



A Life in Pictures

**Blessed Marie Rose Durocher
1811-1849**

Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary
Icon by Joan Brand-Landkamer



Blessed Marie Rose: A Life in Pictures

When the **St. James Cathedral** community in Seattle, WA, was planning its Centennial, the parish commissioned Joan Brand-Landkamer to “write” an icon (left) as a tribute to the **Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary** who have ministered there. The vignettes describe the life of **Blessed Marie Rose** (born Eulalie Durocher), foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Names. The story begins in the upper left corner of the icon. The enlarged images in this booklet are arranged chronologically. More icons by Joan Brand-Landkamer are on the Cathedral’s website:

<http://www.stjames-cathedral.org/Tour/icons.htm>

Reflections: As you view the vignettes and read the text, what do you learn about Blessed Marie Rose? Her service? Her leadership? Her challenges? Do you share traits with her? How do the vignettes reflect Holy Names values? (For instance: full development of the human person, education in the faith, hospitality, service.)

Which values mean the most to you? To your ministry?

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Mélanie by mistake

Eulalie Durocher is born on **October 6, 1811**, at Saint Antoine-sur-Richelieu, Québec, Canada, and is baptized the same day. (The parish priest calls her Mélanie by mistake.) She is the 10th child born to the French-Canadian family of Olivier and Geneviève Durocher.

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The Durocher family

At the top we see Olivier and Geneviève, the parents. Below are the eight children who survive infancy; at the top right are graves of the three who die in early childhood. Three brothers become priests, and a sister, Séraphine, joins the Congregation of Notre Dame. Throughout Eulalie's life, her health is poor. Her grandfather home schools her until she is 10 years old.

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Sisters do not hesitate to leave her in charge

Eulalie is sent across the Richelieu River to Saint-Denys Church and Boarding School and studies there for two years. Germaine Duval, SNJM (*From vision to mission*, 1985), notes that Eulalie “had such an influence on the other students that the Sisters did not hesitate to leave her in charge when they had to be absent... it soon became evident that she was gifted in educating and leading others.” Here Eulalie, shown twice in the bottom right corner, prepares for her First Communion and Confirmation.

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What she wanted, she wanted whole-heartedly

Eulalie's father gives her a horse, Caesar (left panel), so she can get exercise and make visits to sick neighbors or others in need. At home she does chores; recreation includes taking walks and meditating along the banks of the Richelieu River. She wants to become a Sister, but illness interrupts her studies. One of her brothers says, "What she wanted, she wanted whole-heartedly, and she generally managed to get her way."

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Give without counting the cost

Eulalie gives herself to others “with great simplicity, first to her own family, then to people around her in society.” (*From vision to mission*, 1985, Germaine Duval, SNJM) When Eulalie is 18, her mother dies suddenly. Eulalie’s brother Théophile invites her to assist him in his parish in Saint-Benoît, then Beloeil. Here she is shown waving goodbye to her childhood home. Soon she is immersed in parish life. In addition to keeping house and hosting guests, she begins coordinating parish services. Eulalie — a contemporary of Charles Dickens — notices desperation in the lives of many unschooled girls in the countryside.

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Gentle messenger of mercy

1831-1843: As a young woman, Eulalie comes across as being “very tired, always ailing yet happy, calm and peaceful as she welcome[s] all with exquisite courtesy, encouraging or wiping away the tears of the afflicted.” (*From vision to mission*, 1985, Germaine Duval, SNJM, archival document). She becomes known as a “gentle messenger of mercy.” (*Rose of Canada*, 1934, Pierre Duchaussois, OMI)

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If girls were enlightened

With a strong sense of purpose, Eulalie teaches parish children their catechism. Eulalie believes that “if girls were enlightened, brought back to sound morals, formed in Christian virtues, they would found Christian homes; soon the whole country would be regenerated.” (*From vision to mission*, 1985, Germaine Duval, SNJM)

Toward that end, she organizes purposeful activities for girls. **Mélotie Dufresne** joins her friend Eulalie at the rectory. The day Eulalie turns 30, she is one of thousands of people who attend the dramatic blessing of a colossal cross atop a local landmark, Mount Saint-Hilaire.

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Go forth! 1843

Impressed by what he sees in Beloeil, Bishop Ignace Bourget, Montreal, invites Eulalie and her friends **Mélo die Dufresne** and **Henriette Céré** to found a new community of women religious who would teach in rural Québec. First, though, Eulalie wonders whether to follow a suggestion to join the Gray Nuns. She talks to her brother Eusèbe, a priest, in the confessional. His advice: **“You could work out your salvation with the Gray Nuns, but you would not be doing half the good you are doing”** locally. (*Rose of Canada*, 1934, Pierre Duchaussois, OMI)

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Carry the cross: 1844

The congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary takes shape. Eulalie (carrying the cross) becomes **Sister Marie Rose**. On August 4, 1844, she and new Sisters **Marie-Agnès** (Mélodie Dufresne) and **Marie-Madeleine** (Henriette Céré) lead a procession to the convent in **Longueuil**, Québec. Pupils follow along — it's quite the adventure.

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“In union will be your strength. May it be the soul of your little community.”

– Bishop Ignace Bourget

The three Sisters complete their novitiate and pronounce their vows. Sister Marie Rose is named the superior (Mother) of the “little community.” Soon there are many Sisters. **Mother Marie Rose** provides Sisters and students alike with a “maternal solicitude where affection was combined with the spiritual.” (*From vision to mission*, 1985, Germaine Duval, SNJM)

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Performing the lowliest tasks with unspeakable pleasure

Mother Marie Rose leads with compassion and humor. People say she could “chase the clouds away” with a funny word or “look over the top of her glasses, gazing deeply into the eyes of the one who seemed troubled.” (*She Who Believed in Tomorrow*, 1981, 2015, Frances Allison, SNJM) Bishop Ignace Bourget says Marie Rose “performed the lowliest tasks with unspeakable pleasure, washing the dishes, sweeping the kitchen or the classrooms, and removing ink spots.” (*Rose of Canada*, 1934, Pierre Duchaussois, OMI)

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Do not give up: 1846

The congregation grows, and the people of Beloeil build a convent for Holy Names Sisters. Despite that show of support, some critics dismiss the Sisters as “utopians” or “fools.” Marie Rose reminds Sisters they have “embraced our Divine Savior’s cross, don’t drag it, carry it with courage. ... I repeat, carry on and do not give up.”

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Guardians and mothers

The Convent of Saint-Timothée, founded in 1848, is one of the first Québec **missions of the expanding congregation**. Mindful of taking missions into English-speaking areas, Mother Marie Rose insists on bilingual instruction. She also encourages Sisters to do more than teach: they should be “guardians and mothers” to the children. (*Rose of Canada*, 1934, Pierre Duchaussois, OMI)

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Strength through unity

Saint-Lin (1848) is the fourth convent founded by Mother Marie Rose. She nurtures the young congregation's strength through unity and sacrifice:

I invite you to go to the Heart of Jesus with me, for it is there I wish to remain and where, if you wish it so, we shall never be separated from one another.

Since we tread along the same way, let us extend a hand to one another to help surmount the difficulties which present themselves.

Every day I offer you to our Lord, asking Him to bless you and render fruitful the sorrows and sacrifices you undergo for His love.

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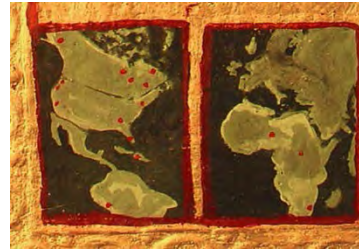


1849: Ah, let me go!

Mother Marie Rose dies on her 38th birthday, October 6, 1849, six years after she and her two friends began the formal process of becoming Sisters. Members of the “little congregation” find it hard to let go. Pierre Duchaussois, OMI, recounts those final hours in his book *Rose of Canada* (1934): “*God will take care of you,*” Mother Marie Rose tells the community gathered around her deathbed. Looking at Mother Veronica, the assistant superior, Mother Marie Rose says, smiling, “***It’s you who retain me here by your prayers. — Ah, let me go.***” Students, too, mourn the death. On the day of Mother Marie Rose’s passing, Holy Names schools enroll 448 students.

In 1982, Marie Rose is beatified by Pope John Paul II and is now known as **Blessed Marie Rose**.

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Jesus and Mary, My Strength and My Glory!

Motto chosen by the early Sisters

Ministries: By the opening of Vatican II in 1962, 4,000 Sisters reside in 277 houses and teach more than 100,000 students on three continents. Today, Holy Names Sisters share their mission and charism with Associates, consecrated lay persons and likeminded groups. The congregation continues to respond to the emerging needs of society: caring for the environment, eradicating trafficking of women and children, promoting water as a human right and public good, improving the welfare of immigrants, building faith communities and maintaining a prophetic voice in the Church.



“My sister’s face came constantly to mind as I wrote the icon...”

Joan Brand-Landkamer “wrote” the Marie-Rose icon, one of many she has completed for St. James Cathedral in Seattle, WA. Joan Brand was taught by Holy Names Sisters. After graduating from Holy Names Academy in Seattle, she completed a BS in medical technology from Seattle University and, later, a master’s in pastoral counseling. Schooled in science and counseling, what led her to iconography? Here’s her reply, sent by email:

“I started a profound interest in icons in 1970-73 when my husband, Leo, and I and our four children agreed to three years in Ethiopia in the Peace Corps. My husband was one of the Peace Corps group that eradicated small pox... hopefully. They used a jet gun and vaccinated one million people. I found work mostly in a Seventh Day Adventist hospital. They needed someone to form a bacteriology department. We used the Kirby Bauer sensitivity tests so those infected could find out

which medication will work, and not have to fly to another country for the tests. I started copying the Ethiopian icons, big eyed and very simple. From there, doors just opened everywhere for me to learn more. I took five classes all over the world and used the Russian [icon-writing] method of egg tempera.

“My sister Helena Brand [Holy Names Sister Marian Frances, RIP 1995] was a poet and taught classes at Marylhurst University for many years. My sister’s face came constantly to mind as I wrote the icon. She is buried in the Marylhurst cemetery [south of Portland, OR]. Marylhurst is a beautiful place; I used to come to visit Helena. We took walks around the grounds. She showed me some huge trees that I had given her as little rooted shoots from my home. ...

“I am writing a triptych for [a] church even now, keeping busy and very happy!”

Warm regards, Joan Brand-Landkamer

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Credits

Thanks to **St. James Cathedral, Seattle, WA**, for providing the images and kind permission to use them. Special thanks to iconographer **Joan Brand-Landkamer**, who has “written” some two dozen icons for the Cathedral. The face of her sister, Helena Brand (Holy Names Sister Marian Frances, RIP 1995) was on Joan’s mind as she wrote the icon.

Thanks, too, to the staff of the SNJM Archives, U.S.-Ontario, for assistance.

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