

Adelante Juntos



Forward Together

Vol.22 No.2 – Nov. 2020



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From the Editor

Welcome to our November 2020 edition of "Adelante Junt@s"! Covid times have not stopped our contributors for this season's newsletter. There are three articles to assist people in appreciating and practising the daily Examen that were shared on a Zoom course from the FCJ Christian Life Centre in Calgary. Other reflections on our lives may also be of interest to you, our readers. Articles from both of our jubilarians, Sisters Mary Bresnihan and Margaret Mary Benoit, are included. Imagine: seventy years of vows and still writing for a newsletter!

Special thanks to Sister Bonnie Moser for permission to use her piece that she had sent to the Religious Women of Toronto for their paper entitled "The Open Liner". You are very much in our hearts and prayers, Sr. Bonnie.

If anyone wishes to make comments or suggestions, please address them to me at terry@fcjcentre.ca.

Thank you.

Terry f.c.J.





Sr. Bonnie Moser writes from London, England, for the Open Liner, the Newsletter of Women Religious in the Archdiocese of Toronto, Fall 2020.

Many thanks for your kind invitation to send a few thoughts for this edition of the Open Liner. After I was elected General Superior of the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJs) last October, I moved from Toronto to London, a daunting move for a Canadian, originally from rural Alberta! Never would I have imagined that within a few months, a deadly, microscopic virus would have the power to change the world I had known and its people, leaving no one exempt from the possibility of contracting COVID-19. Surely this global pandemic continues to test our strength and highlights systematic inequalities that we can no longer ignore.

One thing I have learnt in my new surroundings: this is not a time for despair; this is a time for hope as the 'new normal' gives opportunity for all of us to embrace a new era of solidarity to seek the common good for all humanity; not just for a select few.

Realistically though, leadership in religious congregations at all levels continues to be challenged. How can religious life be lived fully in 2020 and beyond? Today in many places we cannot even travel beyond our own cities, and we must rely on our digital age to connect us like never before. Presently FCJs are in 15 different countries world-wide. For the past four months there has not been one country who has not been in some kind of lockdown because of COVID-19. However, having this time in communities is turning out to be an abundant blessing; calling us forth to take a more contemplative stance towards life and freeing time for better relational living. The gift of technology has united our congregation in ways unknown a year ago and as someone said recently: 'I know the bonds that unite us across our Society are stronger than everbefore—not weaker!'

Does not history reveal that there is a paradox in every crisis? Is there really strength in weakness? We, human beings, no matter who we are, know our vulnerability like never before. The virus has forced us to think and reflect more deeply in ever new ways. Yes, God's Spirit beckons us onwards and calls us to trust that 'nothing is impossible with God'? (Luke 1:37)

I send my very best wishes and prayer to each of you!





A Parable on Our Labyrinth

This note was given to our community by a retired Anglican priest who loves to use our labyrinth.

Attention FCJ Community!

Attendance on Labyrinth Lawn

4 pm, Sat., Sept. 5, 2020

taken by Roy who walks the labyrinth

21 crows

5 magpies

5 Canada Geese

1 Venturesome Flicker



4:20 pm

A Christian Goose

One magpie comes up behind a Canada Goose who is sitting quietly on the sidewalk. The magpie begins pulling at the goose's tail feathers. The Goose soon gets up and quietly walks onto the grass. The magpie follows right behind, occasionally pulling at a tail feather. The Goose ignores it while cropping on the grass.

This goose TURNS THE OTHER TAIL FEATHER!





Active Receptivity

Active Receptivity was the theme for one of the Tuesday evening Daily Examen Zoom Series that I presented in September. Ita, Madeleine and myself alternate giving the weekly half-hour presentations. The time begins with input on a topic and then guidance through the Examen using the topic of the evening.

Let's take a moment to think of the ways in which we can receive things--- we can passively receive – think of just taking something from someone and not even having a real awareness of the fact that they are giving it to us—e.g. We are working on a project and someone passes us a tool that we need. We accept it, maybe even say thanks, but we are not really paying much attention to the fact that it has been given to us. How many people just sit down at the dinner table and give little thought to the fact that the food they are receiving took many people in order for it to be able to be served on this table. We just accept the food and sometimes the cook does not even get a thanks. However, we can also accept gifts in a really attentive way – when we are really aware of the giver, of the gift and we make a conscious choice to gratefully accept the gift. Someone comes in from the garden, gives us a lovely flower or fresh vegetables and we smile, take the gift, look at it and are very conscious of the giver and the gift and express our gratitude! We are attentive and actively receptive!



God is continually giving us gifts –offering various opportunities to us each day to be aware of the gifts He gives. We have the choice on how we will receive God's gifts! I feel that Mary is a wonderful example for us of what I call 'Active Receptivity'.

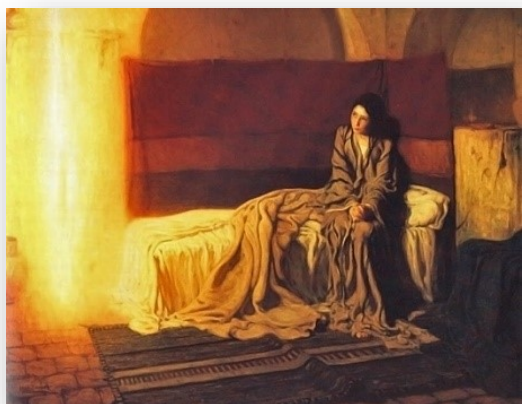
Let's think of Mary now—a model for us of someone who is actively receptive to God. Look at her at the Annunciation: The angel comes with a message from God asking Mary to be the Mother of the Messiah. Mary, listens, and she is filled with wonderings—she asks “How can this be? “ To me this is such a natural response---as humans, don't we do this ourselves when we are asked to do something that seems impossible or near impossible to us? But, after hearing the angel's response – that God's power would do this—Mary responds with a “Yes”. She does not understand, she is probably still very frightened and confused, but somehow,



her trust in God is so great that she freely says “Yes”. She actively responds... she is not a puppet she is a thinking person who chooses to say “Yes” to God.

So, we too, are called to be actively receptive to God....not to see ourselves as a vase into which water is poured—the vase has no choice but to accept. No, we are humans, created by God and given the wonderful gift of free will. We choose to say “Yes” to God. Every day we have the opportunity to actively respond to God’s invitations to us—to be actively receptive to the many gifts of God’s love that are part of our everyday lives.

I’d like to close with *part* of a beautiful poem by Denise Leventov on the Annunciation. (You can find the entire poem on line.)



But we are told of meek obedience.

No one mentions courage

*The engendering Spirit did not enter her without consent.
God waited.*

She was free to accept or refuse,

Choice integral to humanness.

*Aren’t there annunciations
of one sort or another in most lives?*

*Called to a destiny more momentous
than any in all of Time,
she did not quail,
only asked a simple, “How can this be?”
and gravely, courteously,
took to heart the angel’s reply,
perceiving instantly
the astounding ministry she was offered:*

By Denise Leventov

May Mary help us all to live life being Actively Receptive to our Loving and generous God!

Using the Theme of Active Receptivity for an Awareness Examen

So, can we, like Mary – take to heart God’s many offers of daily gifts? How can we be more aware of these gifts so we don’t miss out--- don’t let the “gates close” or let the “pathway vanish” as the Annunciation poem by Denise Leventov says? Here is where I think the Awareness Examen can help us.



Praying the Awareness Examen:

- 1) We take a quiet moment and be aware of the presence of God with us....maybe be aware of our breathing or whatever we know brings us into that sacred space of being with God.
- 2) Pray to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Open as Mary was to the message of the Angel Gabriel.
- 3) Look over your day with gratitude—think of where you were really aware of God's goodness to you and where you responded to God's grace in your day—morning—afternoon—evening....what or who reminded you of God's goodness active in your life? Were there moments when you were aware of bringing God's love, compassion, forgiveness to another person? Praise and thank God.
- 4) Were there times in your day when you were too busy, too distracted to be really aware of receiving a gift from God? Did you miss something beautiful in nature around you or in the persons who were a part of your day—those who reached out to help you, or the person who could have really used your help? Did you *close a gate* or let the *path vanish* (as the poem noted)? Express sorrow and ask for more awareness and growth in active receptivity.
- 5) Now, think of tomorrow and see if there is someone or something planned in your upcoming day where there will be an opportunity for you to be attentive—to be really actively receptive. Ask God to help you not to miss out on opportunities offered. Ask Mary to enable you to be like her in your response to God's action in your life. Pray for continued growth in active receptivity. Amen.

Ann Marie Walsh, FCJ



Advice from Sister Helen

If you have time, you can make time if you want to do so. There is a wealth of joy ahead of you if you go to You Tube and see Sherry Zak Morris with seniors who are having a great time moving to music. Look, see, try and you will enjoy it - doing as much as you can or as little.



Today I found Ann Pringle Burness and her "Stronger Seniors Strength Chair Aerobics". Sherry Morris uses my favourite song to move with - "Sway". I hope you will take the time to search out these wonderful people who offer these programs.

"Motion is Lotion." (S. Z. Morris)

Blessings - enjoy!



Helen Kampel, FCJ



EVENING EXAMEN- A WALK THROUGH THE LABYRINTH OF MY DAY

Let us approach this time of awareness by imagining a labyrinth. Many labyrinths are laid out on the ground like a map. One of the lovely things about a labyrinth is that no matter how lost one may feel, or how far from the centre, the path only goes one way, - to the centre. Of course, one can back-track and move in the opposite direction. Some labyrinths are laid out with tall hedges so that one cannot see the way ahead except for the immediate path. That is the kind of labyrinth that metaphorically represents one's day and often one's week and even longer periods of time. Unlike a maze, where there are dead ends, we know that the path will bring us to the centre, where we can find rest and be still.



The metaphor of the labyrinth reminded me of a poem by Francis Thompson.

In his famous **Hound of Heaven** poem he writes of his attempts to run away from God but no matter where he went or how he tried to escape, God was like a heavenly hound that kept finding him. So, if you felt lost today, this poem may be worth meditating.

*I fled him down the nights and down the days.
I fled him down the arches of the years.
I fled him down the labyrinthine ways
of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from him, and under running laughter.*

He writes of "the strong feet that followed, followed after him, with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace."

Hopefully we are not running away from God, but we may be **running away from life** and life often challenges us to either flight or fright. But life is where God is.

Some days are best described as "days on the run" when we seem to have been racing to get things done all day long. "How could God be discovered there?", we ask.

Time seems to race by and we can't catch up. A gospel song from many years ago sang; "**Are you running with me, Jesus, are you running by my side?**" The song was inspired by a book of prayer poems by Malcolm Boyd and changed how people thought about prayer at that time. We still need to see prayer as intimately interwoven with daily tasks and events.

These days of Covid -19, we may have been forced to slow down. We cannot do what we used to do or go where we would like to go. But even in the slower pace of life which has been thrust upon us we may be lost in the labyrinth of thoughts, panic about how we are to survive, plans for a possible future and ideas that we want to explore and bring to fruition some day soon. Has prayer become more important to you at this time? It is in such a thicket of thoughts that we are often led away from our true goal. St. Ignatius tells us that the "enemy" gets at us through thoughts that gradually wean us away from God's love, and from faith and trust and hope. Many people are feeling hopeless today. They have lost their trust in a God of Life, who says, "I am the Way!"



In this Examen time, I invite you to walk the labyrinth of your day in order to see where God has been finding you this day, even when you were not aware of his presence.

The question this reflection time asks is this. Am I moving toward or away from trust, hope, confidence in God's love and mercy and compassion and kindness?

Was I lost in a labyrinth today?

Was I "running round in circles" or "back-tracking"?

Was "Murphy's Law" in operation all day long when everything that could go wrong went wrong?

Am I still lost in the labyrinth? Am I content to be there? Do I believe that there is no place where God is not.

Where am I going?

Could I just sit in my labyrinth path and breathe for a while?

Edwina Gateley in A Mystical Heart writes:

Each day is so full
of action, noise, and haste
that I miss you, God.
I allow you to get lost
in my clutter.

Oh, let me,
in the midst of it all,
discern a little spark
of your Presence.

Let me,
in the dizziness of my days,
feel the brush of your grace
as I rush by you.

O God,
let me understand and rejoice
that you ever shadow me-
longing to be known,
longing to be loved.
In a single grace-filled moment.

Edwina Gateley A Mystical Heart Week 34 p. 80

Now let us **walk the labyrinth** of our day and seek, search, find the hidden Presence that has brushed us with grace even as we have rushed by.

EXAMEN- WALKING THE LABYRINTH OF MY DAY

Entrance Prayer

Pause at the entrance. Become aware of the labyrinth as a holy place, where God is dwelling. See God holding you in a loving gaze.

Give thanks and praise for your day and this time.



At the entrance, **pray for guidance.**

A line from a hymn or gospel song may help.

***Lead me, Lord, lead me Lord, by the light of truth
To seek and to find the narrow way.
Be my Way, be my Truth, be my Life, my Lord
And lead me, Lord, today.***

Imagine that your labyrinth is composed of tall hedges, like traditional Mazes, and begin to walk along the path of your day.

Remember early morning, where you were, how your day began.

Follow through with what happened next, what you did, where you went, who you connected with, all the twists and turns of your day.

See them in the labyrinth. Become aware of how you responded to each happening.

Now “see God” touching you with love and grace in each event.



If you raced through your day, it is now time to believe and imagine that Jesus was running with you, enabling you to get things done.

Give thanks again and again. And it is now time to stop, breathe, rest in a garden seat along the hedged pathway in the midst of all the events of today.

Now **remember any feeling** that accompanied some event, maybe sadness or grief, upset when things went wrong, pure joy in the colours of Autumn, when out walking, panic that you might not cope....

Reflect on the “feel” of your day. Was it good, bad, boring, indifferent.?

Find some hidden feeling as you rest in your labyrinth seat.

Express sorrow if you were in-attentive all day long and ask for forgiveness for forgetting that God was hiding in each moment.

You do not need to get to the centre of your labyrinth tonight. The Centre is everywhere for God is in each twist and turn. **Resolve to walk tomorrow with more attention**, embracing each event as a place of connection with the Loving Presence that pursues you, seeks you, finds you, even when you may feel lost. Life is a labyrinth and you are in it tonight as you sink into sleep.

Finish with your favourite prayer.

Ita Connery, FCJ





Joy and God's Action in Our Lives

An Examen of Consciousness

Ideas from Tom Wright; Richard Rohr; Fr. Wilbert Chin Jon; Joseph Schmidt, FSC; and, of course, Madeleine Gregg, fcJ!

Joy is what results when I recognize that God has acted in my life—Perhaps I realize that God has saved me, is saving me each day, and will save me at the hour of death. Maybe I understand that God has turned some episode of “death” in my life to LIFE! Possibly, I see that I am growing in interior freedom because God has liberated me from a bad habit or an unloving attitude or something my personality pre-disposes me to accept. When God acts in my life, suddenly, it’s a new day, something has happened and it’s time to celebrate! That’s where JOY comes from! Hope is anticipated joy..... So reflection on God’s action in my life not only leads to joy, but to hope.....

Essentially, when God acts, what has God done? At the heart of it is this: God has given me the courage and the confidence to face the most broken and lost places within myself, to accept that I can’t fix them, but that Jesus is my Savior who wraps me in mercy and sustains me in my very brokenness. Of course, I am called to begin the long process of creatively welcoming and healing my brokenness, but it is the knowledge that God loves me and calls me to be my best self, and also companions with me in all the realities I don’t like about myself and my life that gives me courage and confidence to do the inner work. On this side of heaven, even God does not fix all my brokenness—God allows it to remain so that, where the depth of my brokenness comes into play, I continually am reminded of how much I need a savior!

The Resurrection of Jesus wasn’t a random miracle that occurred because God happened to like Jesus. No, we believe Jesus was carrying on his shoulders the fate of the whole world and bringing it safely through death and out the other side into Risen Life. The problem is that Easter has happened and, somehow, Risen Life doesn’t look like what we expected it would. The new life of heaven has begun, but the old life here on earth is still going on as well... Resurrection life is both the now and the not yet. So, joy is for the NOW and, at the same time, it generates the HOPE of the NOT YET to come.

And yet, because of the Resurrection, we have the Holy Spirit within us and around us, a great cause of joy (God acted to pour out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. When we recognize God’s action, it leads to joy). We have God’s presence among us—where two or more are gathered in my name, I am there—and when we recognize God’s presence, it leads to joy. We have the Church, the custodian of our journey, offering us sacraments and Scripture and the wisdom of countless scholars and saints—and in identifying how God has acted through the Church, we are renewed in joy. Joy is how we celebrate God’s Kingdom....

Joy comes because of something God has done; in my opinion, it is the emotion that most perfectly reflects those moments when I am able to see the landscape of heaven, the contours of eternity, from this side of heaven... It’s glimpsing Kairos time while living in Kronos time..... Thus, joy is a result of AWARENESS! I know some people find the deep experience of peace to be the emotion that most perfectly mirrors heaven to them, but for me, it’s joy... Probably something in personality differences!





For me, joy is different from happiness. Happiness is the emotion I feel because of something I have done (fixed something, intervened in a situation, invented something, recuperating something, etc.) I have used my creativity, my gifts and talents and treasure and time on God's behalf to make the world a better place. Happiness is attached to the recognition of meaningfulness in my life..... in some way, the focus is on me. But joy's focus is on God and how God has acted on my behalf, directly or indirectly.

An Examen on Joy

1-We begin by asking God to be with each of us. (pause) Invite the Holy Spirit to enlighten you and help you see how you moved through this past day. If it helps, use a breathing prayer:

Holy Spirit, show me your way.

2-Focus on a moment of the day of which you are now conscious that something good happened. Thank God for that moment: relive it in as much detail as you can to savor the experience. Recognize that in that moment, God was present to you.

3-Now look back over the day and ponder: How was God working in you? Did something happen that allowed you to understand that God had turned some episode of "death" in your life to LIFE? (pause) Do you now recognize that you have somehow grown in interior freedom because God had liberated you from a bad habit or an unloving attitude or something your personality pre-disposed you to accept? (pause) Did you have a new or deeper awareness of Jesus, Savior, wrapping you in mercy and sustaining you in the depths of your being, even though brokenness is there, too? (pause)

4- Now take a moment to make one resolution, to take one baby step in the right direction tomorrow and offer it to God.

5-End by thanking God for this time of prayer. Glory be.....

Madeleine Gregg, FCI





From the Rocking Chair

Recently we welcomed a new granddaughter into the family fold. What joy and a true example of the awesome! As I contemplated the absolute dependence and perfect trust of the infant in my arms, I thought about the many years that she would be counting on her family and others to care for, protect and mentor her. During this early period of cradling, soothing, cooing and crooning baby either learns to trust, or tragically it does not. God has wisely provided babies with adorableness to draw us into wanting and trying to provide for their every need. But of course, there will be suffering and sorrows that it is beyond our capacity to remove.

It struck me that we adults also need this bonding period as a refresher course on how to be present in times of pain: to the infant's, others' and our own. When the baby cries out, the reason for their unhappiness or pain is often unknown to us. It will be so when they struggle through childhood, adolescence and right into adulthood. We may not be able to fathom what troubles them and often we cannot take the suffering away but do what we can to relieve them. We can be empathetic and hold them tenderly. We can console with words that are more sensible in their soothing quality than meaningfulness. We can abide with them and they will know and trust our love. And we may trust that it is all in God's hands.



As CiM and FCJ we know this to be companioning and the mission that infused Marie Madeleine's life. We stand with her and the steadfast women at the foot of the cross where we are filled with the desire to be the hands of Christ that hold and console.

Maria Di Castri, CIM - Edmonton

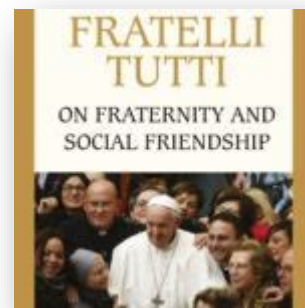




NO SENTARSE A DESCANSAR A LA VERA DEL CAMINO

(For the English translation, see page 13)

Cuando me enteré de que el nuevo Papa se llamaría Francisco (yo sé, unos años atrás), me sentí plenamente identificado y feliz, y aún más, cuando supe que era Francisco en parte por Francisco de Asís. Francis en su lengua natal, que era como mi Madre y mi Padre, que en paz descansan, me llamaban, y es así como en Inglés es conocido, como Pope Francis... como se hubieran sentido de felices y de realizados mis padre, que yo, el soñador, el tiro al aire, llevo el nombre del primer Papa no Europeo. Pero mi alegría y me identificación no terminan allí y ahora que leo su última encíclica, y veo reivindicados, en lo que ha escrito el Santo Papa, todos los principios que han regido mi vida, la vida de los movimientos populares, los principios por los cuales fueron masacrados o asesinados tantos compañeros y compañeras, que ahora vivirán en la encíclica y en cada uno de todos nosotros, que hemos seguido luchando y reivindicando esa forma de vida.



Leer esos mismos principios en la encíclica, que han sido transmitidos directamente por nuestros padres, por nuestra familia, por el barrio, y en mi caso personal también, por los mártires de la Iglesia que conocí en El Salvador. Si, esos mártires santos contemporáneos que murieron por los principios que ahora son expresados por nuestro Santo Padre. Si, esos principios que, desde siempre, han regido mi proyección de fe, mi trayectoria profesional de ayuda al prójimo, que, desde siempre, prójimo, no fue entendido como el próximo, sino como el migrante, el desconocido, sabiendo que el que toca la puerta, es nuestro hermano Jesus, pidiendo agua, comida, posada. Gracias Santo Padre, por esa palmadita en el hombro, gracias por reconoce, la labor de siglos, de los que hemos trabajado por el amor incondicional y la dignidad humana inalienable, por crear espacios para los sin vos. En otras palabras, ha sido tan lindo el sentirme, por primera vez en mi vida, plenamente representado y reivindicado en la encíclica... No es arrogancia, es una forma de reconocer la interpretación del Santo Papa de la sabiduría popular. No hay que reinventar la rueda sino, regresar a nuestras raíces.

Seria imposible resumir la encíclica en dos páginas, pero como decía mi abuelita, para muestra un botón. Tomare como ejemplos, esos que están mas cerca de mi vida y los invito a que tomen, los botones que mas los identifican y escriban como yo, sin miedo a que los regane el Nuncio o algún jerarca de la Iglesia. Comencemos.

Cuando el odio gobierna, la injusticia florece y se corre el riesgo peor que es el de no amar. Vivir sin fraternidad, sin igualdad, sin solidaridad, o lo que es peor, confundir amor, solidaridad, fraternidad, con el amor a sí mismo, que genera una preferencia por los próximos, por los que se parecen a mí. Por ende, yo veo esta encíclica como un anuncio de la Sodoma y Gomorra que hemos creado y como una guía de amor, esperanza, y solidaridad, escrita en un momento histórico de mucha trascendencia en la construcción de la esperanza de la humanidad. Una salida hacia la igualdad, la equidad y la dignidad humana universal.

La encíclica nos hace un llamado a no sentarse a descansar a la vera del camino. Nos dice que "el bien, como también el amor, la justicia y la solidaridad, no se alcanzan de una vez para siempre, han de ser conquistados cada día." Nos hace un llamado a no conformarnos con lo que hemos logrado, porque el desarrollo desigual entre seres humanos, entre familias, entre ciudades y regiones, hace que muchos prójimos estén en situaciones de calamidad, que necesitan el bien y la justicia, que talvez nosotros hemos conquistado para nosotros mismos, pero que ellos no alcanzan. Ese prójimo que necesita amor incondicional, solidaridad para superar la calamidad. Mientras un ser humano no disfrutes plenamente de su dignidad inherente a su condición humana, nadie, puede disfrutar plenamente de la dignidad que cree haber ganado para sí.



La encíclica nos recuerda de la historia, nos dice que nos estamos olvidando de las lecciones de la historia “maestra de vida”. Pero como aprendimos en los movimientos populares, no ha contemplar la historia, no ha memorizar los nombres de los personajes escogidos por el sistema oficial para esconder la cruda realidad, sino, para extraer las lecciones de las derrotas populares, para repetir los nombres de los mártires populares y reivindicar sus luchas, mismas luchas que nosotros seguimos implementando contra “las nuevas pobreza”, contra las nuevas formas de opresión, que siguen materializando la injusticia en contra del prójimo. Reivindica el derecho a no migrar de todo ser humano, si, ese derecho enterado, olvida en la “nueva historia” nuestros Estados, que ven al migrante como una boca menos en el país, una tortilla más para los que se quedan. Acertadamente nos recuerda que la internet no es historia, sino es información manipulada. La información que contiene la internet nunca sustituirá la sabiduría de los abuelos, que viene de la confrontación cotidiana con la realidad. La historia y la sabiduría no se construye viendo un Smart pone encerrado en un cuarto. La historia y la sabiduría se reconstruyen en cada relación humana sin intermediarios.

Hablando de historia y sabiduría popular, recuerdo como mis padres, nos enseñaron que no hay hogar sin hospitalidad. Que se abre la puerta del hogar, para compartir lo que hay en el hogar; no lo que nos sobra y, que son los anfitriones, esos que abren las puertas de su hogar, los que hacen al huésped y no lo contrario. Fue tan lógico y esperado para mí, cuando leí hospitalidad en la encíclica, lo mismo que cuando lo oí de Monseñor Romero, mientras habría las puertas de la Iglesia Catedral de San Salvador al pueblo humilde, campesino, que huía de la represión. Ahora leo hospitalidad en la encíclica, descrita de la misma forma que fue conocida en la popularidad y en la iglesia popular de la guerra civil en El Salvador.

Cuantas veces escuche la parábola del Buen Samaritano en mi familia, en el barrio. Crecí creciendo que Samaritano significaba caritativo, ayudar al prójimo, hasta que un sacerdote Salesiano, me corrigió, después de darme una pequeña palmada en la cabeza, como queriendo decir niño, no sea ... Uds. saben. El Sacerdote Salesiano se refería a la tradición Judía en donde, Samaritano no es sinónimo de persona caritativa, por el contrario, los Samaritanos son vistos con

prejuicio y fueron considerados como clase social baja. Este contexto importante expresado en la parábola se ha perdido en nuestra sociedad. Dicho contexto, muestra la historia de opresión humana. Muestra que aquellos que han sido marginalizados, son los más sinceros y generosos en apoyar al prójimo.



CARTA ENCÍCLICA
FRATELLI TUTTI
— Del Santo Padre Francisco —
Sobre la fraternidad y la amistad social

Esto muestra, que nuestro concepto coloquial actual de “buen Samaritanos” nació de las raíces opresivas diseminadas en toda nuestra historia.

Mi padre decía, que no es el Samaritano, el que hace al herido, sino que es el herido y sus necesidades, las que hacen al Samaritano, hacen la respuesta del Samaritano. Lo único que yo tenía que hacer era ser sensible a lo que está enfrente de mis ojos y responder. También, la sabiduría popular nos recordaba que todos tenemos el techo de vidrio y por ende, tenemos que ayudar al prójimo, porque todos hemos hecho de todo en nuestras vidas; hemos sido heridos, como también hemos sido asaltantes, o hemos ignorado al necesitado. No hagas a otro lo que no quieres que te hagan a ti. Además, no sabemos cuándo estarás como heridos, o como asaltantes. Esta sabiduría popular, también es reivindicada en la encíclica. Años después de estas enseñanzas, encontrar en las homilías de Monseñor Romero la parábola del buen Samaritano como fundamento de su respuesta a las necesidades de su pueblo y como base teológica y defensa ante las acusaciones mundanas de la doctrina oficial de la iglesia, tanto nacional como del mismo Vaticano, fue importantísimo en mi consolidación como persona. Ahora, 40 años después, encontrarla en la encíclica es simplemente maravilloso.

Gracias Papa Francisco, por recordarnos que la tradición cristiana nunca reconoció como absoluto o intocable el derecho a la propiedad privada. La veo como una invitación muy sutil a “desalambrar, que la tierra es nuestra es tuya y de



aquel, de Pedro y Maria, de Juan y Jose”, como versa la canción. Los movimientos populares de tomas de tierras no olvidan, porque el principio de ellos siempre ha sido el “principio de uso común de bienes creados para todos”. El derecho a la propiedad privada es un “derecho secundario” impuesto por los privilegiados, que esta destruyendo el uso común de los bienes, que esta destruyendo la comunidad, la comunión y que se basa en el individualismo. Y como Ud. muy bien lo promulga, la única esperanza de este mundo es volver al uso común de los bienes creados para todos. A lo mejor Santo Padre, ya esta siendo acusado, como todos nosotros hemos sido, de subversivo. Yo siempre he levantado la frente cuando me llaman así, por que implica, subvertir el statu quo en descomposición. Como uds lo dice, la única alternativa es luchar y trabaja por construir la esperanza basada en el uso común de los bienes creados por todos. El sistema capitalista no es la esperanza.

Yo sé, que podría escribir mucho más sobre la encíclica, pero como decía mi abuelita, para muestra un botón y aquí, he tocado algunos botones, los que me tocaron mas el alma; los que están mas cerca de mi peculiar historia. Ahora bien, si quisiera terminar diciendo que me hubiera gustado mucho, si la encíclica hubiera abordado, no solo tocado superficialmente en un párrafo, el hecho que “doblemente pobres son las mujeres que sufren situaciones de abuso, maltrato y violencia”. Las mujeres, las jóvenes y las niñas, a mi parecer merecen ellas solas una encíclica, detallando el papel de la sociedad y de la misma iglesia en la creación de esas dobles pobreza que enfrenta y que han enfrentado desde el inicio de los tiempos. Esta es una deuda histórica Papa Francisco, que se debería de empezar a pagar lo mas pronto posible y una forma es priorizándola.

Por Francisco Rico Martinez CiM

DON'T REST BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

When I heard that the new Pope would be called Francis I felt fully identified with him, and happy... even more so, when I learned that he chose the name for Francis of Assisi. Francis (Francisco in Spanish) is the name my mother and father gave me, may they rest in peace. They would surely be delighted that I, the dreamer, the restless one, share this name with the first non-European Pope. But my joy and my identification with Pope Francis doesn't end here. Now that I have read his last encyclical, and see vindicated in these writings all the principles that have guided my life, the life of popular movements, ... the principles for which so many companions were massacred or assassinated... now alive in the encyclical and in each one of us who have continued to struggle and be faithful to this way of life.

It was a great joy to read in the encyclical these same principles which were transmitted directly to us by our parents, by our neighbours, and in my personal life, by the martyrs of the Church whom I knew in El Salvador. These contemporary martyr-saints died for their fidelity to the same principles expressed by our Holy Father. These are the principles which ruled my faith project, my professional trajectory of service to the 'other' (understood as our brother/sister, migrant, the stranger, those who knock on our door, our brother Jesus asking for water, food, lodging). Thank you, Holy Father, for this pat on the back; thank you for recognizing the labour of centuries of those of us who work to achieve unconditional love and inalienable human dignity, for creating 'spaces' for those whose voice is never heard. In other words, it was a beautiful experience to feel, for the first time in my life, fully represented and vindicated in an encyclical. This is not arrogance. It is a way to recognize the interpretation of our Holy Father of popular wisdom. It isn't necessary to reinvent the wheel but rather, return to our roots.

It is impossible to summarize the encyclical in two pages, but, as my grandmother said, 'it is possible to show a button!' I will take as examples those closer to my life, and I invite you to also chose the 'buttons' with which you most identify, and to write, as I am doing, without fear of being rebuked by the Nuncio or the hierarchy of the Church. Let's begin.

When hate governs, injustice flourishes and we run the worst risk – that of not loving. To live without fraternity, without equality, without solidarity, or what is worse yet, to confuse love, solidarity, fraternity with love of oneself (which generates a preference for those who are most like myself). Therefore, I see this encyclical as alerting us to the Sodom and Gomorrah that we have created, and as guiding us towards a love, hope and solidarity written in this historic moment of great transcendence in the construction of the hope of humanity. It is a way towards equality, equity and universal human dignity.

The encyclical is a call to NOT sit down and rest on the side of the road! It says to us: 'the good, also the love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all, but rather have to be conquered each day.' We are call to NOT be content with what we have already achieved, because the unequal development between human beings, between families, between cities and regions, is such that many 'neighbours' live in situations of calamity, are in need of goodness and justice, (which perhaps we have achieved for ourselves, but which they have yet to achieve.) These are the 'neighbours' who need unconditional love, and solidar-



ity to survive crises. While one human being does not yet enjoy the plenitude of human dignity inherent in the human condition, no one can fully enjoy the dignity which they believe to have achieved for themselves.

The encyclical reminds us of history; it says to us that we are forgetting the lessons of history 'life's teacher'. As we learn in popular movements, it is not the case of contemplating history, memorizing the names of the people chosen by the official system to hide the cruel reality, but rather, to learn the lessons from the people's defeats, repeat the names of the martyrs and vindicate their struggles... the same struggles that we continue to wage against the 'new poverties', against the new forms of oppression which continue to materialize... the injustice against our global neighbour. It is necessary to vindicate the right of all people to NOT migrate, yes, this buried right, forgotten in the 'new history' of our countries, which see in the migrant one mouth less to feed in the country of origin, one tortilla more for those who remain. We know that the internet does not present history, but rather manipulated information. This internet information will never replace the wisdom of our grandparents, which comes from the daily confrontation with reality. History and wisdom are not constructed watching a Smartphone in our bedroom. History and wisdom are gathered in each human relation, without intermediaries.

Speaking of history and popular wisdom, I remember how my parents taught us that there is no home without hospitality... that we open the door of our home to share what we have, not what is left over, and that the important ones are not those who open the door, but those who are guests. This was so logical for me that when I read of hospitality in the encyclical, I was reminded of Bishop (Saint) Romero when he opened the door of the cathedral in San Salvador to give refuge to campesinos and others who were fleeing repression. Now I read about hospitality in the encyclical, written in the same way that it was lived in by the people's Church during the civil war in El Salvador.

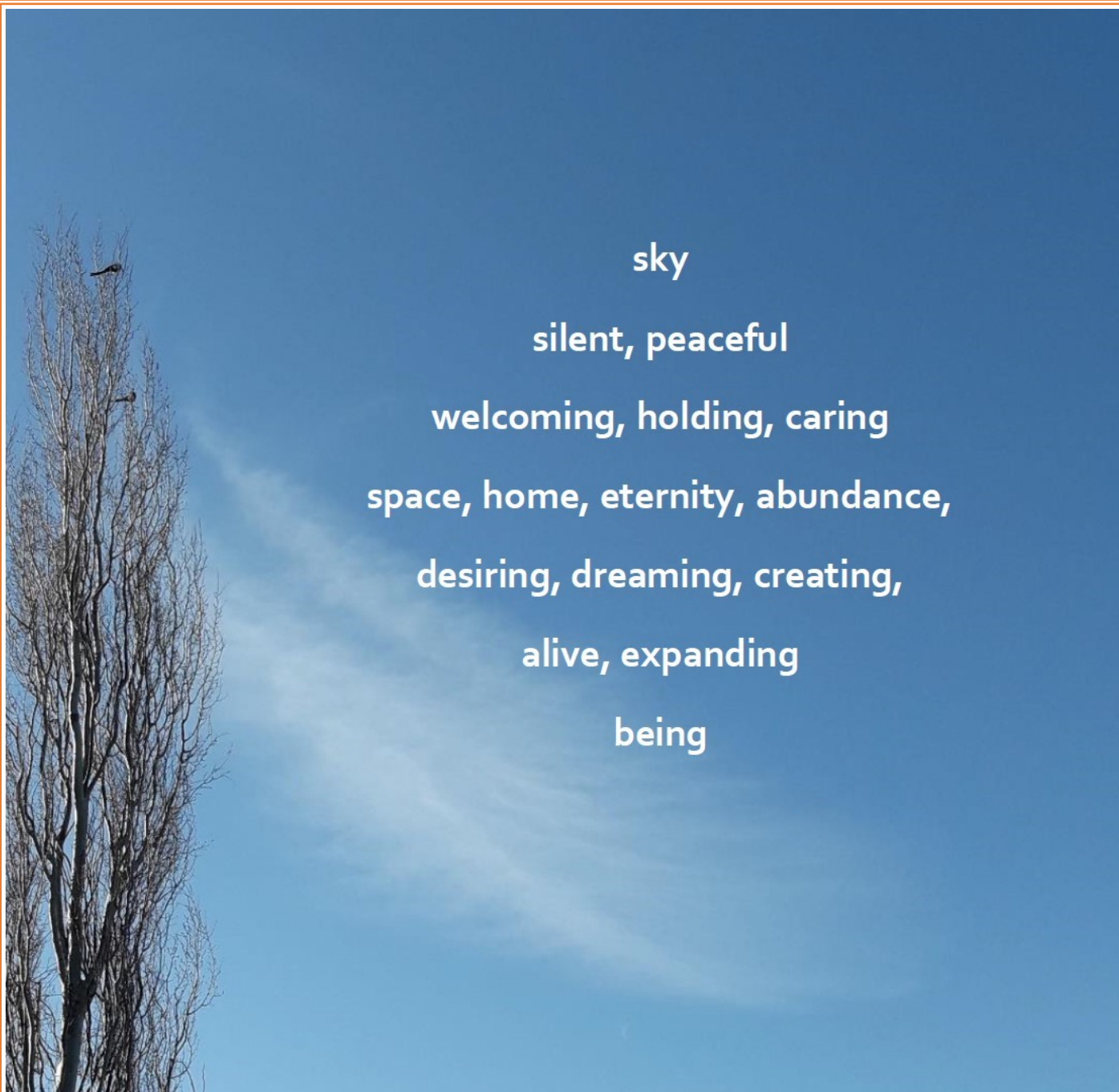
How many times have we heard the parable of the Good Samaritan in my family, in my neighbourhood. I grew up thinking that the Samaritan symbolized charity, service to the neighbor... until one day a Salesian priest corrected me – after giving me a pat on the head as if to say 'child... don't be.... You know! The Salesian priest was referring to the Jewish tradition, where the Samaritan is not synonymous with being a good person, but rather as the Jewish tradition where Samaritans were seen with prejudice, and considered to be of very low social importance. This important context is currently missing – However this shows the historical humanity of the oppressed. Those who have been marginalized offer sometimes, the most gracious and humble support to others. Our modern-day colloquial understanding of the 'good Samaritan' was in fact borne from roots of oppression.

My father said that it is not the Samaritan who caused the wounds, but the wounded one who called forth the response of the Samaritan. The only thing I have to do is to be sensitive to what is before my eyes, and respond. Also, popular wisdom reminds us that we all have a glass roof over our heads, and therefore we should help our neighbor because we have all done everything in our lives- we have been wounded, and we have been the bandits who wound. We have ignored the needy. 'Don't do to others what you would not have them do to you.' Also, we don't know when we will be like the wounded, or like those who assault. Popular wisdom is vindicated in the encyclical. Years after learning these wise teachings, it was VERY important for me to encounter in the homilies of Bishop Romero the parable of the Good Samaritan as the foundation of our response to the necessities of the people and as a theological basis and defense against the accusations of the world against the social doctrine of the Church. It was important in my consolidation as a person. Now 40 years later, to come across the same in this encyclical is simply marvelous!

Thank you, Pope Francis, for reminding us of the Christian tradition which never recognized as absolute or untouchable the right to private property. I see this as a subtle invitation to take down the wire fencing... that the earth is ours, is yours, is Pedro and Maria's, is Juan and Jose's, as the song goes. Popular movements of the taking of land don't forget the principle of the 'common use of goods created for all'. The right to private property is a secondary right imposed by the privileged who are destroying the common use of goods as they are also destroying community, communion, and basing their lives in individualism. As you so well express it, Holy Father, the only hope for this world is to return to the common use of the goods created for all. Perhaps you, Holy Father, are being accused, as we have been accused, of being subversive. I have always lifted up my head when called 'subversive', because it implies – subvert the status quo-in-decomposition. As you say, that only alternative is to struggle and work to construct a hope based in the common use of the goods created for all. The capitalist system does not give us this hope.

I could write much more about the encyclical, but my grandmother said, to show a 'button'! Here I have touched several 'buttons', those which affected me most deeply, those which were closest to my personal history. Now I would like to conclude by saying that I would have very much appreciated if the encyclical had taken up the topic (and not only superficially mentioning it in one paragraph) the fact that those women are doubly poor who suffer situations of abuse, mistreatment and violence. It is my opinion that women, teenage and little girls merit an entire encyclical, detailing the role of society and Church in the creation of these 'double poverties' which have faced women and have been confronted by them since the beginning of time. This is an historic debt, Pope Francis, that should be paid as soon as possible. One way is to give priority!

*Francisco Rico Martinez CiM
Translated by Paula Mullen FCI*



sky
silent, peaceful
welcoming, holding, caring
space, home, eternity, abundance,
desiring, dreaming, creating,
alive, expanding
being

A Word of Explanation from Sr. Madeleine, Director of SDTP

"Sky" was written by **Agnes Samosir, FCJ**, during the Spiritual Direction Training Program, September 2019 to June 2020. It is a "diamante poem", which uses different parts of speech to describe a topic:

One noun

Two Adjectives

Three verbs

A four word phrase

Three verbs

Two adjectives

One noun

None of the words repeat in the poem.



Seventy Years of Living the Vowed Life



Seventy years of living the vowed life - Wow! I feel that my life as a Faithful Companion of Jesus has been very enriching. It was inspiring. I feel that over the years I have been able to grow in my relationship with Jesus and with the people that I have met along the way. My 24 years of teaching little children was something that I had dreamed of doing for many years. Even when I was in school, I wanted to be a teacher.

Later I enjoyed a new role of working as parish coordinator in Calgary where I met many people who helped me to continue the vowed life that I had chosen. Working in a new parish, I found that I grew along with the parishioners that I was working with and hopefully, helped them to grow in their relationship with Jesus. It was a very special time and helped me to develop new initiatives and gifts that I hardly knew that I had. One of the things I enjoyed most about working in a parish was working with parents and children in sacramental preparation. As I worked in the newly formed parish, I grew along with it.

I am grateful for the different opportunities of being missioned to new places as I moved from Toronto to Oyen and later to Northern B.C., to Kitimat. After eight years in Kitimat I returned to Alberta where I lived in Edmonton.

During my years of parish work I have had the opportunity of meeting new people and having good relationships. The religious order that I had joined provided many opportunities for growth in my relationship with Jesus, opportunities for spiritual development with times for retreats. One example was a sabbatical year at a retreat centre near Ottawa, Ontario.

My family have always been supportive in my life and have been an inspiration in many ways. The simple farm life that I grew up in always helped me to appreciate God's creation and the friendships of simple folks.

As I moved from place to place and was given the responsibility of local leadership, I grew along with my FCJ companions and hopefully helped them to grow too.

I am grateful to my Companion, Jesus, for His Love and Faithfulness during these 70 years and for the support and companionship of my FCJ Sisters.

"Great and Wonderful are Your works, God the Almighty One!" Rev. 15:3

Margaret Mary Benoit, FCJ





LIGHT IN THE DARK



I first heard of Covid-19 at the beginning of the year. I saw it as bad news from a faraway place called Wuhan, which I now know, is in mid-eastern China. The invisible virulent virus made its escape and spread like wildfire across the globe without passport or visa or quarantine!! In a short time, it became headline news in the media everywhere. It brought us to the point of great unease, fear and dread. The world was in crisis: it was as if a 'pause' button had been pressed on us

all. What would sustain us into the future or where could we turn for help?

As a believer, I naturally turned to God who has poured out the fullness of love on creation that is "very good." I prayed for those who had contracted the disease, those who had died, the carers at every level, the researchers seeking to develop a vaccine. Psalm 46 reminded me that:

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble:
though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling, we will not fear.

Faith, however, is not just a matter of relationship between God and me; it seeks outward expression in loving action. Using the above as a backdrop, I looked for a way to give expression to my response to crisis COVID-19. I turned to the Persian poet Rumi who reminded me to meet thoughts and emotions passing through me with passion and enthusiasm.

THE GUEST HOUSE

This being human is a guesthouse.
The dark thought, the shame, the malaise
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.
Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond
Every morning a new arrival
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each one honourably.
[She] may be clearing you out
for some new delight

In March our government delivered the shocking news that COVID-19 was spreading rapidly in Canada. I learnt that this virus was no respecter of persons... homeless people as well high-ranking officials succumbed. The elderly and the poor were particularly vulnerable. As days passed into weeks and months, I acknowledged the reality of my helplessness in the

frequent hand washing, mask wearing in all public places, social distancing, gatherings in limited "bubbles", staying homebound as much as possible.



Human ingenuity responded to these challenges in innovative ways. I reluctantly relinquished my family visit overseas but ZOOM, albeit a pale shadow for hugs and embraces, took me into more homes and family events than I could ever have had through physical presence. My annual directed retreat had to be a virtual one. I approached the experience with reluctance. This feeling was intensified when the accompaniment was to be over the telephone. Later I found that hesitancy gave way to enthusiasm because I could concentrate more and interact spontaneously

over the phone.

Our daily 'attendance' at Mass now takes us all over the globe on YouTube. We see a uniqueness and similarity in the way of each celebration. We get a sense of comfort and belonging through common prayers, Scripture readings, and homilies. Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in our condominium allows us to receive Holy Communion daily. What a blessing! However, the lack of physical presence to each other as community diminishes the wholeness of what Eucharist is.



Physical distancing has kept us somewhat apart from neighbours and other residents in the building. However, people express the need for communication and they find unique ways of doing so: the bag on the doorknob with a surprise package... garbage taken to a disposal bin... humorous cartoons put on notice board.

Friends, neighbours and strangers unhesitantly ask: "Need any help?" Need anything from the store? Supplying a list of needs is one thing but I find it lacks the soul of personal choosing. I miss that. However, humility coaxes me to express my need and gratitude springs to full bloom in response. Lockdown- living offers a two-in-one value to communication. Telephone conversations enhance friendships, relieve the desolation of the bereaved, the lonely and the needy.



Rumi reminded me: "Treat each one honourably she may be clearing you out for some new delight." The route to this new delight is turbulent but it brings me to the landing strip of many learnt behaviours born of the crisis. In my reflection on the period of 'desolation' which we're going through I am doing what we know as the Ignation Examen, which brings to mind the old maxim:
"The unreflective life is not worth living".

So my prayer is :

Thank you, God, for the ' guests 'who gate-crashed my ' house '
and ' Yes ' for all other ' guests' who are on their way. Amen.

Mary BresnihanfcJ





The Power of Thank You

In the 50 days of Easter leading up to Pentecost our diocese encouraged people to ring bells each evening from 7 pm to 7:10 in solidarity with and thanksgiving for front line workers. They sent a digital design with the words, "Thank you for having the Heart of Jesus." that we could turn into cards and deliver to caregivers,



ers, sales persons, maintenance workers, etc. As the culture in which we live is very cosmopolitan and of a variety of faiths or no faith, I chose a non-religious thank you card to give to the man who runs a little convenience store with a post office. Ever since that day, he lights up when I go to mail a letter and asks how I am. Even more humbling is the fact that he still has my card high on the post office wall. I am guessing that it was his only card.

May I be equally grateful for all that I have received.

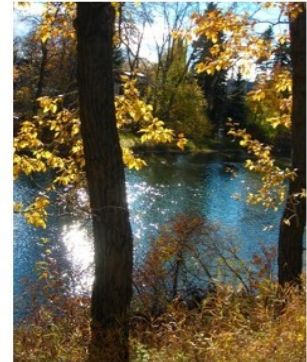
Theresa Smith, f.c.J.



The Space Between



As the trees shed their summer glory
the space between
suddenly comes into focus
for walkers and photographers.
The space between
also attracts those probing the
intangible:
poets, mystics, and physicists
and surely St. Ignatius.
It is an invitation to
the Mystery,
the More
we have yet to see.



Laura and Doug Krefting, CIM Edmonton





My Magnificat on my 60th Birthday

My heart overflows with the blessings of the spirit
He has done great things for me
My family is my blessing, my children, my grandchildren, my husband, my brothers and sisters, my parents, my aunt and uncles, my nieces and nephews
My friends are my blessings
With the Holy Spirit I am raised
And Holy, Holy, Holy is His name

His blessings span 60 years
He is my protector and my guide
He walks beside me
He runs beside me
He travels beside me
He picks me up
He levels me
And Holy, Holy, Holy is His name



His light will shine on me with glory
The gifts of the Holy Spirit are plentiful
The gifts are offered for the taking
He makes me wise
He helps me understand
He gives me counsel
He graces me with fortitude
He grants me knowledge
He instills piety
He raises me up in fear of the Lord
And Holy, Holy, Holy is His name

The eternal life promises great things for me
Peace, stillness and joy will abound
Faith, hope and charity will overflow in my soul
And Holy, Holy, Holy is His name

Kathy Erwin
(one of the participants in the
Spiritual Direction Training Program)





Jokes by Brother Raymond Pierce, CSsR of Toronto

(submitted by Ann McGill, FCJ with Bro. Raymond's permission)

Daddy's Side of the Family

A 4 year old was pestering her mother about "Where do we come from?" "How did people begin?" Very dutifully mom explained the creation story about Adam and Eve...and the little girl marveled...

"God made the first Mom & Dad!"

A few days later the 4-year old came to talk with her mother.

"Mom, I am so confused, I was just talking to Daddy!"

"Daddy says people evolved from monkeys, so who is right?"

"Oh, Sweetheart, it's okay," comforted the mother; "Your daddy is just telling you about his side of the family!"

HYMN 365.....OOPS!

A minister was completing a temperance sermon. With great emphasis he said,

"If I had all the beer in the world, I'd take it and pour it into the river."

With even greater emphasis he said, "And if I had

All the wine in the world, I'd take it and pour it into the river."

And then finally, shaking his fist in the air, he

said, "And if I had all the whiskey in the world,

I'd take it and pour it into the river."

Sermon complete, he sat down.

The song leader stood very cautiously and announced

with a smile, nearly laughing, "For our closing song,

Let us sing Hymn #365," "Shall We Gather at the River."

Smile - life is too short not to!!

See you at the river! Bring your own glass!

"Bring in The Clowns?"

A five year old girl went to the office with her father on "Take Your Kid to Work Day"

As they were walking around the office the young girl started crying and getting very cranky. Her Father started asking what was wrong with her!

As the staff gathered round she sobbed loudly "Daddy where are all the Clowns that you said you worked with?"

The Lethargic Dog.

A lady noticed her dog had not been touching his food for a couple of days. She gathered him up and into her van for a trip to the Vet. She said to the Vet "My dog is Lethargic, he is not been touching his food or water for the past two days would you examine him please". The Vet examined the dog carefully and turned to the lady and said "Madam I am sorry to have to tell you this but your dog is dead."

"What!" said the lady "He can't be dead he's just Lethargic." "Oh my, this is terrible! Doctor I want to get a second opinion!" "I can arrange a second opinion" said the Vet and he left the room. The Vet returned with a cat. He placed the cat on the table with the dog. The cat sniffed the dog's tail & then took a swipe at the dogs' tail with her paw. Then the cat walked along the dogs' back to the dogs' head & took a swipe at the dogs' ear with her paw.



The cat sniffed at the dogs' nose & took a swipe at the dogs' nose with her paw. Then the cat walked along the dogs' back again taking another swipe with her paw at the dogs' tail and jumped off the table and left the room.

"There you are" said the Vet "If your dog were alive the cat would have gotten some kind of a response from him but she didn't so I am afraid your dog is dead."

"Oh Dear" said the lady "I hadn't expected this, I'm in shock, I can't believe it!" "Well Doctor what do I owe you?" "That will come to a total of \$350" said the Vet. "What! \$350 just to tell me that my dog is dead!" said the lady. "Well," said the Vet, "as you know my clinic visits are \$50 and then there is the \$300 for the cat scan!"

New Teacher

A new grade one teacher was three months into the new school year and she was getting more and more exasperated with the children losing and forgetting things like pencils, crayons, shoes, lunches, notes sent home to parents etc.

One day she just lost it and proclaimed to the children: "Why if I forgot and lost as many things as you children did; why, why my Boss would fire me". A little child in the front row raised her hand and said "Miss, Miss Do you work somewhere?"

The Poor Pastor

As a little girl was leaving church after the Sunday service with her parents they stopped at the door to greet the Preacher who had just given the Sermon.

The little girl said to the Preacher "Reverend, when I grow up and have a good job I am going to give you all my money."

The Preacher said "That is very kind of you to be thinking of me but why would you want to give me all your money?"

The little girl answered "Because I just heard my Daddy say you're the poorest preacher he has ever heard!"

Grade 1

A little girl came home from school after finishing her first week in grade one and said to her mother. "Mommy I am wasting my time going to school, I can't read, I can't write & they won't let me talk!"



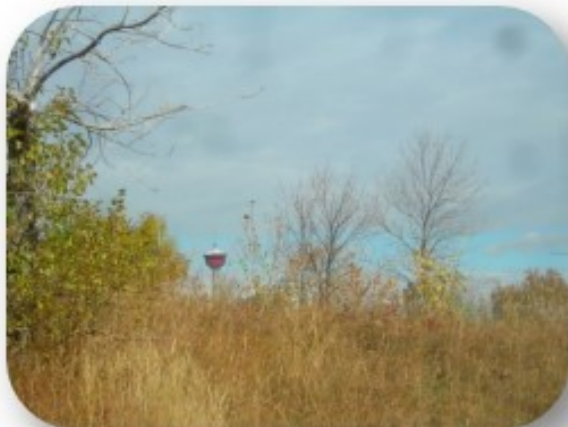


Pondering during Walks



Magpies
High against the blue sky
Sitting peacefully
But caring,
What draws me to you
but Mystery?

My soul is thirsting for the living God.
(Psalm 63)



Beauty,
Peace,
Fresh Air,
Love -
All where we are.



Theresa (Terry) Smith, *f.c.l.*
in Calgary





SEEING WITH NEW EYES

A few years ago, at Sunday Mass, there was a bishop from Africa making an appeal for donations for his diocese. I have never forgotten his words. He began by saying that the North American churches have been very generous to the churches in Africa. The North American churches are truly donor churches and the African churches have been grateful recipients. Through their financial donations, the people in North America have supported the building of schools, hospitals and clinics and they have sent missionaries, volunteer teachers, doctors, nurses and farmers to help my people.

As he reflected further on donors and recipients, givers and receivers, he said, “yes, the people of Africa have received much but he added, I believe that my people have also been donors. The people in my diocese have experienced war and violence. They have gone through unbearable suffering: family members have been separated, killed or maimed, and people have lost their homes and villages and have been displaced throughout the country or have been refugees in camps in neighboring countries or foreign lands. Some people have starved to death.” He paused and continued, ‘this suffering has to be worth something for the growth of the universal church, for the growth of the reign of God. It is not countable or measurable like financial donations from the western world. No thank-you notes are sent to my people; no tax credits are given. Donations, born out of suffering, are like the yeast in the flour, they are like the pearl of great price; they are like seeds planted in the soil; they are like the treasure hidden in the field. We don’t see immediate results, but resurrection hope for the universal church and for God’s reign does happen in God’s own time.’

I tell this story because it bears some significance for us with regard to the lives of some of our sisters who are experiencing aging, diminishment, pain, incapacities, both physical and mental, powerlessness and a constant “letting go”. Some of our sisters are living apart from their familiar community settings in Care Homes because they need extra support and help at this particular time in their lives. Following years of generous giving in education, pastoral ministry, retreats and prayer, leadership, hospital chaplaincy and so many other apostolic endeavors, they are more than ever witnesses to us of being totally available for mission. They are taking to heart Sr. Breda’s words, “Sister, you are on mission until the day you die.” Yes, our sisters worked hard and gave their best. Now, like the suffering people of our world, we have to admit that their lives, at this time, are invaluable for the growth of the universal church, for the reign of God. Their hidden contributions are not countable or measurable by the world’s standards of doing; they don’t receive too many thank you notes. Our sisters’ surrender in faith, trust and acceptance is truly worth something for the growth of the universal church, for the growth of the reign of God and for “widening the circle of love.” Through them we are invited to see how God sees, to see beneath the obvious way of looking at the value of something and to see with new eyes. The offerings of their lives are truly like the treasure hidden in the field, the pearl of great price, the yeast in the flour. Thank you, Sisters! I would like to end with a prayer offered by Pedro Arrupe SJ, who was general superior for the Jesuits for 18 years. He composed this prayer after he suffered a debilitating stroke, the effects of which he patiently endured for the final ten years of his life.

In the Hands of God

More than ever I find myself in the hands of God.
This is what I have wanted all my life from my youth.
But now there is a difference;
the initiative is entirely with God.
It is indeed a profound spiritual experience
to know and feel myself so totally in God’s hands.

Susan Donohue FCJ