

Castlebar

Mother Aloysius Mangan quickly saw the urgent needs and set to work immediately. A large classroom at the rear of the Convent was prepared as a Primary School and it served until 1897. Music and Painting were taught in addition to the basic subjects. A capitation grant was availed of in 1892. In 1894 the foundation stone for St. Angela's National School was laid and this building served until 1963. A larger school was then built with extensions added as needed. The school property has yet to be transferred to the Diocese.

The original school room became a Technical Centre where lace making and crafts were taught until 1915. For three years it operated as a private school. In 1918 it was used as an Intermediate School to provide post-primary education. Extra rooms were added and Science and Commercial subjects were taught. This building was demolished in 1959. In 1925, Lord Lucan sold his estate. The residence on the estate was enlarged and a boarding school was opened. In 1975 it was restructured to cater for more pupils and further extensions followed. The trusteeship was transferred to CEIST in 2007 and the transfer of the Property to EDUCENA is in process.

Care of the sick was a priority with the Sisters. They visited the sick and helped to raise funds for them. In 1922, the Sisters were invited to care for the sick in the Sacred Heart Home in Castlebar. On 2nd July, 1925, Sr. Gerard Cunningham was appointed Matron, Sr. Imelda O'Dowd and Sr. Evangelist Hennelly, to the Nursing Staff, and Sr. Augustine Waldron was Storekeeper with responsibility for finance and accounts. A new modern building replaced the County Home in 1961, and the Sisters continued to work there. A completely new building opened in 1969, while Sister Mary (Anthony) Folliard was Matron. She brought in many innovations, that laid the foundation for the present day, Sacred Heart Home. She continued until her retirement in 1986. In later years, a number of Sisters branched out to other nursing areas at home and on the missions.

The Sisters continued their concern for the underprivileged, consoling the sick and providing meals for the homeless. The original school room behind the Convent was later used as a Social Services Centre, and is still used by the Social Services Council and other organisations in the town.

In their generosity, four Sisters – Mother Bernard Leonard, Sr. Magdalen Cunningham, Sr. Gabriel Mangan and Sr. Patrick Cuddihy founded a convent in Glasgow in 1868. Their hopes of continuing there were shattered by the death of Sr. Gabriel Mangan, and they returned home.

There was a notable connection between the Mercy Convents in Castlebar and Ballymahon. Sr. Eliza (Mary Joseph Peter) Davey-Nolan had entered Religious Life in Castlebar and was Professed there in 1868. She was in poor health and therefore went, at the request of her family, to Ballymahon, in 1872. Her health improved greatly in Ballymahon, and her uncle, who was Parish Priest in Ballymahon, obtained permission from the Archbishop of Tuam, for her transfer to Ballymahon. Her brother donated some money that was used afterwards to build the new National School.

The Closure of Convent of Mercy Castlebar

In the late 1980's and early 1990's it was obvious that the Convent building was not meeting the needs of the Sisters. Furthermore, the need for nursing care in the Diocese was very obvious. Following a lot of consultation, it was decided vacate the Convent, to build a Nursing Home, and a residence for Sisters on the Lawn in Castlebar. A number of houses were also bought in the town to meet the needs of the community. The Convent was sold in 1996.