

Blessed Emilie Tavernier-Gamelin, S.P. (1800–1851)

Emilie Tavernier was born in Montreal on February 19, 1800, the last of a family of fifteen children. When she is four years old she loses her mother and goes to live with her aunt. Her father dies when she is fifteen. When her brother's wife dies three years later she moves to help her brother. She doesn't ask for anything except to be able to feed all the poor who would knock at their door – she called it lovingly the “King's table”.



In 1823, she marries Jean-Baptiste Gamelin who shared her love for the poor. They have three children but two of them die shortly after birth. The third one and her husband die too, not long after.

Alone at 27, far from dwelling on her losses, Emilie turns to works of charity and welcomes the poor and needy people she meets. Her house is open to everyone: elderly people, orphans, prisoners, immigrants, unemployed, young couples in difficulty, physically and mentally handicapped people – people begin to refer to her house as the “Refuge of the Poor”.

On a trip to Paris, Bishop Bourget invites the sisters of Saint Vincent-de-Paul to help Emilie found a religious community. The sisters accept but at the last minute are unable to keep their promise and send sisters overseas. Therefore Bishop Bourget turns to Canadian candidates for his new religious community. Emilie is of the first group of sisters, as a novice first, and then - once they profess their first vows on March 29, 1844 - as their superior and founder.

Through the ups and downs of the community, Emilie always stays standing up as her model, Our Lady of Sorrows, at the foot of the Cross. Mother Gamelin dies of cholera on September 23, 1851. Pope John Paul II beatified her on October 7, 2001.

QUOTATION:

“Humility, simplicity, charity”