

## INSTITUTE HISTORY WORKSHEET

### TOPIC: Sister Superior Julia - Part 1

#### Places:

County Donegal, Ireland: birthplace

Fayetteville, OH: McGroarty family 1<sup>st</sup> settles in Ohio

Cincinnati, OH: family moves to town when she is 10

Roxbury, MA & Philadelphia, PA: ministry

Peabody, MA: death

Foundations: will be included in part 2

#### Dates & Events:

**1827:** February 13 – birth of **Susan McGroarty** in County Donegal, Ireland, named after paternal grandmother, is either 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> child in family

**1831:** family immigrates to Ohio – lives on farm in Fayetteville

**1837:** moves to Cincinnati

**1840:** November 1 – sees SNDdeN for 1<sup>st</sup> time at church; she's not impressed and is reprimanded by Uncle for joking about how they are dressed

**1840/1:** enrolled as pupil at 6<sup>th</sup> Street (bio says she started as a pupil while the SNDdeN were still on Sycamore Street)

**1846:** January 1 – enters after being at parties the night before; friends think she is joking; brother Patrick and Uncle Stephen accompany her

**1846:** April 25 – receives habit & name "Julia"

**1848:** August 3 – pronounces vows & assigned to day school

**1854:** named head of new boarding school at Roxbury (Mistress of Boarders)

**1860:** named superior of Philadelphia & moves community to Filbert & Juniper site

**1867:** obtains property & oversees building of West Rittenhouse Square

**1868:** visit to Liverpool & Namur

**1885:** Summer – called to Cincinnati and asked to return to help Louise

**1885:** September 1 – Silver Jubilee of Philadelphia

**1885:** September 16 – begins role as Louise's assistant

#### People & Relationships between them:

- Cornelius (Neil) McGroarty: Julia's father; gave up farm & moved to Donegal to provide better living; dies after short & sudden illness in 1838
- Catherine Bonner: mother, spends a lot of time alone on the farm while Neil is building roads & railroads
- Patrick, Stephen, William, John McGroarty: brother's, only Patrick survives past June, 1865
- Mary Anne, Frances, Letitia, Nellie McGroarty: sisters
- Bonner family: Sr. Julia's mother's close knit family; McGroartys immigrated to be near them
- Stephen Bonner: maternal uncle & 2nd father, doctor; Civil War service
- Sr. Louise: teacher, novice mistress & superior: 1st novice clothed by Louise (superior clothed novices); Julia loves her;
- Sr. Louis de Gonzague: mentor from afar
- Sr. Alphonse Rodriguez: co-worker & good friend

- De la Cuesta family in Philadelphia

### **Impact of War/Political Unrest:**

- Civil War has huge impact on her family
- Anti-Catholic bigotry still impacting SNDdeN when they were trying to buy Rittenhouse Square

### **Relationship with Hierarchy & Clergy:**

- Positive overall for this part of her life. There are bumps along the road, but she has a way of dealing with different views so relationships are maintained/strengthened
- Pastor at St. Mary's, Philadelphia - "I am not going to let any woman scold me." "Yes," said Sister Julia, "you must let me, for I have been a mother to you for so long." (Life of Sr. Julia p. 124)

### **Primitive Spirit:**

- Louise names Susan after Julie: devotion to foundress; Julia's love of Sisters and their love of her, kindness, motherly attitude, "Make your sisters happy." – in a very real sense she lives up to her name and is another Julie
- Motherhouse so far away yet so loved and linked so closely in hearts of Sisters
- Advice from Louis de Gonzague when she was named superior: give half hour extra every day to prayer....go before the Blessed Sacrament, take our Sisters one by one and make known to our dear Lord the wants of each and the difficulties we find in our interactions with them. This is the time to beg grace..." to do what God needs you to do for them. (Life of Sr. Julia p. 323)
- Joy as a sign of healthy community (Life of Sr. Julia pgs. 66-67)
- Anything that made Notre Dame better known to its members and drew them closer together was a joy to Sr. Julia (Life of Sr. Julia p. 315)
- Commitment to the poor – dressing the children at Christmas
- Spirit of union & charity, love of the rule,
- Responsibility of superiors to help form young sisters, hope of the institute; make the rule loved
- Not obliged to be perfect, but are obliged to work at perfection
- Equality: every SND deserves the same care; unity - analogy of fingers on the hand

### **Spirituality underpinning everything:**

- "Our loved Mother's special devotions are our dearest Lord and the poor. Are they not a natural consequence of each other?" (Life of Sr. Julia p. 97-reference is to Mère Constantine)
- Devotion to the child Jesus – devotion to crib, blessing community with bambino,
- Importance of retreat to life as an SND; silence;
- Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament

### **What touched your heart?**

- Fearless, confident: story of breaking wild colt; love of fun
- Visited Grandmother Bonner daily; couldn't talk and sew at same time, Grandmother reads lessons to her
- Goes with Aunt Letitia Bonner to visit SNDs; tells Sr. Louise she will be a Sister of Charity; Louise: "We shall see."

- Ongoing relationship with family – had Nellie in class at Sixth Street (Life of Sr. Julia pgs. 32-3); takes Mary Anne's orphaned daughter with her to Roxbury, one of Nellie's daughters enters, letters, grief at loss of 3 brothers during the Civil War
- Friendship with/teaching with Sr. Alphonse Rodriguez- science experiments (Life of Sr. Julia pgs. 38-41)
- Devoted former students from 6th Street- list of names (Life of Sr. Julia p. 41)
- Love is central virtue – love of God, love of others, she herself is so loveable by others. Often when leaving a community she would say, "If you love me as I love you, no knife can cut our love in two." (Life of Sr. Julia pgs. 153-4)

### **New insights?**

- Problems at school; could not read; called herself a dunce; excellent memory helped her mask not reading – yet she became one of the foremost Catholic educators in the United States; role of SNDdeN in figuring out her learning disability and helping her overcome it – enrolls as student with SNDdeN while they are on Sycamore Street – becomes star student; LOVED teaching;
- Vivacity contrasted to her older sister's propriety; lovable child
- Postulants not separate from community: Susie happy & busy (Louise's description of her in letter to Namur)
- Obedient, charmed by courtesy & kindness among the Sisters; learning quietness & sharing
- Disappointed when she read rule for 1st time "Is that all?"
- Patience, charity, sense of humor/joyfulness, strict w/herself; courage