



# MARYKNOLL SISTERS: HISTORY

**1910s** — Maryknoll Sisters, founded by Mary Josephine Rogers, a graduate of Smith College from Jamaica Plains, MA, is formed on January 6, 1912. She and six other women, known among themselves as simply “the secretaries” and, later, “The Teresians”, initially helped support the work of the Foreign Mission Society of America (Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers) begun one year earlier in Hawthorne, NY. The women lived first in Hawthorne, and later at Maryknoll in Ossining, NY.

**1920s** — The Sisters’ number increased and they receive approval from Rome to become a religious congregation on February 14, 1920. That same year, convents opened in Los Angeles, CA, then Seattle, WA, to serve Japanese immigrants. The congregation was incorporated in the State of New York on November 7, 1921 as Sisters set out for Hong Kong and China. Missions were also opened in Korea and Philippines, and the multicultural dimension of the congregation was established, with women entering from Austria, Canada, China, England, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea and Trinidad.

**1930s** — The Maryknoll Sisters Cloister was established as an integral part of the congregation. These Sisters devote themselves exclusively to prayer and penance for the missions. By the end of this decade, Maryknoll Sisters were also serving in Japan, Manchuria and Hawaii.

**1940s** — Work in Asia was disrupted by World War II. Some Sisters were interned for the duration; others were deported. In the Philippines, Sister Hyacinth Kunkel, lost while traveling with refugees, was later presumed dead. In the United States, when Americans of Japanese ancestry were confined to relocation camps, Maryknoll Sisters voluntarily accompanied them. New works were accepted in Latin America, Africa and the Marshall and Caroline Islands in the Pacific. Work among minority groups in the United States expanded. At the close of World War II, Sisters began rebuilding missions closed and destroyed by the war, but postwar developments in China, North Korea and Manchuria led to harassment, arrest, trials and deportation. In North Korea, Sister Agneta Chang was abducted and later presumed dead. Maryknoll Sisters opened a clinic which later became a hospital, as thousands of refugees arrived in the southern city of Pusan. A second novitiate was opened in Valley Park, MO.

**1950s** — A third novitiate was opened in Topsfield, MA. Sisters served the Chinese people in New York, Boston and Chicago, and African Americans in the Bronx, NY, St. Louis and Kansas City, MO. In Kansas City, MO, Maryknoll Sisters opened the country’s first fully integrated hospital in 1955. The name of the Congregation was officially changed to Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Inc., in February 1955. Mother Mary Joseph Rogers died on October 9, 1955.

**1960s** — A novitiate was opened in Manila, Philippines, which served the community for ten years. Following the directives of Vatican Council II, Maryknoll Sisters held a special General Assembly in 1968 and entered into a period of renewal and adaptation with changes in lifestyle and ministries. Queen of the World Hospital, Kansas City, MO, closed in 1965, followed by Topsfield Novitiate in 1969.

**1970s** — The Sisters began ministry in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Sudan. Novitiates in Valley Park and St. Louis, MO, were closed by 1976. The next year, the first Sister from another congregation was given associate status with Maryknoll Sisters on a temporary basis and an overseas assignment to mission with Maryknoll Sisters.

**1980s** — By the beginning of this decade, justice had surfaced as a world issue. Maryknoll Sisters were focusing their efforts on the cause of the poor. Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clark and Ita Ford were among four church women killed by the military in El Salvador because of their ministry to the poor. Sisters responded to the needs of refugees in El Salvador, Guatemala, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, Thailand, and the Vietnamese in Hong Kong (and earlier in Saigon). Maryknoll Sisters returned to mainland China to teach English in universities, and began ministry in Nepal. Maryknoll Cloisters were established in Guatemala in 1986 and Sudan in 1987.

**1990s** — The Vatican Congregation for Religious approved the updated Constitution of the Maryknoll sisters in 1990. A Maryknoll Cloister was opened in Thailand. In 1991, five Sisters began working with Nobel Peace Laureate Bishop Carlos Belo in East Timor. In 1992, because of wartime conditions, Maryknoll Sisters were forced to leave Sudan. In 1993, four Sisters resumed their medical and educational ministries in Sudan. By 1994, new ministries began in American Samoa, Cambodia, Namibia and Papua New Guinea. That same year, the Sisters’ Mission Institute celebrated 25 years of providing continuing education and renewal programs for Missioners and others engaged in cross-cultural ministries. Forced by war conditions to leave the Sudan and East Timor for several months in 1998, the Sisters returned to continue their work in both locations in 1999.

**2000s** — In 2005, Maryknoll Sisters opened a mission presence in Myanmar. Several Sisters also published books during this decade: *Ostriches, Dung Beetles and Other Spiritual Masters* by Sister Janice McLaughlin, president of Maryknoll Sisters, and *On the Threshold of the Future: The Life and Spirituality of Mother Mary Joseph Rogers, Founder of the Maryknoll Sisters* by Sister Claudette LaVerdiere.

**2012** — As we celebrate 100 years of service to mission in the universal Church, Maryknoll Sisters number nearly 500. We have Sisters serving in 25 nations in a wide variety of ministries from pastoral care to nursing, environmental concerns, social activism and more. We look forward to the next 100 years!

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