, and, sometimes, Christian beliefs."[40] However, all immigrants were not equal, and California Commission on Immigration and Housing officials often employed hierarchies of race. European immigrants had the most potential to assimilate, although Wild notes that as business owners, Japanese immigrants' reputation for industriousness placed them higher on the ladder than Mexicans, Chinese, and African Americans.[41]

The Catholic Church became more attentive to Japanese immigrants' needs in the 1910s. Father Albert Breton ministered to the small Japanese Catholic community through St. Xavier Francis Mission.[42] The Daughters of Charity first became involved in the work in 1915, when Breton invited four women from *Aikukai*, a lay religious organization in Kagoshima, Japan, to teach catechism to Japanese-American children in Los Angeles.[43] Known as the Order of Visitation or *Homonkai*, four additional women joined the original sisters over the next three or four years. Led by Margaret

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39. Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879–1939* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 55–60; Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 181–182.

40. Wild, *Street Meeting*, 72.

41. Wild, *Street Meeting*, 50.

42. See Michael E. Engh, S.J., "From the City of Angels," 46–47. Yuki Yamazaki, "St. Francis Xavier School: Acculturation and Enculturation of Japanese Americans in Los Angeles, 1921–1945," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 18, no. 1 (2000): 56–57.

43. Because of Japanese immigration patterns, few *Issei* immigrated to the United States as children. Between 1890 and 1908 most Japanese immigrants to the United States were men. Under the Gentlemen's Agreement, the Japanese government stopped issuing passports to laborers, but it continued to allow wives, children, and parents to emigrate until 1924. In 1920, twenty-nine percent of the 71,000 people of Japanese descent living in California were born in the United States. Many of them were children, so it is likely that most, if not all, of the students attending St. Xavier Francis School were Japanese American. David Yoo, *Growing up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture Among Japanese Americans of California, 1924–49* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 3–5.

St. Francis Xavier School, Los Angeles, from *The Field Afar*, October 1920 (Courtesy of the Maryknoll Mission Archives, Maryknoll, New York).

Matsumoto, the Japanese sisters established a kindergarten and primary school in Little Tokyo.[44] Although not yet officially recognized as a religious community, these women patterned their religious life after the Daughters of Charity. Upon their arrival, Breton took the Japanese sisters to visit the Daughters of Charity. The sisters made habits for the Japanese women, a blue dress and a "black veil with a white border."[45] Although the blue dress was likely made of the same material as the habits of the Daughters of Charity, the Japanese sisters did not take the cornette headdress or have any

44. Harry K. Honda, "The Maryknoll Story in Little Tokyo, Little Tokyo Historical Society Meeting, March 24, 2007, at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, Los Angeles," 1–2, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles. Transcript available at www.discovernikkei.org. Michael Engh lists the names of the original four sisters as Sue Matsumoto, Toi Oe, Eki Fujisawa, and Tsui Yamano. See Engh, "From the City of Angels," 47.

45. "Letter of the Sister Servant of the Orphan Asylum at Los Angeles California to our Most Honored Mother, October 30, 1919," 278. See also Hannefin, *Daughters of the Church,* 205–206.

official ties with the religious community. Breton hoped to establish an official community for Japanese sisters, one "adapted to their nationality."[46]

Besides offering material aid to the *Homonkai*, the Daughters of Charity also became involved in their educational outreach programs. In 1919, Breton asked the Daughters to assign two sisters to teach classes at the *Homonkai* school. Breton hoped to attract students by teaching English, while also exposing them to a Catholic environment. Since the *Homonkai* sisters spoke little or no English, Breton charged them with teaching catechism to students in Japanese after Mass. But he needed English-speaking teachers to make the overall program work. The Daughters agreed to supply two sisters on a temporary basis. Visitatrix Eugenia Fealy, superior of all Daughters of Charity in the western United States, assigned Sisters Zoe Reid and Stephanie Lynch, both experienced teachers, to the Japanese school. At age forty-nine, Sister Zoe Reid had served in a school or orphan asylum for twenty-five years, and Sister Stephanie Lynch had seven years of teaching experience.[47]

To assist in their duties, Reid and Lynch enrolled in an Americanization course offered by the University of California Extension Division in November 1919. Along with one hundred other Catholic volunteers, Reid and Lynch learned strategies for teaching English as a second language and techniques used in the Home Teacher program, focusing on teaching American cooking, health, and hygiene practices to immigrant mothers and their children. Lecturers also addressed topics such as housing problems, sanitation, citizenship, and industrial management.[48] During the previous year, Bishop Cantwell secured a $50,000 grant from the National Catholic War Council (NCWC) to conduct Americanization work within the diocese, and the university course acted as part of this program. The diocese also established a branch office under the direction of the local Bureau of Catholic Charities with the stated purpose of organizing Americanization

46. "Letter of the Sister Servant of the Orphan Asylum at Los Angeles California to our Most Honored Mother, October 30, 1919," 278.

47. Albert Breton to Eugenia Fealy, D.C., Los Angeles, August 5, 1919, MHC. Copy consulted in Maryvale Collection, SVMCHC. "Letter of the Sister Servant of the Orphan Asylum at Los Angeles California to our Most Honored Mother, October 30, 1919," 279. Born in Toronto, Canada, on March 25, 1870, Sister Zoe (Mary) Reid entered the community of the Daughters of Charity in 1894. She served at St. Columba's School in Chicago, St. Rose's Asylum in Milwaukee, and St. Stephen's School in New Orleans before coming to Los Angeles. Sister Stephanie (Leonora) Lynch, born in New Orleans on July 24, 1892, entered the Daughters of Charity in 1911, and started teaching at the Holy Cross School in Santa Cruz, California in 1912. "Zoe Reid, D.C.," entry in Daughters of Charity Database, Archives of the Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise, St. Louis Campus, St. Louis, Missouri. "Stephanie Lynch, D.C.," entry in Daughters of Charity Database, Archives of the Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise, St. Louis Campus, St. Louis, Missouri.

48. "Training Course for Americanization Workers," *Tidings*, October 24, 1919.

efforts.[49] The bishop's endorsement of the university's Americanization course and the sisters' participation therein shows some willingness to adapt secular methods to Catholic needs.

Reid and Lynch managed the school, consisting of a day nursery, kindergarten, and classes for the first, second, and third grades. The *Homonkai* sisters supervised the day nursery and instructed the children in Japanese, while Reid and Lynch taught English to the Japanese sisters and their students. Sister Cecelia Craine reported that the Japanese sisters "learn[ed] with astonishing facility," but Reid became frustrated with the children's limited progress at the beginning of the school year, noting, "Our Japanese are very slow and it will take a long time to make them like our own children."[50] From her letters, she appeared a little overwhelmed with sixty kindergarteners, but Reid immediately connected with some older children, describing seven-year-old Marjorie Yamamoto as "a little saint."[51] Over the course of the year, Reid and Lynch developed a love for the children, but their letters elicit some of the paternalism typical of the day by referring to the children as "our little Japs" and "poor little pagans."[52]

As a missionary endeavor, St. Francis Xavier School did not limit its services to Japanese Catholics. Breton purposely reached out to non-Catholics and non-Christians through the school, and about twenty of the 125 students had been baptized by the end of the academic year.[53] The school drew students from throughout the county, and Breton hired a driver to transport the children to and from Little Tokyo. According to Reid, the route encompassed seventy-five miles, and some students did not return home until five o'clock in the evening.[54] The school provided valuable educational services, but Breton believed the "aim of [the work was] exclusively the conversion of pagan souls."[55] Actions of the Daughters of Charity mirrored Breton's spiritual

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49. Engh, "Female, Catholic, and Progressive," 120; "For Extending Work of Americanization," *Los Angeles Times*, December 14, 1919; "Many Attend Course on Americanization," *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1919. Craine to Williams, July 13, 1920, SVMCHC.

50. "Letter of the Sister Servant of the Orphan Asylum at Los Angeles California to our Most Honored Mother, October 30, 1919," 279; Zoe Reid, D.C., to Eugenia Fealy, D.C., Los Angeles, September 9, 1919, MHC. Copy consulted in Maryvale Collection at SVMCHC.

51. Zoe Reid, D.C., to Eugenia Fealy, D.C., September 9, 1919, MHC. Copy consulted at SVMCHC.

52. Zoe Reid, D.C., to Eugenia Fealy, D.C., July 22, 1920, MHC. Copy consulted at SVMCHC; Stephanie Lynch, D.C., to Eugenia Fealy, D.C., March 10, 1920, MHC. Copy consulted at SVMCHC.

53. Reid to Fealy, July 22, 1920, SVMCHC.

54. Reid to Fealy, September 9, 1919, SVMCHC. Craine to Williams, July 13, 1920, SVMCHC.

55. Breton to Fealy, August 5, 1919, SVMCHC.

Father Albert Breton occasionally drove the St. Francis Xavier School Bus on its 75-mile route, from *The Field Afar*, June 1920 (Courtesy of the Maryknoll Mission Archives, Maryknoll, New York).

focus, and they interacted with students' families whenever given an opportunity. Lynch even surreptitiously baptized an infant who was near death during a visit to one of her student's homes, an exceptional occurrence. Breton baptized other children during the course of the year, but he may not have been available at this particular time.[56]

Besides providing school teachers, the Daughters of Charity assisted the *Homonkai* in their fundraising activities. In 1919, Father Breton and some of the "charitable ladies" organized a festival to raise funds for the purchase of a new house for the Japanese sisters. Breton asked Craine to donate some of the refreshments. Despite their own financial struggles at the orphanage, she agreed to donate four hundred rolls made by the older students in the orphanage's bakery. While the other sisters "considered this too generous a gift," Craine believed that God would reward their generosity: "Do not worry," I said to them, "what we do for love of God for these Japanese, much poorer than we are, will not remain unrewarded."[57] The very same

56. Reid explained, "I asked Sister Stephanie, to go with the Japanese sister, to see the child and baptize him if the doctor said that there was no hope. The father would not bother the mother just then but promised to have him baptized when he got better. Poor sister did not know what to do, the mother would not let the child out of her arms, so Sister filled her handkerchief with water and baptized him while his mother thought she was cooling his head, that was about one o'clock, he was in heaven at four." Reid to Fealy, July 22, 1920, SVMCHC. Lynch reported that Breton baptized one of her second-graders when he was ill, and the child recovered and returned to school. Lynch to Fealy, March 10, 1920, SVMCHC.

57. "Letter of the Sister Servant of the Orphan Asylum at Los Angeles California to our Most Honored Mother, October 30, 1919," 279.

day, a Los Angeles baker sent 800 loaves of bread to the asylum, enough for the orphans and the Japanese sisters. The Japanese sisters purchased a home for $8,000, and Craine believed her efforts had done some good. She commented, "This is not the only occasion in which our Lord has given us sensible proofs of the value He attaches to the little service we are enabled to render to these dear Sisters."[58]

Despite its initial success, the collaboration between the Daughters and the *Homonkai* only lasted one year. After five years in Los Angeles, Father Breton wished to return to his work in Japan, and he sought a more permanent arrangement for the St. Francis Xavier Mission. In 1919, he petitioned the Maryknoll Fathers to staff the Japanese mission in Los Angeles. Maryknoll, officially known as the Catholic Foreign Missionary Society of America, acted as a missionary arm of the Catholic Church in the United States. Besides sending missionaries to China, Maryknoll took responsibility for ministry to Japanese Catholics on the Pacific Coast. Assuming that this ministry would be a stepping stone to further missionary work in Japan, the religious community agreed to maintain Breton's mission in Los Angeles, and they assigned two sisters to teach there in 1921.[59] Since the Japanese sisters were now formally associated with another religious community, the Daughters withdrew Reid and Lynch from the Japanese school, although they trained the Maryknoll sisters, neither of whom had teaching experience.[60]

The work of the Daughters of Charity with the *Homonkai* and the students at St. Francis Xavier School illustrate the sisters' willingness to cross racial and cultural boundaries to further their mission, whether by providing bread to the impoverished sisters for their fundraiser, educating students, or providing spiritual sustenance for children and their families. Sisters Zoe Reid and Stephanie Lynch used Americanization training as one tool in their established kit of teaching experience. Their efforts enjoyed some success as the school grew from ninety-four to one hundred twenty-five students over the

58. "Letter of the Sister Servant of the Orphan Asylum at Los Angeles California to our Most Honored Mother, October 30, 1919," 279–280.

59. Although Maryknoll originally included only men, Pope Benedict XV approved the formation of the Maryknoll Sisters by early 1920. Officially named the Foreign Mission Sisters of Saint Dominic, the Maryknoll sisters established a house of formation in Ossining, New York, headquarters for the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America. Although Maryknoll was designed as a foreign mission society, the sisters' work was initially confined to work in the United States. Father Breton decided that the Japanese sisters' work in Los Angeles best fit the Maryknoll charism. "Papal Authorization for the Maryknoll Sisters," *Annals of the Congregation of the Mission: Letters from the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity* 27, no. 1 (1920): 147–148.

60. Stephanie Lynch, D.C., to Eugenia Fealy, D.C., Los Angeles, July 22, 1920, MHC. Copy consulted in Maryvale Collection, SVMCHC.

course of the year. Four students were Christian when they started the year; twenty had become Catholic by the end. Ten students regularly went to confession and three made their first communions.[61] Yet, Americanization at the mission school did not operate as a one-way street. The Daughters of Charity provided English instruction, but the *Homonkai* continued to support the students' language and culture. Parents likely sent their children to the school because students could learn English without completely relinquishing their cultural traditions. Yet, extant records do not reveal whether the Daughters' relationships with the Japanese sisters and students' parents were entirely harmonious.[62] Lynch notes that one Japanese sister "felt rather suspicious of our methods of Americanization" after a frightened child made a disrespectful comment during a visit from an archbishop from Japan.[63] However, she does not elaborate on her relationship with the Japanese sisters, or comment on when or if, the issues were ever resolved. What her letters reveal, however, is a genuine desire to serve and affection for her students.

Conclusion

Religious identity played a pivotal role in the sisters' abilities to act as cultural intermediaries in the Mexican and Japanese communities during the early twentieth century. Recognized in their habits, the sisters were welcomed when Mexican residents turned away civic officials and Protestant missionaries. The sisters also harnessed the enthusiasm of young Mexican women to assist impoverished migrants by sewing clothing and teaching Catholicism and English simultaneously. Laywomen did not just collect funds, and sisters encouraged *Las Señoritas de la Caridad* to become actively involved in works of charity. At St. Francis Xavier School, sisters provided English instruction to Japanese American children and offered spiritual support within a Catholic environment. In both cases, the Daughters of Charity extended their service to those in poverty beyond the orphanage doors, continuing a tradition of working among the people of their assigned communities. In the process, the sisters built and maintained relationships with different segments of the community, reaching across cultural borders by emphasizing their religious identity.

But the question remains, did the Daughters of Charity see themselves as active agents of Americanization? Or, did they view their efforts as part of

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61. Reid to Fealy, September 9, 1919, SVMCHC; Reid to Fealy, July 22, 1920, SVMCHC.

62. Michael E. Engh, S.J., "'Japanese Trimmings on Our American Catholicity': Contested Ministry to Japanese Immigrants in Los Angeles, 1912–1925," in this issue of *U.S. Catholic Historian* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 75–93.

63. Lynch to Fealy, March 10, 1920.

a long-standing tradition to offer charity without regard to race or creed? In their reports, the sisters framed their activities in terms of Americanization, thus conforming to the vision of the National Catholic War Council and the priorities of other Church leaders. In July 1920, Sister Cecilia Craine reported that "we have been engaged in Americanization work among the Mexicans for the past six years."[64] Two sisters taught catechism on Sunday afternoons and another supervised *Las Señoritas*' sewing circle. She also noted, "On Fridays a Sister accompanied by a committee of ladies visits these poor people in their homes to teach them how to care for their children and manage their households as Americans do."[65] Though it is unclear if the "committee of ladies" included members of *Las Señoritas* or other Americanization workers trained by the Catholic Bureau of Charities, these efforts reflect popular trends in Americanization work at the time, while remaining firmly rooted in the teachings of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. Since the 1850s, the Daughters had acted as intermediaries between cultures, races, and classes in Los Angeles. De Paul and de Marillac founded the religious community so that sisters could provide assistance to the sick poor in their homes, so while discussions of household management and child-rearing may have been new, home visits were consistent with the sisters' religious traditions. They blended Americanization with long-established charity practices. The Daughters of Charity had also provided disaster relief by nursing Mexican and Native American smallpox victims in Los Angeles from the 1860s through the 1880s. Extending relief to flood victims in 1914 continued this tradition. By 1920, the Daughters of Charity had been actively involved in charitable efforts in the Californio-Mexican community in Los Angeles for over sixty years. Whatever needs the Church had, the Daughters of Charity continued focusing on their core spiritual mission: service to those living in poverty.

Likewise, the Daughters of Charity taught *Las Señoritas* to give personal service to those in need. Middle- and upper-class Mexican women sewed with Mexican women from the poorer classes, as they sought to help their children understand their religious heritage and nurture their faith. Learning the language of prayer in English could foster their assimilation into the U.S. Catholic community and provide a foundation for economic advancement. *Las Señoritas* learned the sisters' lessons so well that they expanded beyond St. Vincent's Parish, taking up good works in other parts of the city, most notably teaching catechism at the new Catholic Social Center completed on

64. Cecilia Craine, D.C., to Michael Williams, July 13, 1920, Enclosure in Cecilia Craine, D.C., to Eugenia Fealy, D.C., July 13, 1920 in MHC. Copy consulted at SVMCHC.

65. Ibid. See also "Letter of the Sister Servant of the Orphan Asylum at Los Angeles California to Our Most Honored Mother, October 30, 1919."

the site of *El Hogar Feliz* in February 1920.[66] The Daughters sought to facilitate communication and foster relationships between those with differing class or ethnic backgrounds. Americanization served as a useful tool in their charitable service, not an end unto itself.

Furthermore, what did participation in Americanization work mean for *Las Señoritas*? Few, if any, of these young women were U.S. citizens, so why would they engage in activities to help immigrants assimilate into American society? I would suggest that these young women did not define their service in terms of Americanization. They sought to "devote their energies of youth, piety and education to serve their countrymen of the poor class" and to foil "religious seducers" trying to draw the immigrants away from the Catholic faith.[67] These young women taught catechism, not civics. If included in the sisters' home visits, they may have acted as translators rather than proffering advice on childrearing. While the bishop and the sisters placed *Las Señoritas'* service under the umbrella of Americanization, the young women saw it simply as an act of charity.

Interestingly, the young women's participation in these programs facilitated their assimilation into the Church in the United States. Their membership provided a sense of purpose and a degree of social status within the parish. At its founding, the association's leaders met with Bishop Cantwell and received his approval to begin their work. He introduced them to Father William E. Corr, Bureau of Catholic Charities director. Since one of Corr's major projects was developing a network of Catholic social centers like the one at *El Hogar Feliz,* he likely invited *Las Señoritas* to teach catechism at the center. Cantwell and Corr attended the Mass to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, where Cantwell blessed a picture of the virgin donated by members of St. Vincent's Parish. *Las Señoritas* garnered attention from church leadership, and their activities were reported in the diocesan newspaper.[68] Membership in the association provided recent immigrants with an entry point into Catholic society in Los Angeles. The sisters' supervision of the society facilitated this transition, and the Daughters of Charity continued

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66. "Las Señoritas de La Caridad," *Tidings*, December 12, 1919; "Work at the Centers," *Tidings*, March 5, 1920.

67. "*Comunicaronse sus deseas de consagrar sus energías de juventud, de piedad y de educación al servicio de sus conterraneos de la clase pobre tan numerosa en Los Angeles y tan apetecida por los seductores religiosos;*" "Las Señoritas de La Caridad," *Tidings*, December 12, 1919.

68. "Mexican Young Ladies Heed the Voice of Charity"; "Work at the Centers"; "Festival of Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebrated"; "The Spanish Ladies of Charity." Interestingly, when *Las Señoritas* sought to expand their work, they submitted an article to the *Tidings,* one of two articles printed in Spanish in the last half of 1919. The organization was seen as important enough to be included, though the newspaper primarily published in English. "Las Señoritas de La Caridad," *Tidings*, December 12, 1919.

their work as cultural intermediaries, not only for the poor, but for middle- and upper-class immigrants as well. Emphasizing their religious identity as *sisters* helped to mediate cultural differences between these women and other Catholics and allowed the Daughters of Charity to strengthen their relationship with at least two immigrant communities in Los Angeles. Although we do not always know how their actions were received, the sisters sought to construct a space where they could enact their vision of a compassionate and just society.