

Cécile was born in the Parish of St-Pierre in Abitibi on May 25 1925. Her father, Joseph Émile, worked on the construction of the Canadian National railway line. Her mother, Laura Côté, was a pious, brave woman who gave everything to the education of her children. In 1930, the family moved to Quebec City. Cécile, the second of 16 children, grew up there. She went to primary school at Notre-Dame du Chemin Academy. she then obtained her certification of Superior and Complimentary Studies from Laval University.

As a teenager, Cécile took part in the Catholic Student Youth Movement and took up winter sports. She attended the Youth activities at Grande-Allée. She was faithful to the Holy Hour where her love of Jesus grew. *What a mystery*, she stated, *I was happy in my outings, but I would return home with a deep emptiness. I was convinced it was time to say Yes to Jesus. I went to my father and asked him his permission to enter religious life. He sat up in his chair, lowered his newspaper, and said, What a wonderful News! Go my child with my blessing. I am proud of you.*

Cécile entered the novitiate of Grande-Allée in Quebec City on September 13 1945. She had kept a holy card of St. Cecilia with the saying: Always saying yes to Jesus is the refrain that pleases him the most. *This little*

*phrase was a constant source of peace for me in all the yeses of my religious life.*

After 4 years of nursing and lab technician studies at Hôtel-Dieu hospital in Quebec City, Cécile was assigned to South Africa in 1954. On the way, she spent a year in Rome and was fortunate to attend the Beatification of Maria Assunta. She also visited Assisi. In 1955, she arrived in Durban where she learnt Xhosa, the local language. She then went in the bush to Bizana where the construction of a hospital had just started. Apartheid created many difficulties and the construction lasted three years. When the hospital opened its door, Cécile played a key role in the administration and the formation of the nursing staff.

After Vatican II, the sisters took up the renovations of the Diocese's poor parishes and reached out to all those isolated in remote areas. During that time, she organized monthly mobile clinics for the poor in the remote bush. After 20 years of service, the sisters turned over the administration of the hospital to the Bantu Health Department. They left the people with a splendid, modern facility of 248 beds, an ambulance fleet, and several buildings.

In 1975, Cécile returned for her first family visit. There was quite a void as her father had died during her arrival in South Africa in 1955. After 21 years of absence, Cécile

was so delighted to rediscover her brothers and sisters. Two of her sisters were also FMM. At the end of this visit a new mission was about to begin. She would be going to Ile de la Réunion. During 3 years, she trained hospital administration staff to run the hospital in St-Denis. She also became the provincial bursar. In 1978, she returned to stay in Canada. She suffered the heartbreaking sudden death of her mother a mere 2 weeks before her arrival.

At 53 and full of energy, Sister Cécile took on her Canadian mission with generosity and all her mission experience. She was elected superior of the convent in Montreal. In 1985, she was named director of the provincial infirmary in Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré. She would fulfill this post for 18 years. In 1992 while being director, she accepted to be superior of the convent on Dieppe Street in Quebec City. *I was happy to serve the Lord through his aging, suffering members. These sisters had given all to the Lord and the missions. They had a right to our full attention and care.*

In 2003, Cécile came to Montreal where she undertook the enormous task of creating a digital archival system for all the photos accumulated over a century. She even created a database for the digitalized slides on series of CDs. She even created a picture using all the slides over the 100 years of history.

In 2018 after fracturing her femur in a fall, she was admitted to our provincial infirmary. There, she continued her mission of translating texts from French to English. Always keen on what was going on, she kept in touch with her family. She was the elder sister that gathered them all.

In June 2021, our provincial infirmary moved to Carrefour Providence. This change affected her greatly. Being a woman of faith, she was able to write, *I am happy and at peace. I have always found joy in the Yes I professed to God one day.*

On May 25, her brother Georges and his wife Clarisse came to celebrate her 97<sup>th</sup> birthday. They had brought a festive meal with them. It was a moment of total joy for Cécile as they remembered family souvenirs. The brought up all those she had loved and cherished. The following night, Cécile fell. The pain was so intense. Despite everything, she still greeted her sisters with a smile. She spoke of her departure for heaven. We thought she would pull through. On the final night, the night where the Lord knocked on her door, Sister Cécile was ready. With a heart overflowing with love, she said her *Yes Lord, here I am.* The Lord then took her home. Go Cécile and rest in peace.



Picture created in 2011 with photos spanning through 100 years of history.



***Sister Cécile Boulanger  
(Marie Lydia de Jésus)***

***Franciscan Missionary of Mary***

***Born in Privat (Taschereau), QC  
on May 25 1925.***

***Entered the Institute  
in Quebec City, QC  
on September 13 1945.***

***Died in Montreal, QC  
on May 30 2022***

***in her 98<sup>th</sup> year,  
the 77<sup>th</sup> of her religious life.***

***May she rest in the peace of Christ!***