

The Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada finds its roots among the seeds of dialogue and mutual support that were first sown in 1950. Four Canadian Sisters of St. Joseph attended the Tercentenary celebration that year in Le Puy, France. They were deeply inspired by the spirit of Jean-Pierre Médaille, SJ, and the founding women from 17th century France. Recognizing the Spirit-bestowed gift of charism bonding all Sisters of St. Joseph around the world, they were aware of a need for communication among the Canadian congregations. Those seeds of dialogue and mutual support would strengthen a sense of a common origin and identity.

The 1954 formation of the Canadian Religious Conference led to more informal discussion among the six General Superiors. Since 1964, our congregational leaders have met regularly to discuss matters of common interest and concerns. Further impetus for renewal and closer association was provided by *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Second Vatican Council's document on the adaptation and renewal of religious life. In September 1966, the statutes for a Canadian Federation received pontifical approval. Its stated goal was to bring the six congregational leaders together "for consultation and exchange of views and to the extent that it may seem desirable for mutual help and coordination of the efforts." Mother Maura McGuire, Toronto's general superior, served as founding president of the federation council from 1966 to 1968.

Mother Maura, CSJ

Mary Estelle, daughter of John McGuire and Mary Devlin was born on July 1, 1900 in Toronto, Ontario. Estelle received her education at St. Joseph's Academy located in the Toronto motherhouse on St. Alban Street (Wellesley Street West), Toronto. After obtaining a commercial diploma in 1918, she spent the next three years working in a bank in Montreal and earning an accounting diploma from McGill University.



In February 1921 she entered the Toronto Congregation receiving the habit and her religious name, Sister Maura, on August 15 of that same year. Following her canonical year in the novitiate, Sister Maura continued studies for senior matriculation while teaching at St. Basil's and St. Michael's elementary schools. She made first profession on January 5, 1924 and enrolled in the Toronto Normal School that September. Final profession was made on January 5, 1927.

Sister Maura taught in Toronto, St. Catharines and Vancouver and in 1935 she was appointed principal of St. Joseph's College Day and Boarding School (formerly known as St. Joseph's Academy) until 1942. Her last position as an educator was at Guardian Angels School in Orillia where she taught, served as principal and local superior of the convent.

Sister Maura's ministry changed direction with her appointment to St. Michael's Hospital in 1945. There she served successively as Secretary Treasurer, Assistant Administrator and then Administrator until 1956. During her years at St. Michael's she gained a reputation as an astute business woman, initiating an ambitious period of reconstruction and modernization and launching the first-ever fund-raising campaign for St. Michael's Hospital. In this she collaborated with a number of successful Toronto businessmen who praised her highly for her leadership and business acumen.

In 1956 Mother Maura was elected Superior-General of the Toronto Congregation. Her twelve years of general leadership included major property developments. The motherhouse property at Bay and Wellesley Streets was sold to the provincial government and in 1960 a new motherhouse and high school was opened in north Toronto – named Morrow Park after Frederick K. Morrow, a generous benefactor to the Sisters. St. Joseph's House of Studies and the new College School rose on the north side of Wellesley near Queen's Park, opened a year later in 1961. With the closure of House of Providence, Providence Villa and Hospital opened in Scarborough in 1962. During Mother Maura's term of office other buildings were constructed, re-constructed or made larger - Paul Dwyer High School and Convent in Oshawa, the Glendale Wing of St. Joseph's Hospital, the modernization of the east wing of the same hospital and the modernization of St. Joseph's General Hospital in Comox, British Columbia.

On November 24, 1967 Mother Maura was invested into the Order of Canada, one of ten women and the sole woman religious of the initial 90 honorees. While Mother Maura moved with ease among Church and civic officials as well as in government and business circles, she was also at home with the sick and the poor to whom she responded with open-handed generosity. She returned to St. Michael's as secretary treasurer at the end of her second term of office and, in 1971, was named superior and administrator of Our Lady of Mercy Hospital in Toronto. In 1976 declining health brought her to the infirmary at the Morrow Park motherhouse.

On June 30 1979 the Toronto Congregation lost an outstanding member when Sister Maura McGuire died at St. Michael's Hospital where she had lived and served for many years.