

***Ann Ida Gannon, BVM Papers,
1928-2014***
Preliminary Finding Aid

Creator: Ann Ida Gannon, BVM

Extent: 16.5 linear feet

Language: English

Repository: Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago

Administration Information

Access Restrictions: Some materials may be restricted. Contact archivist for additional details.

Usage Restrictions: Copyright for materials created by Ann Ida Gannon, BVM was transferred to the Women and Leadership Archives.

Preferred Citation: Identification of item, date, box #, folder #, Ann Ida Gannon, BVM Papers, Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago.

Provenance: This collection was donated to the WLA by Ann Ida Gannon in 2014 (WLA2014.18). Additional materials were donated by Carolyn Farrell, BVM (WLA2018.32) and John O'Callaghan, S.J. (WLA2019.50)

Processing Information: This collection is unprocessed. Information in this preliminary finding aid was gathered through an initial inventory. This preliminary finding aid was created in 2022.

See Also: Mundelein College Records at the Women and Leadership Archives.

Biographical History

Genevieve Elizabeth Gannon was born April 12, 1915 in Chicago to George and Hanna Murphy Gannon. She was the third of six children. Gannon attended St. Jerome School and Immaculata High School in Chicago. As a clarinet player in Immaculata's newly formed band, she played at the dedication of the new Mundelein College in 1931. After high school, she turned down a scholarship to attend Mundelein College in order to enter religious life.

Gannon entered the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM) congregation on September 8, 1932. She professed first vows on March 19, 1935, and final vows on August 15, 1940. Upon entering the BVM order, she took the name Sister Mary Ann Ida.

Women and Leadership Archives
Loyola University Chicago

She began her teaching career in 1935 as an elementary school teacher in Waterloo, Iowa and Chicago and later as a secondary teacher at St. Mary's High School in Chicago. Gannon began her undergraduate studies after entering the BVM order and continued to take courses at Clarke College, Iowa State Teacher's College, De Paul University, and Mundelein College while working as a teacher. She completed her bachelor's degree in English with a minor in Mathematics at Clarke College in 1941. She attended graduate school at Loyola University Chicago part-time beginning in 1942, earning a master's degree in English in January 1948. During her graduate studies, she also studied Clinical Psychology to help better serve her students. Gannon was asked by the BVMs to complete a PhD in Philosophy in order to fill a need in that field. She earned her PhD from St. Louis University in 1951. She lived in Rome for 8 months while completing research for her dissertation, "The Active Theory of Sensation in Plotinus and St. Augustine."

Gannon was assigned to Mundelein College in the fall of 1951 as a professor and chair of the Philosophy Department. In 1957, she was appointed as the president of the college. During her tenure as Mundelein College President, which lasted until 1975, she gained great respect within the Mundelein community and nationally as a role model in women's education and leadership. She guided the college through the changes in the Catholic Church before and after Vatican II, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Vietnam War. Gannon was a supporter of the Civil Rights Movement and Chicago's Catholic Interracial Council. She also actively supported the Equal Rights Amendment.

After resigning as president, Gannon took a sabbatical as a visiting professor at the University of Notre Dame, after which she continued to teach philosophy at Mundelein College. In 1986, she transitioned from teaching to working in the Mundelein College archives, building the college's collection that would later be housed at the Women and Leadership Archives. After her retirement, she continued to volunteer at the Mundelein archives and at the Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, Center for Women and Leadership at Loyola University Chicago.

Gannon was often the first woman to serve on the many boards she was invited to join. "I didn't mind being the first [woman] on the board just so that I wasn't the only one by the time I went off," Gannon said. Gannon served on the board of trustees for various colleges, universities, and high schools. She served on the Executive Committee of Associated Colleges of Illinois, Catholic Theological Union's board, the National Board of Directors of the Girl Scouts, the American Council on Education Executive Committee, and the Central State College Association Board of Directors, among others. She served on the President's Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities 1969-1970.

Gannon's contributions to higher education were recognized by many higher education institutions and organizations. She was awarded 26 honorary degrees from colleges and universities and earned numerous awards. She was awarded the Laetare Medal in 1975, an annual award given by the University of Notre Dame in recognition of outstanding service to the Catholic Church and society. She was the first woman religious to receive this honor. The Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, Center for Women and Leadership at Loyola University Chicago opened in 1993 to carry on the legacy of Mundelein College after it affiliated with Loyola University Chicago.

Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, died June 3, 2018 at the age of 103 at Mount Carmel, the BVM Motherhouse in Dubuque, Iowa.

Scope and Content

The Ann Ida Gannon, BVM Papers consist of 16.5 linear feet and span the years 1928 to 2014. The papers relate primarily to Gannon's professional activities with various organizations and to her time at Mundelein College. The collection consists of curriculum vitae, correspondence, writings, reports, newsletters, press clippings, event materials, oral histories, memorabilia, photographs, and audiovisual media. The materials include a collection of correspondence between Gannon and her longtime spiritual advisor, Father John O'Callaghan, S.J. containing her personal and religious reflections. Some of these letters are restricted. See archivist.