

Sister Madeleine was born in Drummondville, Quebec on March 24 1936. Her father, Nérée Houle, was a manager at the cotton factory and her mother, Adélia Boucher, was a happy mother among her seven children, four boys and three girls. Madeleine was the eldest. She grew up in a religious household that contributed greatly to her missionary vocation.

She went to primary and secondary school with the Sisters of the Presentation. At the age of 14, she met two FMM who were presenting a film on missions. Madeleine was so impressed. That evening, she was unable to fall asleep as she kept seeing the image of two sisters praying all night before the Blessed Sacrament. Throughout her studies, she had the opportunity to hear the stories of missionaries visiting her school. This confirmed her vocation.

One day, after a visit to our convent in Quebec City, she informed her parents that she desired to become a Franciscan missionary. What a surprise for them! Madeleine was the eldest. Her mother relied on her to help with the six brothers and sisters still in school! Nevertheless, with faith, her father and mother told her, *Go ahead, Madeleine and if it is not your place, you can return.*

At the age of 17, on September 15, 1953, Madeleine began her religious training at the Quebec Novitiate. It was two years of deepening her vocation. She took her temporary vows on March 19, 1956. She then went to our houses in Rigaud and Val d'Or. She also completed pedagogical studies at the University of Montreal.

In 1964, his great missionary dream became reality with her obedience to our boarding school of Aleppo in Syria. There she taught grades 6 and 7. Then she went to Beirut, Lebanon. She was a French teacher in grades 6, 7 and 9. *Among the two hundred students aged 14 and 15, she says, Christian, Muslim or Jewish, my attention was always towards the most vulnerable or isolated.*

An unfortunate event would end her mission in the Middle East. The Lebanese war broke out with its waves of clashes that sowed fear and paralysis everywhere. Madeleine returned to Canada in June 1967, where she started another mission with the poorest of society.

After a period of rest, Madeleine took courses at the University of Montreal in psychology and intervention technics. She then joined the team at the **Marronniers Centre**, a shelter for former psychiatric

patients. As a specialized educator, she helped residents gain greater autonomy by working with psychiatrists and social workers. She showed them how to live in an apartment, keep a job, manage a budget, do groceries, cooking, and cleaning. She devoted herself to this organization for more than 25 years. *I felt very much a Franciscan missionary in this service to humanity, she stated, because I had the joy of nurturing life in these young people with disabilities by giving more autonomy to the poorest.*

In 1995, she took over as director the Marie Hermine Pavilion in Montreal where, for 5 years, she accompanied our residents. Then she was stuck by the ordeal of illness. Cancer, great weakness, physical pain were her daily lot of suffering. Without despairing, she said, *I am very well accompanied by a competent and understanding medical team. I can let go in all confidence.* Having regained her strength, she continued to provide sporadically help as an educator for the intellectually disabled and long-term care patients at the Hôtel-Dieu in Montreal. She also accompanied our sisters in the provincial infirmary.

Throughout her life, she remained very close to her family. She was very happy

when Jean-Guy came to pick her up for family reunions or to visit her. She spoke of her father's gentleness, when as a child he explained her grandmother's death. *That she would rest for a long, long time...* She remembered her mother's last words when she left on mission. *Madeleine, go where God calls you, do what He wants.* These memories remained strengths throughout her life. Everything was about doing God's will and being a constant presence among the most vulnerable.

Sister Madeleine loved her FMM sisters. It was obvious when she was with our sick sisters. She tried through small games to bring them a little joy and love with such patience and gentleness. Then her strength diminished and she had to be admitted to the infirmary. She participated in all the small activities and remained a loving companion despite her limitations.

Then one evening without warning that the Lord was near, she fell in front of her room. It was God's hour. He welcomed his faithful servant into His kingdom.

Thank you, Madeleine, for your life with us and your comforting presence with the poorest of our society. Go, rest in peace.



*Her 50th Jubilee card:
Here and now,
give witness to HOPE
dwelling in us
... and reaching beyond us.
1 Peter 3:15*



***Sister Madeleine Houle
(Marie de l'Épiphanie)***

Franciscan Missionary of Mary

***Born in Drummondville, QC
March 24 1936***

***Entered the Institute in Quebec City, QC
September 15 1953***

***Died in Montréal, QC
June 17 2020***

***in her 85th year,
the 67th of her religious life***

May she rest in the peace of Christ!