

MARGARET BOURGEOYS  
PIONEER CATHOLIC SOCIAL WORKER OF CANADA  
by Sister Saint John of Valencia, C.N.D.

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## INTRODUCTION

Christianity has produced in every age new types of womanhood for the world's benefit such as those who were martyrs for religion, saints, apostles and virgins, promoters of widescale reforms, assuagers of human sufferings and savers of lost souls. . . . According as a new social need arose in her beneficent mission, the Christian woman became, as she is today, with every good reason a no less necessary factor in civilization and progress than man<sup>1</sup>.

How truly applicable are these words to Margaret Bourgeoys, who three centuries ago in Canada, was indeed an "assuager of human sufferings and promoter of widescale reforms". According as a new social need arose she was there to meet it with her unerring wisdom and eager enthusiasm, and after three hundred years history records her tireless devotedness, unbounded disinterestedness and unconquerable zeal for the welfare of the colony.

Amongst the galaxy of glorious names which enrich the history of New France, hers must be numbered, for it is that of a Valiant Woman who contributed much to the making of what is best in Canada today. For forty-seven years she worked and prayed with unflagging constancy to build up the sorely-

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph J. Sullivan, Pope Pius Asks Women Adopt Mission of Peace, Article in The Canadian Register, Kingston, No. 10, May 3, 1952, p. 1, Col. 3.

tried, slowly-growing colony. Her early associations with M. de Maisonneuve, that knightly and fearless soldier of God, bring out most vividly the inflexible sense of duty, ardent spirit of zeal, and dauntless courage which animated her, and made of her a pioneer in every phase of Catholic social work in Canada.

The purpose of this thesis is to justify the title, "Margaret Bourgeoys, Pioneer Social Worker of Canada". The prominence accorded her as a teacher and foundress has caused this part of her work to be somewhat forgotten. Yet it is probable that she herself would say that her social work came before her teaching, for during the first four years of her life in Canada all her time was devoted to the corporal works of mercy. The sick found in her a nurse; the weak, a support, the afflicted, comfort and consolation; the ignorant, light and instruction; the needy, a sure refuge and protection in their necessity. Was not this the essence of social work? Truly Catholic, Margaret brought to her labours that religious conception which considers the super-eminent dignity of man, and envisages him not only in his primitive and sordid surroundings which she did her best to improve, but also as a potential citizen of Heaven.

Were this thesis to present a full historical picture of Margaret Bourgeoys it is evident that her work

of teaching could not be omitted, for it cannot be denied that she was the pioneer teacher of Ville Marie. Her influence in that capacity still lives on; the inspirations and ideals taught by that peerless educator have been transmitted to succeeding generations in the different institutions of her Order, and express in tangible form the life-philosophy of that heroic woman with whom they originated. It is true that the work of education has seen many changes since those far-off days of 1657, but Notre Dame has held fast to the fundamental time-tried principles of the old systems while seizing the salient points of the new.

Interest in Margaret Bourgeoys has been greatly stimulated by her beatification in November, 1950, and more and more, her heroic life has claimed the attention of Catholic Canada. Since tribute to her as teacher and foundress has been paid by eminent historians both of her own day and ours, this writer purposes to stress a less celebrated aspect of her work, that of the social worker. The scope of this thesis will be restricted to those functions recognized by the leading authorities in that field, and only those activities will be dealt with which would come under the field of present-day social work.

Social work, it will be pointed out, is divided into four main divisions, Case Work, Group Work, Institutional

Work, and Organization and Administration. We will endeavour to show that Margaret Bourgeoys' activities may be classified under three of these headings, and that thus she merits the title of Pioneer Catholic Social Worker of Canada.

Definition of Social Work.-- Social work as a specialized skilled service for which specific, scientific and technical training is required, has really come into existence during the last half century. Because it is comparatively new, and because it means different things to different people, it is necessary to offer at least a tentative definition of the term.

This is a difficult task. It is said in the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences that "no satisfactory definition has yet been achieved"<sup>2</sup>, and with this statement a writer in the Social Work Yearbook for 1939 agrees<sup>3</sup>. Attempts have been made both from a general and from a more restricted viewpoint. The former covers all sorts of civic activities, while the latter refers to a specific vocation.

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2 Philip Klein, Social Work, in Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, New York, MacMillan, 1934, p. 165 quoted by Helen Witmer, in Social Work, An Analysis of a Social Institution, New York, Rinehart, 1941, p. 6.

3 Linton B. Swift, Social Work as a Profession in Social Work Yearbook, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1934, p. 430 in op. cit., p. 6.

Defining social work from a general viewpoint, Edward T. Devine states:

Social work is the sum of all the efforts made by society to provide for individuals when its established institutions fail them, to supplement those established institutions and to modify them at those points at which they have proved to be badly adapted to social needs. It may have for its object the relief of individuals or the improvement of conditions. It may be carried on by the government or by an incorporated society or by an informal group or by an individual<sup>4</sup>. . .

In the more restricted sense it is defined as "The art of adjusting personal relationships and reorganizing social groups"<sup>5</sup>. Difficulties arise in the family, in the school, in business, between races and religions. Wherever such problems arise the integrity of a group is threatened. Social work consists in the analysis of the problem-situation, interpreting it to the individuals involved, planning a solution, and in the co-operative carrying out of such a plan.

To the Catholic, however, social work means more than merely assisting man in his temporal and material necessities. Ethical and moral implications are frequently interwoven in the problems which are brought to social work agencies. The Catholic social worker by helping to find a satisfactory

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4 Edward T. Devine, Social Work, New York, MacMillan, p. 21-22 quoted by Amos Warner, Queen and Harper, American Charities and Social Work, New York, Crowell, 1942, p. 5.

5 Op. cit., p. 5.

solution may often remove obstacles in man's quest for his ultimate purpose in life. Hence there would seem to be a difference between social work in general and Catholic social work. This has been effectively pointed out by Father Bowers:

Catholic Social Work is built around a specific, positive approach to human life and to human living which is essentially Catholic and essentially different. . . . It seeks to bring about an adjustment between the individual and his environment which shall assist in bringing man closer to his ultimate end. The Catholic Social Worker recognizes that this environment is something more than social, cultural and physical. It is also religious, for God is part of the environment of every man. . . . The Catholic Social Worker, though every whit as concerned about economic well-being, health-and-decency standards of living, satisfying social relationships, as his colleagues in the profession, since, in the temporal order, these do accrue to the personal dignity of man, will never forget that the individual's relationship to God is of first importance. He sees all things sub specia aeternitatis<sup>6</sup>.

In reference to the Catholic Social Worker the same writer states:

Catholic Social work is something more than a profession. It is a calling, a vocation, a service. The worker must never forget the vocational aspects of that which she is doing. . . . It is her high privilege to undertake an employment which, in itself, is the daily exercise of the great virtue of charity. The practice of this virtue is not, however, the prerogative of any professional group. It is a common obligation, and Catholic Social Work, faithful to its long tradition of service, has included within its ambit volunteer workers<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Swithun Bowers, What is Different in Catholic Social Work, Detroit, St. Vincent de Paul and Federation of Catholic Charities, 1950, p. 1, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., p. 5.

The social worker draws on certain resources to attain her immediate objective; these may be classified as the external resources of the community and the internal resources of the individual. The Catholic Social Worker will follow, in the main, the general practice, but will never fail to use to the fullest measure the spiritual as well as the material resources of the community. There is one point, however, on which the Catholic approach is different and that is in its attitude towards the family. Catholic social work is always recognizable by its efforts to preserve the family and family life, and to utilize their natural values and strengths in the service of the client.

The Catholic social worker endeavours to mobilize the internal resources in the individual, to build upon his strength so that he may overcome his weaknesses. This necessitates a realization of the Catholic concept of man - a rational being endowed with a will and an intellect. Methods of treatment will include a strengthening of man's will and the enlightenment of his intellect, and a recognition in each individual of a natural inclination to God.

In broad outline these are the main features that distinguish Catholic social work from social work in general, different in practice because it is based on an entirely different philosophy of life.

Social work has been divided into four main divisions, Case work, Institutional work, Group work and Organization and Administration. Each of these in turn includes a variety of activities.

Case work	Family Welfare Children's Aid and Probation Visiting Teaching Hospital Social Service Psychiatric Social Service Probation and Parole
Institutional work	For children For the aged For delinquents
Group work	Direction of Leisure time Club works with small groups Neighbourhood work Community organization
Organization and Administration	Administration of Social agencies Publicity Coordination and Supervision Financing Promotion of new Social programs <sup>8</sup>

Each of these four main types involves rather well defined fields of human endeavour. They have this in common, that in each, skilled workers give of their time and talents to solve the needs of others. These are the social workers.

In the following chapters it is our aim to prove that these concepts may be applied to a great woman who lived, toiled and accomplished such work centuries before these definitions were formulated.

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<sup>8</sup> Amos Warner, Queen and Harper, American Charities and Social Work, New York, Crowell, p. 554.

Among the writings concerning Margaret Bourgeoys there exists a work of great value, her own Ecrits Autographes or Memoirs<sup>9</sup>.

Written toward the end of her life, about 1696, they contain an account of her early years in France, her departure for Canada, her arrival in Ville Marie, her work in the colony, the foundation of her Community, and spiritual advice for her religious. Used by M. Glandelet for his work, and again by M. Montgolfier and M. Faillon, the manuscript was carefully preserved in the Archives of the Community. In the fire which destroyed the Mother House in 1768 many of the records of the Congregation were lost, including the greater part of these Memoirs; only scattered pages of the original remain. Fortunately, these writings had been inscribed in the second volume of the History of the Congregation and are thus preserved for the Community.

In the Histoire de la Congrégation de Notre Dame de Montréal<sup>10</sup> is found the record of the life and work of Mother Bourgeoys. In nine volumes is recorded the complete history of the Community since its foundation in 1657 to 1855. The remainder of the work - 1855 to the present is still in manuscript form.

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9 Margaret Bourgeoys, Memoirs, Montreal, 1696, p. 44.

10 /S.S. Henrietta/, Histoire de la Congrégation de Notre Dame de Montréal, Montreal, 1910.

Various other works have been written about the life of Mother Bourgeoys. The first, appearing only a few months after her death in 1700, was undertaken at the request of the Community by M. Glandelet. As Mother Bourgeoys' director for twelve years and staunch friend of the Community, he was judged eminently qualified for the task. He had at his disposal, besides personal recollections and letters, the Memoirs of Mother Bourgeoys, and contributions of facts by sisters who had lived in intimacy with her. This work preserved in manuscript form, was treasured by the Community, but it was recognized that it was not suitable for the general public, since it was designed to edify and console her own religious. In 1715, he was again asked to compile a more complete work, but age and ill-health prevented him doing more than adding a few pages to his original manuscript. This he entitled La Vie de la Soeur Marguerite Bourgeoys<sup>11</sup>. This too, was little more than an edifying account of the virtues and interior life of Mother Bourgeoys; its real value comes from the fact that it was written by one of her contemporaries, and as such he could write intimately and authoritatively of her.

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<sup>11</sup> M. Glandelet, La Vie de la Soeur Marguerite Bourgeoys, Ville Marie, 1715, p. 160.

In 1724, at the suggestion of M. Belmont, then Superior of the Seminary, the work of preparing a second life was confided to M. Ransonet. Unfortunately, living as he did in Paris, and knowing very little about Canada, and less about Mother Bourgeoys, he made scant use of the material and information given him. His writing, Vie de la Soeur Marguerite Bourgeoys<sup>12</sup>, a very small tribute to a great woman and a great work, was a keen disappointment to the Community. Its only merit, if such it may be called, lay in the fact that it was the first printed life of Mother Bourgeoys.

In 1818, appeared La Vie de la Vénérable Soeur Marguerite Bourgeois<sup>13</sup>. Although the work bears no author's name, it is generally accepted by the Community to be that of M. Montgolfier. "Tirées de Mémoires certains et la plupart originaux", as was indicated in the sub-title, it was hoped that at last something worthwhile had been achieved. Unfortunately it is not considered reliable by either the Community or by historians in general. In many cases his commentaries on passages from Mother Bourgeoys' writings have completely distorted the original idea, while his historical data is not always exact. Thus the value of the work was greatly lessened.

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<sup>12</sup> M. Ransonet, Vie de la Soeur Marguerite Bourgeoys, Avignon, 1728, p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> M. Montgolfier, La Vie de la Vénérable Soeur Marguerite Bourgeois, Ville Marie, Gray, 1818, p. 271.

In 1830, a third life of Margaret Bourgeoys was undertaken by M. Faillon. Based on the Memoirs of Mother Bourgeoys, and on manuscripts furnished by the Archives of the Congregation, of the Hotel Dieu and of St. Sulpice in Paris and in Ville Marie, and the public Archives of France and of Canada, a completely documented work was presented. Entitled Vie de la Soeur Bourgeoys<sup>14</sup> it was intended to be the first part of a "Collection de Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de l'Eglise de l'Amérique du Nord", and as such, the life of Mother Bourgeoys was portrayed rather as a contribution to a greater work than as something important in itself. Consequently it appeals more to the historian than to the general reading public.

Finally in 1932, with the process of Beatification underway, it was felt that a more modern up-to-date biography was desirable. Don Albert Jamet was requested to undertake this work; he used as his principal sources of information the Memoirs and the work by Glandelet. The Life by Montgolfier, that by Faillon, documents furnished by the Archives of the Congregation and the Hotel Dieu, of St. Sulpice in Paris and in Montreal, the public archives in Quebec and Ottawa, all

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<sup>14</sup> Etienne-Michel Faillon, Vie de la Soeur Bourgeoys, Paris, Périsse Frères, 1853, p. I-406.

were consulted. His work, Margaret Bourgeoys<sup>15</sup>, completed in 1942, consists of two volumes of nearly four hundred pages each. It gives evidence of painstaking research, but it has offered nothing new, and in the wealth of information and detail the true character of Mother Bourgeoys is difficult to discern. A more recent investigation in view of the Beatification has corrected certain details regarding her family and early history. This work has also been a disappointment to the Community, for it is felt that the author has not portrayed Mother Bourgeoys as an attractive character and has failed to bring out those traits which made her at once an apostle and a teacher.

Several biographies have been written by English authors. The Venerable Margaret Bourgeoys<sup>16</sup> by Margaret Mary Drummond, is considered to be the best of these. It is well documented, and presents a very complete, accurate and attractive account of the life and times of Mother Bourgeoys.

All of these writings have treated of the life of Mother Bourgeoys in a general way, stressing particularly her work as teacher and foundress. This thesis hopes to prove that she was not only a teacher par excellence, but that she was truly a social worker in the best sense of the word.

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<sup>15</sup> Don Albert Janet, Marguerite Bourgeoys, Montreal, La Presse Catholique Panaméricaine, 1942, 2 Vol., p. I-794.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Mary Drummond, The Venerable Margaret Bourgeoys, Boston, Guardian Angel Press, 1907, p. 275.

## CHAPTER I.-

### MARGARET BOURGEOYS, CASE WORKER

The many varieties of social work to-day fall rather naturally into distinct classifications where concentration of attention has been placed upon

- (1) the individual,
- (2) the group of individuals as a working unit,
- (3) a combination of these two, when the individual is dealt with both as an individual and as a member of a group,
- (4) the developing of resources to meet human needs.

In this chapter it is proposed to deal with the first of these divisions,- case work, and to prove that Margaret Bourgeois without any question of doubt merits general recognition as pioneer Catholic social case worker of Canada.

Case work has been defined as one method by which special services are made available in areas of unmet needs<sup>1</sup>. To cope with these demands, specially trained workers are appointed whose duties, responsibilities and rights are clearly

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Towle, Social Case Work in Social Year Book, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, p. 477, quoted by Swithun Bowers, The Nature and Definition of Social Case Work, New York, Family Service Association of America, 1949, p. 5.

outlined, and who seek to solve the problems confronting them. These are the Case Workers.

The case worker has an important role to fulfill.

[She may] perform any one or a combination of the following social duties, usually requiring a college degree, and applying techniques acquired through post-graduate training in social service work, in pursuance of a welfare program organized by a public or private agency or organization. [She] studies the physical and social environment of a family, person or persons in order to determine and execute practical plans for alleviating existing undesirable conditions. [She] visits persons in need of assistance<sup>2</sup>.

While Margaret Bourgeois held no college degree, had no techniques acquired through post-graduate study in any accredited university, we contend that she was pre-eminently a Catholic social case worker, holding that degree attained through the practical love of God which was evidenced by her devoted care for His less fortunate children. Her activities were not those organized by any agency or organization; they were dictated by that burning flame of charity which saw the needs of others, and hesitated not to sacrifice self and possessions in order to satisfy them. In attempting to alleviate misery and to remedy situations she never for a moment forgot the important place of God in the lives of His

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Employment Service, Case Worker in Dictionary of Occupational Titles, Second Edition, Washington, Superintendent of Documents, 1949, Vol. 1, p. 204.

creatures. To her, the needy were not, as the modern social worker too often considers them, simply "cases", they were souls, infinitely precious in the sight of God, and by ministering to their physical needs, she sought to draw them nearer to Him. That she succeeded is affirmed by one of her biographers who states that she was indeed a worthy co-operator with de Maisonneuve, for while he was building a material empire in honor of Mary Immaculate, she was erecting a spiritual one in the hearts of the faithful<sup>3</sup>.

The Social Case Worker interests herself in the work of child placement.

[She] places children in institutions and homes, such as orphanages, foster homes, day-nurseries, hospitals and homes of adoption, in order to protect them from abuse, neglect, and improper rearing, and to provide them with adequate care and shelter<sup>4</sup>.

Mother Bourgeois must be regarded as a social worker in this respect, for her interest in the children of the colony was evident to all. Her solicitude went even further than that of the modern social worker who is satisfied with placing children in a home suitable from the material point

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<sup>3</sup> Montgolfier, La Vie de la Soeur Bourgeois, Ville Marie, Gray, 1818, p. 66.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Employment Service, Case Worker, Child Placement, in Dictionary of Occupational Titles, p. 204.

of view, but often with scant regard for the spiritual element. She adopted these little ones into her own home, training and caring for them with that love and devotion which can spring only from true Christian Charity.

One of the first to receive her care was the little orphan, Marie du Mesnil, a girl of eleven years who had accompanied her on her first trip from France. On her arrival in Canada, Margaret kept the little one with her, for she was sadly in need of a mother's care, and the first real home the child ever knew was that provided by the kindly sister. This interest was maintained until three years later, when Marie married André Charly.

In 1659 Margaret had accompanied Jeanne Mance to France. The latter, obliged to seek medical aid was in need of a companion and Margaret gladly offered her services. On their return trip the ship was crowded; there were over two hundred passengers, and while the boat was large and comfortable the journey was a very difficult one. The St. André had been used for years as a hospital-ship, and through some inexplicable carelessness it had never been disinfected. Illness very soon broke out among the passengers; nearly all fell victim to a contagious fever, and seven or eight of them died. Margaret did not escape contagion entirely, but she

was able to assist her fellow-passengers; day and night she went among them giving all possible aid. One group in particular roused her pity. The whole Thibodeau family, father, mother and four children, was stricken; three of the little ones died, and only a tiny nine-months-old baby survived. No one wanted to care for the child; there was even talk of throwing her overboard. In her Memoirs, Mother Bourgeois simply says:

J'entendis qu'on parlait de la jeter à la mer, ce qui faisait trop pitié, et je la demandai, contre l'avis de notre bande, qui était toute malade<sup>5</sup>.

Here was another occupation added to those that Margaret's kind hands found to do on that crowded ship. She cared for the child so tenderly and so skilfully that the little victim lived to reach Montreal, where she placed her in charge of a foster mother. Once again, her charity had found practical expression by helping one of God's afflicted.

The Social Worker seeks to protect children from abuse, neglect and improper training. So did Mother Bourgeois, for we read in her Memoirs<sup>6</sup> the following account. The plight of the poor Indian children touched her deeply; one little Iroquois child, nine or ten months of age, was sadly neglected

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<sup>5</sup> Memoirs of Margaret Bourgeois, in Histoire de la Congrégation, Montreal, Vol. 2, p. 323.

<sup>6</sup> Id Ibid., p. 313.

by her mother, and so pitiable was her condition that Margaret begged that the child might be given to her to adopt and rear. With the assistance of Father Souart, who offered the mother some trifling gifts, the baby was given to M. de Maisonneuve, who in turn handed her over to Mother Bourgeoys who adopted her and cared for her with all a mother's love. The little one was baptized on August 4th, 1658, receiving the name of Marie des Neiges. According to Father Lemoyne she was the first of the Iroquois race to be baptized in the colony. Mother Bourgeoys mentions several other little savages whom she adopted and cared for during those first years in Ville-Marie. Two of them, both of the Iroquois tribe, were later to become members of her Community, and rendered great services in teaching young girls of their race<sup>7</sup>. Thus Margaret Bourgeoys, by being the first to admit native-born religious into her Community anticipated by more than two hundred and fifty years the desire of the Pope of the Missions - the conversion of pagans by the formation of native apostles.

Margaret's interest in the welfare of the children of the colony, regardless of race, and the services she rendered to them must admit her to the ranks of the Social Worker devoted to child welfare.

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7 Histoire de la Congrégation, Vol. 1, p. 269.

The family is regarded as the most important national institution in any community. If the citizens of a nation are members of happy, stable families in which they have learned the give-and-take of life in society, and have become grounded in high ideals and the culture of a group by means of family social control, then will the nation be sound and whole. True family life, therefore, provides a spiritual function not only of vital importance to the individuals who compose it, but to the country in general. The principle "that a nation is as strong as its individual families" is recognized by all thinking men, and therefore one of the most important phases of Social Case Work is Family Social Work. Workers in this field are specially trained, for various indeed are their activities, and the services required of them.

The Family Social Worker concentrates her interest on the family as a social unit.

[She] assists in solving problems that affect its unity and welfare, such as unemployment, household management and care of family members. [She] attempts to solve problems affecting individual members of the family. . . by recommending positive steps for remedial measures, and counsels other family members on eliminating personality frictions, unsympathetic attitudes towards the maladjusted, and other barriers to harmonious relationships<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Employment Service, Family Case Worker in Dictionary of Occupational Titles, p. 204.

If interest in the welfare of the family is one role outstandingly characteristic of the social worker, then Margaret Bourgeoys must be definitely classed as such, for during the first four years of her life in Ville-Marie all her time and attention were devoted to the families comprising the then young country. Although her prime motive in coming to Canada had been to teach, she was not able to begin her apostolate at once, since most of the French children born in Montreal, had died in infancy. Her zeal found outlet in other good works, and her tender, unselfish sympathy found many ways of doing good that others might have despised. She visited the homes, instructing old and young alike, encouraged the mothers in their daily and difficult tasks, brought joy to the hearts of little children, visited, consoled, and cared for the sick; assisted the dying, prepared the dead for burial, washed and mended for the poor and for the soldiers, often depriving herself of the very necessities of life in favour of others less fortunate.

One incident recorded in the History of the Community<sup>9</sup> bears witness to the extent of her charity. One cold winter's day a poor soldier came to her, complaining that he had no bed. Without hesitation, she gave him her mattress. Soon

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9 History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 48.

afterwards, a second soldier, hearing of his friend's good fortune, came to her with a like sad tale. To him she gave her blankets and bed covering, she herself taking her rest on the cold floor. Surely this spirit of sacrifice which marks true charity is the real meaning of social work - a charity which does not hesitate to deprive self to meet and satisfy the needs of others.

So great was her kindness that one of her biographers writes:

La Soeur Bourgeoys commença ensuite à donner l'essor à son zèle. Une cinquantaine de maisons dispersées çà et là, dans l'enceinte d'un petit fort de pieux, composaient tout le corps de cette ville. Quelques habitants, répandus dans les campagnes voisines et qui commençaient à peine à défricher quelques petites terres, quelques cabanes sauvages dressées dans les environs, formaient toute la peuplade. La Soeur parcourait seule chaque jour presque toutes ces différentes maisons, pour y faire la fonction d'un véritable Apôtre. Elle se reproduisait en quelque façon elle-même, et on était toujours sûr de la trouver partout où il y avait quelque bien à faire. Elle se prêtait à tout; visiter et servir les malades, consoler les affligés, instruire les ignorants, blanchir le linge et raccommoder gratuitement les hardes des pauvres et des soldats, ensevelir les morts, et se dépouiller elle-même des choses les plus nécessaires en faveur des nécessiteux<sup>10</sup>.

What more convincing proof is required than this vivid pen-picture to show that this indefatigable woman truly merits the title of social worker? Here is depicted every aspect of

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10 Montgolfier, op. cit., p. 66.

social work, for by daily visiting not only one but all the families, giving of herself unreservedly to the manifold needs of the pioneer settlement, she fulfilled every function of the modern social worker.

For forty-seven years the New Indian country was to be her home. Not a single improvement was made in the infant colony without the dynamic force of her mind and heart to sponsor it. She was indeed

une mère commune, l'oeil de l'aveugle, le pied du boiteux, la consolation de l'affligé, le soutien du faible et de l'indigent, se faisant comme l'apôtre, toute à tous pour les gagner à Jésus-Christ<sup>11</sup>.

She was all things to all men, nurse, teacher, builder, missionary, the mother of the colony, and like the great Missionary,

"in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in labor and painfulness, in much watching, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often"<sup>12</sup>.

Not without reason did the Saintly Pius X, declaring her virtues heroic say:

Through her invincible courage, her trials and her journeys, Margaret Bourgeois may be said to have reproduced in living traits the life and methods of the great Apostle St. Paul<sup>13</sup>.

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11 Montgolfier, op. cit., p. 67.

12 St. Paul, Corinthians, Chap. 9, v, 26-27.

13 Pius X, Decree Promulgating the Heroicity of the Virtues of Margaret Bourgeois, Rome, June 11, 1910.

This parallel drawn by a man of such keen perception and such judgment, coupled with his outstanding holiness, gives us the profound and calm assurance that Margaret Bourgeoys may unquestionably claim our high esteem and admiration as a Social Worker of note.

Not only did she minister to the evergrowing spiritual and material needs of the colony; she even anticipated them. Occupied as she was with her daily visits to the homes, and later with her school, a new work appeared to be equally pressing. Her motherly heart was touched by the hard and laborious lot of the women of the colony. Many of them were ill-prepared for the pioneer life, chosen as they were to become the wives of the settlers.

The company of New France in return for its Charter had pledged itself to further the settlement of the country by bringing out large numbers of colonists. It was difficult to fulfill this promise, for it was almost impossible to get entire families to emigrate and considerable anxiety was felt for the welfare of the women and girls who might venture forth to the new world. Nevertheless families had to be established if the colony was to endure. So difficult was it to get both the number and the right kind of settler that the company had been reduced to sending out orphans such as Marie du Mesnil and Marguerite Masclin, children still, whom

Margaret Bourgeoys had taken with her on her voyages in 1653 and 1658. In 1663 when the king became interested in the colony the situation bettered, and an organized movement was undertaken for sending colonists to Canada. Each year shiploads of marriageable young women, "les Filles du Roi", set out for Quebec and Montreal. They were chosen for the most part from the "General Hospital" in Paris, and from poor but respectable families. Experience soon showed, however, that these young girls were scarcely fitted for the hard life of the colony, unused as they were to the hardships of the climate and the pioneer life of the farms. In 1670 M. Colbert requested the Archbishop of Rouen, Mgr. de Harlay, to have the priests of the parishes near the city each choose one or two suitable subjects from among their parishioners. These were sent to the colony in care of some worthy and respectable woman who acted as their guardian. Mother Bourgeoys had already accepted this position on her various voyages, and great was her sympathy and kindness towards them. M. Dollier de Casson, speaking of the group of thirty-two whom she accompanied in 1659 stated:

Elle servit de mère dans ce voyage et même jusqu'à ce qu'elles eussent été pourvues, et considérant les services plus que maternels qu'elles recevaient d'elle dans une position si délicate elles ont été bien heureuses d'être tombées dans de si bonnes mains que les siennes<sup>14</sup>.

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Etienne M. Faillon, Vie de la Soeur Bourgeoys, Paris, Pérusse Frères, 1853, Vol. 1, p. 188.

Her care did not cease with the voyage. While many of these girls were married almost as soon as they reached Ville-Marie, there were others who were left without shelter and with no one to whom they might turn for assistance. Mother Bourgeois had always been deeply touched by their plight, and their forlorn condition, as well as the realization of the moral dangers to which they might be exposed, suggested to her the idea of a hostel or foyer where they might be received and sheltered until their marriage. In her Memoirs we read:

Quelques années après mon voyage de 1659, il arriva à Montréal, environ dix-sept ou dix-huit filles du roi. Comme elles étaient destinées à devenir dans peu de temps des mères de familles, je pensais qu'il était à propos de les assembler toutes en un lieu de sûreté, et que la maison de la Sainte Vierge doit être ouverte à toutes ces filles. Pleine de cette pensée je courus au bord de l'eau au devant d'elles pour les emmener dans notre maison, qui se trouvait trop petite pour les loger; il fallut donc les conduire dans la petite maison de Saint-Ange et là, je demeurai avec elles. . . J'étais obligée d'y demeurer à cause que c'était pour former des familles<sup>15</sup>.

Hence could be explained the affection and attention she bestowed on these girls, the realization that they were to become the future mothers of the colony. In spite of painful opposition she remained with them, instructing them in the essentials of housekeeping and in all that would be necessary

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15 Memoirs of Margaret Bourgeois, op. cit., p. 79.

for their new life. Thus was begun the work of hostels in Canada, born of a need no less great in those days than in ours.

It was in the parlour of the Congregation that the work of marriage centres was begun. The young girls residing at the convent were known as "filles à marier", and from time to time notice was posted that there were "marriageable young ladies at the Congregation". Here the shy young settlers came seeking their wives, and it was Mother Bourgeois who interviewed the would-be-husband and examined his credentials. The whole proceeding seems to have been very business-like and un-emotional, but there is no doubt that the kindly nun advised her wards in their choice, and that she did everything to make their wedding day happy. On many contracts, copies of which may be seen in the Mother House Archives, it is noted that "la future demeurait chez la Soeur Bourgeois" and on others that they were "fait et passé à la Congrégation". All bear Margaret's signature and are dated from the Convent parlour<sup>16</sup>. These strangely-contracted marriages turned out happily, for the little French girls became good, brave wives, thanks in great measure to Mother Bourgeois' influence. That

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<sup>16</sup> History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 328.

this was realized may be shown by the tribute paid her by M. de Belmont:

C'est à ce zèle que le Canada doit ce qu'il a de bonnes mères de familles, qui toutes ont appris d'elle les principes de la crainte et de l'amour de Dieu<sup>17</sup>.

This same up-lifting influence persists in our own day; one more testimony that the achievements of Margaret Bourgeoys were not confined to the age in which she lived.

The History of the Community<sup>18</sup> records that frequently Mother Bourgeoys was called upon to solve difficulties that arose in the newly-established homes. As in the twentieth, so in the seventeenth century, misunderstandings threatened to wreck families, and to Mother Bourgeoys the young wives came to be helped spiritually and materially. Wisely she guided and advised them, for many of them were but children; the marriage record of Marie du Mesnil and André Charly shows that she was only fourteen years of age. The marriage took place on November 9, 1654, and scarcely had the young wife reached her new home when she returned to the Congregation absolutely refusing to go back to her husband. Patiently, Mother Bourgeoys explained her duties and obligations, but

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17 M. de Belmont, Funeral Oration, Montreal, Feb. 11, 1700, quoted in History of the Congregation, Vol. 2, p. 20.

18 History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 51

to no avail. The girl was determined to stay at the Convent. Finally, her words having no effect, Margaret withdrew to her room and prayed earnestly for her little ward. She returned, to find Marie completely changed, ready to do whatever the kindly nun would advise. From this marriage saved from shipwreck by the wisdom and prayers of Mother Bourgeoys, came four religious vocations for the Congregation. It was for one of them, Sister Catherine Charly, that Mother Bourgeoys was destined to offer her life in later years<sup>19</sup>.

More than one of Notre Dame's adopted daughters returned to seek the motherly help of the kindly nun. There is a record at the Congregation of the baptism and death of a baby, four days old, and the death, too, of its mother, aged nineteen, befriended in her hour of need by the all-embracing charity of Margaret Bourgeoys<sup>20</sup>.

Deep in the hearts of these young women whom she guarded and guided so carefully and so tenderly, she implanted the seeds of virtue which later bore rich fruit for God and Canada. It is certain that this noble woman inspired the civil and spiritual life of the country, and it must be admitted that in furthering the development of the colony by caring for

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19 History of the Congregation, Vol. 2, p. 190.

20 Ibid., p. 51.

its abandoned little ones, arranging good marriages, receiving "les Filles du Roi" and preparing them for their all-important role of wives and mothers, advising and guiding the young families, and by teaching and training their children, that Margaret Bourgeoys fulfilled the role of the truly Catholic Social Worker.

## CHAPTER II.-

### MARGARET BOURGEOYS, GROUP WORKER

In the preceding chapter we have discussed that phase of social work known as case work. Here, the emphasis is placed upon the relationship established between individuals, a person helping, a worker and a client. The case worker is looked to for help by individuals or families, who experiencing difficulties of one kind or another, seek aid outside their own circle from a professional person connected with some social agency. It was contended that although Margaret Bourgeois could not be classed as a professional worker, nor was she identified with any social agency, she can and must be recognized as a true social case worker. For her work, whatever it may have lacked in organization and technique, bore the stamp of zeal and charity, and she met the needs of the time as surely as does the modern social case worker.

Case work, however, is not the whole of social work. People after all, do not live unto themselves alone. We are all members of groups, be they families, clubs, associations or communities. In these groups we seek certain satisfactions, no matter how unaware of this we may be. They affect us, and we, the members affect each other. The realization of this fact is basic to an understanding of another highly important

area of social work, namely, social group work. In contrast to case work, group work deals with the individual as a member of a group; emphasis is placed not upon the individual but upon the group as a whole. Group work has been defined as

. . . a process carried on with voluntary groups during leisure time and with the assistance of a group leader. It aims at the growth and development of the individual and furthering socially desirable objectives held by the group<sup>1</sup>.

The services of the group worker are just as essential as are those of the case worker.

The role of the leader is crucial in the whole process. Like all social workers he needs to have an effective knowledge of people and the skill to work with them. As a specialized worker he needs to know how groups are organized, how they function, how the members' interests are stimulated, how difficulties are handled, and many other things relating to program and activities. His skill lies in his ability to stimulate other people to express and develop what they want and can do. He needs to know the community in which he work, the people who compose it, their nationality, prejudices and problems; he must know the resources of the neighbourhood<sup>2</sup>.

From this description of the role of a group leader it is evident that Margaret Bourgeois may claim distinction in this field of social endeavour. If knowing her environment and the resources of the community be a requisite, surely it must be admitted that no one better than she knew the conditions

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1 Arthur Fink, The Field of Social Work, New York, Holt, 1947, p. 408.

2 Arthur Fink, op. cit., p. 414.

of Ville Marie, visiting as she did daily every home within its precincts. That she had an effective knowledge of people and the skill to work with them must also be acknowledged, for how else explain the work she accomplished and the co-operation with which she met if she did not possess those necessary characteristics? She may not have been the "specialized" worker, but she undoubtedly was indefatigable and zealous in every undertaking which would further the glory of God and the good of her fellowmen.

The group worker must possess the skill to work with people, to stimulate them to express and develop their capacity for doing things. That Mother Bourgeois possessed this essential quality to an extraordinary degree may be proved from the following incidents recorded in the History of the Congregation<sup>3</sup>.

The first days after their arrival in Canada the colonists spent in various activities; the men lost no time in clearing land to build their homes. During this time, Margaret gave a marvelous example of unwearying charity, multiplying her powers to bring relief to human suffering and want wherever she found it. When the most pressing work was done, she asked the Governor to show her the cross which he had placed on the

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3 History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 45.

summit of the mountain during his visit to Ville Marie.

The story of this cross is as follows:

In the winter of 1643 the river had risen so rapidly that the waters threatened to submerge the fort. The Governor and his people prayed earnestly for deliverance, and the former, moved by a sudden impulse, promised that if the waters fell without harming the fort he would carry a cross upon his shoulders to the mountain top and plant it there. As if to try his faith, the waters rose higher and higher, until they filled the moat and lapped at the very threshold of the door. Then, pausing one moment, they gradually receded until all danger was past. Immediately the Governor gave orders for the making of the cross, and on the Feast of the Epiphany a little procession wended its way to the top of Mount Royal. There, M. de Maisonneuve erected the large wooden cross, which proclaimed to the surrounding country God's mercy and a loyal Christian's gratitude.

M. de Maisonneuve had promised to take Margaret to visit this hallowed spot. It was not possible for him to accompany her at this time, but he gave orders that an escort of thirty armed men should go with her, for danger of attack from the Iroquois was very real indeed. After a long and weary climb the little group reached the summit only to find that the Cross had disappeared. During the Governor's absence

the Indians had destroyed it -- a few scattered fragments remained to mark the place where it had stood.

Margaret longed to see it replaced, and on her return she urged M. de Maisonneuve to do so. He consented readily, but asked her to supervise the work. Margaret, a companion, the soldiers and a group of workmen toiled up the mountainside once more, and began the task of building and erecting another Cross. With this group she spent three days, inspiring them with her own spirit of faith, helping them by word and example, directing and encouraging them. Again the Cross stood on high, clearly outlined upon the highest crest of the mountain. There it remained until about 1759 when it, too, disappeared. In our own day there has been erected a beautifully illuminated cross which keeps nightly vigil over the city of Mary -- another reminder of the unceasing toil and activity of Margaret Bourgeoys. Of this incident M. Faillon writes:

Le choix que fit M. de Maisonneuve de la soeur Bourgeoys pour présider au rétablissement de ce monument, et l'empressement des pieux colons à exécuter les desirs de cette sainte fille, montrent assez la grande considération dont elle jouissait déjà dans la colonie, et l'ascendant que sa vertu lui donnait sur tous les esprits<sup>4</sup>.

One more project dear to Margaret's heart was realized through her ability to organize and lead people. Longing to

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<sup>4</sup> Etienne M. Faillon, Vie de la Soeur Bourgeoys, Montreal, p. 84.

see Our Lady loved and honoured in the colony she resolved to build a chapel wherein she could gather together not only the young girls but the entire population of VilleMarie, men, women and children, and instil into their lives a deep and practical devotion to Mary. She had neither money nor material, but she was possessed of an unconquerable zeal. Encouraged by Father Pijart, S.J., missionary of the district, and by M. de Maisonneuve who allowed her to choose the site and who donated the land, Margaret proceeded with her plans. She summoned the men to a meeting and explained to them her desires. Their reaction was as encouraging as it was spontaneous. Rough and hardened in the ways of pioneer life as they were, these sturdy men were like children in their efforts to prove their love for the Mother of God. Gladly they showed their approval, and pledged themselves to help Margaret carry out the project. In her Memoirs<sup>5</sup> she tells us how she organized the willing colonists into groups, some to hew stones, some to carry sand, others to carve wood; from the more prosperous she collected money. The masons offered their services gratis. Directed by her, and working in perfect co-operation they gave generously their leisure time and very soon the foundations were laid.

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<sup>5</sup> Margaret Bourgeois, Memoirs in History of the Congregation, Vol. 2, p. 317.

Work done for God, however, must be signed with the seal of the Cross, and on this, as on all Mother Bourgeoys' undertakings, that precious sign was affixed. Father de Queylus, then Vicar-General, arrived from Quebec, and for some unknown reason he forbade the building to continue. Unhesitatingly and uncomplainingly Margaret obeyed. It was not until 1674 that permission was given for the work to be resumed, and on June 29th the cornerstone was laid. Once again the construction was begun. Mother Bourgeoys was the soul of the enterprise, kindling enthusiasm, enlisting strong hands and willing hearts, supervising the workers and encouraging them to do their best. Every colonist was eager to do his share. Even the sisters were happy to lend their assistance, carrying stones for the masons, facilitating their work and saving valuable time. In two years the building was finished, the first stone church to be erected on the island of Montreal. Thus was begun, continued and completed the first church to be dedicated to the Blessed Virgin in Canada<sup>6</sup>. The quaint old Church of Bon Secours still stands in Montreal, a vivid reminder of the zeal and energy of an intrepid group worker whose influence extended not only to the young, but to the old and hardened pioneer, and who inspired them to do great things for Our Lady. Surely it cannot be denied that Margaret knew how to work with people,

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6 History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 311.

nor that she exercised a benign and stimulating influence upon all with whom she came in contact.

As a result of this phenomenal success in guiding people and directing their labours Mother Bourgeoys may be proclaimed the organizer of another group activity in Canada -- that of the pilgrimage, for to this venerable shrine dedicated to Mary come pilgrims from all parts. A contemporary writer states:

Mass is said there every day and even several times a day, to satisfy the people's devotion to Our Lady of Bon Secours. People go there in procession in times of public calamity and these pilgrimages are productive of blessed results. Each evening the pious people wend their way thither, few are the good Catholics from all parts who do not make promises and offerings to this chapel when in danger or necessity. I mention these facts to show that the birth of this devotion is due to the zeal of Sister Bourgeoys for the honour of the Mother of God. Unable by herself to accomplish these results, success ever attended her undertakings. She is capable of achieving every work by which God may be glorified; spiritual and temporal affairs always prosper in her hands because it is the love of Our Lord that inspires and enlightens her<sup>7</sup>.

These pilgrimages continue even to this day; one of the time-honoured traditions of the Community is the annual pilgrimage held on May 24, the feast of Our Lady of Good Help, when more than three hundred sisters set out before dawn to assist at the Mass offered at the shrine for their special intentions.

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<sup>7</sup> Soeur Morin, Annales de l'Hôtel-Dieu, quoted by Margaret M. Drummond, The Life and Times of Margaret Bourgeoys, Boston, Angel Guardian Press, 1907, p. 145.

Thus, almost three centuries later is commemorated one of the works begun by Mother Bourgeoys.

The social group worker organizes and supervises recreational and avocational activities of a group. . . . She instructs participants in handicraft arts such as wood-carving, weaving and rug making. She endeavours to improve participants physically and to promote the development of social aptitudes<sup>8</sup>.

Margaret Bourgeoys anticipated formal group work in Canada when, in 1658, she established the External Congregation. While her work was primarily with the younger children of the colony she realized that there were many girls too old to attend her classes and yet who were sadly in need of her care. Many young women, too, had married almost before attaining adolescence and Margaret's motherly heart longed to help them in their inexperience. Her zeal found the perfect answer to the problem in the establishment of an External Congregation. This was a society modelled on similar ones she had known in France and of whose worth she was convinced. In 1628 the Sisters of the Congregation de Notre-Dame in France, a cloistered community, had established a house in Troyes, Margaret's birthplace. Prevented by their cloister from teaching and performing works of charity among the poor, they had established an association of young ladies who would gladly devote themselves to these good works. Those who

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Employment Service, Social Group Worker in Dictionary of Occupational Titles, p. 628.

belonged to the society took no vows and made no promises, but simply assembled on certain days to perform certain acts of piety, and to plan and execute charitable undertakings. Margaret had been prefect of one such group and felt that a like organization would be of inestimable worth in Ville Marie.

Accordingly she organized on July 2, 1658, a society known as the External Congregation under the title of Notre-Dame-de-la-Victoire. This was the forerunner of all societies of the Children of Mary, Sodalitys of Our Lady, and Alumnae groups of Convents and Colleges in Canada. It exists to-day under the same title in Montreal<sup>9</sup>.

This society was composed of young married women and the older girls of the colony. They met each Sunday and holy day, performed certain religious exercises and planned various good works. It gave the members an opportunity to meet and discuss their problems, to enjoy pleasant and wholesome recreation, and, above all, it gave Mother Bourgeois the opportunity to give them the advice and guidance they so sorely needed in their difficulties.

Margaret, herself, presided at these reunions, thus fulfilling the role of the group leader. She listened to their problems, encouraged the often-discouraged young mothers, gave

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9 History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 322.

wise advice, and, by word and example, taught them to sanctify themselves that they might sanctify their families. In France the aim of the External Congregation had been to complement the work of the cloistered religious; in Canada Margaret Bourgeois intended it to prepare good Christian mothers, a truly Christian society, and a great Christian nation. By it, she not only preserved the young women from many moral dangers to which they were exposed, but she also encouraged in them such virtue that from this group came several religious vocations for her institute.

Despite much opposition, for many believed that the assemblies of this congregation were of little value, Margaret considered them next in importance to her teaching, and affirmed that she would always continue them, stating that if they did no other good than to prevent one single soul from committing a sin, she would consider that ample reward for any inconvenience they caused her. She earnestly begged her sisters to continue this work -- a request to which they have ever been faithful. In every school taught by the Congregation sisters one of the most active and flourishing societies is that of Our Lady's Sodality, the first of which was begun three centuries ago in Canada with the foundation of Notre-Dame-de-la-Victoire.

Can the title of group leader be denied Margaret Bourgeoys? Had she not fulfilled that role when in 1658 she assumed leadership of this group? She may not have been the "trained" leader demanded to-day, but she was trained in the ways of virtue and wisdom. So strong was her uplifting influence that according to Père Charlevoix the women of the colony were superior to the men. Long after her death, he was to write:

If to this day there prevail in Canada so great a gentleness in the manners of all classes of society and so much charm in the intercourse of life, it is owing in great measure to the zeal of Sister Bourgeoys<sup>10</sup>.

Was not this proof that she furthered the social betterment not only of the individual but of an entire nation?

In spite of all her vigilance and zeal Margaret was well aware that fervour fast fades and that under the stress and strain of daily life her pupils, young and old, might lose sight of the "one thing that matters". To meet this challenge, her keen initiative and unflagging zeal found another outlet in the opening of her home to women and girls for the purpose of closed retreats. Wives, mothers, and young girls, rich and poor, came back to her, and in her gracious way, through kind

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<sup>10</sup> Père Charlevoix, Histoire du Canada quoted by Margaret M. Drummond in The Life and Times of Venerable Margaret Bourgeoys, Boston, Angel Guardian Press, 1907, p. 76.

advice and wise warning she taught them again the great lessons of piety, fidelity to duty and generous self-sacrifice. Thus the first closed retreats ever to be held in Canada owe their existence to the enlightened leadership of Margaret Bourgeoys<sup>11</sup>.

Here again is shown the wise influence of the truly Catholic group leader. Ever alert for the spiritual betterment of others, she saw far below the surface of things into their real meaning and scope, visualizing not only the present, but also the future and its need. By moulding the minds and wills of the present group she was influencing future generations whom they in turn would be destined to influence.

Another group of people awakened pity in the heart of Margaret Bourgeoys. There were in the colony many young girls of the poorer classes whose mothers, either too burdened, or themselves too ignorant to instruct their children, had failed to give their daughters even the most elementary training. Growing up in idleness, they faced a future which held for them only material and spiritual misery. They reached marriage absolutely ignorant of any household accomplishments. Mother Bourgeoys sought to remedy this situation by establishing in 1676 at Pointe-Saint-Charles an "ouvroir" or industrial

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<sup>11</sup> History of the Congregation, Vol. 2, p. 198.

school in a house given by M. de Maisonneuve for that purpose. This was called La Providence. Here twenty young ladies were assembled, given a Christian formation and taught a trade and handicraft whereby they might earn an honest living. They were trained in the manual works suited to their needs, spinning, weaving, sewing, dressmaking --

préparer le "pot", le pendre à la crémaillère, tremper la soupe, faire de la couture et du raccommodage, filer les quenouilles, en un mot, être femme de colon, tenir un ménage et élever des enfants. . .<sup>12</sup>

all this was included in the program of that primitive school of household arts destined to be the first of all such training schools in Canada.

So successful was this establishment that it merited highest praise from civil and religious authorities. M. de Denonville then governor-general of Canada reported:

J'ai trouvé à Ville Marie, en l'île de Montréal un établissement des sœurs de la Congrégation, qui fait du grand bien à toute la colonie, et en outre un établissement de filles de la Providence qui travaillent toute ensemble. Elles pourront commencer quelque manufacture de ce côté-là, si vous avez la bonté de leur faire quelque gratification<sup>13</sup>.

Bishop de Saint-Vallier was no less appreciative. On his visit to Montreal in 1658 he had remarked the great good

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<sup>12</sup> Dom Albert Jamet, Margaret Bourgeois, Montreal, La Presse Catholique, Panaméricaine, 1942, Vol. 1, p. 319.

<sup>13</sup> History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 329.

accomplished by La Providence. So impressed was he with the work done by this group that he wished to have a similar institution established in his episcopal city. He wrote to Mother Bourgeois asking her to undertake the foundation

jugeant que les soeurs de la Congrégation, dont Dieu se plaisait à bénir toutes les entreprises, étaient seules capables de le former et de lui donner le même esprit<sup>14</sup>.

Two sisters, Sister Barbier and Sister Crolo were sent by Margaret to begin the work in a house provided for that purpose by the bishop. Though intended primarily for the French girls, records show that Indian girls were also received.

M. de Denonville and Bishop de Saint-Vallier occupying widely different positions in life had widely different viewpoints. The former, charged with the management of public affairs, saw the material and social advantages of La Providence; the latter, entrusted with the care of souls, saw the spiritual blessings flowing from it.

The influence of this group, La Providence, cannot be over-estimated. Materially, the colony benefited, for through the excellent training given the young girls they were able to make their homes healthier and happier. Spiritually it improved, for through the lessons taught by both

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<sup>14</sup> History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 330.

word and example the moral tone was greatly heightened. The first Legion of Decency in Dress owes its existence to this group. For some years the love of dress had so penetrated all ranks of society that the rules of good taste and modesty were only too frequently violated. The ladies of Quebec and Montreal vied with each other in style and extravagance. Monseigneur de Laval had denounced the scandal of such conduct, and in his pastoral letter of 1686 he had forbidden the sacraments to any one immodestly clad. The girls belonging to La Providence were thoroughly feminine and copied the fashions as far as they possibly could. By their good example and wise advice Margaret and her sisters succeeded where the Bishop and his priests had failed, for on June 12, 1686, on the eve of the feast of Corpus Christi the girls having listened to an instruction as to the best way of celebrating this feast, voluntarily renounced worldly and extreme attire, pledging themselves to dress henceforth simply and modestly. Their example quickly spread throughout the diocese, giving another proof of the powerful influence exerted on the lives of young Canada by this unobtrusive nun<sup>15</sup>.

Another group activity in which Margaret Bourgeoys engaged and which most certainly bore rich fruit for God and country was in answer to the repeated demands for sisters to

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15 History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 330.

teach in the country districts. She had no teachers to give to the requirements of the hour; she organized a training class for young women who aspired to be schoolmistresses. They met in their spare time at the convent, and Margaret undertook to prepare them for their work. The instruction was simple indeed; emphasis was laid on the teaching of catechism and the preparation of children for their First Communion<sup>16</sup>.

It was in 1684 that the first Normal School in history was begun at Rheims by John Baptist de la Salle. More than likely Mother Bourgeois had never even heard of it, but in her own practical way she devised a plan to train others who might help to extend her work where she was not able to go. We shall not call her undertaking a "Normal School" -- the name was not even invented in her day -- but, however rudimentary the training, the principle underlying it was the same as that which called into being the Normal Schools of a later date. Distinguished educators, however, do claim for Margaret's primitive training school the honour of progenitorship for Normal School Work in Canada<sup>17</sup>.

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16 History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 169.

17 J.B. Meilleur, Mémorial de l'Education, Quebec, Desrosiers, 1876, p. 63 quoted by S. S. Ignatius Doyle, in Marguerite Bourgeois and her Congregation, Quebec, Garden City Press, 1940, p. 108.

By this activity Mother Bourgeoys fulfilled very definitely the work of a group leader, for what has more contributed to the social betterment of the country than the formation of this group, the influence of which can scarcely be estimated.

Still other groups Margaret organized, fulfilling in each the role of the group leader. One of her greatest devotions was to the Blessed Eucharist and she sought in every way possible to further that cult in the colony. To her and the pious recluse Mlle Jeanne LeBer, is owed the foundation of the first society of Perpetual Adoration in Canada<sup>18</sup>. After a lapse of nearly three hundred years this organization still exists at the Mother House. There Our Lady's daughters continue to carry on this beautiful devotion, replacing each other day and night before the Tabernacle -- a custom which has doubtless brought untold blessings on the city of Ville Marie, for which Mother Bourgeoys toiled and prayed so incessantly.

Margaret Bourgeoys and Jeanne LeBer shared the same solicitude for deserted shrines, neglected altars, and for destitute priests lacking fine linens and precious vessels

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<sup>18</sup> History of the Congregation, p. 336.

suitable for use in the Divine Mysteries. From their fusion of thoughts and desires sprang the work of Tabernacle Societies in Canada<sup>19</sup>. Mother Bourgeois gathered a group of volunteer workers who gladly gave of their free time to sew linens and embroider vestments. Some of their handiwork may still be seen at the Mother House in Montreal. The Tabernacle societies of to-day carry on with undiminished fervour the work begun three hundred years ago by Mother Bourgeois.

In the work with les Filles du Roi which has already been discussed under case work can it not be assumed that Mother Bourgeois fulfilled the role of group leader also? Here she worked effectively with individuals who formed a group. Her aim was to prepare these young women to become the homemakers of the colony. Was not this a socially desirable objective? Since the group leader must know the community in which he works, who better than Mother Bourgeois knew the conditions of the country and the unlimited demands which would be made upon these future mothers. By her understanding leadership she amalgamated this group of girls into a unit desirous of working harmoniously to promote the best interests of their immediate surroundings.

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19 Ibid., p. 337.

In these group organizations Margaret went further than the ordinary group worker who is satisfied with improving participants physically. She did that, but much more than that, for she had ever before her the spiritual welfare of the colonists, and no sacrifice was considered too great to further their good. Moreover she sought ways and means whereby she and her sisters, as well as their house and possessions, might all serve to further the reign of Christ.

The stimulus she gave to the organization and endeavours of all these various group activities justifies us in contending that Margaret Bourgeois was outstanding in her role as a social group worker.

### CHAPTER III.-

#### MARGARET BOURGEOYS, INSTITUTIONAL WORKER

We have defined and discussed the social case worker and the social group worker and have attempted to prove that Margaret Bourgeoys may justly claim both titles. There still remains another category under which the social worker is classified, that of the institutional worker. Here, too, it is proposed to show that Margaret Bourgeoys was the pioneer in this phase of social work in Canada and that she merits the name of Catholic institutional social worker.

Social work is generally understood to be those services which are directed towards the alleviation of human distress, the rehabilitation of the disabled, the self-maintenance of the individual and the group of which he is a part. Some of these public welfare services may be provided within institutions, some outside, a distinction which led to the classification of "indoor" and "outdoor" cases<sup>1</sup>. While this terminology has tended to disappear from more recent social work literature, and the nature of its services has changed, a considerable amount of social work is carried on in institutions. Instances of this are the services that are

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Fink, The Field of Social Work, New York, Holt, 1947, p. 318.

offered in hospitals for the physically and mentally ill, in institutions for the feeble-minded, for the physically handicapped such as the blind, the crippled and the deaf, for dependent children, for the aged, for the delinquent and for the criminal.

Institutional work is somewhat a combination of social case work and social group work. However, it does differ from them in one important respect. Both case work and group work deal with people in their natural setting. Institutional work involves removing them from their ordinary environment and community life for a longer or shorter period. These persons must make two very important adjustments, first, to become accustomed to living according to a fixed routine, and second, unless they are to remain inmates of the institution for the remainder of their lives, they must learn some skill or handiwork which will enable them to later become independent in the community. The distinctly social side of institutional work consists in aiding people to make these adjustments. In so far as the inmate is treated as an individual, he is dealt with on a case work basis. In instances where he is absorbed into the group, group work is being done<sup>2</sup>.

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Amos L. Warner, Queen and Harper, American Charities and Social Works, New York, Holt, p. 396.

Institutional work is, then, another important aspect of social work. It concerns itself with three distinct groups of individuals, children, the aged, and delinquents<sup>3</sup>. With the second of these we shall deal. While this work is now highly organized and systematized it should not be forgotten that all such activity in Canada had its origin in far-off 1688 when Margaret Bourgeois opened the first General Hospital in Quebec.

Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier was imbued with a deep love of the poor. Authoritative, exacting, severe towards himself and others, to the poor he was charity itself. In Canada he had plenty of opportunity to practise this virtue, for poverty and want were very common, and beggars were numerous. Steps had been taken to remedy this situation in Quebec, when a group of charitable men formed a society to help the needy. Under the direction of the parish priest they collected alms and distributed them among the poor and destitute. Though a comparatively recent organization, it was really doing excellent work. The Bishop however had other designs.

Near Paris, at Salpêtrière, a successful experiment had been undertaken. All types of indigent poor had been

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3 Op. Cit., p. 396-455.

assembled -- girls and women without means and exposed to a life of danger and temptation, old men who were abandoned and ill -- all were given shelter. They were taught some simple trade which would preserve them from idleness, enable them to earn their daily bread, and at the same time help them to maintain their self-respect. This foundation was known as "l'Hôpital-Général". Very soon in outlying towns and districts similar institutions were begun. In Quebec, the new bishop proposed to found an establishment, modelled on those of France, to meet the needs of his diocese. There was much opposition, particularly from the founders of the society which was already flourishing, for in this new project they saw the frustration of their efforts. Tenaciously, the Bishop held to his ideas; he imposed his will, and finally succeeded in carrying out his plans.

In the beginning it was a modest foundation. A building was needed. Monseigneur had already ceded one to the Congregation sisters for La Providence. According to him there was no reason why he should not use this for his old people. Also there was the building used for the offices of the already established Society for the Poor; if necessary, he could use that. In France, charitable women had directed the undertaking. In Canada, Bishop de Saint-Vulmier would use the Sisters of the Congregation. It was not at all their field

of work, but it would become so. Their Letters-Patent authorized them to teach only, but evidently the bishop felt that he might order the sisters to do as he willed. Accordingly he summoned Mother Bourgeoys to Quebec to acquaint her with his decision<sup>4</sup>.

Unhesitatingly she complied, and undertook the hazardous journey in the spring of 1688. On her arrival, she learned of the bishop's intentions to substitute the General Hospital for the successful La Providence. Though convinced that the work lay far beyond the sphere of her Community, Margaret's remarkable spirit of obedience forbade any remonstrance or objection. She undertook to comply with his wishes, and performed the most difficult tasks to further his designs. She summoned to Quebec Sister Anne Hloux to take charge of the new institution and did everything in her power to acquiesce to the bishop's demands. He in the meantime, had departed for France, leaving her to cope with the situation.

The first foundation was extremely poor, dependent as it was on the alms of the faithful. On more than one occasion the sisters and a faithful helper, Marie Pelletier, were obliged to beg for their protégées. When finally Monsieur de Saint-Vallier returned from Paris, he had great plans for the future

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4 History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 333.

of his cherished project. He bought the Recollet Convent, Notre-Dame-des-Anges, and there transferred the sisters and their charges<sup>5</sup>.

For four years the Congregation nuns conducted the General Hospital, striving to realize in every detail the bishop's hopes and plans. Here, Mother Bourgeoys' kindness and zeal were given full rein. Ever sensible to the needs of others she was stirred to greater efforts by their suffering and misery. Countless poor can bear witness to the depth of her practical charity. Their miserable lot was alleviated by the physical comforts provided and their drab existence was brightened by the fact that they were taught skills and handicrafts which made them a little less dependent. Furthermore, their spiritual needs were provided for, and more than one had cause to bless Margaret Bourgeoys' motherly care.

In 1692 Monseigneur de Saint Vallier secured the Letters-patent for the institution from the king. He then decided to entrust it to the cloistered sisters of Hotel Dieu de Saint-Joseph. In the annals of the Hotel Dieu at Montreal is found this entry:

Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier donna le soin de cette nouvelle maison (l'Hôpital-Général de Québec) aux soeurs de la Congrégation qui s'en acquittèrent fort bien tant qu'elles en furent chargées. Mais Sa Grandeur fit le projet dès l'année 1692 d'en ôter les soeurs de la Congrégation, et d'y mettre des Hospitalières<sup>6</sup>.

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5 History of the Congregation, Vol. 1, p. 238.

6 Jeanne Françoise Juchereau, Les Annales de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec, Pérusse Frères, 1853, Vol. 1, p. 331.

Whatever the motive of the Bishop in making the change it does not detract from the fact that Margaret Bourgeoys was the first to begin this type of work in Canada. This has been proved by one of her biographers. M. Faillon writes:

Ainsi les soeurs de la Congrégation furent l'instrument dont la divine Providence se servit pour donner commencement à l'Hôpital-Général de Québec, où tant de personnes délaissées devaient trouver des ressources assurées contre la misère, et de moyens abondants de sanctification et salut<sup>7</sup>.

Is not this statement proof that Margaret Bourgeoys was the pioneer of institutional work in Canada? True, her work might suffer by comparison with modern organization and techniques, but what it may have lacked in these respects it certainly excelled in the spirit which inspired it.

While the modern home for the aged concerns itself primarily with the physical needs of the inmates, Mother Bourgeoys, no less solicitous for that, kept ever to the fore the all important question of the spiritual welfare of her charges. Many a homeless, helpless individual found in her the comforter and consoler of his last days, while others sought and obtained courage to face the hardships of their miserable lives. To her, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy went hand in

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<sup>7</sup> Etienne M. Faillon, Vie de la Soeur Bourgeoys, Paris, Pêrisse Frères, 1853, Vol. 1, p. 331.

hand, and she was ever mindful of the divine words "As long as you did it for one of these, the least of My Brethren, you did it for Me". Undoubtedly, she contributed all the spiritual strength and wealth of her generous heart and mind to the work she had been asked to undertake. Her one aim was to ever procure the glory of God through working for His poor. Surely no one can be more truly called the Pioneer Catholic Social Institutional Worker of Canada.

## CONCLUSION

We who so readily take social work for granted need to be reminded that while its terms and technique may be comparatively modern, its philosophy and practice reach back to very early days. Its roots may be found in the life and literature of ancient peoples, and it found formal expression in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. There is a tendency to-day to say "social" instead of "charitable" works. "Social" may indicate more organized and probably more lasting action, yet the old Catholic word "charitable" has the deeper value of emphasizing that the work is essentially personal; it is for individual men, women, and children, and it is a service rendered by human beings inspired by love of their fellowmen, not the product of an organized activity.

It is because of this essentially personal element in her work, that we claim for Margaret Bourgeoys the title of Catholic Social Worker. For those, who viewing the present day organization of social work in Canada, remembering the past, must revere in her the spiritual sources of faith and charity that made God's blessing manifest on her undertakings and enabled her to achieve such great things for His glory.

The social worker, it has been pointed out, is distinguished by very definite characteristics, and is classified according to her special training and aptitudes. Hence we have the Case Worker, the Group Worker, the Institutional Worker, each concerned with his own little sphere of activity. Mother Bourgeoys, we contend, was all three, interested in every individual, indefatigable in her efforts to render herself "all things to all men" that she might lessen physical privations while furthering the spiritual welfare of those for whom she toiled.

The family case worker is distinguished by her interest in the family, in maintaining its unity, and in helping to solve problems which threaten its very existence. Has it not been proved effectively that Mother Bourgeoys was, par excellence, the family social worker? Who, more than she, showed interest in the maintenance of the family, indeed more than that, did she not assist in its very foundations by the establishment of the foyer, when she met and sheltered the "Filles du Roi", in her work in marriage counselling and guidance? Was not her interest most strikingly shown when she continued to direct the young wives and mothers, encouraging them and sustaining them in the hardships of their pioneer life? What social worker can claim to know so intimately and to meet so effectively the

needs of the families as did Mother Bourgeoys, visiting as she was accustomed to do daily every home, rendering the humblest services, considering nothing too menial if it but helped her cherished colonists. She probably did not think of it as social work -- the words would mean nothing to her, but she did know and understand very well the import of charity, and after all, what is social work properly understood but the expression of that sublime virtue?

The social worker is interested in the welfare of children, seeing that they are placed in the proper type of foster home, and that they are physically well cared for. Who more than Mother Bourgeoys loved little children? What greater interest could possibly be shown than by her adoption of them into her own home, lavishing on them all the love of her motherly heart? We have records of but few of the little ones rescued by her from misery and neglect, for Mother Bourgeoys had scant time to make note of her good deeds, but we do have enough to prove very conclusively that children occupied a very prominent place in her thoughts, and that a large part of her work was concerned with their welfare. For what other reason had she come from France and sacrificed all that she cherished, if not for the sake of establishing schools wherein they might be taught the priceless lessons of religion? While the actual social aspects of her work may not

be perceived today, surely the teaching order she founded and which still strives for the sanctification of souls and for the moral betterment of young women must stand as a monument to the zeal and charity of a truly valiant woman.

The social worker must have an effective knowledge of people and the skill to work with them. What words better describe Mother Bourgeoys during the forty-seven years of her life in Ville Marie? Unless she had possessed these characteristics it would be impossible to explain the accomplishment of such tremendous undertakings. It is almost incredible the amount of work she did crowd into her busy days, but she was able to do so only because she could inspire others with her own burning zeal. Everyone, men, women, children, the great and the humble responded to the stimulus given by her dauntless courage and intrepid energy. Her genius for organization seemed to know no limits. The External Congregation with its immense power to influence entire families; La Providence, wherein young women were trained not only for a useful career, but for their roles of makers of homes; the building of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours chapel; the establishment of the lay retreat movement in Canada are but instances of her endeavours. Witness, too, the influence for good exerted by her in 1686 when, by her inspiration, the pupils of La Providence pledged themselves to combat indecency in dress. The work of Tabernacle Societies,

so beneficial to the poor missions while at the same time fulfilling the aim and purpose of group organizations, was due to her initiative, as well as the inauguration of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in Canada. In all these undertakings she showed her self a true social group leader.

With the establishment of the General Hospital in Quebec which was destined to do so much good for the abandoned and destitute old people, Mother Bourgeoys began institutional work in Canada. Here, too, she manifested all the qualifications of the true social worker, for she gave unstintingly of herself, her time, even sacrificed her better judgment, knowing the work to be beyond the sphere of her community. Blessed by the spirit of sacrifice which ever prompted her, the project flourished under her care as long as Providence willed her to conduct it.

All these activities emphasize the fact that Margaret Bourgeoys was pre-eminently the social worker of her time. There was nothing she was not willing to undertake when convinced that it was for the glory of God and the good of souls. Hers and hers alone was the glorious mission of forming wives, mothers and teachers for Ville Marie, a mission in which she fulfilled in every sense of the word the role of the social worker; a mission in which she went

much further, for while the social worker gives of her time and her talents, these are but external things. Margaret gave these, but more than that, she gave the best of her mind and heart. The former gifts she gave lavishly; the latter no less generously. This made her the truly noble woman, loyal and kind, who loving God so devotedly, ministered to the poor, the weak, and the ignorant with such depth and tenderness that she must ever be ranked as teacher, educator, benefactress and pioneer social worker of Canada.

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## APPENDIX 1

### ABSTRACT OF

#### Margaret Bourgeoys, Pioneer Social Worker of Canada

In this thesis we have attempted to justify the title, Margaret Bourgeoys, Pioneer Catholic Social Worker of Canada.

Social work has been defined according to the modern interpretation of the word; its main divisions have been given; the difference between Catholic social work and social work in general has been stated, and the qualifications, training, and functions of the social worker have been outlined.

With these ideas clearly established, the work of Margaret Bourgeoys has been examined and classified according to the generally accepted divisions of social work. One chapter each has been devoted to the study of Margaret Bourgeoys as Case Worker, Group Worker, and Institutional Worker.

Defining Case Worker and discussing the requisite qualifications and characteristics, it was pointed out that by her intense interest in the development of the colony as manifested by her care for its abandoned little ones, the reception and sheltering of the Filles du Roi, the preparation of young women for their future role of wives and mothers, the

arranging of good marriages, advising and guiding the newly-established families, Margaret Bourgeoys very definitely fulfilled the office of the truly Catholic Social Worker.

By the establishment of such various group activities as the restoration of the Cross on Mount Royal, the building of Notre-Dame de Bon-Secours Church, the founding of La Providence, the formation of the External Congregation, the establishment of the lay-retreat movement, Margaret proved herself to be an efficient group leader.

With the foundation of the General Hospital in Quebec where Mother Bourgeoys' ardent charity found outlet in her care of the aged and indigent poor, it was contended that she manifested all the qualities of the true institutional worker.

All these activities, wherein Margaret Bourgeoys gave freely of herself, her time, her every faculty of soul and body to the service of others in works intended primarily for the glory of God and the good of souls, emphasize the fact that she was preeminently the social worker of her time.