

Rose Prince, Residential School Survivor and Future Saint
By Fr. Glenn McDonald, CSB

The sad truth of the Catholic Church's participation in the Residential School System has shaken the faith of many families and teachers. As a chaplain with Edmonton Catholic Schools, people pull me aside, tell me of their distress and ask, "How do we respond to this? Where do we go from here?"

In times of turmoil such as these, God has often responded by calling forth a new saint to heal and guide the Church towards greater holiness. I would like to introduce you to someone whom I believe will be Canada's next saint.

Rose Prince (1915-1949) was the third of nine children of Jean-Marie and Agathe Prince. She entered the Lejac Residential School near Fraser Lake, BC at age seven with several of her siblings. Despite the terrible hardships she suffered, Rose Prince became a model of humility, gentleness and prayer. When she was sixteen, her mother and two youngest sisters died of influenza. Heartbroken, she decided to remain at the residential school to care for other children. Mysteriously, God kept Rose Prince's holiness a secret. She died on August 19, 1949, at the age of 34, from tuberculosis.

Two years after her death, her body was discovered to be incorrupt — a traditional sign of sanctity. In 1990, an annual pilgrimage to her grave, which is located on the former site of the Lejac residential school, began.

I have no doubt in my mind that Rose Prince is a saint, but we must interpret her life correctly before God will grant a miracle in her name and make her a formally recognized saint: God made Rose Prince holy *in spite of* the Residential School System. God kept His holy Rose hidden until the Church could see the tragic truth of her life and that of her people.

Scholar Emma Anderson writes, "The strong biblical overtones of Rose's [life] prompts us to recall the inversion that lies at the heart of the Christian message: the promise that...the last shall be first."¹

The journey of truth and reconciliation is difficult and painful, but God has placed a saint on our path. Rose Prince is ready to help us reconcile, if we are open to the truth of her life.

If you would like to receive a Rose Prince prayer card, feel free to contact me at:
glenn.mcdonald@ecsd.net.



¹ Anderson, Emma. "Residential School Saint: The Life, Death, and Turbulent Afterlife of Rose Prince of the Carrier Nation." *Church History* 89, no. 3 (2020): 592-632.