

Fr. John Urbany –

Family History compiled from FSPA files written by his Sisters, Sister M. Kunigunda and Sister M. Dominica

My father, Nicolaus Urbany, was of Italian descent. His ancestors emigrated to Germany, and later to the Grandduchy of Luxemburg. My mother, Mary Nickels, a very devout woman, was a native of Luxemburg. God blessed their union with eleven children. Two died in infancy. Father was an officer stationed at the boundary line between Luxemburg and Belgium. He was very devoted to his family, and whilst he was a Catholic, he could not be classed among the most fervent kind. Nevertheless, his chief principles were, scrupulous honesty and faithfulness to duty, regardless of consequences. He was a very stern man, and his word was law to members of the family. Mother, on the other hand, was very mild, and dearly loved by all the children. She assisted at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass daily, when possible.

Father, mother, and daughter of about thirteen years of age, became the prey of a terrible epidemic, the cholera, which raged in the vicinity of Hobscheid in the year 1866. They died on three successive days. Anie on Saturday, father on Sunday, and mother on Monday, thus leaving a home of eight children parentless. The youngest child, Sylvester, was then only one month old. God in his Divine Providence did not forsake His children. Several worthy relatives cared for the three youngest as they would for their own.

Reverend John Urbany

The oldest brother, John had already been placed in a college by his parents. John continued his studies for the priesthood and was ordained in 1869, three years after the death of his parents. Shortly after his ordination, he bade farewell to his native land and sailed to America. He came to Iowa, to the diocese of Dubuque, which was then the only diocese in the state of Iowa. His parishes were Charles City, Festina, Lansing and Carroll. As his health was beginning to fail, he sought relief in a warmer climate. He went to New Braunfels, Texas in 1884, where he died of heart disease caused by inflammatory rheumatism, at the age of thirty nine years.

Fr. Urbany brought his sisters to America

The third of the Urbany family is Mary; she has always taken the place of a mother, particularly in behalf of the younger children, since the death of their parents. For their sake she struggled through many a hardship. After Reverend brother John's ordination he immigrated to America and was first stations at Charles City and then Festina. It was here he called for his oldest sister Mary to come to this country to be his housekeeper. Anna, being the youngest of the family, then seven years of age, came with her as a companion in 1870. Mary spent her final years at St Francis Home for the Aged in Dubuque, Iowa.

At the opening of the 1870 school year, Anna was sent to school, which was conducted by secular teachers the first few years. In 1875, Reverend Urbany brought the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration to Festina to teach at St. Mary School. It was only then that Anna began to make progress. In 1877, Mother Antonia, and Sister Xavier, now both of blessed memory, visited the Sisters in Festina. Being told, that Anna intended to enter some convent, they took her without any previous preparation. She entered the convent on June 1, 1877 and became Sister M. Dominica Urbany.

Next came sister Margaret. She was but eight years old when their parents died. She was cared for by one of her mother's sisters until the age of eighteen when in 1876 her Reverend brother brought her to Festina with her sisters. She remained with him until her entrance into the convent in 1877. She was known in religious life as Sister Kunigunda.