



Echoes of Emilie

Volume 40 No. 1 - March 2017

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Homage to our pioneers II

The Sisters of Providence in Chile – Part 2

Just about a year after they arrived in Chile, the small group of five Sisters of Providence already understood and spoke Spanish. They gathered about a hundred orphans and worked very hard to give these children a solid intellectual and moral education. The chronicles of the time narrate that *many of these little ones, who were three to four years old, began to read fluently and to sing naming the notes.*

Always in the spirit of improving the lot of the poorest, the sisters decided to open two courses for non-resident students intended for the less privileged girls and boys. Seventy boys and sixty girls were already attending these courses, barely six days after their opening.

Moreover, since there was no church in the neighborhood for the public and at the request of the Archbishop of Santiago, the sisters converted two rooms into a chapel. With the collaboration of the farmers who provided cows and sheep, the sisters began to make cheese and butter.

The reputation of the establishment spread even beyond the Chilean borders. Cities such as Lima, Peru and Quito in Ecuador, considered asking the Sisters of Providence to settle there.

An excerpt from a letter written by Mother Larocque to Mother Caron on December 8, 1854 tells us how these women, so few in number, managed to do so much good around them.

Sister Amable is in charge of the kitchen, the class for non-resident students and the pharmacy. This last position is quite important because doctors never go out at night, The pharmacist is obliged to deal with all the diseases that may arise or worsen between bedtime and sunrise. Sister Marie du Sacré-Coeur is so busy that she forgets she is sick. She takes care of the sacristy, the refectories and the entrance door. Sister Denis Benjamin takes care of the little children and teaches them. Sister Bernard is in charge of teaching the older children... we must all be able to observe the rule in the Customary that says: 'work at all times'.

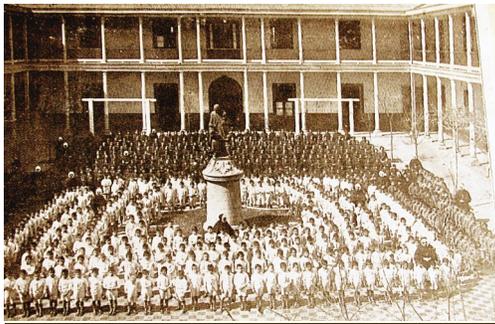


Mother Amable

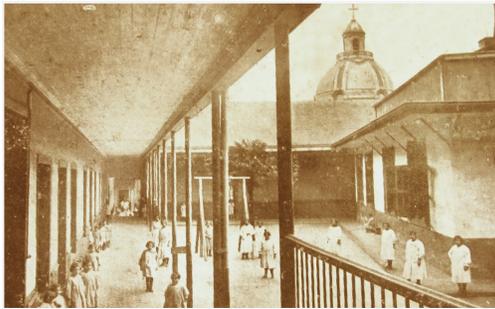
After the death of Mother Larocque, February 21, 1857, and in accordance with the Constitutions, Sister Amable, as the Assistant, directed the community. For many different reasons, elections could not be held earlier. In April 1858 Mother Amable was officially elected the second Superior of the Congregation in Chile, Sister Thérèse de Jésus, Assistant, and Sister Bernard, Novice Director.

The same year, on May 31, the Council of Santiago, with the approval of the Motherhouse in Montreal, accepted the administration of an orphanage in Valparaíso and appointed Sister Thérèse de Jésus the Superior of this residence. A few months later, in October 1858, the Sisters of





Casa de la Providencia - Santiago



Casa de la Providencia - Valparaíso



Casa de la Providencia - Temuco

Providencia in Valparaíso left the administration of the charitable society's orphanage and opened a new one in another neighborhood of the same city.

Mother Amable was very attentive to the mission in Vancouver in the United States, judging from what she wrote to Mother Joseph in November 1858: "I will always be pleased to learn about the good things happening in Vancouver. I am so glad to see the good that we were able to accomplish there!"

The works were prosperous and the sisters pleased to devote themselves to the care of the children and to meet the social needs of the time. Machines and

tools of all kinds imported from Canada converted the establishment into an industrial school. Sister Bernard taught French and Spanish. Other sisters, with the assistance of Miss Theresa Brophy, a deaf woman who arrived from Montreal with the sisters in 1857, took care of the education of deaf children, of both sexes, who arrived at the orphanage. A few years later, Miss Brophy became Sister Marie-de-Jésus, the second deaf woman to join the Congregation.

Due to the distance, slow communication and other reasons, the Archbishopric of Chile suggested that the missionary community should become independent from Montreal. In 1863, sixteen of the twenty-four Sisters of Providence, who were then members of the Chilean community, decided to return to Montreal permanently. Sister Bernard became Superior of the main establishment in Santiago. With the help of lay assistants, the existing works continued to function.

In 1865, the Holy See decreed the houses of Providence of Chile a province and Mother Bernard became the Superior. With an inexhaustible energy and an exceptional sense of organization, Mother Bernard continued to develop and multiply the works of the Sisters of Providence in Chile. In 1880 the Chilean province became independent, known as the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence of Chile.

Despite the fact that she stayed in Chile and never returned to Canada, the heart of *La Madre Bernarda*, as she is known in her country of adoption, remained attached to the Congregation of Montreal, as the letters she wrote over the years demonstrate. She remained faithful to Emilie Gamelin's spiritual legacy that she transmitted to generations of young girls who later would become Sisters of Providence in Chile.

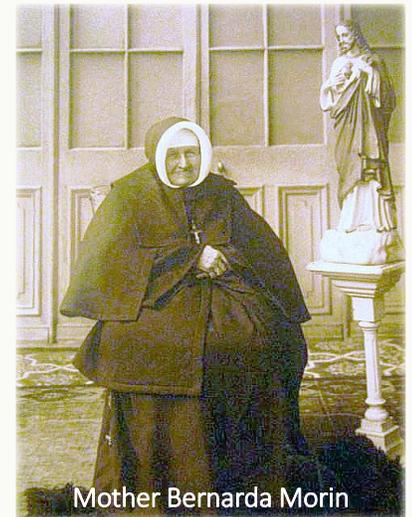
Under her administration, the new Congregation multiplied its works to relieve the most deprived. She established day schools for less fortunate children and vocational training

workshops. In 1905, the Congregation inaugurated a state-of-the-art printing facility that allowed the development of a Catholic newspaper. During the typhus epidemic of 1919, the Sisters of Providence took care of 1,500 patients and 1,700 orphans. The next year, at the age of 87, Mother Bernard realized one of her oldest dreams by establishing a holiday village by the sea for orphans.

In 1925, at the age of 93, Mother Bernard received the Medal of Merit from the President of Chile, Arturo Alessandri Palma. It is the highest award of the country given to foreigners.

On October 4, 1929, at the age of 96 and after 76 years of dedication in Chile, Mother Bernard died suddenly. The newspaper *El Mercurio de Chile* published this editorial in her memory: "Filled with merit... a whole life dedicated to bringing consolation, extending a helping hand... with a maternal attitude, always ready to assist the poor. Born in Canada, she made Chile her second home, to which she devoted the richest treasures of her talents, work and wisdom..."

On July 1, 1970, the Sisters of Providence of Chile and the Sisters of Providence of Montreal became one Congregation. The province in Chile bears the name of Bernarda Morin Province.



Mother Bernarda Morin

Nancy Prada
Coordinator
Emilie Gamelin Centre



The Emilie Gamelin Centre is happy to announce that
the Museum of the Sisters of Providence

is now on



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Under the Sign of Providence

A few weeks ago we began a new year that we have undoubtedly entrusted to the infinite Providence of God and that we want to live for God's greater glory.

For the people of Canada, several historical events will mark the year 2017. First, the 375th anniversary of the foundation of the city of Montreal will be highlighted in various ways by diverse public and religious activities. These celebrations will be followed by the 150th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada and the 50th anniversary of Montreal's 1967 International Exposition that will also give rise to intercultural and international events. We, the Sisters of Providence, will also meet for the 30th General Chapter of the Congregation, to be held in July at the Providence International Centre, in Montreal.



CANADA 150

1867 - 2017

Logo of the 150th
Anniversary
of Canadian
Confederation

We already sense that all these events appearing on the horizon must be lived in a spirit of gratitude for our predecessors and with confidence in the future. It is here, for us and for our compatriots, that the necessity of believing in Divine Providence takes place. Providence will surely continue the work begun so well by God, for God's Providence is ever faithful.

To help us through this meditation, and with the permission of the author, I would like to offer to our readers the homily that Father Gérald Chaput of the Diocese of Valleyfield prepared for the liturgical feast of our foundress Blessed Emilie Gamelin, celebrated in September 2016:

Mother Gamelin, a woman and a providence of God

Homily for: Saturday of the 25th Week
in Ordinary Time, Year C
Matthew 25:31-40; 1 Cor 12:31 - 13:13

"Every human being, whether the person is a believer or not, discovers his or her great need to love, a great thirst for love. This is expressed in different ways. Mother Gamelin found her own way through her closeness to those suffering, the deaf, elderly, and the mentally ill. She lived among them, she set up *her dwelling* very close to them (Revelation 21:3). The *sacred ground of the other* (Evangelii Gaudium #32) was her main residence. Among them, she contemplated the God of her faith. *Her gaze was not raised to heaven but rather lowered to earth* (Contemplate #37).

For her, her love for the humble was an act of contemplation (cf. Evangelii Gaudium #199). Her empathy was her way to enter into God's intimacy. She observed, considered, and contemplated the presence of God in the persons she treated as kings, to quote John Paul II. Her faith was *incarnate and not a lab faith* (Contemplate #7). [Her] *eyes were like a fiery flame* (Revelation 19:12) that warmed hearts.

Let us rest our gaze on the beauty of her life that comes from her self-abnegation, her confidence in Providence and her joy to believe. There are so many ways her actions relieved misery and she demonstrated her unlimited compassion.

The beauty of this life, which St. Paul describes in the first reading, touches and elevates our voices to give thanks to God: to give thanks because Emilie *let the word of God move*

her and become incarnate in her daily life (Evangelii Gaudium #149¹); to give thanks because she kept away from the spiritual worldliness that consists in seeking one's own interests under the guise of religious spirituality (Evangelii Gaudium #93); to give thanks for her vocation to charity (Pope Francis' Homily, September 4, 2016).

Robert Lebel² admirably describes the life of Mother Gamelin. *Like Him, we must know how to set the table; like Him, how to tie the apron; to get up every day and to serve others for love, like Him.* Like Him, she refused to *pass by without stopping.* Like Him, she refused to say that it was not her concern or it did not matter. Like Him, she loved *in deed and truth* (cf. 1 Jn 3:18). She chose to be a *providence of God* rather than focusing on herself. In the *Joy of the Gospel*, the Pope says otherwise: she went forth *"to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ"* (Evangelii Gaudium #49).

Her life was a series of small miracles. With the little she had, she multiplied simple and thoughtful actions full of mercy and compassion. Instead of making beautiful speeches on the distresses of her time, she opened shelters.

With her hands, her closeness, her caring actions and attentiveness, she made visible the law of Christ of *bearing one another's burdens* (cf. Gal 6:2; Jn 13:34). To use a favorite expression of Pope Francis, she touched *the flesh of Christ* with her hands.

Her life was a miracle of faith, love and compassion. The beauty lies in the fact that the miracle of the multiplication of simple actions was continued by other companions who did so much good for the

mentally ill even at the risk of their lives, the elderly, the deaf, migrants, and beggars. They hosted them at little or no cost.

For your contemplation: let us be amazed by this Jesus who invites simple people, like Mother Gamelin, to follow him. By responding to his call, Jesus places these people in communion with his preferred ones. He commands them to be in His name the concrete instruments of His mercy. May Mother Gamelin show us the way of not letting our world take away our joy of being disciples of Jesus. Amen."

May each one of us live this year "under the sign of Providence", following the example of Blessed Emilie Gamelin and, according to what is asked of all the devotees of Emilie, to intensify our prayers so that she reaches the ultimate step of *Canonization*.

Providence of God, I hope in you!

Sister Yvette Demers, SP
Vice-Postulator
Cause Emilie Gamelin

¹ Please also refer to Evangelii Gaudium #150

² Robert Lebel, in his song "Comme Lui" (Like Him)





Gratitude to Emilie



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

Thank you for helping my grandson K. who for two years had had a pain in one hand. I am sure Mother Gamelin will continue to help him.

M. G., Adstock, QC

I thank the good Emilie Gamelin to whom I prayed with confidence for the recovery of my daughter who underwent surgery; I remembered Yannick, whose healing served for the beatification of Blessed Mother Gamelin in 2001, in Rome. Thank you for publishing this favor in your newsletter.

F.V., PA, Cameroon, Africa

Thanks to Blessed Emilie for her intercession during the sale of my property. I even sold it twice as fast as similar properties and at a fair price. Providence fulfills me!

L.P., Napierville, QC

I come to thank Blessed Emilie for granting us the favor of healing my son-in-law. Here is a stipend for a Mass.

J.P., Ville-Marie, QC

Thank you Mother Gamelin, for the relief I felt when my wife was ill.

R.B., Drummondville, QC

I made a novena to Mother Gamelin for the sale of my house and my prayers were answered. In addition, I obtained the support of my family who helped me to find a new house and to furnish it. My son also found a good job. Thank you.

J.D., Joliette, QC

For over a year, I have felt better and the medications I was taking for inflammatory bowel disease have been stopped. I had confided my case to

Mother Gamelin and I am sure that she healed me. Thank you!

D. St-G., St-Michel-des-Saints, QC

Thank you to God-Providence who, through Mother Gamelin's intercession, permitted my daughter and her husband to sell a house and condo in order to buy a house more suited for their little family. They have great confidence in her.

B.D., Montreal, QC

I confided my tinnitus problems to Mother Gamelin; I am getting better and better. Many thanks and I continue to pray to her.

G.L., Louiseville, QC

Thank you to Blessed Mother Gamelin for the sale of a condo, a trip without incident and a quick healing after surgery.

M.C., Edmonton, AB

Once again, I want to thank our good Mother Gamelin for the favors obtained: an interesting job for my son, as well as for my grandson. I keep praying for the sale of my condo.

M.B., Montreal-Nord, QC

I send this offering in gratitude to the Blessed Mother Gamelin who helped me during an operation.

M.V., PA, Louiseville, QC

I often pray to Mother Gamelin for my family; we had a good year. My son returned to classes to become a nurse and my daughter got a full-time job. Many thanks.

D.J., Alma, QC

I express all my gratitude to Blessed Emilie Gamelin for her protection and her help when my ex-husband passed away. My two sons reconciled and now

they get together quite often. Also, I had the strength to visit a sister-in-law who was sick.

L.H., Victoriaville, QC

Thanks to Mother Gamelin! All my prayers through her intercession helped me to go through hardships. Keep praying for us.

M.C., Montreal, QC

Gratitude to Mother Gamelin, she really helped my grandson L. when he suffered from anxiety. He has started to work; he likes his job very much and he feels motivated.

B.M., Louiseville, QC

Thank you, Mother Gamelin, for helping my son, a young veteran of the army, regain a taste for life.

J.M., Longueuil, QC

I had lost a valuable jewel and I asked Mother Gamelin's help. The next day, I found it. Many thanks!

R.P., Montreal, BC

Thank you to Mother Gamelin for the apartment I found.

M.-C. T., Pierrefonds QC

This offering is to thank Blessed Mother Gamelin for the sale of a condo.

F.C.-F., St-Laurent, QC

Thanks to Blessed Emilie Gamelin for healing my sister of breast cancer.

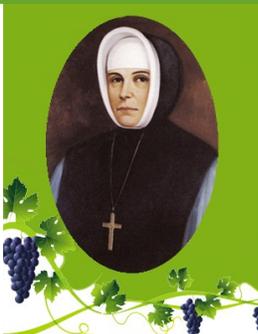
Y.R., Montreal, QC

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

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

Gratitude to Emilie

Please address all favours obtained to:
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Phone: (514) 334-9090 (Ext. 208)
ydemers@providenceintl.org



*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.*

