

## **Mother Angelica Timeline: Religious Life**

### **Oct. 1, 1946**

Sister Mary Angelica's brash personality and poor health make convent life difficult. In addition to pneumonia and a tonsillectomy, Sister begins to suffer with water on both knees, which makes kneeling, a requirement at the time, extremely painful. Fortunately, a retired business owner donates his home and estate to the contemplative order. Although nuns normally cannot transfer to their hometowns and must be fully professed to become a member of a new foundation, the abbess tells Sister Mary Angelica she feels the five stories of steps are causing her knee problems so she has decided to send her to the Sancta Clara Monastery in Canton, Ohio.

### **Oct. 2, 1946**

Sister Mary Angelica awakens to find that both knees are normal. This convinces the order that the young postulant has a vocation. In two months, she makes her first profession of vows.

### **October 1951**

The new convent and Eucharistic shrine are barely standing. Sister Angelica begins to distinguish herself by getting the boys from her old neighborhood to donate labor, acting as a general contractor, and doing construction work herself.

### **Jan. 2, 1953**

Sister Angelica takes her final solemn vows.

### **August 12, 1953**

The Canton abbess, Mother Veronica, departs to found a new monastery in Washington, D.C. This gives Mother Angelica the idea to form a new monastery down south that would recruit black sisters to the contemplative life.

### **Late 1953**

Mother is cleaning the floors with an electric scrubber when she falls, the beginning of three years of back pain. Failed remedies will include a body cast, leg and neck traction, and a back brace.

### **November 1953**

Sister Angelica stands in for the novice mistress, who is going on an eight-day retreat. Sister alters the novice mistress' harsh routine, stressing God's love and teaching that the saints "didn't break the rules; they simply rose above them." When the novice mistress returns, the abbess allows Sister Angelica to provide discreet spiritual guidance to some of the nuns.

### **July 31, 1956**

In the face of a risky operation to repair her back injury, Sister Angelica promises God she will start a monastery in the South if He permits her to walk again after surgery. Although the spinal surgery is a medical failure, Sister Angelica can move both legs when she wakes.

### **Late 1956**

Even as the U.S. Supreme Court affirms a ban on segregation in public schools, Sister Angelica has a desire is to build a cloistered community of black nuns who will "ceaselessly make reparation for all the

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insults and persecution the Negro race suffers and implore God's blessings and graces upon a people dear to the Heart of God." She enlists the support of the new abbess of Sancta Clara, Mother Veronica.

#### **Jan. 8, 1957**

After several false starts, Sister decides to write the bishop of Mobile-Birmingham. Unfortunately, a senior nun at the monastery announces her desire to start a new monastery in St. Cloud, Minn. Because the community only has the resources for one monastery, the abbess decides that each nun will write a letter of introduction to the bishop of their choice. She mails the letters on Jan. 8, 1957. Whichever nun receives a positive response first will proceed with her foundation.

#### **Jan. 12, 1957**

Archbishop Toolen of Mobile-Birmingham responds first, but Sister's joy is short-lived.

#### **Feb. 28, 1957**

Bishop Emmet Walsh of Youngstown tells the abbess of the Canton community that he doesn't feel her monastery is not strong enough to withstand the departure of the six nuns required by Church law to establish a new foundation.

#### **March 7, 1957**

The abbess writes to Bishop Walsh pleading Sister Angelica's cause. Sister Angelica follows up on March 25, 1957. The bishop's response is sympathetic enough to allow preparations to continue, but he does not grant Angelica definite approval. Angelica continues acting as a general contractor at the convent.

#### **April 27, 1959**

After the cold winter of 1958 sends spasms through Angelica's back and left leg, Sister is sent to the Cleveland Clinic for observation and physical therapy.

#### **Aug. 7, 1959**

Sister Angelica writes Bishop Walsh sharing her plans, income and expense sheets, and makes a plea to go to the hot climate of Birmingham to prevent complete disability of her left limb.

#### **November 1959**

Bishop Walsh approves the concept and begins studying the waivers from Church law that will be needed. At 37, Sister Angelica isn't old enough to become the abbess of a new monastery without an official dispensation.

#### **1960**

In 1960, Sister Angelica officially becomes known as Mother Angelica.

#### **Feb. 3, 1961**

Rome grants Mother permission for an Alabama Foundation. To honor her promise to God, and with all the right approvals in place, Mother Angelica leaves her Ohio convent to found Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Irondale, Alabama, which has a Catholic population of 2 percent. On their way down to Birmingham, the nuns spend the night at a motel where, for the first time, Mother Angelica sees a television set. The nuns are housed by the Sisters of the Holy Trinity in Birmingham as they search for land.

**May 1961**

The former mayor of Birmingham takes Mother to see 10 acres of mountainside in Irondale. Mother sees a small two-bedroom house in foreclosure adjoining the property. She places a contract on 15 acres, the house next door and another three-and-a-half acres “so no one [could] build too close to us.”

**July 24, 1961**

Archbishop Toolen breaks ground on Our Lady of the Angels Monastery.

**September 1961**

The monastery site is vandalized every Saturday.

**November 22, 1961**

Concerned about cost overruns, Archbishop Toolen orders Mother to stop building until she can get the necessary funds. Mother informs the crew, but the electrician says: “Sister, for you to owe me money is like having money in the bank. I’m going to finish the job.” The rest of the crew agrees. Mother gets a \$25,000 loan from Sancta Clara to pay them. To contain costs, Mother Angelica and another nun pitch in and Mother scales back the size of the monastery – a move she realizes, in later years, is providential.

**Feb. 21, 1962**

Mother Angelica answers a pounding at the monastery door during a driving rainstorm and five shots ring out. Two weeks later, the incident is repeated. Media attention makes the monastery well-known.

**May 8, 1962**

Mother officially leaves Sancta Clara with the nuns who will populate the new monastery. Two days later, they arrive in Birmingham. For the next 10 days, they host an open house.

**May 20, 1962**

The monastery is dedicated. The tours end, and the convent is closed to the public. The sisters sell St. Peter’s Fishing Lures, rosaries and charcoal sketches to support themselves, but financial problems endure.

**August 1962**

Mother Angelica records her first talk, entitled “God’s Love for You.”

**Sept. 1963**

Mother feels “pushed” to record her second talk, “The Presence of God.” Mother also seeks to change the name of her community from Franciscan Nuns of the Most Blessed Sacrament to the Poor Clares of the Holy Eucharist.

**October 1965**

Mother undergoes surgery for a diseased gallbladder with 50 stones.

**Oct. 28, 1965**

The Second Vatican Council Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life is promulgated and calls for religious to modify the way they live, work and pray. "Obsolete practices" are suppressed and habits modified.

#### **1967**

Mother resumes her speaking activities, although they are initially restricted to her parlor.

#### **September 1967**

Mother has her first television interview with a local affiliate to explain the changes underway in her monastery.

#### **Dec. 5, 1967**

The sisters discontinue the sale of fishing lures so they can roast and sell peanuts. They ask God to help them find work that could be part of the mission of the Church.

#### **March 22, 1969**

The Pope's diplomatic delegate to the U.S., Archbishop Luigi Raimondi, visits the monastery. He promises to secure formal permission for Mother to continue her parlor talks as a "missionary activity," an exceptional waiver for a cloistered nun.

#### **1971**

With the encouragement of Bishop Joseph Vath of Birmingham, Mother accepts invitations to speak outside the cloister to select Catholic groups. By mid-1971, the talks are being taped and sold.

#### **November 1971**

Mother begins recording a 10-minute radio program for WBRC.

#### **1972**

The nuns purchase secondhand tape-recording equipment and a dubbing machine to mass-produce Mother's talks.

#### **August 1972**

Mother sees the need for a book on prayer. Her first book, "Journey into Prayer," is published.

#### **December 1972**

Mother authors three more books: "In the Shadow of His Light," "In His Sandals," and "The Father's Splendor."

#### **October 1975**

When Mother's publisher refuses to publish her latest book, "To Leave and Yet to Stay," the nuns suspect the problem is its content. They face a choice: abandon the book ministry or do the printing themselves. Mother purchases a printing press, a cutter, and a stapler and the nuns begin producing mini-books.

**June 1977**

The Catholic Family Missionary Alliance is born. Its mission is to teach and recruit missionaries who will distribute Mother Angelica's books, tapes and a five-step plan of renewal to every interested parish in the U.S.

**March 1978**

Mother visits a Baptist-run television station atop a Chicago skyscraper and famously declares: "Lord, I gotta have one of these."

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