

Venerable Elisabeth Bergeron, S.J.S.H. (1851–1936)

Born on May 25, 1851, in the village of La Présentation, Elisabeth Bergeron was the fourth of a family of eleven children. Since she was a child she was attracted by religion and, with exceptional fervor for her age, she does her first communion in the spring of 1859, at the same time of her older brother. When she is fourteen, her family moves to the United States because of the economic crisis. She works in a cotton mill and there realizes that her friends know nothing about religion. She therefore invites them at her house to teach them catechism.

Once they return to Quebec in 1870, Elisabeth makes several attempts to join religious communities. She first asks to enter the Adoratrices du Précieux-Sang, but is not accepted. She then spends some time with the Soeurs de la Miséricorde, but decides not to stay for she doesn't feel the community fit for her. In the end, in 1875, she applies to join the Soeurs de la Présentation, but even there she is refused because of her lack of education.



She then talks about her desire to enter religious life with the bishop of Saint-Hyacinthe, Blessed Louis-Zéphirin Moreau, who asks her to establish a community of teaching sisters for the poor children living out in the country. With humility and confiding entirely in Providence, Elisabeth answers him: "If you believe I may respond to your project, despite my ignorance and inabilities, I am at your service". On September 12, 1877, with other three companions, two of which were teachers, Elisabeth founds officially the Soeurs de Saint-Joseph de Saint-Hyacinthe in the village of La Providence and takes the name of Mother Saint-Joseph. They open the first school. Two years later, Bishop Moreau has Elisabeth resign as mother superior so as to name a more educated sister, capable to deal with the school boards. The foundress accepts and becomes assistant general, position that she will hold until 1925. By her life totally given for the service of others and her discretion, Elisabeth is an example for her sisters and a leader by her wisdom. She dies on April 29, 1936, and is declared venerable on January 12, 1996.

LINK:

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