

Spiritual Message – October 2016
Quebec Provincial Leadership Team
The spirituality of welcome . . .
welcoming others and events

This year, the spiritual messages will help us to reflect and deepen the aspect of welcome in our personal and community life. Why speak of welcoming as part of our SNJM spirituality? To answer this question, we will explore our life experiences; we will look at Mother Marie-Rose's life; and we will see how our tradition continues to be renewed in faithfulness to our origins.



In our life experience

Throughout our lifetime, we have been faced with situations which have led us to experience a spirituality of welcome. Daily we have numerous occasions to welcome people and events.

I would like to share with you an event that called me to welcome into my life a new reality: the school reform of the 60's. This reform brought about changes in the school system which obliged many Sisters, myself included, to transfer from the private into the public sector.

During this time of change, I was called to adapt to a new school environment and new teaching methods. I worked alongside lay teachers whom I got to know and with whom I collaborated. I taught students with diverse learning abilities and diverse social and economic backgrounds. I still hold fond memories and deep feelings for people I met at that time.

I experienced challenging moments, but also moments of sheer joy which have marked my life. Above all, I acquired an ability to adapt as well as an openness to others and to events. These have served me well throughout the rest of my life. I continue to be guided by the words of Alexandre Jollien: "To encounter the other is to enter another world. We move away from self, away from our reference points. We come out of our shell, letting our defenses fall. Encountering another moves us beyond the roles we play. "

What specific personal experience has led you to an interior transformation or to a greater sense of openness and welcome?

In the life of Mother Marie-Rose

Under her mother's influence, Eulalie learned very early in life to be attentive to the needs of others. From a very young age, she was concerned about the well-being of others and wanted to contribute to their happiness. "She remained self-possessed and courteous with rude servants and, on occasion, with ill-humored religious as well." (*She Who Believed in Tomorrow*)

Marie-Rose Durocher had a talent for educating that flowed from her unconditional acceptance of others, anchored in a life of relationships based on trust and love. She was convinced that each person is unique and fundamentally good. Her loving appreciation of others helped them to see themselves in a positive light.

Mother Marie-Rose's path was not without obstacles. Throughout her life, she was confronted with adverse situations. Her plans were often thwarted and circumstances often restricted her. However, she accepted all these hardships as opportunities to grow in maturity and in openness to the unexpected.

Marie-Rose Durocher had an acute perception of the needs of society and the Church of her time. Her vision for the future helped her to accept events and, in faith, to surmount her numerous difficulties. If doors closed before her, through the power of the Spirit and trust in Providence, others opened.

How does our foundress's life inspire us to live attitudes of openness and welcome in our daily lives?

In our tradition

Since our foundation, through our Constitutions and the General Chapter Acts which focus on their ongoing relevancy, we have been challenged to ever greater openness, solidarity, dialogue and collaboration. These values express different aspects of a spirituality of welcome in tune with today's reality. Let us call to mind some of these calls:

We are missioned to call humanity to fullness of life

In collaboration with our contemporaries in our fragmented world, we face together the questions of our day and seek paths of hope and life. We are thus led to strengthen our ties and to announce the good news of a life in the process of liberation and communion.

"In union with all who search for meaning in their lives, we are called . . . to use our abilities to bring about relationships of equality, justice and solidarity; to promote dialogue and foster collaboration."
2001 Acts

We are called to live reciprocity and interdependence

In our experience of interdependence, we find strength in new relationships. "In a spirit of reciprocity, we welcome [one another and] the richness of the diverse world and we share the gift of our charism."
2006 Acts

In our adventure with the Spirit, may that Spirit prompt us "to act with audacity and freedom; to widen our circles of collaboration; and to imagine the SNJM mission in new ways – open to all for the sake of the world, the Church, and the whole Earth community." 2016 Acts

How do these calls resonate in our lives?

Jesus told us that the Kingdom of God is in our midst. (Luke 17: 21) Is it not our mission to reveal God present at the very heart of our communities and our world? The Kingdom draws near to us and is present whenever we take steps to be welcoming, to share and to be peacemakers. "The Kingdom draws near each time we love each other in our diversity, following the example of Jesus."¹

Sr. Denise Riel

¹ Simon-Pierre Arnold, *Dieu derrière la porte*, 2016, p. 210