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RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES FROM HERE

Several religious communities in Quebec support the Catholic Bible Society in its mission to make the Bible known and to promote its understanding and interpretation in light of contemporary, social and cultural challenges. The journal *People of the Word* aims to make these communities, who are dedicated to and challenged by the Word of God, well known

To educate is to build a more just world

Simone PERRAS, S.N.J.M.

Centre Marie-Rose Durocher

CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF THE HOLY NAMES OF JESUS AND MARY

“A joyful and free woman, Blessed Marie-Rose, You are ever alive!”

Simone Perras, S.N.J.M.

***“I confess in all sincerity of heart, that I
was quite moved at seeing such virtue in
just one soul (...)***

***I pray to her to obtain for me the same
passion for governing my diocese.”***

Bishop Ignace Bourget to the bereaved Sisters (1849)

Marie-Rose Durocher, an inspiring figure

On October 6, 1811, Eulalie Durocher was born in Saint-Antoine-sur-Richelieu, Quebec. She was the tenth child in the family. From 1831 to 1843, she was hostess and housekeeper at her brother's rectory in Beloeil. In 1843, with Mélodie Dufresne and Henriette Céré, she founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM) in Longueuil, on Rue Saint-Charles. This was the first Canadian Congregation of Teaching Sisters, and Eulalie took the name of Marie-Rose. She died on October 6, 1849, at the age of 38, leaving behind a well-established community. On May 23, 1982, Pope John Paul II declared her Blessed naming her Blessed Marie-Rose Durocher. Since 2004, the foundress's remains have been resting in the Co-Cathedral of Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue in Longueuil.

Her spiritual aspirations

From childhood, Eulalie felt a strong attraction to God. No doubt, it was a family legacy since her father had undertaken classical studies and her mother had studied with the Ursulines in Quebec. From the age of three, Eulalie loved to pray. At Church, this good-natured child was never wiser than in the presence of Jesus in the Tabernacle, which was most probably a foreshadowing of her love for the Eucharist that would illuminate the darkest hours of her life.

The words from the Gospel: “I have come to cast fire on the earth and I wish it were already kindled (*Luke 12, 49*)” perfectly express the love that burned in Eulalie’s heart. Throughout her life, she wanted to give herself over to Love in adoration, to abandonment and service. Therefore, her persistent longing for religious life was not surprising! But frail health hindered her from realizing her dream of becoming a novice with the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame, and she had to return to her family home. To console her, her father gave her a beautiful horse that she named “Caesar”, a proud horse, which would bring her to visit her friends, and the poor and sick of the parish!

An unpredictable time

Eulalie was 18 years old when her mother died. Once again her plans had drastically changed. She, the most fragile, was relied upon to support her father and take charge of the family. She wondered about her future, and found her peace and happiness in serving. However, her brother Théophile was urging her to come and assist him in Beloeil. While there, she would undergo a difficult period of adaptation. For her, it would be a time for maturing, for not being self-centered, for inner transformation, and also for openness, because the Saint-Mathieu Presbytery received a lot of visitors. There were discussions about the profound issues of that era. Eulalie discovered a troubled society, lacking direction and in great need of education. With her friend Mélodie Dufresne, she participated in Evangelization and pastoral activities and exerted a great influence on the milieu. She used her talents for organizing, for bringing people together and for teaching. These resources did not escape the keen eye of Bishop Bourget who would call her to found a community dedicated to education.

A new adventure!

Despite her deep sorrow at leaving Beloeil, a place she really loved, Eulalie was pleased at having found a response to her aspirations. In Longueuil, supported by her burgeoning community, she sought to embody the Gospel values of love and justice. She did this primarily by establishing boarding schools and day schools for

girls from the countryside, the least-favored segment of society. For Mother Marie-Rose, the competence of teachers, a positive pedagogy and success with public exams were a way of bringing about the Kingdom of God. In the Names of Jesus and Mary, and under their gaze, her goal was the full development of the human person. To trust, sustain and support this momentum was to help others find their identity, and to name it. And in this way, give meaning to their lives, and awaken them to their Christian and social responsibilities.

A legacy lived and transmitted

During its almost 175 years of existence, the Congregation has expanded and adapted to the evolution of societies and cultures (in Canada, the United States, Africa and South America). The word "education" has taken on a broader meaning; the fields of action have become diversified. Today, the mission and the spirituality of the Institute are shared with lay people: associates, lay consecrated persons, aid workers, partners, volunteers, etc.

In a spirit of interdependence and of collaboration, a trend is emerging: to join forces with groups, organizations, religious congregations, networks and three NGOs...so as to jointly bring about responses to ongoing issues. Thus, by taking a corporate stand, three causes are being focused on: the fight against human trafficking, access to water, and the defense of migrants and refugee women. As in Mother Marie-Rose's era, special attention is being given to women, children and families.

Despite the decrease in its human resources, the Congregation remains alive and animated through the spirit of its origins. Called to liberate life in all its forms, the Sisters are seeking to make God present in the world through the witnessing, often discreet, of their life and their commitment and also:

“To proclaim the Good News of Salvation, to contribute to the full development of the human person, to be challenged by the needs of society to unite our efforts with those around us.”

SNJM Constitutions, 1985



For further information

www.snjm.org section ACTUALITÉS: Our publications, *She Who Believed in the Future*

www.snjm.qc.ca

LABERGE, Yolande, S.N.J.M. *Mère Marie-Rose. Eulalie Durocher*. Lidec inc., 2000 DUVAL, Germaine, S.N.J.M. *Par le chemin du Roi, une femme est venue*. Bellarmin, 1982 **Visit the historical sites in Longueuil • 450 651-8104**