

NEWSLETTER OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY MISSIONARY SISTERS

# Visions

November 2018

[www.olvm.org](http://www.olvm.org)

**REFUGEE STRUGGLES**

**Helping to keep  
families together**



Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters is a community of women religious founded in 1922 by Father John Joseph Sigstein. The Victory Noll Motherhouse is located in Huntington, Indiana.

Victory Noll Sisters:

- Proclaim the Word of God
- Stand in solidarity with those living in poverty and oppression
- Foster justice
- Promote the development of leaders

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Soe Meh, shown with her daughter, Cinderella, came to Chicago after 12 years in a refugee camp, and was assisted by Madonna Mission.

**PHOTO PROVIDED**

Families are very important whether they are our family of origin or the family we create. The OLVM Congregation has worked with families since our first days in Watrous, N.M., and we continue to support families through the grants given out by the John J. Sigstein Foundation. Two of these recipients — Madonna Mission in Chicago and CASA of Imperial County, Calif. — are featured in this issue of Visions. We are also beginning to

## PERSPECTIVES ALONG THE JOURNEY

take a long, loving look back at our history as we prepare to celebrate our 100th Anniversary in 2022. There will be articles telling our story as well as reflections by the Sisters on different topics of our history. In this issue, Sr. Alma Bill and Sr. Valeria Foltz reflect on the influence of Fr. Sigstein and Archbishop Noll in their life and spirituality. Sr. Mary Jo Nelson offers insights into change, and the current journey of our congregation. As the Congregation moves into the future, we will be fulfilling our mission and living out our charism in new ways. Enjoy the history and the movement into the future as you read this issue of Visions. ❖

### OLVM LEADERSHIP TEAM

*Sister Mary Jo Nelson,*  
*Sister Lucille Martiny,* *Sister Ginger Downey*

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# Being open to God's future

## Changing times: An invitation to deepen the spiritual journey

*There is an appointed time for everything...  
A time to plant and a time to uproot the plant  
A time to tear down and a time to build  
A time to rend, and a time to sew  
A time to hold and a time to let go*  
(Ecclesiastes 3, adapted)

**By Sister Mary Jo Nelson, OLVN President**

In VISIONS, January 2017 I wrote about the “critical time in history for Sisters and their congregations in the United States” and in VISIONS, June 2017, I wrote about “how Victory Noll Sisters are called to pass on their mission and charism as they grow smaller.” In this issue I want to reflect with you about “our planning for the future and how navigating the change is a deeply spiritual journey and that this is a common journey for all of us, not just the Victory Noll Sisters.”



Sr. Mary Jo Nelson,  
OLVN President

Each of us has a story of change: of starting a family and moving out of the family home because it is too big and no longer meets our needs; of shaping a career and leaving it because we have entered into another phase of our life; of being the picture of perfect health and receiving the devastating news of a terminal illness.

The Victory Noll Sisters also have a story of change. We have experienced changes throughout nearly 100 years of presence and service: working and living in small groups in neighborhoods to returning to Victory Noll for the latter part of our lives; witnessing a great growth of members in the congregation as well as experiencing the community growing smaller.

In all the changes in our lives, we are invited into a deeper journey with God. We are invited to grieve and transform our lives — to take a long, loving look at our whole life: to name its blessings and to name the losses experienced in our families and communities. We are called to see with new eyes, to connect our story to the story of all people, to be with God in a new way, and to find a new way to be for others.

All of us — you and the Victory Noll Sisters continue to experience changes that are uninvited, but nonetheless demand our open heart, open mind, and open will.

The Victory Noll Sisters are on a two-fold journey. The

first part of our journey is to complete our “estate planning” —this includes exploring a collaborative plan with other congregations for our archives and heritage items, and telling our story to future generations. It also includes completing a plan for our corporate governance and congregational leadership. In this planning we have sought the assistance of consultants, Sisters from other congregations and colleagues on our boards and committees. They are working with us and offering their insights, questions, and wisdom, as no congregation can do this work alone.

Currently, the most visible planning is related to our motherhouse. As many of you know, Victory Noll has been a place to train catechists and prepare Sisters for mission. As we grew smaller, we were able to establish the Victory Noll Center which prepares adults and young people to deepen their journey with God and to be of service to others. At this time, because the buildings are only 22 percent occupied, and because we are growing smaller each year, we need to sell our Victory Noll buildings. But more importantly, we need to claim anew that we are a temple of God, that we do not need buildings to continue the mission of God.

Our deepest hope is that we can sell them to someone who will be able to continue our charism and mission in some way. Although selling is very hard to do, it is an expression of being good stewards of all our resources. Another way we are stewarding our resources is through our Foundation which we started a few years ago. This helps us serve God's mission through others who also carry our mission and charism.

The second part of our journey is to deepen our commitment to the core of our life as Sisters — prayer, relationships, and the vowed life. The best gift we can now give to the Church and the world is to live our life in a deep and alive way without our active ministries of the past. We are also being called to articulate anew our mission and charism as we enter into a new phase of our life as a congregation.

The faithfulness of our lives is not about having buildings, nor is it about having large numbers in our congregation. It is about presence, encounter and communion not just with ourselves, but with all who share life with us in some way. We are on this journey of life together. Everything in your life connects with us and our life connects with yours. And, deep in our hearts we know that there is a time for everything ... there is a time to hold, and a time to let go. There is a time to be open to God's future, and that time is now. ❖



Photo provided

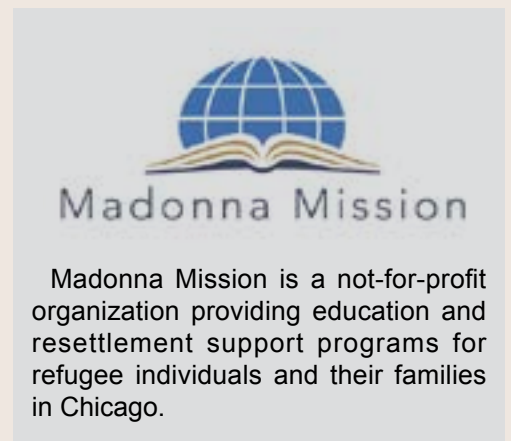
**Lillian, now 18, won an award from the Anti-Defamation League for her essay about the First Amendment. She and her siblings, from Rwanda, have thrived in the After School Program at Madonna Mission in Chicago.**

## Opportunities for a new life

Chicago's Madonna Mission offers hope and support to refugees in transition

By Nancy Deneen  
Madonna Mission

**T**he stories of the refugees who come to Madonna Mission differ in the details: some come from Burma, some from Syria, or from Congo or Eritrea, to name just a few places. Some had time to grab cooking utensils or a favorite photograph before they fled their homes and disappeared into the night. Some left with



Madonna Mission is a not-for-profit organization providing education and resettlement support programs for refugee individuals and their families in Chicago.



# MINISTRIES

simply the clothes on their backs, perhaps clutching a child in either hand.

But at the core the stories are the same: full of terror, full of running, full of unsanitary and often dangerous resettlement camps, but eventually, full of hope. The hope part is where Madonna Mission comes in.

Madonna Mission was founded in 2011 to provide a place of welcome, support and education as refugees begin their journey in Chicago toward a better life.

“We serve refugees regardless of race, religion or nationality,” says founder Lynn Gordon. “We place a high priority on promoting human dignity.”

Gordon said she and her friend Colleen Detjen were familiar with resettlement programs, but realized that the support refugees received from various agencies often ended after only eight months in this country.

“Eight months!” Gordon exclaimed. “Can you imagine being on your own in Chicago after such a short time, knowing only a few words of English? These brave women who had already survived so much were now isolated, unable to help their children with simple homework assignments or to even contemplate joining the workforce in this city.”

So Gordon and Detjen decided to put their Catholic faith into action and provide a place for the ongoing services the refugees so greatly needed. They found a spot in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago, not far from where many of the refugees settle. They gathered a host of volunteers to teach English as a Second Language, a group whose passion for the work soon matched their own.

Mornings in the bright, often sunny two-room center

find refugee mothers paired with tutors who eagerly share with them the building blocks of the English language. The change is often remarkable as the once almost silent women progress through the lessons to become more confident speakers of English, often successfully navigating their children’s schools, the grocery stores, the doctors’ offices. With the Mission’s support some women eventually become United States citizens and find employment to help support their families.

“One new student is indicative of the faces we see,” said Detjen. “Mawazo is a young mother from Congo. With her 6-month old daughter wrapped on her back, she came with a shy and nervous demeanor. By the end of the second day, Mawazo had caught the Madonna Mission spirit and had felt the support and encouragement of the tutors. Her face was transformed with smiles as she practiced the new words she had just learned.”

The children’s needs are as acute as their parents when they arrive in Chicago. According to the UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, less than 40 percent of children in refugee camps around the world are enrolled in school of any kind. Their lack of education puts them far behind once they reach our shores. So in 2013, Madonna Mission began an after school enrichment program to increase literacy and promote academic success. Volunteer students from two area high schools,

Photo provided

**Lynn Gordon (center), founder of Madonna Mission, coordinates volunteer ESL tutors and their students, refugees from many countries.**



# MINISTRIES



Photos provided

**ESL student Aisha (above) comes to learn with her child. Many of the refugee women bring their preschool children to Madonna Mission. Below, volunteer tutor Tereza (center) works with students in the after school program.**



Loyola Academy and New Trier High School, help refugee students to accomplish these goals. Under the insightful guidance of Program Director Peggy Forbes, the students' academic performance has soared. Of the 75 students enrolled in the MM after school program in 2017-18, 96.7 percent increased their reading skill by at least one level.

Gordon added, "Thanks to the generosity of the John Joseph Sigstein Foundation, we have been able to provide safe bus transportation home for the after school students. JJSF is the key to our success with the program and we are very grateful for their support."

During the summer months, the two rooms of Madonna Mission become a lively, noisy and thriving summer camp, a launching pad for students to become fluent in English while participating in swimming lessons, fitness classes, and soccer clinics. Often the Learning in Action summer program becomes an employment opportunity for refugee high school students who have attended Madonna Mission grade school programs.

After being accepted as a junior counselor, Tereza said to Gordon, "Lynn, thank you for believing in me." Another tutor, from Loyola University, feels equally grateful for the personal growth the tutoring opportunity has provided her. "Madonna Mission is the best thing that college has given me. It gives students a safe place to get work done and engage with others. The students know that the tutors are here for them and can feel that support."

Gordon concluded, "The Mission was created to provide support for refugees, but God's love is also life-changing for the scores of volunteers who share their gifts of teaching and, simply, caring."

Not surprisingly, Madonna Mission's tagline is Faith in Action is Love. And, many would attest, that love translates into hope for so many of the world's neediest and transformation for those who serve them. ❖

Madonna Mission website:  
[madonnamission.org](http://madonnamission.org)

On Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/  
Madonna-Mission-422611441177662](https://www.facebook.com/Madonna-Mission-422611441177662)

***NOTE:** Madonna Mission is one of the agencies receiving grants from OLV's John Joseph Sigstein Foundation.*



# Finding Inspiration

## Sisters offer thoughts on Founding Fathers of Victory Noll



Father John Joseph Sigstein



Archbishop John Francis Noll

**F**ather John Joseph Sigstein founded the community that would become Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters in 1922. Archbishop John Francis Noll was the main benefactor of the community, providing them with a home and motherhouse in Huntington, Indiana. OLVN Sisters Valeria Foltz and Alma Bill discuss their memories and inspirations of the two men.

### *What do you remember about Bishop Noll?*

**Sister Alma:** From my earliest age, I was somehow afraid of the hierarchy. Living in a farming community, we saw the Bishop only once every four years when he came to our parish to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. However, after I entered Victory Noll and had the opportunity to meet Bishop Noll, and after hearing stories of his interest and generosity in the founding and growth of our community, my attitude completely changed. Perhaps it would be interesting if I recall some interesting incidents that “broke the ice.”

The Noll family had a cottage on Sylvan Lake, about 40 miles from Victory Noll. Every summer the postulants and novices would go there for a week of vacation. Invariably, Bishop Noll would come to

spend time with us. When I saw him in his overalls, baiting our hooks for fishing, taking us for a ride in his boat, playing horseshoe on the porch — well, I was never afraid of Bishops again!

I will always remember his humility, good humor, naturalness, kindness, care for people, and deep spirituality — a profoundly human member of the Hierarchy.

**Sister Valeria:** I remember that he had a deep faith in God and trusted God and he saw Christ in everyone regardless of whether they were rich or poor. He would come in once a month or so when we were novices and postulants. Victory Noll was a special place to him. It was like home for him. He did so much for the community.

### *What do you remember about Father Sigstein?*

**Sister Alma:** I met Father Sigstein only once — briefly, the summer before he died. I had just returned from summer school at Notre Dame. As I walked across the front lawn,

I met one of the Sisters who was guiding him in his wheelchair. She stopped and introduced me. His message guided the founding and life of our community. The depth of his commitment to help the poor, his originality in outlining ways of ministry



Sr. Alma Bill



Sr. Valeria Foltz

**Archbishop Noll would often take novices and postulants on short vacations to his house on Sylvan Lake, where he would take them on boat rides, teach them fishing, and they could play horseshoes.**



beyond the founding of schools and hospitals, his persistence in prayerful living, and his tireless zeal in breaking boundaries and inventing new options for service guided our lives.

**Sister Valeria:** When he came back to Victory Noll I used to clean his apartment. He was a very quiet man, but he put a lot of life into this community. You can still feel his spirit here.

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### *What about Bishop Noll inspired you?*

**Sister Alma:** At the time when the hierarchy was sometimes viewed as “a notch above” the rest of us, Bishop Noll broke the pattern and proved his relationship with “every man — and woman” He was someone who reacted fearlessly in defending the Faith and generously in providing for the means of spreading the Faith. At the same time, he never neglected the ordinary means of helping others.

**Sister Valeria:** He inspired me to have a great devotion for our Blessed Mother and to God. Our motto was “All for Jesus through Mary,” so he taught us to stay close to our Blessed Mother. He had a great love for the poor. He saw Christ in them. He inspired me through his kindness to others.

### *What about Father Sigstein inspired you?*

**Sister Alma:** How a man with poor health forged ahead in providing for the needs of others, inspired people to begin years of service,



**Father Sigstein spent his final years at Victory Noll, where he was cared for by the Sisters. Fr. Sigstein died in 1963 and is buried in the Victory Noll Cemetery next to Archbishop John F. Noll, who died in 1956.**





**Bishop Noll (left) and Father Sigstein (right) lead the procession at the dedication of the motherhouse at Victory Noll on July 5, 1925, in Huntington, Indiana.**

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found means to encourage new modes of ministry, and overcame many obstacles to realize his life's work — is conclusive evidence of deep love, commitment, and Service in the Lord's vineyard.

**Sister Valeria:** Father Sigstein founded us to help the poor. His spirituality and his prayer life inspired me. He was a very holy man.

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*Describe how you witnessed Bishop Noll's care for the poor and devotion to Mary?*

**Sister Alma:** According to my experience, Bishop Noll's care for the poor was demonstrated by his support for our community in our efforts to serve the poor in whatever circumstances we may find them. He

originally founded the means for our living situation by managing the purchase of land and buildings for our motherhouse; he supplied the funding for Redlands, the large home base for Sisters ministering in the Southwest; he provided advertising space in *Our Sunday Visitor*, the means by which many of our Sisters first learned of our ministry; he constantly lent his support and encouragement by spending time with us at Victory Noll.

“Devotion to Mary” was one of the spiritual highlights of our dedication as Victory Noll Sisters. From our early beginnings, we were introduced to this devotion by Father Sigstein, and it continued as our public demonstration of devotion.

**Sister Valeria:** I remember as a child they were building the Basilica was being built in Washington DC and they ran out of money. Bishop Noll stepped in and led the way to raise the rest of the money needed to finish the building. I was in elementary school in Humphrey Nebraska, and the Sisters would have a jar for us to put in our coins to help complete the Basilica. That's how I got to know Bishop Noll through *Our Sunday Visitor* asking us to send money. Sometimes it was only pennies but we knew we had a hand in it.

*Describe how you witnessed Father Sigstein's care for the poor and devotion to Mary?*

**Sister Alma:** Father Sigstein's whole life story contains a constant account of his concern for the poor, and his efforts to provide for their care. From his early days in Chicago, when he worked with men suffering from the Great Depression, through his founding and growth of our community, his basic tenet of “care and concern” was evident. It governed every facet of our ministry. The section on “Devotion to Mary”, as recorded above, mentions our commitment and devotion to Mary. Upon our entrance, we were immediately introduced to this devotion, recited our Act of Consecration often, and held a monthly procession with rosary, as we carried the statue of Mary in procession. Our oft-repeated short prayer, “All for Jesus through Mary” and “Thanks to Jesus and Mary” indicated our commitment.

**Sister Valeria:** He had a great devotion to our Blessed Mother. He would say that when we find Jesus in the Scriptures also find Mary. That was important for us in our mission work.

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### *How did Bishop Noll influence your spirituality?*

**Sister Alma:** Bishop Noll was a well-known bishop throughout the country. Through his writings, his publication of *Our Sunday Visitor*, he strengthened the Faith of the people and provided for their development and celebration.

**Sister Valeria:** We used to have talks with him in the summer we would go to his lakehouse. He was very fatherly and very understanding and kind and helpful getting us prepared for the work we were going to do. He was filled with knowledge of spreading the gospel.

### *How did Father Sigstein influence your spirituality?*

**Sister Alma:** Father Sigstein's spirituality was deep and prayerful, always aware of the poor and their needs. In the early days, he himself provided classes on spirituality for those preparing for ministry.

Father Sigstein's tenet of deepening spirituality influenced my technique of training catechists in the parishes where I ministered. In preparing them for the ministry of Proclaiming the Word, we studied Scripture together, considered world situations, studied child psychology, and advanced in knowledge and appreciation of the gift of the Sacraments.



**Bishop Noll poses in the main courtyard of the motherhouse during the building's dedication at Victory Noll on July 5, 1925.**

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**Sister Valeria:** We want our charism to carry on, the work of Fr. Sigstein and Archbishop Noll and I think it will — the devotion to Mary, the kindness, helping the poor, and drawing people closer to God. Hopefully, when people come up here, that they can feel the spirituality. It's kind of like holy ground. It was blessed by Archbishop Noll and Father Sigstein and their strong faith in God and our Blessed Mother. ❖



Photo provided

**Children celebrate at a CASA Christmas party in El Centro, Calif. CASA of Imperial County has been successful in reuniting 7 out of 10 children in foster care with their biological parents, the highest rate in the state of California.**

# Making families whole again

## Imperial County's CASA volunteers focus on children

**By Alex Cardenas  
Executive Director  
CASA Imperial County  
El Centro, Calif.**

**T**he support of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters has made a tremendous difference in the lives of children living in poverty who have been separated from loved ones due

to the unfortunate circumstances of foster care. However, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) through the support of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters have reunified hundreds of children with family members and have provided for over 30 children who have been victims of sex and human trafficking from Mexico and South America with an opportunity

to obtain U.S. Citizenship in the United States.

CASA Volunteers are the “Voice for the Voiceless.” These volunteers make an 18-month commitment to help the abused and neglected children in our community. CASA volunteers spend time with their assigned children, get to know them personally, participate in recreational outings and listen



# MINISTRIES



Photo provided

**The family shown above had seven children aged 6 months through 12 years placed in foster care. With CASA's advocacy for both the mother and children, the family was reunited within 11 months.**

to what the children have to say. Court Appointed Special Advocates of Imperial County (CASA) in California, was established to advocate for abused/neglected children in the Juvenile Court process. Through the use of highly-trained volunteers, CASA is committed to providing all at-risk children with a voice in their court process.

CASA's relationship originally started back in 2011 when OLVMSister Francisca Olvera became a social justice advocate for CASA of Imperial County. Sister Francisca worked diligently in ensuring her assigned child was placed in a permanent and safe home while in foster care. Additionally, Sister Francisca advocated in the juvenile courts for health and wellness services to ensure the child was achieving the developmental milestones and nurturing requirements while in

foster care. Sister Francisca did an amazing job for our community and to this date we remain extremely close in the fight for social justice.

Fortunately, CASA's relationship with Sister Francisca led to a funding opportunity with the John Joseph Sigstein Foundation to expand advocacy services, especially in the areas of immigration justice to unaccompanied minors who were victims of sex and human trafficking in our U.S. Border Community and to improve the family reunification rates to foster children who are placed in the foster care system.

This new funding opportunity on the part of the John Joseph Sigstein Foundation led to the recruitment of more than a hundred new social justice advocates who have represented over 400 children and their families in the last six years.

Currently, our county experiences



CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Imperial County, Calif., is committed to providing a voice, hope and a future to abused and neglected children.

CASA programs use trained, community volunteers to speak for abused and neglected children in court. Volunteers follow these children's cases as they move through the court system, making sure children do not get lost in foster care.

the highest family reunification rate in California which presently stands at 72 percent. This means that 7 out of 10 children who are placed in foster care are successfully reunified with their biological parents within 11 months. The success of our program rests on our social justice advocates who focus on family strengthening strategies that promote reunification as opposed to long-term foster care placements.

Featured is a local family in our community who was assigned a social justice advocate. The mother of seven children ages six months to 12 years old experienced the unfortunate circumstances of foster care. The mother, who was a victim of domestic violence which ultimately led to her substance abuse problem, had her children removed due to neglect allegations. The sibling group of seven children were separated from their mother and placed in four different non-biological homes throughout our county. The size of the sibling group made it very difficult for the children to be placed together. The separation from their mother and each other led to separation anxiety. This separation anxiety among the children manifested to negative behaviors in their new schools, leading to punitive measures such as school suspensions and expulsions on the part of school officials. Fortunately, this family was assigned a CASA advocate who successfully mitigated the negative behaviors at school with academic accommodations that included de-escalation coaches and modified school days. Additionally, the CASA advocate was successful in having the judge court order pet therapy to help ease the separation anxiety among the children. The advocate's efforts continued to include weekly and regular visitations with the mother and siblings while they were placed in different homes. The advocate encouraged the mother to complete her court-ordered services and provided supplemental transportation to ensure success in her family reunification plan. While the children were in foster care, CASA provided new shoes, school supplies, backpacks, Christmas gifts, and household supplies to the family largely due to the funding provided by the John Joseph Sigstein Foundation. We are pleased to report that the family



Photo provided

**CASA is committed to providing at-risk children with a voice throughout court processes, and focusing on family-strengthening strategies with the goal of reuniting children in foster care with their biological families.**

was successfully reunified within 11 months of removal, and to date the mother has found employment and is active in the faith-based community.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is extremely grateful for organizations like Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, who partner with us so we can improve the lives of foster children within Imperial County. Foster children are some of the most resilient individuals in the world. Unfortunately, they are victims of trauma and usually are in need of specialized services to help them overcome such tragedies. ❖

CASA of Imperial County website:  
[casaimperialcounty.org/](http://casaimperialcounty.org/)

On Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/CASAofImperialCounty](https://www.facebook.com/CASAofImperialCounty)

**NOTE:** *CASA of Imperial County is one of the agencies receiving grants from OLV's John Joseph Sigstein Foundation.*



# Beginnings of a mission

A young John Sigstein follows call to reach out to the poor

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *As Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters approach their 100th anniversary in 2022, we will be taking a look back at the history of the community in a series of articles, researched and written by OLVM archivist Jeff Hoffman. This initial article looks back to the birth and early years in the life of OLVM founder John Joseph Sigstein, examining the initial events that led to his creation of the community.*

**By Jeff Hoffman**  
OLVM Archivist

**J**ohn Joseph Sigstein was born in Chicago to German immigrants on October 29, 1875. After finishing eighth grade in his parish of St. Vincent de Paul, he considered a career as a druggist, but chose the priesthood. During this time he made it a habit to attend daily mass, and receive communion a few times a week. At the time this was unusual, but Pope Pius X had started promoting reception of daily communion. John Sigstein was initially hesitant, because he was the only one at the communion rail. He thought he might catch some flak from the other seminarians, so he discussed it with his rector. The rector told him to go every day if he wished, because he would be following the will of the Holy Father. Others soon followed him to the communion rail.

It was while attending daily mass in



**A young John Joseph Sigstein (left) is shown with his parents, John and Mary Massoth Sigstein. He had three sisters, two of whom died in infancy. John's father died in 1906. Mary Sigstein died in 1931 at Victory Noll, the OLVM motherhouse in Huntington, Indiana.**



# OLVM HISTORY



**Father Sigstein started the Our Lady of Victory Club in Chicago to support the homeless and and working poor who were building the city's elevated train tracks. They provided necessary living items as well as religious support. Father Sigstein is in the back row underneath the left side of the shop sign.**

the summer that a lay man caught his attention by receiving daily communion. Because the Pope had just promoted the daily reception of communion, it was usually only the clergy and religious that would receive it daily. John and his friend, George Pierson, introduced themselves to Francis Collins. Francis proceeded to tell them of his work with Irish immigrants who were building the elevated tracks throughout Chicago, and how he was trying to get them back to receiving the sacraments. John was moved by his story and invited him to tell it to the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which would support this ministry. Upon receiving funding from a benefactor this project became known as Our Blessed Lady of Victory Lodging House Mission. Shortly after John Sigstein's ordination, the project was turned over to Old St. Mary's Parish.

His first assignment was to St. Pius Parish in Chicago, but as throughout his career, his health broke due to overwork. He was forced to retire from active parish ministry. He was first assigned as chaplain at Sacred Heart Academy and later at St. Bernard's

Hospital in Chicago. During World War I, Fr. Sigstein also assisted on the weekends at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station when their priest signed on as a naval chaplain.

Although his time was taken up by these endeavors, he again turned his thoughts to the poor. He started the Society of Missionary Helpers of Our Blessed Lady of Victory whose purpose was to help missionaries materially with such items as vestments, linens and money. By 1918 this group had 160 members, and 250 active members and associates by the following year. These were women who would sew and hold benefits to raise money for the missions in the Southwest and elsewhere.

Throughout his life Fr. Sigstein had a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother. As seen through these early endeavors, he was extremely fond of Our Lady of Victory. Throughout these undertakings he would say "All for Jesus and Mary". He would later change this slogan to "All for Jesus through Mary" for an enterprise that would have wider implications for the Catholic Church in America. ❖



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## Visions FROM THE VICTORY NOLL ARCHIVES



**A** strong family structure has always been a part of the work of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters. In addition to offering Catholic teaching, the Sisters had provided services and advocated for children and parent, especially those who have been marginalized by society. Families across the country were eager to welcome Victory Noll Sisters into their homes as friends and helpers. ❖