

## PURPOSE

To offer financial assistance to women for:

- Further education for ministry in the Church, whether that be religious education; liturgy; social justice; social action; care of the sick; or other.
- Financial assistance to take advantage of a program that would help her and her family to become healthy and self-sufficient.

*'How very interested I am  
in your successes and how  
ardent are the wishes I  
make at the feet of the  
Divine Jesus,  
to call down on you  
all the blessings of Heaven!'*

Mother Marie Anne in a letter to  
Sister Mary Providence, Victoria, BC., July 16, 1887



This Bursary was originally created in 2000 in honour of the 150th Anniversary of the foundation of the Sisters of Saint Ann and in honour of their Foundress, Blessed Marie Anne Blondin, beatified in Rome, April 29, 2001.

The Diocesan bursaries were created in 2017.



**BLESSED**

**MARIE ANNE BLONDIN**

**BURSARY**

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### BLESSED MARIE ANNE BLONDIN

Esther Blondin was born on April 18, 1809, into a deeply Catholic family of farmers in Terrebonne Quebec. Like many children in the rural francophone communities of Lower Canada, Esther did not have the opportunity to attend a school. As a result, Esther took up a position as a housekeeper at the local convent of the Congregation of Notre Dame. There, in exchange for her work, she was able to learn to read and write. After a year, at the age of 22 she became a boarder to continue her education and eventually a novice in the Congregation. Due to ill health, however, she was unable to continue in this vocation.

In 1833 Esther became a teacher in the parochial school of Vaudreuil. She was increasingly aware that a Church ruling which forbade the education of both sexes in the same classroom or school was repressive for poor, rural communities because nobody received an education. Eventually, in 1848 Esther Blondin applied to the Bishop of Montreal with a plan to found a Congregation where boys and girls would be educated in the same school. Bishop Bourget authorized a modest attempt.

The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann was founded on September 8, 1850 when Esther and her five companions took their vows in Vaudreuil. Esther was named Sister Marie Anne and, as the community's first superior, took the name Mother Marie Anne. The young community taught school, befriended their neighbours and frequently cared for the various needs of the people in the community including those who were ill. Mother Marie Anne's

able direction and the Sisters' way of life were the inspiration for other young women who chose to join the community.

As the community and school expanded Bishop Bourget transferred the Sisters' Motherhouse to St. Jacques de l'Achigan. A new chaplain was appointed with his own vision for the community and, as he began to interfere with the affairs of the Sisters, conflict arose between the chaplain and Mother Marie Anne who was determined to protect the rights of the Sisters to govern their own affairs. Rather than support Mother Marie Anne, the Bishop asked her to step down permanently from her leadership position.

Mother Marie Anne believed she could best serve the good of her community and the greater glory of God by remaining a member. Therefore, with courage and trust in God she decided to live with this ruling. Although she suffered greatly she chose not to live as a victim. Sister Marie Anne spoke her truth when confronted with the unjust treatment she endured over the years.

An assignment given to Mother Marie Anne became a blessing for the growth of the spiritual life of this community when she was appointed to work in the laundry where the novices worked as they prepared to become Sisters. There, she was able to influence these women in the true spirit of the community. In addition to sharing with the novices the qualities necessary for the education of young people, she was an example of a woman committed to living her religious vocation especially her prayer life and devotion to the Eucharist. She was also faithful to maintaining authentic relationships, honesty, integrity and compassion.

When in 1858 the Bishop of Victoria requested the service of Sisters of St. Ann in British Columbia, Mother Marie Anne volunteered. Her offer was not accepted but the Sisters who did come to Victoria fulfilled, for the first time, Esther's dream of educating both girls and boys in the same school. Through correspondence, Mother Marie Anne kept a lively interest in the Sisters in the West and inspired and supported them.

Esther Blondin, Mother Marie Anne died on January 2, 1890 in Lachine, Quebec. She was declared Blessed on April 29, 2001 by Pope John Paul II after a study of her life and the approval of a miraculous cure that was attributed to her intercession.

Today, the Sisters of St. Ann continue the mission of education begun by their Foundress. Like Esther, the Sisters prefer to work with those who are experiencing poverty. Located in British Columbia, Quebec, Massachusetts and Haiti, the Sisters strive to respond to the needs of people through partnerships with those involved in education, health care, pastoral work, social justice and spiritual accompaniment. Wherever they serve, the Sisters and their Associates seek to change unjust structures. Together with those for whom and with whom they minister they journey towards the fullness of life.

