

Important Dates in February

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- 1 - 7 (1920) Seven Sisters died of Spanish influenza in Alton, Illinois, and Steelton, Pennsylvania, in the first week of February.
 - 2 (1870) Nine ASCs from Gurtweil, Germany, depart for the U.S. in response to the Alton, Illinois, bishop's request for teachers in Belle Prairie, Illinois.
 - 4 (1805) Birth and baptism of St. Maria de Mattias
 - 5 (1870) Pioneer Sisters leave Le Havre, France, on the ship, "Hammonia," for New York City.
 - 6 (1863) Paulina Schneeberger was born in Baden, Germany.
 - 7 (1988) Public welcome of sanctuary family (Lorenz)
 - 8 (1983) Religious profession of the first Liberian in Gardnersville, Liberia
 - 16 (1870) ASCs who left February 2 from Gurtweil, Germany, arrive in New York.
 - 17 (1852) Spirit of St. Maria's Rule conveyed to the German Adorers
 - 21 (1981) Wichita Province establishes novitiate at Masan, Korea.
 - 26 (1934) Constitution revision approved
 - 28 (1870) First ASC from Gurtweil, Germany, arrives at Belle Prairie (Piopolis), Illinois.

February 4, 1805 Maria De Mattias, Foundress of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, was born in Vallecorsa, Italy. Maria died in 1866, was declared "blessed" by the Church in 1950 and declared a saint in 2003.

February 17, 1852 As a result of the affiliation of the German Precious Blood Sisters in Steinerberg and later Ottmarsheim in Alsace with Blessed Maria De Mattias' congregation in Italy, an official visitation of the Ottmarsheim community was made by a Missionary of the Precious Blood from Rome. He told the Sisters that he had come "above all as a messenger of peace and to mitigate to some extent" their Holy Rule. (Rev. Karl Rolfus had drafted a rule for them before their amalgamation with Blessed Maria's institute.) He said that the Rule of the Precious Blood Order was a rule of clemency, benignity, gentleness, mildness and love." The Sister who kept the journal at Ottmarsheim also noted that the Visitor brought the German Sisters gifts, little statues and relics of saints, from their Sisters in Italy.

February 2, 1870 In response to the Bishop of Alton's request for the Precious Blood Sisters to serve the educational needs of the Church in Belle Prairie, Illinois, nine sisters departed from the Gurtweil motherhouse in Baden, Germany to establish an American foundation. By meeting this challenge to spread the Gospel message in a foreign land, the Sisters acted with generosity and foresight. In joyful acceptance of the hardships inherent in serving the people of God in the wilderness of southern Illinois, they provided refuge for their congregation, which was eventually driven from Baden by governmental decree.

February 5, 1870 The Gurtweil Sisters en route to America were accompanied by their Spiritual Director, Rev. Anton Fraessle, as far as Basel, where they had a photograph taken. The Sisters continued on to Paris and then Le Harve, where they boarded the French steamer "Hammonia" for a stormy 12-day voyage to New York City. The first nine Sisters to sail to America were: Sister Albertine Rogg (the superior), Sister Theresa Wissmann, Sister Walburga Schneider, Sister Emilie Zimmermann (who died the following year), Sister Caroline Knoerr, Sister Benedicta Regele, Sister Philippine Moser, Sister Josephine Dietrich, and Sister Mechtilde Muhlhaupt.

February 16, 1870 Upon their arrival in New York City, the nine pioneer Sisters were informed that a new bishop had been installed at Alton on January 3. They rested at a German hotel before proceeding by railway to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The Sisters missed their connection to Pittsburgh and had to retrace their journey to Philadelphia and endure a prolonged period waiting at the station. From the old fort city, they came by boat down the Ohio River to Cincinnati and again boarded the train for Vincennes, from which they continued, after a brief stay, on a division line to Evansville, Ind. The trip from Evansville to Shawneetown was by boat. The last link of the journey to Belle Prairie was made by wagon. (Actually, the settlement called Belle Prairie was about three miles from their destination, which was later named Piopolis. The former name was used because the settlement contained the nearest post office.)

February 28, 1870 After sojourning for four days among the kind and hospitable people of Shawneetown, a group of simple modest farmers arrived with a wagon to escort the Sisters to their destination in Belle Prairie. They drove 50 miles each of the two days on rough roads until they arrived at their new home just after dark. The pastor and parishioners were gathered about the two-story frame house to greet them. The first sisters of the Precious Blood from Gurtweil in Germany were at home in America.

February 1-7, 1920 Sisters of the Alton Vicariate (later Columbia Province) at Nazareth Home in Alton, Illinois and Steelton, Pennsylvania sustained seven deaths during this week as a result of an epidemic of influenza. Sister Angeline Planine died in Steelton. Sister Madgdalen Hodrus, Sister Alphonsa Willebald, Sister Floriana Urbatzka, Sister Christiana Crnjac, Sister Theresa Rudhard, and Sister Jerome Luhmuller died in Alton.