

A COUNTRY GIRL

New York City? How did a country girl end up founding a community in New York City? Yes, in the hustle and bustle of the city the Holy Spirit inspired our foundress, Mother Mary Teresa Tallon, to begin the Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate. How did this happen?

Mother Mary Teresa, then Julia Teresa, grew up in the vicinity of Waterville, New York and belonged to St. Bernard's parish. The family farm grew hops, common then in that area, as well as the vegetables they needed. A typical farm girl of that day, she attended school at the local one-room schoolhouse. Even at an early age she was concerned that others live and love their faith, and she informally taught the children of the families who came to the farm to help with the harvest. Although she knew no Sisters, she knew from an early age that she wanted to give herself to God.



When she was 17, Julia and her sister began working in a dressmaking factory in Utica, and while there she attended St. John's church daily, which she had been unable to do in Waterville, and became involved in church activities. At the age of 19 she was finally able to make plans to enter the convent, despite her mother's opposition.

She then became a teaching Sister, working in Indiana and California before coming to New York City. During a retreat in California she had realized that God was leading her to a deeper prayer life; she continued her deep prayerfulness even in the midst of her duties in New York City as a teacher in a Catholic school and director of a large Sunday school program.

Despite the good work she was doing, her heart went out to the many people all around her who were untouched by the Church. The Church, the Catholic school, and the Sunday school program were available and reached many people, but there were so many, many other Catholics who were never reached by God's saving word. She knew that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, longed for them, too.

She saw that many children who should have been learning their faith never came to religious instructions; others came and dropped out and were never seen again. Families found numerous excuses for not going to Mass, for not having the children baptized and brought up in the faith. Young people became involved in illicit pleasures. The list could go on and on. They needed Jesus in their lives.

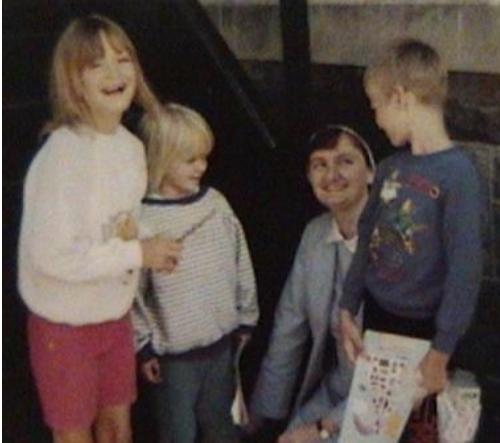
Does all this sound familiar? Yes, all these things were going on even then, while the Sacred Heart of the Good Shepherd longed for these souls to return to Him, these precious souls for whom He had shed His blood.

The children, especially, tugged at her heart. So many children of supposedly Catholic families were growing up like pagans, knowing little or nothing of their heritage of faith, of God's deep love for them. How could she help them?

She realized that someone would have to go out to these people to encourage them in their faith, to help them to

know and love the Lord. They needed missionaries, even though they lived perhaps within a stone's throw of the Church!

At Mass, on January 25, 1908, it became clear to her that God wanted her to begin a new religious community dedicated to deeper prayer and to outreach to those in need of Him, and to instruct the people in their faith. After much difficulty, on August 15, 1920, the feast of Mary's Assumption, in New York City, the Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate came into being.



The Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate have always kept to these ideals of a deep prayer life combined with outreach to and religious instruction of those in need of the Lord—we are contemplative-missionaries. As Mother Mary Teresa Tallon said, the greater our contemplative communion with God, the more zealous we will be as missionaries.

We deliberately do not have any institutions of any kind, in order to be more free to work directly with the people, in grass-roots contact, finding those in need and helping them in the spirit of the Sacred Heart of the Good Shepherd—especially the neglectful Catholics and the poor. While our first concern is their spiritual need, we do not neglect the material needs and other needs of the people.

We find our strength in the Eucharist, and this is also the greatest gift we have to offer to the people—helping them to return to, or to begin to receive, Jesus in the Eucharist. Mary, too, gives us a model for our contemplative-missionary vocation in her visitation to Elizabeth after receiving the angel's wonderful message that she was to be the Mother of God. Mary shows us that prayerfully pondering the Word in one's heart as a contemplative and visiting someone in need can certainly go together!

Our love of the Church, our simple and friendly approach to people, and our simple community life are other traits of the Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate.

There were many people in need of the Lord in the early 1900's, but I'm sure you can imagine how many more there are these days! They need someone to go to them, to help, them, to tell them about their Lord. **What about you? Is He nudging you to do this?**

You can read more about Mother Mary Teresa and about the Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate on our website, parishvisitorsisters.org. Feel free to contact the vocation director, Sr. Dolores Marie, 845-783-2251, pvmi@frontiernet.net, to get to know us better! God bless you!



www.parishvisitorsisters.org

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