IN THE SPIRIT:

ENTRANTS TO A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY OF WOMEN

IN QUEBEC,

1930-1939

by

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ABSTRACT

For religious communities of women in Quebec, the 1930s were record years in terms of recruitment of new members. By examining a group of women who chose one specific community between 1930 and 1939, this study attempts to answer some of the questions about the coincidence of the Depression and the increase in new members. The educational and labour situation for women is reviewed. Specific attention is given to a religious and political rhetoric of the time which emphasized the role of women in the preservation of traditional values and French Canadian nationalism, and which created an atmosphere conducive to the choice of religious life. This study shows that, while the language of the entrants reflected their belief that they were responding to a call from God, religious life was both a reasonable and attractive option for the women of Quebec in the 1930s.

RESUME

Les années '30 comprennent les bonnes années de recrutement pour les communautés religieuses féminines au Québec. Cette thèse répond à quelques questions posées au sujet de la relation entre la Crise et l'augmentation du nombres des membres. On fait l'enquête sur l'enseignement et le travail feminin pour indiquer une situation peu favorable aux jeunes femmes. Les déclarations du clergé et des politiciens au sujet de la nation et du rôle de la femme sont presentées pour révéler un milieu dans lequel les jeunes femmes pouvaient choisir heureusement la vie religieuse. Cette étude démontre que, même si les religieuses elles-mêmes parlent de leur vie en termes de Dieu et de Son choix, pendant les années de la Crise la vie religieuse représentait un choix, à la fois raisonnable et séduisant.

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Barbara Cooper
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CHAPTER 1

A SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE: NUNS IN QUEBEC

Heroines or Harpies?

No comprehensive history of Canadian women can ignore the existence of female religious communities, particularly in Quebec. Veiled and clad in austere, often voluminous black garb, nuns[1] in the province of Quebec[2] have long been a source of mystery, curiosity and power. Their robes were but the outward symbol of the aura in which they wrapped themselves, isolated and set apart from the rest of the world. Committed to God and to the service of the Church, they worked in virtually every facet of teaching, nursing and welfare. Individually, they spoke in humble terms of serving others; collectively they represented a clerical hegemony in the field of social service in Quebec until the 1960s. In that, they knew power, or perhaps more precisely they shared and contributed to the power that was the Roman Catholic Church. In any case, their presence in Quebec invites serious consideration.

The sheer number of nuns raises questions which require answers and makes them a force to be reckoned with. Table 1-1 records their growing population in Quebec since the

Table 1-1: Evolution numérique des religieux au Québec (1850-1969)

Année	Nombre de religieux		Indice religieux absolu		Nombre de catholiques pour un religieux	
	H	F	H	F	H	F
1850	243	650	100.0	100.0	3,065	1,149
1901	1,984	6,628	816.4 = 100.0	1,019.7 = 100.0	720	216
1911	3,039	9,964	153.0	153.3	567	173
1921	3,991	13,579	201.1	204.8	507	149
1931	5,716	19,616	288.0	295.9	448	125
1941	7,910	25,488	398.7	384.5	366	112
1951	9,312	30,383	469.3	458.4	383	111
1961	10,173	35,080	512.7	529.3	456	132
1965	9,801	34,281	494.0	517.2	?	?
1969	8,878	33,569	447.4	506.5	?	?

Source: Bernard Denault, Eléments pour une sociologie des communautés religieuses au Québec (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1975), p. 50.

middle of the nineteenth century. The ratio of nuns to Catholics gives some idea of their pervasiveness in French Canadian society. In fact, so numerous had their group become that by the turn of the century Quebec was actually in a position to export clergy and religious to other provinces, as well as to foreign mission lands and to the many French parishes in New England.[3] Furthermore, by 1931 nuns accounted for 8% of the female population over fifteen years of age and by 1941 they represented 9.3% of the same group.[4]

Thus despite their philosophy of separation from the world and their projected image of aloofness, nuns have definitely impinged on the consciousness of the people of Quebec. They have been both revered and reviled. To those who saw these women approach the needy with nourishment and encouragement during the cholera epidemics of the nineteenth century, they were angels of mercy. To others who viewed nuns with an hysterical suspicion, theirs was a cultic existence that preyed on innocents, a notion best portrayed in that popular Protestant tract Awful Disclosures.[5] First published in 1836, Awful Disclosures revealed the dark secrets of the Black Nunnery of the Hotel Dieu nuns in Montreal according to Maria Monk, who was described as a former nun. That this sensational writing, wringing with bigotry, was penned by a notorious fraud, did little to

diminish its appeal among those who feared papist influence and intrigue.

This difference of opinion about the value of nuns continued into the twentieth century. Among those who held the nuns in esteem were members of the clergy, notably Lionel Groulx and Albert Tessier. Both extolled the marvel of womanhood and woman's place in the "foyer", but saw the religious life as an extension of nurturing and caring that were natural to women because of their sex.

> "Là où il n'y a pas de femme, dit l'Ecriture, le malade gémit." Ceci est un homage au privilege précieux octroyé à la femme de soulager et de reconforter ceux qui souffrent. Une autre excellence féminine, c'est l'art d'instruire et d'éclairer.[6]

Religious communities were thus deemed part of the flower of French Canadian Catholic culture. On the other hand, some later writers, particularly those who lived through the "cultural revolution" of the 1960s, reserved some of their most stinging epithets for the nuns whom they encountered in their schooling or in the parish. Pierre Vallières who was known in the 1960s and 1970s for his radical separatist and socialist position in Quebec, described his parents' antipathy for the nuns whom they experienced as "avaricious business women who were hostile to the poor, especially in the hospitals."[7] Claire Martin, a Quebec novelist and memoirist, portrayed a few of the nuns

she knew as kind, though tending to be doting in their preference for certain of their students. Of the rest, many were shown as angry, spiteful women who gave vent to a repressed rage in their dealings with their charges.[8]

Generally these impressions of nuns add little to an understanding of their contribution to the development of Quebec. They are but caricatures used to laud or attack the Church. Nuns, however, were not an amorphous entity. Each group had its own character and served a function among the people according to the needs of the age. It must be understood that these women pursued their vocation within the context of a specific time and place which shaped their response to the demands of a religious life. Consequently it is vital to the understanding of the history of women in Quebec that nuns be studied in their proper historical context.

The group of women examined in this study chose to become nuns during the 1930s in Quebec, a period of severe economic dislocation and intense ideological conflict. One specific community of nuns[9] was chosen for this study for two reasons: the first was their involvement in almost every sphere of social service, and their history of not insisting upon the dowery from their entrants. This put them in a less elitist category than some other communities and made entrance accessible to any class of women. The second

reason was much more pragmatic. this group allowed me access to their archival material.

Access, however, created some difficulties. Because the time period for this study was the 1930s and many of the nuns who generated the "data" are still alive and understandably wary of any investigation that could be used to cast them in an unfavourable light, the Community wished to remain unidentified, at least for the moment. Consequently, much of the archival material used for earlier studies was withheld. What was made available was the register of the Community and their necrologies, along with the assistance and experience of the archival staff. A questionnaire was also circulated to members in the Motherhouse that offered some additional information. The nuns' desire for privacy required that some of the questionnaire responses not be printed. Nevertheless, this material allowed for a profile to be created of the entrants to the community during the '30s. The ages of the women and their socio-economic background could be determined. Various kin ties and the areas of recruitment could be examined. The questionnaire, despite its limits, also gave an interesting perspective on the social and intellectual environment of the homes of the young women.

The years 1930 to 1939 provided an especially interesting time frame within which to study a religious community

in Quebec. The entire decade lay within the years which Marc Lessard has designated as the most fruitful in terms of recruitment to religious communities: more women were entering communities than ever before. Lessard has suggested, and his view was shared by Micheline Dumont-Johnson, that one reason for this increase in the number of new members was the economic crisis of the 1930s, that the life offered a security that was unavailable practically anywhere else.[10] This study will attempt to show the extent to which the desire for security motivated a woman's choice of religious life, and whether the increase in recruits was a function of the difficult economic times.

The 1930s are also significant because it was the period immediately prior to the Second World War. In many ways the war years marked a turning point for women and for the Church in Quebec, but the soil was being readied in the 1930s for the seeds that would be sown later. The Conscription crisis of the First World War had shaken the French Canadian people. The economic boom of the 20s and the growing urbanization were changing the fabric of society in Quebec, creating a market for female labour. The economic crisis, which followed, generated a social and cultural upheaval that was creating voids in people's lives where once there had been the assurance of a job and a belief in

the future. In many ways the traditional views and the security that faith had provided were being eroded. The clergy, increasingly concerned that a secular mentality was infiltrating the once stable Catholic way of life, responded to this situation with incredible amounts of nationalistic rhetoric mixed with Catholic spirituality in an attempt to regenerate the traditional God-fearing rural society. As Susan Trofimenkoff suggested in her analysis of the Action Française, the clergy were able to build on the image of agriculture, promoted in the 1920s by the Action Française, as the basis for the "superior moral development of French Canadians."[11] According to the rhetoric, this society, if it were to preserve its traditional values against the onslaught of materialism, required record numbers of religious women. That women responded to this call is clear from the figures cited above. It seems important to determine the extent to which the growth of membership was actually a response of young women to the efforts of the clergy, and the society, to stem the tide of secularism that would eventually sweep Quebec.

Historical analysis can often benefit from the research of other disciplines. In this study, a number of sociological and anthropological studies will be used to explore more fully the nature and the phenomenon of religious life.

These works shed some light on the way that communities function within the Church and how they manage to attract members. They also attempt to identify the type of people who join, and in general terms, why they do so. For this particular period, studies of this sort are invaluable in understanding the impact of religious communities on the women of Quebec.

As Has Been Said . . .

A study of this nature must not ignore the obvious fact that nuns are women, and that their story must be placed within the larger context of Canadian women's history, and of works specific to the situation of French Canadian women. Until the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, women received little attention from historians unless they were exceptional and provided useful moral lessons on the virtues of patriotism, endurance and faith in God. In this respect "women's history" closely followed the prevalent historiographical fashions of the period: great men, great events, and history as past politics. Mary Quayle Innis' The Clear Spirit and Grant MacEwan's And Mighty Women Too highlighted the contribution of exceptional Canadian women.[12] Emilia Allaire's Profils Féminins[13] was a similar work that

emphasized women who have been significant in Quebec as well as Canada. The difficulty with these works was that they were, by definition, exceptional and not indicative of women generally. They belonged to what could be described as a literature of redress which sought to right the balance of history which had virtually ignored the presence and contribution of women. Even the attempt by the Association Féminine d'Education et d'Action Sociale to include more "common women" in Pendant que les hommes travaillent, les femmes, elles . . .[14] left the impression that women were valuable to the extent that they were noteworthy. Often the writers of these histories offered a justification for these women's involvement by stressing their abiding feminine nature despite their achievements, and thus betrayed a certain reservation about the place of women in prominent positions.

Other work had a definitely propagandist purpose. While Nellie McClung believed in the rights of women, and the need to work to affirm them, she also held what is called a "maternal feminism". For her the woman who had not borne children was incomplete. "Women," she asserted, "are naturally the guardians of the race, and every normal woman deserves children."[15] In this respect McClung differed little from Albert Tessier who described the role of women in the history of French Canada as being intimately

linked with their procreative function: "C'est elle qui a une mission de payer à Dieu et à la Patrie le tribut vital de la chair et du sang."[16] Unlike in later years when some feminists would deny the need for women to produce offspring in order to be "complete", the mentality that saw women in terms of motherhood was very much a part of the feminist movement at the turn of this century and later. The link between this mentality and the choice for celibacy by increasing numbers of women in the 1930s needs to be explored.

Given the political obsession of Canadian history it is not surprising that the first volumes on women as a group focused on suffrage. Both Margaret Andrews[17] and Veronica Strong-Boag[18] in historiographic essays indicate that suffrage never received an extensive treatment except by Catherine Cleverdon in The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada[19] which Andrews did not discuss because it was not written by or for a Canadian, and which Strong-Boag dismissed as not reliable. In "The Canadian Suffragists",[20] however, Deborah Gorhman outlined the development of the suffrage movement in the light of maternal feminism. She hoped that others would interest themselves in this theme. In fact, at the time, Carol Bacchi was preparing her doctoral thesis: "Liberation Deferred: The Ideas of the English Canadian Suffragists."[21] Bacchi showed how the

impetus for feminism and woman suffrage was absorbed by the concern for social reform around the turn of the century. The growing interest in eugenics and the production of a hearty race was promoted in literature of the period. Women were being given a new view of their role in society. What Bacchi and Gorhman identify is the tendency of women to respond to what is expected of them. Indeed this propensity of women to emulate the image of womanhood held up to them by society's leaders will be considered as a factor in the influx of recruits to the religious life in the 1930s.

Since the 1970s Canadian women's history has benefited from the developments in social history. In Penelope's Web[22], N. E. S. Griffiths grappled with the question of women's inferior status in Canadian and European societies and attempted to trace the historical development of this situation. By her own admission, the web was somewhat enmeshing, but Griffiths did make some important observations about the need to understand the basic tenets of the society from which women are being studied.

Generally recent historians of women in Canada have selected more circumscribed topics. Suzanne Cross selected women in nineteenth century Montreal as the focus of her article, "The Neglected Majority: the Changing Role of Women in 19th Century Montreal".[23] Her work is

complemented by "Ouvrières et Travailleuses Montréalaises 1900-1945"[24] by Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddart. Together they provide an accurate picture of the working women of Montreal over a period of one hundred and forty-five years. Although the Cross article is a little more extensive than Lavigne and Pinard's with regard to the class of women considered, the fact that the authors have restricted their research to Montreal allowed for a more thorough treatment of the material. Their work provides a necessary insight into the economic plight of the women to be studied here.

Veronica Strong-Boag has addressed the issue of women in Canada who seemed to have fought to attain autonomy or admittance to male preserves, and then to have adapted themselves to the existing structures and forgotten their responsibility to keep the door open for others. In "Canada's Women Doctors: Feminism Constrained"[25] Strong-Boag suggested that women succumbed to the pressures of their position, or believed themselves to be the exception to male dominance. In either case the reality seems to be consistent with what the others describe as some self-defeating attitudes engendered by current notions about womanhood. As Strong-Boag asserted: "A maternalist ideology and a professional orientation are hardly the best guarantees of a feminist revolution."[26]

I "The New Woman and Maternal Feminism, Toronto 1877-1914"[27] Wayne Roberts established what he believed to be the root of maternal feminism: women were adapting to the professional and occupational limits imposed upon them by society and had to create their own niche. Whether women created the philosophy to serve their own ends, or whether it was part of a broader nationalistic movement, indications of the presence of maternal feminism appeared in universities, medicine, nursing and journalism. Wayne Roberts documented this phenomenon and showed how such ideas influenced the Canadian Suffrage Association and the National Council of Women in Canada. The maternal feminism sponsored by the Church in Quebec also had an impact on the French-Canadian feminists.

Since institutions absorbed considerable female energy and creativity, historians have turned some of their attention to these groups. Wendy Mitchinson has studied the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). In "The WCTU: For God, Home and Native Land: A Study in Nineteenth Century Feminism",[28] Mitchinson examined the role of the WCTU in the lives of women. As the title suggested this temperance group adapted its focus to the perceived needs of society. They believed in certain control in the public sphere in order to protect the home. What Mitchinson has done is to show how women's ideas evolved as they

encountered new ideals about women's responsibility in society.

In Quebec where the Fédération Nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste (FNSJB) had a membership of about 12,000 in the early 1920s, this organization acted as an umbrella group that coordinated the activities of its twenty-two member groups. In their study of the FNSJB Marie Lavigne, Yolande Pinard and Jennifer Stoddart support what Micheline Dumont-Johnson described in an earlier article as the role of the FNSJB in providing an acceptable channel for feminists in the face of the hostility of the clergy and many laity.[29] Although the organization eventually bowed to the pressure of an essentially anti-feminist society, these authors showed how the FNSJB managed to expose women to some feminist ideals, to fight for the rights of women, and to establish itself in the consciousness of the people of Quebec.

What these studies demonstrate is the extent to which women, like men, were intellectual prisoners of time and space. They cannot be studied apart from the notions that they had about themselves and their role in society at any given time. The mere reassembling of detail about the lives of women in the past is insufficient for historical study since it ignores the perspective which thinking people give to their actions. Consequently, future studies of women

must take account of the ideas and images, presented to and by women, which seemed credible at the time. Thus the Church, which was active in promoting a certain view of women, deserves attention particularly with regard to the women who chose a religious vocation. These women, like others, must be placed within the context of their time.

Religious communities have already attracted the attention of Canadian social historians. Understandably, the earlier studies focused on the foundresses as the important personages and tended to ignore the ordinary membership. Communities suffered from the distortion inherent in those works. Since many earlier writers saw their role as seeking moral lessons in history, the nuns played the role of heroines and models of virtue, a role which rings false to a "modern generation of Quebec women" who, as Caroline Pestieau suggested are:

> . . . unlikely to look on the great pioneers--Marguerite Bourgeoys, Jeanne Mance and Marguerite d'Youville--as models. They were oversold to their mothers and grandmothers with undue insistence on the religious inspiration behind their phenomenal energy.[30]

To an earlier generation, those who chose the religious life were seen as living in a more "purely sacred sphere".[31] According to Horace Miner this form of life served to "make certain individuals non-procreative" and for this they were accorded "great social prestige".[32] Miner did not,

however, spend a great deal of time discussing the place of this group in society. Fortunately this emphasis has changed.

Pierre Hurtubise, in Le Laïc Dans l'Englise Canadienne-Française de 1830 à Nos Jours, suggested a more significant role for those who entered religious communities: "On ne pourrait surestimer l'influence exercée par les couvents de religieuses sur la spiritualité féminine, et par là sur tout l'ensemble du peuple."[33] These people played an important role in the education of the young, and so were responsible for forming the consciousness of the people. A group of such influence which was an instrument in the maintenance of the status quo needs to be examined carefully.

To some extent this research has begun and several pertinent studies about nuns and their function in Quebec have emerged. Micheline Dumont-Johnson has written "Les communautés religieuses et la condition féminine"[34] in which she suggested that nuns were really incipient feminists who just never articulated their position. In her work she juxtaposed the number of religious foundations and the number of feminist groups with regard to their date of origin and showed that communities flourished in the absence of any lay women's organizations. Table 1-2 shows that since the 1960s when feminist organizations

TABLE 1-2: Chronologies comparées des fondations de communautés religieuses féminines et des mouvements féministes québécois

Période	Fondations de communautés	Mouvements féministes
1840-1905	21	Aucune association féministe
1905-1920	1	Action de la Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste
1920-1960	12	Mise en veilleuse de la FNSJB et action marginale de la LDF
1960-1975	Aucune	1957: Ligue des femmes 1966: FFQ 1969: FLF 1971: Centre de la femme 1972: RAIF 1973: CSF

Sources: Tableau établi d'après l'ouvrage de Bernard Denault et les recherches de l'auteur. Le grand nombre de communautés religieuses féminines n'est pas un phénomène québécois. A titre d'exemple, mentionnons qu'il y avait en France, en 1959, 480 instituts de religieuses. (Annuaire des Instituts de religieuses de France. Centre de documentation sacerdotale, Paris, 1959.) From: Micheline Dumont-Johnson, "Les communautés religieuses et la condition féminine" dans Recherches Sociographiques, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (janvier-avril, 1978), p. 100.

have absorbed the interest of women, there have been no new religious foundations. Obviously, there are more factors involved in the decline of religious communities than the ascendancy of feminism. Nevertheless, combined with her examination of the status of women in the early part of the twentieth century and in the Church, Dumont-Johnson's conclusions about the role of the Church in taking over the impetus of women for reform or service merits further consideration.

Marta Danylewycz has also contributed to the recent scholarship on nuns in "Changing Relationships: Nuns and Feminists in Montreal, 1880-1925".[35] In this article, she traced the relationship between nuns and laywomen in an attempt to consider the questions raised by women like Michele Jean[36] and Micheline Dumont. Danylewycz showed close cooperation of religious and laywomen and argued that laywomen needed and indeed requested the assistance and support of the nuns in their charitable works. She also noted that through the FNSJB, religious communities received considerable material assistance. Perhaps more importantly Danylewycz pointed to the link between the feminist desire for superior education and the ability of the nuns to use their facilities and their influence with the clergy to make the dream a reality. Admittedly, other factors intervened such as the founding of a lycée by two

women outside the aegis of the Church, which spurred the bisho s to action, but the nuns were there and ready to assis the women. In the end Danylewycz concluded that the coope ation between laywomen and nuns was undermined by the clerg who feared secular initiatives. One assumes a monol thic attitude within these communities which may or may n t have existed, and it would be interesting to know just ow many of the nuns actually supported interaction with omen outside the cloister. In any case, Marie J. Gérin ajoie, daughter of one of the seminal feminists of Quebe , saw the formation of a religious community as the best ay to facilitate the continuation of the feminist impul e. This decision bespoke not only Gérin-Lajoie's faith in God, but also her ability to recognize that one could best pursue one's goals as a woman only through what was c nsidered to be acceptable modes of female activity in the l te 1920s.

n examining the movements of women and nuns, like Marie J. Gé in-Lajoie, in the early part of this century, one may wonde at what seems to be their eventual choice for accep ability, or their willingness to conform despite ideals that ay have set them against the clergy from time to time. In th s regard, the nuns, particularly, reflect what Hilda Smith an historian of seventeenth century women, suggested is an important focus of study:

> Women consistently, and men occasionally, work against their own interests to conform to their view of proper femininity or masculinity. One of the goals of women's history should be an understanding of the forcefulness of such demands for conformity and their actual operation in the lives of women.[37]

Thus, Danylewycz's suggestion that the clergy intervened to dictate norms for female behaviour needs to be explored further.

Earlier, Marta Danylewycz had written about two groups of nuns in Montreal between 1850 and 1920.[38] In this article she described the difficulty in reconstructing the lives of the women from existing records. She also raised some important questions about why women chose the veil. In suggesting that socio-economic as well as religious factors motivated women to enter, she has opened the door to a more realistic assessment of the phenomenon. Micheline Dumont-Johnson supports the idea that religious life may have offered career possibilities for those who entered.[39] Marie Lavigne and Yolande Pinard added weight to this suggestion by implying a link between the shrinking role of women in the urban setting and the growth of religious communities.[40] This study hopes to shed some light on these questions.

The Phenomenon of Community

Recent sociological research on religious communities can also add an important dimension to our understanding of female religious groups. Religious communities, as closed systems, have rarely welcomed external scrutiny. Believing themselves to exist on a higher plane than other "secular" groups, they have often viewed studies by outsiders as pointless because of the element that cannot be explained: God. Sociologists, however, have rejected this reasoning and have, with some success, begun to explain the dynamic at work within various communities. Theoretical types and models developed by these people help to illuminate the phenomenon of religious communities, and it is now possible to use these constructs to extend our understanding of religious women in Quebec.

One sociologist, Michael Hill, has devoted considerable research to religious communities in England. Although his specific interest is the Anglican community, his comments on recruitment and membership are particularly pertinent to this study.[41] Hill, basing his study on the Weberian concept of the religious virtuoso, explained that "The religious virtuoso follows what he takes to be a pure and rigorous interpretation of normative obligations which

already exist in a religious tradition . . . ".[42] The person thus defined is one who sees value not just in the group's goals, but in the rules by which these are to be attained. Virtuosi revere tradition and wish to retain its purity. In the Church they tend to:

> . . . take as their central point of reference a period in the early history of their tradition which can be seen as particularly authentic. They then compare this pristine model with their perception of the contemporary reality, and are impressed by the extent to which this comparison indicates a decline.[43]

Faced by this comparison of their own creation, they tend to try to return to a more rigorous way of life. In so doing this group in the Church can, and often does, provide "revolution by tradition".[44]

According to Hill, the intensity of this element in the Church has frequently caused concern, and been the object of attempts to control them. By harnessing the virtuosi energy and allowing it a restricted expression, however, the Church has avoided what may have been rifts in its ranks or splinter groups which would have chosen life outside its bounds. It has also provided a forum for reforming elements in its midst. What must be acknowledged also is the Church's not entirely altruistic intent: ultimate control of its membership. Throughout the years there developed within the Church increasing numbers of men and women who believed themselves called to forms of

religious purity, and who banded together at various times to give expression to this belief. At times, as in Quebec, the impetus to form a group came from the hierarchy, in order to ensure the continuance of certain works.

Communities, then, perceived themselves as models of a more perfect mode of existence. To this end their members engaged in austere practices of self-denial and took upon themselves vows of celibacy, poverty and obedience. By removing themselves from the mainstream of life, they created a certain dichotomy in the community of believers, between themselves and those who were thought to be encumbered by their involvement in the world.

> So, it became the duty of the Christians in 'the world' to preserve and procreate the race, which ascetics cannot do; while in return the ascetics render service for others through intercession, penitence and the acquisition of merit.[45]

The membership of religious communities rallied themselves around certain beliefs and practices that provided a focus for their efforts, and a definite perimeter for their group.

In a somewhat similar vein, Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, a sociologist and former member of a religious community, has explained the process by which communities socialize their members, and she described what she would consider their sustaining "myth" or focus of belief. According to

Fuchs-Ebaugh the relative truth or untruth of the myth is unimportant. Members do not understand a myth -

> . . . they feel, experience and believe it is the ultimate explanation for what is. Members are less interested in proving the myth than in living it out in daily life. What sustains the unifying myth is consensual validation by the group. The myth is supported by the fact that others also believe it and are willing to live out their lives in terms of it.[46]

The total commitment that is required to support such a rigid existence is not without the significant reward of status. The Church has traditionally accorded these models of piety an elevated position within its communion. While the communities have sealed themselves off from 'the world' by the wearing of a distinctive garb, by silence, and by strict rules governing their social interaction, the Church has offered them a kind of legitimation that would have been unavailable to any of its members individually. The clergy and religious in Quebec enjoyed such status until the 1960s.

Communities of women seem to have flourished particularly well under the sponsorship of the Church. Some of the reasons for their development were examined by Nadia Youssef who found that in the past women posed as great a challenge to those in clerical authority by their independent behaviour, as did men, if for different reasons. Women's traditional support for the Church, while

not openly acknowledged by the hierarchy, was perceived as an important locus of control. Although Youssef specifically referred to the Church in Latin America, her point has special relevance to the Church in any developing area such as Quebec during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the words of Youssef:

> Given the precarious situation of the Church, it became incumbent upon the clergy to ensure the continuance of women's religious loyalty and responsibility. This necessitated, first of all, stretching the control and supervision of the Church over the female stratum, and secondly, providing meaningful rewards to women by establishing an association between religiosity and special privileges.[47]

What was intended was an extension of the Church's authority over those women who exercised some initiative; what was created was an alternative for women who were hampered by the control of their families or by their social situation. While some might argue that women merely exchanged one form of bondage for another, there is some evidence to suggest that women could more easily manipulate the religious structures imposed upon them than the expectations of society, and thus derive at least some positive reinforcement. Since nuns were treated with respect and deference, and allowed a certain autonomy in their various works, the personal satisfaction thus accruing to these women may well have made their religious restrictions more easily tolerable than the weight of societal or familial norms.

In the last analysis, though, religious communities, whether male or female, always formed part of the larger structure of the Church. Because of this the autonomy that they sought was always elusive and they remained under the close scrutiny of the hierarchy of the Church. Often this constituted a source of tension that not infrequently led to significant compromise on the part of the community. While there were many men and women who emerged as leaders and innovators within communities, they ultimately submitted to the authority of the Church in order to proceed with what they perceived to be the real purpose for their existence.

In the specifically French Canadian context Bernard Denault has elaborated two hypotheses with regard to religious communities in Eléments pour une sociologie des communautés religieuses au Québec.[48] He suggested that the religious communities of the nineteenth century provided an integrative function for French Canadian society in that they absorbed widowed and celibate women "d'un certain âge" who were otherwise marginalized. Some of these women became foundresses and leaders of communities. The second hypothesis deals with the "protestataire/attestataire" functions of communities. Denault believed that communities in Quebec did not emerge as a protest against the Church's involvement in the world, or a loss of

vision or purity; rather, communities formed an important part of the society which was itself Church dominated and saw itself as "anti-world". As Denault stated:

> L'Eglise-institution devient une protestation contre l'état de la société qui l'entoure: l'Eglise, c'est le «royaume de Dieu» commencé sur la terre à côté et contre de «monde» malsain. La fonction des communautés religieuses consiste alors à élargir les frontières de ce royaumme et à y intégrer certaines fonctions sociales telles que l'éducation, les services hospitaliers, l'aide aux démunis, etc.[49]

Denault drew on Marc Bloch's La Société Féodale[50] to describe what he perceived to be the situation in Quebec: a Church very much allied with the "secular" power, whose bishops and clergy maintained their authority and pervading presence by close association with, and control over, religious communities.

Nuns are often portrayed in an unrealistic light. Part of this is a result of the language they use to describe and to isolate themselves; part is a function of the bias of those who write about them. Nevertheless, their presence and contribution call for serious consideration. This study is in no way an attempt to judge the validity of the choice these women made. Nor is it an effort to question the sincerity of their faith. Rather, by examining the questions posed by sociologists about members

of religious groups in general, the role of the Church and the socio-economic situation in the 1930s in Quebec, this study will attempt to show that the reality of religious life, while it maintained its own aura of mystery for those outside its bounds, was very much a part of the society from which it emerged.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 1

1. The term "nuns" is used to refer to members of religious communities without distinction between the various canonical types of communities. Similarly is the term "religious" used. Also, since this study centres on community of women, references to "communities" can be understood as referring to women's groups unless specifically stated otherwise.

2. The term "Quebec" is used to refer to the province during the entire course of its history, despite its changes in name.

3. Bernad Denault et Benoît Lévesque, Eléments pour une sociologie des communautés religieuses au Québec (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1975), p. 20.

4. These figures are derived from statistics given by Denault, Eléments . . ., p. 50, and the Statistical Yearbook of Quebec (1944), p. 110.

5. Maria Monk, Awful Disclosures (New York: Arno Press, 1977 [c 1836]). A former priest, Father Chiniquy, wrote extensively against the Roman Catholic Church before the turn of the century. His work was sensational and attracted much attention from within and outside the Church. His works include: The Priest, the Woman and the Confessional (Montreal: F. E. Grafton, Bookseller, 1876), Fifty Years in the Church of Rome (Toronto: William Briggs, 1878). Father Chiniquy's life and influence are portrayed by Marcel Trudel in his book Chiniquy (Québec: Éditions Du Bien Public, 1955).

6. L'Abbé Albert Tessier, La femme dans l'histoire du Canada (Québec: Le comité permanent de la survivance française en Amérique, 1944), p. 12. Susan Trofimenkoff has explored the image presented to women by Henri Bourassa in her article "Henri Bourassa and 'the Woman Question'" in Susan Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice (ed.), The Neglected Majority (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977). She give a good indication of the vehemence with which Bourassa maintained his view of women's proper place.

7. Pierre Vallières, White Niggers of America (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 97.

8. Claire Martin, The Right Cheek (Montreal: Harvest House Ltd., 1975).

9. This group will simply be referred to as "the Community."

10. Marc Lessard et Jean-Paul Montminy, "Les religieuses du Canada: âge, recrutement et persévérance," dans Recherches Sociographiques, 8 (1967), p. 18. Micheline Dumont-Johnson, "Les communautés religieuses et la condition féminine," dans Recherches Sociographiques, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (1978), p. 41.

11. Susan Trofimenkoff, Action Française: French Canadian Nationalism in the Twenties (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p. 67.

12. Grant MacEwan, And Mighty Women Too (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1975); Mary Quayle Innis, The Clear Spirit (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966).

13. Emilia Allaire, Profils Féminins (Québec: Editions Garneau, 1967).

14. Association Féminine d'Education ed d'Action Sociale, Pendant que les hommes travaillent, les femmes, elles . . . (Montréal: Guérin, 1977).

15. Nellie McClung, In Times Like These (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1915), p. 15.

16. Tessier, La femme dans l'histoire . . ., p. 9.

17. Margaret Andrews, "Attitudes in Canadian Women's History 1945-1975," in Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1977), pp. 69-78.

18. Veronica Strong-Boag, "Cousin Cinderella," in Marylee Stephenson (ed.), Women in Canada (Don Mills, General Publishing Company Ltd., 1973).

19. Catherine L. Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1974).

20. Deborah Gorhman, "The Canadian Suffragists," in Gwen Matheson (ed.), Women in the Canadian Mosaic (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Ltd., 1976).

21. Carol Bacchi, Liberati n Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffr gists (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983). McGill University Thesis recently published.

22. N. E. S. Griffiths, Pe elope's Web (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976 .

23. Suzanne Cross, "The Ne lected Majority: The Changing Role of Women in 19th entury Montreal," in Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and lison Prentice (ed.), The Neglected Majority (Tc onto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).

24. Marie Lavigne et Jenni er Stoddart, "Ouvrières et Travailleuses Montréal ises 1900-1945," dans Marie Lavigne et Yolande Pir rd (ed.), Les Femmes dans la Société Québécoise (Mc tréal: Les Editions du Boréal Express, 1977).

25. Veronica Strong-Boag, Canada's Women Doctors: Feminism Constrained," in Linda Kealey (ed.), A Not Unreasonable Claim (Toronto: The W men's Press, 1979).

26. Ibid., p. 129.

27. Wayne Roberts, "The Ne Woman and Maternal Feminism, Toronto 1877-1914," in Kealey, A Not . . .

28. Wendy Mitchinson, "The WCTU: For God, Home and Native Land: A Study in Nine eenth Century Feminism," in Kealey, A Not . . .

29. Marie Lavigne, Yolande Pinard et Jennifer Stoddart, "La Fédération Nation e Saint-Jean-Baptiste et les revendications féminis es au debut du 20e siècle," dans Lavigne et Pinard Les Femmes . . .; Micheline Dumont-Johnson, "Hist y of the Status of Women in the Province of Quebec," Cultural Tradition and Political History of men in Canada (Studies of the Royal Commission on t Status of Women, 1971), p. 24.

30. Caroline Pestieau, "W en in Quebec," in Matheson, Women . . ., p. 58.

31. Horace Miner, Saint-D is (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 193 , p. 94.

32. Ibid., p. 84.

33. Pierre Hurtubise (ed.), Le Laïc Dans L'Eglise Canadienne-Française de 1830 à Nos Jours (Montréal: Fides, 1972), p. 58.

34. Micheline Dumont-Johnson, "Les communautés religieuses et la condition féminine," dans Recherches Sociographiques, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (Janvier-Avril, 1978), p. 102.

35. Marta Danylewycz, "Changing Relationships: Nuns and Feminists in Montreal, 1890-1925," in Histoire Sociale/Social History, Vol. XIV, No. 28 (November, 1981), pp. 413-434.

36. Michèle Jean (ed.), Québécoises du 20e Siècle (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1974). She has also written articles about women in the Church in Quebec.

37. Hilda Smith, "Feminism and Methodology of Women's History," in Berenice A. Carroll (ed.), Liberating Women's History (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 373.

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40. Marie Lavigne et Yolande Pinard, Les Femmes . . .

41. Michael Hill, The Religious Order (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1973).

42. Ibid., p. 2.

43. Ibid., p. 3.

44. Ibid., p. 3.

45. Ibid., p. 28.

46. Helen Rose Fuchs-Ebaugh, Out of the Cloister (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), p. 14.

47. Nadia Youssef, "Cultural Ideals, Feminine Behavior and Family Control," in Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 15 (1973), p. 345.

48. Denault, Eléments . . .

49. Ibid., p. 11.

50. Marc Bloch, La société féodale (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1939).

CHAPTER 2

CLERICAL QUEBEC

A Matter of Perspective

The distinct and dominant role of the Roman Catholic Church in the history of Quebec has been the subject of great controversy. Much ink has been spilt in an effort to explain its overwhelming presence in the lives of the French Canadian people. Its intentions, failures and achievements have been scrutinized by friends and foes who were frequently seeking arguments to buttress a contemporary cause.

One group of writers found the Church particularly odious. They saw it not only as a restrictive force for its adherents but as an oppressor of any other element of the province. Edward McChesney Sait, an English-speaking Protestant, represented a group at once the victim of the clergy's mistrust, and the outspoken critic of the Church. In Clerical Control in Quebec, written in 1911, Sait criticized the extent of the control exerted by the clergy. Tinged with a fear of papist schemes Sait's book dealt with the particularly thorny issue of censorship. He attempted

to show that the Church, as an overzealous guardian of the thoughts of its people, controlled and manipulated its members. He suggested that the Church was responsible for rendering its adherents ". . . antedeluvian relics of an old regime who have retained all the inertia and bigotry without being literally of any value for the ends which modern civilization has set before it."[1] Obviously Sait thought little of his French Canadian compatriots, unfortunates who happened to find themselves somewhat lower than their Anglo-Saxon brothers on Darwin's ladder. These, he felt were easy prey for an unscrupulous clergy.

A contemporary who shared Sait's loathing for the presence of the Church in Quebec was Robert Sellar. While Robert Hill reminded readers, in the foreword of his book, of the research that went into Sellar's writing, it is impossible to ignore the emotion that accompanied his categorical denunciation of the Church.[2] Sellar set himself up in Huntingdon, Quebec in 1862 as the editor of the Canadian Gleaner and the voice and conscience of English Protestant Quebec. His immediate cause derived from what he perceived to be the direct effort of the Church to force English Protestants out of the Eastern Townships. He accused the clergy of every possible machination in perverting the benevolence of their English conquerors. Sellar's concerns about the Church dealt with what he

perceived to be mind control, the raising of money for unspecified ends (papist plots), and the use of power by the clergy on their own behalf. Interestingly enough, Sellar denied any antipathy toward the French Canadian people themselves or for the French language. They had their place: subordinated to English authority.

Sellar felt that another contemporary, Francis Parkman, the widely-read American romantic historian of New France, was too generous in his description of the French Canadian situation. Sellar wrote:

> Let him who wishes to know how New France was governed not go to Parkman, who picks out from the musty records only the details that enable him to embellish his delightful narrative, but to the royal despatches to the governors and intendants and their reports, and he will learn how in the minutest details of daily life, its inhabitants lived under a system of medieval absolutism destructive alike of initiative and self respect.[3]

In this case Sellar seems to have mistaken Parkman's romantic style for lack of judgement.

In fact, Francis Parkman shared Sellar's Darwinian attitudes and was a firm believer in the superiority of the educated man, education being the prerogative of the elite. Thus, for all his passion for the history of New France, he was not the least bit impressed by the French "habitants" other than as a mass. Nor was Parkman a lover of the clergy. An agnostic who had a certain grudging admiration,

at times, for the Jesuits, Parkman was less and less impressed with those who perpetuated subjugation in the name of religion. Mason Wade, almost a century later, described him as being "notable for his detachment among his historical contemporaries, but . . . hardly . . . the model of the impartial historian today."[4] Parkman's strong Protestant background convinced him of the need for individual responsibility and he saw in the Catholic Church in Quebec the antithesis of the belief. So he wrote:

> Freedom is for those who are fit for it. The rest will lose it, or turn it to corruption. Church and state were right in exercising authority over a people which had not learned the first rudiments of self-government. Their fault was not that they exercised authority, but that they exercised too much of it, and, instead of weaning the child to go alone, kept him in perpetual leading-strings, making him, if possible, more and more dependent, and less and less fit for freedom.[5]

Parkman did not engage in the same papist-baiting as some other writers, but his criticism was no less pointed. For him the Conquest was a positive step in liberating the French Canadian habitants from an oppressive order: "England imposed by the sword on reluctant Canada the boon of rational and ordered liberty. . . A happier calamity never befell a people than the conquest of Canada by the British Arms."[6]

Not surprisingly, all French Canadian writers did not share this enthusiastic view of the aftermath of 1760. In his analysis of the writings of French Canadian historians

from 1840 to 1920,[7] Serge Gagnon isolated a certain conservatism that seemed to motivate their reconstruction of the past. This conservatism was a function of the need to assimilate the actual events of the Conquest and to find in the past the hand of God who had not forsaken His people. Gagnon saw the teaching of history in this way as an ideological form of social control in the choice of subject, heroes, and moral lessons for the people. With the growing vigour of the Church during and after the time of Ignace Bourget, in combatting the liberalism that was creeping into society, the intellectual climate became increasingly dominated by the clergy. Thus Gagnon suggested that the history written during this period generally extolled the attachment to the soil; virtually ignored the people, other than as an abstraction; and marvelled at the religious leaders who had reared a nation out of the ashes of the Conquest. Those who did not agree found themselves in a difficult position in clerical Quebec.

The Church, however, could not control the writing of the history of Quebec forever. A generation of French Canadians emerged who viewed the Church in a critical light. They no longer feared condemnation for their assessment of the past. These neo-nationalists, as they were often called, untied the knot that had bound God to the history of Quebec. Michel Brunet was one of these historians. He shared what

Susan Trofimenkoff called "the view of Conquest-as-thalinomide",[8] a society arrested in its growth by the victory of the English. Consequently he disparaged those who have denied the loss of self-determination suffered by the French after the Conquest, in order to create a notion of the nobility of the French nation and its mission. As he wrote:

> Toutes les envolées oratoires d'antan et d'hier célébrant la superiorité intellectuelle du Canada français et sa vocation unique en Amérique du Nord a'avèrent n'avoir été que de pieux ou de joyeux mensonges.[9]

Brunet held the clergy responsible for the lack of involvement of French Canadians in the industrial development necessary to liberate the province from English economic domination. In his view the clergy promoted a false humility or submissiveness that worked to the disadvantage of the people.

Brunet's view has been countered by William F. Ryan, a Jesuit who based his study of the Church in Quebec on the statement from the Second Vatican Council that Christianity does not preclude economic concern. Ryan focused on Quebec because of its Roman Catholic nature, and the period 1896 to 1914 because of the surge in economic growth. Basically he concerned himself with the expressed attitudes of the hierarchy. What Ryan concluded was that the threats to

"survivance" impelled the Church to try to guide its people to a better life:

> The distinctions between religion, language, culture and race are thus constantly blurred by the clergy, and the attitudes and initiatives adopted by them in this period can only be fully understood if seen in this context.[10]

Thus, while Ryan admitted the errors of the clergy, he also indicated some of their more positive contributions to the economic life of Quebec.

Another historian who was willing to concede some credit to the Church in Quebec was Joseph Levitt. In his study of Henri Bourassa,[11] Levitt admitted that the Catholic faith that impelled Bourassa led him to a profound sense of social justice in action. Levitt, like Ryan, admitted the limitations of the Church and its corporatist teachings.

In L'Eglise et le Village au Québec, 1850-1930[12] one finds another attempt to understand the Church in its historical context. The effort is made to avoid simplistic questions which set the Church of the past against the seemingly irreligious aspect of contemporary French Canadian culture. With the criticism of religion inherent in Marxist analysis, Gagnon and Hardy showed how religion was used as a tranquilizer and a means of control. Theirs is not a biting criticism. Rather, it seems to be an elaboration of what preceded sports and television as the opiate of the people.[13]

More recently scholars from several disciplines have turned to an analysis of the Church, less anxious to score political points, or exorcize an embarrassing past than to understand the function of a powerful, pervasive institution which has shaped and been shaped by the people whom it has served. One of the difficulties of studying the Church in the past has been the tendency of writers to equate the Church with the clergy, and the clergy with the hierarchy. In a sense this is understandable because past historians tended to be interested in power and that meant the leadership of the Church. Among the scholarship that is attempting to redress this overemphasis on power and hierarchy is the work of André Audet, Guy Trépanier and Carmen Rousseau who attempt to reconstruct a picture of the religious activities of people at the parish level.[14] Their focus on the people's perception and practice of religion at the parish level is extended by Pierre Lessard who has tried to develop a sense of the popular religion as mirrored in the use of holy cards and various religious items.[15] Another study, Un patrimonie méprisé,[16] by Jean Simard, Jocelyne Milot and René Bouchard, describes such religious practices of the Quebecois as the pilgrimage and the retreat. Gradually the Church in Quebec is being subjected to a more comprehensive and objective analysis.

Harnessing the Impulse

To all intents and purposes the first clergy of Quebec could be classified as virtuosi. From its inception the French religious community in North America was perceived to be a refoundation of a Church gone to ruin in Europe. The clergy had a mission to preserve Christianity in this new environment. Perhaps because the vision, if not the reality, was never allowed to fade, there remained a distinct tendency to virtuosity in the French Canadian clergy. Or perhaps it was the clergy who kept alive the vision to serve their own ends of evangelizing the population. In any case, the Church continually harked back to its historic beginnings as an inspiration to its contemporary adherents.

Scholars have identified a number of characteristics peculiar to the Canadian Church. One of these is the tendency of the Church to import communities of men from France to meet specific needs. Women's communities, on the other hand, were generally created in the province itself. One reason was the unwillingness of European communities to consider North American missions, because of the overextension of their resources in other areas. Of greater significance was the nature of the development of Quebec itself. As in every developing society where an emphasis is

placed on increasing the population, there is little value accorded to the unmarried. In his study of religious communities, Bernard Denault suggested that one function of religious communities in the nineteenth century was to provide for widows and unmarried women whom society had cast aside. To a certain extent this was probably true. More likely, however, was his hypothesis that the Church was making the most of the presence of unattached women in the community. Mgr Ignace Bourget has become well known for his efforts to create communities to meet the various needs of the people. Léon Pouliot,[17] Bourget's Jesuit biographer, described Bourget as simply following the inspiration of God in his various foundations. One could argue that Bourget was, in fact, attempting to control the women whose efforts to meet the needs of the poor challenged his authority, however unintentionally. Widows and young girls often involved themselves in works of charity, inspired by their faith and unhampered by other ties. It is not unreasonable to assume that Mgr Bourget and other clergy wanted to put these women under their authority, even to ensure the continuance of the work. For example Denault's study showed that of eleven foundresses of communities in Quebec between 1737 and 1902, only two had actually wanted to found an order; the rest were pressured into a community

at the insistence of the clergy.[18] This does not negate their eventual willingness to comply with the requests of the clergy. Nor does it detract from the importance religious communities assign to their foundresses as having a special vision or what they call "charism". All it suggests is the role of the clergy in expropriating their efforts.

The Community Conceived

The Community under study here provides a good case in point. The foundress was a widow who believed that her material and marital status left her free to express her piety in works of mercy. Born in 1800, the last of fifteen children, two of whom were alive at her birth, this woman lost her mother at the age of four. Before the age of fourteen she had spent two or three years at the boarding school run by the Congregation of Notre Dame in Montreal. Orphaned in 1814 by her father's death, she went to Quebec in 1819 to live with and assist a cousin where she kept house. She remained there until 1822, but returned periodically to Montreal. During this time, the young woman followed a strict religious life and at one point considered entering a convent.

In 1823, however, this young woman married a "bourgeois" of the city of Montreal who was many years her senior. By

the end of 1827, she had endured the death of her husband and two of their three sons. Her third son died within the next year. Left alone she was not devoid of material to survive. Her sole responsibility was a simple youth entrusted to her by her husband whose life the youth had saved. Eventually Mme _____ welcomed the lad's mother into her care as well.

Increasingly this woman spent her time and resources on the poor of Montreal. Together with other women she visited homes to bring provisions for those in need. Soon, however, Mme ____ became convinced that this type of aid was not enough, and in 1830 she opened her first house of refuge for the poor and aged women among whom she had been working. In 1831 she began a second larger "asile". Over the next years Mme ____ distinguished herself by her care, not just for women, but for those struck down with cholera, and by her willingness to visit those imprisoned after the political troubles of 1837, as well as those condemned to death. Clearly here was a woman who moved beyond the well-worn paths of conventional female activity. Here, too, was a woman whose activities challenged, quite unintentionally, the functions of the Church, charged with the care of society's unfortunates. More alarming still, Mme ____ was beginning to attract support.

By 1831 Mme ____ had organized a group of women to help with her visits of charity. She had also appealed to those among her friends and acquaintances who had money to help her to continue her mission once she had exhausted her own estate. In 1841 Mme ____ received civil incorporation for her "charitable organization" and in 1842 she pronounced a private vow to be a servant of the poor to the extent of her ability.

By this time Mgr Bourget had replaced Mgr Lartigue as Bishop of Montreal. Before becoming a bishop, Mgr Lartigue had been the spiritual director of the young Mme ____. So, both he and Mgr Bourget, who had served as his secretary, were familiar with this woman's work. Bourget had inherited his predecessor's concern for the poor who lived in the diocese, particularly those in the city of Montreal itself. In assessing the needs of the people, Bourget decided that he would travel to Europe to engage some Sisters to work for him in Canada. Bourget's reasons for preferring a religious community to a lay organization was his fear that the work of the lay women would die with them. On his return to Canada, however, he found that Mme ____'s organization had been incorporated and he decided to build a community around this group of women since his promise of help from Europe could not be fulfilled.

At first it seems that Mme ____ was not interested in joining the religious community being organized by Bourget and the new chaplain M. Prince. Pouliot suggested that because Mme ____ did not ask to join initially, Bourget hesitated to ask lest he "violate her freedom".[19] When one of the first group of novices withdrew from this nascent community, Mme ____ asked to take her place. She was refused by M. Prince, who, it is assumed by Pouliot and the nuns of the Community, was just trying to make sure that Mme ____ really had a call from God. The fact that she pursued the question later with Bourget was their proof. Before Mme ____ was allowed to begin her training, Bourget sent her to the United States to study the rule of St. Vincent de Paul, a rule suitable to communities engaged in works of charity outside a cloister.

It is impossible to determine why Mme ____ was not approached initially by Bourget to be part of the Community, just as it is to know whether Mme ____ saw her choice in terms of a call from God, or simply in terms of continuing what she had begun with this incipient community which was comprised of her colleagues. A harsh appraisal of this situation would lead one to the conclusion that Mgr Bourget was at least singleminded in his pursuit of control over every facet of his Church. To be fair, his offer to sponsor religious communities was probably received with a certain

relief: the Church's sponsorship assured the continuity of the work and provided the women with security. All but one community of the nine studied by Denault, which were founded in Quebec in the nineteenth century, began in this manner.[20]

Regardless of Mgr Bourget's intervention, the Community grew rapidly in the years that followed. By 1851, the year of the death of Mme ____, the Institute numbered seven houses and had engaged in the following works: taking care of the aged who needed hospital treatment, home visiting, distribution of goods to the poor, care of orphaned and abandoned children, attending the needs of elderly women and sick priests, and boarding schools for girls. The Sisters themselves numbered fifty-seven, of whom nine had died, and there were twenty-six in the process of being trained to become nuns.

From their work among the victims of the various epidemics which afflicted Montreal in the nineteenth century, there evolved numerous hospitals and centres for treatment. By 1900, the Community had opened a total of ninety-eight houses in Canada, mainly in Quebec, and along both coasts of the United States, and were involved in virtually every facet of aid to the poor. Their number included trained teachers, pharmacists, nurses and administrators. Some had entered after they had received their education; others were

educated by the community, at their own or lay institutions of learning, often to fulfill a specific request for assistance. This community, as most other French Canadian communities of the time, benefited from the power and predominance of the Catholic Church in Quebec at the beginning of the twentieth century.

A Religio-National Dream

Religious communities spring from a specific social reality. The reality of the nineteenth century Church was that it was not entirely monolithic. It was torn by the debate on ultramontanism and was subject to the attacks of the anti-clericals. Women were not conspicuous in this ideological wrangling, although there were always a few women, like Mme Dandurand who wrote for Canada Revue, who were willing to ignore the censure of some of society in order to speak from the woman's point of view. Nevertheless, women represented support for the clergy in the various communities in existence. As Youssef suggested with reference to the Church in Latin America, these groups of women formed a considerable base of support for the clergy by their very association and compliance with the clergy's requests for service in their parishes.[21]

The Church had also associated itself during these years with the rising sense of French Canadian nationalism which emerged after 1837.[22] Gradually it would blend this nationalism with religious notions of the mission of the French Canadian people which inspired Action Française and other Catholic nationalist groups of the early twentieth century.

By the end of the nineteenth century, another event caught the attention of the religious and political leaders alike. It was the request for soldiers from Canada to fight for Britain against the Boers. The French Canadians were incensed and perceived in the imperialist rhetoric of English Canadians a threat to their survival as a nation. So, as Fernand Dumont and Guy Rocher pointed out it was a coming together of "national, social, and religious preoccupations" within the context of nationalism that united the efforts of the clergy and politicians as they had not been united before.[23] Dumont and Rocher suggested that it was during the first thirty years of this century that, in fact, the image of the French Canadian nation was actually realized. P.-A. Linteau, R. Durocher, and J.-C. Robert support this idea and stated that there was a second facet of the powerful presence of a Church that did not hesitate to intervene in the affairs of State

> Cependant, c'est une Eglise qui a peur, qui craint toutes les inventions du siècle et qui regarde constamment vers le passé pour trouver l'idéal de la société qu'elle cherche.[24]

Perhaps because, at some level, the clergy realized the tenuous nature of the Catholic state that they would create, they assuaged their fear by intense efforts at controlling "the faithful". By 1946 one member of the clergy, the Dominican Provincial, Father Gaudrault wrote:

> Exaggerated denominationalism, or the over-accentuated and too widespread intervention of Church representatives in secular matters, can be very imprudent from many points of view. First of all, this attitude is ennervating to a greater number than one would think of good Catholics who, in their own domain, feel surrounded, guarded and driven like minors. They lack breathing space.[25]

The clergy who had perceived themselves as the inheritors of the holy mission of carving out a theocratic state in North America were at the point where it all seemed to be coming together. They found themselves at last in a position of influence that would allow their messianic hopes to be fulfilled. It is difficult to determine whether their vision was eventually a victim of overkill or whether it was already hollow because they misjudged the level of piety and compliance of the French Canadian people who were experiencing the social changes that were fostering more "secular" or "materialistic" attitudes in North America.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 2

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CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL REALITIES

The Rhetoric

To understand why young women in record numbers chose to join religious communities in Quebec in the 1930s, it is essential to appreciate the socio-economic and religious climate of the time. This climate circumscribed the bounds of acceptable feminine behaviour and forced women to face the brutal reality of finding suitable employment during a period of serious economic crisis. The material and social benefits of joining a religious community must have proved particularly appealing. These, however, were not the only incentives.

After the turn of the century in Quebec the air resounded with calls to live the greatness of the nationalist dream, a dream begun by the heroic founders of the French colony, and maintained by countless courageous clergy and politicians. Among contemporaries, Henri Bourassa, the politician, and Lionel Groulx, the historian-propagandist, stand out among many who pursued the ideal with incredible zeal. According to Bourassa:

> La Providence a voulu que le groupe principal de cette colonisation française et catholique constituât en Amérique un coin de terre à part où l'état social, religieux et politique se rapproche le plus de ce que l'Eglise catholique apostolique et romaine nous apprend être l'état le plus désirable des sociétés.[1]

Not all nationalists were as religious as Bourassa, but at this time the clergy and the politicians found it mutually beneficial to work together. Susan Trofimenkoff, however, has isolated a crack in this façade when she suggested that perhaps the increasingly urban society was not able to accept clerical leadership and that "his [Groulx's] stridency, his repetitiveness [were] indicative of his inability to reach his 'petit peuple'".[2]

While the intellectuals, the politicians and the Church hierarchy may have sensed the difficulties ahead, and viewed the future with a sense of unease, the French Canadian people were inundated with patriotic rhetoric much of which was directed toward the family and what was believed to be the ordained segregated roles of the sexes within that unit. It is here that one detects the fear that changes in society were going to break up this quintessential unit, this stolid defence against the erosive influence of individualism, materialism and the modern world. L'Abbé Albert Tessier spared no ink in creating a picture of women and their true place in society based on an ideal-

ized past. He never ceased to remind his hearers that: "Dans leur foyer, les femmes ont joué un rôle discret, volontairement effacé, mais plus puissant que tout ce que les hommes ont pu accomplir de plus prestigieux."[3] Tessier's beliefs were reinforced by l'Abbé Groulx who was likewise concerned with the role of women in the family.[4] These ideas were part of what has been described as maternal feminism. Carol Bacchi isolated similar ideas among the English suffragists and their followers.[5] Eugenics and the elevated role of the woman who was to contribute to the furtherance of a strong healthy race through her womb, were widespread notions at the turn of the century among English and French intellectuals, clerical and lay alike. What women added to these theories of race, particularly in French Canada, was what Michèle Jean has called a "mystico-religious language".[6] As Madeleine Trottier and Robert Mayer pointed out in an article on images of women in French Canada, "Pour l'homme, la femme est une mère, une éducatrice, et une ménagère. La femme ajoute une dimension apostolique et missionaire à ces roles."[7]

Since the home was often perceived to be the primary place of women, it was the responsibility and duty of the father, as the head and the legitimate source of authority, to defend and protect it from external perils. The mother

was to be the heart, the nurturer both of her husband and of her children.[8] In the opinion of the clergy, intent on fighting what they feared was the disintegration of the family, any rearrangement of the "natural" order would undermine this basic institution and hence destroy the fabric of society.

Consequently, the place of the family in society, and the role of women in the family, became pervasive themes in the press and from the pulpit. The ideas that women would want to be elsewhere than at the hearth was abhorrent to the clergy's idealized vision, and the very notion of women's suffrage aroused the fury of clergy and devout Catholic politicians alike. Perhaps Bourassa was at his most vitriolic when the question of the vote for women was raised. He saw suffrage as ". . . l'introduction du féminisme sous la forme la plus nocive . . .", and as he continued in this, one of his more famous diatribes, he represented suffrage as leading to the creation of ". . . la femme-homme, le monstre hybride et répugnant qui tuera la femme-mère et la femme-femme."[9] Even if the women of Quebec failed to read all of this, many men did, particularly the men who had so much power over the lives of women: the clergy. These frightful images of the result of an independent spirit in a woman were doubtless passed on to the younger women, in many ways the most

vulnerable, and for whom the message was principally designed.

Even the strongest of women could not withstand this pressure for long. Marie Lacoste Gérin-Lajoie who fought so hard for the rights of women and of the family, by 1921 found herself constantly faced with the intransigence of both politicians and clergy. Perhaps more discouraging than the attitude of the men was the opposition of the women themselves. After an unsuccessful appeal to Rome to uphold the principle of women's suffrage, Marie Gérin-Lajoie resigned her post as leader of the Fédération Nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste in 1922. In 1927 Idola Saint-Jean took up the challenge and continued the fight for the vote, but in that year the clergy very adroitly focused the attention of women elsewhere by allowing the formation of La Ligue Catholique Féminine, a definitely safer alternative to any organization run by Idola Saint-Jean.

La Ligue is a good example of clerical paternalism, an organization designed to focus women's attention on a specific issue. This group was initially founded to combat the scandalous clothing being worn by post World War I women. As a chaplain of La Ligue wrote in 1933:

> Tous se rappellent que la mode avait horriblement mutilé les habits féminins en 1926-27:

> des femmes et des filles semblent avoir oublié qu'elles étaient chrétiennes et la vague qui emportait la pudeur était si violente que l'autorité religieuse ne parvenait pas toujours à la maîtriser.[10]

Although concern was extended to other realms, particularly the theatre and other forms of entertainment, propriety in dress provided the initial spark for this group. The reason for the group's popularity quickly became obvious. First of all, it had a concrete and attainable end women could do something about their own clothing. Second, the group was set up to be run at the parish level, so that women could get directly involved. Finally, and most importantly, La Ligue received the approval of the clergy, not just at the parish level, but by 1933 it enjoyed a papal blessing and the collective approval of the archbishops and bishops of the province.[11] While Michèle Jean has suggested that women eventually learned a great deal about organizing, speaking publicly, and assuming leadership through La Ligue[12], the fact is that in the 1930s it provided a narrowly prescribed sanctioned sphere of feminine activity. What was expected of women in those years was clearly, indeed painfully, obvious and this "image" was reinforced at every opportunity by the leaders of society. It is hard to blame women for preferring La Ligue, it is easy to see how other women, even those who seemed so strong, became fundamentally discouraged in

their fight for women's rights.

The clergy's appeal to women would have been less potent had it not been founded on some social reality. In defence of their analysis of the evil in society they could point to a rising crime rate among women in Quebec. In Table 3-1, we see that the percentage of women convicted was significantly higher in Quebec than in Canada. Whether this difference was a function of the vigilance of the police or of the vice of the women is not certain. The fact remains that the clergy could easily link the notion of wanton women who lived alone in the cities to these statistics and paint a grim picture of the reality that awaited the young girls who might want to try city life.

Education of Girls

Despite the inroads made by the feminists in Quebec and their limited victories in opening educational opportunities for women, the education of women was very restricted in the 1930s. School had effectively become the extension of the home. Under the control of the clergy, the daily schedule placed heavy emphasis on the catechism, rote lessons which stressed the teachings of the Church, and the lives of the saints. Particular

TABLE 3-1 Female Offenders in Quebec and Canada, 1929-1939

		1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1939	1939
QUEBEC	Number of Convictions	892	891	566	1279	1353	1240	1533	1466	1652	1880	2589
	% of Total Convictions	18.7	16.1	9.5	18.1	17.5	16.1	16.4	15.4	21.2	18.3	23.9
CANADA	Number of Convictions	2637	2660	2607	3202	3477	3145	3336	3370	3783	4176	4825
	% of Total Convictions	10.9	9.3	8.3	10.2	10.6	9.9	9.9	9.4	10.2	9.6	10.1

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Quebec, 1934, 1937, 1938, 1941.

emphasis was given to the early habitants and heroines, among them Jeanne Mance, Marguerite Bourgeoys, and Marguerite d'Youville. From these women and others like them, the children, girls and boys alike, were to draw their image of dutiful, devout, and patriotic women. The stories were specially selected, and perhaps edited, to epitomize the virtues designed to support those qualities necessary to maintain the status quo: patience, obedience and selflessness. They were most frequently not pictured as restless, sometimes difficult women discontent with an earlier lot, as were the women cited above.

During the 1930s an average of 77% of all school-aged girls were actually enrolled in school each year. Overall, less than half of all students enrolled were female, but more than half of all primary students were girls.[13] Table 3-2 shows that there was a reduction by more than half of the percentage of girls in school after the age of seventeen. Since there is no corresponding decline in male enrolment, it is clear that far fewer young women than young men proceeded to higher education. Women in Quebec also quickly fell behind the Canadian average of females enrolled in school. Part of the reason for this was the emphasis on the place of the woman in the home. After a child could read and write and do some figuring, she could

TABLE 3-2: Proportion of the Juvenile Population at School Between the Ages 12 and 24: 1931

(a) Males

Age	Canada			Quebec		
	Total	At School	P.C.	Total	At School	P.C.
12	107,466	103,278	96 1	31,018	29,156	94 0
13	103,089	95,941	93 1	31,008	26,877	86 7
14	105,156	87,909	83 6	30,487	21,140	69 3
15	103,343	67,820	65 6	29,305	14,507	49 5
16	108,892	47,682	43 8	30,516	9,830	32 2
17	106,414	27,561	25 9	29,675	5,911	19 9
18	106,321	16,615	15 6	30,136	3,701	12 3
19	100,280	9,679	9 7	27,907	2,201	7 9
20	94,766	5,874	6 2	26,780	1,405	5 2
21-24	368,956	10,887	3 1	103,953	3,058	2 9
Total Aged 12-24	1,304,683	473,246	36 9	370,785	117,786	31 8

(b) Females

Age	Canada			Quebec		
	Total	At School	P.C.	Total	At School	P.C.
12	104,546	100,204	95 8	30,939	28,904	93 4
13	100,375	92,607	92 3	30,517	25,747	84 4
14	102,702	85,076	82 8	30,364	20,075	66 1
15	101,808	68,800	67 6	30,232	14,530	48 1
16	106,897	51,429	48 1	31,165	10,012	32 1
17	104,099	32,360	31 1	30,633	5,983	19 5
18	104,648	18,391	17 6	31,289	2,864	9 2
19	96,898	9,291	9 6	29,000	1,238	4 3
20	94,623	4,205	4 4	28 772	497	1 7
21-24	352,840	4,822	1 4	107,611	682	0 6
Total Aged 12-24	1,269,436	467,185	36 8	380,522	110,532	29 0

Source. Figures specially supplied by courtesy of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

From: Leonard C. Marsh, Employment Research (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 307.

learn as much at home, and provide some help for her mother. In the absence of legislation requiring school attendance, parents felt free to terminate the education of their children when family need dictated.

After the elementary stages of education, the girls who possessed higher aspirations were channelled into domestic science where it was hoped they would be exposed to traditional values mixed with some more advanced technical or managerial skills. By 1937 the teaching of domestic science was obligatory in primary schools in Quebec, and l'Abbé Albert Tessier was named as the person in charge of visitation, the person responsible to see that the importance of the family retained its proper emphasis.[14] This type of "advanced" education for young girls has received two radically different assessments, both some years later. Evelyn Brown, who wrote Educating Eve, a description of the Family Institutes as they had evolved until 1957, revealed her beliefs about women and her positive assessment of the Institutes when she said, "It is rumoured that a cordon bleu has a greater chance of lasting happiness in marriage than a bluestocking."[15] In their Etude sur le rôle des sciences domestique dans la formation de la jeunesse L'Association des Femmes Diplômées des Universités took a starkly different stance. This study, published in 1964,

stressed the inadequacy of the education provided for young women in the écoles ménagères, whether the girls wished to proceed to an institution of higher learning or not. As the report pointed out: "Lorsqu'on songe que ces écoles furent subventionées régulièrement alors que les collèges féminins ne le furent qu'en 1961, on peut trouver là élément de réflexion sur la conception de l'éducation féminine au Québec!"[16] Quite rightly, the University Women identified the link between funding and educational opportunities for women in Quebec. Obviously, domestic science was thought to be enough for girls; college education was discouraged.

Education in a classical college was reserved for those who could afford it. Soeur Saint-Stanislaus-de-Jésus, speaking in 1954 on the virtues of a classical education, had to admit that "nos élèves viennent surtout du milieu aisé."[17] How much more so must that have been the case in the 1930s. Although there were classical colleges for women as early as 1908, there was no mention of them in the Statistical Yearbook of Quebec until 1940. By 1939 the number of women attending classical colleges represented 17% of the total number of college students. Although this number of women in classical colleges was small, clergy and lay leaders feared these females who were making their mark in the academic world. To assuage these fears of unbridled

aspirations among women, and perhaps to maintain a façade of respectability, the female colleges had to incorporate teas and other suitable feminine activity befitting female institutions into their daily schedule.

In her speech, Soeur Saint-Stanislaus-de-Jésus found herself having to justify the value of classical education, after almost fifty years of its existence, not by what it did for the women who were involved in it, but by the fact that those who had gone to college had married and had children.[18] Even while these young women were being educated, according to Marta Danylewycz, they were discouraged from challenging the prescribed norms. Those who challenged this well-worn path were clearly an embarrassment. In 1934 Soeur Ste-Anne-Marie, president of the CND College, felt she had to apologize when one of her students applied for admission to study medicine.[19] By 1930 women were allowed to practice medicine in Quebec, but they were not called to the Bar until 1941. Thus the dilemma continued for women who tried to fit the image of the submissive wife and mother but who had the ability and the desire to do more.

Another feature of Quebec elementary education during the 1930s was the predominance of female teachers who accounted for about 84% of primary school staff in the province. Lay women outnumbered the nuns in these schools

throughout the decade but the gap was closing as lay women increased 17% and nuns, 26%, over the ten year period.[20] What is important about the feminine nature of the educational experience of the young was the emphasis on what has been called popular religion. Successful lessons, good behaviour, cleanliness, almost anything that met the standard set by the teachers was rewarded with a holy card, a scapular or a ribbon. Pierre Lessard has suggested the subtle role these practices played in reinforcing the whole religious structure for young girls particularly, since they saw in the women before them models of good behaviour.[21] In this way did the image of women seep into the school system as well.

An Inhospitable Workplace

During the 1930s the marriage rate declined due in part to the economic hardships that made it difficult for a man to assume the responsibility of a wife and children. Table 3-3 shows that the lowest marriage rate corresponded to the darkest years of the Depression, 1931 to 1933. At the same time, the average age at marriage was twenty-five for women and twenty-nine for men.[22] In view of the drop off of female students after age seventeen indicated in Table 3-2, and the fact that less than half the fifteen year

TABLE 3-3: Marriage Rates per Thousand Population
1929-1939

YEAR	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
MARRIAGE RATE	7.1	6.6	5.8	5.2	5.2	6.0	6.5	7.0	7.9	9.0	10.7

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Quebec, 1934, 1944.

year olds were still in school, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of young girls were looking at a ten year wait for marriage after their schooling. These were the years in which a young woman could add to the family income or provide services at home to help her mother. Alternatively, she could become a charge on the family income, one more mouth to feed. Few families in Quebec in the 1930s could afford to let their daughters sit idle awaiting a prince on a steed, or a solvent man on foot. So, it is important to examine the work opportunities for women and just how women were perceived in the work force in order to appreciate the possible alternative provided by a life in the convent.

Opposition to women in the work force was not relegated to any one particular part of the country, or, for that matter to any one country at the turn of the century. As Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddart have said:

> L'insertion des femmes dans la production sociale capitaliste au même titre que les autres travailleurs a été traitée comme un problème social auquel on a tenté d'apporter de nombreuses solutions pour l'enraver, le contrôler ou même l'interdire. C'est dans un climat de réprobation si ce n'est d'hostilité que des milliers de travailleuses ont dû gagner leur vie.[23]

The conservatism of the 1920s, aided and abetted by the Church, made no secret of where it felt women ought to be.

They were to be at home, attentive to their family's needs. Moreover, despite the need for extra family income in the 1930s men were beginning to resent the jobs held by women of Quebec because of their own inability to find work. Women were perceived as interlopers who were taking positions men felt were theirs by right. Whether men could, or would actually perform these jobs is a moot question. One set of figures for 1931 reveals that 30% of the number of people who recorded themselves as actually having earned a wage in the previous year were women. This increased in 1941 to 35%.[24] As a result, in 1935 in Quebec there was serious consideration being given to a bill that would prevent women (married women first) from working who could not prove that they had to work to support their families. The Francoeur bill would have required a woman to have a certificate signed by the pastor, the mayor or other municipal official stating that she was "obliged" to work. Without even considering all the feminist arguments about what constituted this obligation, it is clear that there was pressure, if not censure, on the woman who chose to work. As Lavigne and Stoddart have pointed out: "Si, pour le clergé, le travail des femmes ménace l'unité morale qu'est la famille, pour les laïques, il remet en cause tout simplement les rôles sexuels traditionnels au détriment du prestige et de l'autorité masculine."[25] Madeleine

Trottier and Robert Mayer have suggested that this bill did not pass, not so much for lack of electoral support, but for the administrative difficulties inherent in obtaining the required proof.[26]

Unfortunately this atmosphere did not remove the necessity to find a means of self-support. An examination of the reconstituted statistics in Table 3-4 for the 1931 and 1941 census reveals that 42% of the women between 20 and 24 years of age, and only 21.6% of those between 15 and 19 were gainfully occupied in 1931. These statistics improved only slightly by 1941 despite the fact that by then Canada was committed to a total war. What these figures indicate was the dearth of opportunities for young women in the labour force of Canada even though they earned about half the income men did. And while these statistics were compiled for all of Canada we may assume that they have some relevance for the situation of women in Quebec. It was difficult for women in Quebec to find work.

Table 3-5 records the breakdown for the occupations of those fortunate enough to be employed in Quebec in 1931 and 1941. Further examination of the areas in which most women were employed will reveal what they might have expected from their jobs.

Lavigne and Pinard have described the situation in Montreal at this time. It is reasonable to assume that their

TABLE 3-4: Canadian Female Population Gainfully Occupied and Labour Force by Age, 1931 and 1941 (excluding Newfoundland)

	1931				
				Participation Rate	
Age Group	Population '000	Gainfully Occupied '000	Labour Force '000	Gainfully Occupied	Labour Force
14-19	616	133	163	21.6	26.5
20-24	445	189	211	42.5	47.4
25-34	713	156	174	21.9	24.4
35-64	1,406	170	186	12.1	13.2
65 and over	272	17	17	6.2	6.2
Totals 14 and over	3,452	665	751	19.3	21.8
Both Sexes Totals, 14 and over	7,227	3,926	4,042	54.3	55.9

Continued . . ..

Table 3-4 (continued)

Age Group	Population '000	1941 Gainfully Occupied '000	1941 Labour Force '000	Participation Rate Gainfully Occupied	Participation Rate Labour Force
14-19	661	145	177	21.9	26.8
20-24	512	215	240	42.0	46.9
25-34	886	221	247	24.9	27.9
35-64	1,674	232	254	13.9	15.2
65 and over	364	21	21	5.8	5.8
Totals 14 and over	4,097	834	939	20.4	22.9
Both Sexes 14 and over	8,435	4,517	4,652	53.6	55.2

Source: F. T. Denton and Sylvia Ostry, Historical Estimates of the Canadian Labour Force (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1967), pp. 23-24.

TABLE 3-5. Percentage of Occupations, According to Sex, in Quebec, 1931, 1941

Occupation	1931		1941	
	F	M	F	M
	%		%	
Agriculture	2.3	27.4	1.3	27.0
Fishing, Hunting, Trapping, Logging	.02	2.7	.1	4.6
Mining Quarrying	-	.7	.04	1.5
Electricity, Gas, Water (1941)			.2	.7
Clerical (1931)	13.7	4.7		
Labourers (1931)	3.4	16.2		
Building, Construction	.01	7.6	.2	7.8
Manufacturing	18.5	13.4	29.9	27.2
Transportation, Communication	3.3	8.1	2.0	6.8
Trade, Commerce	6.96	8.3	10.0	10.4
Finance, Insurance	.05	1.1	2.8	1.9
Service	51.8	9.5	52.9	10.4
Not Stated, Unspecified	.03	.04	.6	1.6
Total	100.0	99.7	100.0	99.9

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Quebec, 1935, 1944.

description of labour in this city would have applied to other Quebec cities or towns. For women engaged in piece work, there were incredibly long hours, sometimes fifty or sixty per week, and little pay. According to a report done by Mackenzie King in 1898 well before his time as Prime Minister. ". . . le prix accordé à un grand nombre de femmes travaillant à domicile, il n'y a pas de doute qu'il leur aurait été impossible de vivre à même leur gagne-pain résultant de soixante heures de travail par semaine."[27] There is little reason to believe that things had changed substantially since this report. People who needed the money were the victims of those who were in a position to hire any number of others to fill their places should they complain. As Jacques Rouillard has suggested with specific reference to the cotton industry in Quebec before 1915,[28] most textile factories at this time were known for unsanitary conditions, poor lighting, inadequate ventilation, and the exploitation of some of the women who were willing to do anything to get preferential treatment from the boss for themselves and their families. Efforts were made at this time to unionize, but Evelyn Dumas has suggested that the young girls, particularly the French Canadians were hard to involve in the process because of their lack of understanding of what was going on.[29]

Perhaps part of the difficulty would have been the inability of the young girls to see themselves involved in labour more than a few years until they married, or the fear of making their return impossible if necessary after the birth of children. Or perhaps it was just a refusal to adapt to the exigencies of the industrial society, reinforced by the clergy's insistence upon the virtues of a rural life long after it was economically feasible.

The largest area of employment for women was that of "service". The heading is quite broad and included both domestics and professionals, such as teachers. The role of domestics was on the wane after the turn of the century except in times of hardship. Lavigne and Stoddart have indicated that women often made their way to the city under the sponsorship of someone who wanted domestic help. Frequently the parish priest or the nuns in the town were a good contact for someone who sought reliable domestic assistance. Once in town the domestic often sought other employment because the life of a servant was circumscribed by the demands of her employers, and her personal freedom was curtailed. Furthermore, the work itself was considered to be menial, and young girls sought jobs in department stores where, although the work was just as demanding, and often the pay no better, the young girls were on their own after hours, unhampered by the often well-intentioned super-

vision of their employers. During the crisis, however, it was to the role of domestic that many women returned. Lavigne and Stoddart suggested that this was the reason for the relatively small unemployment rate among women during the depression compared to men. Women could always seem to do cleaning or laundry even if it was for almost nothing.

As for the professional side of service, in the province of Quebec, the religious communities seemed to possess a virtual monopoly in the areas of social work and nursing. At the time there was little need for secular nurses, although a considerable number of young women found employment in the hospitals as clerks or aides. Consequently, many young women interested in actual nursing care were drawn to consider life as a religious. In the field of teaching, too, young women were in competition with the nuns. Throughout the decade of the '30s the number of lay women teachers exceeded the number of nuns, but the gap was closing. As has been pointed out, during these years the number of laywomen increased 17% while the number of nuns increased by 26%.[30] At the same time men accounted for an average of 6% of the primary teaching force and made more than four times what the lay women did, which may well account for the elementary school's preference for women.[31] Table 3-6 shows the average salaries of Catholic teachers at the time. Although nuns often were paid less than the

TABLE 3-6: Average Salary of Catholic Lay Teachers in Quebec, 1931-1939

	'31-'32	'32'-'33	'33-'34	'34-'35	'35-'36	'36-'37	'37-'38	'38-'39
Male	$1630	1603	1566	1459	1441	1666	1714	1752
Female	$ 394	361	331	315	316	337	400	409

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Quebec, 1939, 1941.

laywomen, and possessed little or no bargaining power, they could rely on the security of their communal life. Despite the fact that teaching carried some social status, the financial picture for the young female teacher was bleak, unless she could rely on her family or find an inexpensive boarding house. Consequently, the young women who were interested in teaching probably gave serious consideration to the life in a teaching community.

Other categories of labour can be assessed in similar terms: not much money and long hours in often foul working conditions. Statistics, it should be remembered, hide a great deal of misery. They also hide another segment of the female population, those women who were not classified as gainfully employed. Many of these worked on a family farm or in the home, which existing statistical classifications did not cover. While this failure demonstrates the inadequacy of much statistical material generated at this time, it also underlines a traditional attitude to women who worked at home. On the one hand their contribution was extolled by countless nationalist rhetoricians; on the other hand, their contribution usually went unnoticed in the wider world of government and business. Not all the women at home, however, were married. In his study of Saint-Denis, undertaken in the 1930s, Horace Miner revealed the presence in families of unmarried women who were simply

part of the household. Their presence seemed to have been secure but it is difficult to know whether that was their first coice of where or how to live. Their preference was probably not a consideration, in any case. A religious philosophy which stressed submission to God's will for the individual had little time for individual complaints and wishful thinking. Despite the security, there must surely have been other roles perceived to possess more status and challenge than that of the spinster/aunt in one's brother's home. The difficulties of this group were different from those in the workforce, but hidden. Perhaps these, too, pondered the religious life as an alternative to spinsterhood.

The labour prospects for women in Quebec in the 1930s, then, were not very inspiring. Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddart summed up the situation well in suggesting that the ideology which stressed women's duty to the hearth would never stop the need for more independent women in labour. What the old notions did was to allow the employers to use women. Lavigne and Stoddart explained:

> Cependant cette idéologie a eu aussi des effets réels sur les travailleuses, car en caractérisant leur travail comme marginal et anormal, elle les conditionnait à se soumettre aux injustices et à la discrimination. . . . L'idéologie dominante de la mère au foyer a favorisé le maintien de l'ère du «cheap labour» féminin en soulignant

> l'illégitimité du travail féminin, et les premières victimes de cette situation ont été les travailleuses elles-mêmes.[32]

Ill trained to compete in even an active market economy, women in the 1930s in Quebec found themselves facing contracting employment opportunities. Besides the low pay and often wretched conditions, women had to face the hostility of unemployed men and the disapproval of the Church which preached submission and duty, and had difficulty envisioning women as other than wives, mothers, or nuns.

An Unlikely Alternative to Motherhood?

The alternative to marriage and/or the employment cycle was the convent. Since more young women chose to enter religious orders during the 1930s than ever before, this alternative obviously possessed a strong appeal. First of all, for those with career aspirations the religious life offered an opportunity to fulfill these aspirations, particularly for girls whose families could ill afford to purchase the necessary professional training. The fact that social welfare and education were under the aegis of the Church created a constant demand for the nuns to staff schools, hospitals and other institutions. That

they were often paid less than their lay sisters made them a boon to poor parishes who wanted the nuns to work there. Even for those who did not desire a specific office as a teacher, nurse or administrator, there were places to be filled where they could make a valuable contribution of service. Dispensing charity had its own kind of appeal and reward.

In a time when people were dealing with the uncertainty of unemployment the nuns were a picture of enviable security. They were never without a "job" although the pay was often negligible. Their faith seemed to generate food. The Sisters admit that the '30s were lean years for them too, but they lived in the belief that God would take care of them, and they always seemed to have something to share. As the agents of charity, the nuns often received gifts to share with others and so, even as they stretched their resources, they were seldom without. Furthermore, there was the belief that some poor were more "deserving" than others. These were the victims of unemployment who tried to find work rather than charity. In many ways the nuns were part of this group, but almost as the intermediaries, the honest brokers, between those who had something to share and those who were deemed worthy of the gift. In any case the image they portrayed was one of assurance and lack of worry.

The Church and religious communities enjoyed a certain power in Quebec in the 1930s. Without discussing the uses and abuses of power in the Church it is accurate to say that communities shared in the overall "presence" of the Church during these years, as well as having their own areas of influence. Communities owned land, sometimes vast amounts of it, throughout Quebec, as well as portfolio investments within and outside the Province. They owned hospitals, schools, institutions for various groups, and they administered these. Since ownership is associated with power in our society, the nuns were perceived to be powerful. Within communities, the practice of obedience allowed for the election of representatives to handle the assets of the group, but the use of the pronouns "we" and "our" indicate that the entire group took a collective pride in their accomplishments. So, one hears the nuns saying, "Oh, that was our hospital," or "We own that piece of property." The same nuns would probably find the notion of power abhorrent, since, after all, it is God's work that they are about. Still, the power of the group animated the lives of the women who belonged to communities in the 1930s and the assurance that it suggested to outsiders was probably very attractive, especially to young girls facing an uncertain future.

Since the nuns believed that their life itself was a witness to others of how to live, they were most often careful to project an image of a happy, harmonious community, serene and secure. Whether they always lived up to the ideal is relatively unimportant. The fact is that women who watched the nuns from the time they were small, sensed an overall warmth and camaraderie among the nuns. This particular facet of the life was doubtless a source of envy for those whom society cast in competition for jobs, or for husbands.

For those who had a finely tuned "spiritual" nature, such as have been described as virtuosi, religion offered a life of piety and a path that was designated as perfect. There was more than enough religious rhetoric during these years to set certain hearts aflame with noble ideas about the glorious mission of the Church. Even were such women to wonder about their role as mothers, communities provided the notion of "spiritual motherhood"[33] which spoke of the need for some women to provide food for the hungry spirits of youth in a world that was all too ready to feed them its own poison. The glamour, the pioneering and adventuresome spirit of women like Jeanne Mance that was held out to young women as models must have inspired some young girls to see great challenge in the religious life. For those attuned to the rhetoric of the Church and the

politicians during these years, the religious life offered attractive possibilities for service to one's nation, province, community, and the Church.

The prestige that attended the religious life offered a definite bonus to the membership. To an observer it must have seemed impressive. Set apart from others by their religious attire, the nuns were an enigma. Since their clothing was intended to insulate them from the world's ways, it was most often successful, and the women enjoyed the deference, if not always the respect, of those around them. Although no aspirant to the life would ever have voiced a desire to be treated like the nuns, lest she be thought unworthy, the respect in which the nuns were generally held, had its own appeal.

Finally, and not the least significantly, the religious life was a "legitimate" route to a fuller life. It possessed the approbation of the clergy whose prerogative it was to pass such judgements. Blake Hill has done a study of how socialization of a child leads to the choice of religious life.[34] Hill suggested the role of the home in lending approval to certain occupations and thus encouraging children to see them in a positive light. In examining the same subject, Suzanne Campbell-Jones asserted that "emphasis on the positive value of the religious life

in the upbringing of young Catholic girls cannot be stressed too much."[35] It was a source of considerable family pride, and often expected that in the large French-Canadian families of the 1930s, at least one member of the family would receive the call to the priesthood or the religious life. It was thought natural that children consider the possibility of the religious life at some time. In the last analysis, it was seen as a sign of God's favour for the individual and for the family. For people striving for signs of God's blessing, pressure, subtle or otherwise, could be brought to bear on the individual who was thought to have the proper disposition and who would, in donning the habit, become the sign of God's pleasure.

The socio-economic and religious climate in Quebec in the 1930s made religious life not only a neutral option, one among many, but quite an attractive one for the girl for whom any number of factors converged to present her with a call or vocation. These factors have too often been ignored in the study of religious communities because they are seen as detracting from the validity of the religious vocation which has been described as the direct intervention of God in the life of an individual. Without negating the belief that any individuals held about God's desire for them, it is important to study the phenomenon in its historical context and by removing some of the myth, to recreate a more realistic picture of the group of women who chose religious community living.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 3

1. Quoted in Joseph Levitt, Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf (Ottawa: Les Editions de l'Univesité d'Ottawa, 1972), p. 21.

2. Susan Trofimenkoff, Abbé Groulx: Variations on a Nationalistic Theme (Toronto: Copp Clark Limited, 1973), p. 12.

3. Abbé Albert Tessier, Femmes de maison dépareillées (Montréal: Editions Fides, 1942), p. 11.

4. Susan Trofimenkoff, Abbé Groulx . . ., p. 116.

5. Carol Bacchi, Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English Canadian Suffragists (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

6. Michèle Jean, Québécoises du 20e Siècle (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1974), p. 13.

7. Madeleine Trottier et Robert Mayer, "Images de la femme au Canada français" dans Michèle Jean, Québécoises . . ., p. 275.

8. Often in the earlier pamphlets the word "fils" appeared rather than the word "enfants".

9. Henri Bourassa, "Le suffrage des femmes" dans Michèle Jean (ed.), Québécoises . . ., p. 195.

10. Un Aumônier, La Ligue Catholique féminine (Montréal: L'Ecole Sociale Populaire (235), 1933), p. 4.

11. Ibid., p. 1.

12. Michèle Jean, Québécoises . . ., p. 25.

13. Based on figures from the Quebec Bureau of Statistics, Educational Statistics, 1930-1939.

14. Michèle Jean, Québécoises . . ., p. 160.

15. Evelyn Brown, Educating Eve (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1957). Comment under a picture of a young woman slicing meat.

16. Michèle Jean, Québécoises . . ., p. 31.

17. Soeur Saint-Stanislaus-de-Jésus, "L'enseignement classique en notre province" dans Michèle Jean (ed.), Québécoises . . ., p. 172.

18. Ibid., p. 176.

19. Marta Danylweycz, "Changing Relationships: Nuns and Feminists in Montreal, 1890-1925," in Histoire Sociale/ Social History, Vol. XIV, No. 28 (November, 1981), p. 428.

20. Based on figures from the Quebec Bureau of Statistics, Educational Statistics, 1930-1939.

21. Pierre Lessard, Les Petites Images Dévotes: Leur Utilisation Traditionnelle au Québec (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981).

22. W. Kalbach and W. McVey, The Demographic Bases of Canadian Society (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Co. of Canada, 1971), p. 271.

23. Marie Lavigne et Jennifer Stoddart, "Ouvrières et Travailleuses Montréalaises, 1900-1940," dans Marie Lavigne et Yolande Pinard, Les Femmes dans la Société Québécoise (Montréal: Editions du Boréal Express, 1977), p. 138.

24. Based on figures from The Statistical Year Book of Quebec, 1939, 1944.

25. Lavigne et Stoddart, "Ouvrières . . .," p. 141.

26. Trottier et Mayer, "Images . . . ," p. 181.

27. Lavigne et Stoddart, "Ouvrières . . . ," p. 129.

28. Jacques Rouillard, Les travailleurs du coton au Québec 1900-1915 (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université de Québec, 1974), pp. 76-77.

29. Evelyn Dumas, The Bitter Thirties in Quebec (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1941), p. 48.

30. See footnote 20.

31. Based on figures from the Quebec Bureau of Statistics, Educational Statistics, 1930-1939.

32. Lavigne et Stoddart, "Ouvrières . . . ," pp. 142-143.

33. Abbé Albert Tessier speaks of "maternités métaphisiques" and "mères selon l'esprit" in Canadiennes (Montréal: Editions Fides, 1946).

34. Blake Hill, "Women and Religion: A Study of Socialization in a Community of Catholic Sisters" (University of Kentucky, Ph.D., 1967), p. 108.

35. Suzanne Campbell Jones, In Habit (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1979), p. 75.

CHAPTER 4

THE COMMUNITY

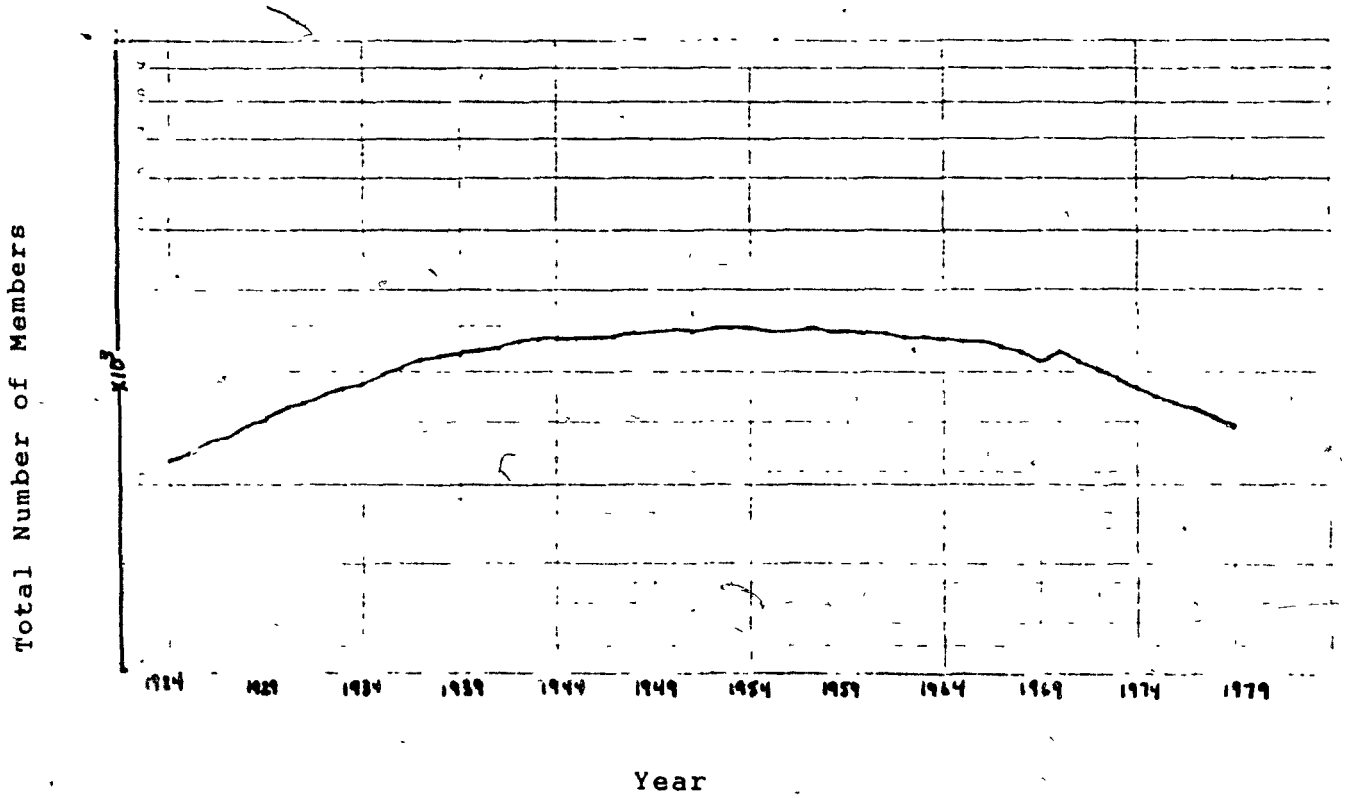
A Review of the Membership

An examination of the socio-economic and religious climate of Quebec in the 1930s provides some insight into the appeal of the religious life during those years. The religious life appears to be an attractive alternative to a shrinking, often hostile, labour market, and to the traditional female roles of motherhood or spinsterhood. A comprehensive understanding of the religious life in its historical context, however, requires that we look beyond its appeal for the women who chose the life. To do this, it is possible to examine a particular group of women who entered a religious community. By studying their social origins, one can discover shared characteristics which might explain their receptiveness to the idea of religious community living, and their decision to join a community. Furthermore, it is possible to solicit the opinions of the women themselves in an effort to understand why they entered a religious community. In all, what should emerge is a more complete picture of this particular segment of French Canadian society in the 1930s.

The Community[1] the young women in this study chose to enter was founded in 1843 to meet the needs of the poor not being met by others. Although begun in Quebec, this Community spread to the eastern and western United States and western Canada in response to requests by bishops for assistance. In 1856, a Novitiate, an institution for training nuns, was established in Vancouver, Washington. From that time onward, the young women could receive their training in English, and the ethnic composition of the Community was more diversified.

The Community continued to grow until 1954 when its membership numbered 3,480. Graph 4-1 indicates the pattern of growth between 1924 and 1979. The graph reveals four different stages of growth: 1924 to 1937 was a period of rapid growth; between 1937 and 1954 the increase continued at a much slower rate; after 1954 the Community's membership declined slowly until 1970; the decline in membership was greater after 1970. The break in the overall decline after 1954 which occurred in 1970 was the result of a reunion of a branch of the Community that had been detained in Chile, en route to Washington, in 1852 by an overly zealous and ambitious bishop. During the years examined by this study, 1930 to 1939, there was a net increase in membership of 563.

GRAPH 4-1: Total Number of Women in the Community
1924-1979



For any period the net increase was less than the number of entrants because of death and departure of those choosing not to remain in the convent. Graph 4-2 represents the number of women who entered in each of the years between 1924 and 1979. Despite the many fluctuations, there is an overall impression of decline after 1926. In a sense this is misleading because the years 1930 to 1934 were record years for numbers of entrants. The total number of entrants between 1930 and 1939 was 1,614.

Since the primary focus of this study is the condition of women in Quebec, only those entrants who were living in Quebec at the time of their entrance will be examined. Between 1930 and 1939 the Quebec members numbered 1,229 or 76% of the total number of entrants to the Community. Table 4-1 shows the number of entrants from Quebec and those who entered from outside the province. Some of the latter were French speaking and made their Novitiate in Montreal, but, like the rest, they will be excluded because they had not experienced the religio-political atmosphere that existed in Quebec at the time.

Entrants were selected for examination because they actually chose a religious life, whether they continued in their choice or not. They will be compared throughout the study to the group who continued in the life and professed

GRAPH 4-2: Number of Women Who Entered the Community Each Year, 1924-1979

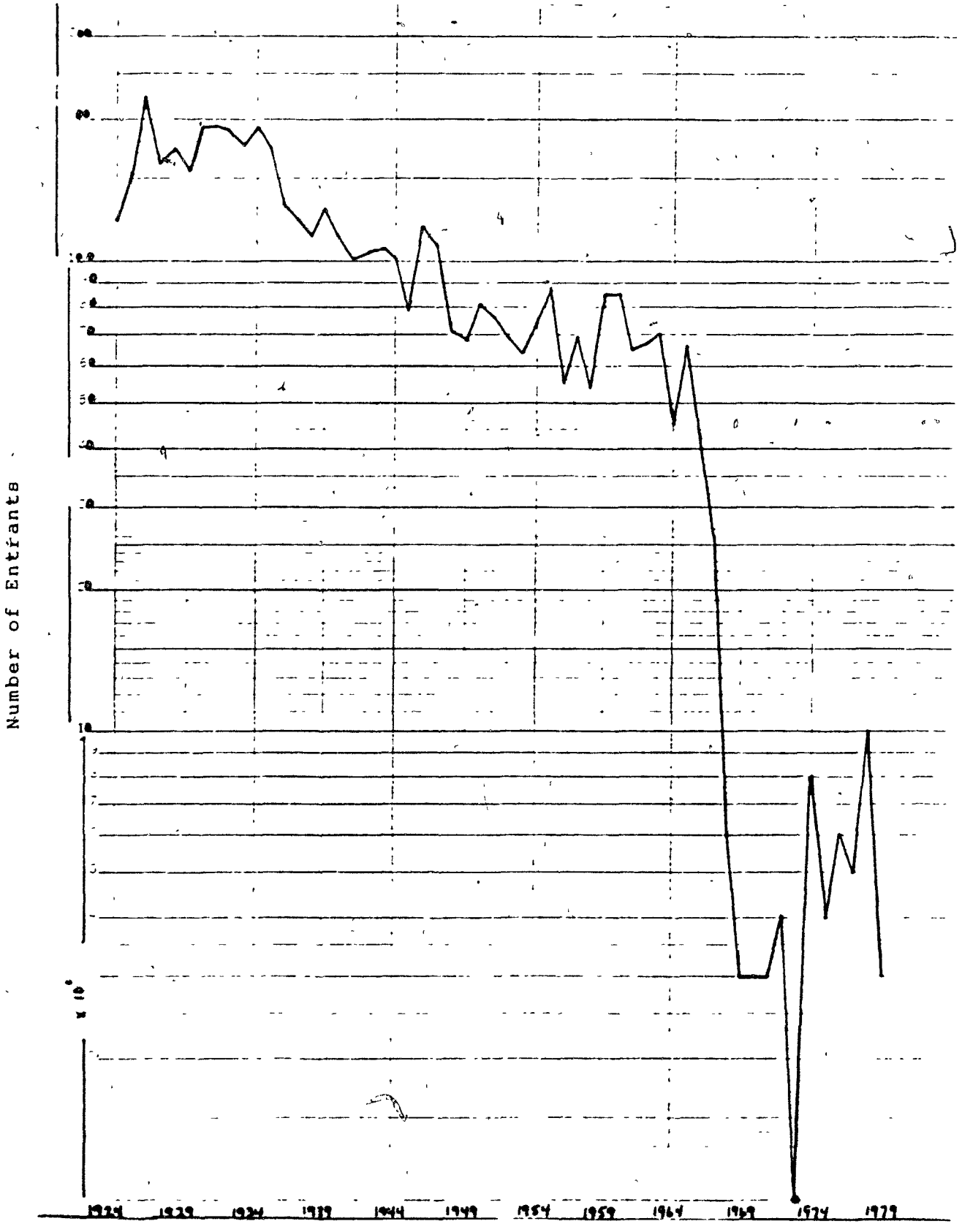


TABLE 4-1: Entrants to the Community by Residence at Entrance, 1930-1939

	'30	'31	'32	'33	'34	'35	'36	'37	'38	'39
Entrants from Quebec	148	129	140	127	153	140	100	96	91	105
Entrants from Outside Quebec	43	63	50	50	39	33	32	28	23	24
Total entrants	191	192	190	177	192	173	132	124	114	129

final vows, those who made their initial choice permanent. Table 4-2 shows the number of entrants who went on to make final vows. The profession of final vows followed a period known as "formation", or initiation into the life of the Community.

The formation process began when the young woman joined or entered the Community. To enter, a woman had to make application to the Community and supply a character reference from her pastor, as well as giving evidence of reasonably good health. The health restriction seems to have been waived or overlooked for certain individuals because of comments in several of the necrologies indicating the almost constant ill health of some members. Nevertheless, it was reasonable to expect that those who came would be fit to work and free from contagion. Particularly feared was tuberculosis. The Community also sought assurance that there was no history of mental disturbance or serious illness in the family. Generally, the young woman was required to show proof of "legitimate" birth. Those enforcing these regulations, however, seem to have had discretionary powers since the records and the necrologies give evidence of exceptions.

During these years, many communities requested a dowery from their entrants. Officially this Community had a $300.

TABLE 4-2: Entrants Who Professed Final Vows, 1930-1939

	'30	'31	'32	'33	'34	'35	'36	'37	'38	'39
Entrants from Quebec	148	129	140	127	153	140	100	96	91	105
Professed Final Vows	87	60	68	75	79	90	56	50	52	62

dowery listed as a requirement. In fact, though, the Sisters claimed that it was never an impediment for an individual who lacked the funds. Moreover, this Community had no set educational requirements, probably because their work among the poor did not require an extensive educational training. The virtual lack of a dowery and educational restrictions made the Community accessible to any level of society.

Once a young girl had entered, she spent not less than six months in what was called the postulancy. This stage required some work with the Community, and instruction on prayer and the religious life. The amount of work varied with the needs of the Community at the time. If the candidate gave evidence of willingness to proceed, and of suitability, she was allowed to receive the habit at the clothing ceremony. This marked the beginning of the novitiate, a period of one year required by Church law to ensure that the young woman was given sufficient time to understand the specific rule governing the life of the Community, and the nature of the commitment she would make by vow at the end of the year. The novitiate was a time of strict separation from any external contact, either with family or with other nuns. It was intended to make the woman dependent on God, and to test her ability to live away from her family and friends.

Following the novitiate, the young girl professed her first vows and took a new name. This was a sign of her willingness to leave the world and her old identity behind. She was allowed to make suggestions about the name, but the final choice was the Superior's. The name was often either one of the parents', and when possible, the father's, as a sign of respect and recognition of the gift of their daughter to the Community. After the ceremony the girl was sent to live in one of the houses of the Community. Usually she engaged in regular duties, unless she was asked to study for some specific task. This was a period of probation to determine whether the woman could live a religious life. The individual was carefully supervised by her superiors during this time. After three years, the nun requested to be allowed to make final vows. If the head of the Community, on the advice of her councillors and the superiors, under whom the woman had lived, agreed, the nun would be allowed to profess final vows. At any time up to this point, if the woman were deemed to be negligent in fulfilling her obligations, she could be asked to leave, and required to do so. Likewise, if the woman wished to leave, she could do so, at any time in the postulancy or novitiate, or at the expiration or dissolution of the temporary vows. After final vows, a nun could be dismissed for very grave

breaching of her vows. She could leave only with special permission from the Church. Until the 1960s few left after final vows because there was considerable stigma attached to such a choice, much like divorce.

Sources of Data

The data on this group of entrants were gathered from the register of the Community which recorded the names of all those who entered, regardless of the length of their stay. This register contains the names of the parents, including the mother's maiden name, the entrant's place of birth, her place of residence at entrance, and the dates on which the individual progressed from one stage to another in her training prior to final vows. It records the religious name of the individual if she professed vows, the father's occupation, the names or numbers[2] of any blood sisters in the Community, and sometimes educational data such as degrees obtained. From this material a social profile of the group can be drawn.

These data were augmented by a questionnaire devised to find out what the women were doing between the end of their schooling and the time they entered the Community; to secure a clearer picture of their family's social position; to discover what the women read or saw or heard by

of entertainment; to establish a better idea of the extent of kin ties within the Community and with other communities; and finally to hear from the women themselves why they chose the religious life as lived in this particular Community. (See Appendix I.)

To obtain a sample of the opinions of the Sisters who entered the Community between 1930 and 1939, five hundred questionnaires were sent to the Archives of the Community which the Archivist agreed to distribute. After securing the necessary permission from the Community leadership to distribute the questionnaire at large, the Sister Archivist expressed some misgivings about how well such a questionnaire would be received. This Sister has held positions of responsibility within the Community over the years and seemed to have a good sense of how the membership would, in fact, respond.

The first distribution of the questionnaire resulted in close to one hundred responses. It also confirmed the Archivist's suspicion about the reaction of the Sisters. She noted at the time that many were participating in holiday (Christmas) activities and so were busy. She also felt that she could not give the questionnaire to the infirm who numbered about seventy. The greatest difficulty, however, was the misgivings of many who wanted to

protect the name of the Community from any possible distortion, and who could not be persuaded of the confidentiality of the study. These refused to fill out the questionnaire.

A second attempt was made to solicit responses when the Community held a large meeting of its membership. People from outside the Motherhouse, as well as some from within who had not had a chance to complete the questionnaire, did so. The end result was that one hundred and forty-nine questionnaires were returned. Of these one was spoiled because it did not have a date of entrance recorded. Twenty-five respondents entered before 1930, and fifty-nine after 1939. Sixty-four women who entered between 1930 and 1939 answered the questionnaire; sixty-one of these entered from Quebec and so are part of the group being studied.

As has been recorded, 679 of the original 1,229 entrants professed final vows. (This is obviously the only group who could answer the questionnaire.) Subsequently, forty-seven of these left the Community, and as of November 1982, 118 of the rest had died. Therefore, of the total original group 514 were still alive and in the Community in November 1982. Of these, 124 were listed as residents in the Motherhouse complex, in various communities, at the last publication of the placement of

personnel. Since there is no set date for the changing of residence, this number could fluctuate somewhat. Seventy of the 124 were listed as belonging to the Infirmary group and so would not have had the questionnaire distributed to them. Therefore the sixty-one respondents reflects a reasonably good response from the Motherhouse, and those who attended the Community meeting at which the questionnaire was circulated. This material, then, is the basis for the discussion that follows.

Recruitment of New Members

Recruitment was the process by which the Community secured new members and assured its continued existence. The process is a delicate issue since most communities view the acquisition of new members as a sign of God's approval of the work of the Community. Hence recruitment is sometimes shrouded in mystery. Encouraging new members had to be done in such a way as to leave no doubt that the initiative was God's. Nevertheless, there was a sense of pride for the nun who was followed into religion by one or other of her protegées, those who were either taught by the nun or who worked with her and who were known to take a special interest in the nun, visiting her and offering her some attention, often in the form of gifts. Although such

liaisons were not heralded, in the lightning-swift communication system of the closed group, most people knew who was "responsible" for whom.

Recruitment took place in several ways. Perhaps the most obvious was contact with the nuns and familiarity with their life. In terms of this Community alone, in the 1930s, they had 49 houses in 31 centres in Quebec. A "house" was an establishment of the Community in which from several to hundreds of nuns lived together, and engaged in some charitable work. The "house" could be a hospital, school or other large institution to accommodate the poor; or, it could be a residence for the nuns who went out into the Community to work. Table 4-3 indicates the distribution of the houses in Quebec. The largest number of the nuns worked in urban centres where many members were required to staff the large Community-operated institutions. Nevertheless, nuns were spread throughout the rural areas of Quebec as well. Most of the houses, with four exceptions, were located along the North Shore of the Saint Lawrence. Not surprisingly, most of the new recruits came from the same area although there were some pockets of entrants from the Eastern Townships.

Bernard Denault[3] suggested that in the nineteenth century convents absorbed excess women. In the 1930s there were more women than men in the cities and some counties

TABLE 4-3: Distribution of the Houses of the Community, 1930-1939

Type of Centre	Number of Centres	Number of Houses
Cities	7	25
Towns	5	5
Villages	5	5
Centres not large enough for incorporation	14	14
Totals	31	49

recorded surpluses of women. The entrants came from some of these counties but these were also centres with large numbers of nuns.[4] Therefore a good part, at least, of the surplus of women was nuns, not just unattached females.

The nature of the Community's work was a factor in the process of recruitment. In the urban centres, like Montreal which had seventeen establishments, the nuns were to be found in every facet of aid to the poor and were particularly obvious in their hospitals and refuges for the poor and disposed, such as the soup kitchen. Sensitive to the call of charity and caring for the poor, girls could see the nuns in action, and many had actually assisted the nuns before entering. Twenty-one of the thirty-three questionnaire respondents who recorded working prior to entrance, had some contact with the nuns. (Appendix p. 160.)

In the towns, villages, and smaller centres, the nuns were not as numerous, but their presence was felt very much by the people. One of the major works of the community was visiting the homes of those in need. In the absence of doctors and undertakers, the nuns were called both to administer to the sick and the deceased. It was the Sisters who prepared bodies for burial, and who often stayed through the night at the home of the deceased for the wake. In areas like these, the nuns were an important part of the

society and were held in hi[illegible] regard by those who benefited from their ministry. [illegible]irls also met the nuns at the schools set up to meet the [illegible]ducational needs of the young people of any area. In man[illegible] areas these schools were residential. There were fo[illegible]teen such schools for girls operated by this Community, [illegible]en of which were located in the areas not large enough [illegible]r civic incorporation. Besides contact with the nuns in th[illegible] community, girls whose parents wanted them to receive some [illegible]nstruction, got to know the nuns who were teaching in t[illegible] schools.

Mere contact with the n[illegible]s, being aware of them in the community, was probably the [illegible]ost passive form of recruitment, and the nuns were awa[illegible] of the need to make a good impression. More direct me[illegible]s consisted of vocation days held in the schools run by [illegible]e nuns as often as once a month. At this time the gi[illegible]s were instructed to ask themselves whether or not t[illegible]y felt that God was calling them to the life. How, the[illegible] might ask, were they to know? Essentially, if they felt d[illegible]wn to the life of the nuns they knew, if they had good [illegible]ealth and a willingness to sacrifice a home and family [illegible]or God, then they would be encouraged to pursue the qu[illegible]stion further, either through talking with one of the nun[illegible], or with their pastor. Having the opportunity for this re[illegible]ection made the choice of

religious life a real one for many girls. It requires little imagination to picture the thrill for a young girl of having one of the nuns ask her personally to consider the life. The feeling of importance, of being chosen, may well have been electrifying. Clearly, contact with members of the Community was an important element of recruitment.

Added to this more direct approach to recruitment, was the fact that many of the nuns had relatives in the Community. Women who had sisters in the order were indicated in the Register. Over the ten year period, 218 women or 18% of all the entrants had a sister in the Community; 22% of the group who professed final vows had a sister in the group. The register does not include any other relative or any other community. The questionnaire, however, revealed that of sixty-one respondents, only eleven said that they had no one, neither a relative nor a friend, in a religious community. (Appendix, p. 161 .) It is reasonable to assume that the influence of kin was considerable. People who had personal experience of the life through a relative were doubtless more apt to join themselves. Although some resent the intimation that younger girls merely imitated their older sisters, there is the possibility that the same home environment could have encouraged more than one member of the family to look favourably on the religious life.

Perhaps having a sister, or other relative, in the Community added another incentive. Isolation of the membership from family and friends was one means of controlling membership mentioned by Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh.[5] This isolation took the form of restricted visiting and limited letter writing outside the convent. For many the strain of this isolation was somehow mitigated by the presence of a relative in the group. It should be understood that silence was the norm in convents during these years; the nuns spoke to each other only in case of need, or during recreation for an hour in the evening. They did not have occasion to spend much, if any, time conversing with each other. The focal point of interaction in the house was the superior through whom all requests were channelled. This was another form of control intended to limit the individual's relationships with others in order to concentrate on her relationship with God. Furthermore, when all that entrants could expect from outside was one half-hour visit a month with their parents, the presence of a family member on the "inside" must have been a boon. Even if visiting were not permitted very often, just the knowledge that one was not alone in an organization would have been reassuring. So, a kin connection also seems to be operative in some individuals' choice of community.

This study is based on the assumption that recruitment is susceptible to natural, as well as supernatural, explanation. This is clearly not how the nuns themselves saw their choice of the religious life. In the questionnaire, when the nuns were asked who suggested the religious life to them, twenty-eight of the fifty-nine who answered said emphatically that God was the one who had given them the vocation. (Appendix, p. 161.) The issue may be simply one of language. For the nuns, to suggest that their call to religious life was a function of the economy or latent ambition may seem to detract from the validity of their decision. On the other hand, to insist that the call from God comes to the individual in a vacuum is unreal. The issue is a sensitive one. Without any attempt to denigrate the spiritual validity of their vocational decision, this study simply endeavours to examine those natural factors which can be seen as mediating this call from God to the individual. There is no intent to judge either the faith of these people, or the expression of it.

When asked by the questionnaire why they had chosen the religious life in general, fifty-eight of sixty-one answered, and thirty-seven of these specifically mentioned the call to serve God. 'Vocation', or the call of God in one's life, has been an important concept in the Church over the years because it is believed that God has a

specific desire for each individual. Throughout adolescence, young people were encouraged by the clergy, their teachers, and parents to discover what God wanted them to be. For the young woman the choice was not career oriented. Rather, girls were encouraged to examine the married, single or religious state. The emphasis, in any case was on motherhood, physical or spiritual. Thus the nuns' response that they were answering a call from God is entirely consistent with the religious atmosphere of the time. It also reflects a certain sensitivity about the nature of their choice, that it is 'of God', and not a 'natural' phenomenon.

Even so, this does not explain why the women chose this particular community. When asked this question, fifty-six of sixty-one nuns answered. The answers fell into three categories. Twenty-three of the women said that they were impressed by the divesity of the work of the Community. For them the nature and scope of the work seems to have been important. Twenty-three others were more explicit. They specifically mentioned that they were drawn to the service of the poor. The concept of the "poor" is interesting because of the almost romantic notions that surrounded those who were suffering. This work, while it had its valid place, also had a certain appeal at a time when there was a great deal of obvious poverty. The remaining twenty-four mentioned either a relative, a friend, a teacher, or

some other positive personal contact with the nuns. Thus the questionnaire results seem to corroborate the basic methods of recruitment: contact and kin. They also suggest a receptivity to certian current ideas about service to the poor, and the intervention of God in individual lives.

Socio-Economic Background of Entrants

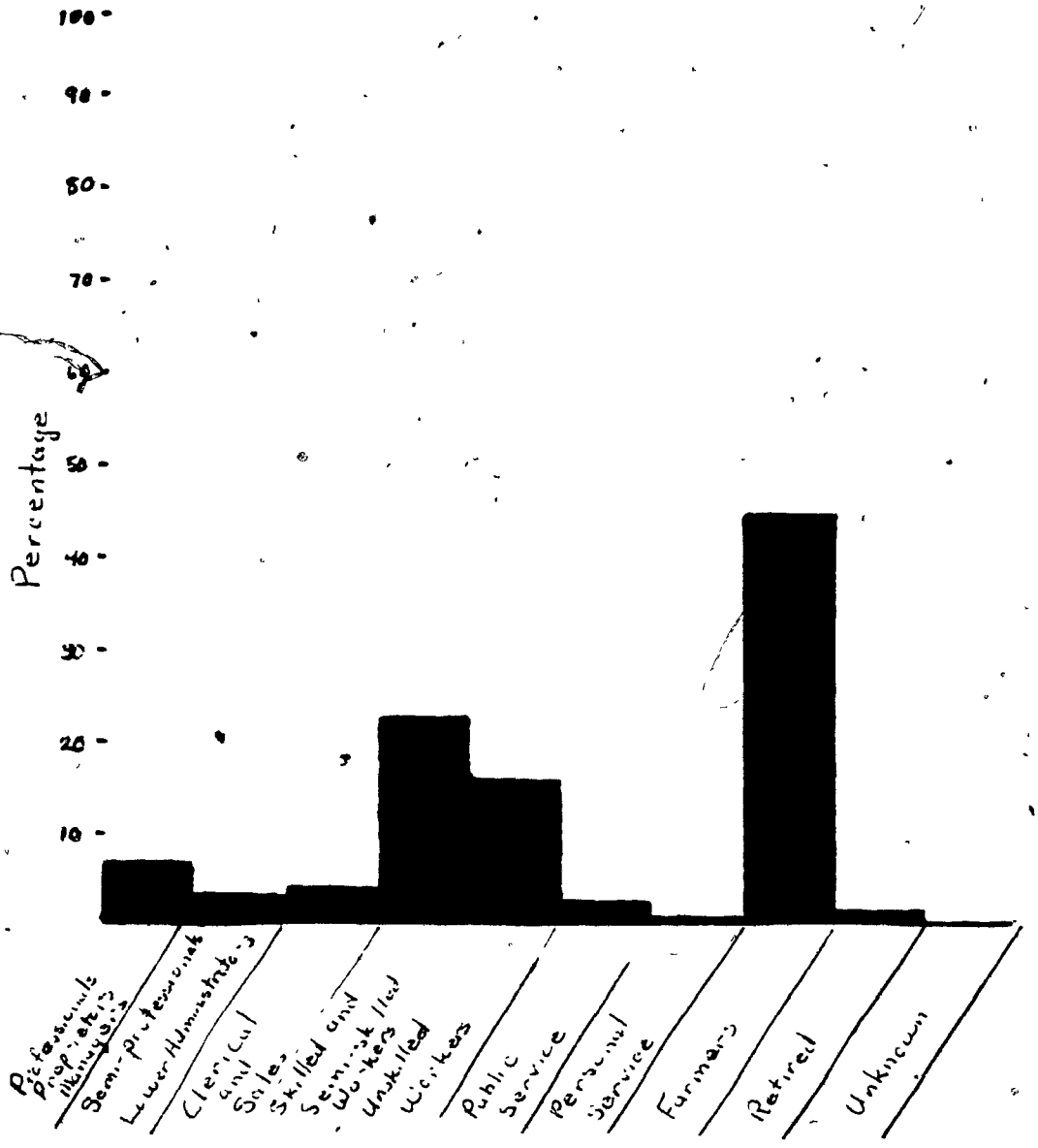
An examination of the socio-economic character of entrants to this Community provides a further insight into its appeal for certain young French Canadian girls in the 1930s. By analyzing the socio-economic background of the entrants, one may see which segments of society were attracted to this Community and why. In the 1930s the social status of a woman in Quebec, and indeed elsewhere in Canada, depended largely upon that of her father or husband, for it was his occupation which indicated the social standing of a family. Although working women, wives and daughters, may have contributed materially to the family income, the husband or father was usually the chief bread-winner. According to the popular notion of the time, women were to share the accomplishments, and therefore the status of the men in their lives. For women, therefore,

their status was "ascribed" rather than "achieved".[6] In the case of this Community, a woman, regardless of her age or employment, was thought of as someone's daughter. It is necessary, then, to determine the status of the fathers of the entrants.

Social status can be viewed from different perspectives. de Jocas and Rocher cite the sociologist P. Sorokin's three principal scales of social stratification: "the economic, the political, and the occupational . . ."[7] The first obviously deals with the amount of money or financial power one possesses. For the purpose of this study, the economic classification is useless because of the lack of data on the financial situation of the entrants. The political classification refers to the position in the community one derives from his political affiliations or public office. Again there is no such information on the entrants or their fathers. Moreover, as de Jocas and Rocher point out, in most societies occupation is one of the major determinants of social status.[8] Quite simply, people are ranked on a social scale according to the work they do. The fathers of the entrants to the Community will be examined according to their occupational classifications.

Graph 4-3 represents the occupations of the fathers of the entrants according to the classifications used by de Jocas and Rocher.[9] These groupings were chosen because

GRAPH 4-3: Occupations of Fathers of Women Entering the Community by Category, 1930-1939[10]



they were among the first to be set for French Canada and perhaps reflect a view closer to that of the 1930s than present classifications. It is also possible to compare these figures with those of Leonard C. Marsh whose study dates from this period.[11] de Jocas' categories reflect a hierarchy based on education and the occupations to which it led. The groupings also indicate the higher status accorded to those who were involved in decision making or a supervisory capacity. An examination of Graph 4-3 reveals a large concentration of farmers' daughters among those who joined the Community in the period under study. The percentage of farmers' daughters increases from 44.4% to 50.5% among those who professed final vows. If one adds to farmers' daughters those of the "blue collar" element, the daughters of farmers and the working class represent 85.6% of the entrants to the Community. Clearly, this Community's most fertile recruiting ground was the farming and blue collar segment of society.

Before these figures are considered alone, it is instructive to compare them with Leonard Marsh's figures of the occupational structure of the Quebec male population during the Great Depression. Marsh's figures are for the year 1931. Table 4-4 shows that the fathers of the entrants are underrepresented in both the white and blue collar segment of the population. The daughters of farmers are over-

TABLE 4-4: Comparison of Fathers of Entrants to General Male Population of Quebec, According to Occupational Group[12]

	White Collar	Blue Collar	Farmers
Fathers of Entrants	14.36	41.24	44.4
Quebec Males	21.6	50.4	27.5

represented in terms of the general population.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these figures. The relatively few daughters of professionals is no surprise; it is but a function of the recruitment pattern already discussed. Since this Community worked among the urban poor and dispossessed it had few contacts with the daughters of professionals. Similarly its lack of a prestigious academic institution made it unlikely that it would attract women with higher educational aspirations. There was also a subtle hierarchy among the various communities reflective of the social status of the membership, and this community, with its high percentage of rural recruits, was not among the elite.

Not only is the professional element underrepresented in the Community, but also the skilled and semi-skilled, or the blue collar element. Along with the destitute, this is the group that the nuns worked with in the cities. On the surface it would seem that the daughters of the blue collar workers or the dispossessed would have a great deal to gain by entering the Community. For those who were struggling to keep alive during the Depression, however, work could be all consuming. The description by Gail Cuthbert Brandt and Jacques Rouillard of the cotton industry, for example, showed how girls were absorbed by the industry at an early age.[13] Their studies suggest that

the daughters of the poor were needed to support their families and that they had little time for higher aspirations, even those represented by a religious community. Neither end of the occupational scale, then, has a significant representation in this Community.

The overabundance of farmers' daughters suggests several things. First of all, farming is near the bottom of the status scale created by de Jocas and Rocher. This is not, however, how farmers were described in the nationalistic rhetoric of the 1930s. At that time farming was characterized by the politicians and clergy as a noble occupation. Farmers were praised for their piety and patriotism. They also heard their calling linked by the clergy to God's will, His plan for the French Canadian nation. Ultimately, farmers had to reconcile this glorious picture with the stark economic reality. Between 1929 and 1933, the worst years of the Great Depression for the farmers of Quebec, the gross value of agricultural production was reduced by 40% of the 1929 figure. By the end of the decade the gross value was still only 75% of the 1929 figure and the number of occupied farms had increased by 14% over the 1931 total.[14] One might expect a deep cynicism to be the response of impoverished farmers to their "glorious" heritage, and indeed there is some reason to believe that that cynicism was there and smoldering in the 1930s, to burst into flame

later in the century. The image, however, did inspire the daughters of the farmers, who seem to have been particularly receptive to the instruction of the clergy and to popular religious sentiment. Girls who saw the nuns as responding to God's call to preserve the traditional religious values of the French Canadian people, probably linked their aspirations, whether occupational or religious, to the religious life.

Furthermore, at a time when capital and business had failed, and when cities housed large numbers of unemployed, the farmers appeared to have a relatively stable life. The attractions of the city had waned because of the Depression, and girls were less likely to set off for the city when many who had been there were forced to return to the farm. Farmers' daughters, accustomed to hard work, and lacking urban sophistication, found the transition to community life reasonably free from trauma. In the convent they found a life not very different from the sharing and working together that had characterized their home life. In a real sense, they had been protected from some of the confusion and unsettling ideas to be found in the cities.

Generally, the entrants came from large families. The questionnaire revealed a range in the number of children from two to nineteen. The weighted average family size was

8.8 members and the median was nine. Six of the sixty-one questionnaire respondents were the eldest in their families, eleven the youngest, reflective perhaps of a greater need for the eldest to help at home. Family position does not seem to have been a factor in the choice for religious life. (Appendix, p. 159.)

Mention has already been made of the fact that this Community did not sponsor a prestigious academic institution, and that it did not require a specific level of education of its entrants. Consequently, the educational background of the entrants reflects the diversity of occupations engaged in by the nuns, and the educational requirements of those occupations. Of those who answered the questionnaire on the subject of education prior to entrance, 30% indicated that they had a primary education. A further 20% indicated levels of schooling up to a twelfth year. These would probably have been in the "écoles ménagères", For women this type of education was not intended to lead them to higher academic study. Another 41% listed various certificates that entitled them to teach and 3% had taken commercial courses in secretarial work. (Appendix, p.159.) The educational level of this group could not be considered exceptional because most women had little formal education, since school was not mandatory until 1943. As for the women who held teaching certificates, these could be

obtained either as part of one's regular classes after the elementary grades, through a local school board, or by attending a normal school. In any case the certificate represented more what one might call vocational "training" rather than higher education. Thus, the academic background of the entrants to the Community in the 1930s reveals quite an average group of women. They were literate, though not likely overly intellectual. Not surprisingly they would have been the part of the population at which was directed much of the clergy's inspirational rhetoric. Because of the relative security of their socio-economic background, they were also more likely to be able to respond to it. Their presence in the religious life indicates that they did.

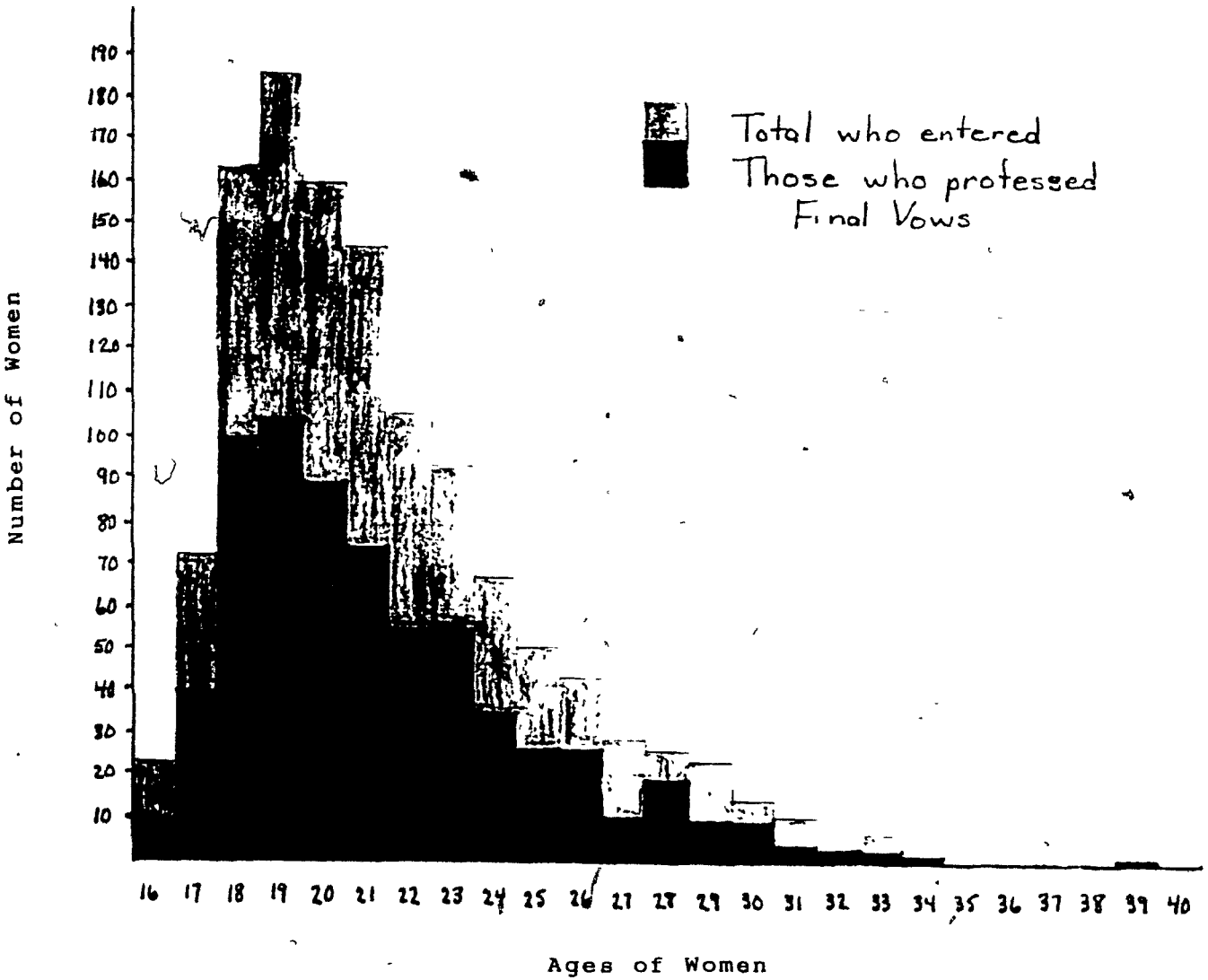
Thus the socio-economic character of the young women seems to have been a factor in their willingness to entertain the prospect of a religious vocation and to be able to choose this life. Definitely the socio-economic background of the entrants reflects the sphere of work and the presence of this Community in Quebec, and it reinforces the already rural emphasis in the membership of the Community itself.

The Age Profile

Social standards exist in most communities which govern the life cycle of its members from birth to death. The age of school entry, and departure, the commencement of employment, or marriage, is enforced, sometimes by law, often by custom. These expectations are frequently the result of socio-economic factors, but the expectations themselves take on the weight of societally approved norms. For example, an average age of marriage of 25 is a mere statistic explainable by any number of social or economic phenomena. To the parents of a 15-year-old who wants to marry, or the parents of a 35-year-old who has not yet "found" someone, the norm has a far different significance even if the statistics are unknown. Examining the ages at which people make certain life choices, then, can reveal something about the situation from which they come.

The age at which women chose religious life offers an insight into how women perceived their choice, whether they viewed it as their first choice, or their last hope, with optimism and enthusiastic idealism, or panic. The minimum age for an entrant was sixteen. Canon law required that an individual be at least twenty-one to profess Final Vows. There does not seem to have been a maximum age. Graph 4-4 reveals that, of the 1,229 entrants to the

GRAPH 4-4: Ages of those who entered the Community, and of those who subsequently professed Final Vows, 1930-1939



Community in the 1930s, 84% were between the ages of 16 and 24. Examination of censal material for the same period indicates that between 1931 and 1941 this age group accounted for about 31% of the female population of the province of Quebec. Until the age of 19 almost 97% of the young women were unmarried; by 24 years, this percentage decreased to 70%.[15] Still, with an average age at marriage of 25.6 during these years for women, the group of entrants was drawn from the largest group facing an important life choice.[16]

While the median age at entrance over this period was 19 years, the weighted average age was 21.3. The fact that the group of 25-29 year-olds accounted for about 14% of all entrants helped to keep the average a little higher. Those over 29 years represented only 3% of the population of entrants in the '30s as compared to 36% of the female population in 1931 and 40% in 1941.

There are several reasons for the age pattern of the entrants. During this time women were being especially prepared for the role of wife and mother. For most, there was a considerable period of waiting because of the tendency to marry at a later age in the 1930s in the face of the difficult economic situation. The fact that so many entrants came from the age group 16 to 24 indicates that

it was at least a reasonable first choice and not the result of widowhood, or a panic over the absence of a mate. For the most part these young women had their entire life ahead of them.

Another factor operative during this period that would have influenced the age pattern could have been external pressure on the entrants. This does not mean coercion. In fact the Canon Law of the Church contained provisions to guard against any undue pressure brought to bear upon an individual to force her to enter the convent. At the times when the entrants moved from one stage to another in their formation, designated clergy were sent to give the members a chance, in private, to acknowledge any such coercion. It does not seem that many ever availed themselves of this opportunity. Pressure, however, can be, and often is, much more subtle. The relative youth of this group and its size indicates the possibility of a malleability that was susceptible to pressure from parents, friends, or teachers to try the life.

Another possible factor in the age pattern is a little more difficult to examine because of its "chicken and egg" quality. Approximately 15% of the entire female population over 30 remained single in 1931--and almost 25% of the 30 to 40 year-olds. One might wonder why so few of these older women received the "call". Helen Rose Fuchs

Ebaugh[17] and Suzanne Campbell-Jones[18] have isolated several areas of control necessary for the maintenance of religious communities. The insistence on total membership, the fact that entrants were expected to embrace the life in its totality and to reject anything of their past that was antithetical to their belonging, is definitely a "weeding out" device. The emphasis on total membership required an enthusiastic response that seemed to have a certain appeal for those who were in a younger group, or perhaps the youth were just less set in their ways. In any case the programmes of formation were obviously set up to integrate members into the community. The question is whether the programme attracted only younger women or whether the programme was set up to respond to the numbers of younger women who could be attracted to the religious life.

In any case, age does not seem to have been a factor in the attrition rate, those who failed to make final vows. Graph 4-4 illustrates that, on the average, a little more than half of any age group proceeded to final vows. Perhaps the age spread was a necessary part of maintaining a balance in the Community where rank depended on age.

These data on the ages of the entrants reveal another striking fact about many of the women: there was a gap between the end of their formal schooling and their entrance

into the community. When asked what they did during this period, thirty-three of the sixty-one who responded stated that they had actually been employed outside of their parents' home. Fourteen of these young women were involved in teaching and earned between $150. and $350. a year, which was about the average for female teachers at this time. Of the rest, three worked in an office or factory: most held positions in hospitals or other institutions run by the Community. Those who did so, therefore, had a fairly good idea of the nature and character of the Community and its work. From their recollections, they made between $60. and $150. a year. Many of these women indicated that they still helped out at home. The rest of the women who continued to live and work at home suggested that they simply assisted their mothers with the household work. (Appendix, p. 160.) Judging by the questionnaire results, it seems that many of the women who had jobs were engaged in a service occupation. This may have accounted for their attraction to the work of the nuns. The fact that many also worked with the nuns reinforces the fact that recruitment came from personal contact.

To appreciate more about the life of these young women, the questionnaire included three questions about their reading habits and entertainment. Their responses

indicate that, thirty of fifty-nine had a radio at home. Two others specifically mentioned that they had a piano and a phonograph and provided their own entertainment. The programmes that the Sisters remembered do not indicate a definite pattern. Music, however, did seem to be a favourite. Judging by their response, the radio does not seem to have been very important to them. (Appendix, p. 161.)

The question about newspapers or magazines elicited a larger response. Fifty-six mentioned one or several publications; three said they received none; two did not respond. The titles ran the gamut of secular and religious periodicals. Overall, 36% received La Presse, 23% received Action Catholique, 18% le Nouvelliste, and 14% le Soleil or Le Devoir. Most received more than one publication. The total number of religious publications was eighteen, and several others just referred to "missionary" or "religious" journals. It would seem that the predominant reading material was conservative and Catholic in nature. These journals often played on the religious sensibilities of their readership in providing stories dealing with popular religious practice, rather than engaging, to any degree in profound theological speculation. (Appendix, p. 162 .)

As for books, forty-nine of the sixty-one respondents

listed some favourite reading material. By far the majority dealt with history, the lives of the saints and biographies of notables. Novels and religious books were also mentioned several times. A few authors were mentioned once. The romantic novels of Delly were mentioned several times. Once again, however, the overall impression is that these women preferred books of a religious or inspirational nature. For the most part this seems to be in keeping with their educational background as well. (Appendix, p.163 .)

The cinema and the theatre do not seem to have been very important for these young women. Fourteen of the total indicated that they had been to the movies, and fifteen had been to a play. Several movies were listed and one woman gave an impressive list of her favourite movie actors and actresses, but there is no indication that this was a frequent pastime. Similarly the theatre seemed to mean plays provided by amateur groups in the parish or the seminary. The plays mentioned included mostly the French classics. Two of the women pointed out that their families created and presented their own plays at home. In both cases accessibility to the theatre and cinema, and the cost of admittance may have been prohibitive. There was also the prevailing mistrust of such popular art forms among the local guardians of morality: the clergy. (Appendix, p. 165.)

The questionnaire also sought to establish whether the young women were active in parish youth organizations. Seventeen of the sixty-one indicated that they had been involved in a group, and six of these had provided some leadership in these organizations. All of the organizations listed were Church affiliated. The "Enfants de Marie", a group stressing piety, and charity, which had meetings and parties once or twice a year, had the largest percentage of members among those who responded. Thus, the activities of these women seem to have been circumscribed by the Church, and they found Church groups sufficient to channel their interests and give a sense of belonging. (Appendix, p.164.) Consequently, through their affiliation with Church groups, these women would have been more consistently exposed to the Church's expectations of women and to religious practices which may have encouraged them to consider the religious life.

The register and questionnaire provide a fairly clear social profile of the women who entered this Community. The entrants came mainly from rural areas in Quebec where the Community had convents, particularly along the North Shore. Over the ten year period covered by this study, slightly less than half were farmers' daughters. Combined

with the business and blue collar element, these women probably represented the more static elements of society in the crisis of the 1930s. They came from large families, many of which had supplied members to this Community and others. About one half of them worked until they entered. Of those who worked outside the home, most worked in what could be considered the service sector, teaching, or doing some other work, often in institutions run by the nuns. Few worked in manufacturing. Their level of education was reflective of the general female population, about half having little formal schooling, and the rest having completed enough study to be allowed to teach. The social life of these young women was centred around the Church.

Overall, they were girls from large rural families, of modest educational attainment, who were familiar with the work of the Community. They were, it would seem, among the least mobile, less exposed to the dubious attraction of a market economy in collapse. They were also those who were very much a part of the popular religious practices of the time, and probably, therefore, more susceptible to the religio-national rhetoric of the clergy. Finally, they were young--young enough not to be in a panic about finding a mate, and able to be challenged by their idealism and the positive life offered to them by the convent.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 4

1. "The Community" designates the particular group under study since they do not wish to be identified.

2. Each Sister had a number assigned at her entrance. She was reassigned a number at the profession of vows, this number being part of a continuum of all Sisters who had professed vows. The number assigned was based on the date of entrance and the age of the individual. This provided a kind of rank ordering for the group.

3. Bernard Denault et Benoît Lévesque, Eléments pour une sociologie de communautés religieuses au Québec (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1975).

4. The counties that recorded a surplus of women, and from which several entrants came, were Joliette, Montreal Island, Quebec, Sherbrooke, St-Hyacinthe, St-Maurice, and Riviere-du-Loup. From the Statistical Yearbook of Quebec, 1944.

5. Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, Out of the Cloister (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), p. 22.

6. Yves de Jocas and Guy Rocher, "Inter-generation Occupational Mobility in the Province of Quebec," in CJEPS, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 (February, 1957), p. 59.

7. Ibid., p. 57.

8. Ibid., p. 57.

9. Ibid., p. 61.

10. For a complete list of the occupations given in the Register see Appendix II.

11. Leonard C. Marsh, Canadians In and Out of Work (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 107.

12. Figures are based on the average of the years 1930 to 1939 for the Fathers of the Entrants, excluding Retired and Unknown. Marsh's figures are from Canadians . . . , p. 107.

13. Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "'Weaving It Together': Life Cycle and Industrial Experience of Female Cotton Workers in Quebec, 1910-1950," in Labour/le Travailleur, Vol. 7 (1981), and Jacques Rouillard, Les Travailleurs du Coton au Québec 1900-1915 (Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1974).

14. Based on figures from The Statistical Yearbook of Quebec, 1944, p. 298.

15. Based on figures from The Statistical Yearbook of Quebec, 1935, 1944.

16. W. Kalbach and W. McVey, The Demographic Bases of Canadian Society (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Co. of Canada, 1971), p. 271.

17. Fuchs Ebaugh, Out of the Cloister, p. 18ff.

18. Suzanne Campbell-Jones, In Habit (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1979), p. 30.

CHAPTER 5

THE PRESENCE IN PERSPECTIVE

Some Limits to Research

The black-robed, often inscrutable figures that formed the basis for this study have now been examined. The Register of the Community and a questionnaire have yielded a picture of the women who joined the Community between 1930 and 1939. The difficulty of the questionnaire is that it relies on memory which is notoriously selective. Nevertheless the questionnaire did allow the nuns to speak for themselves. Perhaps in later years this group which has been so vital to Quebec life will realize that it has nothing to fear from historians who want to recreate, as accurately and sensitively as possible, their contribution to the life of Quebec. In view of these misgivings, access to the Register has been a boon since it allowed for the compilation of data on actual membership. Being able to see where the entrants came from, how old they were, and their social and educational background provides concrete material with which to try to answer some of the riddles that their existence has posed over the years. Once again,

this material was limited, and raised as many questions as it answered. It is hoped that this effort will encourage, not just this Community, but others to extend the limit they have placed on material that is available for research. Their house chronicles, a record kept of each establishment of a community and often containing references to local history, would be a gold mine for historians. Admittedly care would be needed to protect the right of the individuals to anonymity. Nevertheless, as archivists in the religious communities of Quebec continue to discover the wealth that is at their disposal, and to trust the intentions of historians, the picture sketched by this study will be filled in and expanded upon. What must also be acknowledged is the limits of censal data which do not always reflect similar definitions from year to year and make comparisons difficult. As for the study at hand, it is essential to return the entrants to their setting and to address some of the questions posed at the outset.

Women in the Clerico-Political Scheme

The Depression of the 1930s did not spare Quebec. Unemployment and the miserable poverty it occasioned were felt across the province. Urbanization that had been increasing since the turn of the century emphasized the in-

adequacy of the relief measures that were band-aid like in the face of large wounds. Those who doubted the wisdom of their government and their church had to silence their concerns for a time until the need to survive seemed less pressing.

The Church was not unaware of the plight of its people. Religious organizations sought to alleviate the sufferings of the unemployed and dispossessed. The resources of religious communities were strained to meet these needs. Were the Church to fail, it would mean the beginning of state intervention in the domains that had always been the preserve of the Church, and this the Church feared and did all in its power to avoid. The clergy felt that it would be better to let the Church continue to administer charity even if it obtained public funds. The Church continued to believe that the solution to the problems facing French Canadians lay in the increased influence of the Church.

In the belief that social dislocation was caused by a distortion of the ordained social order, the Church set itself up as the guardian of society. It had been very busy since the turn of the century trying to stop up the holes in the dikes of traditional French Canadian society caused by growing restiveness among the people. The Church responded with the creation of myriad groups and projects to help the people to develop the proper Christian attitudes

toward work and society in general.

Aware of the stirrings of labour unrest, the Church preached corporatism that stressed the value of the entire community working together. While this philosophy embraced most aspects of society, it specifically attempted to diffuse any antagonism between labour and management. The initiatives of the clergy, of men such as Eugène Lapointe, who founded a Catholic union as early as 1907, were aimed at bringing society back to its senses out of the range of disruptive foreign influence. After all, in the right order of things the bosses would care for their employees as the clergy cared for their people and as God cared for the Church. There was an ordained order and people had to accept the place God had destined for them, and carry out their specific obligations. Workers had a right to expect fair treatment, but not to be militant or unreasonable in their demands. Management was to behave as a father, now chastising, now rewarding, always acting in the best interests of the workers. The clergy was always on hand to offer a moderating influence. The few voices among the clergy who questioned this interference in a sphere that did not belong to the Church were virtually unheard by the majority.

The whole ideology of corporatism and its effects on Quebec merit consideration because of the fact that the best

efforts of the Church to lead and guide its people ultimately seemed to suffocate them. In the ongoing discussion of the Church's culpability for the way Quebec developed, it seems clear that there were basic assumptions operative about the French Canadian people and about the best way for the Church to behave. These indicated a definite respect for the right "order" of things and a consequent paternalism. It was not that the people knew nothing: the Church just knew better. The clergy firmly believed that they were in the optimal position to direct the affairs of the French Canadian people. Armed with the papal social encyclicals, and bolstered both by their numbers and the influence that had been established under bishops such as Bourget, Laflèche, and Bruchési, the clergy, by the 1930s were convinced of their task and fearful of any undercurrents that threatened their authority. Once again, it is probably a distortion to suggest that it was the authority per se that was perceived to be at stake. It was the authority, however, that allowed for the preaching of certain social doctrines and that kept the people devoted to the Church. Because solidarity was believed to be essential to the continuation of the French Canadian "nation", the whole issue was loaded with emotion and covered with the acceptable mantle of religious fidelity. It is small wonder that the 1930s saw a brief resurgence of fervour in popular religion. The Church had a great deal at

stake.

So the Church continued its attacks on materialism that was thought to be so antithetical to Christian life. Secularism in the media was fought with increasing vigour through the 1920s and into the 1930s in an attempt to keep foreign influence out of the lives of the people. Groups were formed for young people to provide a bulwark against the pernicious modes of entertainment available to them in the cities. The embers of popular religion were fanned in an attempt to bring back the fire of faith. Pilgrimages, retreats and missions abounded. The Church was relentless in its fight to keep education within its jurisdiction. Secular education was feared as the beginning of the end of a Christian society designed to maintain the true values. It was believed that it was better for people to be content with their lot than to feed unrealistic aspirations that might destroy their spiritual contentment.

Women constituted a focus for the efforts of a clergy determined to maintain a proper social order. The family remained the pillar upon which the social order rested. The Church railed against attitudes that threatened to take women out of their homes and put them in the marketplace. The writing and oratory about women's role seemed to border often on hysteria. These paternalistic efforts achieved

some success through the écoles ménagères which were just another attempt to control a society in transition.

Externally, there was a semblance of cohesion in the 1930s; of support for the clerical domination of society. Dissent, often fanned by hard times, frequently took the form of labour unrest which was attributed to foreign influence by the clergy, and therefore viewed with suspicion. Generally, people were weary. In many ways they seemed to welcome the revival of popular religious practices. It provided a positive focus for their energies, and a cover for their doubts. This burst of popular religion does not seem to have been less genuine for its almost hot-house existence. How many remained skeptical, or went through the motions, will never be known. Politicians, linking their careers to nationalism, joined arms with the clergy in the expression of their concerns and in their efforts to regenerate the best of the French Canadian nation. Moreover, it was certainly to the advantage of politicians to co-operate with the clergy who could provide invaluable support at election time.

Despite the poverty and suffering of the people, the Church gave every indication of flourishing by the 1930s. Today with marvellous hindsight we can detect the cracks in the facade. Perhaps more is revealed in the sometimes strident emotion that enveloped the rhetoric of the age than

in the words themselves. But for the majority, the ordinary, unschooled individuals, life continued to be organized around work (when it was available), home, and the Church.

In this milieu women were thus consistently presented with an image of themselves, nonetheless ultimately debilitating for all its glowing nobility. Women were to be the centre of the family which was the core of this French Canadian nation. Theirs was a place of unparalleled importance because they could inculcate the eternal Catholic values in their offspring. Although their life "required" an attitude of submissiveness to their husbands and unlimited pregnancies, motherhood was presented as the greatest position to which a woman could aspire. Even the feminists of the time subscribed to many of these values, whether from a prudence that overrode other concerns, or from the genuine sense that women really belonged in the "foyer". The fact is that in the 1930s motherhood was the expected vocation of young women. Yet, to many, it was denied by choice or circumstance.

A Reasonable Choice

It is against this backdrop that the reality of religious communities must be viewed because in the 1930s unequalled numbers of young French Canadian women chose this

"spiritual motherhood". There are many explanations for why this was so. What is essential is that the women who chose religious life did so for reasons of their own. It was their belief that this was the initiative of God in their lives; that they were in fact chosen for this special existence and were complying with a plan laid out for them by God. That this celibate life was seen as the perfect way to salvation seems paradoxical in the light of the emphasis on motherhood. Set in the gnostic tradition within the Church of a mistrust of the "flesh", theologians taught that those who chose to depend on God rather than on another human being were more closely aspiring to God-liness. Because of the belief that this was a life for which one was chosen by God, the "call" was important and one did not treat the matter lightly. To overlook these notions or to dismiss them as religious fantasy is to distort the reality. This does not eliminate the need to examine other factors, and what might even be the mediating circumstances of such a call; but it does provide a necessary point of view.

There is some difficulty posing questions of historical data that would not have been asked at the time. Women in Quebec in the 1930s facing the possibility of religious life would not have asked some of the questions that we might like to ask today. For example, they would not have asked

themselves whether this life would satisfy their aspirations, whether personal or occupational. They would not have looked on it as an option to avoid childbearing or to spare their family the burden of another mouth to feed. Even if in the darkest recesses of their beings there was a hint that any of these motives may have been there, they could not have verbalized them, for such motives were unworthy of an aspirant to the religious life.

What did these young women ask? On the various vocation days held in school, the girls were asked to examine whether God might be calling them. Essentially the call was manifest in a combination of attraction to the life itself, and a suitable personality. In this regard the personal example of nuns was their best form of recruitment. If the community could be observed to be happy, kind, and properly pious, the young girls could not help but be impressed. What added to the attractiveness was often the remoteness of the nuns in general. Bound by rules of silence and rules governing their social interactions, they were surrounded by an aura of piety and dignity which could be most alluring to idealistic youngsters. To suggest that they were coy would be a gross distortion of the reality and their intent, but the effect was not dissimilar. Many young women could only dream of the marvels that these women represented. For the young girl

with the desire to become a nun, the suggestion that she might try the life would have been a thrill, and above all, confirmation of what she suspected to be the call from God. It would be comparable to being offered a chance to be on the inside of a secret society. It set them apart, if not in the day-to-day chores at hand, at least in their dreams and in the effort to make those dreams come true.

Here it is useful to recall the words of Wittgenstein quoted by Suzanne Campbell-Jones:

> The meaning of a religious proposition is not a function of what would have to be the case if it were true, but a function of the difference it makes in the lives of those who maintain it.[1]

We are not dealing with something that is measurable. Indeed experience is seldom objective. The attractiveness of the religious life was a function not only of the behaviour of the nuns, but of the receptivity of the women who viewed them, and that might well have been influenced by material circumstances. Generally the young women who entered the Community in the 1930s came from homes that valued the spiritual life and who held religious life, if not always the individual members, in esteem. Most had some relatives and friends in communities and so knew the status to which their choice would lead. This was a benefit, however, if not a conscious aspiration.

The young women who joined the Community were at the age when decisions were to be made about their future. They had to consider where they would work and at what. If not they, then certainly their parents would be watching for available young men with an eye toward marriage. Perhaps it was at this time that the rhetoric of the clergy had most appeal. The call to the exercise of charity seemed to strike resonant chords in enthusiastic and idealistic youth, particularly during the crisis created by the Depression. Combined with the images of the nuns as pious women was the fact that they were the dispensers of much charity--whether teaching, nursing or the care of the poor. To hearts not already hardened by the cynicism engendered by extreme poverty the prospect of service to the "poor" was overwhelmingly appealing. Not to regard oneself as in need of charity was enviable. It seems that the exhortation to piety found fertile soil in young impressionable women who were ready to choose how they would spend their lives. From the parents' point of view it was much safer that they relinquish their daughter to the convent than to the excesses of the city.

The relative youth of this group compared to the average age at marriage of the general population indicates still more. The young women were not in immediate danger of being left spinsters. Although the dowery might seem a

prohibitive factor for those who wanted to try the life simply as an adventure, the fact remains that many could afford to try out this life in the absence of any compelling haste to marry. The fact that twice as many entered as stayed suggests that one could leave at the early stages with little stigma of failure. Given the climate of acceptance of the life and absence of attractive alternatives for the spirited or the pious young women, the Community drew large numbers who saw in it a good way to live.

Generally, the women who entered the Community in these years came from traditional homes that were, by their own admission, religious and authoritarian in nature. The overwhelming percentage of farmers' daughters suggests the presence of a religious element that was constantly being equated with the rural experience. Certainly, the city offered few temptations during these years of economic hardship. Therefore it seems that many of the young women moved from religious households to religious novitiates with little trauma. Their home training and familiarity with religious practices hastened their adjustment to their chosen life. Indeed, for many the privacy that was allowed, and the silence, may have come as a blessing. Furthermore, to leave home with the approval and respect of one's family would also have been a boon. It seems that many of

the members who entered in these years felt the support of their kin not only on the outside, but within the convent.

Depending on one's acceptance or rejection of the religious life as a viable mode of existence, the women who chose the religious life in this Community and others in the 1930s, can be viewed as the beneficiaries or the victims of a view of life that was being actively promoted by the clergy and politicians alike. Whether one accepts the notion that there was considerable threat to the existence of the French Canadian nation, or not, the rhetoric generated by the perceived threat was most persuasive. Indeed religious and political exhortations seem to have inspired young women to choose the religious life as a way of continuing their glorious heritage.

In a time when economic hardship was an accepted fact, the clergy spoke of the spirituality of sacrifice. There was a nobility to be cultivated when one had to do without. In their view it was a sign of one's willingness to suffer in the smaller aspects of life what Jesus Christ suffered in greater ways. Such sacrifice could drive out resentment and hostility that led only to trouble and ultimate perdition. In this regard religious life, which stressed personal sacrifice, offered a more perfect way of attaining ultimate salvation.

In the face of very limited educational opportunities

for women, these women were taught that theirs was a more glorious task that was not to be found in books, but in the very nature of their womanhood. For them was reserved the vocation of motherhood and nurturing, whether spiritual or physical. For those who insisted on more, the clergy supported the Family Institute as an advanced form of learning about what women knew "naturally". Such education was guaranteed not to denature women, but to help them to be acceptable helpmates for their men.

The secular workplace was scarcely welcoming to women during the 1930s. There, women faced long hours, inadequate facilities, minimal pay, and the hostility of men who were without jobs. Consequently, women were encouraged to stay home and to engage in works of charity. The clergy taught that it was more blessed to do this than to chase wantonly after money, unless of course there was a need to help out with the family income. In view of this, one can imagine the pressure exerted on the pride of the "man" of the house to keep his wife and daughters at home.

And in a society that deemed ambition a reprehensible characteristic in a woman, religious communities offered sanctioned occupations. For all the restrictions that attended this life the fact remains that women could do things in the community that were unavailable to their peers because of financial or societal pressure. In any

case, women were certainly not encouraged to live independently, and religious life offered individuals a place apart from familial obligations where they could work and perhaps realize some of their dreams.

A Return to the Questions

With the perspective garnered through the observation of the women who entered the Community during the 1930s, it is possible to return to the questions posed at the beginning. Perhaps the most obvious is whether the women joined the Community during the Depression to escape the poverty that surrounded them and to enjoy the security that such a life offered. There are really two parts to the question. Judging by the group under scrutiny here it does not seem that the women who entered were in grave financial need. They were, however, facing a society that offered fewer options because of the Depression. Work was not readily available that could offer them great remuneration. They therefore may have seen in the religious life a way to provide for themselves. As for the security that the life offered, it had a definite appeal for those who wanted to help others without fear of personal peril or serious material deprivation.

A secondary question is whether there was actually a correlation between the shrinking role of women in the urban setting and the growth of religious communities. It would seem that there may be some basis to this notion. Where the work of social service was largely the monopoly of the Church, more specifically the nuns, it is reasonable to assume that some girls joined communities because of the opportunity to work at an occupation of their choice. As in any other choice one had to accept some exigencies, in this instance, celibacy and group living. There is no reason to believe that this was any more difficult for some than the adjustment to a marriage partner.

The possibility that women were seeking work leads one to consider the occupational aspirations of these women. In examining this subject language can obscure rather than clarify since the nuns speak in terms of service to the poor. What their words conceal is often a very real commitment to justice, and the willingness to do almost anything to see that goal fulfilled. Career aspiration need not imply the desire for personal aggrandisement, a notion which would have been consciously rejected by the nuns. Therefore, some of these young women probably did have some distinct ideas about how to help the people they believed themselves called to serve. Since the desire for "power" was suspect within religious communities that

required obedience of their members, the women could hope that in fulfilling the tasks assigned to them, the leadership recognized and used their abilities to the full. Despite the words, it seems fair to assume that women went to the convent with some personal ambitions.

The notion that the feminist impulse was latent in the entrants to the communities is fascinating. Certainly, as with the ambitions, it was not something that was talked about. In fact, it is probable that the entrants would have come from a sufficiently protected and conservative background that they would have found the notions of feminists unappealing. Moreover, they had probably heard enough to make them suspicious of "liberated" women. The difficulty of addressing the question of the latent feminism of these women is the amount of speculation involved and the potential that that provides for the elaboration of bias. The questions are nevertheless like the flame for the moth--terribly attractive and potentially fatal! Perhaps as the knowledge about these women and their time is augmented by further study, such questions may be able to be answered with more authority.

Conclusion

In the 1930s the Catholic Church in Quebec seemed to make its last stand. The clergy pulled out all the stops in an effort to create the great theocratic state that it believed to be its destiny and mission. The women who entered this Community and the many others in existence in these years, were part of this glorious quest. In no way does it diminish their choice, or their belief in being chosen. Many would not have been able to articulate the philosophy or the spirituality that created the religious climate that made their choice not only acceptable but enviable. They did not have to. They had lived it and breathed it all their lives; it was natural to them. Given their own religious background and the intensity of the popular religion to which they were exposed, religious communities in the 1930s provided an attractive option for young women in Quebec.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 5

1. Suzanne Campbell-Jones, In Habit (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1979), p. 22.

APPENDIX I

- Questionnaire
- Responses to the Questionnaire

The following is a copy of the cover letter and a list of the questions posed in the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire follow.

> Comme étudiante à l'Université McGill, à Montréal, j'ai à présenter une thèse en vue de l'obtention d'une maîtrise en Histoire canadienne. Votre co-opération me serait très utile. Je la sollicite en vous présentant le questionnaire ci-joint.
> Le but de ce questionnaire est une compréhension plus précise des circonstances familiales et sociales des jeunes femmes qui sont entrées dans la Communauté. Les réponses seront gardées confidentielles. Les resultats feront partie d'une thèse en histoire des femmes au Québec.

Numéro: _____

Lieu de naissance: _____

Résidence à l'entrée: _____

L'année de l'entrée: _____ Age à l'entrée: _____

A l'entrée le père est vivant ☐ la mère est vivante ☐

le père est mort ☐ la mère est morte ☐

le père s'est remarié ☐ la mère s'est remariée ☐

Occupation de votre père (beau-père): _____

Nombre de frères: plus âgés _____ moins âgés _____

Nombre de soeurs: plus âgées _____ moins âgées _____

Niveau scolaire à l'entrée: _____

Travaillez-vous hors de chez vous avant l'entrée? _____

Où? Quelle sorte de travail? Pendant combien d'années?

_____

Combien gagniez-vous pendant cette période? _____

Si vous travailliez chez vous avant l'entrée, pour quelles tâches étiez-vous responsable? _____

Pendant combien d'années? _____

Qui vous a proposé la vie religieuse?

un prêtre ☐ votre père ☐ votre mère ☐ une amie ☐

autre (spécifiez) _____

Est-ce que vous aviez des membres de la famille dans cette communauté?

Lesquelles? une soeur plus âgée ☐ une soeur moins âgée ☐

une nièce ☐ une tante ☐ une cousine ☐ une amie ☐

Dans une autre communauté? Lesquelles? _____

Au moment de votre entrée y avait-il un radio chez vous?

Quels programmes écoutiez-vous? _____

Quels journaux ou revues lisiez-vous avant votre entrée?

_____

Quels étaient vos livres favouris? _____

Faisiez-vous partie de la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste?

Pendant combien d'années? _____ L'Action Française? ____

Pendant combien d'années? _____

Une autre organisation? Laquelle? Pendant combien d'années?

_____

Remplissiez-vous un emploi dans l'organisation? _____

Alliez-vous au cinéma? _____ Où? _____

Quels films avez-vous vus? _____

Alliez-vous au théâtre? _____ Où? _____

A quelles pièces? _____

Pourquoi avez-vous choisi la vie religieuse? _____

Pourquoi avez-vous choisi cette Communauté? _____

Autres faits qui vous semblent intéressants à propos de votre vie avant où au moment de votre entrée. (Par exemple: votre connaissance de la condition de vie autour de vous; vos aspirations; vos difficultés . . .) _____

RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire was distributed at the Motherhouse of the Community. Of the group of entrants from 1930 to 1939, 124 lived at the Motherhouse: 64 of these responded, 61 of whom entered from Quebec and so form part of this study. This group may be divided according to the years in which they entered.

Year	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939.
No.	9	2	6	2	7	6	7	12	6	4

The questions and answers will be listed where possible without jeopardizing the wish of the Community for anonymity or the need to keep confidence.

AGE OF ENTRANCE:
60 Of 61 Responded

Age	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
No.	1	2	8	2	13	7	9	4	3	4	3	2	1

PARENTS:
57 Of 61 Responded

Both parents alive:	36
Mother dead:	12
Father remarried:	9
Father dead:	5
Mother remarried:	1
Both parents dead:	2
Mother alive (no mention of father):	1

OCCUPATION OF THE FATHER:
50 Of 61 Responded

Farmer:	28
Baker:	2
Butcher:	2
Joiner:	4
Day Labourer:	6
Builder:	2

Merchant:	2
Miller:	1
Millwright	1
Plumber/Tinsmith:	1
Retired:	1

POSITION IN THE FAMILY:
61 Of 61 Responded

Eldest:	6
Youngest:	11
Inbetween:	44

NUMBER OF CHILDREN:
61 Of 61 Responded

Number of Children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
No.	0	2	4	4	7	4	6	3	3	7	5	4	3	2	2	2	1	1	1

LEVEL OF SCHOOLING AT ENTRANCE:
58 Of 61 Responded

Because of the confusion of terms in education system of the time, as well as the tendency of people to translate their experience into terms that might be more comprehensible today, I will record the answers as they appeared in French lest I add to any distortion.

5e année:	2
6e " :	4
7e " :	9
8e " :	3
9e " :	3
10e " :	3
11e " :	1
12e " :	1
9th grade:	1
supérieur:	1
sécondaire:	1
académique:	1
Diplôme élémentaire de l'Ecole Normale:	3
Brevet supérieur d'enseignment:	7
Brevet élémentaire du Bureau Central:	1
Ecole Normale:	1
Diplôme modèle:	1
9e année et Institut Familial:	1

Brevet de l'Instruction Publique:	1
Diplôme supérieur du Département de l'Instruction Publique:	2
Diplôme élémentaire d'enseignment ménager:	1
Cours commerciale:	1
Certificat d'étude:	1
Bureau Central des Examinateurs C. Diplôme Complémentaire:	2
Diplôme Complémentaire:	2

SPECIFIC WORK EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE THE HOME AND SALARY WHERE INDICATED:

33 women listed work outside the home

Job	Remuneration
Manufacture of stockings	$ .25/hr
Library	$ 25/week
Teacher's aide	$ 12/month
Sewing	$ 6/month
Sewing at a factory	$7-11/week
Nursing	$ 12/month
Nursing	$ 10/month
Nursing	$ 10/month
Hospital - St. Jean de Dieu	$ 15/month
Work at St. Jean de Dieu plus sewing for priests	$ 12/month
Secretary at the crèche	$ 6/month
Manual work at an institution	$ 5/month
Hotel work - part-time	$ .50/day
Various tasks at a hospital	$5-12/month
Clerk	?
Hospital care/nursing	$ 5/month
Doctor's receptionist	$17-22/?
Office work	$ 15/week
Hospital work	$ 8/month
Teaching	$ 20/week
Teaching	$ 200/year
	$ 300/year (4)
	$ 250-200-150/year
	$ 35/month
	$ 250/year (3)
	$ 350/year
	$ 15/month
	$ 140/year

WHO SUGGESTED THE RELIGIOUS LIFE TO THE INDIVIDUAL:
59 Of 61 Responded

No one--a friend was interested:	1
Personal call from God:	28
A friend:	1
A religious:	5
Priest:	4
Retreat (priest):	1
Personal choice with the approval of a priest:	2
Mother:	4
Father:	1
Example of parents or teachers:	3
Grandmother and a priest:	1
Spiritual director/parents:	1
Teachers:	1
Brothers:	1
Aunt:	1
Cousin:	1
Parents:	1

KIN IN RELIGIOUS LIFE:

In this Community:			
Family:	Sister -	older:	16
		younger:	4
	Aunt:		20
	Cousin:		21
	Niece:		1
Friends:			8
In another community:			32

Eleven of the sixty-one said that they had no one in a community.

RADIO AT HOME:

Yes: 30
No: 29 plus one who mentioned a piano and gramophone instead,
one who mentioned a piano, and
one who forgets

No answer:
2

Programmes and comments, as recorded:

Family Sketch:	1
L'heure catholique:	2
News:	3
Musical programmes:	11
"Le curé du village":	3
"Seraphin":	1
Tino Rossi:	2
Les belles histoires du pays d'en Haut - C'était le seul, car il fallait payer l'électricité et il y avait les leçons et les devoirs qui passent avant le plaisir	
Les nègres!!! [sic]:	1
"Rue Principale":	1
"Fredolin":	1
C.K.A.C.:	1
"Rêvons, C'est l'heure (avec Jovette Bernier):	1
No choice:	1
Divers:	2
English programmes because the first radio was a crystal and they only got French stations.	

PAPERS AND JOURNALS:

Of 61 - 3 said they received none
2 did not answer
56 mentioned or or several publications

Papers/Journals Mentioned:

La Presse:	20
La Belle fermière:	1
Revues missionaires	1
Revues de lieu du pélérinage	1
Revues religieuses:	1
Bulletin des Agriculteurs:	2
Annales de Ste-Anne de Beaupré:	3
Annales de St-Joseph du Mont Roval:	4
Revue Ste-Anne:	7
Revue Notre Dame du Cap:	9
Le Bulletin eucharistique:	2
Messager St-Michel:	1
Messager-Marie Reine des Coeurs:	1
Messager angevin:	1
La Bannière o.m.i.:	1
la Voix nationale:	3
St-Antoine:	1
Annales religieuses:	1

Papers/Journals continued:

La revue moderne:	3
Le Devoir:	8
La Revue Populaire:	2
Action Catholique:	13
Enseignment primaire:	1
le Droit:	3
le Bien Publique:	3
Le Nouvelliste:	10
La presse illustrée:	1
Le Soleil:	8
L'Action populaire:	2
La Revue canadienne:	1
L'Action populaire de Joliette (diocèse):	1
Divers	1
Revue Catholique:	1
Propagation de la foi:	1
Le Précurseur:	1
le Saint-Laurent:	1
la Patrie:	6
Le Dimanche:	1
Le Canada - St-Jean:	1
Paris Match:	1
Allo Police:	1
Les journaux locaux:	5
La Tribune:	1
L'Eclaireur:	1

FAVOURITE BOOKS:
49 Of 61 listed one or more favourite reading materials.

The following list includes both specific titles and types of material, as recorded.

Histoire et roman à l'eau de rose:	1
Livres d'histoire:	10
Vies des saints:	11
Rayons eucharistiques:	1
Romans de Delly:	5
Romans de Pierre l'Ermite:	2
Romans de Magally:	2
La Contesse de Ségure:	1
Les annales:	2
L'enfant perdu et retrouvé:	1
Romans:	11
Contes:	1

Reading material continued:

Livres de formation personnelle:	1
Revues:	2
Yvonne Estienne:	1
Imitation of Christ:	4
Livres culturels et religieux:	5
Berthe Bernage:	1
Biographies:	6
Encyclopédie de la jeunesse:	1
Romans policiers:	1
Vie de Ste-Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus:	1
Vie de St-François d'Assise:	1
D'une amie à une autre - L'Abbé Roy:	1
Un lis fleuri entre les épines - Blanche Elkan: Hugo	1
Le Nouveau Testament:	1
La foi et l'Amour de Dieu:	1
Une amie de Prêtre:	1
L'Apostolat de l'Elite câché:	1
Romans d'amour:	1
Guide of the Young Girl:	1
L'Almanach du peuple:	1
Mes livres de classe:	1
Romans d'aventure:	2
Petits Romans de DELHI dans le but d'apprendre à composer:	1
Brigitte, le médecin des pauvres:	1
La robe nuptiale:	1

GROUPS TO WHICH THEY BELONGED:

17 Of 61 recorded a group to which they belonged.

Enfants de Marie:	8
J.O.C.F. Jeunesse Ouvrière Catholique Feminine:	2
Filles-mère	1
JIC Jeunesse indépendante catholique:	1
Zélatrice pour une communauté comtemplative:	1
L'Action Catholique:	1
Congrégation Mariale:	1
Tertiares de St-François:	2
Cercles de fermières:	1

Six of these respondents recorded that they had been officers in the groups to which they belonged.

CINEMA

14 of 61 reported that they had been to the show.

What they saw:

Films in the parish:	2
The Chief:	1
Maurice Chevalier:	1
La dame de pique:	1
Ben Hur:	1
Ramona:	1
Le fantôme de l'opéra:	1
L'Aiglon	

THEATRE:

15 of 61 reported that they had been to the theatre.

What they saw:

Celles de la Société canadienne d'Opérette avec Lionel Daunais, Caro Lamoureux et autres - Les cloches de Corneville, Le pays du sourire:	1
La coeur d'une mère:	1
L'oiseau bleu:	1
Aurore, l'enfant martyre:	1
Britanicus	
Le bourgeois gentil'homme	
Athalie	
Phèdre	
La Bohème	
L'as de Coeur - Carmen	

Two of these stated that they had organised and put on plays for their families.

APPENDIX II

List of the Occupations of the Fathers of the Entrants

The following lists are drawn from the Father's Occupation recorded for each entrant to the Community. The numbers are recorded for all fathers of entrant from Quebec and for all fathers of entrants from Quebec who professed final vows.

Occupation of Father	# Entrants from Quebec	# Entrants from Quebec who professed final vows
CATEGORY I: PROFESSIONALS, PROPRIETORS, MANAGERS		
Doctor	4	1
Notary	5	3
Music Teacher	1	0
Pharmacist	1	0
Grocer	11	7
Shopkeeper	29	14
Restaurant Keeper	3	3
Bank Manager	1	0
Engineer	6	4
Store Manager	3	0
Hotel Keeper	6	1
Owner of Mineral Resources	1	0
Insurance Inspector	2	1
Funeral Director	1	0
Postmaster	1	1
Stationmaster	2	1
Manager	3	1
Contractor	1	1
Total Category I	81	38

Occupation of Father	# Entrants from Quebec	# Entrants from Quebec who professed final vows
CATEGORY II: SEMI-PROFESSIONAL AND LOWER ADMINISTRATORS		
Bookkeeper	7	3
Railway Foreman	2	1
Superintendent	1	1
Tea Inspector	1	0
Bread Inspector	2	1
Department Head	1	1
Land Surveyor	2	0
Highways Foreman	1	0
Foremen	14	7
Manufacturer	7	5
Butter Inspector	2	1
Mill Foreman	1	1
Inspector	1	1
Total Category II	42	22
CATEGORY III: CLERICAL AND SALES		
Hardware Merchant	1	1
Real-estate Agent	3	2
Merchant	7	5
Travelling Salesman	9	6
Butter Dealer	2	0
Butcher Shop Clerk	1	1
Wood Merchant	5	3
Wholesale Merchant	1	0
Shipper	1	1
Cheese Merchant	4	2
Insurance Salesman	5	2
Clerk	7	1
Typist	3	2
Bank Clerk	1	0
Total Category III	50	26

Occupation of Father	# Entrants from Quebec	# Entrants from Quebec who professed final vows
CATEGORY IV. SKILLED AND SEMI-SKILLED.		
Barber	6	5
Butcher	13	5
Baker	9	7
Decorator	2	1
Painter	14	7
Plumber	13	8
Machine Operator/ Electrician	10	5
Electrician	7	3
Railway Employee	8	3
Tramway Employee	12	5
Locomotive Engineer	1	0
Navigator	4	3
Conductor (Railway)	1	0
Tramway Conductor	2	0
Photographer	1	1
Paper Craftsman	1	1
Upholsterer	1	0
Miller	1	0
Organ Tuner	1	1
Mould Maker	1	1
Dressmaker	1	1
Bookbinder	1	1
Wood Measurer	3	0
Mechanic	20	8
Carpenter	9	6
Ironworker	14	7
Mason	3	1
Joiner	71	39
Fisherman	1	1
Riveter	1	1
Mill Worker	1	0
Tailor	6	4
Stonemason	1	0
Weaver	2	0
Tinsmith	2	0
Roadman	2	0
Shoemaker	9	3
Plasterer	1	0
Lathe Operator	2	0

Occupation of Father	# Entrants from Quebec	# Entrants from Quebec who professed final vows
CATEGORY IV (continued)		
Bricklayer	3	0
Ferry Boat Employee	1	1
Coppersmith	2	1
Butter Maker	1	1
Imperial Oil Employee	1	0
Total Category IV	266	131
CATEGORY V UNSKILLED WORKERS		
Caretaker	4	2
Station Caretaker	1	1
Transport Driver	2	2
Carman	4	3
Tree Planter	1	0
Gardener	1	0
Dept. of Highways Employee	1	1
Worker	17	6
Worker at U of M	1	1
Day Labourer	159	77
Total Category V	191	93
CATEGORY VI: PUBLIC SERVICE		
Sheriff	1	1
Sacristin	4	3
Nurse	1	1
Night Watchman	3	3
Fee Collector at Montreal Light, Heat & Power	1	0
Civil Servant	10	4
Elementary School Teacher	2	2
Police Captain	1	1
Post Office Worker	2	0
Policeman	3	0
Rural Postman	1	1
Telegraph Operator	2	2
Fireman	1	0
Captain	1	0
Total Category VI	33	18

Occupation of Father	# Entrants from Quebec	# Entrants from Quebec who professed final vows
CATEGORY VII PERSONAL SERVICE		
Doorman	3	1
Hotel Employee	2	1
Chauffeur	2	1
Total Category VII	7	3
CATEGORY VIII. FARMERS	535	338
CATEGORY IX: RETIRED	20	10
CATEGORY X: UNKNOWN	4	0
TOTAL OF ALL CATEGORIES	1,229	679

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