



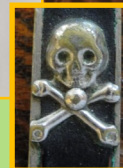
Heritage Happenings

Archives Office
June 2021

Lest We Forget...

PROFESSION CROSS – Is it or Isn't

This was a question of inquiry posted on the ACWR (Archivists for Congregations of Religious Women) ListServe a few weeks ago. Charlene Martin, Sisters of St. Francis, wrote: *I am trying to positively identify an unlabeled, found-in-collection crucifix as a Franciscan profession cross ca. 1890-1920. Does the 7 inch cross seem to match the cross worn by the Sister from a jubilee group photo, ca 1890-1920? Is this a profession crucifix or something else? Were Franciscan profession crosses standardized 1890-1920's, diversifying after Vatican 2 or another time in history? does anyone know when this type of crucifix for women religious lost the memento mori (skull) at the base and became 3 inches shorter? Was it after the 1920's, or maybe after Vatican 2?* Many replies identified this as a profession crosses Some were larger, some smaller, some had relics inside. Communities that replied received the crucifix as a sign of their Profession and was worn on the front of their habit. Not so with us.



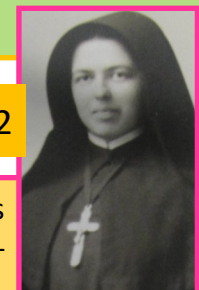
1908



The Candidate Crucifix



1912



In our photo collection, the only time a cross was worn with the habit was as a Candidate or Postulant. In this 1908 photo of Sister Redempta she is wearing a 6-7 inch crucifix with the skull at the bottom. A note with the crucifix states that this was placed in the hands of a Sister when she was dying. The cross worn by Sister Silvana in 1912 was flat with rounded edges, no skull, a very small corpus. We have no sample of this crucifix. In 1914 Sister DeLillis's cross was only 4 inches. In 1937 Sister St. Agnes had a cross 4 inches but without the skull.

Here is Sister Jan Villemure in 1965 with the smallest 3 inch crucifix, the last year it was worn.

Over the years, the box of crucifixes in the archives shows many changes...with no identifying year. If you have your Candidate/Postulant Crucifix, could you notify the Archivist so that crucifixes can be identified!



1965



1914



Of course, change is inevitable. Between 1965 and 1969 the Postulant garb was changed to a navy blue skirt and jacket, vest, sweater. The program from the 1970 Reception of the Insignia ended with: (After the ceremony, sew on your insignia). In this photo (Postulant not identified) the insignia here was sewn on the left side of the jacket. The insignia had a Franciscan appearance with a TAU ross in red and the crossed arms of Christ imposed upon it.

The Reception of the Insignia

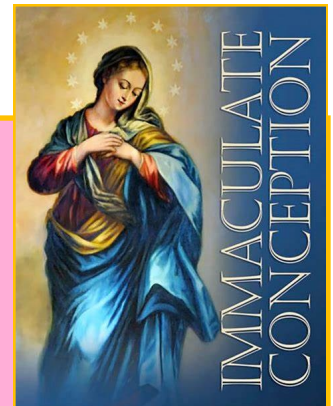


The Insignia Service was considered to be the official entry into the Postulancy. It was always held on December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, honoring her.

In the archives is a letter written on December 4, 1951 from St. Joseph Convent in Rice Lake by Mother Edna to the Senior Postulants. She wrote:

"In spirit I shall be with you on the beautiful feast of Our Lady..."

The Reception of the Crucifix is a wonderfully symbolic ceremony, for the Crucifix signifies the very essence of the life you hope one day to embrace — the death to self in order that Christ may live and work in you and carry on His redemptive mission to the world. ... In identifying yourselves with her crucified Son you are today strengthening the bond of her Motherhood and your own obligations to model your lives on hers."



RECEPTION of the INSIGNIA



Postulants Holy Family Convent

All that the archives has describing this early ceremony is a half sheet of paper dated December 8, 1946 ...After Mass—Before Benediction: The postulants, in a kneeling posture, petition:

"I humbly petition for the privilege of becoming a Postulant, in the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian charity, and I faithfully promise to leave the convent peacefully, if I do not meet with the qualifications, for membership in the Congregation."

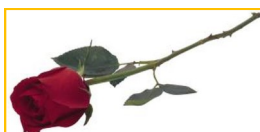
The Chaplain or (Superior General) acknowledges the petition: *"Since you desire to become Daughters of Saint Francis in this Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, I shall present you with the Crucifix, which is the distinguishing mark of the Postulancy."*

Crosses varied in size from 3 to 7 inches, with and without the skull at the base. The cross was strung on a simple dark brown/black shoe string. This special official entrée into the community continued on this date until December 8, 2009. After that the date varied according to the entrée of new Postulants.

Sometime after 1967 with the change in the habit, the Postulancy insignia also underwent periodic changes. Further sleuthing will eventually reveal the history of the changes. The middle one



is a very tiny pin. This one on the right is the present insignia given out each year. Sister Veronica Schad wears it on a silver chain. Gone are the shoe strings many of us remember.



Profession Crosses

We do receive Profession Crosses but not as part of our habit. Each of us receives one as part of Final Profession. Only two crosses in the archives are known to be Final Profession Crosses. Sister Monica Mary received this plain metal Crucifix on her Final Profession.



Along with a gold ring engraved with the initials INR and a long stemmed red rose with thorns, Sister Jerianne received this unique crucifix for her Final Profession. ...

...to be Poor — Poverty
...to Listen — Obedience
...to Love — Chastity

