

THE TRANSFORMATION OF CATHOLIC ORPHANAGES: CLEVELAND, 1851-1996

BY

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In 1886 the formidable three-storied brick structure of St. Vincent's Orphanage in Cleveland—already more than three decades old—housed about 200 boys, the children of impoverished Catholics. Many were German or Irish, and almost without exception they were white. The orphanage was staffed by thirty Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine and funded by diocesan collections and orphans' fairs. A century later, St. Vincent's had merged with other Catholic orphanages and evolved into Parmadale System of Family Services. On its site lived a very few children with serious emotional and behavioral problems; its professional staff provided a wide range of off-site psychiatric and social services; its funding was almost completely public; its clients were children and families of all creeds and races. Responding to national developments, the needs of the local community, and their own institutional imperatives, Cleveland's Catholic orphanages had transformed themselves and Catholic social services.

Catholic orphanages were possibly the most used and are certainly the least studied of American child-care institutions.¹ Although most

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¹National studies that only briefly mention Catholic orphanages include LeRoy Ashby, *Endangered Children: Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse in American History* (New York, 1997); Timothy Hacsí, *Second Home: Orphan Asylums and Poor Families in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997); and Mathew A. Crenson, *Building the Invisible Orphanage* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1998). Nurith Zmora, *Orphanages Reconsidered: Child Care Institutions in Progressive Era Baltimore* (Philadelphia, 1994), and Peter C. Holloran, *Boston's Wayward Children: Social Services for Homeless Children, 1830-1930* (London and Toronto, 1989), contain some information on Catholic orphanages. Good local studies of Protestant and Jewish orphanages include Reena Sigman Friedman, *These Are Our Children: Jewish Orphanages in the United States, 1880-1925* (Hanover and

sectarian orphanages experienced similar changes in services, staff, and clientele from the mid-nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries, the Catholic experience has been differentiated and—to some extent—shaped by the presence of the National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC), founded in 1910. The conference's challenging mission was to modernize Catholic charities—to bring them into the American social welfare mainstream—and at the same time to maintain their Catholic identity. The annual proceedings of the NCCC and its journals, *Catholic Charities Review* and its successor, *Catholic Charities USA*, provide the national context within which the changes in Catholic orphanages, “the hallmark of Catholic social provision,” can be understood and assessed.²

Preserving the Faith, 1851-1900

Orphanages were the creation of the nineteenth century, when Americans believed that institutions solved many social problems, including crime, mental and physical illness, and dependence. In an age of minimal government, the vast majority of social welfare institutions were sponsored by religious organizations and were fervently sectarian, intended by their Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic founders to shelter the bodies and preserve the faith of their co-religionists.

Catholic dioceses founded scores of care-taking institutions, including schools, hospitals, and homes for the aged, infants and unwed mothers, and working women. This prolific institution-building was prompted not only by the common belief in the value of institutions but by the pressing spiritual and material needs of impoverished Catholics, by the well-founded fear that they would fall victim to Protestant proselytizing, and by rivalries between dioceses.

London, 1994); Gary Edward Polster, *Inside Looking Out: The Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum, 1868-1924* (Kent, Ohio, 1990); Hyman Bogen, *The Luckiest Orphans: A History of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum* (Urbana and Chicago, 1992); Kenneth Cmiel, *A Home of Another Kind: One Chicago Orphanage and the Tangle of Child Welfare* (Chicago and London, 1995); Howard Goldstein, *The Home on Gorham Street and the Voices of Its Children* (Tuscaloosa and London, 1996); and Richard McKenzie, *The Home: A Memoir of Growing Up in an Orphanage* (New York, 1996).

²Donald P. Gavin, *The National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1910-1960* (Milwaukee, 1962), pp. 1-3. The quotation is from Dorothy M. Brown and Elizabeth McKeown, *The Poor Belong To Us: Catholic Charities and American Welfare* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997), p. 3.

Perhaps most important, dioceses built institutions because there were men and especially women religious to staff them. European orders such as the Ursuline Sisters and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd were joined by indigenous orders such as the Sisters of Charity of Emmitsburg. By 1900 more than 40,000 nuns, most of them American-born, served Catholic schools, hospitals, and charitable institutions.³ Because women religious received less compensation than men, their institutions became efficient, relatively inexpensive ways of providing charity.⁴

During the nineteenth century, orphanages became the most characteristic venue for Catholic charity. According to the secretary of the NCCC, Monsignor John O'Grady, "the care of children away from their own homes . . . occupied a larger place in Catholic welfare in the United States than any other type of work."⁵ Catholics led the way in founding orphanages, establishing sixteen institutions for dependent and neglected children before 1840 and 175 by 1890.⁶ These orphanages maintained the ethnic traditions of German, Irish, Polish, Bohemian, and Italian immigrants. Most significantly, they sustained the children's religious faith, acting as a "preventive against [the] Protestantism" of the dominant culture.⁷

Because the care of dependent children was recognized as a public responsibility, Catholic orphanages in many states received public subsidies. In New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Maryland, California, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa the counties subsidized private institutions. Other states, like Ohio, maintained their own county children's homes.⁸

There were no county homes in Cleveland, however, and dependent children were housed in the city poorhouse, the Cleveland Infirmary. The poorhouse sheltered those impoverished by unemployment, accident, and illness who had absolutely nowhere else to go. The sick were housed with the insane, the criminal, and the indigent of all ages. The Infirmary was a stark, uninviting place; inmates were not supposed to linger at taxpayers' expense. Although public, the Infirmary was also dis-

³Mary J. Oates, *The Catholic Philanthropic Tradition in America* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1995), p. 20.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵"Catholic Charities in 1941," *Catholic Charities Review (CCR)*, 25 (January, 1941), 38.

⁶John O'Grady, *Catholic Charities in the United States: History and Problems* (Washington, D.C., 1930), p. 71; Haesi, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 77-82, 100, 157-159.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

tinctly Protestant, overseen by Protestants and visited by Protestant missionaries.

Cleveland attracted a rapidly growing, ethnically diverse population, especially from Ireland and Germany. Many were Catholic. In 1836 there was one Catholic church with a membership of 200. The diocese of Cleveland was established in 1849, and by 1860 nine Catholic churches claimed 20,000 members (about thirty percent of Cleveland's population).⁹ Catholic immigrants were probably the poorest group in Cleveland at mid-century. In 1856 of the 159 persons admitted to the Infirmary forty-two were born in Ireland and fifty-nine in Germany; sixty-two were children.¹⁰ The problem was urgent: Catholics "could not let their children go to the poorhouse because it would be an eternal disgrace; they could not permit them to become beneficiaries of Protestant philanthropy because they would be lost to the faith."¹¹

Accordingly, one of the first tasks of Cleveland's first bishop, Amadeus Rappe, was to persuade three Ladies of the Sacred Heart, a wealthy order from Paris, to emigrate and found St. Mary's Asylum for girls in 1851. Members of the order, who were called "Miss" rather than "Sister" and who did not wear religious habits, also taught in several parish schools in Cleveland. In 1863 the order opened a second orphanage, St. Joseph's, for younger girls on five acres on the city's far east side. In 1894 these two institutions merged as St. Joseph's Orphanage.¹² In 1835 the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, led by Sister Mary Ursula, opened St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum for boys. This order also had its roots in France but was organized by Bishop Rappe. The sisters' primary mission was nursing, and they administered five hospitals in Ohio, including Cleveland's first permanent general hospital, St. Vincent Charity Hospital, in 1865. In 1873 the sisters opened a home for unwed mothers, and the children born there sometimes were placed at St. Vincent's.¹³

Other denominations also founded orphanages. The Cleveland Protestant Orphan Asylum was organized by members of the First Presbyterian (Old Stone) Church in 1852. Methodists sustained the Children's Aid Society (1854) and the Berea Children's Home (1864). In

⁹Michael J. McTighe, *A Measure of Success: Protestants and Public Culture in Antebellum Cleveland* (Albany, New York, 1994), p. 17.

¹⁰*City of Cleveland Annual Report, 1856* (Cleveland, 1856), p. 45.

¹¹O'Grady, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹²George F. Houck, *A History of Catholicity in Northern Ohio and in the Diocese of Cleveland*, Volume 1 (Cleveland, 1903), pp. 740-742.

¹³Donald P. Gavin, *In All Things Charity: History of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, Cleveland, Ohio, 1851-1954* (Milwaukee, 1955), pp. 1-55.

1869 the Independent Order of B'nai Brith opened the Jewish Orphan Asylum for the children of Jewish Civil War veterans from the Midwest.

Regardless of denomination, orphans were children of the poor. Although dramatic events like cholera epidemics occasionally robbed children of both parents, most "orphans" had at least one parent, unable to care for his or her child because of unemployment, physical or mental disability, or the death or desertion of a spouse. These parents asked that orphanages, or orphan asylums, care for their children. Timothy A. Hacsí has described orphanages as "often the final desperate step in a series of attempts [by a parent] to deal with poverty brought on by some family calamity."¹⁴ Children might also be placed in orphanages by clergy or public officials who judged parents negligent and incapable of caring for their offspring.

In 1853 a child entered St. Vincent's whose mother had died and whose father was "sick and poor"; another child had been abandoned by his parents, who had left his sister at St. Mary's.¹⁵ In 1861 St. Vincent's admitted seven boys from the Infirmary.¹⁶ In one month in 1895 St. Joseph's admitted a child whose father was dead and whose mother had run off; a child whose father had left his family, including his sick wife; a child whose father was alive but whose mother was missing; a child whose mother was alive but whose father was a "drinker."¹⁷

Parents were supposed to pay for their children's board. Although few did, their payments were a way of retaining connections to their offspring. Sometimes children were "placed out" or "given to" a family that would raise them, presumably in return for work around the house or farm; girls were occasionally placed "in situations"—in domestic service.¹⁸ Most children, however, returned to parents or other family members.

Some children stayed only a few days or weeks; most stayed much longer, sometimes for years, until the family could again care for them or they could support themselves. Martin Styles, "the son of a respectable widow," stayed at St. Vincent's ten years; when he left, he be-

¹⁴Hacsí, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁵St. Vincent's Asylum, Book A, 1853-1881, Cleveland Catholic Diocese Archives (CCDA).

¹⁶Sister Stanislaus, "History of the Congregation," Edward F. Hoban Papers (III) Religious Orders—Women—Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine—History, 40, CCDA.

¹⁷St. Joseph's Admissions Book, 1894-1942, CCDA.

¹⁸St. Joseph's Admissions, 1868-1883, CCDA; Holloran (*op. cit.*, pp. 67-71) maintains that this Catholic orphanage for girls trained servants for Boston's upper class.

came an accountant, "the support of his mother and an exemplary member of the church."¹⁹ Orphanages, in short, "served as early welfare agencies by caring for the children of impoverished families" that did not want to give up their offspring permanently.²⁰

Orphanages provided children with food, shelter, clothing, and some education, especially in job skills so that children could escape their parents' poverty. Sometimes these skills were acquired in classes, but more often by working around the institution. The girls at St. Mary's were taught to sew; their handiwork was sold to "benevolent ladies" to raise funds for the institution.²¹ The children were meant to live a rigorous, disciplined life, symbolized by their uniforms, originally "satinette trousers and coats with good-sized brass buttons" for the boys at St. Vincent's.²²

Religious services were mandatory and daily. In its early years the boys at St. Vincent's rose at 5:30 A.M., had morning prayer at 6, Mass at 6:30, said the rosary at 1:30 P.M., had catechism and Bible history at 6:30 P.M., and said "night prayers" at 7:30.²³ The registers of the orphanages routinely noted when the child made his or her first communion.

The presence of the nuns was crucial. Although the institutions were nominally under the control of the bishop, the sisters staffed them, acting as surrogate parents, teachers, nurses, housekeepers, cooks, disciplinarians, and religious role models. In their spare time, nuns also raised funds.

All Catholic child-care institutions in Cleveland were entirely privately funded. Catholic and sometimes Protestant philanthropists made gifts to the orphanages. The diocese held special collections at Sunday Masses and sponsored annual orphans' fairs. In 1894 the boys from St. Vincent's performed "drills, speeches, music, songs, etc.," in a fund-raiser before 4,000 people in Music Hall.²⁴ Yet there was seldom enough money. In 1881, for instance, the Cleveland Orphans' Fair collected

¹⁹Sister Stanislaus, "History of the Congregation," p. 40.

²⁰Ashby, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²¹Religious Community Questionnaire, Daughters of the Heart of Mary, CCDA; Zmora (*op. cit.*, p. 8) maintains that orphanages offered educational opportunities not otherwise available to these children.

²²Sister Stanislaus, "History of the Congregation," p. 36.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 110.

\$8,248 to support the almost 400 children at St. Vincent's, St. Mary's, and St. Joseph's. The nuns had to beg for the deficit.²⁵

At the turn of the century St. Joseph's and St. Vincent's had become large congregate facilities. St. Joseph's had sold one of its five acres; the neighborhood had become Jewish (the Jewish Orphan Asylum was down the street) and commercial. A tall iron fence surrounded the institution, which housed more than 200 girls. St. Vincent's overlooked the city's industrial valley; 225 boys crowded into its buildings.²⁶

Across the country the number of orphanages rose from 624 in 1880 to 1,067 in 1910. Although the median number of children sheltered in 1910 was sixty, 109 orphanages cared for more than 200 children each, and twenty-four institutions cared for 400 or more.²⁷ The largest child-care institution, the New York Catholic Protectory, housed 2,500 children.²⁸ These large orphanages, almost always sectarian and often committed to lengthy stays for their inmates, were viewed with increasing dismay by the emerging social work profession.

Preserving the Home, 1900-1929

Rejecting the nineteenth-century belief that institutions could save and reform inmates, child welfare workers now argued that dependent children should be raised in their own homes or foster homes, not orphanages. Although conceding that homes were best for children, the leaders of the newly-formed National Conference of Catholic Charities generally continued to endorse orphanages while attempting to move them in new directions.

At the 1898 meeting of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, critics argued that orphanages stifled children's individuality and initiative: "The home develops reliance, the institution, dependence. . . . Children [in orphanages] are often taught too much about heaven and too little about earth."²⁹ The National Conference of Charities

²⁵Michael J. Hynes, *History of the Diocese of Cleveland. Origin and Growth (1847-1952)* (Cleveland, 1953), p. 167.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 222; Houck, *op. cit.*, pp. 740, 744.

²⁷Rachel B. Marks, "Institutions for Dependent and Delinquent Children: Histories, Nineteenth-Century Statistics, and Recurrent Goals," in Donnell M. Pappenfort *et al.* (eds.), *Social Policy and the Institution* (Chicago, 1973), p. 39.

²⁸Crenson, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

²⁹"The Home or the Institution," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1898* (Chicago, 1898), p. 364; Crenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-208.

ties and Corrections had been established in 1874 in an effort to rationalize and professionalize the nation's rapidly multiplying social welfare agencies. Renamed the National Conference on Social Work in 1917 and the National Conference on Social Welfare in 1956, the organization formed the vanguard of the new profession of social work by the turn of the century.

Following suit, Catholic clergy and lay leaders of the St. Vincent De-Paul Society founded the NCCC to play a similar role: to impose order and social work standards on the hundreds of Catholic social welfare agencies and institutions, maintained by scores of dioceses and dozens of religious orders for children of various ethnic backgrounds.³⁰ The NCCC leadership placed itself at the forefront of "the Catholic philosophy of social work" and generally endorsed the principle articulated at the 1909 White House Conference on Dependent Children that became—and still is—social work dogma: "Home life . . . is 'the highest and finest product of civilization.'" Children should not be removed from their own homes "unless unusual conditions exist."³¹ Some speakers offered cautious endorsements of foster homes over institutions and cautious criticism of the regimentation of orphanage life.³² In 1923 the *Catholic Charities Review (CCR)* urged "child-caring homes" (the organization did not use the term "orphanage") to "keep up with advancing standards of health, education, recreation and social life [and] be in the vanguard of all genuine improvements." First and foremost, caretakers of children should remember that "our [child-caring] homes are at best only substitutes for good families which are to be preserved or rehabilitated if possible."³³

Other members of the NCCC, however, were more traditional. They (probably correctly) interpreted anti-orphanage sentiment expressed at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections and elsewhere, as anti-Catholic, especially targeted at public aid to Catholic institutions. Although no one claimed that an orphanage was preferable to a good home, defenders of orphanages argued that it was difficult to find good foster homes for children, especially Catholic homes; institutions,

³⁰Gavin, *The National Conference*, pp. 1-3.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 105; "Standards Relating to Children in Need of Special Care, *CCR*, 3 (May, 1919), 170. See also Brown and McKeown, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

³²"Care of Dependent Children," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC)*, 1910 (Washington, D.C., 1910), pp. 290, 292; "Adjourned Meeting of the Committee on Dependent Children," *Proceedings, NCCC, 1912* (Washington, D.C., 1912), pp. 245, 248, and "Selection of Children for the Foster Home," *Proceedings, NCCC, 1912*, pp. 264-272.

³³"Catholic Child-Caring Standards Now Ready," *CCR*, 7 (May, 1923), 207.

they insisted, could provide greater spiritual direction than foster homes. A priest and director of the Catholic Charities of Baltimore raised these practical questions: if child-caring institutions disappeared, "it would mean the loss of several million dollars in property." More important, "thousands of our religious will have found themselves without the occupation for which they have been especially trained."³⁴

In the wake of the 1909 White House Conference, thirty-nine states (including Ohio in 1913) enacted mothers' pensions. These provided subsidies to mothers so that they could raise their children at home rather than placing them in orphanages. But the stipends were very small and selectively awarded. The numbers of orphanages continued to rise, responding to the huge waves of European immigration and the poverty and family dislocation of urban life. Fifty-one new Catholic institutions were founded between 1900 and 1915.³⁵ In 1923 Catholics maintained 558 institutions that cared for 81,000 children and only eighteen child-placing agencies, responsible for 10,500 children in foster homes.³⁶

Catholic child-care in Cleveland was also torn between the old traditions and the new directions. On the one hand, four new non-diocesan orphanages had been established. The Home of the Holy Family, founded in 1895, sheltered forty-four boys and girls. Three very small Catholic ethnic orphanages, each housing about a dozen children, had also opened: Holy Ghost Greek Catholic Orphanage, Holy Ghost Roman Catholic Orphanage, and St. Basil's Orphanage for Ukrainian Catholic children. (Hungarian Lutherans and Orthodox Jews had also opened orphanages.³⁷) In addition, the diocese established two small institutions for older dependent children with special needs: Catherine Horstman Training Home for girls in 1909 and St. Anthony's Home for boys in 1908.

On the other hand, the diocese also moved to modernize its charitable activities, as did other urban dioceses.³⁸ In 1910 Bishop John Farrelly

³⁴"The Necessity and Advantages of Orphan Asylums," *Proceedings, NCCC, 1910*, p. 291; "Policy and Practice of Catholic Institutions in Receiving, Caring for and Discharging Children," *Proceedings, NCCC, 1916* (Washington, D.C., 1916), pp. 171-180; "The Future of Our Child-Caring Institutions," *Proceedings, NCCC, 1922* (Washington, D.C., 1922), p. 145.

³⁵O'Grady, *op. cit.*, pp. 153, 158-159.

³⁶"A Preliminary Survey of Catholic Child-Caring Work in the United States," *CCR, 7* (April, 1923), 141.

³⁷United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Children Under Institutional Care, 1923* (Washington, D.C., 1927), p. 107.

³⁸Brown and McKeown, *op. cit.*, pp. 6, 51-52; Oates, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-100.

established the Catholic Charities Bureau to oversee and co-ordinate diocesan child welfare activities, especially fund-raising. In 1901 Bishop Ignatius Horstmann had written to the Superior at St. Joseph's: "Repeated complaints have reached me that on pay days various sisterhoods in this city have had representatives at the same hour and place, for the purpose of soliciting alms from persons then receiving their pay . . . especially at the City Hall."³⁹ This competitive begging was a public relations disaster in a Protestant city; worse, it did not raise sufficient funds. Neither did the orphans' fairs. St. Vincent's and St. Joseph's were perpetually in debt.⁴⁰ The diocesan bureau replaced the fairs and the begging nuns with systematic assessments of each parish that yielded more satisfactory returns.

The first director of the bureau, the Reverend C. Hubert LeBlond, was an early member of the NCCC and a frequent speaker at its annual meetings. Probably at his urging the diocesan orphanages joined the Cleveland Federation for Charity and Philanthropy, founded in 1913 and renamed the Cleveland Welfare Federation in 1917. Although sensitive—by necessity—to the sectarian missions of its members, the federation, nevertheless, hoped to modernize the city's private charities. The federation raised and distributed community fund monies to its member agencies; in return, agencies were to implement modern social-work principles. Because they housed large numbers of children, St. Joseph's, and especially St. Vincent's, got substantial operating funds from the federation.⁴¹

In 1921 a survey of Cleveland's overcrowded orphanages revealed that ninety-one percent of their 2,065 inmates from 1915 to 1919 had at least one parent and sixty-six percent returned to their families. The survey also criticized the orphanages' haphazard record-keeping, their "inadequate investigation of family situations, their unhealthy, crowded, unsanitary conditions, insufficient board payments by parents and relatives," and the children's lengthy stays.⁴² As a result, the Welfare Federation funded the Cleveland Children's Bureau. Many of the bureau's staff were professionally trained caseworkers, who screened all applicants for admission to orphanages. Admissions decisions by this non-

³⁹Letter from Ignatius Horstmann, February 4, 1901, Farrelly Papers, Institutions: St. Joseph Orphanage, CCDA.

⁴⁰The Orphans Fair Report, Farrelly Papers, Institutions: St. Joseph Orphanage, CCDA; Hynes, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

⁴¹"The Cleveland Community Drive," *CCR*, 9 (January, 1925), 25.

⁴²U.S. Children's Bureau, *The Children's Bureau of Cleveland and Its Relation to Other Child-Welfare Agencies* (Washington, D.C., 1927), p. 11.

sectarian agency represented a loss of autonomy for the orphanages even though the Catholic Charities Bureau still made the final recommendations.

The Children's Bureau's investigations also revealed the persistent immiserization of Cleveland's Catholic population. From 1922 to 1925, 844 of the 1,416 applicant families—almost sixty percent—were Catholic. As in the nineteenth century, the children's parents were deserted, divorced, widowed, dead, physically or mentally disabled, or unemployed; more than half were foreign-born.⁴³

Farrelly also established the Catholic Charities Corporation in 1919 to raise funds to rebuild Catholic institutions in "deplorable financial and physical condition . . . especially the child-caring institutions."⁴⁴ The Corporation's greatest success was a brand-new orphanage for the boys from St. Vincent's and an orphanage in Louisville, Ohio. Although the facility on 180 acres in rural Parma would house more than 300 children, they would live in a dozen Tudor-style cottages, intended to be as much like private homes as possible. In 1922 *CCR* predicted, "Cleveland will have one of the finest, largest, and most modern child-caring institutions, not only among Catholic, but among all those of the nation."⁴⁵

In 1925, when the institution opened, it was renamed Parmadale Children's Village. Although its new name was non-sectarian, Parmadale remained distinctly Catholic, and the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, led by Sister M. Carmelita Riley, staffed and administered the institution. Life at Parmadale reflected the new thinking that orphanages should be more flexible, more humane, and more like home.⁴⁶ The orphanage stressed vigorous outdoor activity and provided football, baseball, basketball, volleyball, track and field and boasted of its marching band. The boys attended local Catholic schools. The institution did not "retain its children for very long periods," claimed *CCR*; "Its ideal is to provide short intensive training and then return the children to their own homes or have them placed in foster homes."⁴⁷

Although Catholic orphanages across the country were slow to adopt the cottage system—probably because of its cost—two other sectarian Cleveland orphanages switched to the cottage system during

⁴³*Ibid.*, pp. 45-50. Catholics were "heavily over-represented on the relief rolls" in other cities as well: Brown and McKeown, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁴⁴"Catholic Charities Drive in Cleveland," *CCR*, 6 (September, 1922), 242.

⁴⁵"A New Cottage-Plan Institution," *CCR*, 6 (September, 1922), 235.

⁴⁶Haci, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-212.

⁴⁷"Parmadale and Its Cottage Mothers," *CCR*, 12 (May, 1928), 175.

the 1920's.⁴⁸ The Protestant Orphan Asylum moved to Orange Township, becoming Beech Brook; the Jewish Orphan Asylum moved to University Heights and was renamed Bellefaire. The Home of the Holy Family and St. Joseph's remained in the city.

In 1931 John M. Cooper, author of a massive study of child-care institutions commissioned by the NCCC, maintained that because of mothers' pensions, "poverty alone . . . is not sufficient ground . . . for breaking up a home."⁴⁹ The Great Depression had already made his advice irrelevant.

Two Emergencies, 1929-1947

The child-care emergencies created by the Great Depression and World War II prolonged the traditional role of orphanages as caretakers of dependent children. Local and federal governments, however, increasingly shouldered this responsibility.

In December, 1933, 102,000 dependent and neglected children in the United States were in foster homes, and more than 140,000, a record number, were in orphanages.⁵⁰ In 1931 orphanage administrators noted at the NCCC annual meeting that families requesting placement for their children were of a "higher type" than usual and that relatives were less able to help out and parents less able to pay board.⁵¹ In 1933 *CCR* warned, "The depression has increased the demand made on child-caring agencies and diminished their resources. Many child-caring agencies have long waiting lists. Relief agencies are asking children's agencies to accept children without any compensation." Catholic orphanages across the country felt the pinch, especially where state or local subsidies were cut.⁵²

Cleveland orphanages were already filled in the late 1920's as the city's heavy industries began to lay off workers; Parmadale had a long

⁴⁸Hacsi, *op. cit.*, 168-169.

⁴⁹John M. Cooper, *Children's Institutions: A Study of Programs and Policies in Catholic Children's Institutions in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1931), p. 498.

⁵⁰U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Children Under Institutional Care and in Foster Homes, 1933* (Washington, D.C., 1935), p. 4; Marshall B. Jones, "Crisis of the American Orphanage, 1931-1940," *Social Service Review*, 63 (December, 1989), 627.

⁵¹"In Children's Agencies," *Proceedings, NCCC, 1931* (Baltimore, 1931), pp. 154-155.

⁵²"Child Care Today," *CCR*, 17 (December, 1933), 319; "The Appeal of the Child in Private Social Work," *CCR*, 18 (January, 1934), 5.

waiting list.⁵³ As the Depression deepened, the first public child-care agency, the Cuyahoga County Child Welfare Bureau (CCCWB), was established. The orphanages and private child-placing agencies like the Children's Bureau continued to take responsibility for children needing short-term care or children whose parents could pay some board. The CCCWB assumed financial responsibility for children needing long-term care. The agency's staff of professional social workers preferred foster homes to institutions even though the CCCWB was not obligated to pay the board of county wards in orphanages that received community fund monies.

The orphanages struggled to survive. Full to the brim, they had to feed, shelter, and clothe more children with less money than ever before. Children stayed longer, and their parents, unemployed, working part-time, and bearing other crushing financial obligations, paid less and less. Only eighteen of the ninety-seven families with girls at St. Joseph's had any employment; their average compensation was \$8.66 a week; only forty-five of the families of the Parmadale children had work; seventeen of those earned from \$1 to \$5 a week.⁵⁴ Board payments dried up. In 1927 Parmadale received \$14,742 in board monies; in 1933, \$3,322. Both the Welfare Federation and Catholic Charities slashed their subsidies. Parmadale cut per capita expenditures from \$1.15 a child in 1930 to \$.92 a child in 1933. The boys' meals cost seven cents each.⁵⁵ Parmadale had \$26,000 in unpaid bills in September, 1933.⁵⁶ St. Joseph's ended 1931 with \$12.23 on hand; 1932, with \$10.43. When the Welfare Federation and Catholic Charities bailed out the institution, its Superior rejoiced: "Divine Providence steered our over-freighted barque safely over the first half of 1935."⁵⁷

In the midst of the financial crisis, the children's lives probably remained substantially unchanged. The boys at Parmadale rose at 6:15 A.M.

⁵³"Present Problems of the Children's Agencies in Cleveland, November 2, 1928," Children's Services MSS 4020, container 4, folder 53, Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS).

⁵⁴"Analysis of Financial Status," Children's Services, MSS 4020, container 4, folder 56, WRHS.

⁵⁵Parmadale Financial Report, 1925-1934. Schrembs Papers (II), Institutions: Parmadale: General, CCDA.

⁵⁶Minutes, Advisory Board of Parmadale, September 8, 1933, Federation of Catholic Community Services/Catholic Charities Corporation (FCCS/CCC), Box 21, Parmadale Reports, CCDA.

⁵⁷St. Joseph's Orphanage, FCCS/CCC, Box 26, St. Joseph's, 1933-1945, CCDA; Letter, Mary M. Cox to Rev. Michael L. Moriarty, January 18, 1936, FCCS/CCC, Box 26, St. Joseph's, 1933-1945, CCDA.

and attended Mass before breakfast. They tidied their own rooms, scrubbed the bathrooms, locker rooms, and basements, cleaned the dining halls, classrooms, yards, and playgrounds, washed the dishes, and set the tables for meals. They spent most of their day in school and their free time in band or choir practice and went to bed at 9:30 in the evening.⁵⁸ Life for the girls at St. Joseph's remained regimented and limited. This last large congregate facility in the city was still on Woodland Avenue, now an African American neighborhood. Two brick structures housed between 140 and 170 girls, ages 5 to 15, who slept in dormitories in the school building, the smallest children in its basement. The girls "marched" or were "conducted to" their daily activities. For recreation, they roller-skated in the gym or rode bicycles or walked around the grounds for an hour. The girls did a substantial amount of the institution's housekeeping. Even the oldest were in bed by 9 P.M.⁵⁹

In 1941, when the United States entered World War II, the Depression was over, but the dislocations created by family members entering the armed services or moving around the country in search of jobs once more created a pressing need for child-care institutions. By March, 1943, Catholic child-care institutions were "taxed to capacity," reported the *CCR*, and hard put to cope with the loss of staff to war-related jobs, food rationing, and continued "demands of placement."⁶⁰

In Cleveland prosperity returned, but children again fell victim to family disarray. Foster homes for dependent children were in short supply, and the orphanages were soon almost as full as they had been during the darkest days of the Depression. The county Detention Home was crowded with dependent and delinquent children waiting for permanent placement.⁶¹

To fill the crying need for shelter, the diocese opened St. Teresa's, a temporary facility for preschool children, in 1943; in 1946 this facility was replaced by St. Edward's, across the street from Parmadale. Probably in response to criticism by the Welfare Federation, St. Joseph's began "extensive remodeling to make it more homelike and cheerful," and the girls were allowed to attend the nearby parochial school.⁶² The re-

⁵⁸Minutes, Advisory Board of Parmadale, December 5, 1934, FCCS/CCC, Box 21, CCDA.

⁵⁹Report of the Study of St. Joseph's Orphanage, FCCS/CCC, Box 26, St. Joseph's, 1933-1945, CCDA.

⁶⁰"Current Problems in Catholic Agencies," *CCR*, 27 (March, 1943), 62-63.

⁶¹Report of the Committee to Study the Shortage of Placement Facilities for Children," December 21, 1942, and Committee on Child Placement Facilities, Wednesday June 2, 1943, Federation for Community Planning, MSS 3788, container 29, folder 719, WRHS.

⁶²"Revitalizing St. Joseph's," FCCS/CCC, Box 26, St. Joseph's 1933-1945, CCDA.

modeling was not completed, however, and in 1942 the institution and the children were moved to a diocesan property on the lake shore, a former hospital. The sisters found the facility inadequate for their increased population of 141 girls.⁶³ In 1947, although the small ethnic orphanages had not survived, Cleveland's Catholic institutions sheltered far more children than did the Protestant and Jewish child-care institutions combined.⁶⁴

Yet the public agency, the CCCWB, had emerged as the primary caretaker of Cleveland's dependent children. Moreover, the old-age and unemployment insurances and especially the provision of Aid to Dependent Children, of the Social Security Act of 1935 were intended to eliminate the economic insecurity that had earlier forced parents to place their children in orphanages.

At the NCCC annual meetings orphanages still had vigorous defenders, who affirmed the institutions' historic mission to preserve the Catholic faith and feared that the public child-care agencies such as the CCCWB would not safeguard Catholic children's religion.⁶⁵ But other NCCC speakers warned that because of public programs, "The place of the institution is changing." Its new clientele must be children whose emotional difficulties made placement in their own or foster homes inappropriate.⁶⁶

Redefining Orphans, 1947-1971

During the next decades psychological or emotional problems became the rationale endorsed by social workers for institutionalizing healthy children. Catholic orphanages began the slow, difficult transition from institutions for children orphaned by poverty and dependency to institutions for "emotional" orphans.

⁶³Religious Community Questionnaire, Daughters of the Heart of Mary, Archives, CCDA.

⁶⁴"Type and Capacity of Children's Institutions," Microfilm Reel 27, Federation for Community Planning, MSS 3788, probably 1947, lists these capacities: Catholic institutions (Home of the Holy Family, St. Theresa's, Providence Heights [for pre-delinquent girls], St. Edward's, St. Joseph's, and Parmadale), 635; Protestant and nonsectarian institutions (Beech Brook, Children's Aid Society, Cleveland Christian Home, Berea Children's Home), 273; Jewish institutions (Bellefaire and the Orthodox Jewish Children's Home), 125.

⁶⁵"A Continuing Ideological Battle," *CCR*, 30 (May, 1946), 113; "Reasons for a Catholic Child Care Agency," *CCR*, 32 (May, 1948), 121.

⁶⁶"Children's Institutions as Social Agencies," *CCR*, 30 (May, 1946), 121-125; quotation on 125; "Some Problems of Group Management in Children's Institutions," *CCR*, 30 (September, 1946), 177-179.

This transition was complicated by the difficulty of reconciling the institutions' historic staff of women religious with the secular professional staff and services required by these new orphans. The issue of professionalizing orphanage staff had been raised at NCCC meetings during the second and third decades of the century since foster home placement presumably required a professional caseworker. The issue resurfaced during the 1930's when public relief agencies, often staffed by professionals, assumed responsibility for the placement of Catholic children. The NCCC held several sessions on social work to encourage Catholics to enter public agencies to protect the children's faith. In 1941 *CCR* urged "Catholic training for social work" and listed the seven Catholic schools of social work.⁶⁷ In the postwar years this issue of new clientele and staff dominated discussions about child-care institutions at the NCCC annual meetings and in *CCR*.⁶⁸ In 1955 a caseworker advised *CCR* readers that "the 'normal child-caring institution' . . . no longer exists" because the children entering institutions had serious "behavior and personality problems" that must be addressed by trained psychiatric social workers. He also noted "hesitation and doubt" about this "new approach . . . [that] calls for an occasional readjustment or modification of practices which have been carried on for many years."⁶⁹

The NCCC leadership had early recognized that "The Sisterhoods and Brotherhoods [were] the most conservative elements in Catholic Charity."⁷⁰ Yet nuns, not social workers, had been absolutely essential not only in founding and running the orphanages but in identifying them as Catholic. Nuns had become the "universally recognized symbol of Catholic charity."⁷¹ Beginning in 1920, nuns had met separately at the NCCC annual meetings as the Conference of Religious, which remained more interested in and more supportive of orphanages than the general

⁶⁷"Selection of Children for the Foster Home," *Proceedings NCCC, 1912*, pp. 264-272; "Catholic Philosophy and Current Trends in Case Work," *Proceedings, NCCC, 1933* (Washington, D.C., 1933), pp. 78-97; "Catholic Charities in 1941," *CCR, 25* (January, 1941), 41-42. See also Brown and McKeown, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

⁶⁸"Behavior Problems in Children in Institutional Settings," "The Psychologist's Contribution to the Institution," "An Institutional Caseworker's Approach to Children in Difficulty," *Proceedings, NCCC, 1950* (Washington, D.C., 1951), pp. 74-93; "Rehabilitating the Emotionally Disturbed Child Through Residential Treatment," *Proceedings, NCCC, 1953* (Washington, D.C., 1954), pp. 180-187; "Mental Health Concepts in the Administration of Children's Institutions," *Proceedings, NCCC, 1956* (Washington, D.C., 1957), pp. 103-104.

⁶⁹"Program of Psychiatric Services for Child-Caring Homes," *CCR, 39* (September, 1955), 8-10.

⁷⁰Monsignor William J. Kerby, quoted in Gavin, *The National Conference*, p. 42.

⁷¹Oates, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

meetings of the NCCC. After decades of service in institutions, "sisters found arguments that the institutional approach to charity was now outmoded very hard to accept."⁷² In 1951 *CCR* published an article "in praise of institutions" by a member of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent DePaul: "these religious [will] preserve, without financial aid or State standing the Church's standard of charity; they will still be bringing the charity of Christ to the poor and needy because they see Christ in them."⁷³ As late as the mid-1960's *CCR* articles noted the reluctance of the religious orders to provide in-service or other training for the sisters as well as tension between sisters and caseworkers.⁷⁴

Despite pressures from the NCCC, as well as from the Cleveland Welfare Federation, Parmadale in 1951 had on staff only one trained social worker, Sister Mary Beatrice, and no psychiatrist or psychologist; children with emotional problems were sent elsewhere for counseling.⁷⁵ Parmadale remained an institution for dependent Catholic children, serving its historic clientele of children made family-less by "death, illness, desertion, or family breakdown."⁷⁶ For although many of Cleveland's Catholics participated in the wartime and postwar prosperity, many others did not. In 1950 almost forty percent of the dependent children under care of the Child Welfare Division of the Cuyahoga County Welfare Department (formerly the CCCWB) were Catholic; in 1954, more than a third. These were children who presumably needed shelter that could be provided by nuns, not psychiatric care from medical personnel.⁷⁷

Parmadale increased its enrollment by absorbing other Catholic institutions. In 1947 St. Joseph's closed its doors, and its 100 girls were moved to Parmadale, boosting its numbers to 431 children.⁷⁸ In 1952 the boys and girls of the Home of the Holy Family, and in 1953 the small children from St. Edward's, joined them.

Parmadale had struggled to make ends meet even with substantial financial support from the Welfare Federation, Catholic Charities, and local

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁷³"In Praise of Institutions," *CCR*, 35 (April, 1951), 84-85.

⁷⁴"Implications of Change in Children's Institutions," *CCR*, 49 (February, 1965), 4-9; "Sources of Tension in Children's Institutions," *CCR*, 51 (January, 1967), 11-12.

⁷⁵This information is in a paper delivered at the NCCC annual meeting by Sister Mary Beatrice in 1951; Container Parmadale, Archives of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, Richfield, Ohio (Richfield Archives).

⁷⁶Parmadale Reports, History 1947-1975, FCCS/CCC Records, Box 22, CCDA.

⁷⁷Annual Reports, 1950, 1952, 1953, 1954, and 1955, Child Welfare Division of the Cuyahoga County Welfare Department, Child Welfare Collection, WRHS.

⁷⁸Children under Care, 1925-1950. Parmadale Papers, Richfield Archives.

foundations. The merger with St. Joseph's had necessitated building new cottages for the girls and had incurred substantial debt to Catholic Charities.⁷⁹ By 1958 the institution's costs had continued to rise although the numbers of children in residence had begun to decline.⁸⁰ Parmadale's financial difficulties were exacerbated by the fact that the county child welfare agency was not required to compensate Parmadale for the care of its wards. In 1961, for example, Parmadale sheltered in an average month, eighty-one county wards for whom it received no county subsidy although the institution did receive subsidies from the Welfare Federation.⁸¹

In 1962 Parmadale took its first significant steps toward changing its clientele and function. In order to receive public subsidies, Parmadale agreed to provide specialized services for emotionally disturbed children. (Bellefaire had done so since 1954, and Beech Brook also would soon receive county funds.) Since the mid-1950's, a nun social worker had headed the Social Service Department, often with only one other nun to assist her. Now, however, Parmadale hired four full-time caseworkers and several part-time caseworkers who were lay people.⁸² Although Parmadale was still described as a "general care" facility,⁸³ its staff now also included a part-time psychologist and a part-time psychiatrist.⁸³

By 1966 eighty of Parmadale's 180 children in residence were county wards, and the institution received \$84,000 in county monies, almost fifteen percent of its total budget.⁸⁴ Yet all of the children at Parmadale in 1968 were Catholic, as were all of its staff and advisory board.⁸⁵

In the late 1960's, however, the numbers of women religious in the United States began a slow but steady decline that impacted dramati-

⁷⁹Minutes, Advisory Board of Parmadale, January 23, 1951, FCCS/CCC, Box 21, Parmadale Reports, CCDA.

⁸⁰Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Parmadale Board, November 12, 1958. FCCS/CCC Records, Parmadale Reports, History 1947-1975, CCDA.

⁸¹Resolution, Cuyahoga County Commissioners, April 19, 1962, Cuyahoga County Archives, Cleveland, Ohio.

⁸²Annual Reports, Parmadale—Statistics (1955-1966 Annual Report), Richfield Archives.

⁸³"Program Inventory Child-Caring Institutions," Federation for Community Planning MSS 3788, container 44, folder 1072, WRHS.

⁸⁴Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Board of Parmadale, September 14, 1966, FCCS/CCC, Box 21, Parmadale Reports, CCDA; Children's Council, Welfare Federation, Analysis of Total Income by Agencies, Federation for Community Planning, MSS 3788, container 44, Folder 1072, WRHS.

⁸⁵Residential Care Review and Allocation Committee, September 12, 1968, Periodic Review of Parmadale, Parmadale, Historical Process, 1925-, Richfield Archives.

cally on Catholic social welfare institutions.⁸⁶ In 1967 *CCR* lamented the closing of an institution of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd due to an "acute shortage of religious personnel. . . . Most of our Catholic institutions are feeling this same pinch as vocations decline. . . . This decline in vocations also gives rise to the philosophical question as to whether there will be a change in the role of the religious functioning in the institutions."⁸⁷

The number of nuns at Parmadale also declined. In 1968 there were fifty-four Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine at Parmadale; in 1970, only thirty-two.⁸⁸ Sisters continued to staff the cottages, but lay teachers joined the sisters on the staff of Parmadale's school. The loss of the sisters exacerbated the institution's financial problems. In 1969 Parmadale's Advisory Board estimated that the nuns had contributed \$181,000 in services to the institution; now "additional lay personnel" would have to be hired—and paid.⁸⁹

In 1972 an article in *CCR* announced a "crisis in child-caring institutions." Its author noted a "fairly extensive deterioration in the field of child-care institutions . . . characterized by the closing of many institutions throughout the country because of high cost, low population, lack of staff, [and] insufficiently trained staff." He warned that the orphanages must soon address "critical questions of survival."⁹⁰

Redefining Catholic Charity, 1971-1996

Catholic orphanages were about to face their most serious challenges. They would respond by redefining their historic services and purpose.

Beginning in the 1970's, powerful political and financial pressures to deinstitutionalize all populations challenged the long Catholic tradition of child-care institutions. The numbers of dependent and neglected children in child-care institutions had fallen throughout the 1960's even as those institutions became more and more dependent on public

⁸⁶Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Tradition: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1992), pp. 437-438.

⁸⁷"Closing After 94 Years," *CCR*, 51 (December, 1967), 3.

⁸⁸Minutes, Advisory Board, September 9, 1970, FCCS/CCC Records, Box 21, Parmadale Reports, CCDA.

⁸⁹Minutes Advisory Board of Parmadale, February 12, 1969, FCCS/CCC Records, Box 21, Parmadale Reports, CCDA.

⁹⁰"Crisis in Child-Caring Institutions," *CCR*, 56 (September, 1972), 9.

funds. In 1973 the federal government provided a quarter of all income for Catholic agencies.⁹¹ The desire to save taxpayers' dollars spurred the movement toward deinstitutionalization. Alternative, off-site services such as community mental health programs appeared just as effective in treating troubled children and were much less expensive.

Parmadale fell upon desperate times. Its population had dipped perilously low—from 288 in 1961 to 149 in 1971, partly because social workers renewed their criticism of institutionalizing children and partly because Parmadale experienced difficulties adapting to its new clientele. By 1973 only twenty nuns remained on the Parmadale staff.⁹²

In late 1973 the Reverend John H. Leahy became director of the institution, stabilized its enrollment, and initiated significant changes. Parmadale absorbed adolescent girls from Carmelita Hall in 1974 and adolescent boys from St. Anthony's Home in 1975. In 1977 Parmadale's enrollment had risen to 234 children.⁹³

These were different children. In 1960 the "average child" at Parmadale was a nine-year-old placed because of family difficulties; in 1974 the "average child" was a thirteen-year-old placed "for behavior problems in the home or in the community." In 1974 only ten percent of Parmadale's children had been referred by Catholic Charities; the rest had come from the county child welfare agency or from juvenile court, as adjudicated juveniles.⁹⁴ In 1983 Leahy described Parmadale's 221 residents as "multi-problemated"; those problems included chemical dependency, truancy, unacceptable school behavior, and delinquency; "a vast majority . . . are at least mildly emotionally disturbed."⁹⁵ Leahy developed new on- and off-site programs eligible for public funding, including classes for mentally retarded children, a day care center, chemical dependency services, and family therapy.⁹⁶

In the early 1980's, when local agencies felt the impact of the Reagan administration's budget cuts, the county and the juvenile court cut back their placements at Parmadale. In response the new Executive Director, Thomas W. Woll, developed a range of specialized residential services

⁹¹*Encyclopedia of Social Work*, Volume 2 (Washington, D.C., 1977), p. 1253.

⁹²Parmadale Cost Per Diem 1961-1971, FCCS/CCC Box 22, Parmadale Reports (Periodicals 1967-1974); Self Study Report, Parmadale Reports, 1973-1975, FCCS/CCC Records, Box 21, CCDA.

⁹³State of the Village, Annual Report, 1981, FCCS/CCC, Box 21, CCDA.

⁹⁴"Comparative Study of the Population of Parmadale Children's Village," Parmadale Report (Periodicals) 1967-1974, FCCS/CCC, Box 22, CCDA.

⁹⁵State of the Village, Annual Report, 1983, FCCS/CCC, Box 21, CCDA.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

such as a victim protection program for adolescent sex offenders, and more off-site services such as a foster care program. By the 1990's the institution had created a network of integrated services—renamed Parmadale System of Family Services—aimed at “family survival.” Those services included day care, in-home counseling, placement of children in foster care, an out-patient treatment program, family therapy services, a group home for young adults, and training and consultation for social workers. (Bellefaire, now Bellefaire Jewish Children's Bureau, and Beech Brook also developed a wide variety of on- and off-site services.)

As had Catholic charities around the country,⁹⁷ the institution had become increasingly dependent on public funds—from Cuyahoga County, from the state, and from the federal government, including Medicaid payments. In 1985 these sources provided almost eighty percent of Parmadale's budget; in 1993 almost eighty-eight percent.⁹⁸

More and more of Parmadale's children were black: eighteen percent of its children in 1971; twenty-eight percent in 1981, and more than half in 1985. Increasingly, the beneficiaries of Parmadale programs were non-Catholic children and their families. In 1971 seventy-five percent of the children at Parmadale were Catholic; in 1981, only half. In 1987 only seventy-seven of the 389 children receiving institutional care were identified as Catholic; only sixty-two of the children in classes for the mentally retarded; only forty-seven of the 132 children in the drug treatment program.⁹⁹ In 1990 the last Sister of Charity of St. Augustine left, although other religious staff remained.

Parmadale's changed population reflected significant new trends in Catholic charities. As American Catholics increasingly entered the middle class, Catholic charitable organizations across the country became more sensitive to the needs of the non-Catholic poor. Inspired by the War on Poverty and the “social concerns of the Vatican Council,” they broadened their focus.¹⁰⁰ In 1986 a national conference on Catholic Residential Care for Children contemplated “an emerging new identity” for their institutions. Deinstitutionalization had forced some to close; others survived by developing innovative programs. Catholic institutions were also forced to answer this question: “whether or not our call is to

⁹⁷Oates, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-171.

⁹⁸Summary of 1985-1986 Budget Information, FCCS/CCC Parmadale Reports, Statistics, CCDA; Parmadale Family Services Annual Report, 1993, CCDA.

⁹⁹State of the Village, Annual Report, 1981, Chart 1; Statistical Update . . . September 1985. FCCS/CCC Parmadale Reports/Stats, CCDA; State of the Village, Annual Report, 1983; Program Beneficiary Statistics, Parmadale, 1984-1985, CCDA.

¹⁰⁰Brown and McKeown, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 195.

serve the child and the family of another faith." Responding both to the spirit of ecumenism that followed Vatican Council II and to practical necessity, the conference answered yes: the inclusion of non-Catholic children in residential care institutions illustrated the Catholic Church's mission to "reach out to absolutely every person and every need. . . . [I]t is in this apostolic identification with all people that we witness our Christianity."¹⁰¹ In 1988 the mission statement of Catholic residential child-care providers reiterated this broadened definition of clientele as "the youngest and most vulnerable members of society" and affirmed these goals: "the creation of an environment which fosters the spiritual, physical and moral development of each child . . . [and] The integration of the human and spiritual dimensions of service which promote each child's self-actualization and meaningful participation in life."¹⁰²

Like other Catholic residential care providers, Parmadale adapted its religious life and redefined its religious mission. In 1985 the agency offered "a cultural hour as an alternative to mass" and "a variety of services, both religious and civic."¹⁰³ In the spring of 1991 Parmadale celebrated Easter and held a Seder for its staff; the pastor of a leading black Baptist church, also a Parmadale advisory board member, led a prayer service. Current brochures boast: "We provide services to young people in need regardless of race or religion. . . . No attempt is made to dictate or influence a client or staff member's religious preferences."¹⁰⁴

According to Woll, in 1996 only about twenty to thirty percent of Parmadale's clients were Catholic. Yet, he maintained, the agency remained "Catholic" in its sustained mission to provide spiritual leadership for children; it served as "the social action arm" of the Church and "proof of [its] compassion." Moreover, Parmadale served more children and families than it had ever served before.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹"Catholic Identity in Residential Child Care," *Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA)* (May, 1986), pp. 10-13.

¹⁰²"Program Diversification in Residential Child Care," *CCUSA* (April, 1988), pp. 18-291; "Catholic Residential Care Mission Statement," *CCUSA* (April, 1988), p. 4.

¹⁰³Summary of Service-Area Directors' Three Year Plans, April 17, 1985, Parmadale Reports, CCDA.

¹⁰⁴May 8, 1991, Board of Trustees Minutes, FCCS/CCC, Box 21; Brochure, no date, FCCS/CCC, Box 21, CCDA.

¹⁰⁵Interview with Thomas W. Woll, February 5, 1996, at Parmadale: he estimated that in one year, 360 children were in treatment; 250 in foster care; 50 in group or transitional housing.

Revisiting Orphanages

Catholic orphanages have been not only the signature institutions of Catholic charity but, in public memory, representative of all orphanages. When the debate over the future of welfare took shape in the late 1980's and 1990's, policymakers who suggested that the orphanage be used again as a shelter for dependent children probably imagined an orphanage like Parmadale's Children's Village in 1925—home-like cottages in the country where well-behaved children stayed temporarily until they rejoined their families. This suggestion ignited opposition from those who probably imagined an orphanage like St. Joseph's in the 1930's—a bleak, cheerless congregate facility with an iron fence and an asphalt playground.¹⁰⁶ But St. Joseph's is gone, as are St. Vincent's, St. Mary's, the Home of the Holy Family, St. Theresa's/St. Edward's, St. Anthony's, and the three small ethnic orphanages. Parmadale, the most significant beneficiary of Catholic and non-sectarian funds, has survived, but in a form that would be barely recognizable to its founders. As they consider the future of orphanages, it is imperative that policymakers revisit their past. That past illustrates the "complex encounter between modernity and tradition" that, according to Elizabeth McKeown, has characterized the development of Catholic charities from the mid-nineteenth century to the present.¹⁰⁷

The Catholic tradition of child-care developed in an age when government was weak, sectarian identities were strong, and Catholics were poor. Accordingly, Cleveland's Catholic orphanages were founded by the diocese to save the bodies and souls of indigent co-religionists, often immigrants. This mission was reinforced by Catholic monies and the presence of Catholic nuns. Today government takes primary responsibility for dependence, sectarian identities are less narrow, and most Catholics have achieved the middle class. Parmadale Family Services, although still under the auspices of the diocese and Catholic Charities, is funded by public monies, staffed by medical and social

¹⁰⁶On this debate see Ashby, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-183; Cmiel, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-222. New advocates of orphanages include Mary-Lou Weisman, "When Parents Are Not in the Best Interests of the Child," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 274 (July, 1994), 43-63; McKenzie, *op. cit.*, and especially McKenzie (editor), *Retblinking Orphanages for the 21st Century* (Thousand Oaks, California, 1999).

¹⁰⁷Elizabeth McKeown, "Catholic Charities," in Michael Glazier and Thomas J. Shelly (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of American Catholic History* (Collegeville, Minnesota, 1997), p. 242.

work professionals, and serves primarily non-Catholic children. Adapting to dramatically different circumstances, Cleveland's most significant child-care institution has reinvented itself and redefined Catholic charity. Modernity has triumphed.

But this case study reveals that the victory was hard-fought and astonishingly recent, for Cleveland's Catholic orphanages long resisted the modernization endorsed by the NCCC leadership. By the time Bishop Farrelly and Father LeBlond began their efforts to bring Catholic charities into the twentieth century, St. Vincent's and St. Joseph's were well established (although not well funded). For six decades, the two orders of nuns had sheltered indigent Catholic children whose families counted on the orphanages to get them through hard times. And the hard times kept on coming, perpetuated by new waves of Catholic immigration and exacerbated by the Great Depression. World War II disrupted families and did not bring prosperity to all Catholics. Their sectarian identity firmly rooted in service to the community that provided financial and moral support, Cleveland orphanages often discounted advice and suggestions from national Catholic leaders: the needs of the community and of the institutions themselves were more compelling. Even the most "modern" orphanage, Parmadale, remained committed to its original constituency of dependent Catholic children and its historic staff of women religious until the 1960's, long after the NCCC urged professionalization and specialized services for emotionally disturbed children. Only when the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, founders and sustainers of the institution's traditions, began to leave, did rapid change occur—in large part because their leaving created the dramatic need for greater public funding. During the ensuing crises of the 1970's and 1980's, when the alternative to change seemed to be the institution's extinction, Parmadale's new directors did follow the lead of the NCCC, innovating and developing off-site services, broadening the institution's clientele and its Catholic mission. Any consideration of the future of orphanages by national policymakers, therefore, must take into account the practical difficulties, the soul-searching, and the healthy dose of institutional self-interest that accompany the encounter between tradition and modernity revealed at the local level.

**Catholic Child Care Institutions in Cleveland
1851-1996**

Name and Date opened	Renamed or merged
St. Mary's Female Asylum (1851)	Merged with St. Joseph's (1894)
St. Joseph's Orphanage (1853)	Merged with Parmadale (1947)
St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum (1852)	Renamed Parmadale Children's Village (1925)
	Parmadale System of Family Services (1996)
Home of the Holy Family (1895)	Merged with Parmadale (1952)
St. Theresa's (1943)/St. Edwards (1946)	Merged with Parmadale (1953)
St. Anthony's Home (1908)	Merged with Parmadale (1975)
Carmelita Hall (1969)	Merged with Parmadale (1974)
Catherine Horstman Home (1909)	
Holy Ghost Greek Catholic Orphanage (1918)*	
Holy Ghost Roman Catholic Orphanage (1919)*	
St. Basil's Orphanage (1920)*	

*These tiny institutions, listed in *Children Under Institutional Care 1923* (Washington, D.C.: 1927), Table 22, 107, were not diocesan institutions and were located in and/or closely affiliated with ethnic churches or sisters' convents. Because they are not clearly identified in city directories, it is impossible to know exactly when they closed.