

Westport

They began visitation of the sick on the first Sunday after arrival. On 2nd October the two Novices from Carlow were received for Profession in the parish church. This was the first such ceremony after 300 years. The following day the Poor Schools in Castlebar Street were placed under the care of the Sisters. They immediately closed the school for a month for repairs, and when the Sisters reopened on 3rd November the attendance rose from 100 pupils to 500 and even 600 were often present. With the added help of Sr. Josephine Trenor from Carlow, the Sisters took charge of the Christian Doctrine Society and taught Catechism to all classes each Sunday.

Death was an early visitor to the new foundation. The 26th December saw the premature death of Sr. Xavier Peppard, the 19 year old Carlow Novice lent to Westport. She was buried in Westport.

On 25th of January 1843 the first Westport Postulant entered to be followed by two more in May. Their reception took place on 11th June. In March of that same year the first Catholic School for middle-class pupils was opened in a room in the Convent. On 15th October, 1844 the newly built convent was ready for occupation, and the Dean returned to his former residence. The convent site was given free by Lord Sligo and the building costs had been collected by the Dean. In 1845 a new Poor School was built on the Convent grounds to replace the school on Castlebar Street. The Famine years brought great hardship and the Sisters spent days in the Workhouse consoling the starving and dying. Some Sisters contracted the disease and died, while others remained very delicate for a long time. On 19th June, 1848 they opened the House of Mercy and admitted as many as accommodation allowed. In 1868 the charge of the Magdalene Asylum in Altamont Street was committed to the care of the Sisters as it was in great disorder. The women left by degrees and in 1869 the laundry was transferred to the House of Mercy. In 1871 an extension to the House of Mercy enabled the Sisters to accommodate 40 orphans.

In 1904, part of a legacy left to the Sisters was used to purchase the Glendinning Building in Mill Street and established a Technical School of Rural Science there. This flourished for a number of years.

Mother Paul Cullen, the Westport Foundress, died in 1911 at the age of 95. The war years were particularly difficult for the Sisters as food and other essentials were scarce. The 1916 Rising and ensuing troubles also caused huge disruption. In 1916 the Rural Domestic Economy building in Mill Street was sold.

In 1925 the first secondary school for girls was opened in the Sacred Heart School. The school still thrives amid many extensions and changes. It is under the trusteeship of CEIST and is owned by EDUCENA. In 1965 the Girls' Primary School, which was under construction since 1960, was completed. The Girls' school amalgamated with Scoil na mBraithre under the Patronage of the Archbishop in 2006. The Girls' School building was transferred to DES (Department of Education and Science) in 2019 as part of the Voluntary Contribution following the Ryan Report.

The Convent closed in 2008 and the four remaining Sisters moved to apartments in Fernhill in Westport. It was sold to Mayo County Council in March 2009.