

Echoes of Émilie

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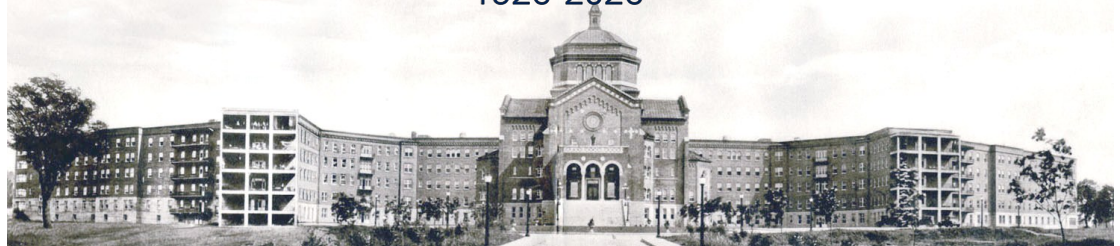
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A Century of History and a Legacy of Compassion

The Centennial of the *Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur de Montréal*

1926-2026



January 2026 marks a significant moment in the history of healthcare in Quebec: the centennial of the first patients being transferred to the new "*Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur de Montréal pour les tuberculeux et les incurables*" (Sacred Heart Hospital of Montreal for those suffering from tuberculosis and other incurable illnesses). This founding event led to the emergence of an institution that would become a major pillar of healthcare in Quebec.

Founded in 1926 by the Sisters of Providence, the hospital addressed an urgent need following the 1923 fire that ravaged the *Hôpital des Incurables*. During a period when epidemics were common and diseases often incurable, a true love story unfolded at the heart of this hospital: love for others, a love that expressed itself through tangible actions, care, presence, and solidarity.

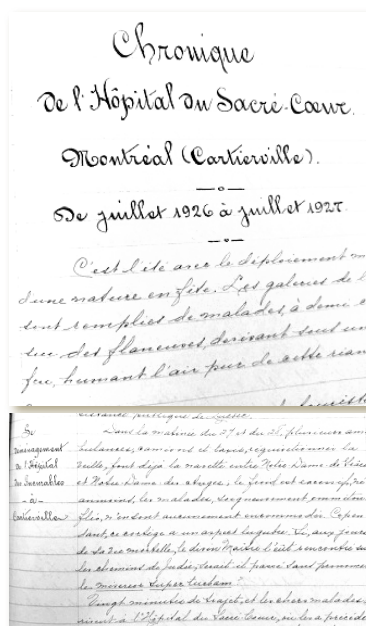
The centennial of this institution also provides an opportunity to reflect on the spiritual and social legacy of Blessed Émilie Tavernier Gamelin. The values transmitted —her way of seeing others, unders-

tanding their suffering, and responding to it with tenderness, dignity, and determination— guided the sisters of the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence, who gave birth to this work.

A Centennial to Honor a Living Heritage

In preparation for the centennial celebrations, the Émilie Gamelin Centre and the Providence Historical Archives were invited by the event organizing team to collaborate on an extensive research project aimed at compiling historical documents and photograph collections.

While reviewing the archival documents, chronicles, and old photographs, it was possible not only to rediscover the depth of commitment demonstrated by the Sisters of Providence, but also to discover a particularly revealing fact: that is, the hospital admitted patients from China, Syria, and many other countries, a testament to the Sisters of Providence's profound sense of duty and their commitment to welcoming all without distinction of race, origin, or beliefs. Such a spirit of universality, quite





rare at the time, was yet another expression of their compassionate dedication to the most vulnerable.

Furthermore, this glimpse into the past allowed us to appreciate the extent of the actions undertaken over the decades, which have shaped the very identity of the hospital we know today.

As you can see below, the hospital's statistics from its first year of operation (1926–1927) provide valuable insight into the early days of this work of the Sisters of Providence. These data contextualize the vast scope of the Mission accomplished during the early months of the institute and highlight the tremendous efforts and determination of the staff members who dealt with the pressing needs of the time:

Statistics from January 1926 to January 1927

- **Affiliation with the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Montreal:** January 1926
- **Transfer of the first patients to the hospital:** January 27, 1926
- **Religious staff:** 92 sisters
- **Lay nurses:** 16
- **Lay male nurses:** 13
- **Patients admitted to the hospital during the year:** 824
- **Patients being treated at the hospital as of December 31, 1926:** 395
- **Home visits to sick persons:** 105
- **Meals provided to the poor:** 1,200

Significant achievements over the decades

From its very beginnings, the *Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur de Montréal* established itself as a leader in medical innovation and education.

The hospital became affiliated with the University of Montreal and gradually evolved into the most important university instruction center of Quebec specializing in pulmonary diseases.

This collaboration has promoted remarkable advances in research and clinical expertise. Major innovations include the progress in lung surgery, pioneering the use of advanced bronchoscopy, and establishing the first French-speaking thoracic surgery department in Canada.

The Sisters of Providence have also made significant contributions to the training of healthcare staff:

- 1929: The hospital's nursing school became affiliated with the University of Montreal, thereby improving the quality of education and academic integration.
- 1950: The opening of the first School for Auxiliary Nurses in Quebec marked a significant advancement for the profession.
- 1951: The facility was recognized as a general hospital, reflecting the broadening scope of its mission and services.
- 1952: Opening of the obstetrics department.

From 1926 to 2026, the *Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur de Montréal* has lived through a century of challenges, innovations, and profound



transformations. Guided by the determination and compassion of the Sisters of Providence, this hospital—born from urgent needs and suffering—has become a leading center for teaching, research, and specialized care. Its centennial is not only a commemoration; it is a tribute to thousands of health care providers, volunteers, and patients, and an opportunity to highlight a humanitarian vision that will continue to inspire future generations.

Starting in March 2026, a commemorative exhibition displayed in the corridor leading to the hospital cafeteria allows the hospital community, families, patients, and the public to explore a century of history and humanism through the institution's major stages of evolution. In addition, media content retracing key moments in the hospital's history will be broadcast throughout 2026 and is available to all.

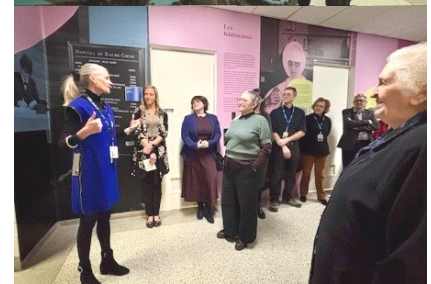
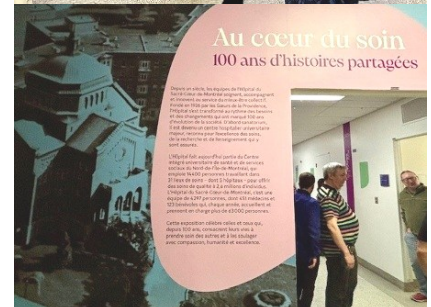
From 1926 to 2026, from battling tuberculosis to providing cutting-edge modern medicine, this hospital remains a lasting work of an exceptional heritage: that of the Sisters of Providence who, inspired by their Foundress, Blessed Émilie Tavernier Gamelin, chose to respond to human suffering with love, compassion, and respect for human dignity.

It is a vibrant reminder that charity, when embodied with courage and vision, can transform lives and live on through generations.

Nancy Prada
Coordinator
Émilie Gamelin Centre

Source:

Chronicles of the *Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur de Montréal*, Cartierville (From January 1926 to January 1927)



A bridge connecting the past and the present ...

On February 21, we had the privilege of welcoming a visitor whose presence held special significance, as he is a descendant of the close family of Blessed Émilie Tavernier-Gamelin.

It was a deeply moving moment for Sister Karin Dufault and myself to meet Mr. Nicolas Vadeboncœur. Thanks to the memories passed down through his family and the artefacts generously donated, a living part of history became real to us: **a soup spoon bearing the inscription "V Gamelin", which belonged to Émilie between 1827 and 1843, and the book "Vie de Mère Gamelin" (Life of Mother Gamelin), printed in Montreal in 1900.**

Over the generations, her family has carefully preserved these precious objects, keeping them as tangible witnesses to a deeply cherished family legacy. Émilie's memory was also passed on in a touching way in the family, at the request of Sophie Guilbault, one of Émilie's nieces who cherished the memories of her beloved aunt, Mother Gamelin (born Tavernier). The family name Gamelin was given to her great-grandson as a first name in 1904. Since then and for three generations, Gamelin has been given as a first name to boys in the family, thus perpetuating the memory and affection for this "Great Lady of Montreal".

In the space of a visit, a bridge was naturally built between the past and the present, reminding us that the legacy of Blessed Émilie Tavernier Gamelin is not limited to archives or artefacts preserved, but continues to live on in the memories and actions of those who keep her story alive today.

We are pleased to share with you the testimony of Mr. Nicolas Vadeboncœur, following his visit to the Museum of the Sisters of Providence.

Nancy Prada

Coordinator
Émilie Gamelin Centre



Greetings,

My name is Nicolas Vadeboncœur. I am a seventh-generation descendant of Marie-Josephte Tavernier, a sister of Mother Gamelin.

My family has passed down a spoon and a book about her life from generation to generation. I inherited these items when my father, Gamelin Vadeboncœur, passed away in November 2024. Having no children, I thought these items could be better preserved and protected by the Sisters of Providence than remaining in a forgotten box when the day comes for me to leave this world.

I therefore contacted the Congregation, whose interest in me and for the history of these items touched my heart deeply. I soon realized that the spoon was special. Émilie used to engrave her utensils when she was married, but she stopped doing so after she founded the Congregation. Consequently, the spoon was likely used during these two periods, when she was a widow, as it bears the engraving 'V Gamelin' for Veuve Gamelin (Veuve means widow in French). Unfortunately, despite my research, we have not found any other utensil.

I was then invited to visit the Museum of the Sisters of Providence and enrich it with the spoon and the book. I thought that they might not have this edition. In fact, they did own a copy, but it was worn from use and filled with handwritten notes in pencil and ink.

So, I donated the book, which had been restored by my godfather Robert Boulanger in 1980. He did a remarkable job: a royal blue velvet cover embellished with a medallion bearing the effigy of Mother Gamelin. Furthermore, the book's pages are intact and free from handwritten notes. The book even contains small pieces of plaster from Mother Gamelin's tomb between the pages, which further enhances its symbolic value. I was told that it would be displayed in the museum. So, if you see a beautiful, royal blue velvet covered book at your next visit, you will know that it has been cared for and passed on with love and dedication.

Before contacting the Sisters of Providence, I was unaware of the existence of such a museum. During my visit to return these items, I was surprised and deeply moved to

see all the work that has been done to preserve the memory of Mother Gamelin and her works. I rediscovered the strength, kindness and love that she had for the most vulnerable people: homeless women, sick children, and people living with different disabilities.

The museum is full of Montreal history and bears witness to the remarkable journey of Mother Émilie Tavernier Gamelin, as well as the hardships that inspired her to found charitable works dedicated to helping people in need, both here and elsewhere in the world.

It was a moving and enriching experience for me. So, I warmly invite you to visit this beautiful, inspiring and profoundly human museum.

Even the smallest act of kindness can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of others.

Nicolas Vadeboncœur



Musée des Sœurs de la Providence Museum

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<https://providenceintl.org/en/emilie-gamelin-centre-museum>

Update from the Office of the Cause of Blessed Émilie Tavernier Gamelin and

Christmas in Émilie's Montreal: When Simplicity Lit Up the Holidays!

Blessings for this new year of 2026, which has rapidly entered our lives! With this Echoes of Émilie, we will provide you with an update on the Cause of Blessed Émilie Tavernier-Gamelin. We will also share how Blessed Émilie was especially remembered this past Christmas at the Providence International Centre.

Resignation of Postulator

In the last Echoes of Émilie, I shared with you that last May, in Rome, I had the opportunity to meet with Brother Luigi Guarneri, FSC, the postulator for the Cause of Blessed Émilie Gamelin. He shared about his declining health. In June 2025, Sister Alba Letelier, Congregational Leader, received a letter of resignation as Postulator from Brother Luigi due to his health condition and the recommendation of his physicians. Brother Luigi was appointed as Postulator in September 2017 and served until September 2025. During that time, he visited the Providence International Center and the Office of the Cause on several occasions, including in 2024. We are grateful for his interest and dedicated service as Postulator during those years, not only for the Cause of Blessed Émilie Tavernier Gamelin, but also for other Canadian Causes of the Saints.

A new postulator will be appointed once the Montreal diocesan inquiry takes place.

Diocesan Inquiry into the presumed miracle

We were disappointed to learn in mid-August 2025, that Abbé Aleksander Dudik, the priest, canonist, President of the Diocesan Inquiry, and Vice Chancellor, had been reassigned to a parish and is no longer responsible for the inquiry. Therefore, the diocesan inquiry anticipated to be in September 2025 needed to be postponed.

We had been collaborating with Abbé Dudik since early 2024 in preparation for the Inquiry and are grateful for the time and energy that he contributed to advancing the Cause including his assistance with the Eucharistic Celebration opening the inquiry process in October 2024.

In February 2026, Archbishop Christian Lépine appointed Father Julien Huron as diocesan priest responsible for the Cause. He will collaborate with Father Claude Ngodji, canonist.

We ask your continued prayers that the Cause will advance. We also ask you to pray that another presumed miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Émilie will be made known to the Office of the Cause. As we can note on the last page of each issue of our Echoes of Émilie newsletter, there are many little miracles that are happening though they do not meet the criteria for being inexplicable (i.e., unexplainable by any human intervention).

Christmas in Émilie's Montreal: When Simplicity Lit Up the Holidays

Though Christmas may seem long past, perhaps our sharing a special way Christmas was celebrated this past year by the Providence International Centre colleagues will revive the spirit of the holiday in the heart of all our dear readers. The planning committee chose the theme: Christmas in Émilie's Montreal: When Simplicity Lit Up the Holidays.

Consistent with that theme, we imagined how Émilie may have decorated. At the International Centre, all the office doors were decorated with fresh evergreen sprays and cones gathered from the grounds of the Centre, along with stars and snowflakes cut from brown butcher paper and hung with thin wire. No Dollarama decorations were available for Émilie and not for us this year. Simple available materials became beautiful!

Program

On the morning of December 16th, all the Centre colleagues gathered with their guests, the sisters from the Mother House and Providence Émilie Gamelin, to present a theatrical program with the above theme. The Communication department team –in charge of coordinating the Christmas celebration at the International Center on this occasion– had researched the simplicity of Christmas celebrations in the 1800s. They gathered historical photos of Quebec and Montreal during that time which were shown on the screen while our own actors and actresses, dressed in period costume,



enacted what was being narrated. The clothes didn't have zippers; trousers were held up by suspenders and buttons; dresses were floor length; heads needed to be covered with hat or cap when attending official events in those days.



The photos projected on the screen during the program helped us understand how much courage, determination and trust in Providence, Émilie possessed to do all that she did with few resources, first as a lay woman and then as the Foundress of the Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor, later known as the Sisters of Providence.

Our guests virtually walked the streets of Montreal with Émilie, remembering her many works of reaching out to those most in need of compassion and care. The story of Émilie closely followed that of Montreal's industrial and commercial development in the early 19th century. On the screen, we saw the first steamboat built in Montreal and the first railroad connecting *La Prairie* and *Saint-Jean*. We saw the old *Notre-Dame* Church, where Émilie was baptized, and *la Place d'Armes* in 1824 that she frequented.

On *Saint-Jacques* Street, we saw the first Bank of Montreal and across the street was the post office. We learned that, in the evening, the streets were lit by whale oil lamps and watchmen ensured security. Also, that *Saint-Paul* Street was the main commercial artery while *Notre-Dame* Street was the elegant promenade of Montreal's elite. We saw the port where Émilie welcomed the immigrants and where she and her sisters nursed the sick new arrivals.

Christmas in Quebec in Émilie's time remained a strictly religious holiday. After a frugal meal on Christmas Eve,



the family went to midnight Mass followed by the *réveillon* good feast. The Christmas tree would have been decorated with garlands of apples or cranberries, ears of wheat, and walnut shells filled with oil serving as small lamps.



A wooden or ceramic nativity scene also occupied a special place. The tree was brought into the house only on Christmas Eve. The simple and practical gifts were given not on Christmas but on New Year's Day. The presents might include hand-knit sweaters or other hand-made clothing items, hard maple sugar candies, and fabrics.

We imagined Émilie making Christmas special for those she cared for helping them to be encouraged by the love that Christ's coming means for everyone. God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to live among us and show us how to love one another!

Many traditional dishes were prepared for Christmas dinner and New Year *réveillon*, such as *tourtière* and *ragoût*, as well as roasted goose or ham and sausages, rich mashed potatoes, pickled vegetables, and classic desserts like old fashioned donuts, *sucre à la crème* and *tartes aux pommes* (apple pies). With large families, preparations started early to feed all the relatives. In Émilie's case, she had to feed all her beloved elderly women, Dodais and his mother, the orphans, and others without family... and after she became Mother Gamelin, her sisters were added to the table.

After the big meal, everyone would gather to play cards, sing, dance, and above all, tell stories. The passing down of stories helped preserve the language, customs, and culture of the hardworking and joyful French Canadian people.

Speaking of song, as part of the program, he choir formed by some members of the Providence International Center, in their period costumes, entertained the sisters with Christmas Carols that were sung in Émilie's time. The carols included *Guillô prends ton tambourin* (Willie, take your drum), *Nouvelle Agréable* (Good news of great joy), *Entre le Bœuf et L'Âne gris* (Between the ox and the gray donkey), *D'où viens-tu, bergère* (Whence Art Thou, My Maiden), and the beautiful *Ô nuit de paix* (Oh Holy Night). Many of the sister guests joined in the singing with big smiles.



At the close of the program with the image of snow-cover Montreal in 1850, our colleagues greeted each sister and offered each a variety of little delicious treats from Émilie's time and a refreshing glass of cider punch, the kind that Émilie and Mr. Gamelin would have made from their apple orchard. We imagined Émilie serving them with great love and joy.

Among the treats were:

- *Tête fromagée* (head cheese) on crackers
- *Terrine de lapin* (rabbit paté on bread)
- *Fromage Paillason - Depuis 1636* (special cheese; the first kind of cheese produced in Canada)
- *Pain de ménage* - Recette d'artisan (bread made from an artisanal recipe from that period)
- *Beurre de pommes à l'ancienne* (old-fashioned apple butter)

Everyone was joyful as we enjoyed each other's company, and revived memories. We were also delighted with the treats!

Providence International Centre Luncheon

After the Program, colleagues of the Centre gathered for their Christmas Season Feast and recognition of years of service, maintaining the same spirit of celebration in Émilie's time. The welcome into Émilie's "home" was delightful surprise. We were welcomed with friendship, imagining we were joining the beloved people cared for by Émilie.

The dining room tables were simply decorated with beautiful short mason jars of water in which cranberries and evergreens were submerged, and a small round lit candle was floating on top. Also resting on the white tablecloths were fresh red apples and sprays of evergreens.

A Christmas tree was decorated with cranberries garlands and hanging dried sliced apples. Some of our colleagues were servers dressed in period clothes welcoming us to Émilie's delicious traditional Christmas meal. The festive atmosphere made the dining room truly look like Émilie's home. Throughout the meal, our hostesses shared stories of Christmas past, embodying all of Émilie's kindness and warmth.

Christmas menu

After praying together with a blessing of the meal, we savored the abundant feast beginning with a hot bowl of pea soup to warm us inside and out, followed by salmon cooked to perfection or tender grilled sirloin. Of course, there was also the traditional holiday *tourtière* (meat pie) and *ragoût* (meat balls in rich gravy), accompanied by pickled vegetables (beets, cauliflower and red onions) and delicious homemade sliced apple pies for dessert. These dishes of Emilie's time continue to be traditional Christmas specialties for many Quebec families.

We remembered the limited selection of food available during winter in Émilie's time. Today, we are so used to grocery shopping for fresh vegetables, fruit and meat year-round. Remember, in her time there were no fresh tomatoes nor other fresh garden vegetables in winter. In fact, whatever was stored in the root cellar or pickled during harvest time was part of the Christmas menu.

We also enjoyed a special treat with freshly baked Grandma's homemade bread (*pain de ménage*) with butter. Just imagine Émilie prepared all things without electricity or refrigeration, and the water she used came from the well! Fortunately, our colleagues, the bakers of the delicious loaves of bread and pies, were able to use electricity!

During the meal, we honored four colleagues who served for 25, 20, and 15 years. We expressed



our congratulations and gratitude for their faithful collaboration, presenting them with gifts.

The experience of replicating Christmas in Émilie's time provided the opportunity to be aware of what was available in Émilie's time. No chocolate, no wine for Francophones except for Mass. There were



no crackers, no electric or gas ovens or appliances (like mixers), no breadmaking machines, no dishwashers, or refrigerators. While we think of things being "simple", we must remember that it did take more time to prepare everything including decorations, cooking and gift making. Giving one's time added to the "labor of love". We can also ponder the joy that the loving labor brought to those who were present.

At the end of this exciting day, we were all very grateful to our colleagues, whose creativity allowed us to experience and appreciate Christmas through the eyes of Blessed Emilie and to remember her heritage.

Conclusion

While we are in anticipation of spring and the Easter Season, let us also not forget the blessings that we received during the Christmas Season and throughout 2025. We ask Blessed Émilie Tavernier-Gamelin to intercede -on your behalf- for all your special intentions and to inspire you to do as she did in responding with loving care for those who are poor and vulnerable.

We also pray for peace, hope and reconciliation in our divided and troubled world and nations, beginning with peace in our families, communities and ourselves.

In Providence,

Karin Dufault, SP

Vice-Postulator

Office of the Cause of Émilie Tavernier Gamelin

Poem

**“Mother Émilie:
Flower of Humility, Seed of Charity”**

In the garden of our soul,
Mother Émilie flourishes,
a flower of humility that reaches heaven,
a seed of charity that in love reposes,
shining with eternal light
where suffering perishes.

Each of her actions is a stream of self-giving,
each of her words, a dew of comfort and calm,
her life, a guiding light of hope
that never fades,
a guide through the darkness
towards the meadow.

In her gaze reflects the firmament,
in her smile, the sun
that illuminates everything,
her faith is the breath of life
that animates the heart.

Mother Émilie,
living example of virtue and kindness,
your legacy is a poem that the world sings,
in every heart, a flame that leads us
to fulfillment and solidarity.

Written by a faithful devotee of Mother Émilie :
Gustavo Alonso Ramírez Moreno,
Franciscan Brother
Pérou, 2024

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Gratitude to Émilie



Émilie, you lend an attentive ear to all our needs... Thank you!

Here is a contribution for a Mass on the 20th birthday of my grandson E. Thank you, Émilie, for giving life back to B., who received a bone marrow transplant at the *Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur de Montréal*. I have great confidence in Mother Émilie Gamelin, so I pray to her every day, and every year I offer a Mass in her honor. Thank you for placing my prayer request on Blessed Émilie's tomb for three sisters of mine who are very ill. C.L., Ruisseau-à-Rebours, QC

Please accept this small donation as a sign of gratitude for favors received. We join in prayer asking that P. may receive a new Mira-trained dog, as his last companion recently passed away. M.T., Malartic, QC

Here is a small offering to thank Mother Gamelin for the many favors received. Thank you for your presence in my life and for everything you do for me! Thank you, Émilie, for watching over me and my family, for being there for us! I have absolute confidence in Mother Gamelin and pray to her every day.

J.L., Paspébiac, QC

I am making a small donation to the Cause of Émile-Gamelin and ask Mother Émilie to please help us in selling a house. Thank you for continuing the Cause of Mother Gamelin! R.D., Sainte-Ursule, QC

Thank you for your prayers, dear sisters. Thank you, Émilie, for interceding for me and my family before God.

G.A., Louiseville, QC

Thank you, Émilie, for protecting us. Pray for us and may Divine Providence watch over us. We are so magnificently guided and protected by God. Thank you for

healing C. and helping my husband accept his illness. J.V.P., Shawinigan, QC

I am scheduled to undergo open heart surgery and eye surgery for cataracts. I will be thinking of Émilie during both procedures. May Blessed Émilie continue acting through Providence. To thank her for faithfully supporting me, my son, and my grandchildren, I am sending a contribution to the Cause of Émilie Gamelin.

L.A., Saint-Christophe d'Arthabaska, QC

I am sending you a contribution to the Cause of Émilie Gamelin. I ask Émilie to pray with me for two special causes and I thank her for helping me through these difficult times.

G.D., St-Édouard-de-Maskinongé

I ask Émilie to watch over my daughter, who is expecting a baby boy, and I pray for the health of my dear family.

L.T., Boischatel, QC

My granddaughter is looking for an apartment, and I am counting on Mother Gamelin to help her find a suitable place. Please forward this request to this Great Lady [of Montreal] who, throughout her life, welcomed so many people in distress. I am enclosing a donation to support your work and your causes. J.A., Pointe-Claire, QC

This is my contribution to the Cause of Émilie Tavernier-Gamelin. I would like to thank Mother Gamelin and Sister Yvette Demers, SP, for all they have done for the Cause. I ask you to pray for my health.

C.R., Sorel-Tracy, QC

Thank you, Émilie, for all the graces you bestow on *Maison Kangourou* (The Kangaroo House). Please continue to help

children and their families through this mission we have built together.

J.F., Montreal, QC

We would like to thank Blessed Émilie Tavernier-Gamelin for always listening to us, for the favors obtained through her intercession over the years, and for standing by our side during challenging times in our lives. Émilie, you will always have a special place in the hearts of the R. family. May she continue to watch over all of us! In loving memory of A., C.R., and M. R. M. and M. R., Montreal, QC

I have great faith in Émilie. I pray to her every day, while holding a prayer card with her image. Anonymous, Montreal, QC

**Blessed Émilie Gamelin,
Pray for Us!**

Sister Karin Dufault, SP
Vice-Postulator
Office of the Cause of Émilie Tavernier Gamelin



Let us pray
for PEACE
in the World!

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<https://providenceintl.org/en/resources-and-inspiration/>

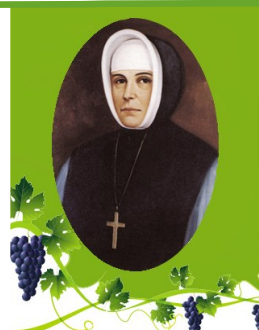
Gratitude to Émilie

Please address all favors received and prayer requests, as well as any donation or contributions for a Mass or prayer candles to:

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**To Blessed Émilie
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.**