

Fall 2020

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A collection of recent discoveries and activities in the IHM Archives



Window brings new light to Gillet Chapel

IHM co-founder Louis Florent Gillet, CSsR, left Monroe for Baltimore in 1847. Later, he received a dispensation from the Redemptorists and joined the Cistercians of the Immaculate Conception in Sénanque, France, taking the name Père Marie Celestin. He spent the last 28 years

of his life at the Royal Abbey of Hautecombe-Savoy. But, in a sense, he did eventually return to Monroe.

In 1891 Father Gillet reconnected with the IHM community through rather amazing circumstances. After the dissolution of a religious

community of nuns in France, one sister entered the Cisterciennes at Notre Dame des Près and another came to America and entered the IHM community at Reading, Pa. Through correspondence it was discovered that Sr. Stephanie, in France, was acquainted with a Père Celestin Gillet. *(Continued next page)*



A Book of Days

Sisters Peggy Schmidt, Annette St-Amour and Genevieve Petrak pose with their personal copies of “A Book of Days,” the Archives Department’s commemorative gift to the IHM community’s 175th anniversary. Copies have been sent to Sisters, Associates and some friends of the IHM, but we would love to have more people read about the daring as well as simple deeds of the IHM Sisters. If you know someone who might like a copy, please contact Jennifer Meacham at ext. 695 or e-mail jmeacham@ihmsisters.org.

Correction: On page 38 of “A Book of Days,” the index entry for IHM High School should read **Immaculate Heart of Mary High School (Westchester, Ill.), 2/1, 6/4**

'Window' (continued)

Sr. Clotilde, the IHM, contacted Gillet via her nephew, a Cistercian at Lerins, and the connection was confirmed. At the request of the Reading Mother Superior, Gillet wrote an account of the founding of the IHM Community, and he continued the correspondence with Mother de Chantal as long as his frail health permitted. He died on November 14, 1892.

In May 1926, Sr. Rosalita Kelly obtained the permission of Mother Domitilla Donohue to request that Gillet's remains be transferred from the Hautecombe Cistercian Abbey in Savoy, France to Monroe.

Three years of correspondence followed with government officials of France, the French embassy in Washington D.C., and Dom Marie Bernard Girardy, C.I.C.

The casket arrived at the Monroe Train Station on Laetare Sunday, March 10, 1929, and was received by Mother Domitilla, Mother Ruth Hankerd, Sr. Leocadia Delanty (Novice Mistress), and Sr. Miriam Raymo. The remains were temporarily placed in the Msgr. Edward Joos Memorial Chapel in St. Joseph Cemetery (demolished in 1986). They were transferred at the Consecration ceremony of the new St. Mary Cemetery and the dedication of the Fr. Louis Florent Gillet Memorial Chapel on the feast of St. Alphonsus Liguori, August 2, 1929, when many sisters were home for the summer.

For Mother Domitilla, this occasion was a blessed consolation for the crushing sorrow which the St. Mary Academy fire had brought only two months earlier.

After the blessing of the cemetery, High Mass was celebrated on the altar of the new chapel, and the relics were placed in the crypt.

The chapel, built by the Daprato Statuary Co. of Chicago, is Gothic in design and is modeled after the monastery and chapels of the Royal Abbey of Hautecombe-Savoy. The bronze doors bear the Abbey coat of arms.

Sometime before 1956 the stained glass windows of the chapel were damaged and replaced with plain colored glass. Over these last few years, the staff of the IHM Archives discussed the possibility of replacing the windows with something more reminiscent of the originals. In early 2019, we obtained cost estimates from Whitney Stained Glass, who services the Motherhouse chapel windows, and Daprato Rigali, the current name of the company that created the original windows. Any further action had to be put aside until a funding source was discovered.

Then, in January of this year, Sr. Diann Cousino received permission to donate \$24,000 she inherited from her mother to fund the construction and installation of a new window. The Daprato

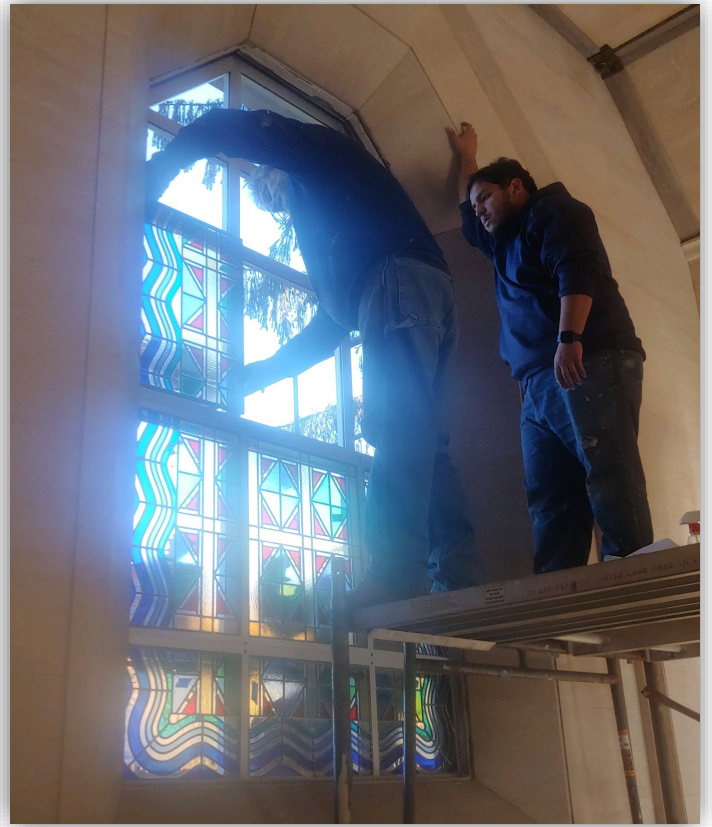


**Original window in the
Gillet Memorial Chapel**

company was chosen to do the work and, after a summer of understandable delays, the project was completed over two days in early November.

To preserve its colorful stained glass and original artwork depicting the pieta, the new window is reinforced with 15 exterior protective glass panels with venting to prevent condensation.

We in the Archives hope and believe that 2021 will bring opportunities for members of the community to see the new window in person. We are thrilled at how wonderful it looks and will continue to explore options to fund the similar projects for the chapel's remaining windows.



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Since 2000, all IHM sisters have been encouraged to submit individual chronicles to the IHM Archives. These records about your own life and ministry over the course of a year or more add breadth and depth to the documented history of the IHM Sisters. Your contribution will enrich the future record of the IHM, so please be sure your life's story is included in the community's story.



Facebook favorite

Enjoying the view at Maggie Valley, N.C., are Sister Cyprian Maurer (left) and Sister Margaret Mary (Mary Elmer) Gautherat. They joined the IHM community just a year apart, Sister Cyprian in 1931 and Sister Margaret Mary in 1930. Both were known for their sense of fun and their enthusiasm for life. Perhaps that came from growing up in large families. Sister Cyprian came from a family of 10 children and Sister Margaret Mary had three older brothers and three younger brothers.

They both were teachers. Sister Cyprian also was a principal and later administrator of the IHM Motherhouse. She died in 1997 at the age of 89. Sister Margaret Mary learned auto mechanics so she could work on the convent cars, her specialty being Chevrolets. She died in 1999 at the age of 90. The photo is not dated.