



LOCAL NEWS

## SISTERS OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD MARK 175TH ANNIVERSARY

[The Catholic Telegraph](#) / [October 7, 2009](#) / [1.4k](#)

By David Eck

**DAYTON DEANERY** — In 1834 Maria Anna Brunner, an elderly widow in Switzerland inspired by the redemption, reparation and reconciliation through the Precious Blood of Jesus, began spending her time in prayer, taking care of the men in a seminary started by her son and teaching young girls.

Other women soon joined her in a life of prayer and good works. They would become the Sisters of the Precious Blood.

The order celebrated its 175th anniversary Oct. 4 with a Mass at Precious Blood Church across the street from their motherhouse in the Dayton suburb of Trotwood. Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk celebrated the Mass. Missionary of the Precious Blood Fathers Angelo Anthony, Barry Fischer and William O'Donnell, and Fathers David Brinkmoeller, Edward Pratt and Robert Monnin concelebrated.

Several hundred people filled the church to celebrate the anniversary and thank the Sisters for their work in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. The Sisters expanded to America in 1844 and were asked by Cincinnati Archbishop John Baptist Purcell to minister to German immigrants in the archdiocese. They established a motherhouse in Maria Stein in 1846.

Over the years the Sisters have taught in schools, cared for the elderly and provided facilities for lay retreats, among other things, as Archbishop Pilarczyk noted in his homily.

"Today we remember 175 years of these various apostolates," the archbishop said. "We remember dozens of ways the Sisters served the church. . . for almost 200 years."

The Sisters moved to the Dayton area in 1923, having outgrown the motherhouse in Maria Stein and wanting to be closer to an urban center. The building in Maria Stein, now known as Maria Stein Center, is home to an adoration chapel, the Shrine of the Holy Relics, a museum and a gift shop. It also features a courtyard and garden with several statues and memorials. Sisters of the Precious Blood have prayed and ministered at Maria Stein for more than 160 years.

The Sisters have long ministered in education and owned and operated Regina High School in Norwood for more than 40 years until it closed in the late 1980s. Over the years they have taught in schools in Ohio and eight other states.

In the years following World War II, they built two additional wings onto their Trotwood motherhouse, one for high school girls considering religious life, and another as a nursing facility for elderly Sisters. They undertook management of two new homes for the elderly and were sought to direct domestic work in seminaries and bishops' residences. They also maintained a large liturgical arts department in which they made vestments for parishes in the archdiocese.

Stories of distant and more recent ministries flowed as the Sisters celebrated the anniversary. On Oct. 3 they hosted a lecture and welcomed back former members for a reunion.

"As we Sisters have shared memories over the past few months, we have come to appreciate ever more deeply how very blessed we have been in so many ways," said Sister of the Precious Blood Florence Siefert, president, at the beginning of the Mass. "And each of you here today has been a part of that blessing. As Sisters of the Precious Blood, urged by the redeeming love of Jesus and rooted in eucharistic prayer, it is only fitting that we invite you to celebrate with us around this table of Eucharist, of thanksgiving. We bring to the altar hearts full of gratitude for the gift of our call to be Sisters of the Precious Blood, for God's faithful presence with us these 175 years, for all who have been part of our lives and mission."

Several Sisters joined with parishioners to form the choir for the Mass. Sisters of the Precious Blood Marla Gipson and Anne Schulz carried the gifts during the offertory procession. Sister Marla is the newest member of the order, having professed her final vows in 2008.

Father O'Donnell, pastor of Precious Blood Parish, noted that more than 110 Sisters have served the parish since its founding in 1948. Sister Anne, for example, is a former principal at the parish school.



From left, Sister of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro Daria Mushi, Sister of the Precious Blood Beverly Bodnar, Marianist Sister Audrey Buttner, Sister of the Precious Blood Catherine Nader and Sister of Child Jesus Eucharika Gomba socialize at a reception following the 175th anniversary Mass for the Sisters of the Precious Blood. (CT/E.L. Hubbard)



Cincinnati Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk celebrated a special Mass at Precious Blood Church in honor of the 175th anniversary of the Sisters of the Precious Blood. From left, Deacon Richard Janowiecki, Missionary of the Precious Blood Father William O'Donnell, Father Edward Pratt, Father David Brinkmoeller, Missionary of the Precious Blood Fathers Barry Fischer and Angelo Anthony and Father Robert Monnin. (CT/E.L. Hubbard)

The property on which the parish and school is built was donated by the Sisters.

"We are a grateful church today," Father O'Donnell said. "The church owes a great deal of gratitude and respect to the Sisters of the Precious Blood and to all the religious women of our church."

The Sisters continued to reminisce and socialize at a reception in Precious Blood School after the Mass. Former members, clergy and friends attended the celebration.

Other events during the anniversary year included a four-part lecture series on Precious Blood spirituality, an open house at the motherhouse, a Mass of thanksgiving and picnic at Maria Stein Center and a celebration in Phoenix to mark the Sisters' ministry in the southwest. Other anniversary celebrations in California, Cincinnati and a final lecture in Dayton are still to come.

Montgomery County Commissioner Dan Foley, Ohio State Rep. Roland Winburn (D-Dayton) and Trotwood Councilman Rap Hankins all presented proclamations to the Sisters in recognition of the anniversary. A proclamation from the City of Dayton was also read.

"Thank you, Father Bill (O'Donnell) and the Precious Blood Parish community for so generously opening up your beautiful church and facilities to us," Sister Florence said. "Thanks to all who shared in any way in preparing for this celebration."