

Catherine McKinley, SP (1837-1904)

Catherine McKinley, Mother Mary Edward in religion, was the first General Superior of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul. She was born on August 14, 1837 in Kingston, Ontario, and trained as a dressmaker in Oswego, New York prior to seeking admission to the newly founded religious congregation in Kingston.



On December 13, 1861 the Sisters of Charity from Montreal, at the request of E. J. Horan, Bishop of Kingston, arrived in the city to found a new religious congregation, which would eventually bear the name, the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul. Catherine McKinley, the first candidate to seek admission, entered the Congregation on March 25, 1862. She made profession on April 4, 1864 and took the name Sr. Mary Edward. In 1865 she opened the first teaching mission of the Congregation in Belleville, Ontario. The following year the bishop of Kingston recalled the sisters from Belleville and the French sisters returned to Montreal. Bishop Horan appointed Catherine McKinley as the first General Superior of this new congregation, the Sisters of Charity of Kingston.

For most of her religious life Catherine McKinley was involved in the governing of the Congregation. She served as General Superior from 1866 to 1872, General Treasurer and First Assistant to the General Superior from 1872 to 1875, founding Local Superior of the mission in Holyoke, Massachusetts from 1873 to 1879, General Treasurer from 1881 to 1884, General Superior from 1884 to 1896, First Assistant from 1896 to 1902 and founding Local Superior of the mission in Trenton, Ontario from 1902 to 1904.

Catherine McKinley was instrumental in all the major building projects and in the establishment of missions in the first forty years of the congregation's history. She was known as a successful fundraiser and oversaw numerous construction projects, including 4 major additions to the House of Providence in 1871, 1892, 1894 and the stunning Mother of Sorrows Chapel in 1898. Under her governance St. Vincent de Paul Hospital Brockville was founded in 1887, and teaching missions were founded in Perth in 1892 and in Belleville in 1900. She personally founded the missions in Holyoke in 1873 and Trenton in 1902. She died in Trenton, Ontario on November 21, 1904.

Quotation: "And since God's grace and love helped you in the past, that same Divine Aid will sustain you in the future if fervently sought." (*Letter Aug 7, 1890*)

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