

MOTHER MARY TERESA OF ST. JOSEPH and her Toronto Experience

From her Autobiography

(Bittle p 260-268.)

The Request to come to Toronto.

I began to look for a counselor, and Divine Providence led me to Fr. Maeckler, S. J. (a native of Oldenburg) a pious and wise counselor. He had thought it best that we go to Canada and advised me to send my request for admission to a number of bishops whose addresses he had given me. To this request he added a few words of his own. In my request I was to state that I would reply in person for the answer. No longer did we feel alone and abandoned in a foreign country and in good spirits we set out for Canada.

I had to write to four or five bishops as I was seeking admission into their dioceses. The next morning as soon as we had returned from Mass, I began to write to the Bishop of Hamilton and the Archbishop of Toronto, for in both cities we could find a rich field of labor among the foreign bom. Monday morning we went on to Toronto. We arrived I toward evening and had just enough time to look for lodging with some Sisters. In the morning we went to the residence of Archbishop Neil McNeil, who had been appointed only recently. However, he was in Rome. We then submitted our request to his delegate. The city pleased me very much. I felt completely at home in it.

Acceptance

In February 1913 I received a request from the Archbishop of Toronto to come as soon as possible to establish a Home there. Heeding this request I left with an Italian Sister for Canada on March 24. We were very hospitably received by the Sisters of St. Joseph, and then had an audience with His Grace, Archbishop Neil McNeil of Toronto.

Searching for a home among the Italians

After receiving us most graciously and inquiring about our mission work, he spoke of the many Italians who had settled in Toronto and needed spiritual guidance. But first we would have to look for a home. In order to help us in our search he gave us the addresses of several pastors in whose parishes the largest number of Italians lived. He then dismissed us with his blessing. What was our amazement the next morning when we were called to the parlor after breakfast and there found the Archbishop who asked us to get ready to go out. In a moment we had put on our mantles. Waiting for what would come next, we returned to the parlor. His Excellency went along with us into the street, led us to his carriage, and urged us to get in. I thanked him and said, "Your Excellency has an Irish heart." He smiled and replied, "My mother was Irish."

We drove from one pastor to another. Those who were at home were very friendly, but none of them knew of a house suitable for us, so we returned to the convent at noon. For a whole week we looked around for a house, but all was in vain.

A house within the parish of St. Francis territory.

On April 2, we not only found what we wanted but what Divine Providence had destined for us. After we had gone quite a distance on that day by streetcar, we got off and turned into the next cross street. We had walked for only a few minutes when we saw a "For Rent" sign in a window. We rang the bell, and a young woman appeared and took us through the house, saying she wanted to rent it to somebody as soon as possible. It was a two family house, and since I wanted the whole property

including the garden, I inquired about the owner. We were told that the house and garden was the property of the archdiocese. The nearest Catholic Church was that of St. Francis. We went there directly, and the kind and zealous pastor, Fr. McCann, was greatly surprised that we had found this particular property of the archdiocese. Divine Providence must have led us there, he said, and so he was willing to take us into his parish. The Archbishop, too, was surprised when we reported to him that we had been able to find the house, and he gave his consent to our renting the property. He also encouraged us to make every effort to purchase the entire property as well as the garden.

Since the upper flat was vacant, we moved into the house a few days later. The family left the house on April 15, and a number of our Sisters arrived from Milwaukee, for our family had recently grown. Three professed Sisters and one postulant had come from Germany. M. M. Fabiana also came along, and now everybody got busy. We ourselves carpentered and painted and decorated. Yes, we even succeeded in getting the Chapel ready on the last day of May. I named the Home "St. Joseph's Home della Madonna" (dear Lady). That's why, in honor of our dear Lady, the first Holy Mass was celebrated in this small sanctuary on May 30.

The Italians generous benefactors

Here my dear Italians showed themselves to be generous benefactors. They had not only supplied us with the necessary food, but also collected money and brought it to us after work. They helped us most faithfully through all these years, and we, on our part, have done all we could to get them to observe their religious duties. Since May 1913, their orphan children have always found a home in the Carmel of the Divine Heart.

In Toronto we found benefactors of all nationalities faster than in any other foundation. They vied with one another to make a real Home here for the poorest of all children. Later we obtained the second house and garden, which was then used entirely for the children.