

*Celebrating the
Birth of
St. Marguerite*



**Prayer Service celebrating the
400th year of St Marguerite with us.**

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This prayer service is to be used on a monthly basis with each month focusing on deepening our awareness of one of Marguerite's gifts to us and through us to the world.

For example: Her vision
Her love of Mary
Her dedication
Her courage
Her openness
Her compassion
Her faithfulness
Her zeal
Her obedience
Her service
Her fidelity
Her hospitality

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The 2nd reading is to be taken from Marguerite's writings reflecting one of these gifts. The appendix contains quotes from the Writings of Marguerite Bourgeoys, Montreal, 1976 that have been selected for the various gifts of Marguerite. The numbers in brackets are the page numbers where the passage is found.

The presider selects appropriate music and pauses for reflection after the readings.

Marguerite's birth heralds that a new voice will be heard. A voice that gives hope; a voice that brings good news to those that are poor — poor in Spirit, poor in physical well-being, poor emotionally, poor of heart. Her vision that humankind can and will be transformed by the love of God.

Marguerite had a dream as we read in her writings "From early childhood, God had given me the inclination to gather little girls of my own age together to live and work together in some distant place to earn our living. I had never known any community of women, but only a few women who lived together. We imitated that as children." The Writings of Marguerite Bourgeoys, page 162

Her dream brought her, first alone and later with others, to Ville Marie in Canada where she founded, a school in 1658 and in 1698 formed the Congregation de Notre Dame modelled on the Blessed Virgin. "...I do not find any more suitable means of achieving this than to follow the Blessed Virgin, to imitate the course of her life in all things and to go to God through her as the Eternal Father gave us His Son through her." WMB page 64.

Over the years the Congregation began spreading its wings, in the Maritime Provinces, in Ontario, to Western Canada, and in the United States. Later, the Sisters widened their field of action even more to work in Japan, Central America, Africa and France.

Wherever the Sisters and Associates are found today there one finds Marguerite present with her compassionate heart, gently loving, guiding, and protecting. The words that Mary spoke to her so many years ago, "Go, I will never forsake you." ring true today for the CND Sisters and Associates, wherever they are and whatever they are doing.

A prayer of birth.

Divine Holy Mystery,
Creator of all that is
We thank You for new life
For the blessings of this new birth.

We praise You for that Holy Spirit
Born anew this day.
We trust in Your love and care for one
as vulnerable as this small one.

Help us to recognize that she is Yours
A gift for us to hold and cherish.
Her breath — Your breath
Her dreams — Your dreams.

Remind us that her life, all lives,
are significant in Your eyes.
Thank You for loving her, for loving us,
For bringing into our world the joys of new life.

Father, we pray that our lives
and the lives of all our children
will reflect the truth that
We are precious to You.

Bless this birth this day
Grace her with the gift
to grasp her unique purpose
and to live it out in total abandon.

May she experience
Joys and sorrows
peace and happiness to the fullest
From her first breath to her last.

Bless her with an unabashed,
all-inclusive everlasting love.

Glory to you, source of all Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.

Reading 1: “It is true that all I have ever desired most deeply and what I still most ardently wish is that the great precept of the love of a God above all things and of the neighbour as oneself be written in every heart. O, if I could only engrave it in my own heart and in each of my sisters, I would have reached the fulfillment of my desires.”

Writings of Marguerite Bourgeoys, page 187.

A prayer of Bringing to Birth

(adapted from a poem by Mariam Therese Winter)

What will we bring to birth in the world?

Wisdom and justice, peace and compassion
Concern for all God’s little ones,
for the homeless the destitute, the hungry
And all who bear the brunt of indifference and oppression

What shall we bring to birth on the earth?

A deep respect for our planet,
its windsong and its waters, its topsoil and its forests,
and a oneness with the wilderness that is image of our soul.

What shall we bring to birth in our church?

A total disdain for power that diminishes or destroys, divestment
of wealth and status,
a sharing of human resources based on mutuality,
And the sudden surprise of grace.

What shall we bring to birth in our hearts?

An unbreakable bond of the Spirit
that binds as one all sisters and brothers
transcending class, colour, culture, religions, race, and gender,
that treats no personal preference ,
no physical or spiritual difference as aberration or handicap.

One has been born among us who heralds such liberation,
human liberation, the liberation of all peoples,
One has taken flesh among us
And in spirit dwells with us.

Holy the woman and man who help this happen.
Blessed are we when we give birth to the word made flesh in
us.

Glory to you, source of all Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.

Reading 2: (WMB)

Prayer of thanksgiving

We give thanks for the gift of Marguerite
For the guidance of mother Mary
For the Spirit of life
Visible in Jesus
Visible in us.

We give thanks for the gift of faith
That recognizes this sacred presence
and this bonding of all people as one
So that peace may be a reality in our world.

May our hearts be open
To allow the life of Jesus
and the love of Mary
and the gift of Marguerite
to Motivate us in all that we do.
And may their presence be evident
in our living and loving.

Glory to you, source of all Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.

Reading 3: I cannot find words to thank our Creator God for all the blessings we have received from His divine Majesty, especially this memorable grace of possessing Him in the most Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

Since He has in His goodness consented that the Blessed Virgin be our foundress, all we can do is to make use of this means of paying our debt to Him: placing ourselves in the company of the Mother of God and the nine choirs of angels, gathering together as so many small threads joined to each other and completely united, we try to accomplish what is being asked of us this day in gratitude for God's benefits and with the help of His grace and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and all the saints.

Adapted from the WMB page 209

Intercessions:

Gracious God, you are the flame of love that burned within Marguerite's heart. May that same flame burn within our hearts and shine upon all we meet. We pray

Loving Father, may Marguerite's vision, courage and dedication be an inspiration for all of us as we seek to determine our role and place in our world today. We pray.

Marguerite left the comfort and security of her home to serve in a new land. May her courage give us the strength we need to let go and move forward with hope and compassion. We pray

Loving God, may we, like Marguerite, desire most ardently and live joyfully "the great precept of the love of God above all things and of our neighbour as oneself". We pray

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Magnificat: Luke's Gospel (1:46-55)

My soul proclaims your greatness O my God,
and my spirit has rejoiced in you, my Saviour,
For your regard has blessed me,
poor, and a serving woman.

From this day all generations
will call me blessed,

For you who are mighty, have made me great.
Most holy is Your Name.

Your mercy is on those who fear You
throughout all generations.

You have shown the strength of Your arm,
You have scattered the proud in their hearts' fantasy.

You have put down the mighty from their seat,
and have lifted up the powerless.

You have filled the hungry with good things,
and have sent the rich away empty.

You, remembering your mercy,
have helped your people Israel,

As you promised Abraham and Sarah,
Mercy to their children forever.

Amen.

Appendix

The following are quotes from the Writings of Marguerite Bourgeoys, Montreal, 1976. The numbers in brackets are the page numbers where the passage is found. I have made slight changes to some of the wording to try and make it more inclusive.

Love of Mary:

In 1640 on Rosary Sunday, I went to the procession at the Dominican Church where there was so great a number of people that the cloister was not large enough. So we crossed the street and passed in front of the portal of Notre Dame aux Nonmains where there was a statue in stone above the door. And glancing up to look at it, I found it very beautiful... (163)

Mary was a shoot of that purity in which God created the world. (52)
From all eternity, God ... resolved to create the world. After creating the stars, the heavens, the earth and all things [God] said: "Let us make man in our image and likeness," giving him the glorious qualities of his soul, as His masterwork, a spark of the divinity. He preserved Mary in the purity in which He created the world for the designs of His Majesty. (62)

The Blessed Virgin drew others to do good by her example; to see her was to be attracted to holiness. (68)

Mary is like: "living water, crystal clear, springing up from the foundations of the Saviour and refreshing all who come to it ... (64)

Her dedication:

The Blessed Virgin never excused herself from any journey on which there was good to be done or some charity to be performed ... (50). If the Blessed Virgin favours us so much as to give us some small place among her servants, ought we not to use all our strength, our industry and even our lives to continue these holy practices ...(51)

Her courage:

One morning when I was fully awake, a tall woman dressed in a robe as of white serge, said to me very clearly: "Go, I will never foresake you." I knew that it was the Blessed Virgin. This gave me great courage and I found nothing difficult This made me believe that if this was of God, I did not have to make any preparations for it; consequently, I did not bring a penny for the voyage". (165-66)

Her Openness:

The apostles went out to all parts of the world. The sisters of the congregation are ready to go anywhere they are sent. (82)

I compare this community to a square in a large garden ... In this square the gardener ... has set out a number of plants and flowers. In this little garden, they are all different in colour, in savour, in fragrance ... (63)

If you [Mary] act as advocate for the church, its own baptized members will be converted, and nonbelievers as well, its commandments will be better observed; peace will reign on earth and particularly throughout Christendom and nonbelievers come to know the truth. (54)

An example of her openness.

[They were just about in mid-Atlantic when the captain made out four English ships on the horizon. In tears, the young women said, "Sister are we going to be captured? What will happen to us?] If we are captured we will go to England or Scotland where we will find God as we find Him everywhere else. (39-40)

Her compassion:

Disease broke out on the ship and eight or more persons died. ... The Thibaudeau family were all near death, except a little girl who was still nursing at the breast. No one was willing to take care of her. I asked for her against the advice of our entire group who were all ill. But I heard them speak of throwing her into the sea and that was too pitiful for me. (31)

Her faithfulness:

Mary lost her Son when he was twelve years old, but she found him again, instructing the doctors and explaining the Scriptures to them ... He willed that the Blessed Virgin be witness of the doctrine He taught so that she might make use of it in the instructions she would give thereafter, for she kept all His words in her heart.

When the sisters are inspired to give glory to God in some way or to instruct their neighbour, they ought not to give this up, whatever the sufferings and the blame that might befall them. (71)

Her zeal:

But true love is the love of a lover. It is rarely found, for nothing touches it, neither good nor evil. The lover gives his life gladly for the beloved. He does not know his own interests or even his needs. Sickness and health are alike to him, prosperity and adversity, life and death, consolation and desolation are the same to him. (59)

Consider dear, that when you go on mission, you go to gather up the drops of the blood of Christ which are being lost. How happy a sister who is sent on mission will be if she thinks that she goes there at God's command and in His company. (78)

If the Blessed Virgin favours us so much as to give us some small place among her servants, ought we not to use our strength, our industry and even our lives to contribute in some way to continue these holy practices ... (51)

Her service:

At three years of age [Mary] was brought to the Temple where there was a school for children ... Once the Blessed Virgin had been recognized as the most enlightened, the most blessed, the most skillful in all sorts of tasks, she became the teacher of all the other girls. The sisters must labour to make themselves knowledgeable and skillful at all sorts of work (68)

While she was in the temple which was a school for girls,[Mary] edifies all the others, both by her instructions and her actions, taking upon herself the

function of a servant, rendering her companions all the services she could and teaching them various kinds of honourable work. (56)

Her fidelity:

I gave myself to God in 1640 ... I have never had a thought contrary to this. (173)

Her Hospitality:

When the time of [Mary's] delivery had come, the angels announced it to the shepherds. Later the kings were inspired to seek Him out to adore Him ... the Blessed Virgin received kings and shepherds with the same love ... (71)

[In 1663] there came to Montreal about 17 of the King's wards. I went to meet them at the shore, believing that we must open wide the doors of the Blessed Virgin's house to all young women ... (178)

Her Obedience:

The sisters must, as far as they are able with the grace of God, do what she [Mary] did: acknowledging their Creator who has drawn them out of nothingness, thanking Him for all the graces they have received from His mercy, embracing the observance of His commandments and following the teachings of Our Lord during His life on earth. (66)

The following are some additional quotes that you may want to consider using during your times of prayer.

I find that there are several kinds of love in human society: there is a love of strangers, of travellers, of the poor, of associates, of angels, of parents and of lovers. All these loves can be good or indifferent. It is only the love of the lover which penetrates the heart of God.

WMB 58

True love is the love of a lover. It is rarely found, for nothing touches it, neither good nor bad. The lover gives their life gladly for the beloved.

They do not know their own interests or even needs. Sickness and health are alike to a lover, prosperity and adversity, life and death, darkness and light ...

WMB 59

God is not satisfied if we preserve the love we owe our neighbour; we must preserve our neighbour in the love they ought to have for us. We must give the cloak to the one who wishes to have the tunic rather than take them to court.

WMB 170

It seems to me that we do not pay enough attention to prayer, for unless it arises from the heart which ought to be its centre, it is no more than a fruitless dream. Prayer ought to carry over into our words, our thoughts and our actions.

WMB 169

All our works are most suited to draw down blessings if they are done with purity of intention, without distinction between the poor and the rich, between relatives and friends and strangers, between the pretty and the ugly, the gentle and the grumbles, looking upon all of them as gift.

WMB 201

The Blessed Virgin drew others to good by her example; to see her was to be attracted to godliness. She was of service to everyone. We too must give good example everywhere; we ought to be of service in all things.

WMB 68

The Blessed Virgin was not cloistered, but everywhere she was, she preserved an interior solitude. She never refused to go wherever charity or need required her assistance.

WMB 69

The Blessed Virgin followed her son to the foot of the cross. We too must live always in the presence of God, as a mother who loves her child intensely does not lose him from her sight.

WMB 73

“Consider, dear, that when you go on mission, you go to gather up the drops of the blood of Jesus Christ which are being lost. How happy a sister

who is sent on mission will be is she thinks that she goes there at God's command and in His/Her company, if she thinks that in this work she can and ought to witness her gratitude to Him from whom she received all things."

WMB 78

It seems to me that we are charcoal ready to be kindled and that Holy Communion is entirely suited to set us on fire. But when this charcoal is kindled only on the surface, as soon as it is set aside, it is extinguished. On the contrary, that which is fired all the way to the centre is not extinguished, but is consumed.

We put the charcoal aside, if after communion, we are preoccupied with our natural moods, with concern for seeking our comfort without need and with frivolous and useless conversations.

WMB 204

"And ought we not, since the Blessed Virgin is our dear teacher, to imitate her virtues, practising what she practised according to the weakness and corruption of our nature? And if we are faithful, we ought to hope that God, who has granted holy founders the graces they asked for their followers, will hear her who is both daughter and spouse when she prays for this little community. Further, to imitate our dear foundress, we ought to go through her life and stop at whatever Our Lord inspires us to do."

WMB 51

It was by God's inspiration that I began a life which was not austere, not lived in a desert, but a little life, simple and proportioned to my condition as a poor woman.

WMB 42

All our thoughts, words and actions must have the fulfillment of God's commandments as their fitting beginning and purpose. At home, at work, and at play, we must make this understood; we must show the importance of observing them. ... we must bear the commandments in our hearts, so that we can make use of them on every occasion.

WMB 66

I compare this community to a square in a large garden. For all Christendom is a great garden created by God and all communities are as so many plots in this large garden. Ours, as small as it is, does not fail to be one of those little squares the Gardener has kept for Himself to set out a number of plants and flowers. In this little garden, they are all different in colour, in savour, in fragrance. The Gardener takes great care to fertilize and enrich this earth and to clear it. He takes care of all the seeds He wishes to sow and bring to growth there, so that they may not take up His ground if they have any vices and so that they may not be choked by weeds. This is why He does not fail to come back over this land and to water it at need.

WMB 63