

The Apostolate of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Michigan's
Upper Peninsula

Six Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary began their apostolate in Michigan in September of 1886. Four other religious congregations had attempted missions at Sault Ste. Marie prior to the arrival of the IBVM's. Houses with cracked walls, cold rooms with limited furnishings, frugal diet, and almost no income were some of the deterrents. During their first year, the "Loretto's" were obliged to move three times, eventually settling in a house on Spruce Street while they tried to raise funds for "an academy."

Social, economic and cultural conditions in Michigan's Upper Peninsula made it imperative that the Sisters expand their curriculum to the secondary school level and that they take measures to house boarders. Loretto Academy opened in 1899.

St. Mary's parish built an elementary school which was staffed by the Sisters from 1902 to 1971. From that year until 1985 the school was used as the catechetical center.

Although the Institute of the Blessed Virgin has had no community in Sault Ste. Marie since then, the Sisters presence remains in the pastoral work of members of the Institute at Baraga, Bay Mills, Menominee and Stephenson.

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