

**Bl. Marie-Catherine de Saint-Augustine
(France/Canada) 1632-1668**

*Served in the Hotel-Dieu (hospital) in Bayeux, France and
in 1648 helped establish the Hotel-Dieu de Quebec in New France.
Honored as one of the six founders of the Catholic Church in Canada.¹
Augustinian Hospitaller Sisters of the Mercy of Jesus*



Catherine de Longpre was born on May 3, 1632, in Saint Saviour le Vicomte near Cherbourg, Normandy, France, to Jacques Simon de Longre and Francoise Jourdan. She was raised primarily by her grandparents. Her maternal grandfather, M. De Laune-Jourdan was known as “a man of prayer and a grand almoner, whose virtue was appreciated by everyone.”² As early as three years of age, Catherine de Longre showed a precocious inclination to follow the will of God absolutely... At age five, she had strong mystical prayer experiences where she felt direct contact with God. When she was only eight, she understood that the Holy Spirit was calling her to be a saint, and at age 10 she wrote a note to “Lady Mary.”³ Catherine was well educated by her relatives, had an affectionate disposition and was very ardent. Advised by St. John Eudes, she became a postulant in the Hospital of Hotel-Dieux, the hospital that the Hospitaller Sisters of Saint Augustine operated in Bayeux, France.

On October 24, 1644, at the age of 12, she received the habit of the Augustinian Hospitaller Sisters of the Mercy of Jesus and took the name Marie Catherine de Saint Augustine. She made her solemn profession at age 16, on May 4, 1648, in Nantes.⁴

Though opposed by her family, she volunteered for the mission of her community in Quebec. Her father went so far as to petition the courts to stop her but later accepted her mission there. She set sail for New France (Canada) on May 27, 1648, and on the voyage, contracted the plague.⁵ She attributed her cure to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Blessed Marie-Catherine arrived in Quebec on August 19, 1648, at age 16. At the new hospital she served as treasurer and nurse and oversaw one of the expansions of the Hotel-Dieu de Quebec which provided health care to the region around Quebec in New France (Canada). She devoted her life to serving the sick and the poor in her adopted country. She learned the language of the people in order to better care for them.

Catherine offered herself as a victim for sinners, hiding from everyone a debilitating illness which she bore patiently. In addition, “for sixteen years she also suffered periods of spiritual dryness and abandonment, temptation and extreme destitution. It was only after her death that the extent of her suffering and the depth of the holiness became known, even to the sisters of her community.” She also served as Novice mistress and was known to spend her spare time in prayer and penance in support of the hospital mission.

In the circular letter notifying the sisters in France of Catherine’s death, the superior of the Quebec mission stated, “*Her outward bearing had a charm that was the most attractive and winning in the world: it was impossible to see her and not love her. Her nature was one of the most perfect that could have been desired; prudent, with simplicity, keen of perception, without curiosity, sweet and gracious, without flattery, invincible in her patience, tireless in her charity,*

amiable to all, without undue attachment to any, humble without being mean-spirited, courageous, without any haughtiness."⁶

Blessed Marie-Catherine de Saint Augustine died on May 8, 1668 in the Hotel-Dieu de Quebec, Quebec City, New France. She was 36 years old. Her relics are enshrined at the Centre Catherine de Saint Augustine next to the Hotel-Dieu de Quebec. She is considered one of the founders of the Catholic Church in Canada.

Her cause for canonization was introduced on September 11, 1980. Due to her heroic virtues, Sister Marie Catherine de Saint Augustine was declared a venerable Servant of God on June 9, 1984, and five years later beatified on April 23, 1989,⁷ by Pope St. John Paul II. (Memorial May 8).

*"I offered myself to the Divine Majesty to serve Him as a victim whenever it pleased Him; I took no care for my life or my possessions. I only wanted God to dispose of them according to His holy will."*³

References:

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- 5) Midwest Augustinians. Blessed Catherine of Saint Augustine. Accessed 13 Mar 2022 <https://www.midwestaugustinians.org/bl-catherine-of-st-augustine> from John Rotelle, Book of Augustinian Saints, Augustinian Press, 2000.
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