



The Catholic
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of Edmonton

Joy in Christ
100 Jubilee
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Jubilee 100 Biography

Biography of Sister Ada Toner

Submitted by Our Lady of the Angels Parish, Fort Saskatchewan

Written by Sister Ada Toner

“They make contributions out of their surplus but this woman has given everything.” (Luke 21)

Each one of us is asked to give our all. Each one of us is asked to follow Jesus in the walk of life to which we are called. I know that I was called to Religious Life with the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception 75 years ago. But as disciples, we are also **sent**. And was I sent!

Our Community responded to the call of the Church to establish Catholic Schools in various parts of Canada and I was sent to Vancouver. Schools were built by the parish and the Sisters were the teachers. So for 18 years I did that in the poorest areas of the city. Then I was sent to Saint John, N. B. to teach in an all-girl high school which made it necessary for me to go to the University in Fredericton during the summer as the schools in New Brunswick are publicly supported. I taught 105 Grade Niners English and Math. After five years I was sent to Winnipeg to replace one of the Sisters. I had my credits transferred to the University of Manitoba to finish my degrees. I was permitted to take some courses at St. Paul's, the Jesuit College. I was able to win two degrees during summer school and evening classes. Then I was sent to Edmonton to replace the principal of St. Gerard School. It was a wonderful place to be as far as staff and supplies were concerned but I found many children in Grades 4, 5 and 6 who could not read. These children were New Canadians whose parents could not speak English. Two of the Sisters, with whom I lived, helped me set language classes in the evenings to teach the parents. To promote Catholic Education in Edmonton, Religious Communities returned 50% of their salary. As the system strengthened the percentage lessened. When I came to Edmonton we were receiving 85% of our salary. Ten years later we received full salary. It was the end of an era.

After making a 30-day retreat in Pecos, New Mexico, I was sent to help parents with sacramental preparation in the new Clairview parish. After one year I was appointed director of the new Renewal Centre in Fredericton, N.B. It was there that I became involved with R.C.I.A. process. Seventeen of us went to Rhode Island for a week under the guidance of Christianne Brusselman, who was sent by the Pope to bring the process to the Americas.

After four years in Fredericton, I was sent to Nova Scotia to coordinate catechetics in the whole of Annapolis Valley. I was classified as a 'rich American from Alberta' and I upset 'the people of God'. After a year I was asked by my superior, "Would you like to go to Fort Saskatchewan?" I said, "Tomorrow?" I was to be Pastoral Assistant at Our Lady of the Angels. I was being called to adult education beginning with myself. If I was to be involved in parish life I must be prepared. So on 'home visits' I made arrangements to pick up some courses in spirituality. I had two good summers at St. Michael's in Vermont, a summer at St. Paul's in Ottawa and many courses at Newman here at home. I never sought degrees but I did seek knowledge. My learning did not always take place in houses of study. I was called by the Bishop of Kamloops to help a priest who was responsible for sacramental preparation on five reserves. For three summers I received more spiritual growth than I ever gave to our Native brothers and sisters.

While in Fort Saskatchewan I was permitted to use my gift-money for materials to help those who would replace me to carry on the work that I was doing. I spent eight years at O.L.A. and when I knew that the people were ready, I left.

I was called to help in Edson, Wainwright, Thorsby, Warburg and Breton until it was thought that I was 'too old and too deaf' to do that ministry. I was sent to Vancouver to assist the sick and dying in two hospitals in different parts of the city. I had no training and for health reasons, I asked to come back to the "Fort" and for the last 10 years I have enjoyed my 'Honeymoon' with Jesus.

