

Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys

- Feastday: January 12
- Patron Saint of: poverty, loss of parents, people rejected by religious orders
- Birth: April 17, 1620
- Death: January 12, 1700
- Canonized: on October 31, 1982, by Pope John Paul II



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Marguerite was born the sixth of twelve children to devout parents in Troyes, France. She experienced difficulty when trying to understand God's will for her life and determine her vocation. She felt a call to religious life, but her applications to the Carmelites and Poor Clares were unsuccessful. In 1654, the governor of the French settlement in Canada visited his sister, an Augustinian canoness in Troyes. Marguerite belonged to a sodality connected to that convent. The governor invited her to come to Canada and start a school in Ville-Marie (eventually the city of Montreal). She gave away her inheritance and bravely left the world she knew behind in 1653. When she arrived, the colony numbered 200 people with a hospital and a Jesuit mission chapel.

She opened a school and was successful at recruiting more teachers for the settlement. With more women coming to assist her efforts, the Congregation of Notre Dame was established in 1676, but its members did not make formal religious profession until 1698 when their Rule and constitutions were approved.

Marguerite established a school for Indian girls in Montreal. At the age of 69, she walked from Montreal to Quebec in response to the bishop's request to establish a community of her sisters in that city.

Referred to as the "Mother of the Colony," Marguerite

"When the heart is open to the sun of grace, we see flowers blossom in their fragrance; these are seen to have profited by the word of God."

spent her last years writing and praying. On the final day of the year 1699, one of the young members of the Congregation of Notre Dame was sick and near death. Mother Marguerite prayed to the Lord and asked him to take her life in exchange. In response to her prayer, the sister was completely well the next morning. Mother Marguerite developed a fever and suffered for 12 days before dying on January 12, 1700. Marguerite was canonized in 1982.