

---

## Remembrance and Thanksgiving in St. George's and in St. John's

June 19, 2026

---



St. Joseph's Church, St. George's, NL

A ritual of thanksgiving and remembrance was held in St. George's on June 19, 2026. The reason for the ritual was to celebrate the lives of six Sisters of Mercy buried in a small cemetery nearby, not far from the site of a former convent and school, St. Michael's. For various reasons it was decided to relocate the remains of the sisters buried there to the sisters' cemetery in Belvedere in St. John's. Before that action was to occur the Bishop of Corner Brook and Labrador, Bishop Bart van Roijen, Fr. Edmond Dantes, parish priest and other dignitaries and community leaders of St. George's joined Sisters of Mercy for the prayer.

Because of heavy rain the original plan to have the prayer in the Sisters of Mercy cemetery nearby was changed and the ritual was held in St. Joseph's Church.



Bishop Bart van Roijen

Following the ritual the group braved the rain to lay roses on each of the graves. After that the guests were treated to a delicious and generous hot lunch at the Canadian Legion on Steele Mountain Road, a lunch prepared by the women's guilds of the Legion and the parish.

The ritual was presided by Bishop Bart and included song, prayer, readings and litany. Each of the six sisters was remembered with a brief description of their life as a Sister of Mercy with some community members placing a rose in a vase for each one. The six sisters are: Sr. M. Corsini Dempsey 1837 - 1919, Sr. M. Veronica Payne c1851 - 1909, Sr. M. Cecilia Sears 1872-1904, Sr. M. Theresa deBourke 1866-1942, Sr. M. Edward Murray 1901-1924, Sr. M. Mechtilde Gillis 1900 – 1956.



The Sisters of Mercy are most grateful to the community of St. George's who have provided the care and attention to the cemetery over many years, to the parish of St. Joseph's and the Town Council. In the next weeks work will begin through the collaboration of Caul's in St. John's and Russell's funeral home in Stephenville to exhume the remains and inter them in St. John's. As per church practice the Bishop will then declare that the sacred space that held the remains of these six sisters since 1904 is returned to its natural and blessed state in nature.



Sisters Patricia March, Diane Smyth, Rona O'Gorman, Sylvia Doyle



We are grateful to Bishop Bart and Fr. Dantes for their presence and leadership, to St. Joseph's parish, to Mayor Conrad White and Town Manager, Danny Conway, and Joey Lee, to Cemetery Committee Chairperson, Celina O'Neill, to school Principal Rob Belliveau and vice Principal Michelle, to RCMP Staff Sergeant Troy Bennett, to Sarah Collier of Russell's Funeral Home, Stephenville and parishioners who joined us. We extend deep appreciation to Linda Williams and the women who prepared and served a generous and hot lunch at the Legion. We were delighted that Mary Foote Bennett could join us and represent her father, Charlie Foote, who served and cared for the Mercy community in so many ways.

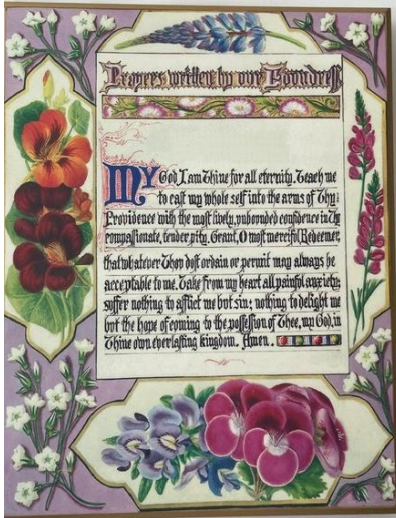
Finally, a word of gratitude to Sister Sylvia Doyle and Rona O' Gorman who live in Stephenville and provided hospitality to Sister Diane and Patricia and who assisted in the event.



## Simultaneous Celebration of Gratitude and Remembrance

While the gathering was taking place at St. George's many of the sisters gathered in the chapel at the Residence at Littledale to follow the same ritual. It was lead by Sisters Rosemary Ryan and Eileen Penney. Sisters who were born on the west coast of the island and others who had been missioned there did the readings and placed roses for each of the sisters being remembered.





The Generalate is making arrangements for the transfer in the near future. We all await the day when we will welcome the remains of our “west coast” sisters to their final resting place in Belvedere Cemetery