



Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul Announce Governance Transfer

Kingston, ON, June 17, 2024 - After years of careful consideration, thoughtful contemplation and discernment, the **Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul** have chosen to transfer their congregation's governance to a **Commissary**. This decision signifies the adoption of a new type of governance model, an historic first among Catholic congregations in English Canada.

The Sisters are pleased to announce that **Sister Bonnie MacLellan**, General Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, has graciously accepted the role of Commissary for their congregation. This significant milestone was commemorated with a formal ceremony on June 16, 2024, at Providence Motherhouse in Kingston, Ontario.

The Sisters' decision to transfer governance to a Commissary reflects years of learning and planning, aligning with their hopes and vision for the future of their congregation and what they believe is their calling from God at this time. Beginning in 2014, the Sisters started examining future demographics and needs, leading to the creation of a long-range plan in 2015. By 2021, the congregation began serious discussions about the future of governance, exploring new possibilities under Canon law.

“As a group, the Sisters were of one heart and came to the conclusion about the necessary next steps for the future of our congregation,” shared **Sister Sandra Shannon on behalf of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul Leadership Team**. “We leave our congregation and our responsibilities in the very capable hands of Sister Bonnie MacLellan. This marks a new chapter for our congregation, and we're grateful for our partnership with Sister Bonnie. We've been very intentional with the choices and decisions that have led us here, and we are confident in those who will carry on our legacy.”

Sister Bonnie MacLellan trained as a registered nurse before entering the convent, where she worked in nursing supervisory and administrative roles in hospitals throughout northern Ontario. She later completed a Masters of Public Health and a Ph.D. in Human and Organizational Systems. After her first two terms as General Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, Sister Bonnie studied Canon Law at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Ontario, where she earned her JCD. Currently,

Sister Bonnie is again serving as General Superior and works with her own and other congregations throughout the United States and Canada as they consider canonically appropriate congregational governance options to support consecrated life into the future. While serving as Commissary of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, Sister Bonnie MacLellan will continue to serve as General Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie.

Following a discernment process with her congregation, Sister Bonnie was officially appointed Commissary by the Vatican. As Commissary, Sister Bonnie MacLellan's ministry will be to look after the needs of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, and honour contracts they have to provide care to the other congregations who live at the Motherhouse; the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph (RHSJ) and the Congregation of Notre Dame (CND). Providence Village Inc. (PVI), the not-for-profit charitable organization established by the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, will continue to manage administration and operations of Providence Motherhouse and provide care to the Sisters living there. Sister Bonnie and Providence Village will work collaboratively to ensure all of the Sisters' needs are met into the future.

"Walking with the Sisters of Providence and serving their Sisters as Commissary is indeed a privilege and a graced moment for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie," added **Sister Bonnie MacLellan**. "Together, we will be forging a shared model of consecrated life that continues in new ways the mission of the Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie."

To support Sister Bonnie MacLellan in her role as Commissary, a team of advisors from the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul has been established. This team, chosen through a discernment process, consists of three individuals with the skills and qualities necessary to provide support and guidance. They will be in place for two years to help with the transition, with the possibility of renewal.

Additionally, Sister Bonnie MacLellan has selected a Commissary Delegate in Sister Bonnie Chesser, a fellow Sister of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, who will provide more frequent onsite support to the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul on the Commissary's behalf. Sister Bonnie Chesser possesses a Masters in Theological Studies, extensive leadership team experience with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie and other ministries, as well as a background in counselling. After meeting Sister Bonnie Chesser, the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul agreed wholeheartedly for her to serve as Commissary Delegate.

The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul are confident in the capable leadership of Sister Bonnie MacLellan and Sister Bonnie Chesser, knowing they will guide the congregation with wisdom and compassion. As the Sisters of Providence embark on this new chapter, they are filled with hope for the future, secure in the knowledge that their legacy will endure through the dedication of those they have mentored and inspired. Embracing this new governance model, the Sisters see it not merely as an administrative shift, but as a profound covenant, uniting hearts and fostering collaboration in their sacred mission. This model represents a departure from traditional hierarchical structures, embodying a spirit of inclusivity and shared responsibility in their journey of consecrated life.

For more information, please email info@providence.ca.