



Founders Day vespers, Monday, Nov. 10, 2025 Sister Maxine Kollasch, IHM

Happy Founders Day!

What a celebration – 180 years in the making!

I hope you've all been able to visit the Galley Exhibit downstairs by the Maxis Room. A beautiful representation our history.

An image you'll see in the exhibit is the log cabin, one of the most iconic images in our founding story!

What makes the log cabin so compelling is that it's not just in the past. It's a living symbol--a symbol of the founding spirit that sustains and enlivens to this very day! A spirit of, hope, creativity, love, joy, perseverance, of deep trust in Divine Providence.



Finding ourselves here, every day

The image of the log cabin evokes this day in 1845, when Theresa Maxis Duchemin, Charlotte Schaff and Theresa Renauld gathered after morning with Louis Gillet at St. Mary's.

In a simple and extraordinary ritual, Louis placed the stole of his ordination on the shoulder of each woman, one by one, as he prayed for her. A new community came into being, the long-awaited dream of Louis and Theresa.

Can you imagine the excitement and awe of that moment! The deep recognition that something profound has occurred, beyond our human capacity to fully comprehend!

After that powerful ritual, the sisters walked back to the muddy north bank of the River Raisin, to the log cabin and old frame house that would be their convent and the first school. The places weren't in great shape.

I imagine Theresa opening the front door of the log cabin, her Sisters at her side.

And maybe not on that particular day—Founders Day—charged with hope and possibility. Maybe not on that day, but surely one day, Theresa opens the door of the log cabin and pauses.

She looks around at the dust that has seeped through the logs and covers everything. Again.

A fresh batch of Boxelder bugs is clinging to the south wall—how many more can there possibly be?

The log cabin is cold and damp and dark inside.

And that persistent swampy smell—Baltimore never smelled like that.

Theresa and her sisters pause, and then go inside, light the fire, and begin to prepare their evening meal.

Theresa sighs as she sets the table--with the one fork, the one spoon, and the one plate they share between them.

And in that moment, she wonders to herself: "How did I find myself here? How did this happen?"

And over there, looking out to the old cook stove in the shed nearby, Charlotte and Theresa Renaud are wondering the same thing.

A log cabin moment

Haven't we all been there at one time or another?

That "log cabin" moment, where we pause--and wonder. "How did I find myself here?"

It's not that we expected our vocation to be easy. After all, to be about the liberating mission of Jesus is a tall order! To be about a community where we live for each other and all live for God, that's a big deal! Life changing. World changing. Transformative.

No, it's not that we expect our vocation to be easy. But maybe in our humble, simple, zealous way, we do expect it to be meaningful. To help bring about the kin-dom of God, here and now.

We said yes to God, trusting in God alone to bless and make our "yes"—individually and collectively—to make our "yes" prosper, if it were pleasing to God and useful for the good of others.

We said yes, we say yes, even to our log cabin moments.

Where the dust of daily life seeps in, again, and covers over some of our joy, our passion, our love.

Log cabin moments when there's something that really bugs us and we can't let it go, even though it would free us.

The moments when we look at the table of our life and ministry and sigh, If only we had more: the temptation to believe that if only we had more forks, more spoons, more plates, then surely we could make more of a difference in the world.

Entering the cabin, again

We pause, and then, like our Sisters before us, we enter the log cabin once more. In faith and hope. Love and joy. Trusting in Divine Providence. "Here I am, God!" we say, perhaps sometimes more enthusiastically than others.

We show up, knowing there will always be dust and boxelder bugs and insufficient kitchen utensils in our lives, our ministries, our relationships, the world.

We show up for God's mission with our whole self—with all that we are and all that we have to offer. Here I am, God.

We show up for each other and the world, just as God shows up for us and walks with us in all moments of life, even our log cabin moments. Here I am, God.

A Founders Day house party

Today, the door of the log cabin is wide open in honor of Founders Day. You need not be in the midst of a classic log cabin moment. But it's ok if you are.

As you enter the log cabin, do not be surprised to find that Theresa Maxis, Charlotte Schaff, Theresa Renauld, and Louis Gillet are already here. They are expecting you.

Is that Marcella and Kay over there, sharing stories of their recent travels?

There are lots of people here, thousands! Who knew this old log cabin could hold so many people!

People not just from Monroe but also Scranton and Philadelphia and Baltimore and beyond! Mary Elizabeth Lange is here, and Elizabeth Bruyere. Remember in July, the 10 Year Gathering, over 400 IHMs and OSPs all together! And now, here today, there are sisters, associates, employees, benefactors, and many more.

The table is set, dinner is ready, and Alphonsus offers the meal prayer. We open our eyes after grace and look, the place settings have multiplied! There are forks and spoons and plates for all!

It is Founders Day, and we find ourselves here again – who we are, with all that we are, with all that we truly need -- and we celebrate.

Happy Founders Day, everyone!

