

The History of Women's Charitable Orders in the Brno Diocese in Recent Decades

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This study gives an account of the work of individual women's charitable orders and congregations in the Brno Diocese and also endeavours to substantiate the usefulness and benefit of the care they provide at the present time. Charitable care can be considered the predecessor and precursor to professional nursing. Attention is focused on ten charitable orders that worked or work in the Brno Diocese. The work maps out their operations, their precise function, their number of members and age structure, and the intrinsic nature of their activity.

Key words: charitable care; ecclesiastic orders; diocese; nuns; congregation; convents; hospices; Christian faith; treating the sick

Charitable care provided by religious orders and the subsequent treatment of the ill covers an extremely long stage in the development of care for the ill whose beginnings stretch back to the early Middle Ages, to the beginnings of Christianity. The first convents were founded in the fourth century with the aim of caring for the ill, and many women from higher social classes engaged in caring for the ill. The development of charitable nursing orders and congregations was influenced primarily by a ruling by Pope Gregory the Great who in the year 817 imposed on the monasteries the obligation of caring for the poor, disabled and ill. Monasteries and hospitals were initially built by members of the ruling families, though they were later joined by wealthy members of the aristocracy and rich townspeople.¹ This initially meant a room with twelve beds (from the number of apostles) which was connected with a chapel or monastery. These hospices were designed for the poor and ill,

¹ Plevová, I. – Slowik, R. (2008). *Vybrané kapitoly z historie ošetřovatelství*. Ostrava: Ostrava University, p. 26.

particularly travellers, though also townspeople, merchants and richer people.² The largest numbers of such hospices were established in this country in the pre-Hussite period.

The political and power changes following February 1948 had a violent impact on the functioning system of charitable care. Until this time, members of women's religious orders made up a large proportion of the staff of hospitals and social and charitable institutions where they belonged among the leading experts. They were, nevertheless, sent to internment camps. The "Ecclesiastic Six", the commission convened by Communist Minister Alexej Čepička, discussed the "Dismantlement of the Convents" on 3 March 1950, during the first stage of which more than ten thousand nuns were relocated. In the subsequent second stage, 4,073 of these nuns were reassigned to thirty-three centres from which the majority of them were then assigned to industrial production. In the meantime, nurses who were to replace the nuns in hospitals were given rapid training. Implementation of the project continued from the end of August to October 1950 with the aim of terminating the employment of the nuns. A total of around 720 convents were abolished and more than ten thousand nuns interned. Individual religious communities tried to preserve their orders wherever possible in spite of all the obstacles.³

The establishment of the Brno Diocese was connected with the church reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II in the 1770s which had a radical impact on the life of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the entire monarchy. The Olomouc Bishopric was elevated to an Archbishopric in 1777 at the direct instigation of the Empress and on the basis of a Papal Bull issued by Pope Pius VI, and a new bishopric in Brno was established in Moravia on 5 December of the same year. The first Bishop of Brno was Matyáš František Chorinský of Ledská, hitherto provost of the Brno chapter and Adjunct Bishop of Olomouc. The new Brno Diocese took in 151 parishes in eighteen administrative groupings or deaneries. At the present time, the diocese takes in 449 parishes in twenty deaneries; sixteen male and twenty-four female orders and congregations are also active here. Since 1990, the Brno Diocese has been headed by Bishop ThLic. Vojtěch Cikrle.⁴

² Staňková, M. (2003). *Z historie charitativní péče a řádové ošetrovatelské péče*. Praha. Sonoma Magazines, p. 3.

³ Foltýn, D. et al. (2005). *Encyklopedie moravských a slezských klášterů*. Praha.

⁴ *Biskupství brněnské. Historie brněnské diecéze* [at. 2016-01-12]. For more detail see: Charouz, Z. (2006). *Pohledy do dějin brněnské diecéze*. Brno. Also: Říhová, K. (2014). *Perzekuce církve v brněnské diecézi v 50. letech 20. století a její dopad na katechezi*. Brno. Masaryk University, Faculty of Education, (Bachelor thesis).

Ten charitable women's orders working in the Brno Bishopric were included in the study. Seven of these orders are still more or less active.⁵ We will first mention three orders that are, to all intents and purposes, no longer active in the diocese. The first of these is the *Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Holy Saviour (Congregatio Sororum Sanctissimi Salvatoris)* which formerly cared for the sick in hospitals, in sanatoriums for the long-term sick and in old people's homes. The congregation had a school of nursing in the provincial house of the Province of Bohemia and Moravia in Znojmo from 1937. In the years 1938–1945, the nuns were forced to move to Slovakia (to Bratislava) and the homes in Znojmo were occupied by German nuns. They were able to return to Znojmo only after the war. The province had twenty-eight members as of 1948. The school of nursing was nationalised in 1950, though the nuns were allowed to remain at the hospital. Some of the nuns also cared for the household of the priest or taught at religious schools. From the 1960s until 1991, they worked in the Brno Diocese at the institute for mentally disabled young people in Borotín near Boskovice. They then left for Znojmo and helped out in the vicarages on an occasional basis. In view of their great age, they stopped performing their work in 2005. Motto: *Now We Help the World with Our Prayers and the Sacrifices Brought by Age and Illness.*

For the *Society of Daughters of Christian Love of Saint Vincent de Paul – the Vincentian nuns (Congregatio Sororum Misericordiae S. Vincentii)*, the nineteen nineties were characterised by a gradual abandonment of its social care institutes, most frequently due to retirement. These nuns were gradually placed in charitable homes for order members. The society's beginnings date back to 1853 when its members jointly founded an orphanage with members of the Society of Saint Joseph in Zábřehovice in Brno where they worked as nurses and teachers. Following World War II, there were already as many as 1,200 nuns in the province working in fifty facilities, not merely schools and orphanages, but also poorhouses. They also performed nursing duties in hospitals and psychiatric sanatoriums. After 1950, the nuns were gradually forced to leave their communities and their jobs. The last nuns left the hospitals in 1960. They were deported to “concentration camps” and worked in the fields and the factories. They were again allowed to serve in hospitals and other social institutions in 1968. In 1988, the society gained the approval of the Ministry of Culture to receive new members to serve the aged and ill priests and nuns. Today, the society operates all over the world, and since January 2007 has held the status of advisor to

⁵ Viček, V. (ed., 2005). *Ženské řehole za komunismu 1948–1989*. Olomouc.

the UN Economic and Social Council. There are still two small communities of three members in Brno engaged in healthcare, charitable nursing and community care and pastoral work.⁶

The Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Hedwig (Congregation Sororum S. Hedwigis) was established in Wrocław (Breslau) in June 1859, though it left for Nezamyslice na Hané in Moravia in 1878. In time, it operated in the Brno Diocese (in Mikulov, Luky, Valtice and Lednice) where its nuns worked in hospitals, nurseries, children's homes and old people's homes. During the war years they worked as nurses in military hospitals. The nuns were dismissed from the hospitals in the nineteen fifties. Some were interned, while the older members were sent to the Charitable Home in Mukařov near Prague. The congregation accepted unwed Catholics over the age of eighteen. In 1981, their provincial house in Břežany near Znojmo was confiscated and the convent chapel was dissolved. In the coming years, they were able to survive in a single parish room in Břežany. Ten years later (1991), the former provincial chateau in Břežany was returned to the congregation and turned into the Social Care Institute for Mentally Disabled Children. Of the original number of around 160 nuns (in 1950), just nine sisters remained in the congregation in 2005.⁷

We will begin our survey of active charitable orders with a look at the *Order of Saint Elizabeth (Ordo Sanctae Elisabethae)*. The order is guided by the Order of Saint Augustine and has its own statute. The individual convents are headed by a Mother Superior (Mater antistita). The sisters are divided into choir nuns and lay nuns. The order was introduced to the Czech Lands at the beginning of the 18th century. The Sisters of Saint Elizabeth came to Brno in April 1749 and first worked in a house on the corner of the streets Pekařská and Kopečná. These premises soon ceased to suffice, however, and a hospital, chapel and convent were built by the River Svratka. In addition to hospital duties, the nuns also taught children of preschool age. The hospice run by the Order of Saint Elizabeth gained the status of a hospital, although it continued to be a convent building. German nuns worked there under the Protectorate. The life of the order was entirely suppressed after 1950 and the building

⁶ For more detail see: Majerčíková, J. (2010). *Inspirace spirituality svatého Vincence de Paul pro dnešní evangelizaci*. Praha: Charles University.

⁷ Hrudníková, M. (1997). *Řeholní život v Českých zemích. Řeholní řády a kongregace sekulární instituty a společnosti apoštolského života v České republice*. Kostelní Vydří, pp. 213–214.

Also: Juráková, M. (2016). *Dějiny Kongregace sester sv. Hedviky*. Olomouc, Palacký University, Saints Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, (Bachelor thesis).

became part of a charity. The nuns were allowed to work only under strict supervision and were made to do even the hardest work. In the nineteen sixties, the convent was taken over by the Municipal Social Care Institution in Brno as a sanatorium for the long-term sick which established an old people's home in the building in which the nuns capable of work also worked. They were also joined by nuns from Prague. The rest were taken to Broumov and then to Osek.

After 1989, the order applied a restitution claim for the return of its property. The Municipal Social Care Institution in Brno operated here until 1997, when it left the building. The building remained deserted and the nuns attended the Hospital of the Brothers of Charity where they occasionally served. In November 1998, the Saint Elizabeth Hospice, falling under the administration of the Masaryk Memorial Cancer Institute in Brno, opened in the original building. In September 2001, however, the hospice was closed for financial reasons, though the civic organisation Gabriela was established at the initiative of former employees and their friends and operation of the Saint Elizabeth Hospice was restored at its initiative on 1 April 2004; the congregation counted twenty-seven members as of 1 January 2005. The hospice provides comprehensive high-quality care for the incurably ill. Motto: *Bring Joy to Others!* The Sisters of Saint Elizabeth see Christ himself in unwell and forsaken people, and put themselves entirely at their service and serve them.⁸

One of the three oldest women's congregations are the Sisters of Mercy of Saint Charles Borromeo (*Congregatio Virginum Sororum Misericordiae S. Caroli Borromei*), established in 1652 by the young lawyer Chauvenel in Nancy, France as a congregation of papal law; the first sisters' house and hospice were also established there. Archbishop of Milan Saint Charles Borromeo, known for his selfless charity, became patron of the congregation. The first four Sisters of Borromeo appeared in Prague, where they purchased two houses to form a basic hospital (today's Pod Petřínem University Hospital) and Saint Charles' Church, at the end of the eighteen thirties. The sisters' work began to spread to other parts of Bohemia and Moravia, including Brno (centred at Údolní 39) where as many as sixty children from the poorest families in Brno were entrusted to the care of the Sisters of Borromeo. From the end of the 19th century, the nuns also worked in the village of Božice in the Znojmo area. During World War II, they cared for the sick and injured in hospitals and military hospitals. From 1945 onwards, the work of the Sisters of Saint

⁸ *Kronika Konventu sester Alžbětinek v Brně. Pamětní spis ke 250. výročí působení sester Alžbětinek v Brně.* Typescript, unpagged.

Borromeo also spread to social institutions; at this time their number rose to more than 1,500 members. Three houses were established in Brno where the nuns could live a civilian life. They worked at Saint Anne's Hospital and an old people's home. They also taught in schools. The original house in Brno on the street Údolní was repaired and served young people.⁹

Immediately following its repair, all the property of the Sisters of Saint Borromeo was taken over in the nineteen fifties by the company Zbrojovka Brno which used it as a hostel for apprentices. The older Sisters of Borromeo were relocated to charitable homes, while the younger among them were moved to the border lands where they worked in textile factories. The Sisters of Borromeo also came to Hradiště in Znojmo in 1958 where they found a new home (particularly for older nuns); they had their headquarters here until 1996 when they moved to Šporkova 12 in Prague (the House of Saint Notburga). The nuns helped out in a residential centre for mothers in need and performed pastoral work. The community of nuns was closed in September 2007 for personal, operational and technical reasons. Most of the staff went to a charitable home in the town of Albrechtice. Motto of the Sisters of Borromeo: *Give merciful love to all your close ones and help soothe the wounds of body and soul.*¹⁰

The Congregation of Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis Under the Protection of the Holy Family (Misericordia Congregatio Sororum III. Sub. S. Franciscus praesidio Sanctae Familiae) was established in Brno on 15 March 1866 and took over tasks from the military administration in caring for the injured following the end of the Austro-Prussian War at the initiative of Bishop of Brno František Bauer. Chairman of the Red Cross Count Felix Vetter of Lille became a great benefactor of the young

⁹ For a more general view see: Soukupová, D. (2015). *Vzdělání a služba všeobecných sester Kongregace Milosrdných sester sv. Karla Boromejského působící v České republice*. České Budějovice: The University of South Bohemia, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, (Dissertation).

¹⁰ Kongregace Milosrdných sester sv. Karla Boromejského. *Dům sv. Antonína, historie*. Available from: <<http://www.boromejky.cz/25.htm>>; Also: *Kongregace Milosrdných sester sv. Karla Boromejského: láska smrtí nekončí*. Český Těšín; Svobodová, M. (2007). *Škola a klášter Kongregace milosrdných sester sv. Karla Boromejského v Líšni*. Brno: Masaryk University, Faculty of Education, (Bachelor thesis); Krátká, E. (2016). *Kongregace Milosrdných sester sv. Karla Boromejského*. Brno: Masaryk University, Faculty of Arts (Dissertation); Slaběňáková, J. (2008). *Působení Kongregace Milosrdných sester svatého Karla Boromejského na území brněnského biskupství od jejího příchodu až do dnešní doby*. Brno: Masaryk University, Faculty of Arts (Dissertation).

congregation. The sisters set themselves the goal of caring for the sick, initially in their homes and later at Brno's Saint Anne's Hospital. The sisters' first house, where applicants took courses in treating the sick, was established in nearby Černá Pole (now a borough of Brno) which was leased by the Red Cross. From September 1914 onwards, 20–25 nuns cared for the injured from the fronts of World War I. The congregation grew rapidly, and shortly after the war already had more than 140 nuns and twelve aspirants who worked in four hospitals in Brno (mostly at Saint Anne's and at Žlutý Kopec) and in hospices in Jihlava, Ivančice, Třebíč, Jevíčko, Drnovice and Žernůvka near Tišnov. There were 355 sisters in the congregation in 1936, and the order's first school of nursing was opened in Brno in the same year both for members of the order and, later, for civilian sisters. During the years of the Protectorate, sisters from Slovakia were housed in the convent on the street known as Siroťčí (today's Grohova). They were joined in October 1940 by sisters from the Congregation of Saints Cyril and Methodius who had been given notice from the convent and grammar school in Lerchova Street in Brno. In 1945, following the most essential repairs, instruction was restored at the school of nursing in substitute premises at the convent.¹¹

After February 1948, efforts were made to persuade the individual sisters to go into civilian life. They all refused. The convents were dissolved after 1950. The sisters were taken to reception camps, though this measure did not apply to those working in hospitals. The continuous pressure from the ruling power structures led to their ending their work in the hospitals in Jihlava and Třebíč. Finally, they were moved to Lechovice near Znojmo.¹² By 1958, the congregation numbered 194 sisters in ten houses. A new religious order was formed in secret.

In September 1989, the Franciscan nuns were allowed to accept new novices for their charitable home as it had no one to care for the aged sisters; the congregation numbered 194 members at this time. After November 1989, new women began to turn to the congregation with an interest in taking the veil and beginning to lead the life of the order. They

¹¹ Havelková, J. (2009). *Kongregace Milosrdných sester III. řádu sv. Františka pod ochranou Svaté rodiny a její působení v českých zemích v letech 1886–1958*. Brno: Masaryk University, Faculty of Education (Dissertation).

¹² For more detail see: Babáková, V. (2012): *Perzekuce Kongregace Milosrdných sester sv. Karla Boromejského po roce 1948*. Brno, Masaryk University, Faculty of Arts (Dissertation). For more detail see: *Život a dílo matky Františky Lechnerové (1998). K památce k 130. výročí založení kongregace. In Memory of the 130th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Congregation*). Compiled by S. M. Filoména Truhlíková FDC. Opava, p. 15.

came to Lechovice. The older members of the order “departed”, however, in view of their age, and 98 members were recorded in four homes (Brno – Grohova and Petrov, Velký Újezd near Moravské Budějovice and Žernůvka near Tišnov) as of 1 January 2005. This number continued to decline and in the middle of 2016 amounted to just fifty sisters. The Ecclesiastic Secondary Medical School in Grohova Street in Brno, where the headquarters of the congregation and the Charitable Home for Aged Sisters began to operate along with the Ecclesiastic Secondary Medical School, the Home of the Holy Family and a hostel for pupils of the secondary medical school, reopened in September 1990. A small number of sisters also began working at the school which provides two four-year study fields – Medical Assistant and Medical Lyceum – and the three-year study field Nursing. The sisters also work in the four homes mentioned above. Motto of the Franciscan nuns: *We follow Saint Francis in life and in poverty and in showing merciful love to all needy.*

The original calling of the *Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Love (Filiae Divinae Caritatis)* was to protect country girls coming to Vienna, the capital of the Hapsburg Monarchy, for work. The inexperience of these girls soon led to them falling into material and moral destitution, for which reason Mother Františka Lechnerová decided to found the Marian Institutes where these girls could receive free housing and education. She put her plan into action in 1868. Two years later, she established a similar house in Brno, as well as houses in Opava and Prague.¹³ From the beginning, around ten sisters worked in Brno and a neighbouring house was soon purchased. The number of women interested continually increased. A report by the Brno Bishopric shows that several thousand maid servants and more than 800 foster children were provided for and educated at the institute in the years 1923–1938, with the girls learning handwork, attending Sunday school and learning music and foreign languages. The scope of its activities spread to providing care for the elderly and, in particular, for neglected and abandoned children. In 1931, the sisters built a new house in Brno called the Augustinium as a women’s boarding house (one house stood on the street now known as Třída Kpt. Jaroše, a second on the street Lidická). Work at the institute became increasingly restricted after World War II, and the house was finally confiscated by the state in September 1950 with the sisters being given four days to vacate it.

¹³ Ibidem.

In 1970, the congregation numbered a mere 160 sisters, of which 16 lived in the Charitable Home in Jiřetín pod Jedlovou (in the district of Děčín) and another 50 worked at the Institute of Social Care for Children in Marian in Opava. To all intents and purposes, the congregation is no longer in operation in Brno. Although houses were returned to the sisters in restitution, they are being leased out at the present time (to the Emanuel Community and as doctors' surgeries). In 2005, the congregation had twenty-three members with headquarters in Opava.¹⁴ Motto: *All for God, for the poor and for our congregation.*

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis Under the Protection of the Archangel Saint Raphael (Congregatio Sororum III. Sub protectione sancti Francisci Ordine S. Raphaelis Archangeli) was established by the priest Kašpar Dunda in 1907 at a spa institution in Moravec in the Highlands of Bohemia and Moravia; the institution was built for the poor and, in particular, for treating priests and theologians. The institution opened a year later. The statutes of the congregation drawn up by Dunda were approved by the Bishop of Brno in 1910, while the community was recognised by the Congregation of Brno Diocesan Law in 1969. Spiritual training (exercises) was held here from the end of 1919 onwards. Between twenty and thirty priests were also treated here each year. Sisters from the congregation also worked in an orphanage in Biskupice u Hrotovic, in a number of social institutions and in children's homes. They had just twenty-four members in 1930, though this number then increased. The work of the congregation was halted in 1950 and forty-five of the nuns in Moravec were forcibly relocated to Rýžoviště near Bruntál where they were forced to work in a factory or on a state farm.

In the following years, the Sisters of Raphael were placed in seven social care facilities or hospitals (in Bučovice, in Nové Hvězdlice, with the Brothers of Charity in Brno, in Nové Město na Moravě, in Svitavy, in Budíškovice in the Dačicko area, in Bílá Voda near Javorník). The nuns in Bílá Voda returned to Moravec in 1989. Some of the sisters left the congregation and went into "civilian life". Their numbers gradually fell to such an extent that just five sisters remained in the congregation in 2004, of which only two worked in the charitable house as nurses; at the end of 2016 their number fell to four. There is also an old people's home for parish housekeepers, sextons and the parents of priests and nuns open

¹⁴ Kostecká, J. (2017): *Charitativní ženské řeholní řády v brněnské diecézi*. Třebíč: Západomoravská vysoká škola Třebíč, (Bachelor thesis). pp. 17–18, 35–36.

in Moravec.¹⁵ Motto: *Observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in obedience, poverty and chastity.*

The main mission of the *Congregation of the Consoling Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Sorores Consolatrices Divini Cordis Jesu Patientis)* was to care for the sick in private homes; this care was later extended to hospitals and old people's homes. The congregation was established at the end of the war year 1915, when the sisters helped out selflessly in treating the injured in military hospitals, with the support of Bishop of Brno ThDr. Pavel Huyn. The congregation spread from Brno to other large towns in the Czech Lands; it operated in Nové Město in Prague, in Kolín, in Poděbrady and in Vyškov. Construction of a new Mother House in Rajhrad u Brna began in 1924 along with construction of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord (completed in 1929). During World War II, the sisters worked in fourteen filial houses in Bohemia and Moravia, Slovakia, and even Italy and Argentina.

In 1950, all these filial houses were dissolved at the intervention of the state and the sisters were forced to leave for Rajhrad. At this time the congregation numbered 126 sisters, eight novices and three candidates. They were transported from Rajhrad to perform forced labour in surrounding factories and nearby fields. Later, they were allowed to work in social care institutions. In 1951, the sisters were moved out of the convent in Rajhrad and the site was used by the army until 1991. The convent suffered considerable devastation over the course of time and had to be repaired following its return in the nineteen nineties. The sisters then devoted themselves to charitable care, including care for old and infirm nuns (The House of Mother Rosa, founder of the congregation, legal name Barbora Vůjtěchová-Vojtěchová). Saint Joseph's Hospice was established on the site in 1999. It has been administered by the Rajhrad District Charity since 2007; the congregation numbered 36 sisters as of the beginning of 2017.¹⁶ Motto: *Our single goal must be to bring joy to God.*

The beginnings of the *Congregation of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius (Congregatio Sororum a SS. Cyrillo et Methodio)* can be found in the original lay company of Cyril and Methodius known as the Apostolate of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Velehrad, established with the

¹⁵ *Kronika Kongregace sester III. řádu sv. Františka pod ochranou sv. Rafaela archanděla. Kongregační prameny (1907–1991)*. Compiled by Sister Pavla Shamalová. Moravec, manuscript, unpagged.

¹⁶ Hošek, S. (2014). *Působení Kongregace sester Těšitelek Božského srdce Ježíšova v letech 1915–2014*. Brno: Masaryk University, Faculty of Education, (Dissertation).

support of Archbishop of Olomouc ThDr. Antonín Cyril Stojan. Then Minister and Chairman of the Czechoslovak People's Party Monsignor Jan Šrámek was accredited with the preparations for the establishment of the congregation by a Papal See; the actual founder of the congregation was Marie Růžena Nesvadbová. Members of the congregation made a vow of obedience, chastity and poverty to God, thereby pledging themselves to the communal life of nuns in the spirit of bringing Slavic Christians together and following the legacy of both their patrons. The work of the congregation in teaching young girls at all school levels was undertaken in the same spirit. From 1925, the congregation's principal house grew on the site of the former Augustinian monastery in Old Brno. Three years later, the sisters also opened a classical girl's grammar school with a hall of residence in Brno. The sisters also worked as religious teachers at state schools. They established nursery schools and also devoted themselves to charitable work in medical facilities, social institutions, old people's homes and schools of various types, along with missionary work (in, for example, Velehrad, Nová Říše, Prostějov, Prague and Litoměřice).

After 1948, when church schools were abolished, convents confiscated and nuns interned in "concentration camps", they were allowed to work only under supervision in social institutions. Those of retirement age had to leave for the camp in Bílá Voda. A short period of "spring" came in the years 1968–1971, during which it was possible to accept young women to the order and the nuns were allowed to perform pastoral work. The congregation received papal approval in 1975. In these years, the sisters in Brno worked in small secret communities. In 1988, they purchased a house in Jiráskova čtvrť in Brno (now Masarykova čtvrť), not far from the confiscated buildings, which they altered to suit the purposes of the congregation's main house.

The sisters were not, however, able to go back to their original mission and work in their congregations until after 1989. The Cyril and Methodius Church Primary School was founded at the mother house in Brno in 1990 and the congregation was returned its confiscated buildings. They began caring for children and young people as nurses and tutors at the social care institute in Velehrad. The "Stojanov" in Velehrad once again became a house for spiritual exercise. The Bohemian Province was given the task of founding the Cyril and Methodius Grammar School and Secondary Vocational College of Education; these schools opened after necessary repairs in September 1992. The sisters worked in the schools as teachers, tutors and administrative staff. The congregation counted seventy-eight members as of 1 January 2005, and sixty-five sisters in January 2017, of

which there were fifty in the Czech Province (in Velehrad – general house, in Brno – headquarters of the province, in Olomouc and in Tetín). There is a community of thirteen in Brno.¹⁷ Motto of the congregation: *For all to be one*.

During the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, newly founded women's religious congregations, whose principal mission was demanding and self-sacrificing work, particularly in charity, took on a quite extraordinary importance. From the beginning, the members of these congregations worked in hospitals, sanatoriums, orphanages, old people's homes, institutes for the physically and mentally disabled and a large number of other social institutions, thereby playing an important role in upbringing and education, particularly for young women. After 1948, as part of the suppression of church life by the state, nuns were sent to selected internment camps, though a number of them were sent to court, accused of treason and even imprisoned. Many sisters ended up in labour camps. After 1989, most of these congregations revived the life of their order and returned to their original work.

¹⁷ *Česká provincie Kongregace sester sv. Cyrila a Metoděje. Historie. Charita*. Available from: <<http://www.cyrilky.cz/historie>>. For more detail see: Důbravová, K. R. (1992). *Dějiny kongregace sester sv. Cyrila a Metoděje 1924–1990*. Bílá Voda.