

Venerable Marie-Josephte Fitzbach, S.C.I.M. (1806–1885)

Marie-Josephte Fitzbach was born on October 16, 1806, in the village of St-Vallier de Bellechasse, Quebec. Though she did not attend school in childhood, she was a bright and quick-witted young girl. At the age of 13, she leaves home because of family need and becomes a domestic servant in Quebec City. Employed by a merchant in Upper Town Quebec, Mr. François-Xavier Roy, Marie takes care of his home, his two children and his sick wife. To catch up on her schooling, she pays a student at the Seminary to teach her how to read, write and do basic accounting. Since she had long dreamt of religious life, Marie seeks to enter some communities but meets only with refusals because her health is frail.



Following the death of his wife, Mr. Roy asks to marry Marie. She accepts his proposal and their wedding is celebrated on April 17, 1828, in Cap-Santé, Quebec. They have three daughters together. In 1833 Mr. Roy dies, leaving a widow aged of 26 with 5 children. The two children of his first marriage are entrusted to their maternal grandparents, while Marie remains alone to care for the needs of her three daughters. Her youngest daughter dies in 1846 and this affects her deeply. Instead the two others, in 1849, fulfilling their mother's youthful dream, became the first postulants of the Sisters of Charity of Quebec.

As her 43rd birthday approached, Marie becomes a resident at the Hospice of Charity to be closer to her daughters and to live the rest of her life away from the world, in silence and prayer. But a few weeks later, she is asked to take charge of a shelter for women released from jail. After praying and consulting her daughters, she accepts and with a companion opens St. Magdalen's Refuge (Asile de Ste-Madeleine) in Quebec City, on January 11, 1850. On February 2, 1856, when the Good Shepherd of Quebec is established as a religious community, Marie takes the name of Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart and becomes the first superior of the Institute on the following February 7th, with a three-year mandate. She dies on September 1st, 1885.

LINK:

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