

## Death of Sister Thérèse Houde Laprise (1914-2008)

A pioneer of the Marian Work has left us for the hereafter: Sister Thérèse Laprise, born on October 1, 1914, passed away on April 13 at Virgo-Fidelis, the residence of the Daughters of Mary at Lac-Échemin, surrounded by several of her children.

This noble woman had a double vocation. After having given birth to 10 children, nine of whom are still living, she lost her husband who was 55 years old, after 33 years of married life. Shortly after his death, in January 1970, her son Denis, a Camillian Father and a chaplain at the *Enfant-Jésus* Hospital in Quebec City, met Marie-Paule who had been urgently hospitalized there. With his Camillian confrere, Father Victor Rizzi, Father Denis quickly perceived the rich spirituality of the one who, at that time, was guiding the little Marian Group. The two young Fathers joined the Group, as did Father Denis' family: his mother, Thérèse, and his brothers and sisters.

On August 28, 1971, the Laprise family was present for the Marian Group's day of prayer at the little shrine of Our Lady of Etchemin, a day foreseen by Heaven for the founding of the Army of Mary without anyone knowing it. Subsequently, Thérèse and her children were invited to read *Life of Love* discreetly, which was offered, in manuscript form, to a restricted group of close collaborators.

In January 1977, Thérèse

was hospitalized in Sherbrooke for a bleeding stomach ulcer. The surgeon who was to perform the emergency surgery thought she would not survive. After the operation, he indicated to the members of the family that he had "sealed the stomach wall that was oozing blood and as thin as tissue paper." Now, during the operation, Father Denis had promised, interiorly, to the Lady of All Peoples that if his mother recovered, he would bear witness that she had been cured through the Lady's intercession. Two days after the surgery, Thérèse was out of danger, and she made a quick recovery. That same year, Thérèse and six of her children came to live at the Army of Mary Center in Quebec City, where Fathers Denis and Victor had been living for a short time.

The Community of the Sons and Daughters of Mary was founded on May 31, 1981, at the Army of Mary Center. Two of Thérèse's children were a part of the Community's initial nucleus: Father Denis and Sister Louise. A short time later, Thérèse was able to realize her ideal of the religious life. On May 24, 1982, in the Basilica of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, within a pilgrimage of the Work, she took the habit of the Daughters of Mary.

In September 1986, when the novitiate of the Sons of Mary was moved to L'Aquila in Italy, Sister Thérèse became the Superior of the first

group of Daughters of Mary assigned to serve the novitiate. For health reasons, she returned to Quebec in August 1988. She resided at Virgo-Fidelis to the end of her life, collaborating, according to her physical capabilities, in the life of the Community. Since the year 2000, her main mission was that of prayer, and at the age of 93, she still went regularly for an hour of adoration at Spiri-Maria.

Sister Thérèse's general condition began to deteriorate seriously on Saturday, April 12, and her family was called to her side. Her Sisters in the Community had the joy of seeing her one last time at about 6:00 p.m., and in spite of her pain, she still found the strength to affectionately greet each one. Father Denis gave his mother the last rites and exhorted her to abandon herself in the Heart of the Lady of All Peoples, Co-Redemptrix, who would guide her to the heart of the Father's Heart.

Throughout her agony, Sister Thérèse murmured several times, "the heart of

the Father's Heart", and finally it was with great serenity that she surrendered herself to Life, shortly after 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 13.

Sister Thérèse went to join her loved ones who preceded her On-High. Besides the members of the Community, she leaves to mourn her passing her children, sons and daughters-in-law – some of whom have occupied or are still occupying key positions in our Works –, 23 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren. She was exposed for viewing at Virgo-Fidelis, and the funeral Mass was celebrated at Spiri-Maria on April 19, while the Mothers of the Family of the Sons and Daughters of Mary were on retreat. Thus, the Mothers of the Family were able to say goodbye for the last time to the one who was the first mother to bring her whole family into the Marian Work.

**Sylvie Payeur Raynauld**



**Sr. Thérèse Laprise**



**Mass presided over by Father Denis Laprise, son of the deceased, surrounded by 26 concelebrating Sons of Mary.**

### Excerpts from the Homily at the Funeral Mass

Dear family and friends of Sister Thérèse, we are gathered here in this beautiful chapel of Spiri-Maria to celebrate the funeral of our beloved sister and one of the first Daughters of Mary. May our prayer ascend to God as a sign of gratitude for all God did for her, and for all she did for all of us. On behalf of the Church and the Directors of the Army of Mary, I offer to the Houde and Laprise families, as well as to the Community of the Daughters of Mary and the Mothers here present, our sincerest condolences....

Sister Thérèse, upon leaving this earth, has entered true Life, the Life of God, because she deeply believed in the risen Christ who said: *"I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in me has eternal life."*...

Faced with the mystery of death, the Word of God assures us that Christ, through His victory over evil and through His Resurrection, opened the gates of the Kingdom of heaven to our sister. All her life, Sister Thérèse was a woman of deep faith who nourished herself of the Body and Blood of Christ. May the Lord welcome her in heaven with all the blessed, especially with her

husband Armand and all the Knights of Mary, in the joy and light of God.

Gratified with divine graces, Sister Thérèse filled with love her life of daughter, wife, mother and religious in the Community of the Daughters of Mary, and she was always a very generous woman....

Simplicity, kindness and charity are the virtues which marked Sister Thérèse's life. Today, it is her turn to go to heaven, but sooner or later it will be our turn. Therefore, let us always be ready, for we too will have to pass through death before being able to reach Life. Since we believe in God, if we persevere in the same faith to the end of our life, we will have a wonderful dwelling place in heaven. How fortunate we are to be able to nourish ourselves of the Holy Eucharist, the pledge of eternal Life. In effect, Christ told us: *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. And I will raise him up on the last day."*

Therefore, I invite you to offer the Holy Mass and your Holy Communion for the repose of Sister Thérèse's soul. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom she consecrated her life, accompany her to the heart of the Father's Heart. Amen.

**Father Victor Rizzi**