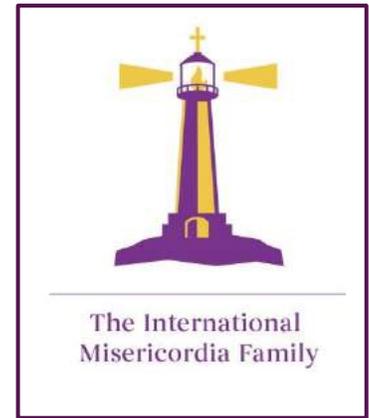


## Mercy in Action in The International Misericordia Family

### God's Wallet

*Gary Nolan*



One of Mercy's definitions is to fill a need when we see it. This is done in many ways and experience has taught us that sometimes to show Mercy to others we must be shown Mercy first. Simeon, a member of the Heritage Committee, sat beside me on our way back from the Annual Gathering in 2018 and told me a story about a particular aspect of Mercy that was fascinating.

#### **From death to life**

The idea of founding the Centre Marie Eve came to Agathe Savard, a nurse, several years ago as she found herself taking care of her sick husband, and witnessing the growing number of young women going to abortion clinics. Those who chose not to have an abortion were often abandoned, with little or no support. Finding this situation deplorable, Agathe thought of starting an organization that could help mothers and their children.

Agathe called on the Misericordia Sisters for guidance and suggestions, which the Sisters gladly provided in the way of training, organizing, and other needs. Agathe began offering services from her home and, when the needs became too great, she eventually rented a place in St. Eustache. She surrounded herself with volunteers, including Simeon's wife, Francine, to work the phones and then accompany the mothers. Not long after, the Centre Marie Eve opened centers in St. Jerome and in St. Therese. Later the Centre Marie Eve purchased a location in St Eustache.

In the years that followed, Agathe retired and invited Francine to guide the organization as president of the Board of Directors. As the needs grew in different cities, Francine, her volunteers, and some staff decided to look for a place to purchase in St. Jerome (30 kilometres away) to help the growing number of mothers in distress in that area. They had a small amount of cash, so they started to search for a property and a mortgage. However, obtaining a mortgage when you are a non-profit organization is not easy, if not impossible. Banks are not exactly thrilled to have you as a client. At one point in their search they were about to give up the idea of buying and started thinking of renting. Then the unexpected happened.

#### **God's Wallet**

While they were still looking, someone learned that the Centre Marie Eve needed financing for this new initiative. The person arranged for a meeting, introduced himself,

and said that he belonged to an organization called *La Bourse à Dieu* (God's Purse or as we translated it, God's Wallet). He said that their organization intervened in projects they believed in when there was no, or little, possibility of finding financing. And, he said, they had an offer.

*La Bourse à Dieu* would lend the Centre Marie Eve the money, charge a low interest rate, and write-up an agreement for five years with one condition: they (people from *La Bourse à Dieu*) had to remain anonymous. (And they still are anonymous all of these years later, except to those who needed to be present to sign the agreement). The offer was notarized and everything was set for the first five years. At the end of five years, it was time for renewal. As anyone who has had a mortgage knows, paying down a mortgage in the first five years does not reduce the capital very much even at low interest rates. However, the people from *La Bourse à Dieu* had another surprise for the Centre Marie Eve.

### **Blessed not once but twice**

The group at the *La Bourse à Dieu* had an important announcement to make. Because the investors were getting older, they wanted to dissolve the group. However, before dissolving the group they decided to cancel the loan, giving full ownership of the property to the Centre Marie Eve with no strings attached. The Centre Marie Eve found themselves with a house that was paid for to serve the mothers and their children in need. The house still exists and the people at the Centre Marie Eve have stayed faithful to the original mission more than three decades later. The Good Samaritan had turned into a Guardian Angel.

### **Sisters and Rosalie put their best foot forward**

One of the lessons in the story is a lesson that the Misericordia Sisters and Rosalie often conveyed. When they needed money for their various initiatives, and they had many in the last century, they would often say that we shouldn't worry about the money. It is somewhere, but for the moment, we don't know where. God will provide. And inevitably He did, many times. Agathe's experience highlights this truth. When God wants it to be, it will be.

To be blessed by God sometimes means putting our foot forward without knowing all the details. In the Bible, Joshua had to put his foot in the water first before the Lord opened the Jourdan River (Josh. 3:13). This is a lesson the Misericordia Sisters, Rosalie, and in this case, Agathe and the Centre Marie Eve, understood. All missions start with many parts of the puzzle still missing. It takes faith, courage, and audacity to do this--qualities we still need every day in the IMF missions. We can only think of the thousands of mothers helped because of Agathe's initiative to put her foot forward, and the kind people who mercifully donated the money. God's Mercy works in unpredictable ways and through anonymous people. May we show the same faith, courage, and audacity to put our foot forward in being God's face of Mercy.