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## TRIBUTE TO THE HÔTEL-DIEU SISTERS

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In marking anniversaries we step back a bit in order to better appreciate the past, experience the present, and look to the future. In 1996 we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the Eudist Fathers in the Madawaska region. 1997 marks three anniversaries: the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the Marist Sisters in Canada, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Filles de Marie de l'Assomption Sisters, and the one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary of the arrival of the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph [Hôtel Dieu Sisters] in the Madawaska region. 1998 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Edmundston.

### DAY OF REJOICING

In his *Histoire du Madawaska*, Father Thomas Albert complimented the Religious Hospitallers, devoting several pages to them. This is some of what he writes: « *It was a joyful day that fourth of October of 1873, when four Hospitallers of the Hôtel Dieu of Montreal arrived at St. Basile. They had accepted to establish a branch of their work in the Madawaska region, at the request of Bishop Rogers. The following November 10 the bishop established them in a building that had been vacated by the Sisters of Charity. [At the time of their moving in,] there were seven sisters: Reverend Mother Davignon, the superior, and Sisters Guérin, Brisette, Maillet, Colette, Philomène, and Rachel, members of two groups having arrived October 4 and 11. It would be a year before classes and the hospital were to open.* » The beginnings were distressing: the death of the Mother Superior four months after her arrival, poverty that was very close to misery, at times, and periods of distress.

### MOTHER MAILLET

It is in a spirit of admiration and gratitude that Father Albert introduces Mother Maillet and her work: « *It is said with reason that the one who rocks the cradle governs the world. The hand of a woman consecrated to God and carrying in her heart the spirit of devotion of a Jeanne Mance and the zeal of a Marguerite Bourgeoys rocked the cradle of the Madawaska region. Always joyful and charitable even when anguish caused by the physical and moral misery clutched at her throat and raised in her a compassionate heart, she watched over her youthful fledgling that was the Madawaska, good-hearted but unrefined... she watched over it with more a more resourceful tenderness than that of a mother bent over her own sick child.* » And the historian goes on to write about the challenges met by this woman, and goes on to tell of « *her work, the work of a generation.* »

### HÔTEL DIEU

« *For over a quarter of a century, the Hôtel Dieu was the only refuge for the sick, in this vast region of ours,* » wrote Father Albert. « *Mother Maillet was ever vigilant. Under the wise and patriarchal direction of Monsignor Dugal, the enterprise developed wonderfully and wrought a transformation in the Madawaska whose greatness would be difficult to gauge and whose favourable effects would be hard to measure. Adapting itself marvellously to all the needs of the region, the convent became a kind of training school, a primary university where every branch of the sciences was taught, and where each talent could develop according to its aptitudes.* »

## **WOMEN OF COMPASSION**

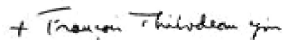
The Congregation of the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph - founded in France in the 17th century by Dr. Jérôme LeRoyer de la Dauversière and Mother Marie de la Ferre - is one of the builders of the Madawaska region. In the memorial album of the Edmundston Diocese, published on the occasion of the diocese's fiftieth anniversary, we read that « *these extraordinary women are committed to the care of the sick, the poor, the needy, and to education. The parishes of Saint-Basile, Edmundston, Saint-Jacques, Clair, Saint-Quentin, Perth-Andover, as well as the diocesan services are constant beneficiaries of these many services.* »

## **AN OUTSTANDING NETWORK**

Throughout these 125 years the Religious Hospitallers set up an entire network of services to respond to the needs of the region: boarding school for young ladies, boys' boarding school, the Hôtel-Dieu of St.-Basile, the Académie Maillet, a public school, the Msgr. Dugal College, the Van Buren Hôtel Dieu, a school of nursing, the St. Joseph Sanatorium which later became the St. Joseph Residence, the Hôtel-Dieu d'Edmundston, Hôtel-Dieu de Saint-Quentin, the Hôtel Dieu of St. Joseph, Perth-Andover, a teacher's college and a classical college, the Troupe folklorique du Madawaska, the LeRoyer Centr'Aide Centre, child care facility and kindergarten, the P'tits Violons Msgr. Lionel Daigle Young Fiddlers, women's help programme, Foundation for the works of the Hôtel-Dieu de Saint-Basile, etc. As many responses as there are needs.

## **GRATITUDE AND BEST WISHES**

In my name and on behalf of the people of our diocese I express my deep gratitude to the Religious Hospitallers of Saint Joseph, for all that they have been and for all that they are in our Church. Before all else they are for us signs of the Lord's compassion for us. And I hope that some of our young ladies will pick up this heritage of devotion and goodness, in these days of celebration, and that these same young women, here as in far-away Mexico or Peru, will continue with as much fervour and generosity the work so beautifully inaugurated 125 years ago in our beautiful Madawaska country. Have a good week.



+ François Thibodeau  
Bishop of Edmundston

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