

Blessed Marie-Anne Blondin, SSA (1809–1890)

Esther Blondin, in religion « Sister Marie-Anne », was born in Terrebonne (Quebec) on April 18, 1809, in a family of deeply Christian farmers. Still an illiterate at the age of 20, Esther dreams to become a teacher one day. She works as a domestic in the Convent of the Sisters of Congregation Notre-Dame and learns to write and read at the same time. She enters as a novice in the Congregation but has to leave, due to ill health.

In 1833 Esther becomes a teacher in the parochial school of Vaudreuil and there discovers to what extent the problem of illiteracy afflicted people and caused their exclusion from society. In 1848, Esther presents to her bishop, Ignace Bourget, a plan she long cherished: that of founding a religious congregation for the education of poor country children and, as a special project, that of opening “mixed schools” (for both boys and girls), to overcome the problem of education – a proposal considered “very subversive” at her time. The Bishop accepts and the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Anne is approved on September 8, 1850.

The rapid growth of the Community soon requires larger quarters. During the summer of 1853, the Bishop transfers the Motherhouse to Saint Jacques de l’Achigan. There the new chaplain interferes in an abusive way in the private life of the Community. After a year of this conflict between the chaplain and the Foundress, Bishop Bourget asks Mother Marie-Anne to resign on August 18, 1854. Mother Marie-Anne obeys her Bishop. She is named Directress at Saint Genevieve Convent where she becomes the target of attacks from the Motherhouse authorities. Mother Marie-Anne is forced to resign again and from this new destitution until her death she is kept away from administrative responsibilities. Assigned to mostly hidden work in the laundry and ironing room, she leads a life of total self-denial. She peacefully passes away on January 2, 1890, at the Motherhouse in Lachine, where many generations of novices received from her, in those years, a true example of obedience and humility. She was beatified by pope John Paul II on April 29, 2001.



QUOTATION:

"May Holy Eucharist and perfect abandonment to God's Will be your heaven on earth."