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## 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE N.-D.-DU-SACRÉ-COEUR SISTERS

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In my own name and on behalf of the Church of Edmundston I want to express my deepest gratitude to the Sisters of Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur for all they have been to our Church these past 75 years, as well as for all their accomplishments world-wide, especially in Grand Falls and St.-André.

### SUZANNE CYR

The sisters came to Grand Falls in 1924, the very year of their foundation, at the invitation of Father Thomas Albert who passed away just a few weeks later, on November 16, 1924. We could say that this year we are celebrating a double anniversary, the arrival of the sisters and the death of Father Albert. The founder, Suzanne Cyr, in religion known as "Mère Marie-Anne," was born in the parish of St. Bruno [Van Buren, Maine] in 1850; she attended school at St-Basile and became a Sister of Charity of St. John. At the age of 73 she and 53 companions established a convent at Memramcook and took the name of Religious of Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur. [Our Lady of the Sacred Heart] Mère Marie-Anne died February 18, 1941, at the age of 91.

### ZEALOUS WOMEN

Despite her advanced age, Mère Marie-Anne left her mark on her era, as Sister Marie-Dorothée, the Congregation's historian points out in her book *Une pierre de la mosaïque acadienne*, where she writes: "In all her endeavours Sister Marie-Anne combined admirably her business acumen and her determination with a truly remarkable spirit of prayer and availability to God. In other words, a Teresa of Avila in Spain or a Marie-de-l'Incarnation in New France held to the same principles but applied them to different circumstances. They are the women of zeal who stand out throughout history and who have altered the fate of our people."

### HEIRS AND BUILDERS

I invite you to thank God for the first 75 years of the N.D.S.C. Sisters, to thank God not only for the past but also for the present: we owe so much to them! And let us make a great act of faith and hope for the future; what was sowed in 1924 is so full of life that it can thrive for a number of years, still. And I make mine the words of composer Patrick Richard, to express the apostolic intensity of our dedication to our sources: All the trees have not been planted; all the grain has not been sown: heirs to the furrows of history, let us be, today, witnesses and builders. Even if the time of sowing is long, even if the long period of waiting seems extended, despite the rocky soil and the brambles, despite all the impatience, let us keep watch standing, let us dare to have this crazy dream. The Spirit says to each of us, 'Trust the men and women with a heart of flesh, trust in the people of prophecy.'

### TO THE AID OF THE STARFISH

I recently came across a modern parable which can shed light on what we are feeling, on this anniversary: There once was a very intelligent wise man who was in the habit of writing by the side of the ocean and of walking long

hours along the shore in deep reflection and meditation. One day while he was walking by the sea he noticed what appeared to be a human form that seemed to be dancing. Getting closer, he realised that the form that seemed to dance was not dancing at all. It would bend down, pick up something, and run to throw it in the water. When he was within earshot, the wise man called out to what was in fact a young woman: "What are you doing?" And the young woman answered, "I am returning the starfish to the sea. Since they missed the outgoing tide they will die if I do not put them back into the sea." The wise man pointed there were kilometres of beach and that her action had no significant influence on the fate of all these starfish. After listening with respect, the young woman bent over once again, picked up a starfish and threw it into the sea. She then returned to the wise man and said: "For the one I have just thrown back in, what I have done is significant." The young woman had made a choice. She had a clear vision regarding the fate of the starfish, and rather than be a mere observer of the world, she had opted to be part of it and help change things. The following day, after having passed a sleepless night over the young woman's response, the wise man rose and went back to her and helped her all day long to return the starfish into the sea. We, too, have to look for the starfish, and if we wisely and carefully return them to the sea, the twenty-first century could be a life-giving one for our Church.

## GESTURES OF LIFE

This parable can apply to the lives of several people we know. On these days marking the anniversary of the death of Mother Teresa, we are reminded of her comments on why she had chosen to minister to the dying while there was such a multitude of them; at first sight it probably did not change anything to the future of the city but for the dying, their agony and their entire life were warmed as if by the sun. Still, the actions of Mother Teresa have revolutionised and will continue to revolutionise our world. Mère Marie-Anne and her companions performed similar actions for the poor and the needy, for the young and the not-so-young, to bring them hope. Actions which the teacher, the cook, and the nurse have to do not often gain them publicity, but they are life-giving gestures, gestures giving life in abundance. The N.D.S.C. Sisters are among the women who have known and who know how to give a second chance to the starfish. (It is wonderful that after 75 years of existence, the Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur Sisters can proclaim in all truth and simplicity:

We walk in faith, O Lord, loving as you love.

We live of your law, O Lord, and we are yours.

Strong in the faith of our ancestors, we draw near to you

Simply through loving one another, because we believe in you.

In our day-to-day living, we work for you

Simply through loving one another, because we believe in you.

You make us, through your Word, witnesses of your voice

Simply through loving one another; yes, we believe in you.

You feed us with bread, with wine, to steady our steps

Simply by loving us, yes, we believe in you.

*+ François Thibodeau*

+ François Thibodeau

Bishop of Edmundston

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