

SAYING GOODBYE TO FAITHFUL MISSIONARY

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BY FATHER ROBERT LAROCHE, O.M.I.

January 16, 2014, is a date that will be remembered for years to come by the Catholic Christian

communities of the Island Lake area in Northern Manitoba. On this day, the people bid farewell to Sister Marie-Claire Boucher, a Sister of Charity of Saint-Hyacinthe, Québec, after over 30 years of service in that area. Sister Marie-Claire is a strong woman, both in faith and in action. She was called by her Superior, Sister

Diane Beaudoin, to return to the Motherhouse after celebrating her 83rd birthday.

In the early days at St. Theresa Point, Sister Marie-Claire was assigned to the kitchen as the cook for the many sisters who served as teachers in the area. Through the insistence of Father

Dutil, an Oblate priest, she became the reluctant gardener of the mission, a task which later became her passion and joy. When looking for Sister Marie-Claire one would usually find her in



Photos: Sister Norma Samar, O.L.M.



In file photo, Sister Marie-Claire Boucher, a Sister of Charity of Saint-Hyacinthe, Québec, prepares youth for Confirmation.

her kitchen baking cakes and cookies, which were in high demand. You could also find her in her garden accompanied by her faithful dog, Neko.

As the years went by, her role changed from being a simple cook to a respected elder and spiritual adviser to many in the community. Many would come to see her. Her gentle and, at times, stern manner would cut to the chase, leaving no doubt of the concern she had for the poor and the justice due them.

The celebrations surrounding her farewell began in Garden Hill, where a number of people gathered in the local church, first to celebrate Mass, and then to offer their gifts as they said a tearful goodbye. Next was the community of Wasagamach, who, with

their many gifts, offered her a pair of snowshoes to remind her of the North and of the people she journeyed with over those many years. Finally, the people of St. Theresa Point also offered their farewell with speeches, dancing, and a choreographed performance by the youth of the community.

At the airport, despite the cold, many braved the frigid weather to wave a final goodbye as the plane made its way down the runway.

Oblate Father Robert Laroché served as pastor at St. Theresa Point and the Island Lake missions in Northern Manitoba, in the Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, for seven years. He is again back in the Archdiocese working in The Pas as vicar general/chancellor.