

History of the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore



Rev. John Mason
Neale



Mother Mary
Francis Basil



Cardinal Henry
Edward Manning



Cardinal Herbert
Vaughan



St. Mary's Abbey, Mill Hill, England

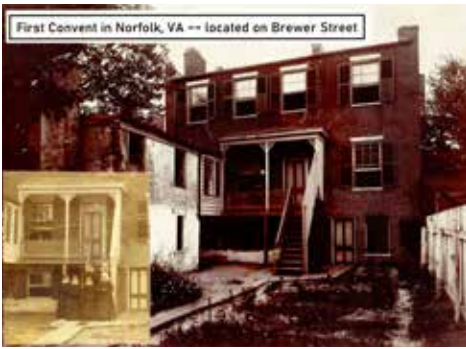


Cardinal James Gibbons



Sisters Teresa Bartram, Winifred Philips, Rose Mitchell, and Augustine Royston

- 1833** Birth of Mary Eliza Basil in Seville, Spain, of Anglo-Spanish parents. Foundress of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Mary, Mill Hill, England, and the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore.
- 1836** Mary Basil relocates to Wales with uncle and his family after parents' death. Eventually all move to London.
- 1856** Mary Basil joins an Anglican community – the Society of St. Margaret – founded by Rev. John Mason Neale. She is known as Sister Mary. St. Mary's Mission in Soho opens, and Sister Mary is Superior for several years.
- 1868** Rev. Herbert Vaughn instructs Sister Mary and seven companions. They are received in the Roman Catholic Church over four days in February by Archbishop Edward Manning of Westminster. On July 12, all are invested as Franciscan Secular Tertiaries.
- 1868 – 1869** Mother Mary Francis Basil, Sisters Agnes Porter and Katherine Household have an audience with Pope Pius IX. The seven Tertiaries enter two different novitiates in France and England.
- 1870** Mother Mary Francis, Sisters Agnes and Katherine profess vows as religious of the Third Order of St. Francis on August 12. The other five – Sisters Elizabeth, Margaret, Edith, Solome, Gertrude – profess vows on August 15.
- 1872 – 1973** Foundation stone is laid and St. Mary's Abbey in Mill Hill opens.
- 1880** Rome grants Franciscan Rule and Constitutions to Franciscan Sisters of St. Mary, Mill Hill.
- 1881** Upon returning to England, Rev. Vaughn petitions Mother Mary Francis to address the education and instruction needs of African American Catholic children.
- Four Abbey Sisters arrive in Baltimore on December 26. Sisters Winifred (Lily) Philips, Rose Mitchell, Teresa (Caroline) Bartram, and Augustine (Sarah) Royston are to begin ministry on behalf of the African American people at St. Francis Xavier Church and School and St. Elizabeth Home for orphans. At the time, Mrs. Mary Herbert is in charge of the Home at 57 St. Paul Street.
- Archbishop James Gibbons of Baltimore becomes a staunch benefactor of the Sisters.



First convent



Second band of Missionaries to America in 1885, Sisters Dominica, Alphonsus, and Leonard



Mother Agnes Porter



Mrs. Austin Jenkins



Original building, Baltimore



Original convent, Norfolk

1882 Teachers at St. Francis Xavier School: Sisters Winifred, Rose, and Teresa, In charge at St. Elizabeth Home: Sister Augustine. St. Francis Xavier Church, founded in 1863 by Rev. Michael O'Connell, SJ, becomes the first Catholic church for African Americans in Baltimore.

1885 St. Joseph's Mission opens in Richmond, Va. Bishop John Keane of Richmond, begs Mother Mary Francis to send Sisters to staff St. Joseph's Mission and School. On September 16 Mother Alphonsus with Sisters Leonard, Jerome and Dominica arrive in New York City. They spend time in Baltimore to gain knowledge about American education methods and practical knowledge from their pioneer Sisters. Father John Slattery is pastor of St. Joseph's Mission.

1886 Death of Mother Mary Francis Basil on September 1. Mother Agnes Porter elected at Chapter as successor and Abbess, from 1887-1925.

1889 Another steadfast supporter of the Sisters is Mrs. Austin Jenkins. She purchases the former Hiss Mansion at 2226 Maryland Avenue, Baltimore, for the Sisters and children. It is to be named the Convent of Our Lady and St. Francis.

Mission opens in Norfolk, Va. Sisters assigned are Sisters Paul Murphy, Superior, and Barbara, Cyril, and Viridian.

1894 A novitiate, a program for beginners to religious life, opens at 2226 Maryland Avenue in October. Rescript, a Papal approval, of establishing an American novitiate dated January 1, 1895.

1902 African mission to open in Uganda, Africa. Sisters leave December 3.

1903 Sisters arrive January 15 at the first African convent in Nsambya, Uganda.

1904 The first mission to open, St. Francis Xavier School, Baltimore, is condemned as unsafe. Sisters withdraw.

1906 Sisters begin to teach at SS. Philip and James School located in the church's basement. Ministry considered as a temporary measure to encourage future vocations. Sisters reside at Maryland Avenue Convent, Baltimore.

Second mission opens in Nakifuma, Uganda. Sister Kevin Kearney is in charge.



First school, Norfolk



First American novices



*Mother Mechtilde
Blanchfield*



*Mother St. John
Kennet-Dawson*



*Mother
Bernadette Dunn*



Sister Mary Gray



St. Elizabeth School and Convent



St. Elizabeth School



Franciscan Center



Sister Cecilia Reilly



Sister Teresa Gilligan

- 1925** Mother Mechtilde Blanchfield is elected at Chapter to lead the Mill Hill community until 1937.
- 1936** Three provinces formally compose the congregation: England, United States, and Uganda, Africa.
- 1937** Chapter elects Mother St. John Kennet-Dawson as Major Superior. She holds this position until 1953.
- 1948** Novitiate relocates to Ellerslie Avenue, Baltimore.
- 1950** St. Francis Orphanage and School closes at 2226 Maryland Avenue, Baltimore.
- 1953** St. Francis School for Special Education opens in September. Mother Bernadette Dunn is elected as the Major Superior, and remains until 1965.
- 1954** Headquarters of Franciscan Sisters of St. Mary, Mill Hill, is transferred to 2226 Maryland Avenue, Baltimore.
- 1960** St. Elizabeth Home closes. 5,603 children are given care from 1881–1960.
- 1961** St. Elizabeth School for Special Education opens – in time, the name changes to St. Elizabeth School.
- 1965** At Chapter, Sister Mary Gray is elected as Major Superior and remains in office until 1977.
- 1966** Franciscan Center opens at 2212 Maryland Avenue, Baltimore, to serve the poor.
- 1977** On March 25, Rome grants approval, on a temporary basis, for a separate and independent congregation – the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore from the Franciscan Sisters of St. Mary, Mill Hill.

Newly elected Major Superior is Sister Cecilia Reilly through 1986.
- 1982** January 18: Rome grants the approval for the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore to be a separate congregation. Francis House, 2226 Maryland Avenue in Baltimore, opens and begins a volunteer program for adults ministering to the poor.
- 1985** Rome approves the Constitutions for the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore. Franciscan Youth Center opens on Greenmount Avenue, Baltimore.



Aisling Retreat Center



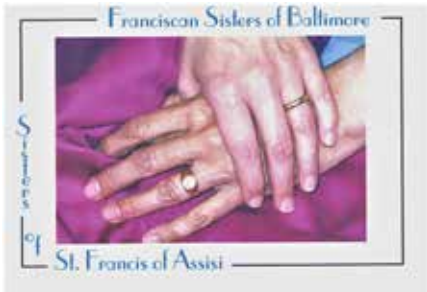
Sister Linda Tan



Sister Mary
Therese White



Becoming one



1986 Sister Teresa Gilligan is elected as the next Major Superior. She holds this office until 1990.

Besides the missions in Baltimore, Md., and Richmond and Norfolk, Va., the Sisters open and close various missions in other states, such as: Alabama, Virginia, New York, Maryland, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

Iosagan Home for abused girls was opened in Baltimore. The ministry continued until 1992.

1990 At Chapter, Sister Linda Tan is elected to assume the role of Major Superior and remains in office through 1998.

1994 A General Chapter mandate passes – consider possible “re-founding” with another/other Franciscan congregation(s)

Aisling Retreat House opens in Manchester, Md., and continues its mission.

1997 October: The invitation to merge is extended to Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore from the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.

1998 The newly-elected Major Superior, Sister Mary Therese White, will assist the Sisters through the merger process that culminates in 2001.

1999 Recommendation passes on March 13 to proceed with the merger process with the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi of Milwaukee (St. Francis), Wis.

2001 January 6: 44 Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore canonically and unanimously vote to merge with the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.

January 20: Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi overwhelmingly vote YES to the merger with the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore.

October 4: Celebration of merger occurs at 3725 Ellerslie Avenue, Baltimore – transfer of vows take place at St. Elizabeth Convent.

October 7: “A Celebration of Becoming One Congregation” is held at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis, Wis.