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## 125 YEARS OF NURSING CARE (1)

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October 4 was the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival at Saint Basile of the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph. As a mark of our gratitude I want to remind our people that they were a great gift of God to us; I also want to talk about their special charism and spirituality.

### A SPLENDID JUBILEE

Despite a full year given over to different celebrations and activities, the Hotel Dieu Sisters were still able to mark with spirit and enthusiasm their 125 years of presence in the Madawaska region, with the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first sisters at St-Basile. With them, with their predecessors and the entire population which benefited from their generous and significant presence, I praise the Lord for the marvels He has never ceased to accomplish, here, both for us and for all our brothers and sisters. On behalf of the diocesan Church and in my own name I want to express my deepest gratitude for all that they are and everything they have been doing, here, these last 125 years; words lack to adequately express the gratitude we owe them.

### STRENGTH AND COURAGE

Throughout this jubilee year of theirs, the sisters rightfully highlighted the spirit of strength, of love, and of courage of the pioneers, and they repeated this on October 4 when they marked the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of religious life of Sister Brigitte Légère and the golden anniversaries of Sisters Marie-Mai Michaud, Alda Boulay, and Patricia Ouellet. It is not a spirit of fear that God has given us but a spirit of strength, and love, and self-discipline, as Saint Paul tells us in his letter to Timothy [1 Timothy 1:7] And he adds: [Verse 8] *"Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord... but join with me in suffering for the Gospel, relying on the power of God..."* Sister Georgette Desjardins discretely recalled the part of suffering which was the lot of the Hotel Dieu Sisters, the first one hundred years: the rain fell, the torrents came, the wind blew, but the house did not fall. *"Never regret, Sisters, having come to the Madawaska region,"* The first superior had told the sisters, *"Our dear community must not regret having accepted this foundation, since none were ever made which promised so much for the glory of God and the good of our holy Faith."*

### HUMBLE AND FREE

Throughout these 125 year, the Hotel Dieu Sisters have had a faith capable of moving mountains and forests, as well as faith to consider themselves but the humble handmaids of Jesus our Saviour. *"Continue to grow in the love of God. Never say: This is very little. No. There is nothing little, in the service of the Master we serve."* These words of Mother Marie de la Ferre show us a very special spirit, one that is proper to the Religious Hospitallers of Saint Joseph, a spirit that is specific to these women of compassion: *"Free to love and to serve."* Inner freedom, faith and obedience deeply marked the life and mission of Jerome le Royer and Marie de la Ferre. It is with this same inner attitude that the sisters strive to live their commitment, as is clear when we read the first pages of their *Constitutions*: *"The spirit of this family is one of holy freedom of children of God which makes one earnest about oneself, faithful to God, pure in life, in simplicity of intention, kind in conversation, cordially united to her sisters, lovingly charitable to the poor and the sick, devoted and strong"*

*in adversity, and infinitely desirous of everything that is pleasing to God."* These words written in 1643 are impressively timely, today.

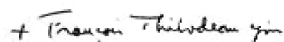
#### **WOMEN OF FAITH AND OF COMPASSION**

*"The Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph are called to live the freedom of the children of God as women of faith embodying the gentleness and compassion of Christ in service to his members, especially to the poor, the sick and the destitute, in a union of charity. Faithful to its mission, the congregation continues to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ through service to the poor and the sick, and through education. All the sisters share in this mission by the witness of their lives consecrated to God in service to neighbour, revealing in this way Christ's compassionate love. The sick and the elderly sisters continue their mission in the Church through their serenity, their prayer, and their afflictions. The sisters embody the gentleness and compassion of Christ for the poor and the destitute, not only by bringing them immediate material aid, but especially by assuring them of a simple and warm welcome. They love them just as they are, they try to understand what it is they are living, and they help them find alternate resources answer to respond to their needs. The sisters work with courage and discernment to promote the respect of the rights and dignity of the person. The Holy Spirit who incited Jerome Le Royer and Marie de la Ferre to undertake the work which was given to them is still effective today in each of the sisters. Fidelity to the Spirit, which assumes an attitude of spiritual, personal, and community discernment, is indispensable to the pursuit of the Congregation's mission according to the Lord's purpose."*

#### **WORDS OF LIFE**

The Sisters are well acquainted with what I have just written; they know them not only in memory, but especially through the memory of the heart. They are words of life, they are treasures not only for them, Religious Hospitallers, but for the whole Church and the whole world.

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau  
Bishop of Edmundston

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