

The Congregation of Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate (SSMI) – Winnipeg, Manitoba

Sisters Athanasius Melnyk and Alexia Chykalo, two Ukrainian Catholic Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate arrived in Winnipeg, Manitoba from their homeland, Lviv, Ukraine on June 16, 1905 to set up their first mission in north-end Winnipeg. As implied in the emblem of their congregation, these Sisters, and the courageous hard-working women who joined them, exemplified Christ, as they took up their cross daily to do the work that was put before them. My tribute recognizes and applauds the work of the Sisters as they toiled among Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians alike to leave indelible marks of achievement, especially in the areas of education and health care. The Sisters continue to invoke the protection of God and Mary Immaculate as they fulfill their religious vows of obedience, chastity and poverty and practice the virtues of meekness, humility and sisterly love.

Through the combined efforts of the Sisters and the Basilian Fathers (Order of St. Basil the Great), St. Nicholas School (currently Immaculate Heart of Mary School), which began in 1905 and continues today, and St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church flourished. Also, from 1957 to 1963, the Immaculate Heart of Mary Academy expanded to include girls enrolled in grades nine to twelve. Thousands of students and dedicated parishioners, passing through the doors of these institutions, built upon the pioneer generation's visionary dream; to make a better life for their children through education.

The Sisters' mission established the well-known Holy Family Personal Care Home, where for over fifty years the elderly have been receiving compassionate care and love, respect and dignity. Holy Family Home, Immaculate Heart of Mary School and the various ministries administered by the Sisters have combined efforts to form the LUBOV SSMI Foundation. I trust that strong donor relationships and financial stability will enable the Sisters to continue for many years the honourable initiatives and ministries set out by Blessed Josaphata Hordashevska, the Co-foundress of the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate.

June Dutka
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