

## PRAISE FOR ENLIGHTENED CHARITY

“We are indebted to Dr. Libster and Sr. Betty Ann McNeil for this well-researched book. Not only will it significantly contribute to our understanding of nursing and some of its true 19th-century heroines, it gives us a model for nursing—defining nursing at a time when that was unheard of. Only a competent and humble nurse, devoted to what was best for the care of patients, would speak and write so clearly about how care should be given, no matter the personal cost. Sr. Matilda was just such a nurse. She will be an inspiration to many nurses today who would follow her example. Even though the technology is dramatically different, the struggles Sr. Matilda had will resonate with nurses, and they will rejoice in her successes.”

**Sr. Carol Keehan, DC, RN, MS**

President/CEO

The Catholic Health Association of the United States

“*Enlightened Charity* is an intriguing, convincing, and groundbreaking history that contributes to our understanding of the consequences of choices made in the past for current nursing practice. This book presents an American history of nursing that claims a much earlier emergence than the traditionally held view that sees American nursing practice beginning in the late 19th century. This portrayal of the life and nursing of Sister Matilda is a work of art that offers valuable insights into the components of effective nursing practice. It is a most delightful read!”

**Sylvia Rinker, RN, PhD**

President, American Association for the History of Nursing

“*Enlightened Charity* is a book that will enlighten anyone who is concerned with the history and future of nursing. It raises critical issues about the promise and problems of the religious origins of the profession and the continued use of religious metaphors in framing nursing work. Beautifully written, it brings to our attention not only a lost tradition but also the skills and intelligence that nurses master and practice and that are too often concealed in an etherealization of both the nurse and her practice. We understand from this book how nurses lived their history and traditions and what has been their true legacy. I recommend it not only for the way it unearths this invisible tradition but for the analytical issues it raises and that desperately need discussion in the contemporary nursing universe.”

**Suzanne Gordon,**

Co-Author, *Safety in Numbers:*

*Nurse-to-Patient Ratios and the Future of Health Care*

Co-Editor, *The Culture and Politics of Health Care Work Series,*

Cornell University Press

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*“Enlightened Charity* succeeds as a history that recovers lost memory about the indispensable role of nurses in the 19th-century development of professionalized health care as science and as service. It does so through a relatively unknown account by a very unknown early nurse in the United States who also happened to be a Roman Catholic sister belonging to the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul: Matilda Coskery. As a member of a community with a long nursing tradition dating back to the 17th century, Matilda Coskery emerges from the shadows as a towering and paradigmatic figure of wisdom, professionalism, and care. The authors of this study have made a wonderful contribution not just to the histories of nursing but also to the present debate about how nursing can evolve to shape the future of health-care delivery.

**Rev. Edward Udovic, CM, PhD**

Senior Executive for University Mission  
DePaul University

*“Enlightened Charity* is a comprehensive historical perspective of the work of the Sisters and Daughters of Charity and their extraordinary contribution to the foundations of holistic concepts in nursing. It is a delightful read that adds a rich dimension to our knowledge of nursing’s holistic roots. This wonderful book really brings forth the importance of understanding our infinite and sacred nature and its centrality in healing.”

**Lucia Thornton, RN, MSN, AHN-BC**

President, American Holistic Nurses Association  
Founder of the Model of Whole-Person Caring™

*“Enlightened Charity* is an important contribution to the care and treatment of the mentally ill in America, the hitherto neglected relationship between religion and medicine, and the history of nursing. It sharply revises the traditional history of nursing, which dates the beginning of professionalization in the late nineteenth century, by pointing to the role of religious orders such as their Sisters of Charity who founded the Mount Hope Institution in Baltimore in 1840. Focusing on the career of Sister Matilda Coskery and her hitherto ignored *Advices Concerning the Sick*, Martha M. Libster, PhD, and Sister Betty Ann McNeil have produced an enlightening history that deserves a wide audience.”

**Gerald N. Grob, PhD**

Henry E. Sigerist Professor of the History of Medicine, Emeritus  
Rutgers University

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*“Enlightened Charity* is a detailed account of a significant piece of nursing history that offers depth to one’s identity as a nurse. The fundamentals of nursing are expressed throughout the book as the story of Sister Matilda and the Sisters of Charity unfolds. Examples of initial assessments, continuous monitoring of patient responses, critical thinking, and planning for individualized care are clearly spelled out in Sister Matilda’s writings and the authors’ account of their practice. The book grounds nursing practice in a long history of care and concern for the sick. I loved it!”

**Cathy Bair McLean, RN, MSN, LMFT, MS**  
Clinical Assistant Professor of Nursing  
East Carolina University College of Nursing

“The authors of *Enlightened Charity* open a window into the nineteenth century, a hidden period of American nursing history. In the book, they describe a religious tradition of nursing, which pre-existed the Nightingale model, and continues today. The exemplar of the tradition, Sr. Matilda Coskery, DC (1799–1870), emerges as an advanced-practice nurse who models a mode and style of psychiatric nursing practice that is enviable. As the reader follows the amazing Sr. Matilda, who founded and managed the first nurse-run psychiatric hospital in the United States, one enters an era where knowledge of neurophysiology and evidenced-based treatment of mental illness was primitive. Yet Sr. Matilda and her religious and medical colleagues practiced moral therapy by creating healing environments and providing compassionate care for psychiatric patients. Interestingly, these nineteenth-century practitioners assessed their patients, were conscious of health-care costs, and reported outcome measurements. During their research for the book, the authors made a wonderful discovery, an unpublished text written by Sr. Matilda Coskery. This primer, *Advices Concerning the Sick*, gives insight into the meaning of a religious tradition of care of the sick poor, which was developed by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac in seventeenth-century Paris and was brought to the United States by Elizabeth Ann Seton. It also sheds light on the beliefs and modalities of nursing in the period. You must read this delightful book.”

**Sr. Rosemary Donley, SC, PhD, APRN**  
Ordinary Professor of Nursing, The Catholic University of America  
and the Designated Laval Professor of Justice for Underserved People,  
Duquesne University School of Nursing