

LIVING WITH CHRIST THIS WEEK

Sunday, July 11:	Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C) - green
Monday 12:	Ferial - green
Tuesday 13:	Ferial - green
Wednesday 14:	Ferial - green
Thursday 15:	St. Bonaventure, bishop, doctor - white
Friday 16:	Ferial - green
Saturday 17:	Ferial - green
Sunday 18:	Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C) - green

Our Saintly and Historical Heritage



3. Mother d'Youville (1701-1771)

On her mother's side, Marguerite Dufrost de Lajemmerais was the great-granddaughter of Pierre Boucher, the Seigneur of Boucherville. She was the oldest of a family of six children. When her father died in 1708, the family endured extreme poverty and humiliation. Thanks to Pierre Boucher, Marguerite was able to study two years with the Ursulines in Quebec City. In 1722, she married François Yon (d'Youville), a bootlegger who was involved in many dubious business deals. The marriage was a catastrophe. When her husband died in 1730, Marguerite was pregnant with her sixth child. Only two of her children survived and they became priests. Marguerite worked non stop to feed her children, maintain her home, pay her husband's debts, and help the poor. She was very compassionate and even ensured that criminals executed in public were buried in coffins. She purchased and managed a business efficiently and successfully.

From 1727 on, she had profound mystical experiences which deepened her relationship with God. Her perspective and devotion focused on the plight of the poorest. In 1737, she formed a community with three companions and consecrated her life to the service of the poor, the elderly, the sick, and those who were psychologically and physically challenged. She welcomed them into her home despite the fact that people of her era found this apostleship shocking. Society felt that one should not live with the poor. At times to earn a living for herself and her followers, Marguerite herself turned to bootlegging. The four companions were known as the "grey women" and were ridiculed when they walked in the streets of Montreal to beg for the poor. Their name remained (*Grey Nuns*) and is no longer perceived as an insult but as a mark of respect.

Then beginning in 1738, disaster struck. Marguerite experienced everything from physical trials, fires, obstacles, epidemics, lies, rivalries, and administrative interference from the Intendants, Governors and even the Bishop of Quebec. Despite these challenges, she remained hopeful and committed to her tireless love for the poor. Her community grew and developed a structure. In 1747, Marguerite became the administrator of the *Hôpital Général des Frères Charon*. In 1755, the religious community received official approval. During the years 1755 to 1760, during the war between the French colonists and the English forces, the Hospital cared for the wounded from both camps and even hid one from the other. In 1765, the Hospital burned to the ground and Marguerite started over.

Marguerite d'Youville was a strong, intelligent and remarkable woman who had an intense and untiring love for the poor. In 1959, Pope John XXIII described her as the "*Mother of universal charity*".

During the summer, why not visit *Maison Marguerite* situated at 138 St. Pierre Street in Montreal (514-842-9411), or better still the Sanctuary of St. Marguerite d'Youville in Varennes, Quebec, her birthplace (450-652-2873). For more information, consult the Grey Nuns' website or Estelle Tardif's book: *Marguerite d'Youville – The cry of the poor* (Montreal, Bellarmin, 2001).

André Beauchamp

Translated by Honore Kerwin Borrelli