

## *Heart to Heart* (Special Edition)



April 1, 2022 (#467)



**ON APRIL 19, 1852, THREE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH**, accompanied by Sr. Delphine Fontbonne, set out from Toronto and ferried across Lake Ontario to Hamilton to set up a new mission. They came in response to the invitation from Vicar General Rev. E. Gordon to care for orphan children of immigrants. From that time, 170 years ago to now, the Sisters have served the people in the Hamilton Diocese, even before it was officially a diocese. Then, as now, they lived in the heart of the city, not separating themselves from those whom they came to serve.

**THE SISTERS FOUNDED ST. MARY'S ORPHANAGE** and later Mount St. Joseph. The Orphans' Festival was a major influence in the city for 100 years. Upon closure of the Orphanage, the Sisters used the Mount to support a variety of other ministries.

**THE SISTERS WERE INFLUENTIAL** in laying the foundations of the *Catholic school system in Hamilton and beyond*, starting in Paris in 1858, and they became known throughout this diocese as leaders in Catholic education.

**IN 1854 AND 1855**, when a cholera epidemic and then a typhus outbreak closed the schools, the Sisters volunteered to care for the sick and dying.

**IN 1861, IN GUELPH**, the Sisters started the first Catholic Hospital in Hamilton Diocese. That facility now known as St. Joseph's Health Care recently celebrated 160 years of mission. The legacy of the Sisters lives on under the *St. Joseph's Health System*.

**IN 1879, IN DUNDAS**, the Sisters were gifted with property to start the House of Providence, now known as St. Joseph's Villa, and its mission not only continues but has expanded to include palliative care with the recent addition of *Margaret's Place Hospice*.

**IN 1890, IN HAMILTON**, *St. Joseph's Hospital* had its beginnings. Many Sisters have given dynamic and legendary leadership in this institution. It likewise continues to play a significant role throughout the province and worldwide. The Sister's legacy of compassionate caring lives on. Kitchener was the next to benefit from the opening of *St. Mary's General Hospital* and school of nursing in 1924. It has grown to become a Cardiac Care Centre.

**ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL OPENED IN BRANTFORD** in 1950 and was replaced by *St. Joseph's Lifecare Centre* in 2004. It includes the *Stedman Community Hospice* palliative care home.

**ALL ALONG HIGHWAY #6** mission houses were established with Sisters as teachers, music teachers, sacristans and a variety of other ministries. They had an educational and religious presence in schools and parishes in Paris, Dundas, Brantford, Arthur, Kenilworth, Mount Forest, Guelph and Owen Sound. Other highways took them to Hespeler, Stoney Creek, Milton, Burlington, Oakville, Waterloo, Cambridge and Toronto.

**THE SISTERS LIVED IN MISSIONS** among First Nations Peoples and other communities in northern Ontario, British Columbia and Labrador. They ministered in Guatemala, Jamaica, Zambia as teachers, catechists, and founders of schools and workers among those who are poor. The International Outreach Program of St. Joseph's Health System further extended a worldwide response to places in need.

**STORIES OF RISK TAKING**, courage and adversity accompany all these stories of the institutions, projects and organizations begun by the Sisters and those who worked alongside them, be they supporters, volunteers, staff, benefactors. The spirit and mission to serve continues.

**IT HAS BEEN 10 YEARS NOW** since the Hamilton Congregation amalgamated with the congregations in London, Peterborough and Pembroke to become the *Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada*. In more "recent times" the Sisters have been initiators of meeting new needs of refugees, women in crisis, families in poverty, homeless persons in need of food and shelter, teaching meditation to children, being parish administrators, parish ministers, chaplains. Sisters today are still involved in meeting the social and spiritual needs of people wherever they are able. Today's concerns include the environment and care of the earth, working towards truth and reconciliation, countering racism and homophobia. They continue to be a neighbour to those whom they encounter, and a presence of and witness of God's love.

**THE SISTERS TAKE THIS TIME** to honour their Hamilton roots (beginnings) within this diocese and the ways in which they continue to be a presence. They give gratitude to God who has blessed them and been with them throughout these many years. They face the future with trust and openness to embrace new moments that lead to transformation, remaining committed to witnessing to a life immersed in life and love.

**VISIT THE CONGREGATION** of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada website at [www.csjcanada.org](http://www.csjcanada.org)

**THERE WILL BE A MASS OF THANKSGIVING** at Holy Rosary Parish, Burlington on Tuesday April 19, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. Guests are welcome, following covid guidelines and potential limited attendance. Please rsvp to [patv@csjcanada.org](mailto:patv@csjcanada.org) by April 10<sup>th</sup>. Live streaming of the Mass will be available at <https://holyrosaryburlington.com>

***"Immersed in Life and Love we embrace this moment of possibility  
as a graced path to transformation".***

St. Joseph, pray for us!

Ex corde, *+Douglas*, OMI