

Adelante Juntos



Forward Together



Table of Contents

1. New Life	Ann Marie Walsh, FCJ
2. Psalm 23 Rewrite	Michelle Langlois, FCJ
3. What Gives You Hope	Joanna Walsh, FCJ
4. Companionship	Madeleine Gregg, FCJ
5. A Gift from Yemen	Laura Krefting, CIM (Edmonton, AB)
6. Encounter	Susan Donohue, FCJ
7. My Magnificat	Madeleine Gregg, FCJ
8. Keeping the Door Open	Lois Anne Bordowitz, FCJ
9. Holy Saturday . . .	Marguerite Goddard, FCJ
10. Wrapped in Love	Madeleine Gregg, FCJ
11. Easter Blessing	Lisa Gilead, CIM (Calgary, AB)
12. The Comfort of Language	Theresa Smith, FCJ
13. Selections from The Covid Catechism	Gerrie Beebe, CIM (Portsmouth, RI)
14. Dreaming with Pope Francis	Tomi Tarasuk, CIM (Toronto, ON)
17. Covid Consolations	Helen Kampel, FCJ
15. Spring Has Sprung	Maria Di Castri, CIM (Edmonton, AB)
16. Some Thoughts on Right Relationships	Ann Marie Walsh, FCJ
17. Examen on Right Relationships	Ann Marie Walsh, FCJ
18. The Way Ahead . . .	Ita Connery, FCJ

From the Editor

Welcome to our April edition of "Adelante Junt@s"! It may be good to recall that the name of our newsletter is Spanish for "Forward Together" and as you read the articles, you may agree that we Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus, with our Companions in Mission are moving forward together in spite of Covid. We hope that you will find time to read our reflections.

If you wish to comment on anything, please address your words to terry@fcjcentre.ca.

Thank you.

Theresa (Terry) Smith f.c.J.





New Life

I thought that I would share with you a reflection I offered recently for one of our Tuesday Night 'Support for the Examen' evenings on Zoom since several people told me they found it very helpful to them. I chose this theme of "New Life" because we are moving into springtime and see signs of new life showing up around us. I also see this time of Resurrection as a reminder to us of new life.

I had a challenge to new life as part of my day today. At 2:30pm this afternoon, I was putting the finishing touches on the reflection for the evening session, and I lost it! Yes, it disappeared into 'computer never-never land'—not to be found by me or by the technology experts! So, the challenge was right in front of me--- do I panic or do I begin again! Since I am writing this, you can guess that I began again! As I did, I recalled that this was part of my message in the original—how Jesus invites us to begin again!

As we live through these days of Covid-19, we are very aware that life is different. Many of us have been spending a bit more time reflecting and are coming to see that God is gifting us in different ways—offering 'new life' in varying ways. We just have to be able to recognize His comings in these new ways. How will we see God inviting us to 'new life' -- how is God springing to 'new life' in you/in us?

Becky Eldridge in the Ignatian Blog writes: "There are days that despite the new life, I feel we are still in a Holy Saturday moment, caught between the grief of the **transition** and loss of our old life and the hope of new life. The disciples surely felt that way as they were overwhelmed with grief and loss, and suddenly new life was in front of them. Eventually, the disciples began to understand what the new life of Jesus rising from dead meant for them and for the world. I know that with a little help from God, we, too, will understand what the signs of new life mean for us."

This made me think of the Resurrection appearance of Jesus: how He came to His friends and how that changed their lives-gave them new life. So, let's look at a couple of these appearances and see what they might hold for us.

1) The women went to the tomb. They went to anoint the body of Jesus and to mourn His death. They got there and found an empty tomb and a man in white telling them that Jesus had risen and gone before them to Galilee. In Mark 16:8, we read that they were "seized with trembling and amazement". We have times too when we are seized with trembling and amazement. Are we ready to do what these women did? They changed their course of action – not anointing, not mourning, but rather: they listened, heard the message and were ready to go to Galilee to meet Jesus. We all have different Galilees in our lives—places where we did not intend to go, doing things that we never thought we would be doing, meeting people we never expected to meet, etc. The important thing to remember is that Jesus goes before us. For me, I rather like to think of Jesus being right beside me as I go and as I arrive. Ready to begin anew! Let's have the hope and courage to go to Galilee.

2) I love the reading in St. John's Gospel of Jesus' encounter with Peter and some of the others on the shore of the lake. Peter and some of the others went out fishing—went back to their



former work – to the place they knew and the work they were familiar with, where they were comfortable and felt secure. Jesus found them there. He went to them! He called to them –just as He had called them before in Galilee “Come follow Me”. A lot had happened in between the two calls! But Jesus wants them to be with Him, to follow again. He is so open to their beginning anew. Remember that in this scene, Jesus asks them if they had caught any fish. They answer “No”. I can just imagine Peter’s impatient tone of voice as he gives this unhappy response to this ‘stranger’. Then they are invited to cast their nets in again on the other side. I can see Peter hearing this – I can’t see him easily accepting to do it but the others must have said to him, we might as well try! They catch a lot of fish! They recognize Jesus and come to Him on the shore.

We, as followers of Jesus, often get off the path of closely following Jesus. We need to remember the great openness of Jesus to us beginning anew. He invites us to new life over and over again. In spite of our many failures, we are invited to let God work in us and strengthen us in our following of Him. I want to share a message that Pope Francis gave as part of his talk at the Easter Vigil 2021.

“This is the **first Easter message** that I would offer you: ***it is always possible to begin anew, because there is always a new life that God can awaken in us in spite of all our failures. From the rubble of our hearts – and each one of us knows the rubble of our hearts – God can create a work of art; from the ruined remnants of our humanity, God can prepare a new history.*** He never ceases to go ahead of us: in the cross of suffering, desolation and death, and in the glory of a life that rises again, a history that changes, a hope that is reborn. **In these dark months of the pandemic, let us listen to the Risen Lord as he invites us to begin anew and never lose hope. “**

We are called to accept the invitation to ‘new life’ that is being offered to us now, whoever we may be on our journey in life, remembering that Jesus constantly calls us, wants to be with us and wants us to accept the new life that we are being offered. He called me this afternoon to trust that He would help me – I tried the human helps I had from technology experts, and I asked for prayers from my Sisters, I prayed myself that it would be found or that the Holy Spirit would remind me of what I had had in my head and in the end, ‘went to Galilee’ and began anew -- sat back at the computer and redid the reflection. From the ‘rubble’ of the lost document came this sharing that I trust God will let touch all of us in whatever way He knows will draw us closer to Him. Jesus has risen and we are called to be Resurrection people with a song of “Alleluia!”

I’d like to share with you an Easter poem/prayer that I found recently and really liked:



"Recognizing the Beloved" By: Macrina Wiederkehr, O.S.B.

O Risen Christ,
When I search for you in the darkness
 Show me the light of your face.
When my darkness is too heavy
 Send me the dawn.
When I am dejected because of your absence
 Remind me to share my presence with someone.
When I am hungry for nourishment
 Invite me to breakfast.
When I cast my nets on the wrong side of life
 Come to my assistance.
When I do not recognize you
 Call me by name. Amen.



Ann Marie Walsh, FCJ

A Reflection on God: Inspired by Psalm 23

God is the Womb of all that I am
She is extravagantly generous and attentive
In Her loving and warm embrace I know that I am cherished and sacred to Her
She invites me ever deeper into the mysteries of Her Love

In my most painful experiences
I remember that I am cradled within You
You envelop me, wholly

Your response to my selfishness and fears is to bless me,
Showering me with gifts of the earth and spirit
I have so much more than I could ever hope for or need
I am overcome

As I continue on this life journey
I give thanks that I am cared for so tenderly in the Womb of God



Michelle Langlois, FCJ



What Gives You Hope?

In early December I participated in one of the FCJ webinars on Hope. The next day, when checking on news from the USA, I came across a heart-warming story that kindled my hope in the USA spirit – after many months of discouragement because of the partisanship, evidence of racism, and individualism that seemed so prevalent in my homeland.

The story was about Emily Bugg and Billy Lewis of Chicago. They had planned a big wedding with invitations to many family members and friends. Over time, the spread of Covid-19 made it obvious that their plans were not to be. They decided to marry in a small ceremony. Only a photographer was present.

It dawned on them that they had paid \$5000 deposit to the caterer of the reception. They asked if the caterer would instead provide Thanksgiving dinners for people in need, and the caterer agreed. Emily is an outreach worker at *Thresholds*, a non-profit agency helping people with mental health challenges. The couple and the caterer provided 200 Thanksgiving meals to people connected with this agency. On top of all this, the couple asked the owner of their reception venue to use their reception deposit towards a future event for the *Epilepsy Foundation*. This will happen when the next public occasion arises for that organization.

Eventually another Chicago man asked that his retirement party food deposit would be used for Christmas meals for people in need.

The CEO of *Thresholds*, Mark Ishaug, said "It's an example of goodness begetting more goodness."

In the PowerPoint prepared by Sr. Katherine O'Flynn for the December 5th FCJ webinar, there was this quote from Pope Francis: "Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile..." (*Fratelli Tutti*, #55) Stories like the one above remind me about the need to be bold and creative about making life more beautiful.

(original reporting "What Brings you hope? - Chicago couple . . ." by Lauren Kent of CNN)

Joanna Walsh, FCJ





Companionship

As an FCJ sister, companionship is an important word to me, almost a technical term. I hope this reflection will offer you some perspectives on companionship that will break open this word for you in a fresh way.

Companionship is a life-giving, life-affirming way of relating to God, to myself, to other people, and, indeed, to all of creation. Companionship is not an automatic stance---we grow into it. For me, when I was a new Christian, I focused on **imitating** Christ..... Christ was far off and I tried to make my life imitate His. After some years of discipleship, I realized that I had moved from imitating Christ to **following** Christ..... Christ was certainly closer, but my mental model was still that He was ahead of me; I was behind, going where He led and trying to follow Him, in my inner world as well as in my outward behaviors. But for the past 20 years or so, I have been **companioning** with Christ....we are moving through the world together. Sometimes, it's my initiative—I say to Jesus, “Hey, I’ve got a really good idea” and we do it. Sometimes, it's his initiative: I get a sense of being called to do something, and as I respond to the call, Jesus is right with me.

Companionship, like any virtue, comprises a number of attitudes and behaviors. The first requirement for companioning is to be committed to the dignity of the other person, accepting that they, like us, are flawed human creatures generally doing their best to grow into the fullness of their potential, but held back or blocked in some way due to life experiences, type of education they've received, how they've developed along their journey..... Companions meet people where they are, accepting them and loving them with the love that God pours out upon the world each moment of each day.

Companions are listeners. They receive what the other says in an atmosphere of warmth, kindness, and gentleness. They help others reflect on their experience and even get a glimpse of what is hidden deep down. As we listen, we help people learn to see the good in their own life experiences..... They can begin to recognize the presence and action of God threading through their lives, even if they do not use words like “God”..... They may refer to mystery or wholeness. At some point, they may begin to explicitly start to value conversations that help them explore their inner selves.

Companions, in one way or another, pay attention to the other person. Companions honor the other person, recognizing their gifts, desires, intentions to make the world a better place, little step by little step. Companions encourage and affirm; gently challenging perceptions, and constantly inviting people to become their best selves. Companions love people into life.....

Companions enjoy each other. It is their joy to spend time together, to engage in new adventures or mind or body or soul.

My way: be with people in conversation and tea drinking, affirming people and giving them the courage and confidence in their lives to take the next step.... whatever they need for their journey, whatever will help them to grow towards their full potential, and whatever will let them discover that it is in God that we live and move and have our being.....



The Companionship Examen

1. Become aware of God's presence. God IS always present, but we are often not AWARE of God's presence. A breathing prayer often helps at this point. Breathing in, say "Loving God" and breathing out, say "fill me with love." You fit the mantra to your breathing. Other mantras:

"You in me" (breathing in) "and I in you." (breathing out).

In my life, Lord (breathing in); "be glorified today." (breathing out)

"Loving Father" (breathing in); "help me now" (breathing out)

"Holy Spirit" (breathing in; "give me life" (breathing out)

2. Review the day with gratitude. Think of one moment when you had a moment of joy, a moment when you felt fully alive, a moment of peace. Sit in stillness, remembering that moment in as much detail as you can, and thank God for it.

3. Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of a time during the day when you were open to the grace of companionship: Perhaps it was a moment when you were moving through the day in companionship with someone. Maybe you saw an interaction that modeled for you some aspect of companionship. Maybe you saw something in nature, or in the Scriptures, or you heard something on TV or in a movie or in a song that evoked the desire for companionship in your own life.

Again, take time to savor that moment, insight, or grace. Then offer it back to God.....

4. Now think back on a time during the day when you failed to offer companionship to someone, particularly someone who badly needed another person to recognize his or her human dignity. Walk through that moment again in memory, asking God for the grace you need to be freer on the inside to respond to people in their need. Or, perhaps you failed to take advantage of an opportunity for companioning with someone when he or she was wanting to offer YOU companionship and you didn't see or hear the offer they were trying to extend. OR, ask the Holy Spirit to show you what God is asking of you, how God is inviting you to change, with respect to companioning with someone.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Pray to become more ready and willing to companion with each person who enters your life tomorrow.

Madeleine Gregg, FCJ





My Gift From Yemen

"Nobody is so poor that she or he has nothing to give and nobody is so rich that she or he has nothing to receive. Real human dignity is found in giving as well as receiving. ..Let's never give anything without asking ourselves what we are receiving from those to whom we give."
(Henri Nouwen)

Mysterious new neighbours moved into the apartment next to ours amidst the second Covid lockdown in December. They seemed to keep unusual hours and we sometimes heard what sounded like running. After about a week I noticed a crumpled piece of paper was placed outside their door which read, "my wife Fatima does not speak English. My number is..". I texted the number and introduced myself, apologizing for not welcoming them. Ali and I met, masked and distanced in our hallway and I learned that the family was from Yemen. Although he had been working in Toronto for four years, his family had just arrived in Canada after a very lengthy and frustrating process with Immigration. The civil war and drought in Yemen had begun to make major headlines a week after Ali's family arrived. The threat of famine became a reality and the capital Sa'ana's airport was bombed just ten days after the family left.

In the pre-COVID days my immediate response would have been to 'adopt them'. I really miss working with new Canadians, especially Muslim women with whom I had worked for several years. In my mind I laid out a whole plan including: helping Fatima with English, taking Malak, Hanan, Manal to the park, inviting them for meals, connecting the family to the proper resources and introducing them to some Arabic friends, and, and, and.... I would have convinced myself that their arrival was from God; just the pick-me-up my weary body and sagging spirits needed.

In fact, my giving was limited to leaving various small gifts and sweets outside their door and having snatched conversations with Ali in the doorway with three giggling girls peeking out from behind him. I only saw Fatima once in the four months we shared the wall of our apartments. It was outside and her faced was covered by a niqab and over her abaya which was trailing in the snow. I wore the usual -30C Edmonton gear but somehow we knew each other, our smiles trying to escape from their face coverings. Instead of giving me a golden opportunity to be a super

giver, the new neighbours became yet another lesson in me of receiving, designed by God. The girls' laughter and playing reminded us of our great grandchildren and made both Doug and me smile. Their excitement when their father came home, and faint Arabic songs and prayers reminded me of places we had lived and the Muslim families that befriended us. One day a small coconut cake arrived at our door. It had been made in a frying pan. Likely Fatima had never met an oven before. The girls had decorated every inch of it with little flower candies. Most important of all, the Yemeni family's brief stay on the 8th floor invited me to attend to the heart of the child in me, a much needed reminder in these times of restrictions.

(The photo is an Internet picture.)



Laura Krefting, CIM (Edmonton)



Encounter

It has been helpful for me to break open the word “encounter” for myself since it is such a prominent theme in Pope Francis’ homilies and writings. It is a heart word; it touches the deepest part of who we are; it is a key to one’s prayer life, to relationships, to companionship, to friendship, to seeing God in all things. It involves a capacity for deep listening, silence, contemplation, noticing, being present and extending a warm welcome with the hand of compassion. It encompasses an ability to feel with, to walk with, to be open to surprise, wonder, amazement and a readiness to reach out, to turn around, to being available for mission. Another name for encounter is LOVE. There are a number of different encounters but they are all closely interwoven: Encounter with **God**, with **self**, with **others** and with the whole of **creation**. How do I encounter God each day in my prayer and in all the events, relationships, circumstances, experiences that arise? How do I allow God to encounter me? What of God’s Self is revealed to me in these encounters?

The global pandemic has perhaps, more than ever invited me to encounter my **self** with my gifts and limitations. How have I experienced my resilience, my strength, my patience, my surrenders and offered thanks. How have I dealt with the exposure of my shadow side - the desire to be in control, in charge, to accomplish, to achieve? Covid -19 may have challenged me to face some deep feelings: fear, anxiety, loneliness, depression. How have I encountered my **self**, how have I embraced my gifts as well as my vulnerability, my powerlessness, my unfreedoms? What has this reflection taught me about me and about God?

Then there is my encounter with others. How do I see each human being as a brother or sister made in the image and likeness of God? I have one example of a surprising encounter that happened recently and continues to touch my heart. I was coming out of a grocery store and my mind was on my mask, balancing the shopping bags and trying to open my umbrella because it was raining. Somewhere behind me I heard a voice and in the midst of my distractions, I turned around. There was a homeless man coming towards me and all he could say with tears in his eyes was: “you turned around, thank you”, “you turned around, thank you,” “you turned around, thank you”. For me and for him this experience lifted the word ‘encounter’ off the page. Neither he nor I were invisible in each other’s eyes. How do I continue to encounter: family members, community members, strangers, helpers, people in the news, people across the world; people on the margins of society, people of different ethnic origins, people who are suffering, people who are causing the suffering? How do I cultivate a stance of encounter, aided by grace, which embraces the world with a heart as wide as the world?

Finally, there is my encounter with creation that invites me to care, with great reverence, for our common home. Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* says, “The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop...” How do I recognize this mystery as I take note of every creature, every tree, every plant, every flower, the beauty all around me, the song of the birds, the food I eat, brother sun, sister moon, water and air as I continue to deepen my awareness of the whole cosmos and give



glory to God? How do I take note of the destruction that my choices, my selfishness, my thoughtlessness and my forgetfulness may be bringing about each day to our common home?

Our greatest model of 'encounter' is Jesus. He often went apart to pray to Abba and to discern his mission. Many of his parables are related to his appreciation and love for creation. We see him encountering many people throughout the Gospels thus bringing about healing and hope: The widow of Nain, the man born blind, the paralyzed man, the women with the haemorrhage to mention a few. After Jesus' resurrection we see touching encounters between Jesus and Mary Magdalene in the garden, the disciples on the road to Emmaus and so many other appearances. Our adventure of companionship with Jesus is certainly the grace of encounter. We do not encounter alone, we encounter all in and through Christ. God needs our encounters with God, with self, with others and with the whole of creation to bring about God's Reign, through Christ, as we participate in God's mission. I would like to conclude with this blessing poem by Jan Richardson:

Guardian of the seasons,
keeper of every time,
tune us so to your rhythms
that we may know
the occasion for stillness
and the moment for action.
May we be so prepared, so aware
so awakened in our waiting
that when you prompt us into motion,
our hands may be your hands
and our purposes your own.

Susan Donohue FCJ





My Magnificat

You who are mighty have done great things for me:

Drawing me to faith

Calling me to life as a Faithful Companion of Jesus

Gifting me with talents

Keeping me growing and hope-filled

Pouring abundance into my life

Freeing me from sin

Holy is your name.....

Madeleine Gregg, FCJ





Keeping the Door Open

As soon as they learned that only essential services could remain open at the beginning of the pandemic, the staff at the FCJ Refugee Centre (Toronto) got to work, sanitizing the office, erecting plexiglass barriers at every desk, sanitizers everywhere, and a new telephone system that would enable most people to work from home. They were determined to remain open as an “essential” service for the many newcomers that they help to navigate the Immigration system.



Over the years, they had a modest food program, receiving food from an organization called “Second Harvest” which collects food from grocery stores that were not selling well or were near expiry date. This food was delivered to the three houses belonging to the Centre, where women and children refugee claimants have temporary shelter, as well as to some clients and volunteers. When the pandemic began, many people with precarious immigration

status lost their temporary jobs. As requests for help increased, the Centre expanded their food program to those clients who were in most need. With more food from Second Harvest, a group of volunteers, drivers, and monetary support from the City of Toronto, the Centre now helps over 250 families with food and grocery cards.



There was also money available to help supplement rent and other emergencies. The pandemic has been hard on many people, but it has also brought out the best in some. The Centre has received many donations and grants for this emergency situation.

The work of helping clients with their immigration situations has not decreased, but rather changed format. Instead of face-to-face meetings in the Centre, the staff now help clients over the phone, and has produced many webinars and podcasts on the various processes. One of the casualties of the pandemic has been a delay in processing the many applications submitted to the Immigration Department.

To see a video of all of the above, click [here](#)

Lois Anne FCJ





Holy Saturday Compared to this Pandemic Time

. . . an unfinished reflection . . .

On Good Friday I burned some papers.... bills, long paid, records of meetings, processes which happened, names, statistics ... all consigned to the greedy flames which turned them into ash. It was as if what they stood for had existed but now was not! The destruction was over; the ashes were the only proof of former life.

After the night of Good Friday, Holy Saturday dawned, an “in between day”, a hinge between what had been, and what will be. Holy Saturday, a place we cannot stay in, a sort of limbo. We can look back, we can re-member the past, we cannot bring it back. We look to the future, the tomorrow, Resurrection day, but we are not yet there.

Holy Saturday is quite different from any other day of the year. It is a sort of ABSENCE day. It exists because of its “yesterday and tomorrow”. We have no option but to transit through it. It seems like a very long day. It is not a time to celebrate, but rather to accept what has happened. We are in waiting for the day to come.

This exceptional time which we, the whole human population are all, without exception, passing through, transiting, can be compared in some ways to Holy Saturday. We have “burned”, have destroyed, as in a Good Friday, much of the LIFE of our planet earth. We are suffering grievously the results of our destruction. We cannot escape from the fact that the COVID virus, as well as a whole gamut of other virus infections is a consequence of destruction of habitat that has allowed/provoked terrible consequences for human life.

We are loath to accept the consequences of our actions. We cannot stay here...we must transit this “in between day”. All the signs are that we must accept our guilt and shame and decide how to move on so that there will be a Celebration of LIFE, a Resurrection Day. We are here until we are in a position to choose how to relate in the future to the gift of the PRECIOUS LIFE which we received.

Marguerite Goddard, FCJ





Wrapped in the love that touches my inmost being

In the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, towards the end, St. Ignatius offers two insights, what he calls “notes” or “remarks” about how we live our relationship with God. “The first is that love ought to be put more in deeds than in words. The second: love consists in interchange between the two parties; that is to say in the lover's giving and communicating to the beloved what he has or out of what he has or can; and so, on the contrary, the beloved to the lover. So that if the one has knowledge, he gives to the one who has it not. The same of honors, of riches; and so the one to the other.” Because he wrote the Exercises so long ago (in the 1500s), St. Ignatius’ words are often hard to understand, and retreat directors typically render them in a contemporary way. So, for years, I knew of the two insights as “True love is shown more in deeds than in words” and “Love is a mutual sharing between us and God.”

However, in my retreat last year, I was given St. Ignatius’ actual words of the second note for my prayer. Knowledge? Honors? Riches? I just couldn’t wrap my mind around how these aspects of reality could be a mutual sharing..... I had always interpreted the mutuality to be about life: God, in Jesus, gave His life for me and I, in turn, give my life to God. I decided to work on just the first category of sharing that St. Ignatius mentions, knowledge. Over the course of that day, I spent three separate hours in Chapel trying to pray, trying to open myself to what Ignatius was trying to help me understand as God’s grace for my life, feeling increasingly discouraged at how my mind just skittered away from the text and couldn’t engage it at all.

A fourth time I sat down to pray and in desperation, because I was scheduled to meet my director two hours later and I had absolutely nothing to report for an entire day’s effort, I cried out to God, “God, you know I’m not getting this. I’m putting my time and effort into this prayer and I just don’t understand. How is it even possible that I have knowledge that you don’t have? You know everything!” Almost instantly, I “heard” God speaking to me: “Until you invented the teacher education program you created, I didn’t know how to form teachers in that way. That program is filled with your creativity; your insights about human development; your values of not wasting materials, of collaboration and working together, of working hard, even when you don’t understand the topic, of taking responsibility for your words and actions. That program builds people, not skill sets.”

I wept, feeling relieved I would have something to report to my retreat director, but mostly feeling an overwhelming gratitude for these words of affirmation for more than twenty years of work as a university professor. I couldn’t even form sentences or thoughts; I could only be present to the experience of being wrapped in the love that touches my inmost being. When I was next able to think again, I asked, “And honor? How can that be? We honor YOU...how could that possibly be mutual?” And again, it seemed in the next heartbeat, I “heard” God reply, “You had to recognize that you had a gift for teaching; you had to accept the gift, you spent decades developing it, and you offered it generously to the Church and to the world--- how could I not honor that? But even more, you’ve spent 47 years (since I became a Catholic Christian around the age of 21 and was baptized into Christ) making yourself a temple of the



Holy Spirit—how could I not honor THAT?” And again, through floods of tears, I was brought into a space of peace and joy and to a silence where I could just be still and know that God is (Psalm 46:10).

I never did get to the third category!

Madeleine Gregg FCJ



Easter Blessing

On Sunday, April 3rd at the Easter Vigil Mass, Navi, a young woman I sponsored in the RCIA Program was baptized and confirmed in the Catholic Church. Having been a sponsor before in the RCIA Program, I was looking forward to hearing the Catechumens and the Candidates share their conversion stories. The majority will share that they are doing this because of their upcoming nuptials, or their spouse is Catholic, or they are starting a family. Then, there are the few who will say they have a strong feeling of being drawn and/or called to God through the Catholic faith. Navi felt this calling. She was born into the Sikh faith and so grew up with a different belief in the existence of God. Needless to say, this affected her family life. What struggles and separation it caused!

I am a cradle Catholic, a choice my parents made for me, which I do not regret but I must admit I do sometimes take it for granted.

I took on this roll of sponsor thinking I knew everything to guide her. Not so! There is truth in the words ‘God works in mysterious ways.’ As we journeyed together, I became more aware of God’s presence in me through Navi’s **blind faith** in God. She was steadfast in her belief that she was on the right path. No matter what obstacles she faced, she never wavered, doubted, or questioned this calling. I wish I could say the same thing about me. How many times have I wavered, doubted, questioned God’s calling?

Easter Vigil Mass is one of my favorite liturgies. But this Easter Vigil will always remain in my heart because I too was renewed in faith.

Two days later, on Easter Monday, April 5th, Navi sent me the following text:

“Just thought I’d let you know; my parents have said they are very proud of me for my conversion.

Another Easter miracle of our Lord”

Lisa Gilead, CiM



The Comfort of Language

Learning French has been an interest of mine from childhood when I told my mother that I wanted to learn French so that I could talk to my patron, St. Theresa, the Little Flower, in heaven. Mum thought that I might find that my saint had learned English.

Since high school when we had the chance to study the language, I have loved the sound of it. Surely French is one of the most beautiful languages that exist. Whenever there is an opportunity to be at Mass in French, I am very grateful. Somehow the prayers express our relationship with God with a deep intimacy that talks to God from heart and head together.

Given this bias of mine, I was glad to have a missalette "Prions en Eglise" at hand to take when Sr. Marie-Thérèse Rouiller was in her final hours, March 22. Sisters Ger, Ann Marie and I had said some prayers together and then were silently with Thérèse. I found it a wonderful privilege to read Ps. 137 with her. How comforting (I hope it was) to hear in her own language,



De tout mon coeur, Seigneur, je te rends grâce

Tu as entendu les paroles de ma bouche.

Je te chante en présence des anges,

Vers ton temple sacré, je me prosterne."

May Marie-Thérèse be enjoying "*la présence des anges*" and be singing, "Qu'elle est grande la gloire du Seigneur!"

Theresa (Terry) Smith, FCJ





The Covid Catechism (selections)

Preface

My childhood friend recently shared a story about a young man she had met while on a train ride with her friends for a day trip to New York City. As they struck up a conversation, he told her he traveled frequently and liked to ask people he met, "What have you learned in life so far?" Her response was, "I've learned that people are basically good!" It made me question what I had learned in life so far, myself. I also wondered what I might have learned since COVID-19 as well. Has it been the value of others in my life, the unimportance of material things, the beauty of nature or even the importance of silence? Have I learned to trust God more or maybe look for joy in simpler things? What a profound question! What have I learned in life so far? It would take a book and here it is!

1. Hope

When I finally decided to start writing this morning in response to Covid-19, it came to me to start with hope. Many questions came to mind. How could a person live without hope? But then, what are we hoping for, especially since the Corona virus has arrived on the scene? Perhaps it's a new job, more money, the love of our life, peace in the world, peace within. Then I found some comforting words in the Bible from Romans 8:38-39. It says, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord!"

I then made a plan to put my thoughts down as I went through this period of self-isolation, also desiring to help others during this somewhat fearful and unsettling time by sending off daily missives by e-mail to whoever was in my contact list. I had to admit that some days might be more enlightening than others. Some of it was going to depend on how open both I and those receiving the messages would be to let God shine within. Everyone who reads this book, just as everyone who read my daily e-mails will be at a different place in their relationship with God.

Some may not even believe God exists. That's okay. My advice is to just reach your hand out into the darkness and maybe you will be guided to see some light in some other way.

7. Aloneness

As I write in the darkness of the early morning and think about what the entire world has been experiencing, I feel a sense of unity in it all. One expression that I've heard is, "We're all alone-together." In some strange way, this period of self-isolation may actually have the ability to change us, hopefully for the better. It has slowed everyone down, except those on the front lines serving others. And I'm sure those people are experiencing a change as well in a different way. Let's face it. We have more time on our hands, and time to do things we



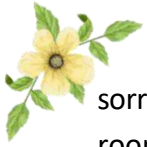
haven't made space for previously. Our routines are most likely very different, without the usual people in our lives by our sides. We can no longer shake a hand or give someone we love a hug without fear or guilt. Maybe out of a greater sense of aloneness, we find ourselves reaching out to others more frequently by e-mail, phone, FaceTime, Zoom or whatever. And then there's our relationship with God. Because of the usual busyness of life, we may realize He's taken a back seat. Even though He's been doing somersaults in front of us everyday of our lives to grab our attention, life may have gotten in our way, so we never noticed. Suddenly we have more time to ask questions like, "What is the meaning of life?" Or "What has been the purpose of my life?" Some of us may even discover if we bring God into the picture, it may be the best medicine to get through this time of trial. Maybe this thing we're experiencing might actually be a time of grace. Won't you let it?

8. Perspective

Today as I prayed in our chapel alone, which is open 24/7, I looked out a window facing the wall of the parish garage. It made me feel so hemmed in, looking out a window out to a wall. The view was anything but beautiful. It actually made me feel imprisoned. Needing more light to see what I was reading, I scooted over in the pew towards the window. Suddenly I had the realization that I was not blocked in at all because I then had a new perspective. As I glanced out the window to the left, I could see cars passing by on the road. Looking to the right, there was a view of our new beautiful kitchen, office and classroom building with grass and the parish's community garden in front of it. When I stood up to look out below the window, there stood a small evergreen, so perfectly formed. But the best view of all was looking toward the sky with its moving clouds changing form right before my eyes. It dawned on me that I never have to be blocked in. I am always free to have a new perspective, only sometimes I may have to look a little harder. God's world is filled with new and wonderful things if we are willing to look for them. Everyday is a good day to look for something amazing.

10. Forgiveness

I saw a story on TV this week of a priest hearing drive-by confessions during Holy Week. I thought, how important could this be in the scheme of things? Then I realized God talks to us about forgiveness every time we say *"Our Father.....Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."* It made me think of Mary, an 89 year old lady who I gave communion to each week because she could no longer get to church. As I walked in one morning, she was crying. "Why are you crying, Mary?" I said. "Because my Father used to hit me", she answered. "But Mary, that was like 70 or 80 years ago", I thought. You mean he's dead and she is still letting him affect her life? That's certainly a long time to carry around old baggage! No wonder God told us to forgive others. He must want us to be free like the man who is finally released from prison or the way we feel receiving a hug after we've said we are



sorry. I recently read that Desmond Tutu had a wonderful thought. "Forgiveness is like this: a room is dark because you have closed the windows, you've closed the curtains. But the sun is shining outside, and the air is fresh outside. In order to get that fresh air, you have to get up and open the window and draw the curtains apart." He goes on to say, "Forgiveness says you are given another chance to make a new beginning." Maybe the real prison we're trying to break out of is not self-isolation, but the imprisonment we have placed in our hearts. I don't know about you, but I want to be free! Even Jesus said from the cross, "Forgive them, they know not what they do."

11. Helping Others

To me, the washing of the feet is one of the most moving parts of Holy Week services and one of the most humbling, if you've ever been privileged to participate. Because of COVID-19, our church will not be re-enacting this total act of love by Jesus for His apostle Peter this year. But it does bring to my memory something that happened with our grandchildren several years back at Christmas. We signed up to volunteer at a place called, "My Brothers Keeper", where we picked a name of a family in need, choosing brand new donated gifts and wrapping and labeling them for distribution for Christmas. The warehouse was stacked with new toys, clothes, cosmetics, etc.. Before we began to assemble the gifts, a very kind, gentle staff member offered to give us a tour of the facility and further explained the mission of the agency, mainly staffed by volunteers, just like us. He turned to my grandkids and asked, "Did you notice the statue outside with Jesus washing the feet of Peter? If you look closely, you can see how uncomfortable Peter is to have his feet washed by Jesus. Today, you'll be wrapping Christmas gifts for families in need, but remember, you're doing the easy part. Those parents wish they could be buying things themselves for their own families. But instead, they have to humble themselves to ask for help. We tend to want to be the ones who give to others, but it takes real humility to be the one to have to receive." It always brings tears to my eyes to tell this story. Maybe that's because to have your feet washed by another requires total surrender. Jesus knew all about the surrender He would be experiencing Himself!

Gerrie Beebe, CIM (Portsmouth, Rhode Island)





Dreaming With Pope Francis

For the past several months, our CIM ZOOM sessions have been devoted to attempting to unpack the tenets in the Pope's latest book, "Let Us Dream." We all know that the Pope often uses the same format in his writings: See. Discern. Act.

We, at Islington, have been exploring what Pope Francis is exhorting us to "see" and "discern" by sharing our collective experiences in our discussions. Although the book itself, is slim in actual volume, the import of the Pope's message is transformative.

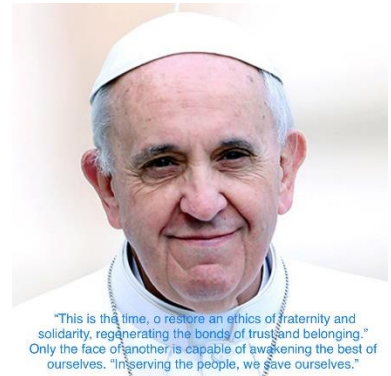
Remembering how important Marie Madeleine's spiritual directors were to her, we have sifted through the Pope's "dreams" and chosen several which we would like to share with you for your discernment:

*The Spirit of God is speaking from the margins.

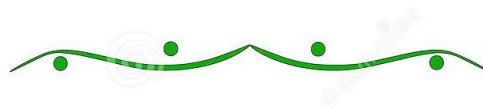
*We have a responsibility for others, the common good...rebuilding Jerusalem, the new Nehemiah project.

*The task of a reconciler is to face conflict, see beyond the surface reasons for disagreement....opening up the possibility of a new synthesis, one that does not destroy either side but preserves what is good and valid in both in a new perspective.

*Self-accusation is the antibody to the virus of the isolated conscience and humility before God is the key that unlocks fraternity and social peace.



Tomi Tarasuk, (CIM Islington, Toronto)



Covid Consolations

On Friday afternoon, the 19th of February, I was in my room feeling particularly downcast. I said to myself, "Get out and get some fresh air and you will feel better." So I did.

I was walking in the bright sunlight, heading for the parking lot. There, I noticed a paper airplane that had landed in the snow. I wondered who could have sent it ... someone in need? I decided to investigate. Does someone need help? A bit of a stretch but I had the plane in hand. Brushing off the snow and pulling off the tape, I read the following message:

"I wish for everyone to have a good day and to feel brave and confident when faced with their challenges."

Well then, that person must be me that the message was for. I returned to the house surprised by the event. The God of surprises!



At prayer around the table that evening, the theme was God in the present moment. What could have been a better time for impressing me and all that God was truly with us in every moment?

On further thought, isn't 'brave' a word similar to 'courage'? Courage and Confidence. OVM is here as well.

Helen Kampel, FCJ



Spring Has Sprung

Spring has sprung, the Lord is Ris
I wonder where the Sisters is?
Joanna's settled in her room,
Liz, chasing squirrels with a broom.
Yvonne's dusting off her cowboy hat
And Michelle's too busy for all of that.
CiM's are waiting for warmer weather
That'll see us gatherin' all together
In some backyard for sharing and tea,
Though socially distanced naturally!



Maria Di Castri, CIM (Edmonton)



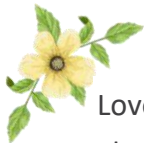


Some Thoughts on Right Relationships

With the celebration of Earth Day, the importance of right relationship with creation was on my mind, but my reflection led me even further into looking at other relationships. I came across the following quote from Fr. Joseph Tetlow, S.J. and it helped my reflection on right relationships. Tetlow says: “The Examen of relationships asks that you grow conscious of a reality we take so much for granted that we do not think about it at all. How often do you note that the sun rose this morning? How much do you value the water that comes from your tap? We treat our relationships rather like that. They are just *there*. They do not take thinking about except perhaps in special circumstances like a special moment in prayer, an argument, a celebration, a trip to the mountains, a flood or regaining health after illness. But in reality, each relationship is a gift greater than today’s sun, and each person given to you to love and be loved by is as indispensable as the pure water you thoughtlessly drink.”

When I think about right relationships, I think of: Relationships with God, with others, with myself and with creation! How are my relationships in all these areas? Are they balanced and healthy or do they need some work? When God created humankind the relationships were all balanced. Think of the story of Adam & Eve –they walked with God in the garden—perfectly peaceful; they had all the nourishment they needed etc. presumably, they got along with one another and so on. They broke the relationship with God –they chose to sin. Then there was an unbalance in their relationship with God –they hid from God but God sought them out. God desired their relationship and He desires ours also! Jesus gives us many examples of our need of relationship with God. Think of the time Jesus was asked: What is the central commandment of the law? Jesus recites the prayer said by all Jews twice each day, the *Sh’ma*: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord, your God, is one. You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” He adds as integral to this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” To do this was to keep the whole law. Jesus’ entire life was about keeping the *Sh’ma*. Everything he said and did flowed from this obedience. It unpacks everything in “right relationship” with God: neighbor, Earth, all its creatures, the Universe itself. So, we are called to love God with our whole heart and soul. Prayer is a great help in fostering a good relationship with God. Prayer is communicating with God and communication is needed in fostering all good relationships!

God loves us each individually! We are temples of the Holy Spirit and Co-creators with our loving God! We need to really take this to heart and have a healthy, balanced love of self. Not being selfish, making ourselves the centre of the universe. No, but deeply knowing that we are good and we have great potential for goodness within us. So, we need to care for ourselves and do what nourishes our spiritual growth and what keeps us physically, emotionally and psychology healthy.



Love of God also leads to love of others. We live with and meet all types of people and read about or see many others on TV. All people are created by and loved by God. As we go through life, we meet people whom we love easily and enjoy spending time with and sharing life with day by day. Our relationships are easy with these people. We also meet others that are not so easy to love. Yet, we are called to have healthy relationships with them as well. Sometimes, all we can do is to pray for them and pray for ourselves that we can grow in compassion and understanding. We have God who can help us in balancing our relationships.

What a gift we have in the gift of the universe! We are learning more and more about God's wonderful creation and of our need to care for it! Thank God, more and more we are hearing about care of the Earth and of the effects of climate change and what we can do to treasure the gifts that God has given us!

Earlier I mentioned the great Commandment of love and the Jewish Sh'ma. I'd like to share something that I found on the Internet: *The "Catholic Sh'ma" may be something as simple as the Sign of the Cross when we dip our fingers into the font as we enter church. In this single gesture, we affirm our baptismal identity vertically and horizontally, acknowledging God above, then our neighbors right and left. The axis of the sign crosses our hearts, our "Yes" to Jesus, whose death and resurrection unites us to God and to one another. To live this sign is to be in right relationship and in balance with everything and everyone. Heart and mind contemplating God, our shoulders bearing up the soul of the world we share, the dignity of each person, the common good of all, the Earth in balance, justice and compassion as the keys to community and to life itself.*

(<http://EzineArticles.com/1073611>)

Ann Marie Walsh, FCJ

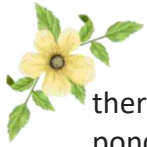
EXAMEN ON RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

As we begin, we take time to get comfortable and recall that God is present with us. Noticing our breathing might help or centering our gaze on one object. You do whatever helps you to 'center in' for prayer.

We ask the Holy Spirit to be with us to open our mind and our heart to be attentive to God's lead as we look at our relationships with God, self, others and creation.

Now, we are going to look at our various relationships and see how we are fostering them or how we need to adjust or strengthen them. As appropriate offer a prayer of praise, thanks, sorrow, and/or petition.

With God: How important is this relationship to me? What did I experience today that reminded me of God's great love for me? What did I do today to foster my relationship with God? How did I express my love for God today? How did God express His love for me today? Is



there some way that I am being invited to grow in fostering this relationship? Take time to ponder.

With Self: What God-given gift/talent did I use today to make this world a better place? Did I get enough sleep, did I take time to pray, get enough good nourishment, set aside enough time for relaxation/exercise? Are there ways that God is inviting me to better care for this Temple of the Holy Spirit? How will I respond?

With Others: How have I shown care and concern for others today? Did I neglect any opportunities to show concern for another today? Am I struggling with some relationship with another that I need God's help to sort out? Am I aware of the wider world –of people in other places that are suffering or in need? Am I in any unhealthy relationships that draw me away from God? I take time to thank God today for the gift of friendship I enjoy with someone?

With Creation: Did I specifically appreciate an aspect of God's creation today? Did I praise/thank God for any aspect of creation today? Did I take a deliberate action to care for creation today? Am I being invited to grow in my appreciation of creation and in awareness of the connectedness of all creation? I take time to picture my favorite place and thank God for it!

Tomorrow: I take time to look at tomorrow with God and see what hopes I have to foster certain relationships in my life. Where do I need God's help to grow in right relationships? What hopes do I have for the upcoming day and do I feel God inviting me to grow in a certain aspect of living right relationships?

Closing Prayer: Loving God, thank you for all the gifts that fill my life each day. Help me to appreciate them and to become more aware of the things I take for granted. I praise and thank you for the beauty of creation in all its aspects and for the relationships that are part of my everyday life: with You, with myself, with others and with creation. Let me live each day with a discerning heart and draw me ever closer to You. I pray this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Ann Marie Walsh, FCJ





THE WAY AHEAD IS HARD TO SEE



Lead, kindly light
Amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on.
The night is dark and I am far from home,
Lead thou me on.
Guide thou my feet,
I do not ask to see
the distant scene,
One step enough for me.

John Henry Cardinal Newman
Photo from Freepic

Soul-work and our Dreams

The words of this old hymn came to me as I reflected on the time we are being forced to live in - a time of disruption of normal life. We find it hard to see the way ahead. We are held in suspension, hostages to an infinitesimally minute organism which is driven to survive at all costs, and the cost is human lives.

Imprisoned in a smaller world, where interaction is limited if not prohibited, we are afraid to make plans, to look too far ahead into the future. It becomes the new normal to live in the present, putting aside our dreams of the distant land, maybe just a warmer place, a holiday place, a longer view, where the soul is always hoping for, seeking for and longing for happiness, joy, peace and connection. Newman prays: "*I do not ask to see the distant scene*", but in fact we do want to see ahead. We want clarity. We are not geared to just take one step at a time. This is the Ego's attitude. But the inner self, the soul has a different attitude, another agenda. Soul lives in the present.

We Need Connection

Everything in the universe seeks connection. From the beginning, particles connected to form molecules and molecules connected to form organisms. We need to connect. No wonder this is a time of suffering, stress and depression. We need the physical connection, the touch, the word spoken, the vibration that comes when bodies, whether they be human or plant life or animal, interact and bring about change. Virtual connection is a poor substitute, even if it partly satisfies our longing for union with others. Could it be that this is a time for connection with the lost or ignored part of oneself- the soul-self where the dreams come from?

The questions that the soul asks and that the dreams try to address are questions about connection and meaning.

Can we find connection and meaning in this place of restriction? What are the dreams saying?



A Case for Dreams

A dream is a series of images, sometimes disconnected, sometimes in story form, rising from the unconscious soul of the dreamer, or from the unconscious collective soul of the world in which we live. If personal, we will recognize the images as places, people, things that we have encountered in daily life.

If coming from the collective outer world the images may be more archetypal, have a fairy-tale-like character, and be more numinous, full of light or beauty and evoking a sense of the Sacred, or they can be more frightening, like a cataclysmic disruption, earthquake, tsunami, fire, war, darkness, and so on evoking feelings of fear or terror. As we endure this time of Pandemic we are affected by the climate of fear, helplessness and uncertainty all around us.

Perhaps in this time of Pandemic, the dreams have a message for us. The dream images may tell us something about how we really are and how we might collaborate with God in healing our soul. A dream may bring us into awareness of predominant or underlying feeling states at present- panic, fearfulness, hopelessness, mild depression, sadness, aloneness, tedium, boredom, but it may also be that a way through is presented. The way ahead is hard to see, but our soul in union with God knows the way. By faith we believe that Christ is the Way.

Carl G. Jung says that **We Dream To Wake to Life**

The purpose of the dream is to make us more conscious of underlying issues, unattended feelings or emotional responses that are being covered up by the conscious personality, either because one is afraid to look at them, or because one is too busy with outer things to notice them.

A dreamer writes:- A dream, very vague, elusive, of being heavily asleep and quite unable to wake myself up. I had a strong sense of disorientation, of not being able to open my eyes no matter how hard I tried. I think, by not being able to wake up, I missed a very important seminar being given by a creative person.



What is the dream telling this dreamer? Having a dream of being asleep and not able to wake up, surely says that the dreamer is quite unconscious in her outer life. By not waking up, she misses out on a creative aspect of herself which has something to teach her. Her problem is that she is asleep. In fact, the only time she is awake is when she is asleep.

How might the dreamer wake up? This is always the question which each dream addresses.

Jung says that a dream should be treated as a fact. It is real, just as real as an outer event, in fact even more real. The dream tells us, not only that “the way

ahead is hard to see’ but that even the place we are in is often invisible to our waking eye. It is as if we were blindly walking through our hours and days, not knowing what is really going on, or where we are going, a kind of mindless existence. How lovely it would be to know the agenda and live fully conscious of who we are and what our soul wants.



Doing dream-work is like an Examen. Just as we pay attention to our various feelings, moods, drives, moments of insight and moments of awareness of where God is present in our day, we also need to pay attention to where God is present in our dreams.

This time invites us to be present and just take one step at a time, one day at a time. With John Henry Cardinal Newman we pray:



**Guide thou my feet,
I do not ask to see
the distant scene,
One step enough for me.**

*From one of my dream evenings
Ita Connery, FCJ*

Psalm of Lament

O Lord,
You are creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them.

You are eternal and there is nothing that is too hard for you.
You are righteous and never the author of evil.
You are good
 and everything that you allow
 will one day work toward the good of those who love you.

O God, we are in distress
 because of those who persecute us for personal gain
 and those who do not judge impartially.
We fear that justice will not be done and that the innocent will suffer.

O Father, hear our cry for help and come to our aid!
May our case come before those who will search out the truth.
I pray for your favor on our cause
 and that your strength, moving in our defense, would be clearly evident,
 resulting in praise for your name.

You, O Lord, have promised to help us,
 and we trust in your unfailing love and faithfulness.
Even while we suffer,
 we know that your good purposes are being accomplished,
 and that as a result we will know you better and trust you more.

We praise you for your loving kindness,
 for your glory that you reveal to us in glimpses of your creation,
 for your care for us expressed through your people. Amen.

Susan Griffith

Participant in the 19th Annotation program