

Sister Suzanne was born on February 24 1931 in Montreal. She grew up in St Jérôme. Her father, Dosithée Gagnon, worked for Dominion Rubber. Her mother, Irène Ruel, was an excellent homemaker. She watched over her seven girls and five boys. Suzanne was the fourth child. In this opened house, they lived with her maternal grandfather and some neighbourhood children in need. They also welcomed Polish, Czech, and German immigrants for a few weeks as they settled. Suzanne grew up in this warm and welcoming atmosphere. Suzanne remembers the devotion of her mother and the games played with her father despite his long work hours. He always found time to play with his children.

She completed her studies with the Sisters of Saint Ann in St Jérôme. At 19, she obtained her diploma and taught for two years. She was young, vibrant, and loved life. She never missed a chance to go to Montreal to see an opera or to watch a hockey game. Nonetheless, she held tight to a deep secret. As a young pious woman, she went to daily mass and felt called to a missionary religious life. She spoke to her parish priest about it and he encouraged her giving her the directory of religious communities. She chose to be an FMM. *I really have nothing to do with how I ended up here*, she stated. *The Lord came searching for me. Three weeks before her death, my mother told me that she had given me to God at my birth.*

In 1952 at 21, Suzanne entered the novitiate in Quebec City. She completed her formation with faith and gratitude. Right

after her first profession, she was sent to teach second grade in St-Malo, Quebec City. She also taught in our Montreal daycare. In 1958, she celebrated her perpetual profession as an FMM and completed her Bachelors in Education. In 1963, she taught four more years at St-Malo, Quebec City. How great was her joy in 1967 when she received a posting for Liberia, Africa.

She was principal at our schools in Sanniquellie, Jirapa, Pleebo, and Monrovia. At the same time, she also taught English and catechism from grade one to 7. *One really needed a good sense of humour and perseverance to be understood*, she stated. *I spoke English with a French accent and my students from different tribes spoke it with their various accents.* She was very happy teaching in West Africa for 17 years. She contributed to the education of many youths who never forgot her.

In 1984, she is named provincial superior of Liberia-Ghana. She courageously undertook this responsibility with full knowledge of the ethnic and economic strife in Liberia. In 1989, a civil war broke out. The civilian massacres by the army were horrific. In face of such horrors, Suzanne was riddled with agony as she witnessed the suffering around her. She also worked at keeping the sisters safe. In one of her letters home, she revealed her inner strength by writing. *All the embassies come out to see their expats and invite them to leave the country. Three times, they came bearing the worst news. I must stay, as there are still 14 sisters here. If we are ready to enjoy years of peace, does it not*

*go without saying that we should be ready to help in times of war? May the Lord come to our aid.*

In 1992, she came back to Canada for a time of rest and discernment. *A battle between Canada and Liberia was brewing in my heart. They both had great needs. How I wished I had a thousand lives to meet all these needs.* Liberia would benefit from a missionary who so loved the people. Canada, on the other hand, needed someone for the formation of the temporary professed. After discerning with her General Superior, she took on the Canadian mission.

She became provincial councilor, superior, and mistress of temporary professed sisters. She instilled the importance of community life. She repeated her mantra; *it is at the heart of the community that the Spirit works in forming his future missionaries.* Sister Suzanne had a special place for the poor in her heart. She greeted them by name in the park. In winter, she offered them hot soup and initiated young people to opening their hearts to the misery of the marginalized. In her last years in Calgary, she animated a large group of FMM associates. She formed them to witness to the values of our Charism in their milieu.

At the heart of this fully given life, Suzanne had a growing love for her family. They were such a gift and support. She enjoyed their visits full of laughter and delightful childhood memories. What a thrill!

In 2016 after a fall, she required rest and came to Montreal. She lived in Park Extension where she welcomed refugee women. Getting more and more tired, she was admitted to our infirmary. For four years, she suffered physically and morally. The daring Suzanne that we had known was gone. She lost all interest in activities and her will to live. Through the closed circuit tv, she gazed at her Lord exposed in the Blessed Sacrament, while she repeatedly recited a prayer she composed at the beginning of her religious life. *Lord, my God, you chose me to become the one you desired. Lord, when will I truly be the one you desired? My soul yearns for you. May your will be done and not mine. My sole desire is to die of love for you alone.* After a few days in the hospital, the Lord granted her wish and came to get her for an eternal happiness. Farewell Suzanne and go in God's peace.



**Postcard on her billboard  
of the Blessed Virgin  
in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.  
(Sanctuary Edition 207/39)**



***Sister Suzanne Gagnon  
(Marie Marguerite-Gabrielle)***

***Franciscan Missionary of Mary***

***born in Montreal, QC***

***February 24 1931***

***entered the Institute in Quebec City, QC***

***September 15 1952***

***died in Montreal, QC***

***March 15 2021***

***in her 91<sup>st</sup> year,  
the 67<sup>th</sup> of her religious life***

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