

BLESSED MARIE ANNE BLONDIN

Esther's early life:

Born on April 18, 1809, Esther Blondin was welcomed into a deeply Christian family who farmed the land in Terrebonne Quebec. As so many in the French Canadian milieu of the time the family was illiterate. Eager to learn Esther took up a position in her own village as a house-keeper in the Convent of the Congregation of Notre Dame. In exchange for her work she was able to learn to read and write.

After a year she became a boarder to continue her education and eventually became a novice in this Congregation. Due to ill health she was not able to continue in this vocation.



In 1833 Esther became a teacher in the parochial school of Vaudreuil. She became increasingly aware that the Church ruling forbidding the education of both sexes in the same classroom or school was prohibitive to poor rural communities and hence neither received an education. Finally in 1848 Esther Blondin applied to the Bishop of Montreal with the plan to found a Congregation for the education of both boys and girls in the same schools. Bishop Bourget authorized a modest attempt.

Foundation and growth of the Congregation

The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann was founded on September 8, 1850 in Vaudreuil and Esther was named Mother Marie Anne. The young community taught school, befriended their neighbours and frequently cared for the various needs of the people in the village. Under her able direction and inspired by the Sisters' way of life many chose to join them.

As the community and school expanded Bishop Bourget transferred the motherhouse of the Sisters to St. Jacques de l'Achigan. A new chaplain was appointed with his own vision for the community. He began to interfere with the private life of the Sisters. Conflict arose between the chaplain and Mother Marie Anne who was eager to protect the rights of the Sisters to govern their own affairs. The Bishop seeking to find a peaceful solution asked Mother Marie Anne to step down from her leadership position and never to accept it again.

Sister Marie Anne believed that she could best serve the good of her community and the greater glory of God by remaining a member. Therefore with courage and trust in God she decided to live with this ruling. Though she suffered greatly she chose not to live as a victim. Sister Marie Anne spoke her truth when confronted with the unjust treatment she endured over the years.

The blessing for the growth of the spiritual life of this community was the assignment given to Mother Marie Anne. She was appointed to work in the laundry where fortunately the Novices, those preparing to become Sisters, also worked. There she was able to influence these women in the true spirit of the community. In addition to sharing with the novices the qualities necessary for the education of youth she was an example of a woman committed to living her religious vocation. She was faithful to maintaining authentic relationships thereby ensuring honesty, integrity and compassion.

When in 1858 the Bishop of Victoria, B.C. requested the service of Sisters of St. Ann in British Columbia, Mother Marie Anne volunteered. Her offer was not accepted but the Sisters who did come to Victoria fulfilled for the first time Esther's dream of educating children of both sexes in the same school.

Esther Blondin, Mother Marie Anne died on Jan. 2, 1890 in Lachine, Quebec.

She was declared Blessed on April 29, 2001 by Pope John Paul II after a study of her life and the approval of a miraculous cure that was attributed to her intercession.

Today, the Sisters of St. Ann continue the mission of education begun by their Foundress. Like Esther the Sisters have a preference for working with those who are experiencing poverty. Located in British Columbia, Quebec, the Eastern United States of America, Haiti, Chili and the Cameroons the Sisters strive to respond to the needs through education, health care, pastoral work and prison chaplaincy. Wherever they serve the Sisters and their associates seek to change unjust structures. Together with those for whom and with whom they minister they journey towards the fullness of life.



PURPOSE

To offer financial assistance to women:

- for theological or ministry studies
- for programs or experiences which promote understanding of issues related to justice, peace and the integrity of creation
- for programs or experiences which promote healing, holistic living and healthy life style
- for programs which offer employment training that enable the recipient to improve her job opportunities in order that she and her family might have greater financial security.



SISTERS
OF ST. ANN
PACIFIC NORTHWEST

ELIGIBILITY

Priority will be given to a candidate from B. C. , the Yukon or the Northwest Territories who is on a limited income and who sees the formation opportunity as a means for personal growth that enables her to be actively involved in some form of service to others.

Generally the bursary is for one year only.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

**April 30th and October 31st
of each year.**

**Bursaries for short term classes
and workshops can be applied for
throughout the year.**

**APPLICATION FORMS
may be obtained by contacting:**

**Bursary Committee
The Sisters of St. Ann
1550 Begbie Street
Victoria, BC
V8R 1K8**

Phone: 250-592-3133

Fax: 250-592-0234

e-mail: administration@ssabc.ca

**'How very interested I am in your successes
and how ardent are the wishes I make
at the feet of the Divine Jesus,
to call down on you
all the blessings of Heaven!' MMA**



MARIE ANNE BLONDIN

BURSARY FOR THE

FORMATION OF WOMEN

**This Bursary was created in 2000 in honour
of our 150th Anniversary of Foundation
and in honour of our Foundress, Blessed Ma-
rie Anne Blondin, beatified in Rome,
April 29, 2001**

