WOMEN RESPONDING TO THEIR CALL TO ACTION:

THE LAY APOSTOLATE PROGRAM OF REGIS COLLEGE,

MASSACHUSETTS, 1950-72

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ABSTRACT

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Through the particular example of the Regis College Lay Apostolate led by Sr. John Sullivan, C.S.J., this project examines the history of United States lay Catholic involvement in Catholic Action and the ways in which the role of the laity in the lay apostolate changed over time (i.e. 1940s to 70s). Historical and critical methods of historical theology are employed including primary research of published and unpublished sources from the archives of Regis College, methods of archival history, and methods of oral history including interviews with and surveys of the alumnae of the Regis College Lay Apostolate Program.

The study contributes to the growing body of research on U.S. Catholic lay activism and illuminates the activity of the U.S. laity during the mid-twentieth century with particular attention to the lay mission work of Regis College alumnae. The thesis helps to trace the origins and sources of the contemporary Catholic lay volunteer movement and offers preliminary commentary toward the construction of a theology of the laity.
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INTRODUCTION

Until the laity of the U.S. Catholic Church came into greater social and economic prominence in the first half of the twentieth century, they were primarily poor and uneducated immigrant laborers. With greater opportunities for education and employment, they gained upward mobility. At the same time, the institutional Roman Catholic Church became increasingly vocal about the inherent responsibility of the laity to participate in the apostolic work of the hierarchy. The momentum for this papally sanctioned Catholic Action spread to the United States – particularly among those whose economic status afforded them participation in such extra-ecclesial work. Within this context of an active U.S. Catholic laity, little consideration has been given to date to a theology of the laity. Through the particular example of the Regis College Lay Apostolate, this thesis examines the diverse U.S. Catholic Action movement and the implicit theology of the laity that has yet to be explored.

The Lay Apostolate Program of Regis College was the pioneer organization of U.S. Catholic post-undergraduate lay volunteer programs. It was a significant initiative of religious and lay women within the Catholic Action movement of the twentieth century. As the first effort toward a critical history of this visionary program, this research gives the women of Regis and the communities with whom they served a voice in the work toward a construction of a theology of the laity.
This thesis composes the history of the Lay Apostolate program of Regis College, Massachusetts (1950-72) founded and coordinated by Sr. Mary John Sullivan, C.S.J. As the prototype for post-undergraduate lay volunteer service programs in the twentieth century United States, it is significant in the history of U.S. Catholicism. The program is of special interest because women served as its sole founders and participants, and through the Regis Lay Apostolate they built a network among themselves independent of the ecclesial hierarchy. Their example offers historians contextual material for research on the Catholic Action movement in the United States and a case study on the roots of U.S. lay mission programs. The Regis Lay Apostolate was not the forerunner of women’s post-undergraduate lay volunteer programs but the forerunner of *all* post-undergraduate lay volunteer programs. It is time for this missing chapter in U.S. Catholic history to be written.

The work and experiences of Sr. John Sullivan and a group of the more than 230 alumnae of the Regis program will be analyzed. This research contributes to a clearer understanding of the history and origins of U.S. Catholic lay involvement in post-undergraduate volunteer mission and service work. The study utilizes correspondence between alumnae and Sr. John Sullivan housed in the Regis College Archives, survey responses from the alumnae, and oral history interviews with Sr. John and 21 alumnae. In the final chapter the Regis College Lay Apostolate will be surveyed as a case study for understanding the ways in which the role of the laity and Catholic Action changed between the 1940s until the time that the term was no longer used following Vatican II.

Contemporary theological scholarship has begun in recent years to address the subject of the international Catholic Action movement, most prominent from the 1930s
through the Second Vatican Council. Originally a response to a papal directive for Catholic lay involvement in the world, the Catholic Action movement eventually extended into the United States. Pope Pius XI’s frequently used phrase “the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy” described the general purpose of Catholic Action. A variety of programs in the U.S. claimed their participation in this apostolate of the laity. Unfortunately an exhaustive study of these programs of lay involvement is absent from U.S. Catholic scholarship.

In the Fall 1997 issue of *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Steven Avella and Jeffrey Zalar point out that a “good comprehensive history of Catholic Action in America is waiting to be written.” They cite Debra Campbell’s chapter “The Heyday of Catholic Action and the Lay Apostolate, 1929-59” as one of two secondary sources that provides a brief overview of Catholic Action in the United States. Yet only in passing does Campbell mention the Regis Lay Apostolate amidst her description of other early mission programs of U.S. Catholic Action. She notes its distinctive model of post-undergraduate volunteer service work. Campbell’s recognition of the unique nature of the Regis Lay Apostolate indicates the necessity of the present investigation. Perhaps it is only today – in light of the hundreds of lay volunteer programs and their more than 5,000 volunteers each year –

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that the groundbreaking Regis College Lay Apostolate program's full significance can finally be recognized.

Furthermore, a thorough study of the Regis Lay Apostolate provides an opportunity to examine the role of a charismatic leader in a lay volunteer program. Regis College is a small, Catholic, women's liberal arts college run by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston attracting primarily middle class women to its student body. What made the Lay Apostolate so successful given its emergence in an environment that many would judge to be an unlikely source for this type of initiative? Under the influence and leadership of Sr. Mary John Sullivan, C.S.J., a program of social service and action began on the Regis campus in 1942. When, in 1950, the program expanded into the Lay Apostolate, no one could have predicted its success or influence.

The thesis utilizes research methods of critical-historical analysis and theological critique. The critical-historical analysis includes investigation of archival holdings (primarily correspondence, news clippings, and personal memoirs housed in the Regis College Archives); primary (published and unpublished) sources from the Regis College Archives and from the personal collections of Sr. John and the alumnae; secondary sources contemporary to the Lay Apostolate from relevant periodicals of the time as well as recent secondary sources with analyses of Catholic Action and U.S. Catholicism; social history of the Lay Apostolate alumnae obtained through results of surveys of the 230 alumnae (86 were returned); and oral history interviews with Sr. John and 21 Lay Apostolate alumnae conducted in person or by phone.

The method of theological critique employs theological categories (e.g., ecclesiology, discipleship, theology of laity) to analyze the emergence of a previously
unrecognized theology of the laity in the pre-conciliar U.S. Catholic Church. This theology is explored as a framework in which Catholic laity come to understand their relationship to God through their participation as laity in the mission of the Church – the Body of Christ – in the world.

Chapter 1 provides a background of Catholicism in the United States generally and in Boston particularly in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries followed by an overview of the broad and complex Catholic Action movement of the mid-twentieth century. In Chapter 2 the stage is set for the Regis College Lay Apostolate by telling the story of Sr. John Sullivan’s life, examining the social consciousness of the Regis campus prior to the Lay Apostolate, and describing the Regis College Mission Unit in the years before the Lay Apostolate. The twenty-three year history of the Regis College Lay Apostolate is told in Chapter 3. The story is told by highlighting the inception of the program, the ways in which it spread to sites across the country and around the world, the support received from the institutional Church, the demographics of the Lay Apostles, their motivations and influences, and some of their personal experiences. Analysis of the historical, ecclesiological, and theological implications of the Regis College Lay Apostolate concludes the thesis in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 1

SETTING THE SCENE – CATHOLICISM AND CATHOLIC ACTION IN THE U.S.

A history of the Regis College Lay Apostolate necessarily begins with a review of the historical contexts and patterns by which it was shaped. The Regis Lay Apostles and their leader, Sr. John Sullivan, C.S.J., came from the particular context of mid-twentieth century New England amidst a complex U.S. Catholic culture. The disparate Catholic cultural atmosphere included both anti-Catholicism and increasing economic and social affluence among Catholics. As a whole, the country faced the repercussions of the Depression, two world wars, and later the Cold War. Yet the spirit-filled atmosphere created by the Catholic Action movement distinguished Catholics at this time. Catholics became more established within U.S. society by the mid-twentieth century, and their upward mobility launched them into greater awareness of and participation in the work of the Catholic foreign missions and other charitable programs. The families and activities of the women of the Regis Lay Apostolate and Sr. John mirror these existing social patterns of the time period.

The women of Regis challenge scholars of U.S. Catholicism to recognize the types of dynamic movements that flourished prior to and influenced the changes of Vatican II. With this challenge in mind, this history begins with a broad view of the Catholic world of the United States in the late nineteenth and the first half of the
twentieth centuries. The significant population of Irish descendants in Boston is important given that 63 percent of the Lay Apostles were of Irish ancestry.¹ A general setting of both U.S. and Boston Catholicism will characterize the environment in which the Regis College Lay Apostolate arose and the families from which the Lay Apostles came.

In the second section, some of the changing roles for lay and religious women in the U.S. will be considered alongside the increasing opportunities for Catholic women in higher education in the early twentieth century. The Regis Lay Apostles as a whole were part of the upwardly mobile U.S. Catholic population whose growing economic stability allowed for closer attention to charitable causes and participation in Catholic Action and the lay apostolate.

The third part of the chapter will examine the complex Catholic Action movement in the United States. Though the movement originated in Europe, various responses to the papal directive to serve in the apostolate emerged in the U.S. The Regis College Lay Apostolate is an example of a movement that arose within the spirited ambience of Catholic Action. Significantly, the program combined the elements of women leaders and participants, Catholic collegians, and support of and service in Catholic mission schools. Additionally, the section will confirm the importance of the location of the Regis Lay Apostolate in Boston while attention to U.S. Catholic Action has previously focused on programs based in Chicago and other parts of the Midwest.

¹ Based on survey data.
U.S. Catholics have always been characterized as diverse, whether ethnically or ideologically. Relatively homogeneous ethnic groups of European Catholic immigrants from a variety of countries arrived in the United States. They faced people of various faiths and ethnic groups, whether they were Protestants or Catholics. Irish and German immigrants were the most significant in number during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Between 1820 and 1920, an estimated 4.3 million Irish and 5.5 million Germans immigrated to the United States.\(^2\) History of these particular immigrant groups is important here because of the significant number of Catholics among the Irish and Germans who came to the United States. The exact percentage of the immigrants who were Catholic is unknown, but a majority of the Irish and a third of the Germans probably identified themselves as Roman Catholics.\(^3\)

Beginning in the 1880s, large waves of immigrants from Italy and Eastern Europe, many of whom were Roman Catholic, began to arrive in the United States. Most left Europe due to substantial increases in population and the subsequent poverty as the arable land was distributed into exceedingly small segments. Unlike the majority of immigrants from the other countries, a significant percentage of the 3.8 million Italian immigrants were men who returned home after earning enough money to increase their family’s standard of living.\(^4\) 2.1 million Italian migrant laborers – dubbed “birds of


\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Ibid., 132.
passage"—returned to Italy between 1899 and 1924. The final sizeable group of European immigrants was the Poles. Two million Polish immigrants came to the United States between 1870 and 1920. While they did not return home in as great a number as the Italians, many of the Polish immigrants, like the Italians, were male laborers in search of employment who planned to return home.

The factors of class and ethnicity among the various immigrant groups led to a complex situation. Jay Dolan describes the U.S. immigrant Catholic community as “multilayered.” The combined distinctions of economic class and ethnicity among the Catholic population led to this complex layering. The immigrant populations each followed unique social patterns of settlement and employment upon their arrival in the U.S. While a few success stories existed among entrepreneurial Irish and Germans in the nineteenth century, the vast majority of Catholic immigrants in the 1800s worked as unskilled laborers and did their best to provide for their families. The German immigrant population, typified by middle class German families, was more likely to be able to afford land and many settled in the Midwest. In contrast, the poorer and often single Irish immigrants settled primarily in urban areas of New York and Boston because they did not have money to travel beyond the coast after their arrival. Many of the Regis students were descendants of these early Irish laborers. Closer examination of this New England population offers insight into the background of the Regis Lay Apostles.

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 156-57.
8 Ibid., 130.
The specific situation of Catholic immigrants in the Boston area is important to this project. The Irish immigrants were by far the most significant group to settle in Boston during the nineteenth century. Financially destitute, most Irish immigrants accepted the urban living and working conditions in which they arrived. Despite low social and economic standing, the Irish were an important factor because of their great numbers in the city. In 1850, 26 percent of Bostonians had been born in Ireland while 65 percent (including Irish-Americans) were born in the United States. The remaining Boston population was composed of immigrants from throughout Europe. Often unwelcomed by the dominant Protestant population, new Catholic immigrants struggled to gain opportunity for economic mobility.

Catholics strove for acceptance from the general society in Boston, since being Catholic was often equated with being un-American. Yet, according to historian Oscar Handlin, the anti-Catholicism that persisted throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century U.S. was less pronounced in Boston. No equal Boston counterpart existed to the successful anti-Catholic propaganda of the New York Protestant Association and their New York Protestant publication. An attempt in 1829 to circulate the Anti-Jesuit paper failed. Even Irish Protestants, according to Handlin, condemned this effort.

The essayists of the more recent Catholic Boston may be less apt to represent the state of Catholic-Protestant relations as congenially as did Handlin. The memory of the 1834 burning of the Ursuline convent in Charlestown lingered long, and Boston-area

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10 Ibid., 181.
Catholics were well aware of their disfavor among the Protestant majority. "Irish need not apply" signs were hardly uncommon in the city. Evidence of anti-Catholicism across the country included the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s and the defeat of 1928 presidential candidate Al Smith. Boston Catholics, as Catholics throughout the country, sought to prove themselves worthy American citizens during the early twentieth century when, by virtue of their religion, Catholics continued to be held suspect by the dominant white Protestant population.

An historical essay on Catholic Charities in Boston during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries demonstrates some of the ways in which Boston Irish Catholics demonstrated their American loyalty while serving those in need. To prove their "middle-class respectability and sense of civic duty," Catholics shouldered "a part of the city-wide burden of care for the needy and the deviant" and in turn "participated in the corporate municipal life." Nineteenth century Protestant charity in Boston was characterized by avid proselytizing, so, in addition to meeting the needs of the poor, Catholic charity defended the faith against fundamentalist Protestant evangelization. By the 1920s, both Yankee and Catholic Bostonians moved beyond the issue of proselytizing. Yet there remained for Catholics an ongoing struggle to balance their

12 Frances Kellaher Perron, interview by author, Weston, Massachusetts, March 1998.
15 Ibid., 67-68.
desire for acceptance among the Yankee establishment and to maintain their identity as Irish Catholics. The spiritual emphasis of Catholic charity served to isolate the Catholic population somewhat.16 "Satisfaction and self-confidence in the CCB [Catholic Charitable Bureau] as an agent and emblem of the larger Catholic group and its contributions to the public good mingled with bitterness and defensiveness, a sense of exclusion from public life."17 Despite the struggles, the place of the Irish Catholics in Boston and other Catholics throughout the U.S. began to change both socially and economically.

Immigration legislation of the 1920s was one source of social change that contributed to social and economic mobility among United States Catholics. As chronicled by Jay Dolan, the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 (implemented in 1929) significantly limited the number of new immigrants entering the United States to fewer than 154,000 each year.18 The legislation was characterized by a quota system based on race and ethnicity. Since the majority of immigrants arriving at the time were Mediterranean and Eastern European Catholics, U.S. Catholics viewed the legislation as an attack against them. The results of the new immigration restrictions were soon evident as the face of U.S. Catholicism began to change dramatically. By mid-century, without the steady influx of poor immigrant Catholics, the proportion of Catholics in the middle class expanded a great deal, affecting the social characteristics of the U.S. Church.

16 Ibid., 118.
17 Ibid., 110-111.
18 Dolan, American Catholic Experience, 356.
Ironically, many Catholics who immigrated prior to 1929 benefited from the restrictions against new immigrants. The prohibitive measures reducing the influx of poor Europeans to the U.S. provided additional opportunities for earlier immigrants and their American-born descendants to establish themselves and make their way into the middle class. The Immigration Act tailored the growth of the Catholic population and consequently aided in its increasing economic stability. By the mid-1940s, nine percent of U.S. Catholics were identified in the upper class; 25 percent were middle class, and two-thirds were members of the blue-collar working class.19 U.S. Catholics were predominantly in the blue-collar working class, but more Catholics began to make great strides into the middle and upper classes. The post-war economic boom was beneficial to the country as a whole, and by the early 1960s, Catholics roughly achieved economic and social parity with U.S. Protestants.20

The Regis College student body and the Lay Apostles reflect this growing middle class Catholic population. Increased financial resources allowed Catholic families to educate their daughters. Support for the Catholic missions and social action groups came from the middle class population as well. One historian writes,

Affected by the immediate economic slump after the First World War and later by the Depression, Catholics gave more sparingly to mission causes but still made contributions during these difficult times. Approaching 1950, Catholics became

19 Ibid., 357.
increasingly prosperous – and more middle class – and were able to provide still more money.21

The subjects of this thesis are among those in the Catholic population who had the freedom to support the Church financially due to their own higher economic status. The majority of the Regis Lay Apostles came from middle class families.22 Paralleling the economic shift among Catholics was the social shift – significant to an understanding of the context in which the Regis College Lay Apostolate arose – of U.S. Catholics to greater participation in mission and charity work.

U.S. Catholics as a whole were not active in foreign mission work or charitable service prior to the mid-nineteenth century. The United States itself was long considered mission territory by European Catholics, so until a more established U.S. Catholic population emerged, American missionaries were not sent. The first missions served the immigrant populations in the United States. Later religious communities began to minister among the Native American and African American populations. Recently published and very helpful to this discussion is Angelyn Dries’ *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History.*23 She provides a thorough history and makes important connections between the lay missionary movement in the twentieth century and Catholic Action. Dries writes,

A number of lay missionaries had been sent overseas by 1953, but general acceptance of their role did not come until the end

22 75 percent of those who returned surveys came from middle class families.
of the decade. Those interested in evangelization could become part of a small but important movement of lay preachers in the United States or could respond to the inspiration of the Spirit through local involvement in Catholic Action. They need not go halfway around the world.24

Certainly most Catholic college students did not travel around the world, but many were active in the support of the missions from their campuses. The precursor to the Regis Lay Apostolate, the Regis College Mission Unit, is a good example of the ways in which Catholic laity supported the missions from home. The identification of mission activity with Catholic Action and as a ‘specialized department’ will set the stage for the complex debates and controversy over the true meaning of Catholic Action in the last section. The movement of the United States from a missionary territory to a source of missionaries – both domestic and international – inspired the mission spirit embraced by the Regis College women. To fully understand their context, the changing roles of Catholic women and their increasing opportunities for higher education must be examined.

Social Mobility and Educational Opportunity Among U.S. Catholic Women

Growing opportunities for education and social mobility contributed to expanding roles for U.S. Catholic women during the early to mid twentieth century. The most prominent female Catholics prior to this time were women religious. Members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy had invited a number of European women’s religious communities during the nineteenth century primarily to serve the immigrant Catholic

24 Ibid., 147.
populations. Once in the U.S., sisters took on the care of immigrants across the United States. From education to nursing to social services, women religious were among the most socially active Catholics in the country. In Boston, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and the diocesan Sisters of St. Joseph were the two original teaching orders and emerged as the “dominant” communities.25

The freedom in which women religious were able to work as professionals within the Church and society came with ambiguities. While lay Catholics respectfully treated them as members of the ecclesial leadership, the hierarchy allowed them no more power than the laity. As a result, religious sisters did not belong fully to either group. In writing about the Boston women religious and their struggle for vocational autonomy from the local hierarchy, Mary Oates writes, “Like other women of this period, then, sisters met from church as well as society serious challenges in their efforts to control their own lives and organizations.”26 Traditionally depicted as sheltered from society, religious women did indeed have greater social freedom and opportunity than their lay counterparts. Oates continues,

Nuns were able to acquire and preserve considerable autonomy by forming lasting female networks and by engaging collectively in significant professions . . . Sisters were principals of schools and administrators of hospitals and homes, taking these roles for granted in a period when women

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25 Mary J. Oates, “The Good Sisters”, 172. It is interesting to consider the social and ecclesial roles of these communities because of what they demonstrate about women religious of the time, but also because of Sr. John Sullivan’s connections to them. She was educated by the Sisters of Notre Dame and has been a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph for nearly 70 years.

26 Ibid., 195.
managers in public schools and state hospitals were uncommon.27

The autonomy provided by the "lasting female networks" is particularly important to the subject of this study. The existence of such informal networks was vitally important to the growth and development of the Regis College Lay Apostolate as will be shown in Chapter 4. Even when leadership opportunities for all Catholic women began to emerge, religious sisters continued to have significant roles in the Church and among the laity as leaders and managers of a large network of schools, hospitals, and colleges.

Roles for lay Catholic women in the United States at the turn of the century were generally limited to the home as wife and mother or to sisterhood, although unmarried Irish Catholic women were often forced to work outside of the home in order to help provide for their families.28 The vast majority of these single women were employed as domestic servants, while Irish wives and mothers tended to stay in the home where they earned money by housing boarders or making products to be sold such as hats, shoes, clothing, or other items.29 Many of the Irish women in Boston would have found themselves in such circumstances, but eventually the second and third generation Irish-Americans began to find greater opportunities.

Perhaps the most important factor in the expanding social roles for Catholic women was the opportunity for higher education. Catholic higher education for women was not available in the United States until the late nineteenth century. The earliest

27 Ibid., 196.
28 Dolan, American Catholic Experience, 140.
29 Ibid.
colleges—branches of women’s academies—were not of equal caliber to other non-Catholic institutions of higher education for women. Once the Catholic University of America opened to lay men in 1895, women applicants were turned away each year and often attended one of the non-Catholic “Seven Sisters” colleges in the Northeast.\textsuperscript{30}

Clerical leadership and conservative Catholics feared that the women would “lose their faith” by attending such institutions. Yet they recognized the irony of a condemnation when no acceptable Catholic alternative existed. Vocal ecclesial leaders such as Bishop John Lancaster Spalding and Boston College President Thomas I. Gasson were strong public supporters of Catholic higher education for women. Mary Oates (a Sister of St. Joseph and professor at Regis College) describes the platform Bishop J. L. Spalding took. “If women seemed to lack capacity for work beyond the domestic, he argued, it was only because men had refused them entrance into wider spheres of action.”\textsuperscript{31} When the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur expressed interest in opening another women’s academy in Washington, D.C. to Catholic University officials, they were encouraged instead to open a women’s college.\textsuperscript{32} Conservative opponents were vocal, but progressive supporters such as Cardinal Gibbons prevailed, and Trinity College opened in 1900 just a short distance from Catholic University.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 414.
\textsuperscript{32} Philip Gleason, \textit{Contending With Modernity}, 28.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
Trinity College founder, Sr. Julia McGroarty, S.N.D. de Namur, worked diligently to open a college with high standards. Oates describes the early efforts made by the college and its supporters:

Sister Julia visited the eastern women's colleges, studying their admissions standards, curricula, and student living arrangements. An auxiliary board of regents composed of influential women across the country undertook early fundraising. Emma Forbes Cary, sister of Radcliffe President Elizabeth Cary Aggasiz, headed Boston supporters who pledged the library. Assistance came also from other sisterhoods who directed their academy students to the new college and initiated scholarship endowments. Enthusiasm ran high with inquiries for the first class coming from every state, Canada, and Mexico. The sisters were proud to claim that admission requirements were identical to those of Radcliffe, Vassar, and Bryn Mawr.34

The financial resources of the women's auxiliary board indicate that Catholics were moving into higher economic and social standing and that they desired higher education.

Sr. John Sullivan is herself an example of the growing opportunities for Catholic women in the early twentieth century. A first generation Irish-American, Sr. John was encouraged to pursue her education. Her family's economic success made possible the funding of her college education at Trinity College.35 Trinity's Boston auxiliary board

35 Kathleen Sprows to author, 8 June 1998. University of Notre Dame doctoral candidate Kathleen Sprows has conducted research on the founding of Trinity College. According to Sprows, "Of all the states that sent students to Trinity, Massachusetts sent the most. I have heard speculation that Trinity became a haven for the daughters of the newly-rich Irish immigrants in Boston, who both because of their religion and their 'new money,' would not have felt welcome at any of the Seven Sisters. This theory is rather difficult to substantiate, but it does ring true. I myself suspect that religion, more than class, was the most significant factor in the decision to go to Trinity. For the women I looked at, a Catholic education was their priority."
may have recruited Sr. John and other women with whom she graduated from high school at the Sisters of Notre Dame academy in Roxbury, Massachusetts. Such organic networking among lay and religious women as well as the notable support from ecclesial hierarchy in the case of Trinity College is significant. The increasing social mobility of Catholics and Catholic women in particular, as reflected in increasing opportunities for higher education, allowed U.S. Catholics to begin to look beyond their own needs to the charitable needs of others. The Regis Lay Apostles represent a small group of primarily Catholic women, who, through their education, began to look more seriously to the needs of the poor at home and abroad. Their sense of responsibility to fill the needs of the less fortunate is characteristic of the wider Catholic Action movement of the mid-twentieth century. Rooted in Europe, the Catholic Action movement spread to the United States where its numerous manifestations included the Regis Lay Apostolate.

**Catholic Action in the United States and Its European Origins**

Essential to understanding the history of the Regis College Lay Apostolate is historical background on Catholic Action. This author’s research has shown why there exists no comprehensive source on the history of Catholic Action in the United States. The meaning of Catholic Action in the U.S. during the 1920s to 1950s was highly contested as there were no clear boundaries to limit what was or was not “Catholic Action.” Historian Philip Gleason accurately describes the concept of Catholic Action as ubiquitous and capacious.\(^{36}\) Though the term “Catholic Action” was used by popes

\(^{36}\) Philip Gleason, *Contending with Modernity*, 154.
Pius IX (1846-1878), Leo XIII (1878-1903), Pius X (1903-1914), and Benedict XV (1914-1922), it was regularized during the papacy of Pius XI (1922-39) and continued under Pius XII (1939-1958). Pius X set the standard for Catholic Action to "restore all things in Christ," but it was Pius XI who gained attention as the "Catholic Action Pope." His general description of Catholic Action as "the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy" was used consistently as a catchall identification for the various Catholic Action groups. As a result of the broad usage of this description, clear boundaries for defining Catholic Action did not exist.

The traditional definition of Catholic Action as "the participation of the laity in the apostolate in the hierarchy" is inherently unclear because of the significant room for interpretation around the use of "hierarchy" in the definition and the activity of Catholic Action. The use of "hierarchy" could signify a need to follow the direction of ecclesial leadership and an ability of the men in charge to control Catholic Action and the activity of the laity. On the other hand, it could be interpreted in an empowering light. If the definition charges the laity with the same apostolic responsibility as the apostolate of the hierarchy, then the laity are empowered to serve and lead in a variety of ways.

The actual debates do not address the lack of clarity in the definition, but they implicitly argue over this very issue of defining "official" Catholic Action based on hierarchical sanction or lack thereof. By no means will there be an attempt in this project to resolve the Catholic Action debates or to offer a definitive understanding of its meaning and role. However, the debates will be described and summarized, and overviews of a few of the primary Catholic Action groups in the U.S. will highlight the
diversity within the movement while providing a general understanding of the atmosphere in which the Regis Lay Apostolate emerged and developed.

Numerous writers, both contemporary to the period and present-day, describe the difficulty in defining and determining authentic Catholic Action because of the wide and varied use of the term. A 1935 essay by the publicly recognized Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen states, "There is probably no term used in the Church more vague and obscure than Catholic Action."37 Today this confusion persists. As Philip Gleason wrote recently, "everything from boycotts of morally offensive movies to conferences on world peace was boomed as Catholic Action, while advocates of liturgical reform and theologians of the Mystical Body hastened to associate themselves with the new talisman."38 This ubiquitous nature of Catholic Action was exciting as it opened participation to many groups, but also confusing because the diversity left people without a definite understanding of the term.

To further complicate the ability to define Catholic Action, the term was also used somewhat interchangeably with "lay apostolate." Debra Campbell expands on this issue with her insight that,

Because Pius XI self-consciously promoted the terms "lay apostolate" and "Catholic Action," they became the accepted way for bishops to describe whatever the laity were doing under their jurisdiction, whether or not it had been informed by the statements of Pius XI.39

38 Philip Gleason, Contending with Modernity, 153-54.
Undoubtedly the line of thought that persisted throughout the debates was the laity’s need to take personal responsibility as Catholics for others in need – whether that need was spiritual or material. This understanding of the role of the laity is difficult to articulate fully because it is again so inclusive.

In one attempt to clarify the responsibilities of the laity, Pius XI defined roles for different vocational groups. The pope established the protocol to guide the laity in their individual apostolates through what came to be known as “specialized” Catholic Action. The pope’s “like to like” formula was drawn from the 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* written for the fortieth anniversary of Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* in which he suggested that “workers must be the apostles of the workers, farmers the apostles to farmers, students the apostles to students.” Such groups as Young Christian Workers, Young Christian Students, and eventually the Christian Family Movement in the United States evidently adopted this philosophy of a “specialized” apostolate. In addition to the vocational pairings of the specialized apostolates, there were liturgical and theological emphases from Europe that influenced Catholic Action in the U.S. as well.

In an essay on Catholic Action and the lay apostolate in the United States, Debra Campbell names three European “imports” of Catholic Action that shaped the U.S. movement.\(^{40}\) The European themes included,

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\(^{40}\) Ibid., 222-52.
Solesmes, and the rediscovery of the Pauline concept of the church as the mystical body of Christ.41

The effects of these theological imports are evident in the emphases of the U.S. Catholic Action movements.


Catholic Action is the Mystical Body at work, restoring all things in Christ and it is well to see that it is not made up of sporadic outbursts in different countries, nor is it confined only to a few countries. It is a worldwide movement, it is the Mystical Body, it is the Church.42

Here Catholic Action and the mystical body are in fact equated with one another and with the Church itself. Catholic Action is defined as the living and active mystical body of Christ – the Church – in the world. Individuals and groups throughout the world were empowered by this strong connection of the movement with the mystical body to “restore all things in Christ.” Examples of three types of Catholic Action groups in the U.S. will demonstrate both the commonality of the mystical body and the diversity of the U.S.

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41 Ibid., 223. Campbell provides a thorough discussion of European influences on Catholic Action in the U.S. in this essay, see 223-27.
movement and will show multiple ways in which the Regis College Lay Apostolate related to the Catholic Action movement of the day.

During the middle decades of the twentieth century Regis' campus was imbued with the Catholicism characterized by the Catholic Action and lay apostolate movements of the wider U.S. Church. The rhetoric found in Catholic Action pamphlets and articles from the 1920s to 50s is very similar to the language used at the time by Sr. John and countless speakers from the Church and the missions on campus at Regis. While the Lay Apostolate represents the patterns of U.S. Catholicism in the 1950s, it is distinctive among the groups related to Catholic Action because it links students, mission-mindedness, lay and religious women, and missionary activity. This combination within the Regis College Lay Apostolate formula also offers insights into the forthcoming changes of the 1960s. To identify the Lay Apostolate's characteristics common to other mission and Catholic Action movements, closer examination of the Catholic Students' Mission Crusade, Sodality, and the Grail will prove helpful.

One of the earliest examples of support for the missions among U.S. Catholic youth, the Catholic Students' Mission Crusade (CSMC), was founded by several seminarians in 1918 and eventually spread across the country. The Foreign Mission Society of Trinity College and the Regis College Mission Unit, as will be shown in Chapter 2, are clear examples of local support among Catholic collegians for foreign missions. Similar to these programs but active nationally, the CSMC raised awareness of and promoted support for Catholic missions among Catholic college students. The Regis
College Mission Unit from which the Regis College Lay Apostolate emerged was organized in a similar fashion to the CSMC.

A 1942 essay describes the organization of the CSMC as well as its relationship to Catholic Action. The program of CSMC combined "prayer for the missions, material support of the missions, and study of mission problems." According to Monsignor Freking, by 1941, the CSMC had a total membership of approximately 800,000 people who were organized through 2,625 educational institutions, in 70 "Veteran Units" and in 45 dioceses. Freking relates their work to Catholic Action,

The ‘mission action’ program [of the Crusade] was understood by Catholic leaders as being essentially a part of Catholic Action so that Archbishop Cicognani, the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, was able to describe the Crusade as "a highly specialized department of Catholic Action." In applying this term, His Excellency added: "Catholic Action itself began in exactly the same way, that is, by lending aid and assistance to the Apostles in their tremendous undertaking of spreading the Gospel; Catholic Action was, therefore, originally a missionary project."

Like the CSMC, the Regis Lay Apostolate was based on the Catholic collegian’s responsibility to the mystical body. Additionally, it reflected characteristics of both the Sodality and Grail movements.

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44 Ibid., 171.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 174.
The Jesuit sponsored Sodality of Our Lady first expressed Catholic Action in the United States. Re-founded in St. Louis in 1925, its leader, Daniel A. Lord, S.J., sought to revive the moribund Sodality (first organized by the Jesuits in Rome in 1563) as an active example of Catholic Action in the U.S.\textsuperscript{47} By the early 1930s, Lord instituted Summer Schools of Catholic Action. There was an active Sodality at Regis College that participated both in the Summer Schools and in a federation of Sodalities from other New England schools. Similar federations developed in other areas of the country as well. In 1956, the United States Catholic Bishops approved the formation of the U.S. National Federation of Sodalities. Lord’s brand of Catholic Action emphasized personal piety as well as awareness of the needs of the wider human community. Though Sr. John did not especially emphasize personal piety among the Lay Apostles, the Sodality’s commitment to the wider human community is certainly present in the mission of the Regis program.

The Lay Apostles’ service to the human community was also unique because the program’s participants and leaders were all women, similar to the European founded Grail movement. The Grail was founded by Jacques van Ginneken, S.J. in the Netherlands in 1921 and came to the United States by 1940 where it was first located at Doddridge Farm near Chicago. Led by laywoman Lydwine van Kersbergen, “the Grail set out self-consciously to nurture the liturgical renewal and the concept of the church as the mystical body through collaboration with parishes, dioceses, and other Catholic organizations.”\textsuperscript{48} These women were active in liturgical reform, and the group also

\textsuperscript{47} Philip Gleason, \textit{Contending with Modernity}, 152-53.
sponsored members as foreign missionaries. The group eventually chose to move to the Cincinnati area due to conflict in Chicago with Cardinal Stritch. According to Debra Campbell,

The Grail’s efforts to heighten lay women’s consciousness of the intimate connection between the liturgy and their lives were not clearly understood by some of the bishops and clergy. When the Grail offered its first summer program at Doddridge Farm in June 1942, they issued a crisp, upbeat flyer outlining the goals of the program, and received a swift, negative response from the local chancery. It was doctrinally incorrect, Grail leaders were informed, to suggest that their two-week program would aim at ‘developing a strong, dynamic, living faith’ when ‘faith is an infused supernatural gift which we do not develop.’ . . . In response to the archbishop’s suggestion that such a flyer should have an imprimatur, van Kersbergen discreetly apologized, and declared that she had no idea that one needed an imprimatur for a flyer.49

The difficulties met by the women of the Grail in Chicago are indicative of more than ecclesial conservatism. Cardinal Stritch was known as an avid supporter of the Catholic Action movements such as Young Christian Workers, Young Christian Students, and later the Christian Family Movement which were headquartered in the archdiocese. Yet he did not support the efforts of these women that included liturgical reform and foreign missionary activity. This example is not unusual in the history of Catholic Action; the diverse movement was defined differently by nearly everyone connected with it. By

49 Ibid.
contrast, the Regis Lay Apostolate was strongly supported by Archbishop Cushing, so though he was never directly involved in the program’s direction his public support contributed to the Lay Apostolate’s success. Cardinal Stritch’s disparate responses to the Grail and the specialized apostolates highlight both the importance of hierarchical support of the movements and the ways in which the location of a program could help or hinder its development.

Despite the Grail movement’s struggle with hierarchical authority in Chicago, Grailville flourished once it relocated to Loveland, Ohio in the Cincinnati archdiocese. Grailville became “a center for the education of lay women in matters of theology and liturgy.” Their focus on liturgical renewal held particular significance for the members:

> The dialogue Mass, offertory procession, and congregational singing were incorporated early into the Grailville liturgies celebrated by visiting priests . . . For participants in the Grailville program, the liturgy assumed a new level of meaning both because of the emphasis upon lay participation and planning of the liturgies and because of the self-conscious way in which the leaders at Grailville discussed the relationship between liturgy and the work the women did everyday in the kitchen and on the farm.

The direct relationships shared between the Eucharist and the daily lives of the women were a unique and meaningful approach to life and spirituality. The Grail was aligned with the National Christian Rural Life Conference. According to Campbell,

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50 Ibid., 242.
51 Ibid.
Lay apostles embraced the agrarian ideal because of the three elements that agrarian apostolates brought together so naturally: lay activism, an emphasis upon the sacramental character of everyday life, and the community of the small group.  

Campbell also connects this use of the agrarian ideal of the Grail with the Catholic Worker movement and Friendship House. While the Regis Lay Apostolate did not emphasize an agrarian ideal, they were similarly significant as lay women’s mission movements. Beyond the direct links of the Lay Apostolate to the characteristics of CSMC, Sodality, and the Grail, it is important to examine one of the Specialized Catholic Action movements – the Young Christian Workers.

Founded in Europe, the Young Christian Worker movement exemplifies key elements of the specialized Catholic Action movement such as the mystical body of Christ ecclesiology. The Young Christian Workers was one of the better known examples of specialized Catholic Action in the United States. Substantial research has been dedicated to the study of this group within U.S. Catholicism, and it provides a helpful overview of the movement in the U.S. during the time prior to and during the span of the Regis College Lay Apostolate.

Belgian Cardinal Joseph Cardijn founded the Young Christian Worker (YCW) movement (Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne, popularly referred to as the Jocists) in 1925,

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52 Ibid., 243.
53 For an overview of the Catholic Worker and Friendship House, see Florence Henderson Davis, "Lay Movements in New York City during the Thirties and Forties," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 9/4 (Fall 1990): 401-418.
though its roots traced back to his days in his first parish beginning in 1912. According to former YCW leader and historian of the U.S. movement, Mary Irene Zotti, Cardijn began his apostolic movement by

forming small groups of young workers who would take initiative and develop leadership skills while improving the surroundings in which they lived. Using the method of Observe-Judge-Act, they looked at the realities of their lives, judged whether their observations were in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ, and then took action. In the process, they gained a sense of their dignity as Christians with a responsibility to serve the needs of their fellow young workers.54

Cardijn’s method of Observe-Judge-Act and organizations associated with it came to be known as Jocism. Oklahoma priest Donald Kanaly was impressed with this method when introduced to it in Europe and shared Cardijn’s program with Chicago’s Monsignor Reynold Hillenbrand in 1938. The two were strong proponents of Jocism early on in the United States.

By the late 1950s, the term “Catholic Action” is used less frequently. There is more focus on the specialized apostolates or Specialized Catholic Action offered through such organizations as Young Christian Students (YCS), Young Christian Workers (YCW), and the Christian Family Movement (CFM). It is interesting among even contemporary secondary sources to find alternative terms to “Catholic Action.” In writing about the active Chicago Catholics of the mid-twentieth century, Steven Avella

continually refers to "Specialized Catholic Action" and even notes that Catholic Action cells were allowed, but the hierarchy warned against competing with the "official" Catholic Action groups. \(^{55}\) Again the unclear limits of Catholic Action are evident as Avella carefully distinguishes between Chicago's official Specialized Catholic Action and other forms of Catholic Action.

While Chicago's debates are rather vocal, the situation in Boston is more difficult to determine. U.S. Catholic Action has often been identified with Chicago as it was the headquarter city for YCW, YCS, and CFM. A 1990 presentation by Debra Campbell raises the importance of looking beyond Chicago to cities such as Boston when studying Catholic Action in the U.S.\(^{56}\) She asserts,

> We know instinctively that we cannot assume that the experience of the American laity in Boston was just like that of Midwesterners and New Yorkers, but we are not yet in a position to say, as precisely as we would like to, what made the Boston experience distinctive.\(^{57}\)

While Chicago served as the nerve center for the "specialized apostolates" in the U.S., Boston is rarely referred to in the literature on these movements. Campbell argues that the Regis College Lay Apostolate is an important example of a Boston-based movement during Chicago Catholic Action's prominent years. Mary Irene Zotti's history of the U.S.

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\(^{56}\) Debra Campbell, "Beyond Pagan Babies: From the Regis College Mission Unit to the Regis College Peace Corps" (paper presented at the Conference on American Catholicism in the 20th Century, University of Notre Dame Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the, 2 November 1990), 1-3.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 1-2.
YCW movement offers an explanation for the lack of attention given to Boston Catholic Action.

Zotti recalls a brief meeting with Archbishop Cushing in Boston in 1946. Canon Joseph Cardijn met with him shortly after the YCW leaders. She states, “We learned later that Cardijn and Cardinal Cushing did not hit it off personally, with the apparent result that the YCW was never encouraged in Boston . . .” Upon first reading, her comment seemed trivial, but given the importance of hierarchical approval and support of such efforts at the time, it is worth considering. Perhaps Cushing was not impressed with YCW as a result of his discomfort with Cardijn, and perhaps he found his energies for such apostolic service better directed toward programs already flourishing in his archdiocese including Sodality and the Regis College Lay Apostolate. A conclusive answer to this question is not possible. But Campbell’s argument that programs such as the Regis Apostolate call for a wider look at Catholic Action and a closer look at the activities among New England Catholics leads this investigation to the story of Sr. John Sullivan and Regis College in Weston, Massachusetts.

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CHAPTER 2:

FOUNDATIONS OF THE REGIS COLLEGE LAY APOSTOLATE:

SR. JOHN SULLIVAN, REGIS COLLEGE, AND THE REGIS COLLEGE MISSION UNIT

The historical background on U.S. and Boston Catholicism and Catholic Action in the United States creates a helpful understanding of the Catholic environment that surrounded the Regis College Lay Apostolate and the Lay Apostles. To further understand the importance of this unique program, it is imperative that its foundational elements are examined. The life of Sr. John Sullivan, C.S.J., the social consciousness promoted by Regis College, and the Regis College Mission Unit provide the particular elements that gave the Lay Apostolate its specific character. Sr. John, founder of the Lay Apostolate, is a remarkable woman and the story of her life in the first section below offers tremendous insight into the birthing of a movement. The second section explores the social consciousness on campus during the years leading to the establishment of the Mission Unit. Through speakers, campus-sponsored activities, and other programs, the wider U.S. Catholic atmosphere permeated the Regis campus. Finally, the Regis College Mission Unit was the mission-minded vehicle through which the Lay Apostolate was able to emerge. Sr. John and the students involved in the Mission Unit unwittingly prepared the way for the veritable revolution that was the Regis College Lay Apostolate.
Sr. John’s Story — The Life of this Leader and Risk Taker

Charismatic leader. Educator. Visionary. Risk taker. These words only begin to describe the passionate woman whose faith and wisdom allowed her to bring to life the Regis College Lay Apostolate. Many steps of her life led Sr. John to the Lay Apostolate. Born Margaret Agnes Sullivan on May 15, 1907, Sr. John was the youngest of eight children and the only daughter.¹ A first generation Irish-American, she grew up in Merrimac, Massachusetts. Her mother, Mary Ruth Murphy Sullivan, was from Waterford, Ireland and worked in the family’s home. Daniel Francis Sullivan, of Bantry Bay, Ireland, owned a carriage factory in Merrimac and supported his family with the sales of carriages on which he painted distinctive family monograms for his customers.² Once the automobile came to prominence, he adjusted his career as needed and worked as a foreman in a car factory.

The Sullivan family was middle class and certainly of higher economic standing than most Catholic immigrants of the time. They believed in a conscientious work ethic, commitment to one’s Catholic faith and the Church, and education for all of their children. One biographer described the syncretism of Sr. John’s Yankee and Irish roots, saying, “the traditions of Ireland and the quality of rural New England life both were part of her. She had the tenacity and respect for hard work of the Yankee and the sensitivity and imagination of the Celt, plus [her father’s] strong Catholicity.”³ These impressive

¹ Dated information throughout this biography of Sr. John comes primarily from Sr. Lucilla Dinneen, C.S.J., handwritten biography of Sr. John Sullivan, C.S.J., 24 April 1981, Regis College Archives (RCA); and Sr. John Sullivan, C.S.J., “History of the Regis College Lay Apostolate,” typescript, RCA, unless otherwise noted. Her personal stories and additional information for the narrative come from Sr. John’s “History of the Regis College Lay Apostolate” and a series of interviews by the author as noted.
qualities are evident throughout Sr. John’s faith-filled life of commitment to education and service.

One of Sr. John’s earliest memories in life also marks the beginning of the path she was to take. As a very young girl – perhaps no more than three years of age – Margaret’s father took her by the hand into the garden. There he planted for her patches of pansies in all different colors. Because she was the youngest and had no sisters, her father wanted to instill a sense of sisterhood into his daughter. He told her that the pansies were her sisters – black, white, yellow, red, some mixed in color – they represented her sisters throughout the world. Mr. Sullivan told young Margaret to watch as they swayed and danced together in the breeze – moving together in harmony, they bowed to one another. She cared and nurtured them as she would her own siblings. Sr. John continues to refer to this event and the memory of these colorful flowers – her “beautiful sisters of the world” – as a key moment in her personal development. Her father’s simple planting of flowers somehow planted far more valuable seeds within his young daughter. Sr. John’s continued sharing of this foundational story suggests an orientation toward a loving life of service and compassion which she acknowledges as being imparted from an early age.

Fascinated by geography and history as a grade school student, Margaret began to learn about “the world and its people” at a young age. Concerned that her only daughter was surrounded by too many masculine influences (her father even nicknamed her

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5 Ibid.
Charlie), Margaret’s mother sent her to boarding school at Notre Dame Academy in Roxbury “to be feminized and to better prepare [her] for college and for life.” There her compassion was further nurtured under the guidance of the Sisters of Notre Dame. Margaret received the same opportunity for quality education as did her seven brothers. Sr. John still recalls the profound influence of Sr. Theresa Regina Keough, S.N.D. de Namur. One of Margaret’s teachers, Sr. Theresa represented the type of person the young woman hoped to become – a woman committed to her faith and her students. It was here, at Roxbury, that Margaret first began to consider the possibility of religious life through the inspiration of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

During her senior year, Sr. John’s mother passed away. Now that Margaret was the only female in the family her father fought to keep her close to home. He would not even begin to entertain the possibility of Margaret entering a religious sisterhood. As a result, she chose to go to college, which her father supported. She was able eventually to convince him to allow her to journey to Washington, D.C. to attend Trinity College, run by the Sisters of Notre Dame. There she was a good student and an active participant in campus organizations. An English and math major, Margaret studied these subjects as well as the required minors of Latin and Greek for English and physics for mathematics.

Outside the classroom, Margaret was a member in and eventually a leader of the Trinity Wekanduit Society. This group was a branch of Trinity Foreign Mission Society and was involved in service projects to raise funds to support Catholic missions and other

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6 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
causes. \(^9\) Sr. John recalls that the Wekanduit Society was the most popular student club at Trinity while she was there. As President of the club her senior year, Margaret was a respected leader on the college campus. One of the annual events that she led was called the Circus. Once a year the Wekanduits took over the dining hall for a night and served a banquet of fine foods donated from some of the best restaurants in Washington. The students had no option for dinner on campus except to pay the modest fee to attend the Circus. All of the funds raised benefited the missions abroad. Her experiences at Trinity firmly rooted in Margaret her interests in both the study and teaching of English and the support of the missions.

Following her years at Trinity, Sr. John continued her education in English. After graduation in 1929, she returned to a school closer to home and attended Boston College where she studied for her M.A. in English. Again, Daniel Sullivan financially supported his daughter's education. Around this time she began to discern further her call to religious life. While studying at Boston College she lived with the Sisters of St. Joseph at Mount St. Joseph's Academy in Brighton because it was a more convenient commute to Boston College. During this year, Sr. John was first introduced to the Sisters of St. Joseph. The Boston College master's program required 75 hours of "practice teaching," and instead Margaret, along with four male classmates, taught voluntarily for the year without pay. She taught English and math at St. Clement's, the Sisters of St. Joseph

\(^9\) Kathleen Sprows, to author, 8 June 1998. Regarding the Wekanduit Society, she comments that the students founded the Trinity Foreign Mission Society in 1917 of which the Wekanduits was a branch. The members of the Wekanduits "decided to raise funds through personal service such as mending and typing. Eventually those services were expanded to include running the college switchboard, selling cookies and candy, and a variety of other things. All the money that the Wekanduits earned was donated to the foreign mission society."
school in Somerville. This year of voluntary teaching had a great influence on Margaret and the experience informed the eventual development of the Lay Apostolate which came nearly 20 years later.

Continuing in her religious discernment, Margaret naturally felt connected to the Sisters of Notre Dame who sponsored Roxbury Notre Dame Academy and Trinity College and thought she would enter their community. Her father continued to disapprove of her interest in becoming a religious sister however, and certainly not one that would take her to a community far from home. As a result, she looked into the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston with whom she had become close during her year at Mount St. Joseph’s and St. Clement’s. She entered this local diocesan community on September 8, 1930. Sr. John recalls that her father threatened never to visit her if she entered the convent; yet she remembers happily that he never missed a visiting day.

The next few years consisted of novitiate and formation for the sisterhood and teaching at the high school level. From 1931-35, Sr. John taught English and physics at St. Columbkille’s in Brighton. The three years following were spent teaching English in Newton Centre at Sacred Heart Academy. Having proved her teaching abilities, her order sent her for further education in 1938. Despite her own feeling that her master’s degree in English was enough education, Sr. John obediently followed the community’s wishes that she go on for doctoral studies because she was needed to teach at their college, Regis, founded in 1927. Sr. John earned her Ph.D. in English from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. where she studied from 1938-42.

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She completed her dissertation entitled *A Study of the Theme of the Passion in Medieval Cyclic Drama* and graduated in 1943.

Prior to her graduation from Catholic University, Sr. John began teaching at her community’s school, Regis College in Weston, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1942. Now thirty-five and a young and respected Sister, Sr. John was immediately recruited by Sr. Honora, President of Regis at the time, to utilize her gifts and skills to draw the women into activities on campus. Sr. Honora was also an alumna of Trinity College and knew of Sr. John’s positive impact on campus as an undergraduate. She called upon Sr. John “to give witness to Christ on the Regis campus, and to work with students so that they would be imbued with His love and His concern for those in need of help [sic].” From this call was born the Regis College Mission Unit in 1942 and eventually the Lay Apostolate in 1950.

During her years at Regis she served as a professor in the English Department and moderator of the Regis College Mission Unit which she founded in response to Sr. Honora’s request. Sr. John was consistently promoted in the English Department, beginning as Instructor from 1942-46, Assistant Professor from 1946-53, Associate Professor from 1953-57, and Professor from 1957-71. From 1946-68 Sr. John served as Chair of the English Department. She also founded and directed the Lay Apostolate, 1950-72. Sr. John taught a variety of courses including Freshman Composition, English Literature, World Literature, Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Dante. Among her favorites was World Literature, a natural preference given her fascination with the cultures and

missions of the world.¹² Her teaching career ended in 1971, and within a few years the Lay Apostolate ceased as well.

The respect that the Sisters of St. Joseph had for Sr. John became especially evident when she was elected to serve as an Area Councilor and member of the Executive Council for the Congregation in 1971. This new position took her to the Motherhouse in Brighton, so, at the age of 64, she retired from a 30-year teaching career at Regis. Sr. John completed a seven-year term on the Congregation’s Executive Council in 1978 and was asked to return to Regis to work with the Alumnae Office. The strong relationships she built with her students, members of the Mission Unit, and the Lay Apostles were of tremendous help in her work with the alumnae. By the late 1980s, she resigned this duty and continues today, at age 91, to work part-time in the college Development Office. Sr. John’s 91 years have been characterized by a love of God and a commitment to education – of her own students and of those children around the world in need of teachers. This dynamic commitment to both education and the mission of the Church offers a fruitful reflection on Sr. John’s unique life.

Sr. John’s career as a professor of English for thirty years in Boston is somewhat curious given her profound sense of responsibility to the missions. Why did this woman, so convinced of her baptismal call to share Christ’s love and of the importance of the missions, never serve in the missions herself? The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston staffed missions in parts of Latin America and the southwestern United States. The need for missioners was certainly great; Sr. John never had enough Lay

Apostles to answer all of the requests for help. The answer – and perhaps the curse – lies in her education.

An intriguing correlation exists between Sr. John’s education, her lack of opportunity to serve as a missionary, and her pursuit of the creation and continuance of the Lay Apostolate. Unlike the majority of lay Catholic women of her generation, Sr. John was well-educated at prestigious Catholic institutions of higher education. Her experiences at these schools supported her passion for the work of the missions. Her attraction to live her life “doing the Lord’s work” led her to the religious sisterhood, teaching, and further education. Sr. John’s connection to Sr. Honora as a fellow Trinity alumna led her to found the Mission Unit. Later her friendship with former Catholic University classmate, Sr. Inez, who asked for help staff her school on the island of Guam, provided the revolutionary spark for the Lay Apostolate.

Her education connected her to these women, and their personal relationships led to the organic development of both the Regis College Mission Unit and the Lay Apostolate. Sr. Honora utilized her own personal ties to Trinity to persuade Sr. John to engage the Regis students in the work of Christ. Sr. Inez used the strength of their friendship to her advantage in pleading for assistance in Guam. Sr. John believed that if she did not find help for her friend no one else would. Her education and role as a teacher bound her to Regis where she was greatly needed to serve on campus. Unable to leave Regis, Sr. John’s English classroom provided a forum – among others – for her to share the work of the missions and to inspire her students to recognize their own baptismal call to serve God’s people. Ironically, this woman religious was essential to the organization of the Lay Apostolate while the lay women were the only ones able to
fulfill the need for teachers. The Regis College Lay Apostolate could not exist without either the women religious or the lay teachers.

When asked about her personal interest in the missions, Sr. John smiles knowing that while she was never able to go herself, her commitment at Regis freed her students in many ways to embark on the greatest adventure of their lives.\textsuperscript{13} For this result, she has no regrets. "I was always interested in the work of the Maryknoll Sisters. But I believed that as long as I was doing the Lord’s work, it didn’t matter where I was doing it."	extsuperscript{14} Sr. John happily served as a good English teacher and a faithful member of her religious community. Her responsibility to the students at Regis allowed her to divert her own desires to serve in the missions through supporting their endeavors. Her face, her voice, her posture, everything about Sr. John fills with tremendous pride when recalling the courage, sacrifice, faith, and service of her Lay Apostles.

\textit{Why Regis? The College’s Social Consciousness Prior to the Lay Apostolate}

Founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1927, Regis College was still very "young" when Sr. John arrived in 1942. Records from the student written and edited school paper, the \textit{Regis Herald}, offer a glimpse into the early social, political, and spiritual environment of this college that eventually yielded such a remarkable initiative as the Lay Apostolate. Sr. John’s persuasive rhetoric paralleled that of the Catholic Action movement in the wider Church, although the alumnae of the Lay Apostolate as a whole remember very little regarding Catholic Action on campus during the 1950s and

\textsuperscript{14} Sr. John Sullivan, C.S.J., phone interview by author, 1 June 1998.
The environment in which these women found themselves was so imbued with the Catholicism of the time that it is difficult for them to recall anything distinct about it. Beginning in the 1930s and continuing through the late 1960s, the *Regis Herald* mentioned regularly Catholic Action (as both movement and group), support of the missions, and social issues of the times.

One characteristic of the times and consciousness at Regis was a sense of urgency and personal responsibility of Catholic young adults to look to the Church in the face of troubling modern times. Rev. Robert H. Lord delivered a challenging commencement address to Regis’ fifth graduating class in 1935. He reminded the women of the anti-Catholic origins of the United States and warned of the “perilous times” in which they were living, saying,

> Now over against the confusion and bewilderment of the modern world, when so much all around us is tottering or collapsing, there is one thing that stands as firm as the rock of Gibraltar . . . Today [the Catholic Church] stands forth as the staunchest defender of those principles upon which Western civilization has been built up and without which it cannot endure.\(^\text{16}\)

Fr. Lord insisted on the moral soundness of the Church for all of civilization and also called the Regis graduates to embrace their role in the Body of Christ. He charged, “It

\(^{15}\) Based on responses to Lay Apostolate Alumnae Survey questions 7, 10, and 11. See Appendix 2. Survey responses and interviews confirmed that there was in fact a Catholic Action group on campus at Regis College in the late 1950s. However, only a few individuals who responded to the survey recalled its existence. This “absence of memory” may be due to the drastic change in the language of the Church that has since occurred, and the fact that such language and activities prior to Vatican II are often connoted negatively today.

\(^{16}\) Robert H. Lord, “Commencement Address, Regis College, 7 June 1935,” *Regis Herald*, 8 June 1935, RCA.
will now be your duty, within the measure of your abilities and opportunities, to be missionaries, apostles, of Catholic thought and action."  

Such a call to the Regis graduates exemplifies the rhetoric of the time and indicates the type of environment that existed on campus. This mission-minded environment led Regis students to participate in Catholic Action programs.

Regis students participated in the annual Summer School of Catholic Action held at Boston College in the 1930s. Sponsored by the Sodality of Our Lady, the one week Summer School consisted of motivational lectures, roundtable discussions, and such elective courses as Convert Making and Approach to Non-Catholics; Catholic Citizenship; and Mental Prayer.  Sixteen Regis women were selected to attend the 1935 Summer School.  The obligation of Catholic collegians to participate in Catholic Action was important enough to send these representatives, and it was to be embraced by the entire college as well.

1930s Herald editorials by the student staff educated members of the campus community about their role in the lay apostolate. Catholic Action was presented as a national and international movement and a responsibility of all Catholics. "...[T]he alert Catholic, especially the Catholic with college training, must anticipate the trend of events in order to direct and motivate the revolution along Catholic lines."  The women were made to value their education and the responsibility that such opportunity gave them.

Catholic Action is one of the most frequently used phrases of modern Catholicism, yet it is a much abused and much

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17 Ibid.
18 "Summer School of Catholic Action to be Held at Boston College," Regis Herald, 8 June 1935, RCA.
19 Ibid.
20 "Catholic Action," Regis Herald, 27 November 1935, RCA.
misunderstood phrase. Catholic Action means the act of being a Catholic in every sense of the word. It is the practical application of Catholic doctrines and principles to the problems of your life.

Those who are strongly advocating Catholic Action are serious-minded far-sighted Catholic men and women who realize the value of example. In order to combat those who profess subversive doctrines, advocates of Catholic Action must meet enemies on their home ground and battle with their weapons. By living true Catholic lives and acting according to our own high principles and ideals, we Catholics will be better able to refute the erroneous opinions of our opponents.21

The absence of Catholic Action’s official definition as the “participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy” from this description is intriguing. The lay-empowering rhetoric in some sense democratizes the movement. Whether or not this end was intended is unknown, but it is important to recognize the lay-centered nature of the statement. The editorial does reflect some of the literature of the wider Catholic Action movement, considering the diversity of the movement. The same sense of immediacy and responsibility found in the broad movement was promoted on Regis’ campus.

Tangible examples of the impact of this Catholic Action environment are found in the annals of the school newspaper as well. Sodality was a very active group on the Regis campus. In a brief 1936 article on the Sodality, directed nationally by Fr. Daniel A. Lord, S.J., Catholic Action was reported to be the main topic of the group’s meetings. The group planned to study and discuss papal encyclicals and to bring in guest speakers.

21 “Catholic Action,” Regis Herald, 13 October 1936, RCA.
“on the currently interesting topics of Communism in America and the Spanish situation.”22 Other editorials during the same time addressed the persecution of Spanish Catholics as well and speakers on campus addressed topics such as communism.23

Regis Italian Professor Ambrose Hennessey spoke early in 1937 about the “two powerful contrasting evils of today, Capitalism and Communism.”24 Their evil came from their disregard for social justice as demanded in Pope Leo XIII’s Rerum Novarum. He called for an end to the abuses of capitalism and to communism altogether. He urged, “We must endeavor to throw in the economic system some degree of social justice and charity – justice toward all and love of the working men and poor as children of God.”25 The Herald’s inclusion of editorials on the persecution of Catholics in Spain and the college’s sponsorship of anti-communist talks on campus suggest a wider awareness of and interest in the world at large. This broad concern was not only found within the school paper, but also within groups such as Sodality.

Combating communism was an early interest of the Jesuits and in turn an interest of the students involved in Sodality. Shortly after Professor Hennessey spoke on campus, the Holy Cross Sodality gave a presentation entitled “Communism and Its Evils” to the Regis student body as a regular meeting of the Sodality. The speakers, all male College of the Holy Cross undergraduates, approached the evils of Communism from a variety of perspectives: the propaganda and its efficacy among the young and unemployed; its

22 “Nucleus of Active Sodality Formed,” Regis Herald, 30 October 1936, RCA.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
history in the "violent creed of Marx and Lenin made popular today by Stalin;" and the "workings of the Communist mind." 26 Reported very matter-of-factly, the article also stated that the meeting closed with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. This dual emphasis on political issues and spirituality is again suggestive of the permeable boundaries of the Catholic Action movement.

The Regis Sodality group entered into a confederation with the groups at Boston College, Emmanuel College, College of the Holy Cross, and St. Elizabeth’s School of Nursing in December 1936. The loose confederation began as a response to the suggestion of Fr. Daniel A. Lord, S.J., head of the central Sodality office in St. Louis, during the closing session of the Student Spiritual Leadership School. 27 Later articles mention what seems to be this same confederation under several different names: Boston Regional Conference of Catholic Sodalities (January 1937); Federation of Intercollegiate Sodalities (February 1937); and New England Intercollegiate Union for Catholic Action (February 1939). 28 The first two names most likely demonstrate an initial lack of clarity as to the group’s identity. The third may indicate a shift in focus. Lord equated Catholic Action and Sodality, so amidst the battle for recognition as "official" Catholic Action, he may have promoted the third name indicated for the Federation. During this time, articles in the Herald indicate that Catholic Action was a consistent topic of discussion and source of motivation for the activities of Regis’ Sodality.

26 "H.C. Sodalists Speak on Communism," Regis Herald, 18 March 1937, RCA.
27 "College Sodalities Confederate," Regis Herald, 21 December 1936, RCA.
Missionaries from various parts of the world and other supporters of the missions were often speakers on campus at Regis during the years immediately prior to the formation of the Mission Unit and throughout the existence of the Mission Unit and the Lay Apostolate. Prior to his appointment to the episcopate, Rev. Richard Cushing spoke on campus at a Sodality meeting regarding the mission problem of the Church. Likened to the economic problem of the State, Fr. Cushing suggested that both are “concerned with a more equal distribution of goods, the one of spiritual goods, the other of material goods.” Then Diocesan Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Fr. Cushing conveyed to the Regis students that the generosity of Boston Catholics “has been instrumental in helping mission stations in every part of the known world.”

The attitudes of the missionaries at that time would today be deemed imperialistic by most international mission programs. Although missionaries then were well intentioned, the ideas and perspectives toward people of other cultures and religious traditions now have changed. Jesuit missionary Fr. Edward Garesché was described in the Herald as “[i]ntellectually well-equipped to discuss the medical problem in backward countries,” and in his talk on campus he “set down phenomenal figures of diseased persons and the contagions of the tropics and unknown world.” Today missioners would be offended by the notion of a “backward country” implying that the “other” is not “civilized” as those of us from the “forward” countries. The faith-filled response of the

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30 Ibid.

31 "Fr. Garesché Asks Help for Missions," Regis Herald, 2 May 1941, RCA.
Catholic missioners in the second quarter of the twentieth century, while based on genuine concern and charity, was also imperialistic.

A 1941 guest columnist called Regis women to the kind of charitable service that inspired French college student Frederick Ozanam and friends to found the St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1833, and the Vincentian who in 1921 founded the Legion of Mary. He referred to these “youthful pioneers” as “enthusiastic Catholics” whose object was “to reinforce themselves in the Catholic Faith and to spread that faith among others through charity.” Fr. McColgan challenged the women of Regis:

Are you girls of Regis enthusiastic Catholics? Would you enlist in a crusade of Charity? Test yourselves! . . . Would you be willing to make concerted efforts to steer prospective converts to a priest, to arrange for delayed Baptisms, to help instruct first Communion and Confirmation classes? Would you be ready to take pains in paving the way for the validation of marriages, in encouraging the careless Catholic to return to the Sacraments, in increasing Sodality membership, in distributing Catholic literature? Would you do valuable works of real Charity? If you would, remember that charity means service, and if charity is to save and salvage your faith, that charity must be personal.33

The call to the Regis women in 1941 to engage actively in such apostolic duties is notable. As young lay women, they were charged with equal responsibility in promoting the sacraments to any other member of the Church. There is a strong sense of social action and charity indicated in relation to the Church. One does not simply serve the

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32 Fr. Daniel T. McColgan, "Catholic Collegians, Champions of Charity," Regis Herald, 14 October 1941, RCA.
33 Ibid.
material needs of the less fortunate, but also addresses the spiritual needs which can best be filled through the Catholic Church and her sacraments.

Similar devotion to the Church was promoted by other speakers such as Rev. Robert P. Barry, Director of the Catholic Charitable Bureau of Boston, who urged students to use their gifts for good in the world.

I leave you with this thought and resolution – to give the best you can of what has been given you, for the sake of those it is your lot to serve; and to bring the culture, Catholicity, and devotion of the faith and the loyalty of your tradition into whatever walk of life you enter. *Be more than just Catholic, carry into life a real, loyal Catholic mind [sic]*.\(^{34}\)

This devotion to Catholicism as well as the emphasis on bringing the Catholic faith into any walk of life was consistent throughout the 1930s at Regis. The “loyal Catholic mind” was developed through participation in the Sodality, support of the missions, and charity. Given this Catholic spirit of charity on campus, Regis was ready for Sr. John’s challenge to support the missions.

**Setting the Stage for the Lay Apostolate: The Regis College Mission Unit**

Shortly after her arrival as an Instructor in the English Department in the fall of 1942, Sr. John Sullivan began recruiting students with whom to share the love of Christ as Sr. Honora, President of the college, charged her. Reflecting back on the fall of 1942, Sr. John shared her original intention to connect the students with Sodality.\(^{35}\) Each year

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\(^{34}\) "Religion in Social Work Urged by Father Barry: Catholic Charitable Director Speaks at Regis," *Regis Herald*, 23 April 1937, RCA.

dozens of new Regisites became members of the active Sodality. Upon further consideration, Sr. John recognized that the Sodality’s emphasis on the spiritual and academic life rather than the work of the missions was not what she had in mind. She also sought to develop a fully inclusive program for the students. A club’s membership by nature tends to be exclusive, so the group organized by Sr. John was open to any and all students at all times. Sr. John embraced the idea of a Mission Unit that would perpetuate such an open milieu on campus. Her goal was to offer all Regis students an opportunity for involvement in the work of supporting the missions – work to which each and every one of them were called by virtue of their baptism.

Despite Sr. John’s recollection of the Mission Unit as distinct from the Sodality, the first mention of the Mission Unit in the *Regis Herald* deemed the group the Mission Unit of Our Lady’s Sodality.\(^{36}\) As presented in the previous section, the Sodality regularly sponsored speakers on campus and was involved in Catholic Action in the years immediately prior to the formation of the Mission Unit. According to the *Herald*, the Mission Unit functioned as a mission-focused extension of the Sodality. The unit members and Sr. John devoted themselves to raising awareness and funds for mission causes and projects. The first issue of the *Regis Herald* that made mention of the Mission Unit described the initial interest in such a group as a response sparked by the presentation of two Maryknoll Sisters earlier in the fall. Its purpose and plans were summarized in the following:

\[
\text{The purpose of the new organization is to lend stronger financial support to those who are working in the mission}
\]

\(^{36}\) "Mission Unit of Our Lady’s Sodality Begins Career with 176 Volunteers," *Regis Herald*, 17 November 1942, RCA.
fields, and, at the same time, to bring a new spirit of unity and material usefulness to the members of the Sodality, owing to the needs of the time.\textsuperscript{37}

The “needs of the time” were made apparent throughout the November 17, 1942 issue of the \textit{Herald} that first introduced the Mission Unit. Less than one year earlier, the United States had entered World War II. The times were trying, and like the entire country, the campus was united in its support of the people of the armed services and was certainly attentive to current events.

The thorough attention given to the war demonstrates Regis’ awareness of the wider social concerns of the time. Additionally, World War II raised the global awareness on campus to an extent that may not have otherwise occurred. A review of the November 17, 1942 \textit{Herald} offers insight into the tone on campus with relation to the war and the missions. Coverage in the issue also included a presentation on campus by Fr. John Wright entitled “The Catholic College Girl and World Peace” and a farewell to philosophy professor Fr. John Keegan who left the college to prepare for his induction into the U.S. Army.\textsuperscript{38} Fr. Wright insisted on the need for educated Catholic women to participate in the “needs of the times.”

The Catholic collegian yields to none in patriotism and in national loyalty; but her patriotism may have in it no element of exclusion, no blinding loyalty closing mind and heart to the wider human community of which the nation, however great, is but a part . . .

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
The times in which you live, the unborn generations whom you must serve, the Church you love, and the Christ Who loves you, all bid you consecrate your lives, your learning, and your faith.\textsuperscript{39}

These young women witnessed the departure of a priest and faculty member from the serenity of Weston, Massachusetts to the battlefronts of Europe. Yet in the serenity of Regis, they were to be no less patriotic or less involved in the support of the American troops. However, they were taught that their sense of responsibility to the wider human community and the missions superceded their national patriotism.

Another \textit{Herald} editorial issued a call to serve those in need during the war by encouraging students’ participation in the Mission Unit. The editorial, “Enlist in Service of the Missions,” demonstrated a heightened sense of responsibility to the missions among Americans as a result of Europe’s entrenchment in the war.

... Today the United States remains almost the sole source of revenue for the foreign missions ... [W]ith practically the whole of Europe in the hands of a Godless dictator, the resources of great [European] Catholic countries ... have been completely cut off. For centuries these countries have sent saints and supplies into the depths of the pagan lands – in order to gain souls for Christ. It was the heroic missionaries of these countries who brought the Faith to the wilderness that is now our great nation.

We ... who are still free from oppression should willingly take up the Cross that our less fortunate brethren have been forced to abandon and carry it, in the true Christian spirit to the infidel.

A great portion of this tremendous work is ours, Regisites. It is our duty to use every means to raise money for our heroic missionaries. Co-operate now with those in charge of mission projects.\textsuperscript{40}

Clearly the emotions of a country at war are reflected in this call of Regis students to one another to contribute to financially supporting the “heroic missionaries.” While their brothers and boyfriends, and even a priest from the college, were sent to the battlefront, the women at Regis accepted responsibility and participated in the war effort. Fulfilling their responsibilities as Catholic collegians, they raised funds for the missions and prayed for the people of the armed forces.

The need for the women to support the war effort in some way may have contributed to the initial response to the call for the mission unit. The women engaged in a variety of projects during the first few years of the unit that contributed to the support of the armed forces. Some of the regular projects of the Mission Unit included selling newspaper subscriptions and delivering the papers, and selling flowers for different occasions. The feast day of Sr. Therése of Lisieux became Rose Day for the Mission Unit each October 1. The Little Flower, as patron of the missions, also became the patron of the Mission Unit. The Mission Unit sold red roses on campus and the students wore them in honor of the Little Flower and their men at war. Such simple activities mirrored “the little way” of St. Therése.

The ever-present reality of World War II during the early years of the Mission Unit significantly effected the tone on campus as well as the focus of the Mission Unit.

\textsuperscript{40} “Enlist in Service of the Missions,” \textit{Regis Herald}, 17 November 1942, RCA.
These were difficult years in which the women depended upon one another for support as they prayed for their enlisted friends and relatives. Their fathers escorted them to school dances while the young men were away at war. Hence, the growth of the Mission Unit was connected in many ways to the reality of World War II.

An annual Missions Week began in 1943 to celebrate the work of the missions through “festive, profitable, and apostolic” activities. This description highlights the spirited response on campus toward the Missions Week. Sr. John recounts that the students purchased roses and put their boyfriends’ and relatives’ names on them to carry or wear during Missions Week. During that first Missions Week in 1943, the campus purchased every available rose, contributed cancelled and cut stamps, attended Jesuit Fr. E. Murphy’s talk on “The Missions,” participated in a social consisting of dancing, bridge, and refreshments, offered continuous rosaries, and donated books and pamphlets to be sent to the armed forces. Seventy-five dollars were raised during that first Mission Week, and all of the funds and efforts were dedicated to the “boys” in the armed forces. The circumstances of World War II drew the Mission Unit to focus outwardly on the troops as well as the missions. As indicated in the Herald, the students supported the Missions Week while the entire campus was devoted to the cause of the war.

Additional examples demonstrate again that the global awareness of a country at war served to increase the mission-mindedness of the Regis campus. The November 15, 1943 Regis Herald reported that the 1944 Mount Regis yearbook would be dedicated to

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41 “First Regis Mission Week Finds Students Rallying Behind New Committee: R. Donovan is Chairman,” Regis Herald, 15 November 1943, RCA.
43 Ibid.
“Our Lady Queen of Peace, for fathers, brothers, and friends with the armed forces.”

The campus as a whole participated in supporting the war effort in a variety of ways. “Students Pledge All-Out for War” reported a competition among the classes to increase the sales of war bonds and stamps. They also collected books to send to the soldiers and dedicated special days in the chapel to say rosaries for them. The article mentioned that the Mission Unit was collecting rosaries and scapulars to send to the armed forces as well. Beyond these more mission-minded activities, the women were involved socially. The Regis Herald reported, “Regis seniors have volunteered to do hostess work at servicemen’s centers in Boston. This is a very patriotic work. So you can see that Regis girls are really doing their part and do not have to take a secondary place among the colleges.”

The women were not entirely isolated from the actual stories of the war either.

In November 1943, a returned Major Canavan presented to the women his experience in the Pacific theatre of war. His positive impression of the Catholic chaplains may have encouraged the women in their support of the war effort. “The religious attitude of the Catholic soldier possibly stems from the fine Catholic chaplains in the foreign field of war . . . I have seen Mass celebrated on the back of a truck, with a soldier as acolyte. Mass has been celebrated with artillery shells bursting overhead.”

44 “Staff Announces Theme of 1944 ’Mount Regis,'” Regis Herald, 15 November 1943, RCA.
45 “Students Pledge All-Out for War,” Regis Herald, 15 November 1943, RCA.
46 Ibid.
47 “Major Canavan Outlines Highlights of Experience Culled from Warring Areas,” Regis Herald, 16 December 1943, RCA.
48 Ibid.
Another speaker that fall prompted the women to continue in their support of the missions as well.

Maryknoll missioner Sister Elenita, O.P. told a moving story of a young Japanese woman who converted to Catholicism following her attendance in English classes in the Maryknoll Mission School in Dairen.\(^{49}\) The strong impetus of the missioners to establish native priests and religious among their mission communities was emphasized and the positive work of the missionaries among the Asian countries described. The regular exposure to such real examples of conversion and education must have influenced the women of the Mission Unit to persevere.

By 1944, the work of the Mission Unit began to further expand. Auctions and festivals were held at other times such as Valentine’s Day and May Day. At the first May Day Festival for the Mission Unit the women sold a variety of foods and reached their goal of one thousand dollars for the support of the missions.\(^{50}\) The *Herald* reported their success to be educational and spiritual as well as financial. Funds were contributed to the “Propagation of the Faith for the education of native priests and the building of the sanctuary of the Church of the Solomons, for the spreading of religious pamphlets among the armed forces, for assisting the Marist leper colony, and for Maryknoll.”\(^{51}\) On campus the group was said to have gone “far toward realizing the mission ideal of the union of prayer, work, and sacrifice in bringing about the reign of Christ in the kingdom of Christ” – high praise from one’s peers.\(^{52}\)

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\(^{49}\) "Sister Elenita, O.P., Recalls Conditions of Missionaries in Stricken Countries," *Regis Herald*, 16 December 1943, RCA.

\(^{50}\) "Mission Unity Uses May 1 as Culminating Point," *Regis Herald*, 5 June 1944, RCA.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.
The accolades for the unit continued. The following school year, the Mission Unit was congratulated for its success in serving both God and humanity. "Spiritually the unit has spread the doctrine of charity, which now abounds through Regis, and is seen in the aid the students have given to the cause." Under the leadership of Eileen McSoley, "lectures by missionaries, discussion groups, days of prayer, and a continuous program of social events," were added to the activities of the unit. 1944's Mission Week included a very successful rose sale, a noon rally for the Little Flower, a prayer day, panel discussions, a Barn Dance, and mass.

At this time the students ran a mission store from a room in College Hall as well. The women sold candy and snacks and delivered Boston newspapers to subscribers on campus. Additionally they performed other jobs for which they collected fees such as typing assignments and ironing dresses. These activities were small ways, as in the Way of the Little Flower, in which they were able to collect money on an ongoing basis for their mission causes. They also collected lost and found items that were returned to the owner for a small fee. Financially the group raised $500 in its first year and $1000 in the second. Active involvement and support on campus continued throughout the 1940s.

In January 1945, the students began to produce a weekly newssheet entitled "The Little Mite" and later "The Mighty Mite." It reported the work of the Regis Mission

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53 *Mission Unit Launches Out to Widen Spiritual, Social Aid," Regis Herald, 17 October 1944, RCA.


55 *Mission Week Success Forecasts Future," Regis Herald, 14 November 1944, RCA.

56 *Mission Unit Launches Out to Widen Spiritual, Social Aid," Regis Herald, 17 October 1944, RCA.

57 Ibid.
The image of the widow’s mite was used here to demonstrate the value of even the smallest contribution when sacrificed for the good of others. Sr. John recalls the inclusion of stories and articles on various missions supported by the unit as well as the regular activities of the group. Such an effort on the part of the group demonstrates their commitment to an open unit which included and invited the entire campus to participate. The group’s inclusive nature allowed for more artistic forms of participation as well.

A memorable event incorporating the creative energy on campus was the production of “The Tableaux of Madonnas of the Mission World” in 1946. The Most Reverend Richard J. Cushing served as narrator for the event. A similar production entitled “Woman Wrapped in Silence” by John W. Lynch was offered shortly before Christmas in 1946. This production featured tableaux of the nativity, choral speaking, and music. The women contributed proceeds from this particular production, which was a collaborative effort of the Mission Unit and the Drama Club, to the construction of St. Regis Chapel in the Philippines. Such programs and fundraisers continued to be standard fare of the unit each school year. A field day was held in 1948 on Ascension Thursday. Elaine Gillson led the unit that year and started the field day that included sports events, a scavenger hunt, and informal performances.

A common thread through the work of the unit and the projects it supported financially was the personal connection that the group sought to make for the women at

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58 Unfortunately there are no known copies of the newssheets in existence. I am dependent on Sr. John’s memories for the contents.
60 Ibid.
61 “Missioners Round Out Year of Work, Fun,” *Regis Herald*, 1 June 1948, RCA.
Regis with the people aided through their efforts. At times they supported the education of a missionary priest and maintained correspondence with him as a source of education and inspiration for the students. They also “adopted” children in foreign missions and received word from Maryknoll about their development. This sense of personal connectedness and responsibility to the missions was the foundation necessary for the Lay Apostolate to emerge. Sr. John continued to facilitate the students in the Mission Unit for eight years. For eight years the students gave tirelessly of their time, their money, and their energy to support the missions. Then in 1949 one small event changed everything.

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The Spark of a Revolution: The Beginnings of the Lay Apostolate

In October 1949, a letter arrived for Sr. John from a friend in Guam. Sr. Inez, Superior of the Sisters of Mercy on the island, was a former classmate from Catholic University. She was also a member of the original group of three Sisters of Mercy from Belmont, North Carolina who went to Guam in November 1946. The sisters answered Bishop Apollinaris Baumgartner’s plea for help following the devastation of Guam under the Japanese occupation of World War II. Sr. Inez and her sisters were working very hard to establish a Catholic grade school and high school on the island. Sr. Inez wrote a very compelling letter to her friend in Boston sincerely asking her to consider coming to Guam to teach and help open the school. Committed as Chair of the English Department at Regis, Sr. John could not possibly leave. Knowing what the answer would be, Sr. John met with the Superior of the Congregation, who did decline Sr. John’s request for a leave of absence. She was not discouraged however; she knew there were people who might be able to go in her place.

As Sr. John tells it, the request was made very simply. One day she strode into English class with the letter in hand and presented the passionate request to her students:

... Sister dear, if you could just get one or two Sisters ... for me even for one year, it would give me some encouragement
If it is impossible to get Sisters, then can you recommend a young lady from Regis or elsewhere who might like to come out and help with our mission work. I thought . . . there may be some young lady who . . . would like to try out the mission work by . . . helping us for a year or two . . .

Honey, I know that this is a big order, but then you are a big hearted person . . . I shall be praying and storming heaven while you do the work on that side . . . You have always wanted to do something for the mission, now is your chance – perhaps our dear Lord is doing this for some special purpose – don’t let the opportunity go by . . . Don’t let me down and please remember my poor guamanians [sic] who need help so badly.¹

The students listened intently to the desperate plea from Sr. Inez. When she finished reading the letter, Sr. John inquired of her class, “What would you do if you received such a letter from a friend but could not help her yourself?” From the back of the room came an offhand response, “Send a substitute!” “That,” Sister responded, “is exactly what I intend to do.”² “And then I went on with Shakespeare,” she recalls.³

Sr. John insists that there was nothing more that she did. The seed was planted through that simple sharing of a letter. One young woman, Marie McCormack, was especially moved by the need in Guam for teachers. Though as Marie tells the story herself, she hoped that someone else would volunteer to go as she was planning to enter a

¹ Sr. Inez, R.S.M. to Sr. John Sullivan, C.S.J., 13 November 1949, typescript, RCA.
career with the Air Force and "travel the world." Marie recalls that one day she ran into Sr. John in a hallway at Regis and found herself rather spontaneously offering to go to Guam since several weeks after the plea was presented no one had offered. Sr. John happily accepted her offer, as did Sr. Inez.

Marie was also the President of the Mission Unit that year. Just as her advisor, Sr. John, had served Trinity College's Wekanduit Society, so Marie served Regis and the missions through the Mission Unit and the Lay Apostolate. She took the risk that would inspire more than 200 Regis women after her to say "yes" to giving a year of their life in service to those in need. When invited to reflect on her experience, Marie stated, "It was, of course, the single most important decision and experience of my life. The whole experience certainly made me a stronger person, and a wiser one."

From this humble beginning, many were to follow. The grace and wisdom that gave Sr. John and Marie McCormack the courage to answer Sr. Inez's plea for help was shared with hundreds of future Lay Apostles and thousands of children who were provided with teachers. The importance of personal relationships in the growth of the program becomes evident upon recognition that during her doctoral studies at Catholic University Sr. John and Sr. Inez became friends. From this initial relationship and Sr. John's awareness of a network of connections among religious communities and the institutional Catholic Church, the Lay Apostolate began to grow and spread organically. Beginning at Regis, Sr. John's obligation to the college freed her student, Marie

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4 Marie McCormack O'Driscoll, phone interview by author, Atlanta, Georgia, 25 June 1998.
5 Ibid.
McCormack, to go in her place. The President of the Mission Unit – inspired by the mentor who herself had served as President of Trinity’s mission society – was empowered to say “yes” to such an incredible challenge.

**Marie McCormack: The “Yes” that Started it All**

Marie McCormack was a woman of faith who lovingly answered the call for help on the island of Guam. Raised in an Irish family in Newton, Massachusetts near Boston, Marie came from a middle class background.\(^7\) Her mother was a homemaker, and her father served the United States government in the Secret Service and in the Army during World War II.\(^8\) As a result the family moved several times, so unlike the majority of her classmates, Marie had lived in or traveled through “the four corners of the country.”\(^9\) From Boston to Texas to Seattle and back, perhaps her opportunities to travel contributed to Marie’s willingness to volunteer to serve in Guam.

Her relationship with Sr. John, both as a student and as President of the Mission Unit her senior year, was very positive. Through interviews with each of them, one senses a genuine fondness that these two women continue to hold for one another after fifty years. In a letter she wrote to Sr. John shortly after her commencement in 1950, Marie humbly and graciously shared her feelings about Sr. John. She wrote,

> I am one of your spiritual children . . . one of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, you have influenced in your field of

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\(^7\) The background information on Marie’s family was drawn from her responses to the Alumnae Survey, received April 1998, and phone interview by author, 25 June 1998.

\(^8\) Ibid.

teaching. Through almost daily association, a part of you has become a part of me. Sometimes I can detect your influence; but mostly it is present unconsciously in my personality, soul, or what have you. Sometimes I can say . . . “Now that is Sister John coming out in me” . . .

I love you, Sister, and I love the gentle, understanding Christ I have seen in you.\textsuperscript{10}

The fondness Marie held and continues to hold for Sr. John – as a teacher and a role model – is evident in these words. Sr. John and Marie herself ultimately influenced numerous future volunteers. Many of the women who served in later years looked to her as a role model of faith and courage for answering “yes” to Sr. Inez’s plea. Her faith was a vital element in her decision as well.

Like Sr. John, Marie’s faith and education were intertwined. She was educated primarily in public schools until she attended the Dominican Sisters’ Rosary Academy in Watertown, Massachusetts her last two years of high school. There, under the nurturing care and strong academics of the Dominicans, Marie says, she was “a Catholic who converted to Catholicism.”\textsuperscript{11} While her mother was an active Catholic who attended mass regularly, Marie was not educated in nor faithfully committed to her religion prior to attending the Catholic women’s academy. Her positive experiences with the Dominicans led Marie to attend college at Regis where she happily continued to practice her self-described “fervent Catholicism.” She recalls consistently attending daily mass –

\textsuperscript{10} Marie McCormack to Sr. John Sullivan, C.S.J., May 1950, RCA.

\textsuperscript{11} Marie McCormack O’Driscoll, phone interview by author, 25 June 1998.
even when it meant walking through the cold and snow. Her decision to go to Guam served in her mind as an offering for the Holy Year of 1950. Her life was blessed with a loving family, quality education, and a deep faith; for these gifts, the Lay Apostolate became a small way in which she was able to offer thanksgiving for her life.

While in Guam, Marie maintained her connections to Regis as she braved life in a new culture and worked as an English teacher and catechism instructor. She sent typed letters filled with beautiful descriptions of the island in the Pacific as well as encouraging and challenging words to future Regisites who might answer the same call to serve. Some of the letters were published in the Regis Herald and others were written to Sr. John. Several remain in the archival collection and offer tremendous insight into the mind of twenty-two year old Marie McCormack in 1950.

Two letters written to the Regis community appeared in separate issues of the Herald in October 1950. Each describes the beauty of the Pacific island and the warmth and sincerity of the Guamanian people. The letters also charge the students of her alma mater to accept their call to the apostolate and become “laborers in the harvest.”

Everywhere in the world, it is the same story – so much to be done, such a ripe harvest, but too few laborers to gather it in. Our own interests seem petty and selfish in the light of the utter spiritual poverty of half the world.

We Catholic college graduates have everything; and millions have nothing. How profoundly tragic that our

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12 Marie McCormack O’Driscoll, survey response, April 1998; phone interview by author, 25 June 1998. "Holy Year," in The Harper-Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism is defined as “proclaimed by the pope as a propitious time for pilgrimage and other observances by those who wish to grow in holiness of life” in more traditional times. “The focus of Holy Years in recent times has been upon the celebration of God’s forgiveness and mercy.”
overflowing cups do not spill on more of those whose parched throats have never tasted the waters of truth.\(^{13}\)

Marie’s youthful idealism toward the world and the Church characterizes the tone of the letters. She recognized the great need for missioners throughout the world and promoted the responsibility of Catholics to give back to their community and Church. Marie also recognized the isolated background of many of the Regis students when she wrote,

We Bostonians living in our closed, comfortable Catholic circle may not realize the utter spiritual poverty of millions of human beings all over the world. They are famished for Truth, living in that hopeless, helpless void which only Christ can fill and heal.

... Surely, God has not sent us to Regis just to save our own souls!\(^{14}\)

Marie’s spiritual – rather than economic or material – characterization of poverty is interesting here. As was typical of missionaries of the time, she emphasizes spiritual needs of the people whose immediate needs of food, clothing, and shelter were not being met. Regardless, the powerful words inspired both Suzanne Gill and Marie O’Connell to join her in 1951. The “soul-saving” mentality of 1950 is still reflected in Marie’s recollections of the Lay Apostolate. In her response to the survey, Mrs. O’Driscoll described that her understanding of the Lay Apostolate’s purpose was “to help the

\(^{13}\) Marie McCormack, letter included in “Some Gleanings from Campus Mailbag,” *Regis Herald*, 1 October 1950, RCA.

\(^{14}\) Marie McCormack, letter included in “Editor’s Mail Pouch Bulges with Letters About S. Pacific Beauty, Teacher’s Life,” *Regis Herald*, 15 October 1950, RCA.
Church save souls, without being part of the clergy or taking vows.”¹⁵ Her sense of power as a lay person was enhanced during her time in Guam.

Marie did not find her time in Guam free from struggle. Her experience was publicly described idealistically and successfully, while personally the experience included challenges. For reasons she still does not understand, Marie’s relationship with Sr. Inez in Guam was very tense. As a result of her own discernment and her difficult living experience with the Sisters of Mercy in Guam, Marie determined that she would not enter religious life. Because the need for teachers continued to be significant and she was committed to her students, Marie agreed to a second year of voluntary teaching at Our Lady of Guam School. She lived in private housing with Suzanne Gill and Marie O’Connell the second year. In November she met a young serviceman from Texas who later became her husband. While she found her second year to be much happier personally, she was tested spiritually through her two years in the Pacific. Difficult interactions with the Sisters and the negative impression held in Guam of the U.S. government caused Marie to lose some of her idealism toward both the Church and the United States.¹⁶ These difficulties were never mentioned in the letters to the Regis community. She lived through the tensions and struggles and continued to serve where she was needed. Ultimately Marie’s experience of independence and teaching on the other side of the world set her life on its course and opened the doors for hundreds of future Lay Apostles.

¹⁵ Marie McCormack O’Driscoll’s response to survey question #9, April 1998.
The Spread of the Movement

The success of the first two years in Guam – as indicated in Marie McCormack’s ability to persuade other students to serve – motivated Sr. John to begin looking at additional possibilities for Lay Apostles in other locations. The organic growth of the movement began immediately. In 1952, Pauline Nelson ’48 served in Georgia after completing her master’s degree at Marquette University. The Lay Apostolate was not an option when she graduated from Regis four years earlier, so Pauline chose to give a year once the opportunity was made available. In her history, Sr. John quotes one of Pauline’s letters as a source of encouragement for future Lay Apostles. In describing what she had gained through the experience Pauline wrote, “I was never so right in making my decision to give a year to the missions . . . I found in giving one year to the missions the wonderful secret of the goodness of God.”\(^\text{17}\) The Lay Apostolate confirmed for Sr. John a way to share the love of Christ with and through Regis students beyond the Mission Unit, so she worked to find more opportunities for the women.

Sr. John continued to build the Lay Apostolate by contacting religious communities with Sisters in “mission” sites. The Blessed Sacrament Sisters of Philadelphia, founded by Mother Katherine Drexel and committed to serving Native American and African American communities, were one of the first groups. Upon receiving Sr. John’s letter of inquiry regarding the possibility of collaborating on her “Give-a-Year” plan, a sister enthusiastically responded to her. As Sr. John tells it, the

Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament had just completed a novena to St. Joseph for assistance in the reservations. Upon calling her they said, "to think that a Sister of St. Joseph, unknown to all of us, offered immediate assistance is truly a miraculous response!" St. Catherine’s Indian School in Santa Fe, New Mexico, sponsored by the Blessed Sacrament Sisters, welcomed Regis Lay Apostles for a number of years beginning in 1953. St. Francis de Sales Academy for African American girls in Rock Castle, Virginia, and St. Michael’s Indian School on the St. Michael’s Navajo reservation in Arizona were additional schools sponsored by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament where Regis Lay Apostles taught. While most of the schools staffed by the Lay Apostles served economically disadvantaged children, Sr. John did not use any particular criterion to determine where to send the students. St. Francis de Sales Academy in Virginia educated African American girls of varying economic status. Because it was a school for African Americans in the South, it was considered a mission school and an acceptable site for Regis Lay Apostles.

Her own community of Sisters of St. Joseph was another source of placement sites. In 1954, new graduates Alison Cass and Carole Bocasky were the first Regis Lay Apostles to serve as teachers at Cristo Rey School sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Sisters of St. Joseph also welcomed Lay Apostles at St. Joseph Academy in St. Augustine, Florida, Bishop Kenny High School in

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19 St. Catherine’s School closed following the 1997-98 school year. In the years since the Regis Lay Apostolate ended St. Catherine’s welcomed independent volunteers at the school, volunteers from the University of Notre Dame, and Mercy Corps volunteers sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – the same sisters connected with the first Regis Lay Apostle in Guam, among others.
Jacksonville, Florida, Santa Rosa School in Santa Rosa, New Mexico, St. Joseph’s School in Waipahu, Hawaii (St. Louis Province), and with the sisters in Piura, Peru. The strong relationship with the Sisters of St. Joseph spanned the years of the Lay Apostolate as Cristo Rey, St. Michael’s, and St. Joseph Academy each hosted Lay Apostles as early as 1954 and Santa Rosa and Cristo Rey schools as late as 1971 and 1972 respectively. The vast majority of placements for the Lay Apostles beyond the program’s earliest years came through word of mouth and requests to Sr. John. She no longer needed to look for places to serve, they began coming to her.

Positive stories of the Lay Apostles’ invaluable help to understaffed Catholic schools spread among communities in need. A flood of requests arrived for Sr. John. Many Catholic schools were in need of teachers, and Sr. John staffed them with her Lay Apostles whenever possible. In responding to their understanding of the purpose of the Lay Apostolate on the surveys, 15 of 86 alumnae (17 percent) made reference to a “nun shortage.” While concern over the numbers of women religious was a factor of the times, the real lack of teachers had more to do with an increased number of Catholic schools than a decrease in women religious. The Lay Apostles’ curious response may be related to the significant decrease in the numbers of religious since the late 1960s as

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20 Based on responses to Lay Apostolate Alumnae Survey question 9. See Appendix 2.
21 In his history *The American Catholic Experience*, Jay Dolan summarizes the declining numbers of women religious in the twentieth century United States. On page 438 he states, "Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the number of women leaving religious life was steadily increasing; in the three-year period 1963-66, an estimated 4,332 left. Yet recruits kept coming, so the total number of women religious in the United States increased and peaked in 1966 at 181,421. Then a steady decline set in. Recruits stopped coming, more sisters left, and by 1980 the total population of women religious in the United States was 126,517."
the women recall their understanding of the program’s purpose thirty to fifty years after their participation.

During the early years of the Lay Apostolate, the women were highly concentrated in the American Southwest and South. Missionaries were active among the Native American and Hispanic populations of the Southwest and the African American population in the Southeast. The entire southern United States was considered Catholic mission territory. With the exception of the first two years of the apostolate during which three women served in Guam, and the three who served in Copper Valley, Alaska in 1956 and 1957, all of the Lay Apostles from 1952-58 (65 out 68), served in the southern United States. While 13 of the 65 served in the southeastern states of Georgia, North and South Carolina, Florida, and Virginia, the majority of the Lay Apostles during these early years taught in the southwest. 49 Lay Apostles made their way from New England to Texas, New Mexico, or Arizona between 1952 and 1958.

A long-standing relationship with Santa Fe, New Mexico began with St. Catherine’s Indian School in 1953 and Cristo Rey School in 1954. 27 (11 percent) of the Regis Lay Apostles served in those two schools over the course of the Apostolate’s 23 years. Blessed Sacrament School in El Paso, Texas was another early-established relationship (1955) that produced years of Lay Apostles. 17 Regis women served as teachers at Blessed Sacrament. In addition to the significant number of Regis Lay Apostles in these schools, they eventually hosted Lay Apostles sent by Sr. John from
other colleges and universities around the country as well.\textsuperscript{22} This type of networking between Regis and other colleges and between Sr. John and various religious communities allowed for a unique opportunity in Alaska in 1956.

In 1955, Jesuit Fr. John Buchanan arrived on campus at Regis to request the assistance of Lay Apostles in Copper Valley, Alaska. Widely known as the “pack-rat” priest, Buchanan was busy scavenging for funding and supplies to build and support his “University of the Midnight Sun.”\textsuperscript{23} In 1949, following his ordination, Buchanan, a Seattle native, volunteered for the Alaskan mission. He was handed five dollars and told to go to work.\textsuperscript{24} By the mid-1950s the school he was building in Copper Valley was well underway and in desperate need of teachers, so he visited Regis in 1955 in hopes of gaining the help of some Lay Apostles. During the year following Fr. Buchanan’s visit, Sr. George Edmund, a Sister of St. Anne who was to serve as principal of the new school in Alaska, visited the campus and two Regis women who expressed interest in serving with them.\textsuperscript{25}

Margaret Mannix and Mary Anne Kent ’56 volunteered to teach in Alaska. They left for the 1956-57 school year with Sr. George Edmund and three other young Massachusetts women. A fantastic story accompanies these Alaskan adventurers. Sr.

\textsuperscript{22} The scope of this project does not allow for a thorough study of the Lay Apostles from other schools who served with the Regis women, but their contributions were significant as well.


\textsuperscript{24} “The Miracle of Copper Valley,” RCA. This pamphlet provides a history of the Copper Valley School but has no publication information. I estimate that the pamphlet was published between 1955 and 1956.

\textsuperscript{25} According to Debra Campbell, “Sr. George Edmund is a legend waiting to be told,” ("Beyond Pagan Babies," 6). Again, that task must be left for another time. Sr. George Edmund and the story of the Alaskan mission will receive further attention in the forthcoming dissertation of Simon Hendry, S.J., doctoral candidate at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley.
George Edmund acquired the necessary funding for their travel on the television quiz show "Strike it Rich" where she won $7,000 - hardly a story one expects to connect with a Catholic mission school in the 1950s.26

This particular example of a new site of service deserves attention because it highlights the creative leadership and resourcefulness of many of the women involved in these programs and schools. Sr. George Edmund’s unexpected acquisition of funding through participation in a game show, like the resourcefulness of the “pack-rat” priest, allowed Copper Valley School to flourish and for Regis women and others to gain invaluable experience as teachers. Additionally, from those involved in the Copper Valley School eventually developed the widely known Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Sr. John and her Lay Apostles were connected to the beginning of this remarkable program that continues to prosper today. Here the personal relationships and grassroots Catholic network clearly contributed to the proliferation of the Regis College Lay Apostolate and other post-undergraduate lay volunteer programs for men and women. The Alaska mission also foretells the significant number of sites to be served beyond the continental United States in the years following.

Beginning in 1959 and continuing through the end of the Lay Apostolate in 1972, the informal Catholic network drew Lay Apostles to numerous international sites. During these later years of the program a far greater percentage of the Lay Apostles served beyond the continental United States. Regis alumnae served in Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Internationally, they served in the Caribbean – Jamaica and St. Thomas

and St. Croix, Virgin Islands; Canada – Prince George and Prince Rupert, British Columbia; Pacific Islands – Taiwan and Micronesia; Central America – Guatemala and Honduras; and South America – La Paz, Bolivia; Piura, Peru; Osorno, Chile; and Guayaquil, Ecuador. 107 of 160 (67 percent) of the Regis Lay Apostles who served between 1959 and 1972 were outside of the continental United States as opposed to seven of 72 (10 percent) between 1950 and 1958.27

There is not a single explanation for the shift from domestic to international (and non-continental U.S.) sites of service in the latter half of the Lay Apostolate’s tenure. One reason may be that Sr. John’s most direct contacts with other religious communities were primarily involved in domestic missions in the 1950s. Additionally, more international placements were arranged following Sr. John’s presentation at the Second World Congress on the Laity in 1957. Following her presentation on the Regis College Lay Apostolate to the representatives of the eighty countries in attendance, numerous requests arrived from around the world. The informal networking that took place among individuals connected to various Catholic institutions is again evident. These networking relationships often existed among members of other religious communities, but Sr. John also sought to build a positive relationship with the hierarchy of the institutional Church.

**Institutional Support: Cardinal Cushing and Rome**

During his tenure as Archbishop of Boston, 1944-70, Richard Cushing served as a source of immeasurable support to Sr. John and the Regis Lay Apostolate. Numerous

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27 See Appendix 1.
pieces of correspondence held in the archives indicate the mutual friendship and respect that he and Sr. John shared for one another. Head of the Propagation for the Faith in Boston prior to his appointment as archbishop, Cushing was an active supporter of the missions. He occasionally spoke on campus about the missions or participated in an event of the Mission Unit. Favorable articles appeared in the Herald upon his appointment as archbishop in 1944 and later as cardinal in 1958. Archbishop Cushing was a respected supporter of Regis’ mission and students and of Sr. John.

In 1956 Sr. John along with Sr. Melmarie (another Regis English professor) participated in a summer program at the Shakespearean Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon in England. Knowing that they were going to Europe, students and alumnae - primarily English majors - raised funds specifically to allow the sisters to travel to Rome in hopes of gaining an audience with the pope and a blessing for the Lay Apostolate. This effort on behalf of Regis students and alumnae demonstrates the Regis community’s informal commissioning of Sr. John and Sr. Melmarie to share the Lay Apostolate program with the pope. In her written history, Sr. John describes the audience with Pope Pius XII on August 24, 1956 as “a momentous occasion and a precious memory. There were only eight of us in the small, intimate audience and we each were able to express ourselves to His Holiness. He seemed to be delighted.” Their invitation to such an intimate

28 “Regis College Fêtes Archbishop Cushing at Reception Commemorating Installation,” Regis Herald, 14 November 1944, RCA; and “New Cardinal is Old Friend of Regis College Students,” Regis Herald, 19 December 1958, RCA.
audience was possible through the intercession of Archbishop Cushing who met the sisters in France on their way back from Rome and accompanied them to Lisieux, home of the Little Flower, patron of the Mission Unit. Sr. John had a mutually respectful relationship with Archbishop Cushing on both formal and informal levels.

The desire for such hierarchical approbation as a papal blessing is indicative of the times in which these women lived. Sr. John established the Lay Apostolate of her own volition and with the support of her religious community. She never asked permission from Archbishop Cushing though she regularly informed him through the years of the program’s progress. Yet significant value was placed on the public praise and approval of the institutional Church. In the fall, following the sisters’ return to Boston, Archbishop Cushing wrote to Monsignor Angelo Dell’Acqua, then Pro-Secretary of State at the Vatican, requesting the Holy Father’s blessing on the Regis Lay Apostolate. The Archbishop asked that the blessing be “in writing rather than in the form of a cablegram because it is something we want to frame as an encouragement to those who are interested.”

The Vatican’s response and blessing arrived in November. Monsignor Dell’Acqua graciously forwarded the message of the Pope’s blessing upon the program, which said:

In His paternal interest in every undertaking directed towards the Christian education of youth, the Holy Father could not fail to be deeply gratified on learning of this praiseworthy

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31 "Regis Profs Have Private Audience," The Regis Alumnae Magazine, Fall 1956, 5.
32 Archbishop Cushing to Monsignor Dell’Acqua, 20 September 1956, Cushing Correspondence file, RCA.
Apostolate, to which the graduates of Regis College are dedicating themselves in such edifying numbers . . .

The Pontiff cherishes the prayerful hope that an ever-increasing number of generous young girls, not only from Regis College but also from other Colleges in the great Archdiocese of Boston, may volunteer for this noble Apostolate, and to all who take part in it he cordially imparts His special Blessing as a pledge of abiding divine assistance and as an earnest of a copious celestial recompense [sic].

Sr. John took the words of this blessing and the emphasis on “the Christian education of youth” very seriously. In response to the Pope’s hope that the program might expand to other colleges in the Boston area, she began allowing women, and eventually some men, from nearby colleges to serve as Lay Apostles as well. Over the span of the Lay Apostolate, approximately 175 women and men from other colleges served in missions arranged by Sr. John. For the purpose of this thesis, the Lay Apostles from Regis will continue to be the focus, but it is important to note the significant number of people that served from other schools.

In addition to her incorporation of graduates of other colleges into the Lay Apostolate, Sr. John also spoke at campuses and meetings across the country encouraging other schools to begin their own programs. It is interesting to note that Sr. John continued to refer to the papal blessing in her speeches and articles on the Lay Apostolate. To make its words universally applicable, she altered the line calling for

33 Monsignor Dell’Acqua to Archbishop Cushing, 10 November 1956, Cushing Correspondence file, RCA.
more apostles from "Colleges in the great Archdiocese of Boston" to "Colleges in the great dioceses of the United States." Beginning in early 1957 and spanning the life of the Lay Apostolate, she estimates that she gave lectures and/or presentations on the Lay Apostolate at 75 different colleges and universities around the United States. An estimated 40 colleges and universities started their own programs as a result of their collaboration with Sr. John.

She also spoke on behalf of the Lay Apostolate at conferences such as the National Catholic Education Association, the Lay Missionary Conference at Loyola University in Chicago, and the National Catholic Social Science Conference. At the Lay Missionary Conference she was on the program with the incomparable Dr. Tom Dooley, the ex-naval doctor who opened a hospital in the jungles of Laos. Yet all of these honors were overshadowed by an opportunity she had in 1957.

Archbishop Cushing invited Sr. John and Sr. Lucilla to represent the archdiocese in Rome at the Second World Congress on the Laity in October 1957. Such an invitation clearly demonstrates the respect Cushing held for Sr. John and the Lay Apostolate. She shared her message of the Lay Apostolate in a workshop at the College De Propaganda Fide, which was translated simultaneously into the many languages of the

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36 Ibid., 27-28. The dates of Sr. John's participation in these conferences are unknown as she does not include the dates in her history. The researcher estimates that, like the visits to other colleges and universities to promote the program, they took place following the papal blessing in late 1956 and on into the 1960s.
37 Ibid., 27.
38 Ibid.
80 countries represented at the Congress. She describes the event as “a world-shaking, mind-boggling experience for me – and an historic event when a woman’s voice echoed in those hallowed halls [sic].” Sr. John recognized the significance of her invitation as a woman to address the College De Propaganda Fide and the change that it represented for women in the Church.

The hierarchical representatives at the Congress heard Sr. John’s message of lay service. Innumerable requests “poured in” to Sr. John following her presentation at the Congress. Throughout the span of the Lay Apostolate, there existed an ongoing dynamic between the formal and informal relationships with the institutional Church. The formal role – including the papal blessing, Archbishop Cushing’s annual blessing of the new Lay Apostles, and Sr. John’s presence at the World Congress of Laity – was not possible without the informal network characterized personal relationships, letters to friends, and the word of mouth sharing of the work being done by the women of Regis. The Lay Apostles themselves were of vital importance to this informal side of the movement. Through their personal stories they influenced others to participate. It is important to understand who these women were.

**Who were the Lay Apostles? A Demographic Overview**

The Regis women who served as Lay Apostles were not demographically unique among Regis students. Complete statistics are not known regarding their ethnic,
religious, economic, and educational backgrounds, but the information collected in the returned surveys offers significant insights. With a 42 percent return rate of the Lay Apostolate Alumnae surveys, the demographic profile derived from the survey responses can be accepted as representative of the Regis Lay Apostolate participants as a whole. The women will be profiled with regard to ethnic background, religious background, economic status, parents’ education, hometown, and major area of study at Regis.

Ethnically the Lay Apostles, like most Regis students, were largely of Irish descent. 53 out of 86 (63 percent) respondents identified themselves as having one or more parent of full Irish descent. Ten percent (nine out of 86) were Polish-American and ten percent were Italian-American, five Lay Apostles identified English and French Canadian roots accordingly, and three had one or more German parent.41 Many listed multiple ethnic groups in their ancestry. Other ethnicities included French, Scottish, Welsh, English Canadian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Swedish, Welsh, and Dutch. One respondent is Puerto Rican and a native Spanish speaker, but she too is of European descent – her ancestors were Spanish and German.

Not surprisingly, the vast majority of the women are from Catholic families. In fact, only six out of 86 indicated any religious background outside of Roman Catholicism. Three indicated that they were raised in a family with one Catholic and one

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41 Based on survey responses received from February to April 1998.
Protestant parent. One identified herself as Protestant, and two responded that they were not raised in a particular religious tradition.42

Economically the majority of the women (65 of 85) described their families as middle class. While three alumnae chose not to respond to the economic status question, one third of those surveyed described the status of the family in which they were raised as something other than “middle class.” 14 identified themselves in a lower economic category, choosing terms such as “working class,” “lower-middle class,” “low-income,” or “blue collar.” Another 15 women described their families “upper-middle class” or “mid to upper class.” The economic categories in which the women located their families tended to reflect their parents’ educational background as well.

The parents of those in the upper class group were generally well-educated. Ten of 15 mothers of the women describing their families as upper-middle class had at least some education beyond high school, and five of the ten earned college degrees including one master’s degree. Twelve of 15 of the fathers of the more economically advantaged group were college educated including three lawyers, two doctors, and a dentist. Among the middle class group of alumnae respondents, 27 of 56 (48 percent) mothers received at least some education after high school. Fifteen of the 27 earned college degrees including two master’s degrees. 30 of 56 (53 percent) middle class fathers were educated beyond high school and 22 of 30 earned college degrees. These statistics far surpass the rates of education among other U.S. Catholics of the same period.

42 The author suspects that the percentage of Catholics who returned the surveys may be higher than the percentage on campus at the time of the Lay Apostolate and/or higher than the percentage of Catholics among the Lay Apostles overall.
Similarly, those parents of the lower economic group generally were not educated beyond grade school or high school. Three women indicated that their mothers were Regis graduates. Of the mothers who worked outside the home, most labored as teachers, nurses, or businesswomen. The majority of their mothers were homemakers, but overall they were probably more educated than the general population of Catholic women in this period.

The location in which the women were raised is another demographic factor to consider. Again, as most of the students at Regis, most of the Lay Apostles hailed from Massachusetts and the majority of those women were from the Greater Boston area. Of the 86 respondents, 68 stated that they were raised primarily in Massachusetts. The remaining 18 were from other states, but most were nearby. With the exception of Mrs. Cancio from Puerto Rico, the other 17 hailed from Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, or Vermont.

Besides their family background, it is interesting to consider the major fields of study of the women who chose to serve as Lay Apostles. Nearly all of the Lay Apostles served as teachers, but only a few had any prior background in education.\(^43\) Some of the women who were interviewed indicated that they had completed “practice teaching” prior to their year of service. Only six of the 86 survey respondents stated that they had minored in education.\(^44\) Five of those alumnae were psychology majors with an

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\(^43\) A few women had to serve as principal of their respective schools. Many of the women had secondary roles as catechists.

\(^44\) It is possible that more of the women completed the education minor. The survey only requested information on their major field of study.
education minor, and one was a home economics major with the education minor. Based on the survey responses, 93 percent of the Regis Lay Apostles did not have teaching experience. They were however, often able to utilize their major in the courses they taught.

Nearly half of the respondents were either English (24) or psychology (20) majors. Nine majored in home economics, six each in business, math, and political science, five in French, three each in sociology and history, two in Spanish, and one each in biology and social work. One major was unknown. Many of the women were active on campus in some way beyond the classroom. Several were student body or class presidents; others were active in sports; some participated in theatre and music programs. Overall it seems that they were generally involved on campus.\(^45\)

Based on the interviews, there were distinctions between those women who attended Catholic or public schools prior to Regis and whether they were residential or commuter students while attending Regis.\(^46\) Prior to attending Regis, several were educated in Sisters of St. Joseph schools throughout their lives, while others graduated from public schools, and still more from other Catholic schools. Regarding their residential status, the twenty women interviewed seemed evenly mixed between

\(^{45}\) The survey and interview data do suggest this conclusion. However, the author is aware that while it is possible that the Lay Apostles in general were more active on campus, it is also possible that the women who chose to return the surveys were among those within the group of Lay Apostles who were more involved on campus.

\(^{46}\) Unfortunately these distinctions were revealed during the in-person interviews with the alumnae in Boston and were not included in the survey, so statistics are not available. It would have been helpful to know how many of the women attended Catholic schools and/or an academy of the Sisters of St. Joseph prior to Regis. Such information could point to whether lifelong Catholic education in any way pre-disposed the women for the Lay Apostolate. The author does not believe such a connection necessarily existed.
residential students and commute "day-hops." Some of the women suggested that they were less involved in campus organizations because, as commuters, their time on campus was more limited.

In many ways the students at Regis College and in turn the Lay Apostles were a very homogeneous group of young European-American Catholic middle-class women. Yet the distinctions that existed in their private versus public education prior to Regis, their level of participation on campus – often affected by whether or not they were able to live on campus, and their major field of study, demonstrate ways in which they were unique from one another. Their service as Lay Apostles may be the greatest point of similarity among them, so it is important to understand what motivated these various women to participate in the Lay Apostolate.

Why? Their Motivations and Influences

The motivations, influences, and sense of purpose among the Lay Apostolate alumnae are greatly varied. There is a consistent awareness of serving "the less fortunate," but the anticipated connection to the wider Catholic Action movement is nearly absent. A few alumnae did identify with the Catholic Action movement, but that vast majority recalls no connection to it or even awareness of what it was. This

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47 The additional distinction between the residential students on campus and the "day-hops" who commuted to Regis from home each day affected the women's ability to participate in campus activities, according to the interviewees. The author estimates that among the in-person interviews of 20 women the Lay Apostles were evenly divided between residential and commuter students. It is unknown as to whether this reflects the Lay Apostles as a whole.
surprising reality will be addressed further in the concluding section of Chapter 4, but for now it is important to consider the actual motivations and influences of the Lay Apostles.

Responses to two key survey questions are helpful in providing a sense of the varying reasons, motivations, and influences behind the women’s decisions to serve as Lay Apostles.48 Question seven asked the women, “What most motivated you to serve in the Regis College Lay Apostolate?” The possible responses were the opportunity to travel, the opportunity to be of service to others, the idea of being involved in the work of Catholic Action, the influence of Sr. John or others at Regis, or other. If there were any common denominator among the women regarding their motivations, it was the desire to be of service. Some described it in stronger terms, resembling a “call.” One alumnae wrote, “it was like a call from God...’Who will go, who shall I send [sic]?’ ‘Here I am Lord, send me.’ So I didn’t decide to be a Lay Apostle, it had already been decided for me.”49 This was not a typical response however. A number of the respondents named a desire to travel and a spirit of adventure. Others cited the lack of opportunity for single women to travel or move away from their parents prior to marriage. Whatever the factors, the women consistently express a genuine desire to serve where they were needed.

The second question helpful in providing insights into the reasons the women chose to serve as Lay Apostles was number nine which asked, “What did you understand the purpose of the Lay Apostolate to be?” The responses to this question could be

48 See Appendix 2.
49 Response to survey question 7 from a 1953-54 Lay Apostle in El Paso.
generally divided into three categories which will be deemed: “missionary” motivation/purpose; “service” motivation/purpose; and “faith-based/Catholic Action” motivation/purpose. The missionary purpose category included 16 responses such as “to aid Church in Mission Territory, to spread teachings of the Church” and “to ‘give’ a year of your life bringing ‘Word of the Lord’ and education to others.” Among the 41 responses categorized as service-oriented were the comments “an opportunity to give time, energy, and knowledge to another person,” “to teach in schools who needed teachers – for little pay,” and “to be of service; to give back for all the gifts I was given.” The 40 faith-based/Catholic Action responses indicated a more direct connection to the mission of the Church. For example, “service to humanity in the name of God,” “to provide Catholic leaders in schools where there was a shortage of priests and nuns,” and “even before Vatican II I was grounded in the idea [that] ‘Apostolate’ flowed from baptism. It was Christian discipleship; living the Gospel.” Overall there was a consistent mix of responses in each of the three categories of purpose and motivation over the span of the Lay Apostolate, though the service and faith-based responses predominated.

The sources of influence for the women in their choice to serve as a Lay Apostle varied. Many did not name any particular individual or movement that inspired them. Some named such prominent Catholic figures as John XXIII, Dorothy Day, Tom Dooley, 

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50 The numbers of each of the three types of responses total more than the total number of surveys returned because some of the responses contained a combination of two types. Responses to survey question 9 from a 1955-56 Lay Apostle in South Carolina; and a 1962-63 Lay Apostle in Prince George, British Columbia, Canada.  
51 Responses to survey question 9 from a 1953-54 Lay Apostle in Santa Fe, New Mexico; a 1959-60 Lay Apostle in Flagstaff, Arizona; and a 1968-71 Lay Apostle in Emmonak, Alaska.  
52 Responses to survey question 9 from a 1951-52 Lay Apostle in Guam; a 1959-60 Lay Apostle in Hobbs, New Mexico; and a 1963-64 Lay Apostle in Austin, Texas.
and John F. Kennedy, but Sr. John was undoubtedly the primary personal influence.\footnote{53}{50 percent of the survey respondents identified Sr. John among what most motivated them to serve in the Lay Apostolate.}

During in-person interviews, several of the alumnae recalled Sr. John’s incredible ability to speak so persuasively at an assembly about the Lay Apostolate that one had the feeling she was speaking directly to you. Sr. John possessed the distinct ability to make one feel personally responsible to the children in the missions who lacked teachers. Her tactics were not deceptive. She sincerely invited and challenged the women of Regis to use their Catholic education to serve Christ’s people.

\textit{Life as a Lay Apostle – Personal Experiences}

Today several thousand new college graduates spend a year in lay volunteer service each year.\footnote{54}{Catholic Network of Volunteer Services staff, conversation with author, December 1997. CNVS statistics indicate that their member organizations have approximately 5,000 lay volunteers each. Because most of the programs are open to a range of ages, not all of the volunteers are new college graduates.} The barriers that may have existed at the time of the Lay Apostolate in terms of transportation and cultural taboos – particularly for single women – have certainly been alleviated. Yet in the 1950s and 60s, a commitment to a year of service far from home was hardly common or openly accepted. As indicated in the demographic information, nearly all of the women were from New England. Few had traveled beyond the region prior to their departure for the Lay Apostolate. A few women related that they had never been outside of Massachusetts before getting on a plane to travel across the country or beyond. Needless to say it took substantial courage and faith to commit to such a program.
The majority of the women were thrust into very foreign circumstances in which they were expected to teach – without teaching experience. While recognizing today that some sort of formal orientation or cultural preparation may have been wise for the participants in the Lay Apostolate, Sr. John makes no apologies for the absence of training or orientation.55 Today multi-cultural training, language preparation, personal and group study and reflection, preparation in conflict mediation and community living, and various other issues and combinations thereof are included in the orientation of most lay volunteer programs. Sr. John did not provide any of these types of preparation. She established a “verbal contract” with each Lay Apostle. This contract committed the young woman to her site of service for one year – and each Lay Apostle fulfilled her commitment.

In addition to the absence of formal preparation, additional issues made the Lay Apostolate program challenging. The travel itself was hardly as convenient as it is today. International airports and jumbo-jets were beyond the imagination of the graduates of the 1950s. Even President Eisenhower’s Interstate System did not yet exist to accommodate more efficient domestic transportation. Letters in the college archives describe the long journeys to their respective service sites. The journey to Guam in 1950 and 1951 took four days. A 1955 graduate who traveled to Santa Fe, New Mexico described the multiple plane changes that were needed to get from Boston to Santa Fe. Needless to say

there was no non-stop jet service. In fact there were five legs of the trip over a period of two days.56

Yet inconvenient travel was trivial in comparison to the significant social issues faced by many of the Lay Apostles in their sites of service. Racism and poverty were the social issues most consistently faced by the Lay Apostles. The cultural differences of the Regis women from the populations with whom they served, namely race and language barriers, were common issues and sources of struggle. Whether they were working with African-Americans in the southeastern U.S., Native Americans in Alaska or the southwest, Hispanics in the southwest, Hawaiians, Latin Americans, or peoples of the Caribbean or Pacific Islands, the Lay Apostles faced diversity – often for the first time – wherever they served. One of the most striking examples of the race issue was at St. Anne’s School in South Carolina in 1955. Joan Hennessey and Phyllis Budrick ’55 staffed the first integrated school in South Carolina where they eventually faced a cross-burning in front of St. Anne’s School.57 Despite the prejudice and the fearful circumstances, the women adjusted to their life in South Carolina and completed their yearlong commitment to the school.

To provide a better understanding of ways in which individual lives were affected through the Lay Apostolate, it is helpful to share personal stories from two of the alumnae. The examples of Winifred Murphy ’60 and Helene Swiatek Savicki ’62 depict the lifelong impact that the Lay Apostolate had on some of its participants and the

56 Roberta Koster to Sr. John Sullivan, C.S.J., August 1955, RCA.
unexpected and unique circumstances in which the Lay Apostles found themselves at times. Intrigued with the possibility of serving in British Columbia, Winifred Murphy journeyed to Prince George, British Columbia, Canada in the fall of 1960.\textsuperscript{58} She arrived at Bishop O’Grady’s Frontier Apostolate and found simple surroundings. The volunteers helped to prepare the school for its first opening. She taught in the high school and fell in love with the people there. Planning simply to spend a year in Canada, her initial experience led Winnie to commit the majority of the next 20 years of her life there. She eventually became one of the administrators of the school and of the Frontier Apostolate’s own volunteer program. Her two decades of service to British Columbia demonstrates the life-defining impact that the Regis College Lay Apostolate experience had on some of the participants.

Two women in the class of 1962 committed to a year in Honduras to teach with the Sisters of Mercy of Cumberland, Rhode Island. During an in-person interview, Helene Savicki recounted stories from her year in Central America.\textsuperscript{59} Her experience illustrates the type of unknown situations in which the Lay Apostles sometimes found themselves as well as the affect of the wider society and current events upon the women and their circumstances as Lay Apostles. While most of the Lay Apostles traveled by plane to their site of service, Helene and her companion Janet Monafo journeyed to Honduras by way of a banana boat. A large United Fruit Company freight ship carried

\textsuperscript{58} Winifred Murphy, interview by author, March 1998, tape recording, Regis College, Weston, Massachusetts.

\textsuperscript{59} Helene Swiatek Savicki, interview by author, March 1998, Regis College, Weston, Massachusetts, March 1998.
them from Boston to Honduras in ten days. Scheduled to take a mere three days, the trip took significantly longer because they were forced to take a route that would avoid Cuba. The women had no idea – nor did the American public – of the concern over the Soviet nuclear threat in Cuba at the time. When the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred in October, Helene and Janet were completely unaware. It was later after their parents offered to bring them home if they wanted, that they learned of the events that had taken place.

Later in the year, the first Peace Corps volunteers arrived in Honduras. According to Helene, those first Peace Corps volunteers in 1963, like the Lay Apostles, were sent without formal training. Helene recalls that she and Janet provided their “training” in Honduras – familiarizing them with the area and with cultural norms and issues. Such unique experiences were not uncommon in the Lay Apostolate, and amidst the difficulties the women all fulfilled their contract with Sr. John.

Based on the research and the memory and writings of Sr. John, none of the Lay Apostles returned home early, unable to complete their year of service. Though a few removed themselves from the program prior to departure, all of those who arrived at their site completed the full year. Discussing this issue in a 1961 article reporting on the first decade of the Lay Apostolate, Sr. John wrote,

There were two schools out of 25 which were very difficult but our apostles did not give up. There were only two girls out of a hundred who presented adjustment problems but even they persevered. We have not had a single volunteer defect.61

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60 Ibid.
The level of commitment among these women was tremendous. Neither the lack of preparation, nor poor living conditions, nor personal homesickness ever took one of them home early. They each met the verbal contract made with Sr. John, but one Lay Apostle did not make it home.

There was one tragedy in the 23 years of the Lay Apostolate. 1963 Regis graduate Judith O’Toole spent a year in Panape, Micronesia with Mary Jayne Higgins. Having suffered from serious asthma throughout her life, Judy and her family were aware of the risk involved in her choice to travel to an island on the other side of the globe. Judy suffered a severe asthma attack and died on route to a hospital in Guam. The Mercedarian Sisters, with whom the women served, wrote and produced a biographical pamphlet called “Judy” that was distributed to campuses across the country.62 Judy’s story is one of courage and inspiration. Her commitment to service surpassed her fears regarding her health.

Each of the 232 Regis Lay Apostles has a powerful story to share. The scope of this project allows for only a few examples, but those mentioned witness to the sacrifices and experiences of the others as well. The stories of the women of the Regis Apostolate — whether immortalized in the annals of the archives or retold more recently through a survey or interview — provide insights into the effects and significance of the Lay Apostolate experience.

CHAPTER 4

GLEANING WISDOM FROM REGIS LAY APOSTLES: ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Interest in investigating a lesser known Catholic Action movement in the pre-conciliar twentieth century United States led me to study the Regis College Lay Apostolate. The Regis program was a creative movement at a New England women’s college with roots as early as two decades prior to the Second Vatican Council. Its anticipated significance was its place as the prototype for today’s multitude of post-undergraduate lay volunteer programs. Ultimately, Sr. John Sullivan’s Lay Apostolate proves to be significant for far different reasons than I expected.

The Regis College Lay Apostolate modeled tremendous initiative and networking on the part of lay and religious women in the United States. Their ingenuity did lead – directly and indirectly – to the founding of dozens of similar programs. But the women’s unique self-perception and the implicit ecclesiology expressed in their practice truly challenge U.S. Catholic historians to expand the traditional understandings of the laity, women, and the Catholic Action movement in the United States prior to Vatican II. This final chapter examines the significance of the Lay Apostolate – both as an example of the unique network that existed between lay and religious women and as the prototype for today’s post-undergraduate lay volunteer programs. It concludes with some preliminary observations and commentary regarding the use of the Regis College Lay Apostolate as a resource for the construction of a theology of the laity.

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Women Taking Initiative – The Network of Women Religious and Lay Apostles

In November of 1990, Debra Campbell presented a brief overview of the Regis program and its significance at the University of Notre Dame Cushwa Center’s Conference on “American Catholicism in the 20th Century.” Campbell concluded her presentation on the Regis College Lay Apostolate by saying,

The history of Catholic Action and the lay apostolate has yet to be written, but the fragmentary efforts in that direction that have been published thus far are hardly replete with accounts of Sisters inspiring their English classes with the zeal to teach school for free in Guam for a year or two after graduation . . . Sister John Sullivan . . . may be exceptional in some ways. [Her story is] larger than life; [it stands] out like the tip of an iceberg. That iceberg represents the shared experiences and values of Catholic sisters and their female students in parochial schools, convent schools, academies and Catholic colleges, a fundamental and essentially unacknowledged dimension of the story of the American laity in the twentieth-century.

Campbell accurately defines the task for U.S. Catholic historians in the years to come. The fundamental though unexplored area of the interfacing of lay and religious women in the pre-Vatican II U.S. Catholic Church deserves attention. The particular example of the Regis College Lay Apostolate offers material for preliminary commentary in that direction.

The history of the Regis College Lay Apostolate advances our understanding of the ways in which lay Catholic movements develop through the examination of its

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1 Debra Campbell, "Beyond Pagan Babies."
2 Ibid., 9-10.
organic network of religious and lay women. Personal relationships and informal contacts characterized the organic nature of the network. The personal relationship between Sr. John and Sr. Inez made possible the inception of the Lay Apostolate. The public success of Marie McCormack’s first year in Guam and her influence upon the Regis students motivated Sr. John to identify additional opportunities for Regis graduates to serve as teachers. Significantly, this informal networking functioned independently of the ecclesial leadership. Women religious sought one another’s help in staffing Catholic mission schools, and the lay participants were welcomed collaborators in their ministry. Birthed more than a decade prior to the Second Vatican Council, this program raises intriguing questions about the relationship between lay women and women religious in the 1950s and 60s.

Two elements of the Regis College Lay Apostolate story serve as significant resources for historians. First, the Lay Apostles’ self-perceptions, previously unexplored by both historians and the women themselves, and second, the interfacing that took place between the lay and religious women – namely the relationships of mutual benefit and respect that existed between women religious and their lay female students. Both these aspects of the Lay Apostolate manifest valuable points for better understanding certain influential segments of women in the pre-conciliar U.S. Catholic Church.

A 1960 article by Sr. John, “College Students and the Missions,” highlights the way in which she perceived the role of women religious, and the unique perspective she shared with the Lay Apostles.³ In describing her role as a religious sister and educator,

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Sr. John quotes Pius XII who said, "The vocation of the Nun is fully and completely apostolic: unlimited by circumstances, place or time, it reaches out everywhere and always to all that regards the honor of her spouse and the salvation of souls." Her use of this particular quote asserts her self-understanding as being unlimited by any existing boundaries placed on the laity by the ecclesial hierarchy. Sr. John implicitly identifies herself as a member of the mystical body of Christ who, by the simple fact of her baptism and additionally her vocation as a woman religious, is called to the apostolic life of sharing Christ's love with the world. Although it would be inappropriate to suggest that Sr. John promoted an early feminist movement, she did actively live her apostolic vocation and challenge her female students to do the same.

The women perceived themselves as vital to the Lay Apostolate. They believed that they were personally needed to teach in the mission schools. This perception and belief was a product of both the Catholic culture and Sr. John’s persistent invitations and enthusiasm for the program. Yet their willingness to leave their familiar New England setting to serve those in need is a profound witness to the active response to the call for lay involvement on behalf of this group of lay Catholic women in the 1950s and 1960s.

Sr. John’s program and the women who served in it were unconventional in many ways. Yet contemporary Church teachings of that period and the responsibility those teachings placed on the laity through Catholic Action movements informed the Lay Apostolate’s purpose. While the program did place the women in “role appropriate” work as lay teachers, it also challenged social boundaries for single laywomen as they chose to travel across the country or the world. Their active roles as teachers, principals,

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4 Ibid., 19.
and catechists were socially acceptable because of their unique circumstances in serving with women religious or clergy.

In some ways the Lay Apostles were co-opted into the culture of women religious. They were thrown into large classes (some had 50 children or more) without any preparation or training. Women religious in the first half of the twentieth century often faced the same predicament. Some of the Lay Apostles lived with the religious sisters or at least in close proximity to them. In some cases they celebrated daily mass with the sisters and assisted them with the children’s catechetical instruction. Regardless of their daily interactions, both groups, in their distinctive roles, were essential to the success of the Lay Apostolate – the mystical body of Christ at work.

Ultimately it can be said that the women religious and laywomen involved in the Regis College Lay Apostolate were mutually dependent upon one another for the program’s success. Only lay people could experience the opportunities provided through the connections among women religious. Sr. John could never have left Regis to teach in the missions herself. Yet the contacts that led to the opportunities for the Regis graduates could only have been made by her. The spread of Catholic education and the demand for mission school teachers in the mid-twentieth century surpassed the number of religious available to staff their institutions. Their dedication and organization laid the path down which the Regis Lay Apostles, and eventually members of many other organizations, were able to give of their very lives in service to resource-poor communities.
The Regis Lay Apostolate as Prototype of Today’s 200+ Lay Volunteer Programs

Both contemporary sources to the Regis Lay Apostolate and recent historical works such as Campbell’s recognize the significance of the program as a forerunner of today’s lay volunteer movement. A 1959 America article on the spread of the lay missionary apostolate to international missions highlighted Sr. John’s “imaginative lay mission program.” The following year, an article in The Shield-Collegian calling for lay workers and describing the “give-a-year” plan at St. Joseph College in Emmitsburg, Maryland, clarified that “[t]his particular lay apostolate movement . . . was originated in 1950 by Sister Mary John, C.S.J., of Regis College.”

The recognition continued in Columbia in 1963. The article “Can Teach – Will Travel” on the Lay Apostolate, quoted two priests who credited Sr. John with the inception of the contemporary lay volunteer movement. James P. Cotter, S.J. stated, “Where did the notion of preparing for service as lay missionaries first appear? Credit should go to Sister John and the girls of Regis College in Weston.” Fr. John Sullivan, founder of the Extension Volunteers, gave equal recognition. He said, “Sister John, C.S.J., is the pioneer in this lay volunteer movement, especially on the college level. It should be a matter of record. She is an outstanding woman and no single person has made a greater contribution to the lay volunteer movement.” Her contemporaries as well as historians recognize Sr. John Sullivan’s significant contributions to the entire lay

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8 Ibid., 40.
9 Ibid.
volunteer movement in the U.S. She was not only influential among lay women volunteers but among all lay volunteers, and her legacy continues.

Today the Catholic Network of Volunteer Services confirms a membership of nearly 200 faith-based lay volunteer programs with a combined 5,000 volunteers annually. Such programs are typical today, yet in 1959 – nine years after the Lay Apostolate’s inception – it was referred to as an “imaginative” program. Its successful combination of the disparate elements of educated Catholic laywomen engaged as teachers in distant mission schools was certainly unique. Unlike many of the 1950s Catholic Action movements managed by ecclesial leadership such as Chicago’s Specialized Catholic Action programs, the Regis College Lay Apostolate functioned independently from the Church hierarchy. Sr. John welcomed and sought Archbishop Cushing’s approval, but he was in no way involved in the program’s direction. The creative nature of the Regis Lay Apostolate paved the way for future lay volunteer programs. The Lay Apostles expanded the possibilities of extra-ecclesial lay ministry and participation in both Church-related and secular service programs.

Interestingly, the Lay Apostolate alumnae more readily connect themselves to the development of the secular Peace Corps and VISTA promoted under the Kennedy administration rather than recognizing their contributions to the multitude of faith-based organizations. Among the surveys and interviews conducted with the alumnae, fantastic stories emerged about Sr. John’s direct role in the formation of Kennedy’s Peace Corps. While it is not entirely implausible that the Catholic Senator from Massachusetts would

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10 Catholic Network of Volunteer Services staff member, conversation with author, December 1997.
have known about this program at a Catholic college outside of Boston, this researcher found no evidence that there was any communication or consultation between Sr. John and President Kennedy. Substantiated by both Sr. John and a 1985 article in the *Regis Today* alumnae magazine, Kennedy did meet a Lay Apostle in New Mexico while campaigning for the Presidency.\(^{11}\) Marie Vasaturo White ’56, who married and stayed in Santa Fe following her year in the Lay Apostolate, apparently had the opportunity to meet with Kennedy, circa 1959, and shared with him the vision of the Lay Apostolate during their conversation. According to Sr. John, Kennedy responded to Marie by saying, “I don’t know why we can’t do this on a national level.”\(^{12}\) Regardless of whether or not there was a direct connection between the Regis Lay Apostolate and the founding of the Peace Corps, this perception is held fondly in the collective nostalgia of many of the program’s alumnae. It is from this embrace of the secular that we can begin to observe the precarious task of describing a theology of the Regis Lay Apostles.

**A Theology of Regis Lay Apostles**

The history of the Regis College Lay Apostolate and the personal experiences of the Lay Apostles raise historical and ecclesiological issues. These issues arise out of the Lay Apostolate’s connection to the changing roles of lay and religious women in the pre-conciliar U.S. Catholic Church. These historical and ecclesiological questions invite speculation on the theological implications of this investigation. Even the term “theology” in this context is difficult to define. Embedded in the letters in the archives,

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the *Regis Herald* articles, the alumnae survey responses, and the oral interviews, are raw materials that can serve as resources toward a theology of the laity. While the Regis alumnae do not respond in explicit theological language to survey or interview questions, their recollections and insights do share characteristics common with praxis-oriented theology. This thesis concludes then with observations and questions for further exploration that are based on the particular example of the alumnae of the Regis College Lay Apostolate. Such efforts will prove helpful as U.S. Catholic historical theologians continue to search for a pre-conciliar theology of the laity.13

Official definitions of the role of the laity in the twentieth century have consistently called the faithful to the lay apostolate. Following the Catholic Action and lay apostolate pronouncements of the first half the twentieth century, the Second Vatican Council’s *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, articulated in 1965 a more contemporary understanding of the lay apostolate:

The lay apostolate, however, is a participation in the saving mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation, all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself. Moreover, through the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, there is communicated and nourished that charity toward God and man which is the soul of the entire apostolate. Now, the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can she become the

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13 It is important here to distinguish between a theology of the laity versus a theology for the laity. In 1944, John Courtney Murray set off a debate among Catholic intellectuals that lasted for years. His two-part article “Towards a Theology for the Layman,” *Theological Studies* 5 (1944), 43-75, 340-76, called for a theology for the laity that in Philip Gleason, “The Search for Unity and Its Sequel,” *Keeping the Faith: American Catholicism Past and Present* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 147, is described as having been “designed to help lay people in relating the truths of faith to the secular world in which they dwell.” The commentary here attempts to recognize the laity’s own implicit theology rather than to impose one upon them.
salt of the earth. Thus every laymen, by virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church herself, “according to the measure of Christ’s bestowal” (Eph. 4:7).¹⁴

This definition recognizes the extra-ecclesial role of the laity in contrast to the intra-ecclesial role of the clergy. More recently, the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes the apostolic role of the laity for today:

Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all [people] throughout the earth . . . Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it.¹⁵

Again the hierarchy identifies the unique role of the laity in the Church. These “official” definitions are helpful guides, but it is through lay people themselves that we must find the resources for a theology of the laity. The women of the Regis Lay Apostolate assumed extra-ecclesial roles as called for above, yet their explicit descriptions and recollections rarely connect them with this universal responsibility to serve in the lay apostolate.

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As we look for insights into the Regis women’s expressions of their relationship to God and the Church, we must examine the parameters of theological “expression.” Can the very act of saying “yes” to the challenge of serving in the Lay Apostolate for a year be considered a theological statement? Must theological expression include traditional theological rhetoric? Can the rhetoric of “service to the less fortunate” in fact serve as a theological resource? If the boundaries of theological expression are expanded to include broader manifestations in actions as well as words, then the resources of the Regis College Lay Apostolate will prove useful in the constructive work toward a theology of the laity.

The historical context of the Catholic Action movement and the Regis College Lay Apostolate provides a thorough background of the cultural and ecclesial influences of the time in which the women came of age in the Catholic Church. What remains unknown and will serve as the subject of this final investigation, is how the women implicitly and explicitly articulated and lived out their faith and how they perceived their role as lay women in the Church. The use of the theological categories of ecclesiology, discipleship, and the role of laity, will be intertwined and guide these tentative suggestions toward a theological construction.

The mystical body of Christ was the most consistent ecclesial image invoked by the complex Catholic Action movement in the U.S. Additionally, the responsibility of the laity to serve those in need was invariably promoted through the Catholic Action programs. Sr. John’s writings portray a theology similar to that of the wider Catholic Action movement. She wrote, “As educators of the laity, we Sisters have a tremendous opportunity and obligation to awaken in the students under our care the awareness of
Christ’s need of them.” As Sr. Honora had charged her nearly 20 years earlier to “work with the students so that they would be imbued with His love and His concern for those in need of help,” now Sr. John challenged other sisters and educators to instill the same values in their students. Sr. John’s theology of discipleship for herself and other women like her is apparent in the challenge issued and in its obligatory nature.

Beyond her own role and responsibility as a vowed lay woman, Sr. John indicated a contrast between the responsibility of the laity and hierarchy. She defines two separate groups into which Christians fall: the clergy with primarily pastoral duties, and the laity, whose duty it is to conquer the world for Christ, to propagate the faith and, therefore, to be apostles. Religious . . . are really a special group of laity who have organized in order to better fulfill their apostolic obligations.

Sr. John clearly separates the role of the clergy from that of the laity (including religious). The call here to “conquer the world for Christ” continues to be proclaimed today.

In the late 1950s, following her commission by Pius XII to spread the Lay Apostolate to other schools and students beyond Regis, Sr. John and the alumnae spoke at schools across the country. One of the speeches in the archives attributed to Carole Bocasky Remick ’54, captures the rhetorical similarities between the wider Catholic Action movement and the Regis College Lay Apostolate. She defined the Lay Apostolate as,

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18 Ibid., 21.
19 “The Regis Lay-Teaching Apostolate,” RCA. This speech is not dated or signed. Based on its location in the archival collection, it seemed to be credited to Carole Bocasky. It is likely that the speech was adapted from one of Sr. John’s own speeches because some of the quotations and sentences are identical to those found in speeches and promotional materials of Sr. John.
a movement to develop religious responsibility in the collegiate laity, to further the spread of Catholic education, and to offer to Catholic colleges the challenge that they accomplish – the formation of real Catholics.\textsuperscript{20}

Promotion of the responsibility of the laity was of primary significance to the movement. Additionally, she characterized the “social-educational significance” of the Regis College Lay Apostolate for the “Church militant today.” According to this speech,

\begin{quote}
The apostolic vocation, the responsibility to spread the faith, belongs to every baptized Catholic. It is consecrated by the sacrament of Confirmation which makes us soldiers of Christ, with duties of saving our own souls and of conquering the world for Christ.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

The implicit idea of the mystical body of Christ and the responsibility of each lay person to share it is ever present in this public portrayal of the Regis College Lay Apostolate, even though today the Lay Apostles themselves rarely use such militant language in their reflections.

While many alumnae of the Regis College Lay Apostolate respond in similar ways regarding the benefits reaped from their experience of service, participation in the experience as a whole does not predict any particular effect in the lives of the alumnae. The former Lay Apostles went on to work in a variety of career fields, to become involved in a wide range of community organizations, and to engage in or disengage themselves from the Catholic Church on a number of levels.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 1-2.
According to the survey responses and interviews, two of the important effects of the year of service were personal maturity and an expanded worldview. The women describe the value of the experience in many ways: “It strengthened my values and enriched my catholic [sic] faith”; “. . . knowing I helped in some small way to bring those children closer to Christ”; “. . . the Lay Apostolate broadened my [sic] world. I must admit I didn’t think of it as service on behalf of the Catholic Church, but rather an adventure, and I was the person who profited”; “knowing I could live without the material things I had thought were important”; “gave me an opportunity to grow up [sic] away from home”; “It has directed my entire adult life and impacted how I’ve raised my own children”; “exposure to a new culture”; “It enriched me intellectually and spiritually”; “I am forever grateful for having been given the opportunity to serve the Lord in this capacity . . . I look back on it as one of the best years of my life.”

The language of the Christian militant used in Carole Bocasky’s speech is virtually absent from their responses. One would not expect to see the terms such as “Christian militant,” “Mystical Body of Christ,” or “Catholic Action” today, but the overwhelming sense of belonging to a unified group as a Catholic young adult member of the wider lay apostolate that existed in the mid-twentieth century seems to have been abandoned. This researcher found the lack of identification with the Church as the body of Christ and the women’s singular focus on personal growth surprising at first. But closer consideration of the profound shift — in language, practice, and theology — that occurred at Vatican II helps to explicate these circumstances.

22 Responses to survey question 12. See Appendix 2.
Two examples of the shift in language will give greater clarity on the issue of the lack of theological language in the expressions of the Lay Apostolate alumnae. The first comes from outside the Lay Apostolate. Sandra Yocum Mize’s work on Little Flower Parish of South Bend, Indiana provides a valuable example of the effects of Vatican II on the language and theology of the laity. A distinct change occurs in the parish’s description of the “CCD program” between 1966 and 1969. Referring to these directories, Mize writes,

In 1966, the program was the “Confraternity of Christian Doctrine,” described as a “lay organization” mandated by Church law to be active in every parish. Its purpose was: “to spread the knowledge of Christ and His Church in order to achieve a total re-Christianization of our society.” In 1969, the program bore a new name, “Little Flower Christian Development Program.” As the directory explained, “this new name . . . gives promises of a revitalized approach to the entire CCD area.” The program’s expressed purpose was: “to help each person find in Christianity a means of having life more abundantly.”

The shift in 1969 explicitly demonstrates the new language of personal growth adopted by the laity following Vatican II.

A second example of this shift is found in an example from an alumna’s survey response quoted in Chapter 3. When describing the sense of call she experienced in choosing to commit a year to the Lay Apostolate, the alumna responded with words most commonly found in a post-conciliar liturgical song. She wrote, “it was like a call from

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God . . . ‘Who will go, who shall I send [sic]?’ ‘Here I am Lord, send me.’” A similar passage also occurs in scripture, but the popular song “Here I Am” by Dan Schutte is the more likely source of her response.24 This example illustrates the laity’s adoption of contemporary theological language characterized by an emphasis on personal growth and self-improvement.

The reality of this shift in emphasis and the women’s inability to connect to the theological language of the time of the Lay Apostolate may also point to the disunifying effects of the renewal that occurred at Vatican II. An essay by Philip Gleason addresses what he describes as the “spiritual earthquake” and “disintegration” that he and many adult Catholics experienced following the Council. In “The Search for Unity and Its Sequel,” Gleason argues that

stress on unity and integral Catholicism from the 1920s through the 1950s heightened the disintegrative impact of changes in the postconciliar years and made those changes particularly unsettling to the faith of persons whose religious character had been formed during the earlier period.25

The women of the Regis Lay Apostolate were among those “whose religious character had been formed during the earlier period.” While they did perhaps experience a sort of disintegration from the integral Catholicism in which they were raised, the Lay Apostles as a whole maintained a strong sense of connection to the Regis College Lay Apostolate.

The very fact that more than 40 percent of the surveys sent to the Lay Apostolate alumnae were returned is indicative of the undeniable connection many of the women feel toward Regis College, one another, Sr. John, and the Lay Apostolate. During interviews with the alumnae, I witnessed the enthusiastic sharing that took place among women who had never before met but had in common their participation in the Lay Apostolate. They share a common experience which transcends the mid-twentieth century context and language of Catholic Action that once characterized the program.

The ways in which the alumnae of the Regis Lay Apostolate described their experiences in the program through the surveys and interviews did not generally match the rhetoric of Catholic Action or the sense of identification with a movement and spirit larger than themselves as I expected. Further reflection has shown me that my expectations were unrealistic because I did not anticipate the dramatic shift in the women’s language from their pre-conciliar participation in the Lay Apostolate to today. It is also possible that the survey itself was worded in such a way that I invited the more contemporary personal growth language. Regardless, the insights gained by the women of the Regis College Lay Apostolate are valuable for the difficult task of formulating a theology of the mid-twentieth century laity.

To conclude, it is appropriate to call to mind the thousands of children who were able to attend school because of the generosity of the Regis Lay Apostles and many more lay Catholics who followed them in similar pursuits. They continue to teach us today through their stories and by their example. Their legacy made possible the multitude of lay volunteer programs serving throughout the world today, and their stories provide us with material for developing and understanding a theology of the laity.
APPENDIX I

CHRONOLOGY OF REGIS LAY APOSTLES AND SITES OF SERVICE

Below is a chronology of the Regis College Lay Apostles from 1950-1972. This chart is included to provide the reader with an overview of the development of the movement: the number of apostles each year of the program; the progression from primarily domestic U.S. placements to primarily placements beyond the continental United States; and the variety of women who returned surveys and participated in interviews.

It is important to note that this information is based on Sr. John’s “History if the Regis College Lay Apostolate” held in the Regis College Archives. Some corrections were made based on survey information received by the author as well as through the author’s reference to the 1997 Regis College Alumnae Directory.

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³ References such as (2) indicate the total number of years served as a Lay Apostle. Those without additional notations served one year, although it is possible that the author is unaware of some of the women who served more than one year.

² Reference to a different class year indicates the year that the woman graduated from Regis during a year other than the one during which she served as a Lay Apostle.
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<td>Anne-Marie Turner</td>
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APPENDIX 2:

SURVEY OF REGIS COLLEGE LAY APOSTOLATE ALUMNAE

Please feel free to use additional paper if you need more space to respond. Simply indicate the number of the question to which you are responding on the additional paper. Thank You.

1. Name_________________________ Maiden Name (if different) ____________________________
Address __________________________ City ______________________ State __
Zip ______ Home Phone ______ Work Phone _______ E-mail ______

2. Date of Birth ______/_____/____ Where were you raised (primarily)? _______________________

3. How would you describe the background of the family in which you were raised?
   a. Ethnicity: Mother____________________ Father____________________
   b. Religion: ________________________________
   c. Economic status: ____________________________
   d. Parents’ highest educational level: Mother___________ Father___________
   e. Occupation(s): Mother____________________ Father____________________

4. Major at Regis____________________ Degree earned ______ Grad. Date ______

5. Were you a member of the Regis College Mission Unit as a student?  Y  N
If yes, are there particular projects of which you recall being a part? ______________________

6. Year(s) you served as a Regis Lay Apostle _______ Location of Service ______________________
Placement/ job in the Lay Apostolate _________________________________________________
Brief description of your work responsibilities _______________________________________

7. What most motivated you to serve in the Regis College Lay Apostolate? (please check your response)
   ____ The opportunity to travel
   ____ The opportunity to be of service to others
   ____ The idea of being involved in the work of Catholic Action
   ____ The influence of Sr. John or others at Regis
   ____ Other (please explain)____________________

8. Was there an individual leader or figure in the Church who inspired your participation in the Lay Apostolate (i.e. someone you regarded as a hero or heroine of the Church)? If so, who and why?
   _______________________________________________

9. What did you understand the purpose of the Lay Apostolate to be? _______________________

10. Explain how aware you were of Catholic Action prior to your service in the Lay Apostolate.
    _______________________________________________
11. Explain the impact of your involvement in Catholic Action during and shortly after your service in the Lay Apostolate.

______________________________

12. What do you consider *today* to have been the greatest value of serving in the Lay Apostolate?

______________________________

13. What action have you taken since your service in the Lay Apostolate, as a probable result of your experiences in the Lay Apostolate? Please be specific.
   a. Choice of career?
   b. Further education?
   d. Community involvement?
   e. Church or parish involvement?
   f. Political/social justice involvement?
   g. Leadership in any of the above?

______________________________

14. Interview opportunities:

   BOSTON AREA ALUMNAE: Would you be available for an interview in person (approx. 30 min. long) the week of March 16-20? 
   Y   N

   If yes, which day of that week would be best for you? 16 17 18 19 20

   Where would you prefer to meet? HOME OFFICE REGIS COLLEGE

   I will call you to set a time and place for the interview the week of March 9-13.

   When would you prefer to be contacted? DAY EVENING

   At which phone number? HOME WORK

   ALL ALUMNAE: Would you be willing to be interviewed by phone? Y N

   If yes, would you prefer to be contacted during the: DAY EVENING WEEKEND

   At which phone number? HOME WORK

15. I invite you to share your personal stories, memories, and feelings about the Regis College Lay Apostolate – positive and/or negative. Feel free to use the space below and/or additional paper for your response.

My sincere thanks for your time and participation in this research. Please return the survey to me in the enclosed envelope at your nearest convenience. For those in the Boston area who are interested in being interviewed, please return the survey by Monday, March 9. I would appreciate receiving all surveys by March 23.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Resources: Regis College Lay Apostolate Program:

Regis College Lay Apostolate Archival Collection. Regis College Library. Weston, Massachusetts.


\(^1\) The abbreviation RCA for Regis College Archives is utilized throughout the text's footnotes and bibliography.


_______. "History of the Regis College Lay Apostolate." 1980 (?). Photocopy obtained from author.


Phone interview by author, 1 June 1998. Bethany Health Care Center, Massachusetts.

Secondary Sources Related to the Regis College Lay Apostolate:


Williams, George Hunston. Regis College Commencement Address, June 14, 1964. Photocopy. RCA.

Secondary Sources Contemporary to the Regis College Lay Apostolate:

Selected articles contemporary to the Lay Apostolate were utilized from pertinent Catholic periodicals (e.g., *America, Catholic Action, Catholic Charities Review, Catholic Mind, Commonweal, Social Justice Review*).


Pax Romana. International Movement of Catholic Students, General Secretariate. The Role of the University in Catholic Action. 1939.


Papal and Church Teaching on Laity and Catholic Action:


Contemporary Resources of Catholic Action and American Catholicism:


