



Echoes of Emilie

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Homage to our pioneers III

Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus

Mother Gamelin, Mother Bernarda and Mother Joseph are the pillars of the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence. However, thousands of other sisters have worked in their footsteps to improve the existence of the neediest. In the current edition of the *Echoes of Emilie*, we choose to present **Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus**, an example among many others, of a woman who dedicated her life to alleviate human misery and who was ready to go wherever she was needed.

Cléopée Têtu was born in St-Hyacinthe, Quebec, on December 3, 1824. She entered the novitiate at the Asile of Providence in 1844. The young novice, who had the chance "to rub shoulders with" Mother Gamelin, became Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus on July 21, 1846, after she consecrated herself to God through religious profession. She was the eighteenth sister to make profession in the community which had been founded one year before in Montreal.

She remained at the Asile of Providence until 1848 where she occupied different jobs in the pharmacy and the Business Office. Later, in 1848, she was sent to the

Ferme St-Isidore to teach in a class for English-speaking students. In 1849, she directed *l'hospice St-Jérôme-Émilien*, an institution dedicated to the education and the care of orphans.

Intelligent and dynamic, Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus rapidly gained the admiration of her superiors and companions. Her talents as a leader and an organizer were very soon recognized.

In 1854, she was appointed as a superior to lay the foundations of the St. Joseph's Orphanage in Burlington, Vermont, USA. Barely settled, the sisters began their visits to the poor, the sick, and to welcome orphans.

It was an arduous beginning. The sisters and the people of Vermont joined efforts and showed their utmost creativity in finding ways to raise money and to collect the essentials to feed the poor and educate the children.

Three years later, in 1857, Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus was called back to the Motherhouse in Montreal, with a view to prepare her for another mission, this time in Chile.



Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus

Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus and her traveling companions arrived in Valparaíso on December 13, 1857. Her talent for languages enabled her to learn Spanish in a very short time and with great ease.

Four months after arriving in Chile, during the elections held on April 17, 1858, she was appointed assistant to Mother Amable, the Superior recently elected in Chile. Barely engaged in her new functions, a new challenge already lies ahead of her. The local council of Santiago, with the permission of the major superiors, had accepted the direction of an orphanage in Valparaíso and placed Sister Thérèse-de-





Jésus at the head of the new establishment.

In 1863, six years after she arrived in Chile, Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus returned to Montreal and the Congregation entrusted her once again with the direction of the orphanage in Burlington, which she had founded in previous years. The good reputation she gained during her first administration there did not lose its luster.

During the elections in 1866, Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus was called back to Montreal, where she occupied the position of General Depositary (General Treasurer) and proved that she was up to the task.

In the spirit of their foundress Emilie Gamelin, the Sisters of Providence, represented by Mother Thérèse-de-Jésus, founded the first psychiatric hospital in the Montreal area. Mother Thérèse-de-Jésus was entrusted with the works of what became the hospice *Saint-Jean-de-Dieu*. With Sister Marie-Godefroy, she visited and analyzed the functioning of various hospitals in the United States and Ontario.

Upon her return, and inspired by the Mount Hope Retreat Hospital of Baltimore, Mother Thérèse-de-Jésus drew the outlines of the plan of a building quite

large for the time. The observers were convinced that she would need half a century to achieve it with so few resources. Mother Thérèse-de-Jésus perfectly sensed the social need and the magnitude of the task did not intimidate her. In October 1875, barely one and a half years after the construction begun, *l'hospice St-Jean-de-Dieu* was finished and blessed. In the very first year, four hundred and eight patients were admitted.

Mother Thérèse-de-Jésus was appointed superior of the establishment. Her heart was completely committed to her patients, who became an adoptive family for her. There was no storm she could not face nor fatigue she was not willing to endure to provide them with some relief, to improve their condition, or to increase their well-being. Committed to providing the highest quality of care possible, Mother Thérèse-de-Jésus went to Europe for two months in 1889. With Sister Madeleine du Sacré-Cœur, a lawyer and two doctors from the hospital visited forty psychiatric institutions among the most famous in the world.

On May 6, 1890, a fire broke out and completely destroyed the *Saint-Jean-de-Dieu* Hospital. 86 persons died as fire victims and 1,200 were left homeless.

In less than two weeks, Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus drew up the plans for temporary pavilions. Three months later, fourteen

red buildings, connected by corridors, were ready to welcome the residents.

Shortly thereafter, on November 22, 1891, Mother Thérèse-de-Jésus died at the age of 67. The Montreal newspapers published laudatory obituary notices, both in English and French.

L'Étendard said: "Her heart, gifted with a great sensitivity, was completely committed to the poor ... One thousand six hundred people shed tears at *St-Jean-de-Dieu*. She was, for all the patients, like a mother to them. She knew them all and had always a kind word for every one of them."

A newspaper of the time quoted: "She was a pride for all the people; she was gifted with great virtue, good judgment and courage capable of overcoming the most insurmountable difficulties."

A Catholic newspaper mentioned: "The loss of Sister Thérèse-de-Jésus is a provincial mourning. In another country, this humble religious would have had a public funeral. Because, if ever a woman has rendered immense services to her country, she is that woman, whose active life has just ended."

Nancy Prada

Coordinator - Emilie Gamelin Centre



Saint-Jean-de-Dieu Hospital - Red pavilions
Built after the fire, these pavilions welcomed the residents between 1890 and 1902.

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Emilie Gamelin... at the heart of the 375th of Montreal

May 17, 2017 marked the 375th anniversary of the founding of Montreal by Paul de Chomedey, Sieur de Maisonneuve, in 1642. Many events were organized and brought together an impressive number of Montrealers who wished to celebrate the memory of this "project inspired by God".

In his pastoral letter *"In the Name of Jesus"*, dated December 8, 2016, Archbishop Christian Lépine of Montreal wrote: *"We focus on this heroic past to give thanks to the Lord, not only for the city's beginnings but for its entire history up to now. In fact, over the years, several religious communities of men and of women bore witness to God's eternally gracious love"...*

"Numerous people, members of these various religious communities, were wonderful models of Christ's charity toward the littlest, the poorest and the most vulnerable. Men and women of prayer dedicated their lives to serve the Gospel and their brothers and sisters. Among these witnesses to the faith, we recognize, as does the entire Church, the sanctity of the founders whose heroism and virtues challenge us today, who have left us an eloquent legacy of our Christian and social history, and to whom we can pray."

These few words immediately brought to mind our Blessed Foundress, Emilie Tavernier Gamelin, the "Great Lady of Montreal"; the name the late Bishop Andre-Marie Cimichella, OSM liked to call her, while he was Auxiliary Bishop in Montreal.

And then a beautiful dream arose: what if Mother Gamelin visited Montreal this year of the 375th anniversary? Where would she go? What would she find? What would she do?

Her first stop would surely be at: *Place Émilie-Gamelin*, the square where the Asile of Providence was built; where she lived; where she welcomed and served so many poor people through "the Soup kitchen work". She would walk through the *Place*, stopping to greet, encourage, and to relieve all those homeless people whom she would recognize as children of God who suffer and seek happiness without finding it.

I also see her at the door of the "*Au Pied du Courant Prison*" where she would learn that visitation to the prisoners continues even today and that several of her daughters meet woman prisoners, especially on Saturday evenings while they prepare the Sunday celebration for them.

Oh! She would also realize how her city has changed! The sheds where typhus patients were accommodated and received assistance have been demolished. She would be happy to know that the memory of those poor Irish immigrants has been preserved and that a monument has been placed at one end of the Victoria Bridge which reminds us of those times.

She would also go to Longue-Pointe, where the work of psychiatric patients began and where the education of the deaf was instigated on February 19, 1851. In the same way, she would also be pleased to see that the Sisters of Providence, still today, give their time and leisure to accompany, give joy, and to assist all categories of people suffering from handicaps or addiction to gambling or drugs. She would also certainly applaud the readi-

ness of some of her daughters to assist in the pastoral care of the deaf... etc.

She would very likely go to the Motherhouse in Cartierville, where she would witness the openness of her Institute to the needs of the times ... while this great building has become a kind of "*Carrefour Providence*". There, the Congregation, founded 175 years ago, welcomes many feminine and even masculine religious congregations. There a sort of fraternity, resulting from the charisms and gifts put in common, is lived in harmony and serenity, while preserving the identity of each group.

As she did during her lifetime, she would visit the various units of the Providence Pavilion to greet and comfort the sisters, as she certainly did at the Asile of Providence. She would surely bring some kindness to these dear sick sisters and pray with them.

Then she would stop to greet the young aspirants and sisters in initial formation, inviting them to "thank God for the grace of their vocation" and to prepare themselves with confidence for the mission through which they will be called to be a witness of the always benevolent Love of God. She would also warmly greet the Sisters of Our Lady of Seven Dolours in this year of the 130th anniversary of the foundation of their congregation.

Moreover, would not be she delighted to find so many groups of Providence Associates continuing the Providence mission in their community, just as the *ladies of charity* "in her time" shared her dedication and compassion in Montreal in the 1800s?

Goodbye and THANK YOU, Emilie. From heaven, keep watch over us and present all our intentions to God-Providence, so that He may bless and listen, according to His Will.

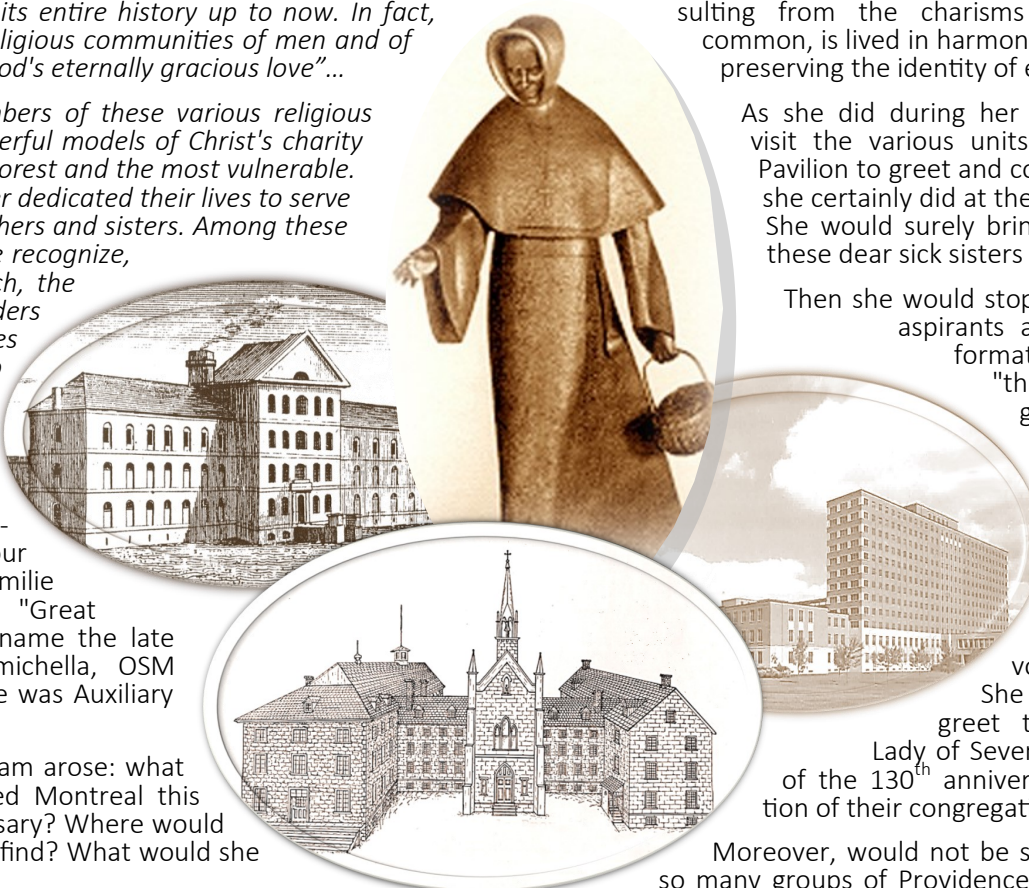
Let us conclude with another speech by Bishop Christian Lépine: *"This anniversary presents a unique opportunity to highlight the spiritual dimension of our city's origins and its history, the desire to live together that has been present since the beginning, and our rich tradition of solidarity with the poor and the sick. It is a time of thanksgiving for bringing together the People of God who reside in Montreal with the living and ever-new strength that comes from the Joy of the Gospel!"*

Let us hope that in this Jubilee Year, the Cause of Canonization of this "Great Lady of Montreal" will take another step forward, for the glory of God and the good of the whole Church!

Sister Yvette Demers, SP

Vice-Postulator - Cause Emilie Gamelin

Images (from left to right): View of the « du Pied du Courant » prison, in 1839 (drawing by J. Duncan); the Asile of Providence (drawing provided by Providence Archives, Montreal); photo of the actual Mother House of the Sisters of Providence, on Salaberry Street, Montreal.





Gratitude to Emilie



Blessed Emilie, very attentive to those who pray to her...

I requested special prayers for my sister, through the intercession of Mother Gamelin, concerning a breast cancer recurrence. Blessed Emilie seems to have answered my prayers. My sister underwent surgery and she healed without chemotherapy or radiotherapy. Thank you, thank you!

Y.R., Montreal, QC

I want to express my gratitude to Mother Gamelin, who helped me when my husband was ill. Thanks to her, to whom we prayed, my husband passed away without much suffering. She also granted me the quick sale of my house.

N.L., St-Zotique, QC

On behalf of my friend M. A., I thank Blessed Emilie for healing her son-in-law, L.Z.C., after a heart attack. Today, thank God, life is giving him another chance.

X.Q.I., Chile

I am grateful to Emilie Gamelin for granting me the sale of my house and a place at Saint-Dominique Residence, like my parents, who also lived in a nursing home sponsored by the Sisters of Providence. Thank you, Emilie, for listening to my prayers.

M.T.-G., Montreal, QC

I was living a very challenging family situation. The process for a friendly separation took 9 months which was obtained thanks to the novena my mother, a neighbor and I did to Blessed Emilie Gamelin. Now, I feel liberated and very happy, along with my eleven-year-old son.

H.N.R., Mayabigue, Cuba

Through the intercession of Mother Gamelin, I obtained several favors: the sale of a house, the purchase of a condominium, and the diagnosis of my son's health problem. Thanks to Emilie,

and to all of you, for placing her on our path to help us maintain our faith.

L. C., Rimouski, QC

I write to you on behalf of my daughter, who asked Mother Gamelin to help her quit smoking a month ago. Now, she is asking her for a job for her husband. Here is a donation for the first intention. Thank you.

Mrs. G.J., Montreal, QC

Thank you so much for everything. I ask you to pray in particular for my daughter Lucie. Once again, thank you!

Mrs. M.B.L., Valleyfield, QC

As in previous years, here is my contribution for the Cause of Mother Gamelin. I would like to thank her for all the favors she has granted to me and my family. Also, I would like to thank you for your prayers. Please continue your great work.

Mr. P. A. T., Shawinigan, QC

My gratitude goes to Emilie for favors received.

Mrs. C. G., Repentigny, QC

Here is my contribution for a few Masses of Thanksgiving to Emilie, for various favors received.

Mrs. M. T., Malartic, QC

Here is my donation for various favors received. Mother Gamelin has always been there for me.

B. J. Chandler, QC

In January, I made a promise for our family, for health and protection. I am confident that Emilie will continue to protect us. We always pray; thank you for praying with us.

Mrs. J. B., L'Anse-Saint-Jean, QC

This is a donation sent by my daughter A., who asks Emilie's assistance in a matter at work and also to gain confidence in life. She also asks for her

mother P. and for the health of my eyes.
Mr. and Mrs. P., Trois-Rivieres, QC

It is with great joy that I thank Blessed Emilie for helping our son to sell his house and to buy another in a better place. That was difficult and he had entrusted it to Mother Gamelin. In addition, the house he bought was a ready for occupancy. I always say the prayer written on the back of the image. Please receive my small contribution for the Cause as a sign of gratitude.

Mrs. M. H. Montreal, QC

Enclosed is a contribution for the Cause of Mother Gamelin to whom we prayed for our daughter so she could find the job for which she was searching. Once again, our prayers were answered. Thanks to Mother Gamelin for being there for us through her intercession before God. Thank you for keeping us in your prayers.

R. and M. L., Moncton, NB

Here is a contribution to thank Blessed Emilie Gamelin. I prayed to her when I was feeling really bad about myself; today, I am feeling much better.

L. M., Trois-Rivieres, QC

I had to undergo surgery for a hip replacement and a knee problem. I prayed to Mother Gamelin; God and all his saints must have helped me, because I have fully recovered. Thanks for everything.

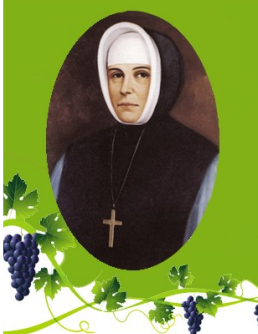
C.C., Thunder Bay, ON

**Blessed Emilie Gamelin,
intercede for those
who are confident in you!**

*Sister Yvette Demers, SP
Vice-Postulator - Cause Emilie Gamelin*

Gratitude to Emilie

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*To Blessed Emilie we confide
all the intentions
that you carry in your hearts,
both spiritual and temporal;
she will certainly know
how to lend an attentive ear
to all your needs.*

