

The Sisters' Departure From Fort-Coulonge



July 7, 2019, rose as a glorious day even if there was sadness in the air brought on by the departure of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa, after 84 years of presence in St. Peter Parish of Fort Coulonge, in the Province of Québec in Canada. The Sisters who had worked in the parish as well as friends were invited for the occasion.

The feasting began with a Eucharist scheduled for 10:30, but several guests were already in place by 10:00. The last three Sisters who have worked at St. Michael Convent traveled with companions from Ottawa and the surroundings.

Members of the Provincial Council also came from the Mother House. The Sisters were welcomed by two Associates, Suzette Adam and Marielle Sirois, who received them by pinning a blue carnation.

The Knights of Columbus and the Daughters of Isabella formed an honor guard at the rear of the church and escorted the 16 Sisters to their reserved places in the front pews. The Eucharist was celebrated by the assistant pastor, Fr. Justin Bertrand, because the pastor, Fr. Real Ouellette, was on sick leave. Monsignor Douglas Bridge, Vicar General of the Pembroke Diocese was also present in the sanctuary.



The parish choir was under the direction of Carole Morin, director for the Associates and organist for the parish.

In his homily, Fr. Bertrand drew a parallel with the Gospel reading for the day which was a call to mission with the work the Sisters accomplished in their 84 years in the vineyard of St. Peter Parish and the municipalities of Fort-Coulonge and Mansfield/Pontefract.

The large number of parishioners and friends in attendance then made their way to the Knights of Columbus Hall for a festive meal. According to the traditional ways of the region, the menu consists in "sea pie", mashed potatoes, vegetables and coleslaw. A beautiful cake bearing the Congregation's coat of arms was the creation of Rachel Nadeau who was also the photographer for the celebration. Mr. Clayton Deneault recorded the proceedings in view of producing a DVD.

At the head table were seated, Monsignor Douglas Bridge, son of the parish, Fr. Justin Bertrand associate-pastor, the last three Sisters who were missioned in the parish: Sisters Jeanna Dufault, Danielle Pelletier and Cecile Brizard, plus Sister Claire Cardinal, Provincial Animator, and Sister Lucie Carpentier, Provincial Councilor and Secretary.

As the meal drew to a close, Mrs. Carole Morin sang grace, then Sr. Cecile Brizard joined her for the singing of a humorous song related to that region. Monsignor Douglas Bridge, as a former parishioner, told a few stories of his rapport with the Sisters. His father, being Anglophone, enjoyed speaking with the late Sr. Françoise Taillon, an American who was fluent in English.

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Fr. Justin Bertrand shared a word from the pastor, Fr. Real Ouellette, who expressed his regrets for not being present as well as his gratitude to the Sisters as they leave the region. He offered them the gift of a wooden plaque on which he had sculpted an image of St. Peter (Parish Patron) holding the keys.

The Associates to the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa of the Fort-Coulonge Sector offered good wishes with a text written by Carole Morin, their director, and read by Suzette Adam, organizer of the farewell celebration.

The Knights of Columbus of the 4th and 3rd degrees expressed thanks with a gift to the Sisters who worked in Fort-Coulonge, presented by the Grand Knights, Hector Soucie and Jeannot Bilodeau. The Daughters of Isabella came forward with a lovely floral bouquet and words of appreciation for the three remaining Sisters to leave St. Michel Convent.

Gilles Dionne, Mayor of Mansfield/Pontefract and Gaston Allard, Mayor of Fort-Coulonge shared their gratitude to the Congregation who had contributed so much to the human and spiritual growth of their fellow citizens.

Sister Claire Cardinal, Provincial Animator, then became the spokesperson for the 135 Sisters who had spent time in Fort-Coulonge, thanking the people of the region who always helped, supported and collaborated with the Sisters in their mission of charity. Finally, the last of the Sisters: Jeanna Dufault, Danielle Pelletier, Clothilde Denis ad Cecile Brizard expressed their good-byes and assured these caring and generous people of their lasting remembrance.



It was one feast which will long remain in our memories.

