

Mother St. Rose Cullen

Mother St. Rose (Mary Catherine) Cullen was chosen to lead the Peterborough Congregation in 1965, and was one of the six founders of the Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada.



Mary Catherine was born in 1909 and grew up in Eastern Ontario in a loving Catholic family that served as a basis for her faith. After graduating from Notre Dame Convent School in Kingston, she attended Normal School in Ottawa to become a teacher.

Before entering the Congregation in Peterborough, Catherine taught in Kitchener, Ontario, and Hungerford (Hastings County) Ontario, for nine years. After joining the Congregation in 1938, Sister St. Rose taught in Peterborough, Hastings, Kirkfield and Campbellford for a total of twenty-six years. She held offices of local superior and tertian mistress of St. Margaret's Convent in Kirkfield, ON and of local superior Our Lady of Mount Carmel Convent in Hastings.

Mother St. Rose came to her position as General Superior with a strong foundation of practice and knowledge. She led the Congregation through two General Chapters (1968 and 1971) and through the changing and challenging times following Vatican II. Her involvement in the new Federation was an important aspect of leadership during this eventful time.

In her role as General Superior, she was a strong supporter of the Congregation's mission in Brazil, which had been undertaken by the previous General Council. She made two visits to the Sisters in Brazil. During her second term in office the Sisters in Peterborough formed a choir, "*Musically Yours*", which produced an LP recording and performed concerts throughout the diocese with proceeds going to the mission in Brazil.

Under Mother St. Rose's guidance, Sisters had the opportunity to revert to their baptismal names, and to wear a modified religious habit. The Sisters also incorporated into daily life the important liturgical changes, such as the use of the vernacular, which were mandated by the Second Vatican Council. In addition, Mother St. Rose initiated renovations to the chapel at Mount St. Joseph that

reflected these liturgical changes. In various ways Sisters also enjoyed greater personal responsibility for their lives. Mother St. Rose also attended the International Union of Superiors General meeting in Rome in 1969.

At the end of her term as General Superior in 1971 she retired, due to onset of muscular dystrophy. Although her activities were curbed due to the progress of the disease, she continued to offer spiritual direction and to co-ordinate congregational retreats. She died in Peterborough on July 5, 1975.

She is remembered for her deep spirituality, her warm interest in the welfare of all those with whom she came in contact, her sense of humour and her wholesome common sense. All members of the Congregation regarded her as a dear friend, one who had given thirty-eight years of her life in generous service.