

St. Marguerite D'Youville
Marie Marguerite Dufrost de Lajemmerais d'Youville
b. 15 October 1701, Varennes, Quebec, Canada
d. 23 December 1771, Montréal, Quebec, Canada

This pious woman founded the religious congregation called the Grey Nuns (originally called the Sisters of Charity of the Hôpital Général of Montréal). The first Canadian-born saint. Pope John Paul II canonized her on 9th December 1990. Her feast day is celebrated on 16th October.

Three days after her wedding, Marguerite learned that her new husband was trading liquor with the Indians for their furs. He continued this despised and illegal practice until he died in 1730, leaving her with two young sons and a mountain of debts. Marguerite opened a general store, and in a few years, she had made herself financially secure and turned her attention to charity.

Montreal had only one badly mismanaged hospital, so Marguerite began to nurse destitute women in her home. Three companions joined her, and on 31 December 1737, they officially founded the Sisters of Charity of Montreal. Rumours spread that Marguerite was continuing her husband's liquor trade, and when she and her Sisters arrived at Mass on All Saint's Day, 1738, they were met by an angry mob hurling stones and shouting "Down with the Grey [Topsy] Nuns." The pastor refused to give the Grey Nuns Communion, but Marguerite reminded them that Christ had also been despised by a crowd. The Grey Nuns gradually won the respect of the community, and during the French and Indian Wars they nursed the wounded without regard to nationality.

When a British soldier burst into Marguerite's sewing room pursued by an Indian waving a tomahawk, she hid the soldier, named Southworth, and sent the Indian in the opposite direction. Later, an English general was preparing to destroy the hospital until Southworth told him how Marguerite had saved his life. The general sent officers to question Marguerite, and they emerged convinced that her hospital was truly an "oasis of charity" and must be spared.

Canonised in 1990, Marguerite is Canada's first native-born saint.

The Genius of Marguerite d'Youville:

Marguerite always told the Grey Nuns: "The people must know that we never refuse to serve."

Reflection:

*"Lead me out of my prison
that I may give thanks to your name.
Then the just shall gather around me
because you have been good to me."*

Psalm 142.8

From The Big Book of Women Saints by Sarah Gallick,
(c) 2007, HarperCollins Publication, p. 314

1 Corinthians 13.4-13

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

James 2.14-19

Faith without Works Is Dead

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder.