St. Joseph was proclaimed Patron of the Universal Church by Blessed Pius IX 150 years ago, Dec. 8, 1870. To mark the occasion, Pope Francis has proclaimed a “Year of Saint Joseph” from December 8, 2020, to December 8, 2021 and has written an Apostolic Letter entitled *Patris corde* (“With a Father’s Heart”). “The Holy Father wrote *Patris corde* against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, which, he says, has helped us see more clearly the importance of ‘ordinary’ people who, though far from the limelight, exercise patience and offer hope every day. In this, they resemble Saint Joseph, ‘the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence,’ who nonetheless played ‘an incomparable role in the history of salvation.’” [Website, Vatican News. Accessed 26 February 2021. Pope Francis proclaims “Year of St. Joseph” - Vatican News].

Our community has long cherished a devotion to St. Joseph. The Steinerberg Rule [section IX, “The Sisters’ Special Devotions”] names four principal feasts, then adds, “Otherwise, St. Joseph, St. Francis, St. Theresa, and St. Ursula are especially venerated and daily some prayers should be offered in their honor.” The Rule does not specify what prayers, but from later Rules, we know that novenas were celebrated in honor of St. Joseph, the Holy Angels, and the aforementioned patron saints. In the “Monthly Saints,” March is dedicated to St. Joseph [Constitutions 1919, p. 31-32; Constitutions 1941, p. 50].

The early sisters showed reliance on St. Joseph as an incident in the Steinerberg Diary [pp 13-14] illustrates. One evening close to supper time, the cook asked Mother Theresa what kind of soup she should make. Mother Theresa told her to make “flour soup.” Alas, there was no flour in the barrel. So Mother Theresa told the Procuratrix, Sister Maria Anna Disch, to take a sack and go begging door to door for flour. As she left, she found a beggar at the convent door asking for flour. Laughing, she told him that she had none; indeed, she was going begging herself. But at each house she was told that the homeowners had no flour either. Meanwhile, the sister cook revisited the barrel, hoping that maybe she could scrap up sufficient flour for the soup. There she found flour! When she reported her find to Mother Theresa, Mother said that “St. Joseph heard all, and the Blessed Mother must have urged him on to blow sufficient flour in the barrel for the Sisters to have their flour soup.... And so it happened. And, Oh! Miracle! From then on, we had sufficient flour for ourselves and for beggars, too!”

Incidentally, there is such a soup as “flour soup.” A recipe from Basle, Switzerland, for “Browned-Flour Soup” calls for butter, flour, water, onions, and seasoning [Website, Cooks.com. Accessed 7 March 2021].

O God, Who in Your ineffable Providence did vouchsafe to choose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of Your most holy Mother, grant, we beseech You, that he whom we venerate as our protector on earth may be our intercessor in Heaven. Who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen [concluding prayer from the Litany of St. Joseph].
St. Joseph has been honored in the naming of buildings. Most significant is St. Joseph Chapel

The wing which now houses Abbey Senior Health was once known as St. Joseph Hall.

In 1908, the Community purchased twenty acres of land from Mr. and Mrs. Talleur to be used for an orphan home. St. Joseph Orphan Home was in use from 1908 to July 1914. It served variously as orphan home, guest house, workmen’s quarters, and isolation for contagions. It stood somewhere in the north-west section of the property. St. Joseph’s Home was sold in 1954 [buyer unknown] and was torn down around 1991.

Some who have honored St. Joseph as their primary or secondary patron.

Sr. Josepha Bauer,
Sr. JoAnn Faust,
Sr. JoAnn Fischer,
JoAnn Cheli [Partner],
Sr. Teresa Joseph Ganley,
Sr. Joan Klaas, once known as Sr. Joseph Ann,
Sr. Ellen Orf... Sr. Joseph Marie,
Sr. Susan Borgel... Sr. Ronald Joseph,
Sr. Theresa Jezl... Sr. Rita Joseph.

Sr. Josephine Moellmann, died 5/20/1971,
Sr. Mary Joseph Schilly, died 1/27/2000,

When the cloister corridor served as a passageway from the convent to the chapel, the statue of St. Joseph stood in the corner near the door. At present it is immediately visible when one enters the Precious Blood Center on the way to chapel.
Our sisters served in nine parishes named for St. Joseph. Here they are in chronological order.


“Community records... verify that in 1874 the first sisters to be missioned in St. Joseph’s parish arrived: Srs. Collette Holweck, Henrietta Muelhaupt, and Brigitta Decker. The first school was the original log church which was converted into a two-room school building” [O'Fallon in Focus, Spring, 1972, p.11]. St. Joseph is a thriving parish today.

Two Sisters are pictured with school children in St. Joseph Parish, Josephville, MO, c 1874-? [Photo cropped from the original]


“St. Joseph School opened on September 5, 1887, with 190 students under instruction by three Precious Blood Sisters: Srs. Constantia [Imhof], Dionysia [Rund], and Hildegard [?]. The convent was the present Brennan house. ... Two years of High School were first added to the school. And then a full four-year program produced its first eleven graduates in 1939....

In 1981, the Precious Blood Sisters completed their final and 94th year of staffing St. Joseph's School. Too few teaching sisters led the Sisters to regretfully end a memorable era of apostolic work and witness among the St. Joseph's parishioners” [from pamphlet, St. Joseph Catholic School 1887-1982].

St. Joseph Parish, BEATRICE, NE, 1895-1903 [8 years]

“After the Ursuline Sisters withdrew from the school, at the Bishop's request, the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood from O'Fallon, Missouri, agreed to take charge of the school in Beatrice. ... Three sisters began the academic year in September 1895.

“The sisters arrived after three successive years of crop failures. ... Under such conditions, the [parish] could not promise a definite salary for the teachers. The sisters were told to collect tuition from those children whose parents were able to pay, and this amount would constitute their salary. Unfortunately, for the sisters, there were very few parents who could afford to pay anything.

“By 1897, there were one hundred forty pupils in classrooms that had been built to serve temporarily for eighty pupils. [The facilities were inadequate; the sisters faced indifference and opposition]. In June 1903, after serving for ten years, the sisters terminated their apostolate in Beatrice” [From A Profile of the Diocese of Lincoln by Sr. Loretta Gosen, C.PP.S.].


In 1899, Father Hennes engaged the Sisters of the Precious Blood from O'Fallon, Missouri, to take charge of St. Joseph's school. Children living in the country boarded with the two Sisters who lived in part of the school building in order to get their religious education.

In 1920, Father Ernst inaugurated a fully accredited grammar and high school curriculum. The new high school consisted of four students in the freshman class. Each year the enrollment in the high school increased with students from neighboring towns taking advantage of the Salisbury school.

A new pastor arrived in Salisbury in 1837. He was better acquainted with the Benedictine Sisters, and so in 1938 he released the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood from their contract and asked the Benedictine Sisters to take over St. Joseph's School [Information from parish centennial book, 1870-1970 and CPPS records].

“St. Joseph School opened in September 1885 ... In 1900, [our sisters] ... took charge of the school whose enrollment was now 60 students. In 1919, the 9th and 10th grades were added. The pastor taught Latin and Ancient History. The Sisters taught the other courses. The two-year High School was discontinued in 1945 when the New State Constitution required a four-year curriculum for State recognition. The sisters withdrew from St. Joseph in 1988” [from parish centennial book]. St. Joseph School continues to flourish with lay teachers. Pictured with school children are Srs. Gregory [Maise] and Eudoxia [Eudocia Schmelzle], and pastor, Fr. [Joseph] Haar. [Photo cropped]


“Shortly after [Fr. William Pezold’s ] arrival, he obtained the teaching services of three Sisters of the Most Precious Blood from O’Fallon, Missouri. The first church of 1874 was renovated, with the upper floor serving as the living quarters for the sisters with two classrooms on the ground floor” [from parish centennial book]. After we withdrew from teaching, we continued a ministry of presence in the parish. In 2007 the Dominican Sisters of Nashville took over the school at the invitation of the pastor.


Four sisters arrived in Des Moines to prepare for the opening of the new St. Joseph school on September 6 [1949]. “It is the first mission in Iowa for the congregation; ... The Most Precious Blood Sisters are Sister M. Dosithia, superior, and sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teacher; Sister M. Margaret, intermediate grades teacher; Sister M. Rose Ann, primary grades teacher; and Sister M. Virgil, housekeeper. Three serve as classroom teachers, the fourth serves as housekeeper at the school’s adjoining convent and as a substitute teacher” [from parish commemorative book].

St. Joseph Parish, Island Grove, IL, 1906-1914 [8 years]

We have no information about this parish, other than the names of the seventeen sisters missioned there.

St. Joseph Parish, Manchester, MO, 1900-1905 [5 years]

Nothing is recorded about our brief time in this parish other than the names of the three sisters missioned there.

We have Mother Wilhelmine [1920-1938] to thank for the custom of lemon pie on the Feast of St. Joseph. The growing community needed a larger worship space, so a new chapel was planned; its dedication was to be to be held in the summer of 1925, the year we planned to celebrate our 50 years in O’Fallon. But a long rainy season coupled with an epidemic of typhoid fever in July and August put those plans on hold. Many prayers were directed to St. Joseph. Festivities had to be postponed for a year. The chapel was eventually completed, and no one died from typhoid. The fervent prayers to St. Joseph were answered.

Mother Wilhelmine was very fond of lemon meringue pie; it was her “Dessert Supreme.” On the Feast of St. Joseph, she wanted this special treat for the sisters. This was to be repeated every year on his feast.

“And so, St. Joseph not only brought the great building process to a happy completion, along with many more such undertakings that followed, but he also brought a good piece of LEMON PIE for the sisters to enjoy each year on his feast day, March 19” [From an essay by Sr. Ernestine Schulze].