

*Did you know?*  
**CSM FACTS**

The Sisters of St. Martha first came to Inverness in 1925. In 1924-5, the people of the coal mining town of Inverness and

surrounding areas in Cape Breton, NS, built a community hospital and petitioned the Marthas “to take charge”. Mother M. Stanislaus and the Council agreed unanimously to the request, sent by Father Kyte, under the direction of Rev. Alex MacDonald.



The “Inverness Brigade”: Sisters of St. Martha, staff at St. Mary’s Hospital in Inverness, Palm Sunday, 1936. Seated: Sr. Mary Philip Neri MacDonald, Mother Mary Stanislaus MacDonald, Sr. Mary de Chantal Maclean. Standing: Sr. Antonia Flynn, Sr. Mary Albert Gleason, and Sr. Mary James Campbell.

During the 97 years of CSM presence in Inverness, Sisters served in health care in St. Mary’s Hospital and the Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital. St. Mary’s Hospital staff was first managed by the “Inverness Brigade” of Marthas (photo above), headed by a Sister Superintendent. Initially, cash-strapped families contributed crops and produce to support the institution.

In the late 1970s, Marthas began working in Team Ministry, offering pastoral education, pastoral visiting, education in schools, and music ministry. Committed to the ministry of prayer, Marthas visited the sick and shut-ins, especially those living in Inverary Manor; they attended the wakes and funerals of many parishioners. Some Sisters were involved in housing projects,

**97 YEARS IN INVERNESS:  
1925-2022**

counselling and serving on liturgical committees. These highlight a few of the areas of Martha presence in Inverness. The ministry carried on till this year with Sr. Lucy MacNeil and Sr. Stella Chafe who responded to being in mission and continued working within the limits and challenges of COVID-19.

CSM records show that many Sisters entered the Congregation from Stella Maris Parish, Inverness, and St. Margaret of Scotland Parish, Broad Cove, a testimony to the deep faith of the Catholics of the region. These friends and community members have opened their homes to the Marthas, shared their family stories and have kept a watchful eye on them for almost 10 decades. They will always hold a special place in our Community Prayer, and indeed, in our Common Martha Heart!



Some Sisters working in Inverness in the late 1980s. Standing: Sr. Elizabeth Fraser, Sr. Alexius MacLellan, Sr. Michelle MacDougall and Father Stanley MacDonald. Seated: Sr. Sandra White and Sr. Franklyn Ferguson.

## 97 YEARS IN INVERNESS: 1925-2022

Altogether, 93 Sisters were sent to live and serve in St. Mary's Hospital and 24 Sisters to live and serve in many different capacities from St. Mary's Convent. A few of those Sisters were able to attend the September closing celebrations in Inverness and share their memories.



In the years 1981-1990, **Sr. Franklyn Ferguson** worked as a medical social worker at the Inverness Consolidated Hospital and as a counsellor with Family Services of Eastern NS. She specialized in

working with families of alcoholics and ran many support groups designed to help people live a healthier lifestyle. She remembers other great groups run by the Team such as the single parent group or *Mothers helping Mothers* as well as some fun events, for example *Mothers Weekend* in Mabou, designed to pamper new mothers!

*One of the key images that stay in my mind is when we borrowed a school bus and filled it with children, mothers, single parents (...). We landed in Antigonish [at Bethany] and had lots of fun, games, and food, the children were able to play around. All I can remember from the drive up and back is singing, telling stories, and laughing. These were memorable experiences that some children never had before and would remember. I really appreciated being here, I loved living and working here, I carry a lot of wonderful memories!*

**Sr. Alexius MacLellan** spent 21 years in Inverness, she was a nurse from 1973-80 and continued in pastoral care in 2000-2014. Unable to attend the closing ceremony, she passed on greetings to all friends in Inverness area:



*Dear friends,  
I send warm greetings and abundant blessings on this very special occasion. I want to say thank you to each of you for your gracious hospitality, multiple kindnesses, care, and concern. helpfulness to me during my time with you at St. Mary's Hospital, Inverness Consolidated Hospital and at St. Mary's Convent touch my heart deeply. I will never forget you. ~ Sr. Alexius*

### **Sr. Claudette Gallant**

was missioned in Inverness in 1978-85 and was part of the Inverness Parish Team. She was 37 then and full of energy, ready to work on any project.



*It was a wonderful time in the Church because Vatican II had just happened, so we could do all kinds of innovative things within the parish. We had Christopher Course, we had RCIA, we had Family Days for children for First Communion and Confirmation. We had Baptism Sessions: we visited every home in which the child was baptised. (...) I can't tell you how much I enjoyed myself being here! Besides that, I was the director of the pre-marriage program in this pastoral section. (...). I was here with Father Stanley (...), he and I used to meet once a week and, every time we met, he had 3 or 4 different projects for me and I used to say to him "You know Stan, I'll look at 2 of those". It was absolutely great! (...)*

## 97 YEARS IN INVERNESS: 1925-2022



Sr. Florence Kennedy, never served in Inverness, but was born in the area. She believes that her vocation was fostered and nourished by the connections she made during her teenage years with the Sisters living in town.

*My first introduction to the Marthas was in the late 1970's when I was asked if I would play mandolin in the choir. With some trepidation I said yes. It was the beginning of saying many yeses as I got to know the sisters. (...) The more time I spent with the sisters in Inverness, I became aware of how welcoming and respectful they were to everyone they encountered. Whether it be at the convent for a cup of tea and a visit, or meeting someone at the store or at the church they listened and had time for people. These two values: welcoming and respect empowered people including myself.*

*When the sisters invited you to take part in liturgy, such as being lector or Eucharistic Minister, or to participate in a program they were offering in the parish such as the Christopher Course, or Genesis II or an event such as a Family Day, it was hard to say no. They had a knack of engaging and involving people. This resulted in developing the diverse gifts of people and, at the same time, their interaction enriched and strengthened community.*

*I was inspired by how much the sisters cared about the people they served. I learned the importance of the common good. I desired to be like them.*

*The sisters had a spirit of simplicity. They enjoyed doing ordinary things like picking berries, preserving jams and pickles, baking biscuits, having a cup of tea, chatting, having a sing song, or a good laugh over some funny thing that happened in the day. It was their ordinary 'earthy spirit' that appealed to me.*



Sr. Lillian Gaudet was missioned to Cape Breton 40 years ago. She spent four memorable years as choir director in Inverness and Broad Cove. At the closing reception, she remembered with great

appreciation people who helped her share her love of music in the already very musically inclined parishes.

*We all know that corporate worship is important for Christian life but please keep in mind that we can also worship in music, it can help us connect with the Creator, as the old saying says: "whoever sings, prays twice". So, I say turn up the volume and sing praises to our God, raising high the name of Jesus and exalting the spirit of God.*

*I'll leave this message from Psalm 1:04 with you: "I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being"*

*Thank you everyone, I really enjoyed my 4 years here!!"*

