



## SCMC History



### Bishop John Zwijsen, Founder



*Bishop John Zwijsen*

John Zwijsen was born on August 28, 1794 in Driel, Netherlands. Since childhood, it gradually became evident that God had begun to prepare this young man for an important role in the Catholic Church of the Netherlands and his challenging task of founding two religious congregations. On December 20, 1817 John was ordained a priest and served in several parishes before he was assigned as pastor at Tilburg in 1832.

It did not take long for Bishop Zwijsen to become aware of the great need to educate the poor children of his parish who had no opportunity of receiving an education. Divine Providence brought him in contact with three women who ardently desired to consecrate themselves to God in a special way.

Bishop John Zwijsen began his Congregation on November 23, 1832 simply to “establish a school where poor children could be taught reading, writing, sewing, and knitting”. The three Sisters, assisted by twelve young women, were in charge of the school. He placed his new foundation under the guidance of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and urged that each Sister imitate her in faith and obedience to the will of God. Convinced that this foundation was to be solely a parish effort, he did not send his Sisters to minister in other parishes. Although Bishop Zwijsen had a vision of this Congregation being parish based, God intended it to be much larger. This was made evident by the rapid spreading of his Congregation even beyond the Netherlands. Thirty years later the Sisters of Charity numbered approximately 1500. In 1874, the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity was invited to open a school in America.

### Mother Marie Alma Lafond, Foundress



*Mother Marie Alma Lafond*

Mother Marie Alma Lafond, Foundress of the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady Mother of the Church, entered religious life on September 7, 1932 and professed her perpetual vows on May 22, 1939. Mother first taught in the elementary schools of the Diocese of Norwich, Connecticut and was chosen in 1954 to be the first diocesan school supervisor. Mother served in this capacity until 1962 and was highly esteemed by the Sisters of the diocese who grew to know her and to recognize the goodness, wisdom, and leadership qualities of this great woman. It was in 1958 that Mother Marie Alma was made Provincial Superior of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Province of the Sisters of Charity in America — a position she held until 1970 when she received permission from Pope Paul VI to begin a new autonomous Congregation of diocesan right here in America under the title Sisters of Charity of Our Lady, Mother of the Church.

Mother Marie Alma possessed a deep and abiding love for Jesus Christ, for the Church, and for the Congregation. Steadfast in her commitment to the mission and spirit of the Congregation, Mother Marie Alma resolved to remain faithful to her unconditional love of her divine Bridegroom, to the charism of Bishop Zwijsen, and to witnessing to the Gospel Message as a true Daughter of the Church. It was then that Mother Marie Alma requested permission from the Holy See to begin a new Congregation of diocesan right. After prospering as a diocesan Congregation for twenty-three years, the Sisters requested Pontifical recognition of the Congregation from the Holy See. This honor was granted by His Holiness, Saint Pope John Paul II, on November 1, 1993. God used Mother Marie Alma’s gifts of to lead the Congregation to spread God’s kingdom here in the United States. She instilled in her Sisters a strong desire to become true Daughters of the Church. Mother Marie Alma went to meet her Divine Bridegroom on February 12, 1995.

*“With Mary, our lives continually proclaim the greatness of the Lord and the joy experienced in rendering service to Him.”*

#### Holy Rule

*Make a difference today ~ help us reach those in need!*

MY OFFERING

#### CONTACT US

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#### OUR MISSION

As Sisters of Charity of Our Lady, Mother of the Church we embrace our two-fold mission of sanctity and service. In a spirit of simplicity we aspire to live a life rooted in the Gospel, in imitation of Mary and expressed by prayer, charity, self sacrifice and loving obedience. We devote ourselves to the works of charity, and as true daughters in the heart of the Church, we serve others through the apostolates of education, caring for the sick, the aging and the poor, wherever there is a need.

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