

Blessed Marie-Rose (Eulalie) Durocher (1811-1849)

Educator of Poor Children

Feast Day: October 6



Her Life

Eulalie Durocher was born in Saint-Antoine-sur-Richelieu, Quebec on October 6, 1811. The tenth child of a prosperous farming family, she attended schools run by the Congregation of Notre Dame in Saint Denis and in Montreal. She was friendly, cheerful, straightforward, and charming, and she easily won people's respect and trust. She had good judgment and had a solid practical sense. Although she had an emotional and strong-willed character, she succeeded in controlling it and came across to people as patient, soft, and humble.

As a teenager she wanted to become a religious, but she had to give up that plan because of her health. When she was 19, her mother died and she stayed home with her father and several of her brothers. Eventually she went to manage the household of her brother Théophile, a priest in Saint Benoît and then Longueuil, where she also helped with pastoral ministry. For 12 years, her daily life included helping to look after priests when they were tired and sick, helping the poor, and visiting the sick. She observed first-hand that a lot of people had no education and the young needed both schools and religious training. She joined the Congregation of the Children of Mary, established in Beloeil by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The congregation of Daughters of Mary Immaculate gave her the opportunity to exercise her gifts for teaching the young. She became president and spiritual animator.

Eulalie hoped that a teaching order of religious would become established in every parish. She envisioned small convents where poor and rich students alike would receive a good faith-based education. Such a community existed – the Religious of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary of Marseilles, approved by the Bishop of Marseilles, the Most Rev. Eugene de Mazenod, who was founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The nuns didn't want to come to Canada, so Eulalie went to work, at the request of the Most Rev. Ignace Bourget, Bishop of Montreal and with the support of the Oblates, to establish one.

In October 1843, Eulalie left Beloeil for Longueuil. There she founded, with two companions, a congregation which was inspired by the rule of the sisters of Marseille. She took the name in religion of Sister Marie-Rose. Many people were skeptical about the new community. It seemed to be based on a dream and to have no resources. However, in 1845 when the Hon. Louis Lacoste presented to Parliament the incorporation bill for the Institute; he said, "I wholeheartedly disagree with my friends who think I'm mad to support a community which, to all appearances, will not have a very long lifespan." From this beginning, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary became an international congregation of Catholic Women Religious, Associated and Lay Consecrated.

Mother Marie-Rose died prematurely on October 6, 1849. The young congregation consisted of 29 professed nuns, seven novices, seven postulants and four houses of education. She was beatified by Pope (now Saint) John Paul II on May 23, 1982.

Her Spirituality

Eulalie Durocher manifested her talents as a hostess, housekeeper and nurse when, as a laywoman, she collaborated with her brother, who was a priest. She also helped to coordinate parish activity. She could bring people together, she was a good teacher, and she organized retreats for families and directed the first Marian sodality in Quebec, a movement that would play an important role in the religious renewal of the 19th century. She had an uncomplicated and intelligent approach to life, and was known for her fidelity to prayer and her silent humility.

Her active charity and her determination were determining factors in her decision to found a religious congregation based on a spirit of sharing with, as she put it, "the most abandoned". The Chronicles of the Institute note that a year after her death, "God wanted the founding of a new Institute to give a religious education to the poor and abandoned children." For Mother Marie-Rose, religious education was "the indispensable foundation of all learning."

In the summer of 1844, Mother Marie-Rose sent two of her Sisters to the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Montreal to learn advanced pedagogical methods. She added music, drawing, English, and home economics to the basic curriculum to prepare the girls for their adult

lives. She established a boarding school and the fees paid by the parents of its students financed free education for poor students.

The new religious community drew inspiration from the Religious of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary of Marseilles and from the community founded by its Bishop, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The motto of the OMI's was "He has sent me to evangelize the poor." Mother Marie-Rose's personal motto was "Jesus and Mary, my strength and my glory." She left her Order with a spiritual heritage characterized by fidelity to the Good News, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary, and the method of prayer of St. Ignatius, founder of the Jesuit Order.

The life of the community was disrupted by a Catholic priest who had become a Protestant minister, Charles Chiniquy. He turned up at the Longueuil convent in 1846 and caused serious trouble, becoming the sworn enemy of Mother Marie-Rose when she perceived his destructive intentions and banished him from the convent. He spread calumny about the Sisters and sowed discord in the parish. Mother Marie-Rose wrote, "I hope that God will take pity on us. I find our situation really difficult; it seems that most of our parishioners have risen against us. We pray every day that God will transform our misery to his glory and enlighten our superiors and grant us patience and submission."

The only time Mother Marie-Rose reprimanded her Sisters was when one of them spoke ill of others. She often said, "Let us pray, let us suffer, and let us trust." On her deathbed, she asked forgiveness of her Sisters for lacking in gentleness, goodness and charity. But Bishop Bourget would say of her that "Charity was her favorite among the virtues."

For further information:

English

<http://www.snjm.qc.ca/cms/index.php?lang=2>

http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/durocher_eulalie_7E.html

French

<http://www.snjm.qc.ca/cms/index.php?lang=1>

http://www.biographi.ca/fr/bio/durocher_eulalie_7E.html

**Image: miniature on ivory by Casimira Dabrowska, 1957.
Courtesy of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.**