

## Sisters of Providence

# 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary year

Providence Associates, Companions, staff and friends joined the Sisters of Providence, March 26-29, to mark the close of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the religious congregation.

**H**osted at the Sisters of Providence mother house in Montreal, it was a time of joy, reflection, history, connection, gratitude and the generous hospitality for which the sisters are known.

More than 500 sisters and guests traveled from the western U.S., western Canada, Quebec, Chile, Haiti, Cameroon, Egypt, El Salvador, Argentina and the Philippines to participate in the celebration. Events during the week included the Footsteps of Emilie, a walking tour of significant places in the life of Emilie Gamelin; tours of the archives and museum at the mother house; and a day of reflection to deepen participants' connection with the Providence charism, mission and spirituality.

The week of festivities culminated with a Mass at the Mother House Chapel on March 29 (the anniversary of the first profession in the congregation) presided by Christian Lépine, archbishop of Montreal. Liturgical processions, rich in meaning, with hymns and songs by *L'Ensemble Vocal Épiphanie* from Sainte-Famille de Bordeaux-Cartierville Parish, contributed to an unforgettable experience. Sisters and friends unable to attend in person were able to watch the Mass via live-streaming. Mass was followed by a festive banquet luncheon in the mother house dining room for all 500 guests.

## *closes with a flourish in Montreal*



▲ Mass opened with a procession of the flags representing the countries where Sisters of Providence are present, along with a white flag symbolizing hope for the future.

For those in attendance, the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary closing celebration was inspirational and moving. Here several sisters and Providence leaders shared highlights from their experience and what it meant to them.

### Susanne Hartung, SP

My week-long experience of being in Montreal for the 175<sup>th</sup> called to mind such a spiritual awareness of all the blessings we have received over these many years. I had the opportunity to lead groups for two days in the footsteps of Emilie Gamelin. The interest and engagement of the pilgrims was inspirational. I met so many people from other provinces that enhance the depth of our relationship with

the laity, following the legacy of Emilie. The final liturgy proclaimed our cultural diversity and the breadth of our global involvement. It was so moving to witness this proclamation through the presentation of the flags and the multiple languages spoken. It was such a privilege to serve on the 175<sup>th</sup> committee and experience a flawless endeavor. Thanks to the general council and to all who worked tirelessly to make it memorable.



◀ Sister Susanne Hartung led Footsteps of Emilie walking tours for visitors, including a stop at Place Émilie-Gamelin, a Montreal subway station graced by a bronze statue of the Sisters of Providence foundress.





# 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary year...

## Myrta Iturriaga, SP

My visit to Montreal for the celebration of 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of our community was a wonderful experience. The highlight was following the life of Mother Gamelin at the museum and following her footsteps in Montreal. Every step marks a profound life. Because I entered the Sisters of Providence in Chile, I was more connected with Mother Bernarda Morin. Now Mother Emilie Gamelin is growing in my life and, especially, in my heart. This was the best part of my experience — she is more alive with me in this time and has filled me with hope and renewed energy for the future of the community.



▲ The 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary closing Mass at the Mother House Chapel took place March 29, the anniversary of the first profession in the congregation in 1843. Archbishop Christian Lépine of Montreal presided.



▲ The Sisters of Providence 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo and a warm welcome to all.

◀ Mass was followed by a banquet at the mother house for more than 500 guests.



Mother Bernarda for the enjoyment of all. Sponsors of Providence St. Joseph Health also attended and relished the experiences, from housing across the street from the Metro station with the statue of Emilie, to walking the footsteps in old Montreal. The tour of the museum at the International Centre, as well as the historical and financial archives, brought life to the early years of the foundation. Other inspired presentations by Sisters Karin, Annette and Nancy, along with the delightful coordination of Sister Josie, were not only informative, but entertaining as well. Sister Rollande topped off the entire week with a banquet for over 500 persons after the magnificent liturgy with simultaneous translation in English, French and Spanish. Archbishop Christian Lépine detailed the countries to which God's Providence currently calls us and gave a beautiful tribute to our foundress and Bishop Bourget. Soon it was time to return with so many grateful memories of this unforgettable week of prayer and reflection on the gift we have been asked to carry on for the poor and vulnerable as our foundresses did. Providence of God, we thank you for all!

## Sharon Casey, OP

The pilgrimage to Montreal for the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary was a sacred journey for me. Walking in the footsteps of Blessed Emilie, conversing with Sisters of Providence from other provinces around the world, and viewing the historical legacy in the museum and archives deepened my appreciation and understanding of the charism and spirituality of the sisters, as well as appreciating the covenant relationship between the Tacoma Dominicans and Mother Joseph Province. Two things touched my heart: the closing Mass which was a visible sign of unity among all present — sisters, associates, collaborators, partners and sisters of other communities — and visiting the statue of Blessed Emilie in the Basilica of Notre Dame and realizing that right beside her was St. Dominic. Providence does show the way!

## Lucille Dean, SP

It was a blessing and a privilege to have been able to be present in Montreal for the closing celebrations of our Sisters of Providence 175<sup>th</sup> Jubilee. To be with our sisters from across the congregation, as well as many of our lay collaborators, family members and lay friends, added to the fullness of all for which we were giving thanks. A particular highlight for me was the day of reflection on our Providence spirituality so beautifully presented by our leadership team members.

## Barbara Schamber, SP

How fortunate for us to be alive during the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the founding of the Sisters of Providence. The congregational leadership team and staff truly detailed every aspect of the week-long experiences of Blessed Emilie, Mother Joseph and

## Rod Hochman, MD, president and CEO, Providence St. Joseph Health

It was an honor to be invited to attend the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Sisters of Providence. One of the many highlights was Sister Karin Dufault's introduction, particularly

her discussion of the meaning of the word Providence. The Mass with the procession of the flags of the nations where the Sisters of Providence are present was very impressive. This was a wonderful family celebration, and I was very honored to be invited and hopefully play a small part in continuing the blessed work of this Ministry.

### Anna Loan Nguyen, SP

I was profoundly struck by the Gospel according to Matthew 25:21-40, read by Archbishop Christian Lépine during the Mass in honor of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Sisters of Providence on Friday, March 29, 2019. The Gospel moved me to identify and feel aligned with our foundress, Mother Emilie Gamelin, who spent her life among the sick, the poor, the imprisoned and the outcast. Her words strongly echoed in my heart, "I pray that you may always love the poor." Being a part of this 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary event was truly an uplifting "Pentecost" moment in my life. I was honored and proud to carry the white flag in the ceremony and more deeply impacted when I learned it was symbolic of our congregation's future, a future of hope. Deep within my soul I felt the pure love and hope of God that continues to pour out in our community. I began weeping, and in that moment felt the flame burning in my heart. It gave me great excitement for future vocations and a renewal of our dedication to love and serve the poor.

### Mary Hawkins, SP

It was a delight to be able to attend the Sisters of Providence 175<sup>th</sup> celebration in Montreal. What a blessing it was! The day of reflection was a special grace that gifted my heart. The presentations by the leadership team and the responses of the panel were memorable. Also, just to be with all the sisters, various cultures, lay men and women was a great joy. I was amazed and grateful for all those who welcomed us, and all who planned and prepared the treasures we experienced. The liturgy and the banquet were outstanding! Providence, we thank you for all!



▲ A display shows traditional habits (left to right) for a postulant, a novice, and a professed Sister of Providence at the Sisters of Providence Museum in Montreal.

### Anita Butler, SP

This trip was a nostalgic time for me because of all the experiences I've had in Montreal. I enjoyed visiting with many friends I've known since 1980. There is something about the Notre-Dame Basilica in Montreal that moves me. Visiting the statue of Blessed Emilie Gamelin there was a special moment. A lighthearted moment that stood out to me was when several of us were viewing a collection of habits in the archives. I'm older than the others, and when we looked at examples of the traditional habits of a professed sister, a novice and a postulant, others thought it was wrong, but I could say it was right — from personal experience. Also, a number of our lay leaders came to Montreal, and it was inspiring to them to see our history. They were energized by

being there. The liturgy on March 29 was very special — the music and total community participation. It was a great depiction of who we are.

### Dougal Hewitt, EVP & chief mission officer, Providence St. Joseph Health

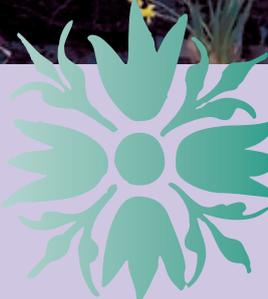
The day of reflection during the celebrations was especially memorable. Anchored in Sister Karin Dufault's profound and beautiful exploration of the meaning of 'Providence,' the day featured speakers who demonstrated the breadth and depth and impact of the Sisters of Providence. There was a wonderful sense of hospitality and inclusivity that resonated throughout all of the events and activities marking the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. People of many different backgrounds, cultures and traditions, and speaking many different languages, all came together and welcomed one another. The closing Mass in the chapel was a very special, sacred experience that was deeply moving with music, word, dance and ritual woven together so beautifully. The extraordinary banquet is worthy of mention, not only for the delicious meal that was served, but for the sense of shared community that permeated all of the days and the way that those who had cooked and prepared and served were recognized spoke to the respect that the Sisters of Providence have always shown to their partners. Truly, I was honored to participate in this extraordinary celebration. ●



▲ A day of reflection, March 28, featured presentations and table talks about the Sisters of Providence charism, mission and spirituality.



▲ Blessed Emilie Gamelin's tomb at the Sisters of Providence mother house in Montreal.





▲ Sister Karin Dufault leads Sister Marita Capili through her perpetual vows, March 24, Spokane, Wash.

## Reflections from my final vows ceremony

March 24, 2019

By Sister Marita Capili

*WOW, what a celebration!*

**T**oday is a very special day. We are not only celebrating my perpetual vows, we are also celebrating the feast of San Oscar Romero, saint and martyr of Central America; celebrating the 175th anniversary of the congregation of Sisters of Providence; and celebrating my mother's birthday.

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be grateful! Today is a celebration of love, faith, hope, joy and gratitude. As Mother Emilie Gamelin said, "O my God, I thank You for the grace of my religious vocation. You alone inspired me to follow You."

In the same spirit of our foundress, my heart is filled with gratitude for the gift and grace of my own religious vocation. I have found my life's purpose. Saint Augustine said, "Our heart is restless until it rests in you." I come before you here today as a witness of God's love, hope and mercy. With these experiences, I welcome God to empty, transform and transfigure me, and continue to do so every day.

The good news is I am still a work in progress. In El Salvador the people always call us Divine Providence (*Divina Providencia*) and I always correct them and I say, "We are still human, not divine yet. In almost

10 years as a Sister of Providence, I have experienced God's love and grace in a very deep way in our ministry and in our community life. Sister Jean Shultz told me during my first year of candidacy, "The love and grace that you receive, you must also give."

Today you all received a prayer card entitled *Suscipe*. I used to pray this daily in the bus on my way to work in downtown Seattle. Who knew that later I would enter religious life? This prayer reappeared to me during my retreat last month. In my reflection, I came to an understanding that the more I surrender all to God, the more I receive in return from God. That's the nature of giving and receiving — unending and overflowing grace, the sweetness and seduction of God. I invite each one of you to continue the process of giving and receiving: The more you give, the more you receive, and the more you will give. Be generous as your Father in heaven is generous.

Today as we celebrate the feast of San Romero, we pray in gratitude for his intercession in our continued and growing mission of giving hope for the youth of El Salvador. In January of this year, with the blessing of the Mother Joseph Province, we began a new site for the Beca Scholarship Program in El Salvador. We are now serving the four islands in Usulután.

Today, as we celebrate my mother's birthday, I also would like to honor my family, especially my parents, nanay and tatay. Nanay and tatay only had a basic education, but it did not stop them from dreaming big for a better future for all of their children. We are very grateful for all the love and sacrifices so we could be who we are today. My parents are risk takers, adventurers, hard workers and with great love and hope for the family.

In the spirit of celebrating the 175th anniversary of the congregation of the Sisters of Providence, I would like to honor all our sisters in our congregation, especially our deceased sisters. A candle is lit to commemorate them, for their love for God, love for the community, and for their service to the people of God through their ministries.

I have received so much love, grace, blessings, richness and support from God, the sisters, and the people we serve. How could I say no to the call of discipleship? Taking my perpetual vows is my expres-

sion of my full commitment to love and serve God as a Sister of Providence. It is a celebration of gratitude to God for the gift of my vocation, and for the support and prayers of my Sisters of Providence community, family and friends. ●

### Suscipe

**Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own.**

**You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it.**

**Everything is yours; do with it what you will.**

**Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me.**

**Amen.**

*St. Ignatius of Loyola*



◀ Sister Maria Fernanda joined Sister Marisol Avila (right) in Yakima, Wash., to learn about her ministry with Hispanic youth.

## Novice from Bernarda Morin Province experiences religious life

in Mother Joseph Province

**S**ister Maria Fernanda Apablaza, a novice from Bernarda Morin Province in Chile, recently spent three months with sisters in Mother Joseph Province. The international formation experience gave her a valuable opportunity to get to know the sisters, ministries and culture of the American West.