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En cette fin du mois de septembre, nous vous proposons de communier au deuxième centenaire de la naissance de saint Pierre Julien Eymard, fondateur des Sœurs Servantes du Saint-Sacrement. Un autre sujet fort intéressant est un survol de la vie de la première carmélite canadienne. Merci à celles qui ont envoyé ces articles. Votre participation est toujours bienvenue pour alimenter nos échanges fraternels.

Fraternellement

Sœur Gabrielle osc.

At the end of the month of September, we propose that you share in the 2nd Centenary of the birth of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. Another very interesting subject is an overview of the the life of the Canada's First Carmelite Nun.

Thanks to everyone who sent in these articles. Your participation is always welcome to nourish our fraternal exchanges.

Fraternally

Sister Gabrielle osc.

Mot de la Présidente

Voici l'automne aux mille coloris, le temps des récoltes et aussi des labours pour préparer la prochaine récolte.

C'est le temps des relances, des nouveaux départs, de remises en route après la période plus relaxe de l'été et du repos.

L'U.C.R.C. et la revue Présence ne font pas autrement. Nous voici donc avec une invitation à repartir ... de notre baptême avec saint Pierre Julien Eymard, fondateur des Religieux et des Servantes du T.S. Sacrement. Ses réflexions sur son baptême sont pertinentes et interpellantes pour nous toutes encore aujourd'hui. Un Religieux du St Sacrement a écrit cet article que vous trouvez dans nos pages à l'occasion du 2^e centenaire du baptême du P. Eymard, né le 4 février 1811.

C'est le seul article parvenu à Présence. Si on souhaite la continuation de ce périodique, je rappelle qu'il en dépend de la matière à publier que nous pouvons recevoir. Chaque monastère est responsable en ce domaine!

Bonne lecture,

Sr Janine Bourque, sss

Présidente du l'U.C.R.C.



President's word

Here is autumn and its thousand colors, the time for harvests and for plowing to prepare the next harvest.

It's time for revival, for new beginnings and to start again after a good rest during the more relaxed season of summer.

The U.C.R.C. and the magazine Presence are no different. So here we are with an invitation to start again ... with our baptism with St. Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Brothers and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. His reflections on his baptism are relevant and make all of us stop and think today. A Brother of the Blessed Sacrament wrote this article that you can find in our pages on the occasion of the 2nd centenary of the baptism of Father Eymard, born on February 4th, 1811.

This is the only article that reached Presence. If you want a continuation of this periodical, please note it depends on the material to be published that we can receive. Each monastery is responsible in this area!

Happy reading,

Sr Janine Bourque, sss

President of the U.C.R.C.

Prochain Chapitre général - Next General Chapter

Les Servantes du T.S. Sacrement tiendront leur chapitre général à Sherbrooke du 18 septembre au 8 octobre.

Il réunira 21 capitulaires représentant 8 pays répartis sur les 5 continents. Au cours de ces assises, le chapitre procédera à l'élection d'un nouveau conseil général.

Nous recommandons tous ces travaux à vos ferventes prières.

The Servants of the very Blessed Sacrament will hold their General Chapter in Sherbrooke from September 18th to October 8th, 2011.

It will gather 21 capitularies representing 8 countries from the 5 continents. During these meetings, the chapter will elect a new General Council.

We recommend all these proceedings to your fervent prayers.

Deuxième centenaire de la naissance et du baptême de saint Pierre Julien Eymard fondateur des Servantes du T.S. Sacrement

Le P. Eymard et
la « mémoire » de son baptême

P. Manuel

Barbiero, sss,

Il y a 200 ans naissait le 4 février et était baptisé le 5, à La Mure d'Isère au diocèse de Grenoble en France, un petit garçon, d'une simple famille d'artisan. Un enfant comme les autres, qui a dû lutter et travailler pour vivre; qui a dû se battre pour suivre la vocation à laquelle il se sentait appelé.

L'église paroissiale de l'époque du P. Eymard, conserve l'antique cuve en pierre où Pierre-Julien fut baptisé.

Saint Pierre Julien Eymard est connu comme apôtre éminent de l'Eucharistie, nous connaissons avec quel soin il s'est préparé pour recevoir la première

communion; mais nous restons surpris quand nous découvrons que dans sa correspondance jamais il parle du jour anniversaire de sa première communion, par contre souvent il rappelle le jour de son baptême.

Le baptême : une pierre d'angle de sa vie

C'est à partir de l'année 1841 (il avait 30 ans) deux ans après son entrée chez les maristes qu'on trouve des écrits rappelant avec une certaine constance, son baptême.

À l'occasion de la retraite du mois, il note le 5 février, que c'est sainte Agathe, jour de son baptême ... (cf.NR 15,2-OC V,99)

Le même jour, le 5 février 1841, il écrit à sa sœur Marianne, qui est sa marraine : *« C'est aujourd'hui un beau jour pour moi, c'est aujourd'hui que je vous ai eue comme marraine. Vous savez que de millions de fois je vous ai appelée de ce doux nom. En entrant dans l'état ecclésiastique, je vous ai donné celui de sœur; mais les sentiments de filleul resteront jusque dans le ciel; car je vous dois beaucoup, surtout de m'avoir retenue dans ma jeunesse loin des occasions du mal, de sorte que je puis dire que c'est en partie à vous que je dois ma vocation à l'état ecclésiastique (CO 17 – OC II,50-51).*

Dans les notes d'une autre retraite, en 1843, il écrit plus ou moins la même : *« La veille j'ai dit à l'église le Veni Creator afin d'implorer les grâces du Saint Esprit sur cette petite retraite pour me préparer à l'anniversaire de mon baptême. J'ai résolu de faire ainsi: la 1^{re} méditation, sur la sainteté comme fin de mon baptême, la 2^e méditation, sur les causes de la tiédeur, la 3^e méditation, sur l'amour de Jésus-Christ au très Saint Sacrement. Sous la protection de sainte Agathe » (Nr 21 – OC V,135).*

Trois ans plus tard, le 5 février 1846, toujours à sa sœur Marianne, le Père Eymard écrit : *« Je ne puis résister aujourd'hui au plaisir de vous écrire deux mots. J'ai bien prié le Bon Dieu pour vous, pour notre père, pour notre mère, pour mon parrain. (tous décédés) Vous devinez pourquoi! C'est un si beau jour pour moi, c'est le plus beau jour de ma vie : c'est aujourd'hui que j'ai eu le bonheur d'être baptisé. (...) Je vous dois beaucoup, ma chère marraine, pour toute cette vigilance que vous exerciez sur moi dans ma jeunesse, et pour toutes ces pratiques de piété que vous me suggériez. Aujourd'hui tout ce temps de mes jeunes années m'est présent d'une manière particulière, et j'y vois là une grande grâce. (CO 68 – OC II,113-114)*

On pourrait multiplier les citations, mais celles qui précèdent sont suffisantes pour tirer quelques conclusions.

Le jour du baptême est appelé *un si beau jour* ou *le plus beau jour* de la vie; il devient l'occasion pour faire une évaluation du chemin parcouru, pour rappeler les acquis surtout pour ce qui concerne les pratiques religieuses, pour prier pour sa famille. Le baptême c'est aussi un jour qui réveille le désir d'une vie plus fidèle à l'appel de Dieu.

Le baptême : une pierre d'angle de sa vocation eucharistique

Nous avons vu que Pierre-Julien Eymard n'oubliait jamais de commémorer le jour de son baptême avec un profond sentiment de gratitude. Pour lui, ses vocations de prêtre et de religieux se fondent sur cette base initiale et permanente.

La méditation qu'il a écrite pendant la grande Retraite de Rome, le 5 février 1865 (3 ans avant sa mort) « jour de mon Saint Baptême » renforce cette conviction : *J'ai fait ma méditation sur la grâce gratuite et toute miséricordieuse du saint baptême que j'ai reçu. J'ai vu ce qu'il est : une recreation en Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ, une seconde vie en Jésus Christ, mais en Jésus crucifié. Vous tous en effet, baptisés dans le Christ, vous avez revêtu le Christ (Ga 3,27). – Ceux qui appartiennent au Christ Jésus ont crucifié la chair avec ses passions et ses convoitises (Ga 5,24). – Nous avons été ensevelis avec le Christ par le baptême dans la mort (cf. R, 6,4). – Si quelqu'un vient à moi sans haïr ... sa propre vie, il ne peut être mon disciple (Lc 14,26). Ainsi, voilà le caractère de la seconde génération : la séparation du monde, le crucifiement, la guerre, la mort continuelle. J'ai vu les grâces qui ont fait la dotation de mon baptême : immenses, - cette filiation de Dieu, - membre de Jésus-Christ, enfant de l'Église, frère des saints, - droit à la grâce, à la gloire de Jésus Christ. Ce qui m'a fait pleurer, c'est de voir mes trois vocations, à la vie pieuse, sacerdotale et religieuse (NR 44,21 – OC V,269).*

Dans le baptême se trouve les fondements de la vie chrétienne, de la vie de disciple de Jésus-Christ. C'est la signification qu'on peut donner aux citations bibliques.

Dans la même méditation, il cite saint François d'Assise, saint Ignace, saint Dominique et saint Alphonse. Ce sont des fondateurs. Il dit : *J'ai reçu les mêmes grâces*. On peut en déduire que pour le Père Eymard, même sa vocation de fondateur est liée à sa grâce baptismale.

En effet dans la deuxième méditation du même jour, il écrit : *Sur la bonté de Dieu depuis mon baptême, sur sa divine Providence à me retirer des dangers, à me faire changer de lieu, d'état, de santé même pour me préserver de l'esclavage des études, de la vanité des succès, de l'attache aux créatures, de l'esclavage même de la reconnaissance, Notre Seigneur ayant voulu être mon Maître en tout, un peu comme pour saint Paul, parce que j'aurais trop aimé ceux qui m'auraient fait du bien ou aimé. J'ai bien été un peu comme Jacob toujours en chemin. Il me fallait Marseille pour m'en (de l'eucharistie) donner l'amour exclusif, (en faire) le centre; Lyon, pour m'en donner l'exercice et me mettre sur le chemin du Cénacle. Puis ce cher Cénacle, à l'heure de Dieu (NR 44,22 – OC V,270).*

Nous retrouvons ici les différentes étapes de la vocation eucharistique qui l'ont conduit à la fondation de la Congrégation du Saint-Sacrement. Il parle de son séjour chez les Oblats de Marie Immaculée (Marseille), de l'expérience mariste (Lyon), et finalement de la fondation (le cénacle, « à l'heure de Dieu »). Et tout ce chemin est placé sous le signe de la bonté de Dieu, tout est une expression de son amour.

Le baptême : point de départ de la vie spirituelle

Le baptême a été pour le Père Eymard la pierre d'angle de toute sa vie et de ses vocations. Pour lui, la vie spirituelle de chaque individu est une croissance de la vie nouvelle, évangélique, reçue au départ par l'incorporation au mystère pascal par la foi et le baptême. La maturité chrétienne consiste en une participation toujours plus grande à l'amour du Christ pour son (notre) Père.

Il a transmis aux autres cette conviction. Nous avons un exemple dans un texte, tiré du Directoire des Agrégés, ces laïcs que le Père voulait associer à la mission de la Congrégation.

Il écrit : *La grâce du chrétien est une grâce d'adoption, de filiation divine, une grâce d'amour. C'est d'abord une grâce d'amour de sentiment que la bonté divine met en germe dans les cœurs, et qui forme au baptême, comme le fond du caractère chrétien; puis cet amour se développe avec la foi, grandit avec les vertus qu'il inspire et perfectionne, et devient ainsi une vie, un état d'amour (RA 18,6 – OC VIII,474).*

La vie que le baptême fait naître en nous, c'est une vie d'amour. Le Père Eymard, dit dans le même texte : *Toute l'éducation chrétienne, toute la direction spirituelle d'une âme doivent donc reposer sur l'amour à développer,*

à mettre en exercice (RA 18,6 – OC VIII,474). *L'amour, c'est le règne de Dieu dans l'homme ... Ainsi l'amour fait de l'homme un ciel où la sainte Trinité vient demeurer avec complai-sance (RA 18,7 – OC VIII,474)*

Le baptême : une expérience pascalle

Pour conclure cet article, il me semble important de rappeler un dernier passage de la vie du Père Eymard, comme achèvement de son parcours baptismal.

Si le baptême est la participation à la mort et à la résurrection de Jésus Christ, ce même mystère se réalise sans cesse en nous, toute notre vie est un passage à travers la mort pour arriver à la résurrection, la vie nouvelle en Jésus Christ.

Dans la Retraite de Saint Maurice, vécue trois mois avant sa mort, le Père Eymard rappelle encore une fois sa vocation eucharistique, le chemin de sa vie, toujours marqué par l'amour de Dieu. Ce chemin a été marqué aussi par toute une série de morts, sacrifices, ruptures etc. il en énumère une bonne dizaine. ...

Mais dans une vision baptismale de la vie, c'est la vie qui a le dernier mot. Et le Père Eymard chante : *Et cependant la vie suit la mort. C'est la voie de la Société et la mienne. (NR 45,4 – OC V,392-393)*

Au terme d'une liste impressionnante de « morts symboliques », c'est le mystère pascal qui éclaire toute l'existence du P. Eymard; la puissance du Seigneur ressuscité, découverte avec foi et force dans sa présence eucharistique, transfigure toutes ces « morts » et en fait autant de passages vers la Vie. *La vie suit la mort. C'est la voie de la Société et la mienne. **C'EST AUSSI LA NÔTRE.***

**Second centenary of the birth and baptism
of St. Peter Julian Eymard founder
of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament**

Father Eymard and
- the « memories » of his Baptism –

P. Manuel Barbiero, sss

200 years ago, a boy from a simple artisan family was born on February 4th and baptized on the 5th, at La Mure d'Isère in the diocese of Grenoble in France. He was a child like others, who had to struggle and work to live, who also had to struggle to follow the vocation to which he felt called.

The parish church at the time of Father Eymard, preserved the ancient baptismal font in which Peter Julian was baptized. When later, Father Eymard returned to his homeland, he never failed to venerate the Baptistery of his parish.

St. Peter Julian Eymard is known as the eminent apostle of the Eucharist, we know how carefully he prepared himself to receive First Communion. But we are still surprised when we discover that, in his correspondence, he never talks about the anniversary of his first communion. However, he often refers to the day of his baptism.

Baptism: a cornerstone for his life

Beginning in 1841 (he was 30 years old), two years after joining the Marists, we find writings frequently recalling his baptism.

On the occasion of a monthly retreat, he noted February 5th as being Saint Agatha's day, the day of his baptism... (cf. NR 15,2- OC V,99)

The same day, on February 5th, 1841, he wrote to his sister Marianne, who was also his godmother: « *This is a beautiful day for me. This is the day you became my godmother. You know that I called you by that sweet name a million times. When I entered the clerical state, I called you sister, but my feelings of godson will continue even in heaven. I owe you so much, especially for having kept me far from occasions of sin in my youth. I can say that you are partly responsible for my vocation to the clerical state.* (CO 17 – OC II, 50-51).

In his notes from another retreat, in 1843, he wrote more or less the same thing: *The day before, I said the Veni Creator at the church in order to implore the grace of the Holy Spirit upon this small retreat to prepare myself for the anniversary of my baptism. I decided to do so: the 1st meditation on holiness as the end of my baptism, the second meditation, the causes of the half-heartedness, the third meditation on the love of Jesus Christ of the Blessed Sacrament. Under the protection of St Agatha.*» (Nr 21 – OC V,135).

Three years later, on February 5th 1846, again to his sister Marianne, Father Eymard wrote: « *Today I cannot resist the joy of writing you a few words. I'm sure that you can guess why I prayed so earnestly to God for you, for our father, our mother and my godfather! It's such a beautiful day for me. It's the most beautiful day of my life since this is the day when I had the good fortune to be baptized. (...) I owe you so much for your vigilant care during my youth and for all the religious practices you would suggest to me. Today I remember all those childhood years very clearly and I see them as a great grace.* (CO 69 – OC II, 113-114)

We could multiply the quotations, but the above are sufficient to draw some conclusions.

One's Baptismal day is called *such a beautiful day* or the *most beautiful day of life*; because it becomes an opportunity to make an assessment of the road taken, to recall the achievements particularly with regard to religious practices, to pray for one's family. Baptism is also a day that awakens the desire for a life of fidelity to God's call.

Baptism: a corner stone of one's Eucharistic vocation

We have seen that Peter Julian Eymard always remembered his baptism day with a deep sense of gratitude. For him, his vocations as priest and religious were based on this initial and permanent foundation. The meditation he wrote during the Great Retreat of Rome, on February 5th, 1865 (3 years before his death) "day of my Holy Baptism" reinforces these convictions:

I made my meditation on the gratuitous and all-merciful grace of the holy Baptism that I received. I understood what it is: a new creation in our Lord Jesus Christ, a second life in Jesus Christ, but in Jesus crucified. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (Gal 3.27). – Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal 5,24). – Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death (cf. R, 6,4). – If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. (Lk 14,26). And so, that is the nature of my second generation: a separation from the world, a crucifixion, a war, a continual death. I saw the graces that made up the dowry of my Baptism – beyond all computing: a son of God, a member of Jesus Christ, a child of the church, a brother of the Saints; a right to the grace and to the glory of Jesus Christ. What made me weep is the sight of my three vocations : to a devout life, to a priestly life, to the religious life. (NR 44,21 – OC V, 269).

In baptism is the foundation of the Christian life, of discipleship with Jesus-Christ. This is the meaning we can give to biblical quotations. In the same meditation, he quotes St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius, St. Dominic and St. Alphonsus. They were founders. He said: *I received the same graces*. One can deduce that for Father Eymard, even his founder's vocation is bound to his baptismal grace.

Indeed, in the second meditation of the same day he wrote: *On God's kindness since my baptism, on His divine Providence to keep me away from dangers, to make me change place, state, even health to protect me from the slavery of the studies, from the vanity of the success, from attachment to creatures, even from the slavery of recognition, Our Lord, wanting to be my Master in all, a little as for Saint Paul, because I would have loved too much loved those who would have loved me or done me some good.*

I was indeed a bit like Jacob always on the road. I wanted Marseille to give me its (the Eucharist) exclusive love, to make it the center; and Lyon to give me its exercise and put me on the path of the Cenacle. Then this dear Cenacle, at the time of God (NR 44,22 – OC V, 270).

We find here the different steps of the Eucharistic vocation which led him to the founding of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. He talks about his stay with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (Marseille), his experience with the Marists (Lyon), and finally about the foundation (the cenacle, "in God's time"). And this road is placed is seen as coming from God's goodness, everything is an expression of His love.

Baptism: starting point of the spiritual life

Baptism was for Father Eymard the cornerstone of his life and his vocation. For him, every individual's spiritual life means growth into evangelical life, received initially by incorporation into the Paschal Mystery through faith and baptism. Christian maturity consists in an increasing participation in Christ's love for His (our) Father.

He communicated this belief to others. We have an example in a text, from the Directory of the Aggregation, to the lay people that the Father wanted to associate with the mission of the Congregation.

He wrote: *The grace of the Christian is a grace of adoption, of divine filiation and of love. It is primarily a grace of love, of feeling that God's goodness plants in the hearts and that forms, at the baptism, like the basis of the Christian character; then that love grows with faith, grows with the virtues it inspires and improves, and so becomes a life, a state of love.*

(RA 18,6 – OC VIII, 474).

Life created in us by baptism is a life of love. So, Father Eymard, said in the same text: *All the Christian education, the entire spiritual leadership of a soul must therefore be based on love to develop, to exercise (RA 18,6 - OC VIII, 474). Love is the God's kingdom in man ... Thus love turns a man into a sky where the Holy Trinity comes to dwell with deference (RA 18,7 – OC VIII,474).*

Baptism: a paschal experience

To conclude this article, it seems important to evoke one last passage of Father Eymard's life, as the completion of his baptismal path.

If baptism is a participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the same mystery is constantly occurring in us, our whole life is a passage through death to resurrection, new life in Jesus Christ.

In Saint Maurice's Retreat, held three months before his death, Father Eymard evokes once again his Eucharistic vocation, the path of his life, always marked by the love of God. This path was also marked by a series of deaths, sacrifices, breaks, etc., he enumerates at least twelve....

But in a baptismal vision of life, life has the last word. And Father Eymard sang: « *Life follows death; it is the life of the Society and mine.* » (NR 45,4 – OC V,392-393)

Pursuant to this impressive list of "symbolic deaths", the paschal mystery illuminates Father Eymard's entire existence, as the power of the Risen Lord, found with faith and strength in His Eucharistic presence, transforms all these "deaths" and makes them passages to Life.

« *Life follows death; it is the life of the Society and mine.* »

IT IS ALSO OURS!



A Grain of Hope

Canada's First Carmelite Nun

Hermine Frémont

Sister Teresa of Jesus

(1851-1873)

“Oui, je serai Carmélite et je mourrai Carmélite.”

Yes, I will live and die a Carmelite

In one momentary illumination of grace she had understood all, feeling the gentle joy of finally seeing the end of all her uncertainties. It was the spring of 1872. An encounter with the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Baltimore, U.S.A., changed the course of her life.

CALLED BY THE LORD

God seems to delight in choosing *the weak things of this world* to accomplish His purposes. God chose Hermine Frémont for a special work. Her mission: to bring the Carmelite Nuns to Canada. The means God used: a providential encounter, the illumination of grace and her generous “yes”.

Born and raised in Canada’s oldest city, Quebec, Marie Luce Hermine Frémont was destined to make a unique contribution to the religious history of her country. Having discovered her vocation in a providential encounter with the Carmelite nuns in Baltimore, Maryland, she was determined to answer Our Lord’s call no matter what it might cost her. The generosity of her response can serve as an inspiration for each one of us. The story of her life is like a *treasure hidden in a field* that is waiting to be rediscovered.

A DAUGHTER OF CANADA

Doctor Charles-Jacques Frémont and his wife Marie-Cécile (née Panet) welcomed Hermine, their fourth child, into their family on December 24, 1851. Both parents were deeply religious and highly respected. Doctor Frémont, one of the founders of the School of Medicine of the University of Laval, occupied the Chair of Surgery for many years. In 1862, Dr. and Mrs. Frémont sailed to Europe in the hope that the trip would restore the Doctor’s health. He died at sea on December 20th.



Hermine became the inseparable companion of her widowed mother. She considered it apparent that such was God’s will for her at that time. Still, she could not dispel an unmistakable disquiet within her heart

She felt a lively attraction for religious life, but did not feel called to any community in particular. She reasoned, ‘but to enter religious life, it is necessary to feel called. It requires a vocation. One must

know the will of God. Do I really have a religious vocation?' She would often pray, "My God! Make me know Your will!"

During the winter of 1870-1871, Hermine, her mother and her youngest brother Henri spent some time in St. Hyacinth, Quebec, with Mother Catherine Aurelia and her new community of Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood. (This was the first contemplative community to be established in Canada). During those months her dear sister Marie-Adine, who had joined that community six years earlier, became seriously ill. Hermine and Adine exchanged many intimate thoughts and aspirations, especially concerning their vocation. A short time later, on March 9, 1871, Adine's soul quietly took flight. Hermine began to understand a little of the spiritual good that can be found in pain. She felt a detachment from the things that do not last with an expanding perspective of deeper truths and eternal realities.

A PROVIDENTIAL ENCOUNTER

The following winter, on the advice of doctors, Mrs. Frémont and Hermine traveled to Florida for the sake of their health. On the return trip they traveled slowly, staying for several days in Baltimore, Maryland. Hermine wrote in her journal: "At Baltimore, I was very much interested and edified in visiting the religious communities, especially the Discalced Carmelites who received us with much charity." On this 18th of April, 1872, enchanted by the amiability and joyous simplicity of the nuns and the atmosphere of poverty, silence and recollection that reigned in the monastery, Hermine experienced an interior conviction that God was calling her to Carmel. As they proceeded home, mother and daughter discussed enthusiastically the possibility of establishing a similar monastery of Carmelite Nuns in their native Quebec. Mrs. Frémont was willing to set aside part of her fortune for the foundation.

When they arrived back in Canada, the two women were at first unable to find the necessary support for their venture. The Archbishop of Quebec, a relative of Mrs. Frémont, did not think that it was a good time to found another religious community in Quebec City. Next, they put their proposal before Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal. During his episcopacy this great bishop had both introduced and encouraged the establishment of several religious communities in his diocese. For a long time he had been praying that one day he would be able to establish a monastery of Carmelite Nuns. Bishop Bourget encouraged Hermine and her director, Father Antoine Braun, S.J., to write to the Carmel in Reims, France, and put before them the possibility of a foundation in Montreal.

An exchange of letters followed. After unsuccessful attempts to elicit help from the Carmels in France, the community in Reims regretfully acknowledged that there was no possibility of coming to Canada in the foreseeable future. However, in a letter to Hermine, the Prioress stated: "If the times were not so terrible, I would tell you to come to

us and be formed. Then you could return with the group of foundresses." That was all that Hermine needed. "I will go," was her reply.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

Departing from Quebec City on May 31st, 1873, Hermine traveled on the steamer *Scandinavian*. Throughout the journey across the Atlantic, Hermine wrote affectionate and interesting letters to her mother. In this way she hoped to soothe the pain of separation. When the ship arrived in Liverpool, England, Hermine proceeded to London for an overnight stop. She arrived in Paris on June 12th. She had been advised to rest a bit and to take in the sights of Paris before going further. Mr. Bédard, a Quebec City businessman and frequent traveler, accompanied her on this last stretch of the journey.

On the morning of June 15th, the travelers attended Mass at the Jesuit church in Reims. A surprised Hermine noticed that the priest celebrating was her director, Father Braun. She had known that he was in Europe, but had no idea that he was awaiting her in Reims. In the early afternoon Father Braun presented her at the Carmel. Rev. Mother, Mother Seraphine, the novice mistress, and all the sisters were delighted that she had arrived safely. At last the little dove had found the ark of her desire.

Hermine settled into community life without apparent difficulty. For their part, the Sisters later stated they had never had a postulant who had adapted so effortlessly. Hermine had great affection for her religious family. She found herself at ease with them, as if they had already been well known to her. They also deeply loved her, affectionately calling her "the little Canadian". But they also witnessed a succession of intense interior sufferings, such as is rarely seen except in the most advanced souls. On October 13, 1873, Hermine joyfully received the habit of the Order and was given the name *Sister Teresa of Jesus*, in the hope that she would follow in the footsteps of Our Holy Mother St. Teresa. At evening recreation on that momentous day, the new novice sang for the community a hymn dear to her heart, *The Canticle of Heaven*. It expressed the total offering of her soul to God. It had great significance for her, as it had been sung at the Religious Profession of her late sister, Adine.

GOD'S WAYS ARE SOMETIMES DISCONCERTING

Just when it seemed that Hermine had attained the object of all her desires on earth, her health unexpectedly collapsed. It was completely unforeseen, even to her, yet she maintained a composure which could only be described as 'supernatural peace'. On December 21st, of that same year of 1873, Sister Teresa showed signs of extreme weakness. She said she was not suffering and that she would be fine. It was well known that she had a delicate constitution. In the previous weeks the doctor had examined her twice and had found nothing serious to be concerned about. Nevertheless, the Mothers were greatly disquieted. The next day, their dear little Sister Teresa of Jesus was gravely ill. The Last Sacraments were administered and she was allowed to make her

Profession. Shortly before her death, she asked the sisters to sing the *Magnificat* and *The Cantic of Heaven*, whose refrain expressed so well the cry of her soul: 'Lord, I love You, I want nothing more. *Je veux te voir! Je veux te voir!* I want to see You! I want to see You! ...Ah! Let me rise to heaven!' It was sung to a melody well known in Canada. About four o'clock in the afternoon of December 22nd, she passed away.

The sisters wrote: "Yesterday, Sunday, she participated in the Mass and received Holy Communion as usual; she went to the refectory, afterwards to recreation which she loved so much. Reverend Mother did not allow her to go to Vespers. She was very tired and was sent to bed, without any alarming symptoms. In the morning, her state had changed; her overall weakness became extreme. We understood the gravity of the situation, and Our Mother spoke to her gently of the Sacraments. She received this news with happiness, calm, peace and a gentle serenity that she maintained until the last moment. Our Confessor came in to hear her confession, and at one o'clock in the afternoon he returned with the Superior of the house for Viaticum and the Last Anointing....Around four o'clock she became very quiet and fell asleep in the arms of her beloved Spouse, to awake in heaven – we are confident!" It was December 22, 1873.



"You are the grain of wheat that falls into God's furrow and dies, and when you rise up you are My harvest.

Are you then surprised if a whispering takes wing in you and day and night you perceive a low, beckoning call? To a love that wants to suffer, to a love that, together with Mine redeems? Are you surprised if the desire comes upon you to risk your life and all your strength for your brothers? Are you willing? For My work in you will be brought to term only when My heart beats in yours, only when all hearts beat for the Father together in My Heart...Only he possesses Me who gives Me away."

« Hans Urs Von Balthasar » (Heart of the World)

OBSTACLES BEGIN TO DISAPPEAR

Sister Teresa had the desire of seeing the Order of Saint Teresa established in Canada, her beloved homeland. It was thought that God had chosen her to be the instrument of this foundation, which she undoubtedly was, but in another way. Many difficulties

opposed the projected establishment, but after Hermine's death these unexplainably disappeared. Like a grain of wheat buried in the ground, her sacrifice brought forth abundant fruit. Family and friends rallied to support the foundation.

The idea of bringing the Carmelites to Canada, it is said, was almost as old as the colony and originated around the time that the first Discalced Carmelite Nuns arrived in France. The plan, however, could never be realized.

In 1874, Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal formally invited the Carmelites of Reims to establish a monastery in his diocese. Six generous souls responded and braved the voyage over the stormy Atlantic Ocean, sighting Quebec on May 5th, 1875. They then traveled by train and arrived in Montreal on May 8th. Canada's first Teresian dovecote, dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, was founded at Hochelaga near Montreal on June 6th, 1875.

There are presently nine monasteries of Carmelite Nuns in Canada.

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Photos:

Courtesy of the Archives, Carmel of Montreal

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Discalced Carmelite Nuns

Carmel of St. Joseph Website: www.thecarmel.ca

