

December 2023 – Mother St. John Fontbonne’s Rosary

By Linda Wicks, Toronto Congregation Archivist



A personal rosary originally belonging to Mother St. John Fontbonne is one of the most precious artifacts to be cared for by the Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto. According to the framed explanation of ownership, Mother St. John gifted these beads to her brother on the evening before she was to have been guillotined in 1793. Her brother, in turn, bequeathed the rosary to his daughter, Marie Antoinette, before she left France for North America as a young Sister of St. Joseph, Sister Mary Delphine Fontbonne. After Mother Delphine’s death on 7 February 1856, this precious legacy passed into the possession of Mother Teresa Brennan and Mother Bernard Dinan, successively. Prior to its transfer to the archives, the rosary was in the care of the novice mistress.