

Meet the Ursuline Sisters



Sisters (also called women religious) choose to live a life of holiness with God and others. The Ursuline Sisters were the first order of women religious to serve in North America. They arrived in Quebec, Canada in 1639. The Ursulines were founded by Angela Merici in Italy. She had a new idea—an order of women religious who would be committed not only to prayer, but also to action where there was a need. Until then, women reli-

gious had lived apart from the rest of the world. In the days when Angela began the Ursulines, only the rich had the luxury of education. So, the Ursuline Sisters chose teaching as their special mission.

Fifty years before the Revolutionary War was fought, the Ursulines had already settled in the French Quarter of New Orleans, Louisiana. As they moved to other cities, they suffered many frontier hardships, such as severe heat and cold. The first Ursuline Sisters in Dallas, Texas grew vegetables, milked cows and raised chickens for their food, in addition to teaching every day.

Today, there are about 2,700 Ursuline Sisters in North America. They serve in places from Alaska to Tabasco, Mexico, and from Maine to California. These Sisters have found many ways to serve people and continue the healing work of Jesus Christ. They lead retreats. They assist people in prisons. They teach every level from grade school to college. They are artists and musicians. They work for justice.

For many years, Sister Angela lived in Brescia, which has more fountains than any other city in Italy. Surrounding each fountain is a little plaza, a welcoming place where people can find rest and refreshment. Angela asked her Sisters to be like those plazas—welcoming and gracious. Ursuline Sisters still remember her words. In every work they do, their purpose is to offer hospitality.