

Providence

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE, PROVIDENCE ASSOCIATES & FRIENDS



CANADA
WEST

Fall 2001 – Issue: 1



The unveiling of the tapestry of Mother Emilie Tavernier Gamelin at the Beatification Mass in Rome on October 7, 2001.

BLESSED EMILIE

...a model for all

Thousand of pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square on October 7 and cheered as the names of the newly beatified were read out and their images unveiled on tapestries hung from the basilica. Among those in the crowd, were hundreds of Sisters of Providence, Associates and friends, all wearing distinctive yellow scarves, in unity with each other.

Sister Evelyn Dechant, SP, reflected on the experience. "There was excitement and great anticipation as the pilgrims gathered, trying to get a good spot to hear and see as much as possible. To be with such a large gathering of people from diverse cultures, speaking different languages, was awesome. The sights and the sounds, the activities, spoke to me of hope, of unity, and of faith. At the celebration of Beatification, several

languages were used, however, the celebration of the Mass was in Latin — common for everyone. There was an atmosphere of unity. As the bells chimed and rang out throughout the whole Square and beyond, what a joy for all who were gathered for this most wonderful event."

The Holy Father called Blessed Emilie a "model of courageous self-giving" who had a "heart open to everyone, especially the poor and the weak, whom she wanted to treat as kings."

The Beatification Mass was simple, meaningful and touching for all in attendance. It is a time of great joy for the Sisters of Providence. "Blessed Emilie is for the world now. She is a model and a person that can be looked upon as a light of holiness in response to the needs of the poor," said Sister Carla Montante, SP.



The Sisters of Providence continue the ministry of Jesus in the world today, with special concern for those who are poor and vulnerable. Working with others in a spirit of compassion, we strive to manifest the Providence of God by meeting the needs of people as they journey through life.

Our mission is realized through the combined efforts of our Sisters, employees, physicians, board members, benefactors and volunteers.

Service to one another is also central to our mission. We join with other religious, civic and social service groups with whom we share common values to achieve the greatest good in the communities which we serve.

A celebration of 150 years of working with the deaf

- 2 -

Sister Carla Montante shares her personal reflection after the tragic events of September 11, 2001

- 3 -

Mother Emillie Gamelin's Beatification pictures and stories

- 5 -

At 96 years old, Sister Alice Gauthier continues to be involved in the Community

- 8 -

We remember those called home by God

- 10 -

humility

simplicity

charity



Monique Trudelle
Editor

Welcome to the premier edition of *Providence Canada West*, a publication for the Sisters of Providence,

Providence Associates and friends.

Its name, chosen through a vote by the Sisters in Holy Angels

Province, is reflective of the mission and charism of the congregation and of the Community's desire to represent where the majority of the Sisters reside and minister.

When I was asked by the Sisters to assist them in their communications efforts, I was excited by the opportunity to develop materials to share information about the works of the Sisters in western Canada. What I never anticipated, were the benefits I experienced in the process.

For me personally, it has been a journey of discovery. Each day I am privileged to see the Sisters in their

daily lives, to learn about their ministries and to share in their celebrations. These are women of strength and conviction, yet humble to speak of their work. I thank the Community for welcoming me and for their willingness to allow me to tell their stories.

Providence Canada West is just one way for you to get to know the Sisters as I have. They are truly women of Providence, whose ministry is a tangible way of witnessing God's presence among us.

I hope you enjoy this first issue as we honour Blessed Emilie and get to know the Sisters of Providence a little bit better.

Mother Gamelin Embraced the Needs of the Deaf

At a time when many people considered it unproductive to instruct deaf persons, Mother Emilie Gamelin disagreed and supported one of her novices, Sister Albine Gadbois, in learning sign language. The young Sister, later known as Sister Marie de Bonsecours, was given permission to use her new skills to teach young deaf girls, which eventually led to the establishment of the Institution for Deaf Girls in Montreal.

On February 19, 1851, the work with hearing impaired girls officially began and helped to dispel the notion that the deaf were inferior and devoid of intelligence. This specialized teaching promoted a solid Christian education with practical learning.

This was the last ministry Mother Gamelin established before she died of cholera on September 23, 1851. In 1887 the community of Deaf Sisters of Our Lady of the Seven Dolours (SNDD) was founded for deaf women who were interested in joining a religious congregation.



Sister Elizabeth Kass and Sister Augustina Stark, dressed as Mother Gamelin, cut the cake at the September 9th celebration.

Holy Angels Province celebrated the 150th Anniversary of Mother Gamelin's work with deaf on Sunday September 9, 2001 at Providence Centre. Close to 200 people attended the Mass and reception. Father Peter Monty, SJ, presided at the Eucharistic Celebration organized by the Sisters and St. Mark's Catholic Community of the Deaf. Father Monty is the chaplain for the deaf in Winnipeg. There were interpreters and signers throughout the celebration, enabling the deaf community to fully participate in the event.

Sister Elizabeth Kass, SNDD, was recognized for her significant contribution in bringing religious education to the deaf community. Since 1983, she has provided support and assurance to members of the deaf community, has taught catechism, and continues to prepare individuals and groups for the sacraments.

Today, through the work of Sister Kass, and St. Mark's Catholic Community of the Deaf, the important work, established 150 years ago by Mother Gamelin, remains the foundation of this important ministry.

Welcome from the Leadership Team

We extend a warm welcome to all members of our extended community. As the important and varied duties of the Sisters in Holy Angels Province requires us to work at numerous locations around western Canada and beyond, more means of communication are necessary to

maintain our sense of Community. This newsletter, *Providence Canada West*, will perform a key role in keeping our Sisters in touch with one another and allowing our Providence Associates, friends and collaborators to gain a deeper understanding of our charism and way of life.

Through these pages we will celebrate both the major events and the small everyday activities that renew our spirit. We hope that all who read this will feel more a part of our lives. Please feel free to suggest ideas and offer stories and photographs. We encourage your input. In the coming year, our new web site will be introduced as another means to increase our communications with you.

As we celebrate this year the beatification of our Blessed Emilie, events of the world remind us that now, more than ever, we need to rely on divine Providence to guide us on our journey. We hope that this newsletter will help us to stay closer to one another while we follow God's designs wherever they lead us.

Enjoy!



The leadership team at a recent planning day. (l-r) Sisters Germaine Chalifoux, Patricia Vartanian, Carla Montante, Josephine Mainka, and Anne Hemstock.

Dear One, Child of God,

The following is part of a personal reflection written by Sister Carla Montante, SP, after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. It is in the form of a letter.

Words cannot begin to express the pain we feel today. Your life was taken from us September 11, 2001, in calculated acts of terror, and we are agonized to the core of our being by the violence perpetrated by humanity upon itself.

As I write to you this day, I do not know the name given to you on this earth, but I do know the one given you by our Creator — Child of God. It is that name that binds us together as we are joined with all who have come before us and all who are yet to be born.

Just a short time ago we shared life together upon this earth. Perhaps our paths had never directly crossed, but this was for us a common time in history. And then, in an instant, your life was cruelly taken from us. Because of the nature of your death, we know that the world will never be the same.

Child of God, know that your sisters and brothers are praying for ways in which the horrible act that took your life will not be the last word. Evil will not be victorious. Know that we are striving to be instruments of God's provident love for all. We are praying for your families and friends. While some of us may not have other direct ways to reach out to them, we will embrace

our own families and communities with a renewed understanding of the gift of life. We will reach out to our sisters, associates, benefactors, and collaborators with greater appreciation of the importance of friendship. We will hold out our hand to the stranger, especially poor persons, with the desire to learn what it truly means to become sister and brother one with another.

Therefore, Child of God, know that I pray to God that as we strive for love and peace with justice, we can move beyond revenge and retaliation. I pray to God that as we seek answers to why such violence has occurred, we will join together that it might never happen again. I pray to God that I will not be suspicious of another because I think he or she looks like those who committed these atrocities.

Child of God, I thank God for you and that we shared life together on this planet earth. I honor you with the commitment to purposely live with the fullest understanding of the name given to each one of us — Child of God.

Your sister,
Carla, SP

AFRICA FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

On July 10, 2001, our Sisters had the opportunity to hear about Africa Future Development, a humanitarian association put together by the people of Cameroon to improve their own future. The project, founded by Father Emmanuel-Marie Mbock Mbock, is a sponsored work of the Sisters of Providence, Elizabeth Province. Africa Future is dedicated to training and education, roads and bridge building, health and hygiene, agriculture and animal husbandry, habitat and living conditions.

Father Emmanuel, a child of Ngodi-si, Cameroon shared his story and the works of this non-profit organization with Sisters, Providence Associates and friends. He was born to a very poor family in Cameroon, but was given the opportunity to attend the seminary thanks to the generosity of an Austrian priest and later one of his students. Father Emmanuel was

ordained by Pope John Paul II in 1985 during the pope's visit to Cameroon. Although he had experienced many hardships, Father Emmanuel was thankful for all he had received from God and decided to show his gratitude by helping his people. He knew the misery of the people because he had personally experienced it and wanted to give something back. This is why Africa Future Development was initiated.

During the summer of 2001, Father Emmanuel toured Canada and the US in an effort to raise awareness and funds for the project. Sister Carla Montante, on behalf of the Sisters of Providence in Western Canada, presented Fr. Mbock Mbock with a donation to help with his work in Africa.



Sister Annette Noel, Provincial Leader, Elizabeth Province, Carla Montante and Emmanuel Mbock Mbock.

If you are interested in more information or in helping with this humanitarian effort contact:

Afrique Future
13, rue Wilson
Saint-Mathias-sur-Richelieu, QC
J3L 6A5

EL SALVADOR REBUILDS AFTER EATHQUAKES

In January and February 2001, devastating earthquakes shook El Salvador, leaving thousands of people homeless. But because of international and local solidarity, more than 180 homes have been repaired or reconstructed in the Christian Base Communities of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Tierra Blanca, Usulután, El Salvador.

However, more than 1000 still need to be rebuilt or repaired. Families are now living in provisional housing of tin or of plastic wrap with a tin roof.

Through the work of the Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province, the missionary Sisters in El

SISTERS IN WESTERN CANADA SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Salvador and many volunteers and organizations, new homes are under construction. The goal is to work until all the families in the area have a home of either brick or concrete blocks, which not just withstands earthquakes, but provides a healthier environment.

The Sisters in Holy Angels Province have contributed financially and through their prayers to help in the relief efforts. The Sisters in El Salvador wrote, "Thank you for your compassion in action in your donation for the rebuilding of earthquake torn El Salvador ... you are Providence."

To assist with the rebuilding efforts, contact:

Sr. Lynn Chappell, SP
Provincial Treasurer
Mother Joseph Province
9 East Ninth Avenue
Spokane, WA 99202-1295



Mother Emilie Gamelin's

BEATIFICATION

THE CAUSE OF MOTHER EMILIE TAVERNIER GAMELIN

The petition for the Cause of Emilie Tavernier Gamelin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence, was entered officially on October 8, 1977. His Excellency Paul Gregoire, Archbishop of Montreal, signed the petition on October 26, 1977, asking Pope Paul VI to give permission to introduce the Cause for Mother Gamelin. A cause is the name given to the process of investigating, studying and promoting a deceased persons' life and virtues to allow them to be named a Saint in the Roman Catholic Church. It is a complicated process, involving many levels within the church.

The official introduction of her cause was granted on May 31, 1981 when the decree was issued to introduce the proceedings for the Beatification of Mother Gamelin. The process has been coordinated by Reverend James Fitzpatrick, OMI, and Sister Thérèse Frigon, SP, who has been involved with the cause for more than 40 years.

After many years of research, a detailed study of the virtues of Mother Gamelin were published in the *Positio*. This is a book required by Rome, containing all the necessary documentation, to establish the reputation for holiness of the Servant of God whose cause is being considered. It was submitted for study to both theologians and historians in 1989 to obtain their approval. The final approval came on April 27, 1993. The bishops then

recommended to the Holy Father to recognize the heroic virtues of Emilie Gamelin. Mother Gamelin was proclaimed Venerable on December 23, 1993. This marked the end of the first step towards canonization.

Having being named Venerable, the next step was to determine that God had worked a miracle through the intercession of Mother Gamelin. After a detailed study by the scientific commission and the theological commission, officials of the church attributed the miraculous healing of 13-year old Yannick Frechette's fatal illness to Venerable Emilie Gamelin's intercession. Pope John Paul II authenticated the miracle on December 18, 2000.

The Holy Father proclaimed her among the Blessed on October 7, 2001. Pope John Paul II presented her to the people of God as a model of holiness, through a life completely dedicated to the service of the most needy persons in society. Her liturgical feast is set for September 23, the anniversary of her death in 1851.

The Sisters of Providence will continue to work on her cause and one day, Blessed Emilie may be canonized a Saint in the Roman Catholic Church if another miracle is attributed to her intercession.

Standing next to a portrait of Blessed Emilie are Yannick Frechette, Thérèse Frigon, SP, and Reverend James Fitzpatrick, OMI.



The Miracle attributed to Blessed Emilie

Yannick Fréchette, the young man who was cured through the intercession of Mother Gamelin was present at the Beatification celebration, along with members of his immediate family. The following is an excerpt from the text of the authenticity of the miracle attributed to Mother Emilie Gamelin.

... an extraordinary cure that took place in Montreal in 1983. It concerned a young boy, Yannick Fréchette. In 1980 — when he was 10 years old — he underwent a craniotomy for the removal of a growth of tissue from the right parietal lobe of the brain. The following year, he was stricken with an acute aplastic leukemia. Following treatment for the leukemia, the child experienced two remissions, but both remissions were followed by the recurrence of the illness. On September 21, 1983, they proceeded with a bone marrow transplant given by his mother, but a month later this was rejected and the child's bone marrow once again became 'deserted,' as there was an abnormality in the production of the white and red blood cells. Because he had no immune system, Yannick was susceptible to numerous complications of viral infections and cardiac problems. The aplasia of the bone marrow lasted about one hundred days. The prognosis of the doctors who were treating him, regarding the chances that the child would survive, was completely pessimistic.

From the moment that the illness had been declared, the boy's grandmother along with some relatives, friends, and Sisters of Providence, constantly implored the divine assistance through the intercession of the Servant of God, Emilie Tavernier Gamelin, whom they invoked with great piety. Yannick himself placed a great deal of hope in the intercession of Mother Gamelin. In mid-December 1983, during an examination of the bone marrow, it was discovered that the leukemia had not progressed. The 21st of that month, the child was sent home from the hospital. He then completely recovered his health.

Yannick Fréchette and his father with Sisters Gertrude Kwan, Thérèse Frigon, Yvette Millette, and Patricia Vartanian.



The following is a personal reflection of Angie Webster, a Providence Associate who attended the Beatification of Mother Emilie Tavernier Gamelin in Rome on October 7, 2001. Angie lives in Calgary and has been a Providence Associate in since 1987.

My travels to Rome from Calgary with the other Associates was the start of a very personal and spiritual journey. Toronto airport really was the beginning of camaraderie where the pilgrims travelling from western Canada and the United States met and connected on our way to Rome, in the name of Mother Emilie Gamelin. Our nametags helped us to recognize each other and the instant bonding that took place at the airport was unprecedented. It was like a 'big' family reunion, with everyone greeting and acknowledging each other.

We arrived in Rome October 5. Just the thought of being in Rome was exciting! We had a pre-visit to the Vatican the night before the beatification. An astounding feeling came over me when I saw the preparations being made on St. Peter's Square for the great celebration next day. I couldn't even imagine what kind of a beatification service it was going to be. I knew one thing — I couldn't wait to hear Emilie Gamelin's name professed by the Holy Father, from the Papal Altar, honouring her beatification.

October 7, 2001 — we woke up early Sunday morning to be driven to the Vatican. St. Peter's Square was bustling with people from all over the world. After we had taken our seats in the reserved section for the pilgrims, I felt so special and so privileged to be there for Mother Emilie Gamelin to honour and cheer her in her moment. When I looked back at the Square, it was absolutely filled with thousands of people. St. Peter's was electrified with spirituality and wonderment!

We were now waiting in bated breath for the arrival of the Pope. A feeling of jubilation, excitement and mixed emotions ran through my whole being. To actually see the Pope, the Vicar of Christ on earth, with my own eyes, and at close distance, was the ultimate feeling of joy to inner peace and spirituality. I was so touched just being in his presence in St. Peter's.

The Mass began after the Papal protocol. It was an unbelievable feeling for me to suddenly realize that I was attending a liturgical celebration in Rome given by the Pope. It was long — the Mass was in Latin and had a beautiful choir. The profile of each servant of God was read out. After honouring the beatified the Holy Father gave His blessing. A huge portrait of each beatified was unveiled from the Vatican windows. The Square once filled with a roar of clapping and cheering. The feeling at that moment was indescribable when I saw our dear Mother Emilie Tavernier Gamelin's portrait in full view for the thousands of people to see. My heart leapt with happiness for her. It was a very proud moment for the whole PROVIDENCE Community—religious and lay.

Mother Gamelin has been recognized and elevated in beatification for all the Apostolic and Corporal Works of Mercy she did in her time. Her portrait reminds us all, religious and lay, to embrace her words: "I pray that you would always love the poor and that peace and unity would always be with you". It is up to us to live up to Emilie's mission statement. I now look upon her as our beatified Mother Emilie Gamelin. The whole experience of witnessing a beatification celebration was absolutely exhilarating. It is a once in a lifetime experience!

A very startling reality that brought Emilie even closer to me that day was the fact that when she was consecrated to religious life there were seven women; in her beatification October 7, 2001, there were seven beatified (including her). Lucky 7, Emilie!



Sisters Jeanne Couturier, and Magdalena Chan, at the Beatification of Mother Gamelin with the banner of the Sisters from western Canada.

Celebrations at Providence Centre

While other members of Holy Angels Province were in Rome preparing for the Beatification ceremony, the Sisters in Edmonton were getting ready for a late night. A special internet feed gave the Sisters at Providence Centre the opportunity to view the celebration in real time. Many gathered in the Emilie Community room, at 1:00 am on Sunday October 7, to see the celebration as it unfolded. The excitement of the event was evident at the Sunday morning liturgy, as Archbishop Emeritus Joseph MacNeil celebrated the Eucharist in recognition of this joyous occasion.



Sister Marie-Paule Vinet (l) and Sister Josephine Mainka serve at the reception following the October 7 Mass.

Archbishop Joseph MacNeil applauds Blessed Emilie.

The Holy Father greeted the pilgrims at St. Peter's Square on October 8 at the Papal audience and spoke about each of the Blessed.

"I greet all those who have come from Canada for the beatification of Emilie Gamelin, especially the Sisters of Providence. The new Blessed is a model for the men and women of today. One is always astonished by the fruitfulness of a life abandoned in the hands of God and that finds in contemplation the strength and daring for daily life and for the mission, receiving Jesus, in the image of Mary at the foot of the Cross, to live through him and for him alone. Blessed Emilie's spiritual life gave her strength for her charitable mission; she emptied herself of all things and found the energy to comfort everyone. Taking her as your model, I encourage you to put yourselves at the service of the poor and of society's most underprivileged who are God's beloved, to alleviate their sufferings and thus make their dignity shine out."



SISTER ALICE GAUTHIER

... 75 years as a
*Sister of
Providence*

At 96, Sister Alice Gauthier is still very active. Incredibly, the oldest member of Holy Angels Province can usually be found at daily Mass and often enjoys a social evening with the other Sisters. Sister Alice has spent her life in service to the poor and says that prayer and helping others has been her motivation.

When asked why she chose the Sisters of Providence she smiled and replied "It's 75 years ago, do you think I remember?" But, of course Sister Alice remembers well. She shared her past and the struggles she faced when at the age of six, her mother died of tuberculosis. "After my mother died, my father was left to raise me and my four brothers. He had to work long hours so I was placed in the care of the Sisters."

Although it was a difficult time for Sister Alice, she has fond memories of her childhood years at the convent with the Sisters of Providence. "The sisters were very good to me. I learned to sew, how to write, and I went to school. I made my first communion when I was seven years old. I was happy, they gave me a childhood that I might never have had."

It wasn't long before Sister Alice realized that her life had changed dramatically because of the influence of the Sisters of Providence. Leaving her family was very hard on her, but in her heart she knew

she too wanted to serve the people, the poor, like the Sisters she admired.

Sister Alice entered the Novitiate in February, 1926 in Montreal. She was sent to the west for her first ministry, arriving in Fort Vermilion in September 1927. She remembers vividly when she professed her final vows in 1930.

"I was in Fort Vermilion on a very cold February day and there was only me and the other Sisters who worked with me. It was a cold winter. I was glad that the children

"I was so lucky to have been taught by the Sisters. I saw first hand how their love and compassion was put to the test each day."

I helped were able to be there. The priest gave a nice sermon and the Sisters made my day special by giving me beautiful feast. We had fun." To Sister Alice, this was one of the happiest days in her life.

For 25 years, Sister Alice worked with Native communities in northern Alberta. She especially loved working with the children.

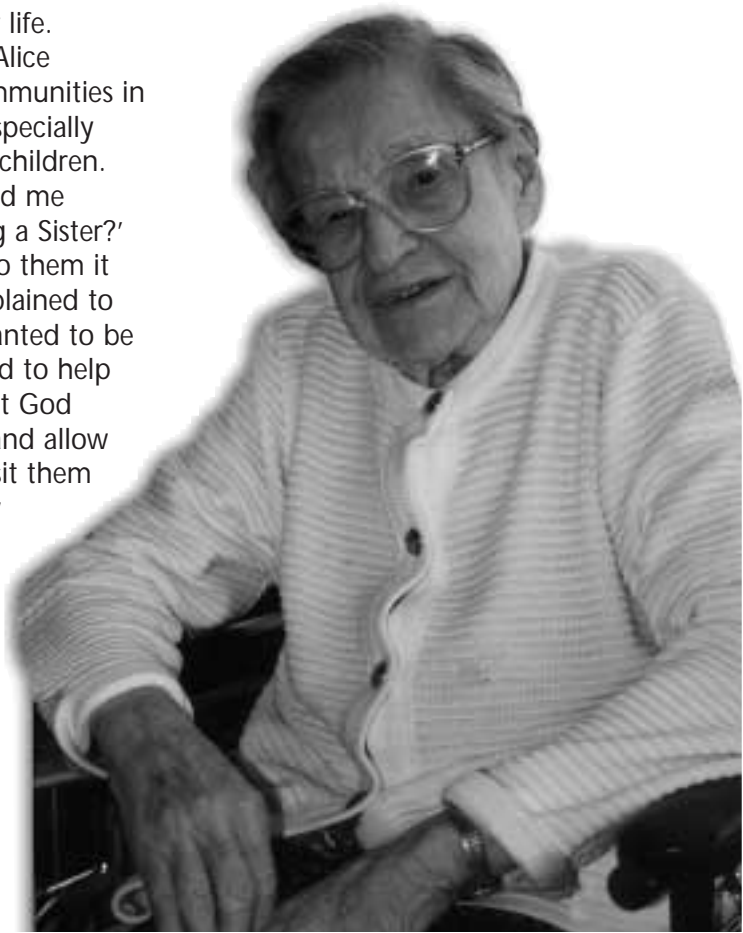
"The children once asked me 'Sister, do you like being a Sister?' And I said, 'why not?' To them it was a mystery." She explained to the children that she wanted to be a Sister because she liked to help others. She believed that God would provide for her, and allow her to help the poor, visit them and be there when they needed her. She always felt close to the children.

She recalled when the Bishop came to her and said "You know Sister, you will never succeed with the children." She was shocked and asked

what he meant. He said "You love the children too much, you don't want to upset them. You just want to make them happy and comfort them when they need it." Sister Alice did not dispute this observation, adding with a chuckle, "I guess that is why I was asked to work on the books."

Her next ministry was in the area of administration. She served at several of the community houses in Alberta and BC, doing various jobs as required. In September of 1987, after 60 years of ministry, Sister Alice retired at the tender age of 82. However, for her, this was just another beginning. She embraced this opportunity to continue her ministry of prayer and to visit other Sisters in the Infirmary.

Sister Alice has been blessed with good health, however she now finds it hard to walk because of a sore leg. She likes to get out as much as possible. She has a love of nature and enjoys the beauty of the flowers in the summer, but now has to rely on others to help her experience the outdoors.



"Sister Thérèse is always helping me and she's not young either. She takes me out when she can, but I don't like to impose on her too much," she confided.

Sr. Thérèse Belanger, who herself just celebrated her 75th birthday, takes her on walks regularly when the weather cooperates. According to Sister Thérèse, Sister Alice is a very determined lady. She knows what she likes and what she doesn't. She is not afraid to speak her mind. Although this is the first ministry the two have shared (prayer apostolates), Sister Thérèse has noticed that Sister Alice takes a keen interest in all the news. "Each day she wants to know what is happening in the house, with the other Sisters and in the Community. It is amazing how she is able to get around and keep informed," said Sister Thérèse.

Over the years, Sister Alice has seen many changes. Only three of the 32 Sisters who made profession the same year she did are still living. Yet, Sister Alice continues to look to the future. Her eyes are failing and her hearing isn't what it used to be, but she places her trust in God to keep her active as a contributing member of her congregation.

She has no regrets. "I have been very happy as a Sister. This is the life I chose. I gave myself to God and to my Community. For me, it has gone too fast."

In June of this year, Sister Alice celebrated her 75th anniversary as a Sister of Providence. "I was so lucky to have been taught by the Sisters. I saw first hand how their love and compassion was put to the test each day. I knew this was the life I was called to."



Sister Alice and Sister Thérèse Belanger enjoy an autumn walk on the grounds of Providence Centre in Edmonton

A Celebration for Twelve Jubilarians

Sisters of Providence, family and friends gathered in celebration on June 9th, 2001 to acknowledge the significant contributions of twelve Sisters celebrating a Jubilee Year. Combined, the 12 Jubilarians share 725 years of religious services. Celebrating 75 years since taking first vows were Sister Alice Gauthier and Sister Denise-Hélène. Celebrating 70 years were Sisters Juliette St. Laurent, Rose de Lima Thibault and Mary Zuscar. Sisters Theresa Devine, Mary Michael, Madeleine Joyal and Nora St. Denis celebrated 60 years as a Sister of Providence. Celebrating 50 years were Sister Rosa Roshau and Sister Lucille Belval. Celebrating her 25-year anniversary was Sister Anne Hemstock.

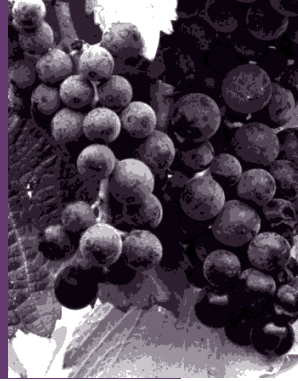
Most Reverend Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Edmonton, presided at the liturgy and thanked the Providence Sisters for their tremendous work of service. Sister Carla Montante also recognized the dedication and commitment of the Jubilarians. "Our Provident God takes delight in the gift of today. Providence extended an invitation to the consecrated life a few years back for each of our Jubilarians. Today we rejoice and give thanks for these lives that truly have made a difference," she said.



*Standing (l-r) Sisters Madeleine Joyal, Rosa Roshau, Theresa Devine, Lucille Belval, Mary Michael, Anne Hemstock.
Sitting (l-r) Sisters Mary Zuscar, Alice Gauthier, Nora St. Denis, Rose de Lima Thibault, Denise Hélène.
Missing from the picture is Sister Juliette St. Laurent*

For the Jubilarians, the special ceremony was an occasion to renew their vows, in the presence of their congregation and guests. Each one of the Jubilarians proclaim God's Providence in all aspects of their lives. They have demonstrated this in the work they have done and, in many cases, continue to do.

REST IN PEACE



Sister Elizabeth Dechant

Sister Elizabeth Dechant went home to God on June 5th, at the age of 90 years and 68 years of religious life. Her health had been declining for several years and in March 2001 she was admitted to the infirmary at Providence Centre. She was known for her loving, calm and practical approach to life. Her gift of leadership and her administrative qualities were both recognized by the Community and she served as local superior from 1948 to 1997 with the exception of about six months. She also served in northern missions and in Calgary, doing everything from cooking, sewing, looking after the children, housekeeping, and laundry. She was a homemaker in the truest sense of the word and was loved and appreciated wherever she was. Her large, extended family, were devoted to her and she to them. The liturgy of resurrection was on June 8, 2001 with Father Michael Dechant, OMI, as celebrant. Prayer vigil was held on June 7 at Providence Centre.

God, Giver and Sustainer of life, has called home six Sisters this past year.



Sister Marion Poirier

Sister Marion Poirier died very peacefully in the Infirmary on September 26, 2001 after a long illness. Sister Marion was an educator who had a deep love for youth. She taught for almost forty years in schools in Jossard, McLennan, Whitehorse, and High Prairie. She was known as a coach, a friend, a generous woman who shared her time, her talents, herself with those around her. As a final tribute, the local paper in High Prairie wrote a poignant tribute to honour her many years of service in the area. The vigil was held on Sunday, September 30th and Father Vernon Regis, the chaplain, offered the funeral liturgy to Providence Centre on Monday, October 1st.



Sister Celina Gerard

Sister Celina Gerard died on May 29, 2001 after a long illness. She was 97 years of age and had been a Sister of Providence for 79 years. Following profession in 1923 she served in hospitals and cared for children in many Sisters of Providence institutions in Vancouver, North Battleford, McLennan, Cranbrook, Kenora, Vanderhoof, Dawson Creek, Desmarais, Calgary, and Midnapore. Her life and ministry was one of quiet service and she was happy to do whatever was asked of her. The care she provided her patients was marked with a deep compassion and the children she looked after saw her as a kindly mother. The prayer vigil was held on May 31 and Father Vernon Regis celebrated the Mass of Resurrection on June 1st at Providence Centre in Edmonton.



Sister Laurette Dancause

Sister Laurette Dancause died peacefully on June 22nd, in the Infirmary at Providence Centre after a long illness. Her sister, Sister Alice Dancause, was at her side. Sister Laurette became a Sister of Providence in 1943 and served in a variety of health care institutions as a nurse, x-ray technician, personnel manager and supervisor. She served as the archivist for Holy Angels Province and local director for Emilie Gamelin Community later in her ministry. Sister Laurette was a woman of deep faith with a strong sense of service and concern for others. She brought joy to many evenings and community gatherings with her love for music and dance. The vigil was held on Sunday, June 24th, and the funeral was June 25, 2001 with Father Vernon Regis, chaplain to Providence Centre as celebrant for the Mass of Christian Burial.

A BRIEF HISTORY



Sister Juliette St. Laurent

After a long illness, Sister Juliette St. Laurent died on July 9th, 2001 in the Infirmary at Providence Centre one month after her 70th Jubilee. Sister Juliette served in Sisters of Providence hospitals throughout western Canada: McLennan, Cranbrook, Vancouver, and North Battleford. She was known for her commitment to the sick and the poor and for her gentleness and listening heart. She had a particular love for maternity care and new babies. After she retired from active nursing in 1966, Sister Juliette was a patient visitor at St. Paul's Hospital in Maternity. Her pocket always had a small statue of Our Lady for a new mother and child. A vigil was held on July 12, 2001 and the Mass of Resurrection was celebrated on July 13, both at Providence Centre.



Sister Nora St. Denis

Sister Nora St. Denis died on October 16 after a lifetime of poor health. She was 84. As a young girl, Sister Nora had a strong desire to give herself to God as a Sister of Providence. Although her health was an obstacle, Sister Nora entered the novitiate in 1941 and celebrated 60 years as Sister this year. Over the years, Sister Nora's flare for cooking kept her busy working in the kitchens of a number of Providence institutions in Alberta and BC. Everywhere she went, she made it a point to learn what the local dishes were and how to make them. Her loving spirit, her patience in suffering, her sincerity and her simplicity will be remembered. For Sister Nora, the presence of God was always her source of happiness. The prayer vigil on October 19 and Mass of Christian burial on October 20 took place at the Providence Centre.

In the years prior to 1843, one woman in the area around Montreal, Quebec was particularly remarkable for selflessness and for charitable activity: Madame Emilie Tavernier Gamelin. From her infancy and at each stage of her life, so outstanding was she for compassion toward the poor, toward the miserable, toward the suffering that she became a veritable "Providence" to them. People spontaneously called her home the "House of Providence".

Thus, the Sisters of Providence of Montreal were founded. The Community's Canonical title was "Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor," but from the outset the people called them Sisters of Providence because of their reliance on Providence for the care of the poor in all its forms: nursing, education, care of orphans, aged and handicapped people, and other responses to human need. Another important aspect of their charism was the living of compassion for the suffering in imitation of Mary at the foot of the cross.

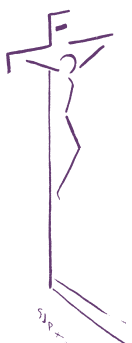
Today, the Sisters of Providence are an international community found in Canada, the United States, Chile, Argentina, Haiti, Egypt, Cameroon, the Philippines and El Salvador.

Their ministries extend to the sick in hospitals, nursing homes and homes for the aged; home visits to the disabled and the dying. They are actively involved in prison ministry, social services, schools and colleges, services to the mentally handicapped and the deaf, as well as pastoral spiritual ministries, retreats and spiritual direction.

They continue to minister to aboriginal people and ethnic groups, sponsor refugee families and provide safe interim housing for abused women and children.

This mission of compassionate care involves more than 1200 Sisters and over 1000 Providence Associates throughout the world.

The Sisters of Providence in the 21st Century continue to be inspired, shaped, focused and energized by their understanding of the original call: to care for the poor, the rejected persons of society, and those with special unmet needs. The emphasis today is on leadership to promote justice through effective social change and through direct service to the needy.

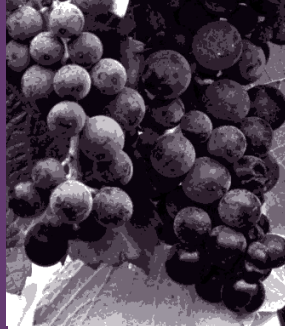


*Lord, my desire
is to follow you
to Calvary.*

- Mother Emilie Tavernier Gamelin

HAPpenings

HAPpenings is a regular feature, highlighting events and celebrations and promoting coming events in Holy Angels Province.



The Sisters had a busy summer, taking in a host of exciting events and participating in many fun activities in addition to their work with various ministries.

Coming Events

■ The Sisters of Providence General Chapter will be held at Providence Renewal Centre July 7 – 27, 2002. The theme will be CHOOSING LIFE – TODAY AND FOR THE FUTURE. This is the first General Chapter to be held outside of Montreal. Over 100 delegates and observers, representing each province and sector, are expected at this historical Community event. A General Chapter is held every five years and is a time to reflect on the past five years and to set goals and strategize for the future. Watch for more information about this in *Providence Canada West*.

■ The Sisters of Providence in western Canada are launching their new web site in January 2002. Check us out in the new year at: www.sisters.providence.ab.ca



◀ *Sister Florida Duhamel does the prep work as Sister Thérèse Belanger and Sister Andrea Arsenault add the finishing touches while making pies for the Community.*



▲ *Sister Mary Michael shares a laugh with Sister Ellen Brunt, who looks guilty after finishing her ice cream, during the Ice Cream Social on the hottest day of the summer. Sister Anne-Marie Rochon looks on.*



▲ *Sister Eliane Lanteigne and Sister Margaret MEEK with a member of Junkanoo music group from the Bahamas. Junkanoo stayed at Providence Renewal Centre while in Edmonton to perform at the World Track and Field Games held in August.*



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Please address correspondence to

Office of Communications
Providence Centre
3005-119 Street,
Edmonton, AB T6J 5R5

email: communications@providence.ab.ca

