

Blessed Marie-Rose (Eulalie) Durocher

(1811-1849)

Educator of Poor Children

Catechetical Activity

Ages 6-8

Blessed Marie-Rose (Eulalie) Durocher (Educator of Poor Children, 1811-1849)

Materials Needed: Blessed Marie-Rose Durocher's biography (short version), copies of the activity sheet (1 per child), pencils, pencil crayons, markers, etc.

Gathering:

1. Ask the children to gather around and sit quietly for a moment.
2. Have a discussion with the children about how fortunate they are to live in a country where education is free. Every person in Canada, regardless of what city they live in, or what their parents/guardians do for a living, goes to school for free. Explain to the group that not all children in the world have the privilege of going to school and learning. There are children in many different countries that cannot go to school because it is too expensive, or the school is too far away from their home.

Listening:

1. Read Blessed Marie-Rose Durocher's biography on pages 3-4. You may find it beneficial to paraphrase some parts of the biography for the children.
2. Remind the children that Blessed Marie-Rose Durocher made education for poor children her priority. Ask the children to think about what that would mean for children who would otherwise not be able to receive an education. (Ex. they will learn how to read, might be able to have a better job, earn money to help provide for their family, have more confidence, meet new people and make friends, etc.)

Doing:

1. Ask the children to use the template on page 5 to create an acrostic poem for 'charity' - Blessed Marie-Rose's favourite virtue. If time permits, encourage them to decorate their poem and add symbols that represent charity and giving.
2. Provide the group with an opportunity to share their acrostic poem with a partner.

Going:

1. Read the prayer on page 6 aloud to the group.

Blessed Marie-Rose (Eulalie) Durocher (1811-1849)

Educator of the Poor

Feast Day: October 6th

Her Life

Eulalie Durocher was born in Saint-Antoine-sur-Richelieu, Quebec on October 6, 1811. She attended schools run by the Congregation of Notre Dame in Saint Denis and in Montreal. She was friendly, cheerful, straightforward, and charming, and she easily won people's respect and trust. She had good judgment and had a solid practical sense.

When she was 19, her mother died and she stayed home with her father and several of her brothers. Eventually she went to manage the household of her brother Théophile, a priest in Saint Benoît and then Longueuil, where she also helped with pastoral ministry. For 12 years, her daily life included helping to look after priests when they were tired and sick, helping the poor, and visiting the sick. She observed first-hand that a lot of people had no education and the young needed both schools and religious training. She joined the Congregation of the Children of Mary, established in Beloeil by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The congregation of Daughters of Mary Immaculate gave her the opportunity to exercise her gifts for teaching the young. She became president and spiritual animator.

Eulalie hoped that a teaching order of religious would become established in every parish. She envisioned small convents where poor and rich students alike would receive a good faith-based education. Such a community existed - the Religious of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary of Marseilles, approved by the Bishop of Marseilles, the Most Rev. Eugene de Mazenod, who was founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The nuns didn't want to come to Canada, so Eulalie went to work, at the request of the Most Rev. Ignace Bourget, Bishop of Montreal and with the support of the Oblates, to establish one.

In October 1843, Eulalie left Beloeil for Longueuil. There she founded, with two companions, a congregation which was inspired by the rule of the sisters of Marseille. She took the name in religion of Sister Marie-Rose. Many people were skeptical about the new community. It seemed to be based on a dream and to have no resources. However, in 1845 when the Hon. Louls Lacoste presented to Parliament the incorporation bill for the

Institute; he said, "I wholeheartedly disagree with my friends who think I'm mad to support a community which, to all appearances, will not have a very long lifespan." From this beginning, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary became an international congregation of Catholic Women Religious, Associated and Lay Consecrated.

Mother Marie-Rose died prematurely on October 6, 1849. The young congregation consisted of 29 professed nuns, seven novices, seven postulants and four houses of education. She was beatified by Pope (now Saint) John Paul II on May 23, 1982.

Her Spirituality

Eulalie Durocher manifested her talents as a hostess, housekeeper and nurse when, as a laywoman, she collaborated with her brother, who was a priest. She also helped to coordinate parish activity. She could bring people together, she was a good teacher, and she organized retreats for families.

In the summer of 1844, Mother Marie-Rose sent two of her Sisters to the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Montreal to learn advanced pedagogical methods. She added music, drawing, English, and home economics to the basic curriculum to prepare the girls for their adult lives. She established a boarding school and the fees paid by the parents of its students financed free education for poor students.

The life of the community was disrupted by a Catholic priest who had become a Protestant minister, Charles Chiniquy. He turned up at the Longueuil convent in 1846 and caused serious trouble, becoming the sworn enemy of Mother Marie-Rose when she perceived his destructive intentions and banished him from the convent. He spread calumny about the Sisters and sowed discord in the parish. Mother Marie-Rose wrote, "I hope that God will take pity on us. I find our situation really difficult; it seems that most of our parishioners have risen against us. We pray every day that God will transform our misery to his glory and enlighten our superiors and grant us patience and submission."

The only time Mother Marie-Rose reprimanded her Sisters was when one of them spoke ill of others. She often said, "Let us pray, let us suffer, and let us trust." On her deathbed, she asked forgiveness of her Sisters for lacking in gentleness, goodness and charity. But Bishop Bourget would say of her that "Charity was her favourite among the virtues."

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Image: Miniature on Ivory by Casimira Dabrowska, 1957.
Courtesy of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.

Lord, who enkindled in the heart of
Blessed Marie Rose Durocher
the flame of ardent charity
and a great desire to cooperate
in the mission of the Church as a teacher
grant us that same active love,
so that, in responding to the needs
of the world today,
we may lead our brothers and sisters
to the blessedness of eternal life.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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