



Echoes of Emilie

Volume 43, No. 1 - April 2020

Return to our roots

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In a time when societies tend to question secularism in public services, we often forget that many professions and services, taken for granted today, were established by religious congregations at times when social measures to assist people in need did not exist. Even though realities have changed a lot ever since, we can see that the values of Emilie Tavernier Gamelin and the Sisters of Providence still remain valid.

In our present edition of the Echoes of Emilie, I would like to tell you the story of the beginnings of the ministry of care for the elderly, since it is the cornerstone of the works of the Sisters of Providence.

After the death of her husband and her last child, Emilie Gamelin took action to help the poor of her time. She quickly discovered that the needs far exceeded the resources available in Montreal. In 1828, Madame Gamelin began to house elderly, abandoned and sick women in her residence on St-Antoine Street. In 1830, Madame Gamelin opened her first refuge at the corner of Sainte-Catherine and St-Laurent streets, and her first resident was a 102-year-old lady. Twice a day she went to the refuge to visit her guests, to give them the care and comfort they needed and to sing and to read to them.

With the new responsibilities she acquired, many difficulties arose, but instead of getting discouraged, Emilie solved went about solving her problems. She did not hesitate to ask for help from the many friends she had among the Ladies of Charity. Also, she often visited the new church, Notre-Dame



de Montreal, to pray and to ask the Lord for clarity, advice and consolation.

When there were no more vacant places in this first refuge, Emilie managed to convince her cousin, Agathe Perrault-Nowlan, to lodge a few women in her home while she was finding a larger place.

In 1831, Emilie opened a second refuge. This was a property that had two connecting houses. The elderly ladies moved into one house while Emilie moved into the other. She hung a crucifix in this new refuge as well as an image of Our lady of Seven Sorrows that she had received when her last child passed away.

Emilie Gamelin devoted her personal financial resources to meet the needs of her elderly guests. In 1832, the *Fabrique de Montréal** entrusted her with the manufacture of candles.

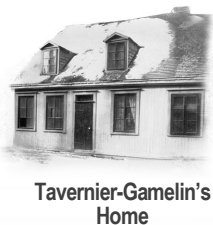


Although, as this was not enough to meet the financial obligations of the shelter, Madame Gamelin founded a limited society of ladies, who agreed to assist her with the visits to the poor in their homes, the daily quest for money, and the organization of bazaars and drawings as well. Her work with the elderly ladies was respected and it benefited because people had confidence in it.

In 1836, Olivier Berthelet, a benefactor of Emilie Gamelin's work, visited the refuge on Saint-Philippe Street and donated a larger home that was in need of repair. On May 3 of the same year, around twenty residents, one of whom was a 110 years old lady, moved to "la Maison Jaune" (the Yellow House), which became the house of Providence. A blind girl washed the dishes and swept the floor and the residents who were able helped with various chores.

With the help of the daughters of her collaborators, Emilie organized a small choir to entertain her guests. The young girls sang on feast days and during the weekly mass.

In 1841, Ms. Gamelin petitioned the Governor General of Canada for the civil incorporation of her work. The corporation took the name of "Corporation de l'Asyle des femmes âgées et infirmes de Montréal" (The Corporation of the Asile for the Aged and Infirm Ladies of Montreal). On September 24, 1841, *Les Mélanges Religieux* newspaper published the following about the subject "...the Asylum shelters today 31 disabled persons, including 7 blind persons, 5 deaf persons, 2 paralytic persons and 5 mentally ill persons. Almost all of the poor welcomed in this Maison de la Providence (House of Providence) are 70, 80 or 90 years old. Nevertheless, this singular community follows a routine adapted to the Asile and presents, at the same time, the double panorama of human misery relieved by charity and piety supported by religion. The director, Madame Gamelin, has only the services of Mademoiselle Madeleine Durand to assist her in her nursing duties; but in many of her relatives



Tavernier-Gamelin's Home



St-Laurent Home

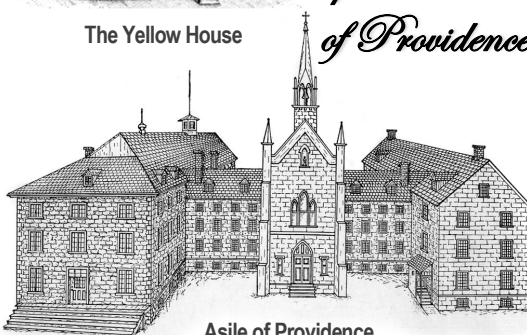


St-Vincent Home



The Yellow House

Under the protective care of Providence...



Asile of Providence

and friends she found generous help which well supported her charitable and continuing goals".

In 1843, with the foundation of the Congregation that the people spontaneously called Sisters of Providence, this work continued to grow. On May 18, the residents of the Yellow House moved to the still unfinished Asile of Providence. On November 11 of the same year, the work of the "elderly women" was officially inaugurated, and September 1844 marked the official establishment of the work of elderly and infirm priests, "Providence St-Joseph". Over the years, the Asile of Providence, the first Mother House of the congregation, was expanded several times to be able to accommodate the growing number of people who were welcomed to receive care. On November 11, 1845, *Les Mélanges Religieux* announced a bazaar to be held in one of the new halls of the Asile, for the benefit of this charitable work. At the time, the Asile housed 110 women.

Governments took a long time to come to the assistance of this vulnerable population. Shelters for men and women, called "hospices", have multiplied over

the years in different places where the Sisters of Providence have been ministering.

It is clear that 192 years after Emilie Tavernier Gamelin began the work with the elderly, the protection of the elderly persons remains a current issue and the Mission of the Sisters of Providence remains the same over time: to meet the needs of the poor, the sick and the marginalized.



Today, even under a secular administration, this ministry continues to be very important in all the countries where the Congregation is located and the sisters are present. They continue their mission of compassion through a variety of activities, services and care, adapted to individual and collective realities.

Nancy Prada
Coordinator - Emilie Gamelin Centre

* *Fabrique: ecclesial body responsible for managing the assets of a church.*

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The Congregation of the Sisters of Providence remembers events that have marked its history...

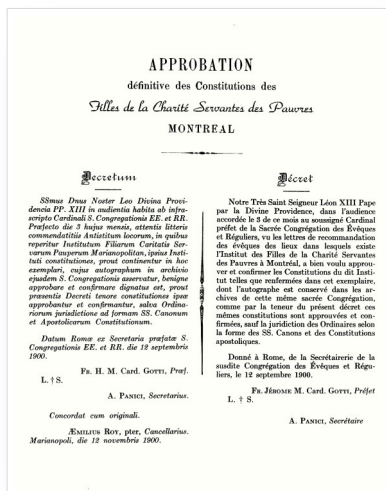
220th Birthday of our Foundress: Emilie Tavernier Gamelin



When on February 19, 1800, a fifteenth child was born in the family of Antoine Tavernier and Josephite Maurice, one might have asked: what will become of this baby girl? Emilie Tavernier was born on "Terre Providence" (Providence Land) that owed its name to the Sisters of the Hôtel-Dieu who received it as a gift from the Notaries Basset on November 29, 1730, and Antoine Tavernier rented it on November 7, 1791. But who could imagine that Providence was entering into little Emilie's life? On this day of her 220th birthday we can say that "a generous soul was revealed, a bearer of the message of charity".

120th Anniversary of the approval by Rome of the Sisters of Providence as a religious congregation of apostolic life.

Founded on March 25, 1843, by Bishop Ignace Bourget and Mother Emilie Tavernier Gamelin, the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence was officially recognized as a religious congregation of apostolic life on September 12, 1900. This event was the answer to the hopes and the prayers of Mother Gamelin's spiritual daughters and of her contemporaries who had seen in her, the Mother of the poor, the work of relieving all human misery.



60th Anniversary of the opening of a research bureau for the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Mother Gamelin.

In 1960, the General Council of the time, noted that the fame of holiness of Mother Emilie Gamelin had become more and more evident and that many faithful people prayed and obtained favors by her intercession. Steps were taken to begin the historical research required for the opening of the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Mother Gamelin.

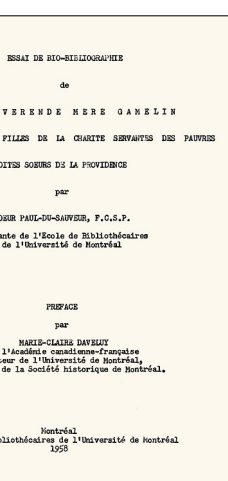


Sister Thérèse Frigon, SP
(Sr. Paul-du-Sauveur)
1960

zation of Mother Gamelin in the diocese of Montreal. Sister Thérèse Frigon, SP (Sr. Paul-du-Sauveur, No. 4851) had just completed a thesis in library science entitled: *Essai de bibliographie de la Révérende Mère Gamelin, fondatrice des Filles de la Charité Servante des Pauvres, dites Sœurs de la Providence* (Bibliographical essay of the Reverend Mother Gamelin, foundress of the Daughters of Charity, Servant of the Poor, known as the Sisters of Providence). Providence, who always watches over us, had prepared the one who, on June 20, 1960, became the director of the Emilie Gamelin Center of that time. The same day, Sister Thérèse celebrated her 40th birthday... So this year is a double anniversary celebration for her, since on June 20, she will become a centenarian. Congratulations and thank you, Sister Thérèse!

50th Anniversary: Merger of the Sisters of Providence of Montreal and the Sisters of Providence of Chile.

Mother Emilie Gamelin had a missionary heart, she wanted to respond to the desires of the bishop of Nesqually, United States, and planned to appoint sisters to work in that territory. But then, in 1851, the Foundress suddenly died from the cholera epidemic. However, in 1852, steps were taken and a group of five sisters left for the American North West territory. Surely providential circumstances allowed Mother Bernard (Vénérançe Morin) and four companions to arrive, on June 17, 1853, to Valparaiso, Chile, and to found a religious community that became independent from that of Montreal in 1880. A desire of unification was manifested in the 1950s, both from Montreal and the Chilean community. It was a long process which ended on July 1, 1970, with the merger of the two congregations, under the name of Sisters of Providence of Montreal, and with the opening of the Bernard Morin Province in Chile. All this happened at the very beginning of the General Chapter of 1970. So fifty years ago!



Bibliographical essay of the
Rev. Mother Gamelin

20th anniversary: Unveiling of the Emilie Gamelin monument at the Berri-UQAM Metro station.

In 1995, at the same place where our foundation house, the Asile of Providence, had been erected, in the quadrilateral bounded by Ste-Catherine, St-Hubert, De Maisonneuve and Berri streets, "Place Emilie Gamelin" was inaugurated. Since then, and in view of

the construction of the Berri-UQAM Metro station, steps were taken with the City of Montreal, so that a monument could be erected in tribute to the great Lady of Montreal, Emilie Tavernier Gamelin, there, on that same square, where millions of bowls of soup were served for 120 years, from 1843 to 1963. On May 25, 2000, the artwork of Raoul Hunter, a sculptor from Quebec, was blessed by Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte, archbishop of Montreal, in the presence of several civil and religious authorities. The traditional "soup" was served to all guests and passers-by, in remembrance of her, the one who we continue to call: *Mother of the poor*.

**"Emilie, you speak to our hearts,
your whole life is a path of light.
Your message joins us
on today's roads;
where we will, like you, spread joy."**

Sister Yvette Demers, SP
Vicepostulator
Cause of Emilie Gamelin



Gratitude to Emilie



A litany of thank you's to Blessed Emilie... Thank you, Emilie!

We successfully sold my mother's house.
P.R., Ile Perrot, QC

For my daughter; she is recovering quite well.
L.P.-T., Montreal, QC

Once again, I got to see my son who lives in Florida.
E.L., Cuba

My son was suffering from cancer. He is healed; his strength has returned.
G.P.-L. Joliette, QC

For M. who obtained the job for which she had applied.
M. and R. L. Moncton, NB

For providing me support through an eye surgery.
E.M., Mont-Laurier, QC

For the two homes rented after making a prayer to Emilie.
C.B. Montreal, QC

My husband recovered his strength after many weeks.
C.M., St-Bruno, QC

For the good employment obtained by my young son.
A.G., L'Assomption, QC

For the unexpected sale of land belonging to my son.
L.H., Victoriaville, QC

I had a stomach biopsy; everything turned out well.
D.C. St-Jean-de-Matha, QC

For the assistance received; I could maintain the status quo in my life.
D.R., Laval, QC

For the cure of skin disease.
T.L., Montreal, QC

For obtaining a good job and other favors obtained.
L.T., Boischatel, QC

For all the protection provided to my family.
R. and J.P.B., St-Bruno, QC

For the sale of my son's house.
J.T.R., Santiago, Chile

For all the favors obtained over the years.
L.D., Montreal, QC

For the assistance in the sale of a house.
F.D., St-Armand, QC

For assisting my whole family during difficult times.
J.T., St-Leonard, QC

For my neighbor, now a widow, who was able to sell her house.
M.-P.C., Val David, QC

For a successful heart surgery.
M.R., Saint-Jacques, QC

My son was able to recover from depression.
R.-A.G., St-Charles-Borromeo, QC

For the improvement of the kidney condition of my little niece.
H.L., Louiseville, QC

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

Let us also entrust to our blessed Emilie, the many prayer intentions received daily at the Bureau of the Cause. Let us remember that Emilie herself used to say:

**"With faith,
you may obtain everything
from our benevolent God."**

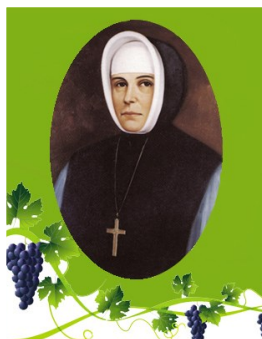
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Gratitude to Emilie

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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.**

