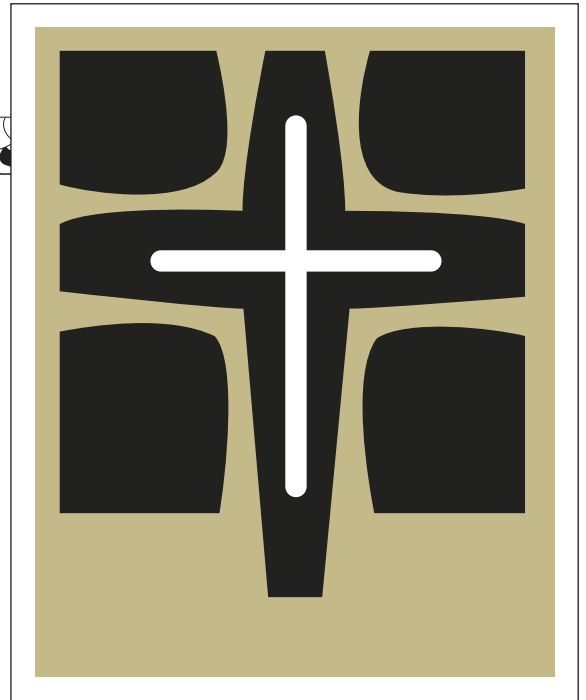




2007

The Religious Sisters Of Mercy



The insignia of the Sisters of Mercy embodies their motto "Our institute was founded on Calvary." The black ebony cross symbolizes Christ and the white ivory represents the Sisters embracing the cross of Christ.

The congregation of the Religious Sisters of Mercy was founded in Ireland in the mid 1800's by Sister Catherine McAuley. The corporal and spiritual works of Mercy are the roots of their mission. The Sisters of Mercy traveled the world to establish schools, hospitals and social service ministries.

In 1902, a new parish was organized in the rapidly growing town of Traverse City. Father Cornelius Emperor labored with the men, digging and hauling field stone to lay the foundation of the city's second Catholic church and school. This undermined this heroic man's health, forcing him to enter Mercy Hospital in Big Rapids where the Sisters of Mercy cared for him until his death in January 1905.

Father John Sheehan arrived to guide the parishioners in completing the two story building on Division Street. It was dedicated on February 22, 1906.

Father Sheehan petitioned the Sisters of Mercy in Big Rapids for sisters to staff the parish school of

Immaculate Conception. In September 1906, the Mother General responded by sending six sisters to teach the 80 young children of the mostly Polish and Bohemian immigrants who had settled on the west side of Traverse City.

The first Mercy Sisters to arrive were Reverend Mother Mary Gertrude Bertrand, Sister Mary Agnes Keegan, Sister Mary Austin Thiel, Sister Mary Laurence Gass, Sister Mary De Sales Coutu, and Sister Mary Claver Bischoff.

In 1911, Elizabeth Middleton was the first girl from Immaculate Conception School to enter the convent at Mt. Mercy in Grand Rapids. She took the name Sister Mary Lucille and became the second president of Mercy College in Detroit.

The Sisters also schooled their students in the love of music and became well known for their School of Music. After the parish schools consolidated in 1969, the Sisters of Mercy taught throughout the Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools.

The love and sacrifice of these dedicated women and their devotion to Christ enabled Catholic education to prosper in the Grand Traverse area.