



Providence  
Associates



*Special Year  
dedicated to Saint Joseph*

## **Peace and joy to you in Providence,**

The year 2021 begins on a positive note for us as we begin to see an end to the suffering caused by the pandemic and that continues to affect our world. However, the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine is a great relief as well as a sign of hope that we are coming to the end of this pandemic, which is what we all hope for. We continue to look to a better future so that we can live fully the International Virtual Meeting of Providence Associates, May 3-6, 2021. We look forward to this great and very significant event for the Providence Associates Movement. ➡

## *.....continuation of the letter*

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In the meantime, I would like to share with you the good news that our Church has dedicated this as a special year in honour of St. Joseph, husband of the Virgin Mary, protector and guardian of the Holy Family. This special year, which began on December 8, 2020 will end on December 8, 2021. For this reason, it is important for us to grow in love for this great Saint so that all Christians may be moved to implore his intercession and imitate his virtues as a loving father, a father in tenderness, a father in obedience and hospitality, a father with creative and hardworking courage, a father in the shadows but in the joy of love within the family.

Moreover, Pope Francis will soon inaugurate, on St. Joseph's feast, March 19, a year dedicated to the family "Amoris Laetitia Family," which means, "Love in the family" and which will end on the occasion of the Tenth World Meeting of Families in Rome in June 2022. This is a special year that urges us to bear witness to familial love. An event that underlines the central importance of marriage and the family as the cornerstones of our lives, our society and the Church. For that purpose, we will take this opportunity to celebrate as a Providence Family the joy of love that unites us following the example of Mother Gamelin. A woman of faith who loved with tenderness and caring kindness her biological family and who gave birth to the Providence Family.

For the Pope, this Year of the Family reminds us of the urgency of rediscovering the call of the family to evangelize by the example of life by proposing anew the ideal of

conjugal and family love, as underlined in the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, whose 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of publication will take place next March 19.

For this Family Year, I think of you, of your families who are living through moments of both joy and struggle in this time of the pandemic. I encourage you to reflect creatively as you find spiritual, pastoral and cultural initiatives to accompany other families facing the challenges of our time. I wish you a year of joy, love and blessings within your biological family and the Providence Family. May our love and our compassionate charity become inventive to help the needy and vulnerable families that the Lord puts on our path and let us entrust to the Holy Family of Nazareth, especially to St. Joseph, caring husband and father, this journey of love, challenges and joy within our biological families and with the Providence Associates.

*Hortense Demia-Mbailaou. SP*  
PA General Coordinator



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## *Providence Family*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR EMILIE!

FEBRUARY, 19<sup>TH</sup>

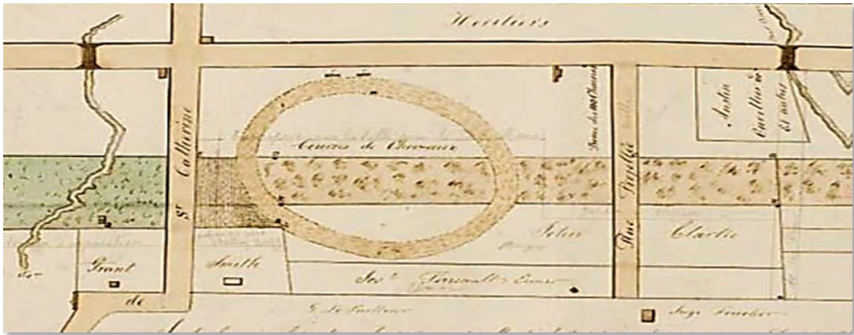
*by Sister Yvette Demers, SP*



On February 19, 1800, the fifteenth child of Antoine Tavernier and Marie-Josephte Maurice was born. The very next day, the father and his 21-year-old son, Antoine, the godfather-to-be, hitched the horse and buggy and made their way to Notre-Dame Church. The child would be baptized by Father Joseph Michel Humbert, Sulpician, a native of Lyon, France. The baby girl received the name of Marie-Emilie-Eugene. Her godmother was her 15-year-old first cousin, Marie-Claire Perrault, daughter of Marie-Anne Tavernier and Joseph Perrault.

Would this child live? The anguish of this question could be read in Marie-Josephte's eyes as she watched over the infant. Nine of her children had already died and the threat

of epidemics was ever present. However, “Providence is watching over...”. We also know that Emilie was born on land called “Terre Providence.”



But where did this name come from? The Hospitallers of St. Joseph had their hospital on St. Paul Street, but as the years went by and the population grew, they wanted to find a parcel of land so that one day they could build a new Hôtel-Dieu. Brothers Gabriel and Benoit Basset, both unmarried, had inherited, upon the death of their father, a parcel of land that they gave to the Hospitallers of St. Joseph on November 29, 1730. The Hospitallers welcomed it as a gift from heaven and named the plot “Terre Providence.”

Subsequently, on November 7, 1791, Antoine Tavernier came to the convent of the Hospitallers, along with notaries A. Foucher and Louis Chaboillez, to sign a long-term lease of 30 years for Terre Providence.

In 2021, this place is easily identifiable: it is bounded on the north by Bernard Street, on the east by St-Urbain Street, on the south by Sherbrooke Street and on the west by du Parc Avenue. It is the site of the Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal.

Source : Emilie Tavernier Gamelin, Éditions du Méridien, by Denise Robillard, 1988, p.35, 31, 32.



## Providence Family

Providence really entered Emilie's life... With the years she would be recognized as a "true providence", her houses would be named "House of Providence", the house of foundation would be named "Asile de la Providence", and when Emilie became the foundress of a new community, its canonical name would be "Daughters of Charity Servants of the Poor", but people would say: "In the House of Providence, they are 'Sisters of Providence'" and Bishop Bourget will add this to the title: "Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor, known as Sisters of Providence".

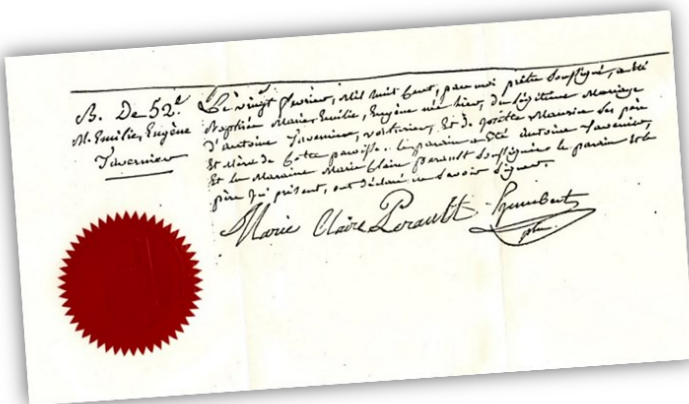
Providence Family, let us be proud of our origins and grateful to be the spiritual children of such a wonderful Mother! Let us implore her to continue to watch over us, to protect us in these difficult times and to heal our world by restoring confidence in better days,

PROVIDENCE OF GOD, I HOPE IN YOU!

Sister Yvette Demers, SP

Vice Postulator

Emilie Gamelin Cause



Baptismal certificate  
of Emilie

## IN SEARCH OF DIGNITY

EMILIE GAMELIN PROVINCE

*René Lefebvre, PA*



Here is a text that I composed in November 2000 while working with the priest of St. Joseph's Church, located in Little Burgundy on Richmond Street. At that time, I worked as church warden while being also a catechist and I participated in the pastoral and liturgy with the parish priest, Mr. Jacques Fournier, and the Sisters of Providence, Sister Eva Rose Rheault and Sister Marie-Paule Dessureaux.

I live in a very strange neighborhood: all the poor live in the interior space and all the rich have settled on the outskirts. Thus, they can easily be identified. At Sunday Mass, the poor form the visible majority.

Collections often reflect this harsh reality and I, that am in charge of counting the collections, know... I do know that my church is heading towards a substantial deficit and I also know that my church vitally needs the generosity of the wealthy in the neighborhood.

Unfortunately, they are not legion. They are very often absent from our Sunday gatherings. As a Providence Associate, I try to raise wealthy people's awareness of the problems of our church and our neighborhood. I approach them, one by one, to ask them to help us function better.

It is true that the neighbourhood is in fierce competition with our downtown area, which is so prolific and so much more attractive to new residents looking for an image that matches their status.

It is also true that our work, which is very modest, is less interesting for them, who are very often looking for more prestigious works. Certainly, if our fundraisers were held in front of the cameras, the sums collected would be indeed sufficient to sustain not only my neighborhood but also the entire southwestern part of Montreal.

However, our work is done in all simplicity and humility, often in the shadows. It is more difficult, but I reap a lot of joy when I succeed in raising awareness, even if it's only one person. The same happens with the Christmas grocery store. It would be so much more motivating to go and solicit large sums of money from certain companies than to collect the dollars pieces by begging my neighbors.

I feel like the poor widow of the gospel for whom it was much more demanding to give even a few coins by taking "from her poverty, contributing all she had, her whole livelihood." On the other hand, for a well-to-do person, it is so much easier to give because it is often from the surplus that they draw this money.

I believe that Providence sees me as it saw the poor widow because, through my actions, it recognizes her goodness and compassion. Providence has given me hands to welcome the poor and the excluded. It has given me feet so that I can



follow it in the search of good Samaritans to bring love, compassion and dignity to the poor in my neighborhood.

To keep this face of God alive, I keep firmly anchored in my heart Emilie Gamelin's tenderness for the underprivileged and the wounded of life, whom she welcomed with such kindness and generosity, even going so far as to invite them to her "royal table."

This is what I wrote in November 2000. Today, St. Joseph's Church is no longer. The parish has expanded to include the neighbourhoods of Saint-Henri, Little Burgundy and Griffintown, and only Saint-Zotique Church, located in front of George-Étienne-Cartier Park in Saint-Henri, remains.

More than twenty years have passed since this text was written. Together with the volunteers of my parish and carrying the torch of Providence, I am its hands to the destitute families, the homeless people of Maison Labre and the hungry but well-fed children of the Garde-Manger Pour Tous (community pantry).



Distribution of Christmas baskets 2020

## IN PORT-AU-PRINCE WE CELEBRATE EMILIE GAMELIN

### EMILIE GAMELIN PROVINCE



On the afternoon of February 20, we received the Providence Family in Ruelle Rivière, Port-au-Prince, to celebrate Emilie the day after her birthday. We began with a Eucharistic celebration. Our guests were Providence Associates, Providence Friends and young people in vocational research who are used to participating in the Providence gathering one Sunday a month. Joining with us were young men who are “journeying as pre-seminarians” as well as young women whom we invite to our meetings who wish to explore a religious vocation. Also present were three young women who participate in the “Come and See” program, our two pre-novices, a novice and us, the nine professed sisters who are in Port-au-Prince.

We celebrated joyfully this unifying anniversary which was, at the same time, a balm for our lives at this time of pandemic. Blessed Emilie Gamelin, thank you for the gift of your life!

**MESSAGE FROM CINDY,  
A PROVIDENCE ASSOCIATE FROM ALASKA, USA  
MOTHER JOSEPH PROVINCE**



Cindy made her commitment as a Providence Associate thanks to an invitation made by Sister Claire Gagnon, S.P., in a special moment of her volunteer work. "Sister Claire saw me in the Providence Chapel, Anchorage, Alaska. After

I had been taking Communion to people in hospital. She asked if I wanted to be a Providence Associate. I said yes and that choice has brought so many lovely people into my life," she said.

Considering the difficult times we are all going through, Cindy sends us this message: "There are so many things that can weigh us down all over the world even before the Covid-19 issues. Now more than ever, the "box" of worries seems very heavy. Like many who have had loved ones in hospitals and all the heroes serving during the pandemic times, the reality that we daily have to "Let Go And Let God" has led me to pray about "how to let go."

Cindy, as are all committed Providence Associates, continues to take an interest in the well-being of those around her as well as increasing the Spanish classes which she is taking with her daughter. She deeply loves the PA Movement and follows the news about it closely. She is currently looking forward to the International Virtual Meeting of Providence Associates in early May 2021.

Thank you, Cindy, for sharing with us your thoughts and concerns about the present world and the future of the Providence Associates Movement. God bless you!

## A GARDEN IN MEMORIAM, CALIFORNIA

MOTHER JOSEPH PROVINCE

*Sister Rosa Nguyen, SP*



“Providence Grove” is a succulent plant garden whose name was chosen for two significant reasons. First, to serve as a memorial to all the Sisters, Providence Associates, and Providence Companions who are resting in peace. You may recognize some of their names in these pictures. This garden always gives me a sacred space to be myself, to reflect and remember the Sisters’ and Providence people’s lives, gifts, talents, spirituality, and love for our community. Second, to embrace all the Sisters and Providence people who are living through this COVID-19 pandemic. This garden is an invitation from Sr. Marilyn and me to remember that life takes nurturing. Whether of the soil or of the soul, cultivation is not a one-time thing. It requires ongoing labor and a continual process of growth. Providence of God we hope in you.



**WE CELEBRATED THE TABLE OF THE KING  
IN A DIFFERENT WAY THIS PAST CHRISTMAS 2020!**

**BERNARDA MORIN PROVINCE**

***Bulletin of the Bernarda Morin Province***



Due to the uncommon situation experienced worldwide because of the pandemic, this past December 2020 we had to find another way to celebrate the traditional *Table of the King*, which is prepared every year with great love and effort for the brothers and sisters who come for meals at the Emilie Gamelin Soup Kitchen.

On December 21, thanks to the collaboration of volunteers from the Soup Kitchen, the Sisters and Associates and staff from the Providencia Campus more than 80 trays of





food, and gifts, were distributed to those who are regulars at the Soup Kitchen. They were all invited to come to the soup kitchen to pick up their trays and gifts, and to take them with them, since it was not considered advisable for all of them to gather in the same place. Extreme precautions were taken to avoid contagion. In this way the Christmas tradition of shared company and help was made available to those who suffer the most. It was with the understanding that what motivated Mother Emilia to share the table was her desire to help and not to comply with formalities or rites.

We are grateful for the collaboration of the Sisters and volunteers in the planning, and the preparation of the meals and then the final delivery of what was prepared.



**PROVIDENCE ASSOCIATES OF SAN JOSE HELD A PREPARATION DAY FOR THEIR RENEWAL OF COMMITMENT**  
**BERNARDA MORIN PROVINCE**

*Margarita Alarcón, PA*



On Monday, December 28, the community of Providence Associates of San José held a day of preparation for the renewal of the 2020 commitment. In this fruitful and pleasant

meeting of work and reflection, the following topics were discussed: “Leadership and profile of Emilie (Gamelin)”, prepared by Sister Ana Delia Silva, “Leadership and profile of the PA” and “Living and witnessing our PA commitment today,” prepared by Margarita Alarcón.



On Tuesday, December 29, the day that commemorates the birth of Mother Bernarda, the renewal of commitment ceremony was held for the PA community of San José and two PA of Santa Rosa. The following associates from the San José community renewed their commitment: Gladys Alarcón, Margarita Alarcón, Nelly Lizana, Adriana Osses and Susana

Zambra. From the Santa Rosa community, Idilia Caballero and Juanita Cristi Mellado renewed their engagement.

The mass was presided by Father Ignacio Gramsch, in the San Alberto de Sicilia Parish, at 7:30 pm. Sister Ana Delia Silva, who acts as a companion to the PA community, accepted the commitments in a very emotional and intimate ceremony.

PA were also grateful for the presence of Mrs. Ivonne Valenzuela, companion from Santa Rosa, and Marcela Ferrada, in charge of communications of the San José School.



**PROVIDENCIA DE LINARES SCHOOL:  
PROVIDENCIA DE LINARES ASSOCIATES  
RENEWED THEIR COMMITMENT  
BERNARDA MORIN PROVINCE**

The Virgin Mary inspired Mother Emilie Gamelin to live the pain arising from love, succeeding to establish in the heart of the Sisters of Providence the values of charity, simplicity and humility. These values also inspire the Providence Associates of our Providencia de Linares School, who renewed their commitment on December 30. On that





occasion, the PA coordinator stated: “Today we are meeting to renew our commitment as Providence Associates. Looking around us, the desire to contribute to the work of Providence, from a deep spiritual change, emerges more strongly. Today, more than ever, we must live and proclaim the Providence Charism according to our state of life, being for this purpose people committed to their baptismal vocation, who deeply believe in Christ, Lord of Life, and who want to welcome the message of his word; people who, attentive to the orientations of our Shepherds, want to truly live a real option for the service of the needy; courageous people to proclaim the Providence of God and the example of Mary Sorrowful in their own life with a joyful, creative and hopeful attitude.”



**NEWS FROM CALGARY, ALBERTA  
HOLY ANGELS PROVINCE**

*Patricia Pat) Nex, PA*



Peace, love and good health to all our fellow Providence Associates everywhere, from the Providence Associates of Calgary!

For maybe the first time in modern History, we are all united in experiencing the same Health attack, with its associated fears, restrictions, and perhaps even the loss of loved ones... all because of a little Virus, the Corona Virus, which has brought about the devastating Covid-19 Pandemic! We are also united in having Jesus, the best Physician and Healer, guiding us.

Our small Calgary PA group consisting of 9 sincere members, plus one or two faithful friends, have two things in common:

- Our love of God
- Our desire to follow in the footsteps of Blessed Emilie Gamelin, doing what we can to help the needy and less fortunate around us.

Despite problems of sickness, injuries and the normal-aging-process among our Calgary members, the spirit to keep-going is still so strong and palpable in our PA group. Members show up at meetings defying all the odds, whenever they can, and contribute to all our group projects.

One PA member who had a stroke about four years ago and is now in a wheelchair, loves coming to the meetings if someone is willing to bring her there. For a few years, her friend, Ken, assisted her in coming to the meetings, until he too, became quite sick with cancer. However, the beauty of this story is that her friend Ken, who brought her to the meetings, felt very comfortable in our group, enjoyed our discussions and prayerfulness, and actually became a PA member himself, in 2019!

Two of our senior PA members fell and fractured their hips last year and needed to be in hospital, with the added risk of Covid-19 prevalent around them. But with lots of supportive prayers offered for them, and the grace of God, they have healed well and are both at home and are safe.

Two other members are presently struggling with serious health problems, Ken being one of them; so we continue to support them in prayer and by making phone calls of encouragement and comfort to them.

The highlights for us in the last 2 years were as follows:

### 1. Celebrations for the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sisters of Providence

In Calgary, the Providence Sisters and Associates celebrated this anniversary by sponsoring a Feed-the-Hungry-Evening at St. Mary's Church hall. In addition, the PAs devoted part of a meeting to praying the special Anniversary prayer and honouring memories of the Sisters dear to our hearts, e.g. Sr. Lorraine, Sr. Joan.


Also, I (Pat), represented the Holy Angels Province, in Montreal, together with several Sisters, from the West, for the official 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations/Conference, attended by PAs and Sisters from all over the world. It was an outstanding affair of multiculturalism, information, and unity.

2) The reception of a new member (a man) into our PA group, 8 years after our last member was initiated; so a very special and exciting event for our PA group.

3) Our oldest member in the group, Pat Gallagher, a PA member for almost 21 years, celebrated a big milestone, her 98th birthday, on January 28, 2021. Pat attended our meetings quite regularly, right until our last meeting, before the Covid-19 locked us down. She loves composing poems and prayers, which she will spontaneously recite, during a meeting, if she feels inspired to do so. We are proud to say we probably have the oldest PA in the world!(?)

The various projects we have been involved with over the last 2 years include: providing 55 pairs of shoes for children in poor countries, monetary donations towards the building of the Lacombe Centre Healing Gardens, donations towards Fr. Larre's Bosco Home for street children in Coquitlam, B.C., and a donation to Sacred Heart Church toward the repair of the Church's roof. Also, an on-going project of ours is the financial support of the Prison ministry in Calgary which provides spiritual literature for all the prisoners.

Since Covid-19 hit we have all been isolated from each other, but we still keep in contact by phone. Some of us do little acts of kindness for others and from time to time we have prayed Novenas or offered Masses together for an end to the Pandemic.

In June 2020 we lost one of the pillars of our group, Jean Burnell (96 years old), who had been suffering bravely for several years. Jean was a proud PA for 28 years, a founding member of the group, and always ready to do what was needed to help the group. A couple of her accomplishments were: keeping records of important 



events and putting together the process for the Orientation of new members. About five PAs attended Jean's Funeral and Burial; it was sweet and simple, just like Jean would have liked it.

We started January 2021 still in isolation and with meetings on hold, except for a couple of Zoom meetings organized by Sr. Christina Wong for the Edmonton and Calgary PAs. This provided a good way for the two groups to unite, work together and get to know one another better.

Our PA group was very sad to see Sister Evelyn Dechant move to the Edmonton Providence House in January/21. She was our friend and very supportive of our group. We will all miss her very much.

What has struck me during this Pandemic is how we are actually experiencing what Blessed Emilie experienced in her lifetime! She knew all about epidemics, their risks, their devastation, and the numerous ensuing deaths. She was right in the middle of it an epidemic, helping the sick and the dying! Blessed Emilie Gamelin is looking down on us and probably thinking, "Now my children, you will understand even better what suffering, pain, fear and sacrifice is all about"... We are truly experiencing a major challenge that Emilie faced so we can appreciate even more our journey in her footsteps...

It is a privilege to be a Providence Associate, so let's do what we can, when we can, to make this World a better place for everyone.

## GREETINGS AND PEACE TO ALL !

HOLY ANGELS PROVINCE

*Melba Cervantes, PA*

### NOT EVERYTHING IS CANCELLED

sunshine is not cancelled  
spring is not cancelled  
love is not cancelled  
relationships are not cancelled  
reading is not cancelled  
naps are not cancelled  
devotion is not cancelled  
music is not cancelled  
dancing is not cancelled  
imagination is not cancelled  
kindness is not cancelled  
conversations are not cancelled  
hope is not cancelled



#keeplookingup  
SimpleStencils.com

Thank you my dear fellow Associates who shared your thoughts and experiences in our December, 2020 Bulletin. Your stories are inspiring.

What a challenging year was 2020! The pandemic came "like a thief in the night". In the beginning, there was little information about this new virus. Even scientists, political leaders, medical professionals were caught unprepared. As the months progressed, millions of people, all over the world, were infected and died. Our way of life changed, a "new" normal emerged. Lock downs, social distancing, quarantining, self-isolation, travel bans, etc. became the new buzz words. Wearing mask in public became mandatory and quite trendy.

Volunteering and ministries were curtailed due to the lock down. In spite of the isolation, I found the silence and stillness comforting and calming to the spirit. Like my fellow PAs in other regions, I have been praying more - offering my daily Mass for all victims of the COVID-19 all over the world. In addition, I have been attending Bible studies on TV, learning and understanding more about the word of God. The wonders of technology like ZOOM effectively bridge the visual interactions of groups. Personal human dynamics are sustained, even though it is at a minimum.

In spite of adversities in her life, Pat Gallagher, PA, on her 98 years old, always finds joy and gratitude. God gave her the gift to write poetry (a sample of one of her poems is included in this article).

Fast forward to 2021, with the availability of vaccines and more are being developed, hope is around the corner. Let us turn to Our Mother of Sorrows and Blessed Emilie, who by their example, showed us how to open our hearts to all of God's blessings even if they are wrapped in a package of suffering.

I would like to share the following prayer from Dr. David Jeremiah:

Lord help us find the message in the mess!  
In the midst of the mess, remember....  
There's no mess GOD can't handle!  
No mess is forever!  
No mess is a surprise to GOD!  
A mess is a place where only GOD can work!  
We are never alone..... GOD is with us always!

### The Star

*Christmas is for children. The child within us all.  
Let our faith be pure and simple.  
As we with joy recall the gentle grace of Jesus  
as he was born that night.  
May the brilliance of the guiding star  
keep our life path clear and bright.  
We thank you good St Joseph earthly Father of our king.  
And Jesus Mother.  
May it be somehow someway, the will of all from every sin, be free  
to live our lives in love and peace as God's Holy Family.  
Amen, Shalom*

**Patricia Gallagher, PA**



