



OBITUARY NOTICE



SISTER PATRICIA WISTAFF
MARIE-GILBERT

Entered eternal life on October 6, 2020
At the age of 97
and 78 years of religious life

+2225

In life, some people transform our paths by their mere presence. Such was the case with Sr. Marie-Gilbert. Her peaceful and wise disposition invited others to friendly and harmonious interactions. She was nourished by melodies and verses of the Word of God imbued with peace. To cite but a few of them: "Keep my soul in peace, close to you Lord. (Ref. Ps 33)
May the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. (Nb 6, 26). Strive for peace with everyone. (He12,14)" Proud daughter of the parish of St. Francis of Assisi, here in Ottawa, she had a great love for Francis of Assisi: "Make me an instrument of your Peace!" she would often recite. Today, she can say: "Mission accomplished!"

But where did she draw this wisdom, this serene tranquility, this thoughtfulness that inhabited her? Her childhood played a strong role in engraving these traits in her. Born Patricia Wistaff, daughter of Cyrias Wistaff and Béatrice Bellefeuille, she is the third of five children. Sadly, her mother, aged 29, passes away after giving birth to twins. Patricia is only 4 years old at the time and her older sister is 7. This affliction of her mother's death would shape little Patricia's entire personality.

Her father, overwhelmed by the events, sends the three older daughters to St. Joseph's Orphanage in Ottawa and the youngest one to his sister's home in Montréal. He himself goes to stay with his father-in-law, bringing along with him his one and half year-old son. Sister Marie-Gilbert will reminisce: "For four years, Dad visited us regularly and took us to see our little sister in Montréal in the summer. It was wonderful to be reunited with our family again." During the holiday season, Mr. Wistaff brings a turkey he has himself prepared to the orphanage to be shared among his daughters and other orphans. This attention from Daddy fosters her compassion, care, and love for others.

Her father remarries and fortunately, the family that has been separated for 5 years finally recovers family warmth and unity. Sr. Marie-Gilbert recalled: "My stepmother, a woman of faith and a convinced Christian, took her role to heart and succeeded in endowing all of us with happiness, affection and comfort

while guiding us on the path of duty".

Wounds healed? Despite all the love she receives from her father and stepmother, Sr. Marie-Gilbert talks about the time of separation at the orphanage with much sadness and pain. Her discreet, withdrawn and shy personality stems from the hardship she experienced as a child. Adversity gradually moves her to interiority that deepens her faith, a faith rooted in the Essence of life. And then she hears a sweet voice calling out to her: "Come, my beloved, follow me".

She answers "yes" and in 1942 she becomes a Grey Nun of the Cross. Her oblation is total and unequivocal. The wounds of her childhood give birth to an entirely evangelical mission. Sr. Marie-Gilbert adheres completely to the spirituality of the cross and Élisabeth Bruyère's charism of compassion. She is truly a reflection the compassion of Jesus and all recognize her through this personality trait.

She becomes an exceptional educator, carrying out her mission at the Rideau Street Convent in Clarence Creek, Sudbury and the surrounding area, Hamilton and Paincourt. Whether as a teacher or a principal, she always leaves the children, parents or colleagues with beautiful memories of her. As a well-organized and efficient woman, she transmits her taste for neatness and work well done to students and employees.

An exceptional teacher, she develops, with the help of companions, educational tools that are introduced in several French-speaking schools across the country. Her love for those who are most vulnerable always leads her toward the student with a learning disability, the child being harassed and hurt by his peers or who is less fortunate. She brings them lunches, treats, and offers them consideration, love and security. For example, she offers after-school classes in her principal's office to a youngster ridiculed by his peers for not being able to pronounce his "r's". The child is overjoyed and says: "Oh yes! I like those lessons. I have a 'blothter'... His name is ENÉ and I can't say his name." Sr. Marie-Gilbert works fiercely and uses

all the tools and tricks so that this child can be no longer taunted by his peers and learns to say his brother's name, René. Sr. Marie-Gilbert touches many people along her journey. So many children and parents have fond memories of her to this day.

Even after retiring from education, Sr. Marie-Gilbert became a valued advisor and secretary to the Sudbury and Ottawa provincial councils. Her sense of duty, her love for the right word and excellent work became assets in this new mission that she carried out for some twenty years.

And let's talk about the "sister", the companion with a strong and responsible sense of sisterhood. Her well-balanced personality, her gentleness in her remarks, her attention to others and her words of encouragement helped to build the bonds of fraternity. She was loved whether she was an animator or a companion because all recognized in her the desire to make the Sisters happy. Because she experienced the tenderness of God, it was easy for her to share it. A woman of faith and prayer, she embodied the "solid" aspects of consecrated life.

Her health then started to decline. She surrendered herself completely to God and lived this moment with serenity and anticipation. On the peaceful evening of October 6, Sr. Marie-Gilbert answered a joyful yes to the One to whom she gave her life. The Lord, in his love, has left us the communion of saints to remind us of the power of the resurrection and the thread that connects us to the living in Eternity.

Thank you, Sr. Marie-Gilbert. Thank you for embodying all the greatness, beauty, peace and compassion of Jesus. Thank you for all those "René" and Bernard and Julie whom you elevated and protected. Thank you for the power of your radiance, which was, after all, the light of Jesus. Your heritage as a wise, gentle and kind woman calls us to become instruments of God's peace. Farewell and may you watch over us.

