



City's 'Saintsational Seven' made a big difference

By Beth Donze
Clarion Herald

New Orleans is steeped in saints, but local Catholics might be hard-pressed to name more than a handful of them.

Seven individuals with New Orleans connections – six women and one man – are either recognized saints or on the road to sainthood: St. Frances Xavier Cabrini; St. Katharine Drexel; St. Rose Philippine Duchesne; Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos; Venerable Cornelia Connelly; Venerable Henriette Delille; and Margaret Haughery.

Can walk in saints' footsteps

"There's so much Catholic history in the French Quarter alone," noted Dr. Emilie Leumas, archivist for the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

"As you walk, you are able to see the building at 824 Dumaine St. (later St. Louis Cathedral School), which was the original Sacred Heart School founded by St. Rose (Duchesne). Walk to the Bourbon Orleans Hotel, and you'll see its connection to Henriette Delille and how the site was once used as the convent of the Sisters of the Holy Family."

Uptown sites connected with Blessed Seelos and Haughery, the latter who dedicated her life to New Orleans' orphans, are a short bus or streetcar ride away, Leumas added.

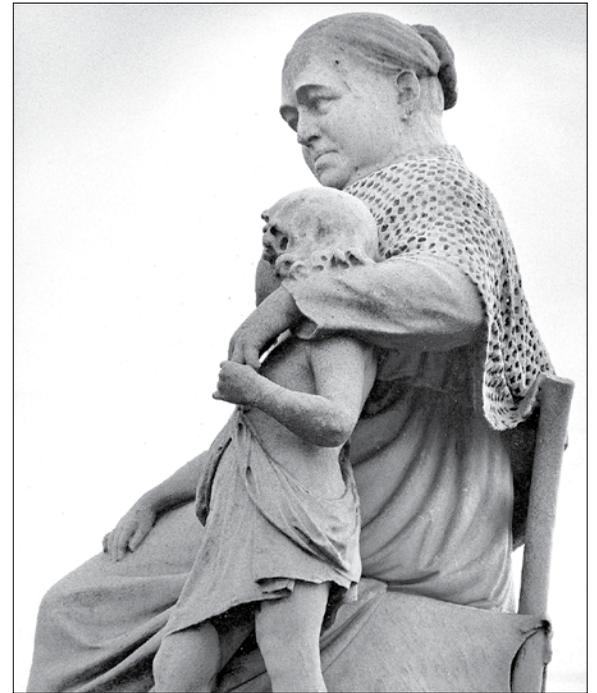
Here is a peek at the "Saintsational Seven":

► St. Katharine Drexel, the tenacious foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacra-



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Six individuals with connections to New Orleans – who are either canonized saints or on the road to sainthood – are commemorated in statues at the Old Ursuline Convent on Chartres Street, above. A seventh holy person, Margaret Haughery, is depicted in the statue at right. Haughery was an Irish immigrant who ministered to the city's orphans.



ment, dedicated her \$14 million inheritance to the establishment of schools for the education of black and Native Americans, a legacy that includes Xavier University of Louisiana, Xavier Prep (now St. Katharine Drexel Prep) and Blessed Sacrament School.

► St. Frances Cabrini founded the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart with a main ministry of helping poor children through schools and hospitals. Mother Cabrini's first local convent-school, founded to educate the Lower French Quarter's influx of poor Italian immigrants, was located at 817 St. Philip St. Her second orphanage, founded in 1905 at 3400 Esplanade Ave., is located on the campus of the all-girls' high school that bears her name.

"When you drive down

Esplanade, you don't realize that the part of Cabrini (High School) that faces Esplanade was the orphanage," said Leumas, noting that the building's façade is partly hidden behind oak trees.

► French-born St. Rose Philippine Duchesne sailed to New Orleans in 1818 with four other sisters to bring the Society of the Sacred Heart to the United States. St. Rose, who already had demonstrated her deep Catholic faith by teaching homeless children, caring for the poor and sick and aiding underground members of the clergy during the French Revolution, went on to establish six communities within 10 years. Her Louisiana legacy includes Sacred Heart schools in Grand Coteau, Natchitoches, Baton Rouge, Convent and on St. Charles Avenue in New

Orleans (known by alumnae as The Rosary).

► Venerable Cornelia Connelly, a native of Philadelphia, had a desire to help children that led her to found the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in England in 1846. Although they spent little time in New Orleans, Presbyterian-raised Connelly and her husband Pierce, an Episcopal minister, experienced a significant moment in their faith journeys here in the city. They were inspired to convert to Catholicism after attending the 1835 Ordination Mass of New Orleans Bishop (later Archbishop) Antoine Blanc. Cornelia was received into the church that same year at St. Louis Cathedral.

When Cornelia discerned a calling to become a religious sister and Pierce was ordained a Catholic priest,

the couple legally separated and enrolled their three children in boarding school. Pierce ultimately left the priesthood, but when his former wife refused to cast aside her vows, he sued Cornelia in an English court for custody of their children.

The archdiocesan archives contain a letter from Cornelia urging her spiritual advisor, Archbishop Blanc, to pray for her oldest son, whom she never saw again.

Residential trio

Three members of this saintly group resided and ministered in New Orleans in more than a visitor's capacity: Venerable Henriette Delille, Margaret Haughery and Blessed Francis Seelos.

Mother Henriette and Haughery, who were born a year apart, worked con-

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1963: U.S. bishops approve the use of English in the liturgy, Dec. 4.

1963: ST LOUIS CATHEDRAL DESIGNATED A MINOR BASILICA BY POPE PAUL VI DECEMBER 9, 1964

1963: Pope Paul VI designates St. Louis Cathedral as a minor basilica, Dec. 9. Also, John Patrick Cody is appointed 10th archbishop of New Orleans upon the death of Archbishop Rummel, Nov. 8.

1964: New St. Mary's Academy school building dedicated on Chef Menteur Highway, Aug. 20.

1965: Society of the Divine Word Father Harold R. Perry, a 48-year-old native of Lake Charles, is consecrated as auxiliary bishop of New Orleans, Jan. 6. Perry is the nation's first African-American bishop since 1875.

1965: Bishop Philip M. Hannan is appointed the 11th archbishop of New Orleans, Sept. 29; formally installed, Oct. 13. Turns his immediate attention to the victims of devastating Hurricane Betsy, which struck with 110-mph winds, Sept. 9.

1966: The New Orleans Saints are founded on All Saints' Day, Nov. 1. Archbishop Hannan says jokingly of the nickname: "In the view of the church, most of the early saints were martyrs."

1966: Archbishop Hannan establishes Christopher Homes to provide affordable housing for seniors.