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### **Buffalo Cursillo History #9 (August 2022 Newsletter)**

#### “The Sister in Christian Community”

From the onset, religious sisters were a part of the Buffalo Cursillo Movement. Eight sisters from several religious communities were candidates on Buffalo Women’s Cursillo #1, held at St. Mary’s School for the Deaf (staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph) in 1966. By 1971, over 100 religious Sisters from over 12 local Apostolic Religious Communities participated in WNY Cursillos.

During the two previous decades, young women were entering religious communities at the rate of 15-20 per year. This included the local mother houses of the Alleghany Franciscans, the Williamsville Franciscans, Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph, Felicians, Sisters of St. Joseph, Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, Mercy Sisters and Franciscan Sisters of Stella Niagara, who in the 1960’s, built a three story novitiate which later became Stella Niagara Center of Renewal. There was a great deal of enthusiasm for religious life.

Vatican II’s “Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life” recommended that instead of being sent out directly from the novitiate to teach, sisters were first getting college degrees in various areas of education, theology, psychology, music, nursing and other disciplines. Sisters were now not only nurses, teachers and sacristans but participated or conducted Scripture study groups and prayer groups in parishes, and ecumenical endeavors. They served on staff and boards of Peace and Justice Centers and Inner City organizations. In the age of the Peace Corps and greater mission awareness, many sisters volunteered for the foreign missions and in the American South, following Vatican II’s “Decree on Mission Activity in the Church”.

From 1970 to 1977, one of the Saturday talks the Buffalo Cursillo movement added was “The Sister in the Church”, later changed to “the Sister in Christian Community”, given by a Sister Cursillista on the women’s weekends.

Because sisters were able to expand their apostolates, the talk was a way of the sister sharing her vocational call from God, her life in a religious community as well as how her life of faith and prayer related to the life of the Church. It not only inspired the married women, but served as an encouragement to the single women on the weekend.

Sisters soon offered their talents as Cursillo team members, as liturgists, serving on the Secretariat and writing for the Cursillo Newsletter.

Beginning in 1979, sisters became Associate Spiritual Directors with priests on Women’s weekends. Only Sister Noreen McCarrick, O.S.F. and Felician Sister Antoinette Sikora served as Associate Spiritual Directors on Men’s Cursillos #85 and #159 respectively. Bishop Head appointed Sr. Noreen McCarrick, Buffalo Cursillo Spiritual Director from 1979 to 1980. She was

also Spiritual Director of the Rainbow County Ultreya which met at Stella Niagara Educational Park in the 1980's.

Sister Jane Marie Brach, a Franciscan Sister of St. Joseph was assistant Spiritual Director for the Buffalo Cursillo from 1988 to 1989.