



## Sisters' legacy of compassion lives on in Mundare

Four Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate made the journey from Western Ukraine to Edmonton in 1902 on their first mission to Canada. They arrived in Edmonton, where they lived together in a small attic above a church, and immediately began ministering to the sick in their homes, as well as in hospital.

These beginnings prepared them for their next big journey—in 1903 they founded a Convent on a homestead in the Mundare district, where they began a school, an orphanage, and caring for the ill in their homes.

Any day of the week, at any time, the Sisters would make house calls to care for the sick. They often not only cared for those that were ill, but also their families, by preparing meals, cleaning their homes, and even caring for their children. This tireless and selfless ministry continued on when they officially opened the Mary Immaculate Hospital in Mundare, admitting their first patient on December 20, 1929.

Through the depression, when they were paid in produce, and the Spanish Influenza epidemic after the First World War, the Sisters lived out their mission of sharing their experience of God's compassion, forgiveness and unconditional love, as they worked tirelessly for the health of the community.

To better serve the population of Mundare's needs, Mary Immaculate Hospital has officially transitioned to Mary Immaculate Care Centre, where staff provide compassionate care for seniors.

Today, there are four Sisters that regularly visit residents, and one Sister working there a few days each month—Sister Zoe Bernatsky. Sister Zoe was the Director of Care at Mary Immaculate from 1985 to 1987, and returned to work at the site as a nurse in 2011, covering vacations and staff vacancies.

She explains staff have the same commitment to compassion, kindness and a high standard of care that the founding Sisters did when they began the hospital.

"While many things change, many things stay the same. When the Sisters first built the hospital there was a need for emergency and surgical services. Now the greatest need is for compassionate and competent long-term care," says Sister Zoe, who explains that Mary Immaculate is still the hub of the community, where everyone is treated with kindness and respect.

Sister Zoe was recently moved by a story that was shared at a celebration of life for a few residents.

A resident's family member was helping her father drink out of a cup, and it reminded her of the Eucharist. It occurred to Sister Zoe that this captured the essence of Mary Immaculate—nursing the body and the spirit, not just housing people.

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**– Sister Zoe Bernatsky**



Sisters Servants of  
Mary Immaculate