

Foundation of Mercy in St. John's June 3, 1842

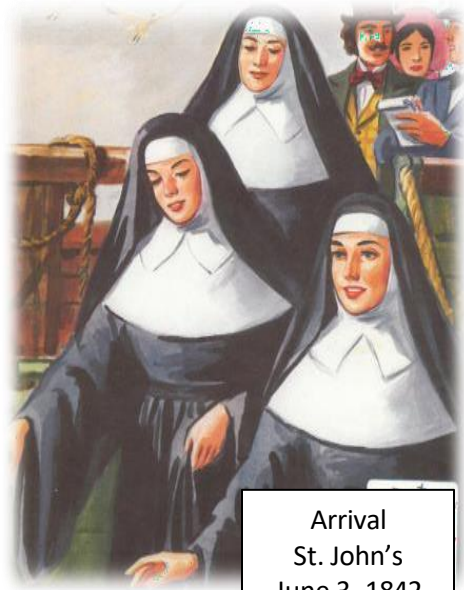
What must have gone through the heart and mind of Marianne Creedon when Bishop Fleming asked her if she would return to Ireland to train as a Sister of Mercy! "Go back to Ireland; enter the convent; come back to St. John's and start up a convent here?" What must the bishop be thinking!!

Marianne had come to St. John's in 1833 from Waterford, Ireland with the Nugents, her sister's family. Life was fairly comfortable and Marianne had settled in well. She was teaching and serving the sick and the poor in various ways. At the age of 21 she had faced the unknown in her move to St. John's: the loss of what was secure and familiar in her home with the Nugents in Waterford, the risk and suffering of crossing the ocean to a new land, the leaving of all that was familiar and secure. Now, what was Bishop Fleming asking of her? What was God asking of her?

The thoughts of returning to Dublin may have been exciting for the young Marianne; but the long voyage over the north Atlantic Ocean! This would indeed be an extraordinary experience! Then there was the excitement of a new challenge to join a certain Catherine McAuley in a brand new religious order, an order different from other orders in Ireland. Were not the Sisters of Mercy called the "walking nuns" because they visited the poor and the sick in their homes and in the hospitals? Is God calling her to something new, again?

Bishop Fleming must have seen great potential and giftedness in Marianne. He must have had great trust in her leadership, her ability and her faith. He knew of her skill to nurture the spiritual, intellectual, artistic and social life of the Catholic population in St. John's and beyond. Catherine McAuley, too, must also have had deep trust in Marianne and guided her to completion of her novitiate at Baggot Street where she made religious profession as a Sister of Mercy, August 1841. There seems to have been an agreement with Catherine that Marianne, now Sister Mary Francis, would return to Newfoundland to found there the Sisters of Mercy.

Catherine's successor, Sister Mary dePazzi upheld the foundress' commitment to Newfoundland. Francis Creedon, Rose Lynch and Ursula arrived in St. John's on June 3, 1842 to establish the first foundation outside of Britain. Likely Catherine McAuley would have accompanied the founding group *but she was too sick and died a few months later.*



Arrival
St. John's
June 3, 1842

Marianne was back in Newfoundland, now as a Sister of Mercy, Sister Mary Francis. She, Rose Lynch and Ursula Frayne immediately took up the works of Mercy. The three founding sisters opened a school on Military Road in May, 1843 and continued to visit the sick poor in their homes. In the middle of November that same year Sisters Rose and Ursula returned to Ireland leaving Francis and a newly professed Mary Joseph Nugent in St. John's to carry on the mission.

So, thanks to these two dedicated and faithful women, the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of Newfoundland was firmly planted and continued to grow and to flourish. This is the beginning of our story! June 3 is our Foundation Day! Once upon a time . . . 179 years lat

