



OBITUARY NOTICE



SISTER THÉRÈSE MOTARD
Thérèse-de-la-Charité

Entered eternal life on October 28, 2022
at the age of 96
and 76 years of religious life.

+2399

"He who has mercy on the poor lends to the Lord, who will repay him according to his work." (Proverb 19:17)

To celebrate the life of Sister Thérèse Motard is to recognize with wonder and thanksgiving the many talents the Lord granted her and with which she generously and faithfully served him during her seventy-six years of consecrated life.

From the moment she was born on June 15, 1926 in the parish of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Ottawa, the seventh of ten children of Henri and Yvonne Motard, Thérèse became a neighbour of the house built by Mother Bruyère. On June 17, she became a child of God through baptism and received the name *Thérèse* in honour of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux whom the Church had canonized a year earlier.

When Thérèse was only nine years old, the sudden death of her father at the age of 43 left the family in dire poverty. Her mother, who was only 39, assumed her responsibility as a single mother of ten children with courage and deep faith. Despite the challenges created by the crisis brought about by the Great Depression of the 1930s, Madame Motard always found means to help the poor in her neighbourhood. Later, Sister Thérèse would say she owed her compassionate love for the vulnerable to the inspirational example of her mother.

Our "little Thérèse" attended Routhier School and Pensionnat Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur on Rideau Street, Ottawa, where she met the Grey Nuns of the Cross. In August 1944, Thérèse answered the Lord's call and on July 14, 1945, when she took the habit, she received the name of Sister Thérèse-de-la-Charité, an all-encompassing name for one who would become the servant of the needy. She made her profession on July 16, 1946.

Her first mission was to take care of a group of children at St. Joseph Orphanage in Ottawa. In 1948, Mother General gave her the obedience to come to the States. She would teach in Haverhill. Therese's face was countered with, "We come back from the States, you know, we come back." A few years later, Sister Thérèse would say, laughing, "But I was never called to come back."

As she fulfilled her mission on American soil, Sister Thérèse heard many calls and as the "Energizer Bunny", her battery never ran out.

She dedicated herself to her beautiful educational mission of service to children: five years at St. Joseph's School in Haverhill, 12 years at Notre-Dame School in Ogdensburg and 28 years at Ste Jeanne d'Arc School in Lowell. While remaining at Ste Jeanne d'Arc Convent in Lowell, she was involved with the poor in several charitable organizations especially at St. Vincent de Paul Society until 2013.

Her long and fruitful sixty-five-year mission in the United States gave Sister Thérèse a double status. We do not mean by this that she was *Canadian and American*, for one will recall how Sister Thérèse liked to say that she was of "pure Canadian wool", but rather of having a double filial bond: daughter of Elizabeth Bruyère and at the same time of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Many knew Sister Thérèse to be a teacher by day and a "Vincentian" by night. Nonetheless, she was always a genuine "Sister of Charity" faithfully carrying on the charism of compassion bequeathed by Mother Bruyère. She merged her love of teaching with her love of the poor giving of herself energetically and selflessly to both calling.

Because of her patience, students loved her especially those with learning difficulties with whom she shared her energizing love for the poor. That became obvious especially during campaigns to prepare food baskets distributed at Thanksgiving and Christmas to families in need. Sister Thérèse also revealed her strong will when, involved with several projects at risk of cancellation due to lack of human and financial resources, she never gave up.

In 1971, she was the first woman invited to become a member of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society of Greater Lowell, a Society where members were almost exclusively men. On February 23, 1993, Ste Jeanne d'Arc Parish in Lowell recognized her work, done mostly behind the stage, by awarding her with the Medal of Merit of Frederick Ozanam, founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a decoration reserved for those who have made outstanding contributions to the mission of the Society. She shied away from publicity and blushed at the mention of her untiring efforts towards the needy. She would say, "My Congregation was founded to serve the poor and like Mother Bruyère, love for the poor is my only motive." The Lowell area continued to be the object of Sister Thérèse's dedication and boundless generosity. Some rightly called her the *Mother Teresa* of Lowell. For her testimony of charity, on

January 14, 2004, the local newspaper, the *Lowell Sun*, named her "Local Hero."

It was evident to all who lived with her that Sister Thérèse had a sense of mission. There was never just one call, but many. In the summer of 2013, she heard the call to return to Canada where she continued her mission of compassionate service to her sisters with the same bubbling energy that characterized her. Her return to Canada also brought her closer to her family, especially to her sister Gabrielle, her nephew Marc together with his wife.

In the fall of 2019 as her strength diminished, Sister Thérèse was called to a new mission, that of the apostolate of prayer at the heart of Résidence du Sacré-Coeur. She expressed her deep love for the Virgin Mary by faithfully praying the rosary. Her dynamism and her commitment to fraternal life did not leave her despite her increasingly fragile health; she remained a rallying member of the community until her last breath.

The Lord made a final appeal to Sister Thérèse on October 28, a call to the eternal reward for her work of charity, service and compassion lived faithfully on a daily basis for 76 years of consecrated life.

Her legacy? It lives on energetically in the persons who attest to her mark on their lives. "She was such a giving person." "She helped everyone tirelessly." "She taught me to read, when others gave up." "She always gave to whomever was in need." "I hope I can be as energetic as she is when I am her age."

We now give her back to the lover of us all, and hope Sister Thérèse remembers that God rests on the seventh day!

