

# MISSION EFFECTIVENESS COMMITTEE CELEBRATION OF UIW'S HISTORY AND HERITAGE

## READING FOR THE FIRST WEEK OF OCTOBER

### **BISHOP CLAUDE MARIE DUBUIS, Founder of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word**

The people of San Antonio were desperately in need of help. Mayor W.C.A. Thielpape and other civic leaders appealed to the Catholic bishop, Claude Marie Dubuis, for assistance. Like many other bishops throughout the United States...**Dubuis had recently returned to his native France and had successfully persuaded a small group of Catholic Sisters from Lyons to open a hospital in Galveston to care for the people dying of yellow fever in that city.** Perhaps he could do the same for San Antonio.

Bishop Dubuis, whose diocese covered the whole state of Texas, had been born in the village of Teche, not far from Lyons. In 1846...he came to the United States as a missionary....**As a young man, Claude had been critically ill and had promised to spend ten years doing missionary work if his life was spared.** He was assigned first to the town of **Castroville**, a rural settlement of 1,399 people, mostly Alsatians and immigrants from Germany, Austria, Holland, and Belgium. Here he labored under conditions of extreme poverty but successfully built the first chapel and rectory, and started a Catholic school in the area

In 1862, he was consecrated Bishop for Texas where keeping in touch with his people was extremely difficult for they were scattered throughout vast expanses of wilderness. In a letter written to his family some years later, **Dubuis described his journeys on horseback that sometimes lasted six months and took him through ‘the monotony of the plains as well as the terrible Rocky Mountains which hide their heads in the clouds** and in whose valleys are the red-skinned Comanches, panthers and lions....”

In addition to sickness and disease that claimed many lives, Bishop Dubuis faced “insurmountable poverty” everywhere he turned in his diocese. In San Antonio, he found “deprivation, sufferings of all kinds.” He reported to Archbishop Odin, “In spite of everything we live, but we live without dollars.” He realized that he desperately needed more priests, hospitals and a congregation of Sisters who would care for the ever-increasing number of victims of disease. He returned to France determined to find answers to all of those needs for the Catholic Church in Texas. **He finally turned to his friend, Rev. Mother Angelique Hiver, of the Order of the Incarnate Word in Lyons, France. She agreed to prepare young women for Texas. Dubuis’ well-known formal appeal read:**

**“Our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering in the persons of a multitude of sick and infirm of every kind, seeks relief at your hands....He begs you to accept the mission of corporal works of mercy by sending Sisters of the Incarnate Word to take charge of our hospitals, refuges, and asylums.”**

**The result of this appeal was that Sisters Madeleine Chollet, Pierre Cinquin, and Agnes Buisson were chosen to be the pioneer Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word to come to San Antonio in 1869.**