Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys, CND (1620–1700)

Born in Troyes, Champagne (France) on April 17, 1620, the sixth of twelve children, Marguerite Bourgeoys grows up in a Christian, middle class family. She is 19 years old when she loses her mother. The following year, during a procession in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary, she receives a special grace that transforms her and urges her to leave the world and consecrate herself to God. She therefore begins to search for her vocation and finally enters the Congregation of Troyes, an association of young women devoted to teaching children of the poor neighbourhoods of the city.

In 1642 she learns about the foundation of Ville Marie, in Canada, and feels a call to missionary life. In 1652 she meets with Maisonneuve, founder and governor of Nouvelle France, who was looking for a lay teacher for the French and Indian children. The Blessed Virgin will appear to her and confirm her vocation: "Go, I won't abandon you". Marguerite leaves Troyes in February 1653 and arrives in Montréal in November.

She is considered co-founder of Montreal, together with Jeanne Mance and Maisonneuve. To stimulate the piety of the colons, she has the Cross of Mount Royal put up again and plans the construction of a chapel dedicated to Notre Dame de Bon Secours.

Convinced of the importance of families in the construction of the new country and the role of women, in 1658, in a stable given to her by the governor, she opens the first school in Montreal. She then starts a new Congregation, like the one of Troyes, but devoted to the needs of the new mission: the Congregation of Notre Dame, who inspires itself from the "journeying life" of the Virgin Mary.

Marguerite Bourgeoys dies in Montreal on January 12, 1700. She is beatified by pope Pius XII on November 12, 1950, and canonised by John Paul II on October 31, 1982.

LINK:
http://www.cnd-m.org/