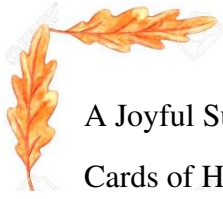




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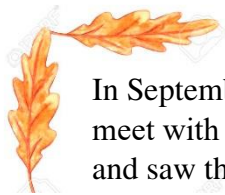
From the Editor

Welcome to the November 2021 edition of "Adelante Junt@s"! The title of our newsletter is apropos of what is happening in our world and Church: efforts to care for our planet and now to engage in the Synod on Church. May we keep going forward together, Adelante Junt@s!

As it turns out, some of the articles help us to reflect on the meaning of life and death with hope, so in keeping with November, the Month of the Holy Souls. May we strengthen one another with compassionate hearts.

Terry Smith, FCJ





A Joyful Surprise

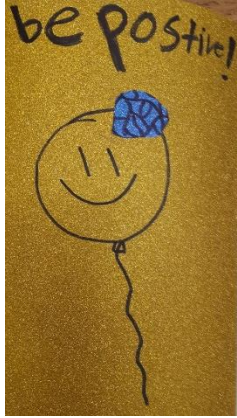
In September, the Coordinator at the FCJ Christian Life Centre asked me if I would have time to meet with a person who was coming for a day's retreat in early October. I looked at my calendar and saw that it was going to be the same weekend as our Annual Companions in Mission Retreat and I was part of the Team for that retreat. However, I figured that we would be having a break before supper, so I said "yes" and scheduled a meeting for 4:15p.m. on the Saturday afternoon. Soon, the day came. In actual fact, I would have to miss part of an afternoon session of the retreat but I mentioned that to the person giving the reflection and all was well!

I was waiting in my office and 4:15 came and went and no sign of the person. As you can guess, I was saying to myself, "I wonder if he has forgotten. I could have stayed downstairs for the reflection, etc." Around 4:20, reception rang saying that he was here. So, up he comes rushing along the corridor and I greeted him warmly. He apologized for being late and explained that he and his girlfriend had driven to the mountains and it took them longer than he expected to get back. Then he said that he had wanted to go to the mountain area where it would be really peaceful and quiet because he wanted to propose to his girlfriend! With that, his face just broke out into a BIG smile and he looked radiantly happy! I looked at him and said: "Well, looking at your happiness, I would say that she said 'Yes'." It was such a joyful moment for me to be a part of that moment with him and I thought of how wonderful God is to share His love with us so that we can share it with others. Before we began to meet, I asked if I could share the news and he said I could. It was another joyful moment at supper to be able to go to tell his fiancée how happy I was for them and to have her show me her beautiful ring! She was radiantly happy as well! They are both very spiritual and she showed me a little pink jewel on the inside of the ring (where it is not obvious to others). She said that it was a reminder to them of the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Maybe as you read this, you can say a little prayer for them that their love may deepen and grow as they share many happy years of married life together.

Ann Marie Walsh, FCJ



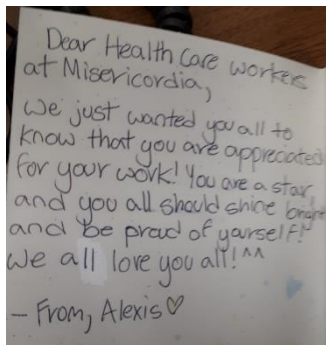
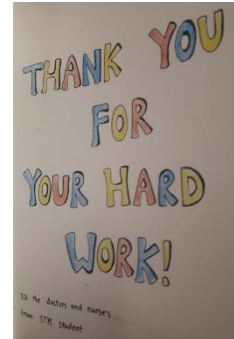
Cards of Hope



Having heard that some Albertans were choosing to harass health care workers outside of hospitals in September, my students and I decided that we wanted to respond. Several years ago, someone had shared that a good way to respond when vulnerable groups are being targeted is to communicate your support to them, either through phone calls or letters.

We decided to create Thank You cards for these hardworking frontline workers. Already having a relationship with Edmonton's Misericordia Hospital through my Knight Justice group, I rallied several classes at St Thomas More Junior High School to decorate and write homemade cards. The Grade 7

students that I teach were excited to participate in this project. They took the time to craft beautiful cards, some with very heartwarming messages.



I delivered over 100 cards to the hospital in October. A couple weeks passed with no word back from anyone at the hospital and I could only hope that the sweet messages from the students had made someone's day. Finally, towards the end of October, one of my students approached me to tell me that her dad, who worked at the hospital, had seen the cards and that staff had enjoyed looking at and reading the messages very much. The student was very happy to

share this with her peers.

Joanna made the point that this was a good message for the students to learn: hearing that others have enjoyed receiving the gifts and cards that we've sent them is actually a great gift for us! What an important reminder for me, too!

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11f3eer-bndLB2UVvi3kGcspyOL4LMKET?usp=sharing>



Michelle Langlois, FCJ





Working as volunteers with refugee families 2015 – Ongoing

(This article was written for CCIS (Calgary Catholic Immigration Society) on the occasion of their 40th anniversary.)

May 2016 was a great month for us here at the FCJ Christian Life Centre. Our first sponsored Syrian Family arrived from Syria via Lebanon. We had waited several months, so our joy was complete. We were not unfamiliar with Syrian Refugees as three families had already stayed in one of the FCJ Convent houses. These were families who had met with difficulties after arriving and were delighted to have a place to call home.

The FCJ Centre reached out to these families and many more who needed English classes and a place to meet other Syrian families. As the number of refugees were so numerous in the city, many had to wait for a considerable time to be allocated to an English class in the city.

We were blessed that this project was in conjunction with CCIS who had great settlement programs at the time for the incoming refugees, St Mary's Cathedral who co-sponsored our family and raised money, as well as providing some volunteers. The Melkite Church led by Fr Ephrem was also extensively involved. Coffee after Divine worship was the refugees' new home.

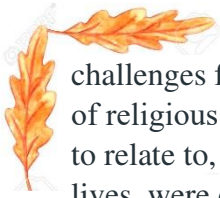
The words of the Dad of the family we sponsored are far clearer than mine, and with his permission I will use them to illustrate what it was like for newcomers in 2015, and what road we have travelled to companion with refugee families.

I was so worried coming to Canada. I kept worrying how can I start again? What will the future hold for me and my family? What is Canada like? I received financial and emotional support when I arrived. From Day 1 representatives of CCIS, St Mary's Cathedral, FCJ Christian Life Centre and the FCJ Sisters met me and welcomed me at the airport. I was provided with a house, money to live . They made us feel welcome and safe again. Right now I have a job which I got from the FCJ Christian Life Centre. I am now beginning to feel safe again and plan a future for my family.

People like me, when you escape from war, you lose something, you lose some of your hope and beliefs. When you are surrounded by nice people who want to help you and care, you begin to look at things differently. I came to learn that whatever happens God will never abandon us. No matter what hope and trust is lost, there is someone who cares. My family received this inspiring support from the Centre and the FCJ Sisters. We were invited to BBQs to meet other Syrian Families and new comers from different countries and faith traditions to ours. We even participated in the Stuff a Sock Project to help Alpha house who reach out to the homeless.

Our gratitude for Canada, for organizations like CCIS has grown, as has our own gratitude for the FCJ Centre which can provide an atmosphere of trust, safety and respect to newcomers.

As the person we sponsored mentioned above, the Centre came to realize that there were many unmet needs amongst the refugees. The newcomers needed moral and material support, as they began learning English, managing life in a new and very different culture, finding employment, and confronting the multiplicity of challenges that face them each day. One of the hardest



challenges for newcomers is to integrate with the broader Canadian society, with its acceptance of religious pluralism. The BBQ's are the Centre's effort to help newcomers grow in their ability to relate to, converse with, and enjoy the company of people from cultures that in their former lives, were considered suspect. The BBQ events have been held for a number of years prior to Covid. At the second annual Turkish-Syrian gathering, it was wonderful to see the growth from the previous year in each community's willingness to engage with others. Both Turkish and Syrian committee members exchanged ideas very easily. The BBQ's featured music and dancing from each culture.

Christmas parties hosted by the FCJ Centre became a favorite especially as Santa always spoke Arabic! The local schools in the mission district, as well as schools connected to the Centre, came up extraordinarily in providing super age specific presents. As most Syrian refugees are now attending schools and belong to new Parish areas there was no longer a need for Christmas parties. The Christmas Party has now morphed into *The Advent Festival*. This festival is designed to get ready for Christmas in a way that will keep God's love front and center in Family celebrations! Families are invited to the Advent Festival and begin to prepare the way of the Lord so that the family will move into a deeper sense of the meaning of Christmas. The event has become a really wonderful way to prepare to celebrate the Feast of the Incarnation!

Another group we engaged with were Yazidi refugees, who are one of the most vulnerable groups who have come to Canada. We worked with Yazidi volunteers to help the refugees settle in Canada, drawing from our experience in working with the Syrian refugees. We were delighted to host an event which we called 'Eggstravaganza'! This was to mark the Yazidi New Year. While most of the mothers did not have any English their joy in watching the children's games was heartening. We were very happy to join with three local schools who fund raised for an electric wheelchair for a Yazidi child to help both the child and her Mother. Each day her mother struggled to bring her disabled child to school while pushing a younger child in a pram at the same time.

What we have taken to heart in the Centre is that refugees are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children, with the same hopes and ambitions as us—except that a twist of fate has bound their lives to a global refugee crisis on an unprecedented scale. Their faith and hope continually inspires us to reach out and find new ways of widening our circle.

FCJ Christian Life Centre/Sr. Ger Curran FCJ.





Companions in Mission Reflecting on the CIM Alberta Retreat



This year's retreat with Companions in Mission from Edmonton and Calgary was held at our FCJ Christian Life Centre, October 1 to 3. Some of the highlights for different participants are shared here.

Retreat Highlights; meeting everyone in person, sharing insights, zen doodling, listening to stories that fed the soul (from session leaders and each other), and walks along the river where we met a man who reminded us of St. Francis. Although suffering from MS, he let us join him in feeding the birds. Chickadees and nuthatches came to feed out of our hands, a wonderful experience. Plus we spent time admiring a beautiful owl (picture to right) who seemed so capable of remaining calm and peaceful amidst all the racket of protesting crows. A good lesson for us during these difficult times.

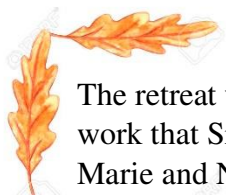


To finish off a wonderful month, a number of CIM attended our first in-person performance after 2 years! The Providence Renewal Centre hosted our session of St. Paul. Thanks to the CIM who attended. (Hoping to return to touring our saints stories to schools, retreat centres and churches once again)

*Maureen Rooney and Paul Punyi, CIM
Edmonton*

I so enjoyed this time: reflection, being with each other as Companions with Jesus, fun times, the breakout groups. Seeing those from Edmonton who we don't get to enjoy often. Of course you wonderful Sisters are always our Delight.

Marilyn Howey, CIM Calgary



The retreat was very good for me. I appreciate the work that Sr. Terry and Laureen and Sr. Ann Marie and Nancy Angel did. I liked that there was time to walk, sit, reflect, etc. between presentations. Food was excellent. Getting to know the Edmonton group even a little was a real highlight. The sharing in my small group was deep and very meaningful.

It was so good to be all together in person after such a long time and be at the Centre.



Vallerie Ross, CIM Calgary

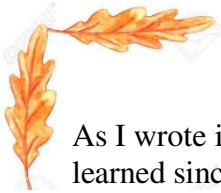


One thing I took away from the retreat is a better understanding of what my gifts are and how Jesus has been using my gifts for a long time. I can now acknowledge some of my gifts revealed to me at the retreat. Thanks again.

*Warm regards,
Wayne Lozier*



Photography (last five pictures) by Rose Palen, CIM Calgary



Excerpts from My Covid Catechism

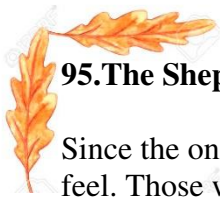
As I wrote in my introduction to my Covid Catechism, I had been wondering what I might have learned since COVID-19 struck. Has it been the value of others in my life, the unimportance of material things, the beauty of nature or even the importance of silence? Have I learned to trust God more or maybe 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 are three excerpts from my one hundred topics.

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 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."



95.The Shepherd

Since the onset of COVID-19, I have become so much more aware of how alone many people feel. Those who typically serve as our usual sources of comfort and direction are struggling as well during this time of uncertainty. In Psalm 23, it states, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me to the path of righteousness.” Years ago, while on pilgrimage in a very rural area, I strayed from the tour group to be alone. I was dealing with a painful situation in my life at the time and was desperately seeking answers. Suddenly I was drawn to lie in a field and just look up at the heavens. As tears streamed down my face, I knew I was not alone to face my situation. As I lay there telling God my dilemma, He refreshed my soul, just as if I was one of His sheep and He was my Shepherd. I felt safe and He filled my soul with nourishment.

Many years later, while talking to a customer at my religious bookstore, the woman told me something strange but totally relatable that had happened to her on her way to the store. As she sat on the side of the road in her car, reading the twenty-third psalm, she got the strong urge to go lie down in the field nearby. She too got refreshed from the experience. As I look back on my life, I realize I haven’t always had to lie down in a field to know God was there to give me nourishment and refreshment. I also learned I never have to feel alone if I only take some time to be with Him. After all, we are His sheep and He is our Shepherd! That’s what shepherds do, they watch over their flock. And you don’t need a field to talk to Him either!

Gerrie Beebe, CIM - Portsmouth, Rhode Island



Coyotes spotted on the grounds
of Sacred Heart Convent



From the Rocking Chair of Grandma

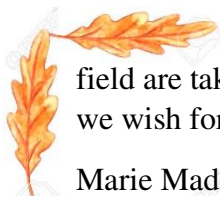
Recently we visited our oldest daughter, her husband and our two granddaughters after 20 months of covid driven separation. I was admiring how our daughter and son-in-law negotiated the many duties of parenthood as well as very busy jobs and covid protocols. More than the sheer energy required for it, it brought to mind the companions of Marie Madeleine.

Humility: Parenthood has to be among the most humbling of jobs. Nothing goes according to our plans once babes appear. Mothers' bodies change in astonishing ways – most often in ways we'd rather they didn't. Our comfort and physical freedom, even nutrients and minerals yield to growing baby. Labour is like willingly jumping in front of a speeding semi-truck. There is a roller coaster of hormones that can cause us to react in ways that aren't in accord with our usual disposition and we sometimes have to face the grand disappointment of post-partem depression. Fathers must pick up the slack while moms recover and feed the baby. Both parents are subjected to intense sleep deprivation and odious diapers. We leave the house looking haggard with spit-up on the shoulders of whatever clothes we could find that are clean – or not. The days of personal time or choosing how we will spend our day are largely a distant memory. In public we bear the scrutiny and judgement of others when the baby screams incessantly or the toddler has a temper tantrum.

Poverty: (See humility above – there is no kidding ourselves that we are in this for self-aggrandizement.) Even before we become a family, there have usually been financial sacrifices in preparation of the home. Now our resources will all be directed to baby first: our energy will be diminished, our bodies will suffer. We will lose esteem in a society that values work outside the home and striving for the top positions and salaries. Where did our lively social life go? Will it ever return? We adjust our dreams as the reality of providing for our children reshapes our ideas of what is important. Selling everything and sailing the world is not so imaginable anymore. A mini-van that is reasonably reliable to escort the children and their friends to activities becomes the dream.

Obedience: Children shouldn't rule the roost but their needs are constantly on our minds. We have to make prudent decisions for their sake and ours. We want to indulge them with every good thing but we know that in obedience to our responsibility we have to teach them that all is not within their grasp. "No" is a most important word for them to understand and accept. Sometimes we hold out consequences for misbehaviour that affect us too. A family outing that we were really looking forward to has to be cancelled because a child is acting up. We have to live with the pouting child or raging teenager because of our greater responsibility to shape their character positively. It can be exhausting but we are obedient out of love for them when it would be easier to give in and spare ourselves the grief.

Gentleness: In matters of discipline children must be handled gently and with firmness. But there is so much more to gentleness and children! Children teach us gentleness. Who can resist treating a baby with gentleness? We absolutely melt before their beauty – both mother and father. Those ugly diaper messes are tolerated willingly as we gently cleanse our baby's body and restore their comfort. Even toddler siblings understand quite easily that babies require a gentle touch. Their tears bring us quickly to their side to quell whatever seems to be disturbing them. We sing softly in their tiny ears and mirror their smiles with our own joy. As they grow up and face the unjust realities of the world we listen to their rants and with respectful concern. We gently teach them that life will often be unfair but just as the birds of the air and flowers of the



field are taken care of by the Creator, so are we, and so must we treat each other with the respect we wish for ourselves.

Marie Madeleine was a mother and she accepted a ministry of education that would keep her in the company of children for so much of her life. As such she truly remained in the constant company of the companions of humility, poverty, obedience and gentleness. What is more, she did it with joy. She brought her virtues to the work and I am sure that she was strengthened in these especially by her contact with the children. I had never heard of Marie Madeleine while I was raising my own children but her charism has touched me as a mother of grown children, a teacher of young children, as a grandmother and as a CiM. I accept these companions of humility, poverty, obedience and gentleness because I too have known that they abide with me always, teaching me and bringing me closer to the Creator, our foundress and each other.

Maria Di Castri, CIM Edmonton



“I hope I never recover from this”

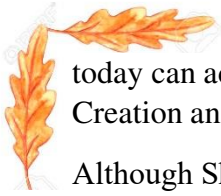
– Captain Kirk’s experience of the Mystery



We have all seen the coverage of the 90-year-old Star Trek Captain, William Shatner, rising from earth in the Blue Origin rocket on October 13th. Given his stardom, quick humour, and somewhat rough and ready manner, we might have expected him to make jokes or take advantage of this moment to boost his career ... but no! What we saw was this seasoned actor weep spontaneously and express with exuberance the wonder he had experienced in approximately 10 minutes. I have been very inspired by his profound, emotional comments after he returned to earth, and I don’t want us to lose his unique way of describing a flight into Mystery; therefore, I decided to write this reflection. To prepare it, I researched some of the various interviews he has given since his adventure.

So many aspects of Shatner’s demeanour and comments blend in with my rereading of *Human Experience of God* by Denis Edwards, who writes this: “It is, I will argue, precisely as mystery that we experience God’s presence and action.” (p. 13) It is in and through our human experience that we encounter the Presence at the heart of creation. He writes of “Moments of mystery and transcendence” (p.2) that cannot be explained from our usual point of view. “Experience of grace, then, is the experience of something which transcends us, which breaks in upon our day to day existence in a mysterious way, and which we experience as a gift given to us.” (p.28)

I wonder if in Shatner’s rather secular but profoundly human ways of describing an experience of grace and awe ... if Shatner is unwittingly proclaiming the gospel in a way that people of



today can accept . . . if his comments and encouragement can lead people to a deep reverence for Creation and openness to its wonders.

Although Shatner never mentioned the word “God”, so many of his heartfelt expressions about his experience . . . so many had the flavour of awe . . . of a deeply contemplative experience of the deep Mystery at the heart of reality.

“I hope I never recover from this,” he exclaimed . . . In uncontrolled tears as others around him sprayed champagne and cheered, he remained pensive and humble.

With a sincere spontaneity, his voice cracking, he exclaimed to Jeff Bezos: “What you have given me is the most profound experience I can imagine.” Deep and humble gratitude . . . so reminiscent of a core quality of an Ignatian approach to life!

He vividly described shooting through the blue of the sky and being catapulted into blackness “all of a sudden, like you whip off a sheet when you’ve been asleep”... For Shatner, the blackness conjured up a sense that “Space is cold and ominous and ugly, and it really threatens death, there’s death there”. It conjured up for him loves lost, etc. It made him ponder about the “big” life issues of love, life, and death.

And then he came up with what I think is a stunning image of earth’s atmosphere: “This comforter of blue that we have around us... We need to take care of the planet, but it's so fragile,” he said. “There's this little tiny blue skin that is 50 miles wide, and we pollute it, and it's our means of living.” And at another point . . . He said that earth “looked so fragile from space”.

Shatner used the word “overwhelmed” several times in interviews– and his whole demeanor exuded that feeling. Synonyms for this word are “engulfed” or “submerged”. This is what happens when Mystery breaks through our often self-focused and narrow vision of what is real. “I was moved to tears by what I saw, and I come back filled with...overwhelmed by sadness and empathy for this beautiful thing we call Earth.”

“...you look down, and there’s this warm, nurturing planet.”

“I was overwhelmed by all the things we need to do and the loves and the losses. It was an enormous moment for me that I never expected,” he shared. Denis Edwards writes, “... there is the experience we have when we notice something in the world around us and suddenly, perhaps for the first time, we really see what is before us ...” (p.33) One can see here that Ignatian principle of gratitude leading to actions aiming to help or improve things.

Shatner’s conclusion? “Everybody in the world needs to see it,” ... It was so moving. This experience did something unbelievable.” In one tv interview he mentioned that a poet needs to go into space next time ...

I found a reference to this headline in TIME Magazine: *How William Shatner Turned a Flight of Fancy Into a Lyrical Pitch For the Planet*. Perhaps his enthusiastic, humble reflections on his experience will go further to convince people than the proclamations from the COP26 UN Meeting in Glasgow about Climate Change!

Joanna Walsh, FCJ



Interfaith Peace and Harmony Week in Calgary - FCJ Centre Calgary February 1 – 7, 2021

This year, despite COVID, Calgary celebrated Interfaith Peace and Harmony Week. The week was a great example of creatively coming together as we tried to connect with each other.

The various events presented by the Calgary Interfaith Council were all virtual. The opening ceremony on Monday, 1st February, included a proclamation of Interfaith Week in Calgary from Mayor Naheed Nenshi. This is the fifth time that Calgary has taken part in the United Nations-backed celebration to mark interfaith unity by promoting peaceful coexistence in the face of intolerance, prejudice and conflict.

Following the city's inaugural entry in 2017, Calgary Interfaith Council was the winner of the UN's gold medal, an honour awarded to the city that staged the best such celebration anywhere in the world.

This year everything was online. We have learned during the pandemic that we need to connect with each other. For religious communities online has been great because our reach is wider and farther. As well as the opening and closing ceremony of Interfaith Week, many religious traditions presented each day on the theme of peace and harmony in thirty-minute workshops online. We called these events open houses and they were held three times a day. More people than any other year joined for these, through zoom, and some participated each day and at each event.

The Centre presented on the Friday, 5th February. Denise welcomed people and acknowledged our traditional territories. She then rooted the Centre in our values. I presented on the theme, *Living Together in Peace and Harmony*. Madeleine followed and played beautifully "*Peace Is Flowing Like a River*" which was recorded in our chapel. Next Madeleine introduced the Centre Video which served to give people a window into our Centre and the facilities we offer. The questions that followed were lively and indicated great interest. We were very grateful to Silvia Plazas, our marketing, development and communications coordinator, for leading us through this whole technological process.

Food is unique in all the religious traditions and unites us. This is why on the final day all were invited to join a virtual cooking class that demonstrated how to make Noah's pudding, a traditional dish believed to have been the first meal consumed after survivors left the ark following the flood. Afterwards people chatted and shared the specialties of different faiths. Living in these tentative times we were given a real opportunity during this week to understand each other and our differences.

It is at times like this that I am delighted to be a member of Calgary Interfaith Council!

Ger Curran, FCJ





Guided Meditation: To the Cross and Beyond

Please get comfortable in your chairs with your feet on the floor and your backs straight and your hands folded comfortably in your laps. Close your eyes and breathe in asking for the Holy Spirit to enter you and be with you in this time.

St. Ignatius suggests that we begin each prayer time by asking for a grace from our prayer time. Do that now with the aid of the Holy Spirit. (pause)

It is a hot stuffy day in Jerusalem. There is tension in the air. There has been much talk and commotion going on in the city over the past few days with the trial of this Galilean, Jesus who has been all over Israel and has stirred up much controversy. You can still hear the crowd shouting: **BARABAS! BARABAS!** as Pontius Pilot presented him to the people for their choice between Jesus and Barabas. This followed by the even louder cries: **CRUCIFY HIM!! CRUCIFY HIM!!**



(pause)

Now here we are so close to the feast of Passover and things seem to be moving quickly to a conclusion. Crowds gather along the street as the Roman soldiers escort Jesus carrying his heavy cross, laboring under the weight, obviously in pain as he supports the wood against the open wounds on his back from the lashes he received prior to embarking on this agonizing journey. His head bowed down with trickles of blood from where the thorns have pierced his forehead and scalp.

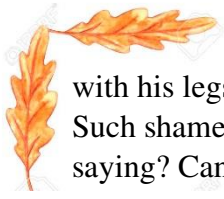
Do you gasp and turn away? Do you want to run to him and console Him? Are you one of the women who offer him a cloth to wipe his face? Does Jesus look into your face and hold you in his gaze? What are the feelings? Anger? Disbelief? Fear? Sadness? Despair? (pause)

You push along with the crowd and witness Jesus stumble and fall. Your heart skips a beat! Can he get up? Will the soldiers beat him further? Are you Simon who helps him carry this heavy burden? Jesus is up and moving on but now with heavier breathing and sweat pouring off his body from the heat and the exertion.

You know the sweat must be entering those open wounds on his body and stinging, adding to the agony. Please God can't you stop this? You once called Jesus your **beloved!!** Where are you now?

Do you want to turn away? Do you feel an irresistible pull to carry on to Golgatha?

There he is – hanging above you, arms outstretched, pinned there by nails pounded through the palms of his hands. His arms feel like they are being pulled out of the shoulder sockets as they try to support the full weight of his body. You hear his groans as he attempts to push his body up



with his legs and pain shoots through his feet which are also nailed to the cross. Such disgrace! Such shame to end this way! The soldiers and some of the people mocking him! But what is he saying? Can it be? **Father forgive them for they know not what they do!** (pause)

You see his mother, and two other Marys and John, his disciple standing at the foot of the cross. Can you stand with them at the foot of the cross? Can you accept the Lord's forgiveness? Can you forgive yourself? What comes next? Does Jesus see you standing there at the foot of the cross? How does that make you feel? Is Jesus trying to tell you something? Do you feel a calling? What are you carrying in your heart right now? Do you want to say something to Jesus? Do you want to reach out and touch Jesus? Hug his feet? Cry? Scream? Fall on your knees? Do you want to see him take his last breath. See the soldier pierce his side with a sword? See Jesus hanging lifeless there on the cross? (pause)

(music)

When you are ready say farewell to Jesus. Focus again on your breath and with each breath desire that the Lord stay with you. That he leads you in your next steps.

When you are ready come back to the room. Finish your prayer with an act of thanksgiving for letting you experience the cross and the call to go beyond.

Laureen Swann, CiM Calgary

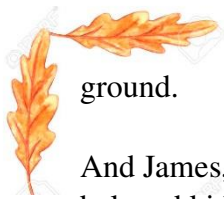


Now We Are Four...

All my life I counted myself as one of the five McCarthy kids: Ellen, DJ, Susan, James and John – five kids born in six years. We raised each other with tough love, and a competitive spirit. We were so close in age that we were friends and siblings. We were the five McC's.

I say were, because on August 1, 2021 James, the 4th one of us, died after the briefest illness with cancer. So brief was his illness, so aggressive the tumors, that even the doctors and nurses were stunned into tearful defeat as they attempted to revive him for nearly half an hour.

Where were the rest of us while God was gently taking James into his loving arms? I was at Sue's having just finished breakfast and I was about to answer some emails which I had been neglecting. DJ was at home preparing to finish some landscaping with his son Danny for a party to be held in two weeks at their home. Sue was at an installation mass for a friend from the Diocese of Providence. She was at mass receiving Jesus in the Eucharist, just as Jesus was receiving James into heaven. And John, John was the stunned, numb and welcomed guest at DJ and Buffy's home, because less than 36 hours before James' death, he was made homeless, with only the clothes on his back, after the house in which he was renting an apartment burned to the



ground.

And James, James was the first of us to 'leave too early' causing his wife Linda and his two beloved kids Krystal and Jay to be wracked with inconsolable grief, stunned agony and utter disbelief. James, a man who had been pronounced healthy as a horse, was dead not more than a month after seeing his doctor. James, who knowing I was coming home from England after an absence of three years, came to the 'family gathering' the day after I landed to celebrate my return. James, who rejoiced in Ian's Baptism – the next generation of McCarthy's – one month to the day in the same church where James's funeral is now to be held. James, a man who knew how important family was and who honored family in his words and deeds. James, the only child of my parents to be born naturally two months premature (another time in his life he was way too early). James, the man who never complained, always had a smile, and always had a ready helping hand. This man, my brother, lay in the bed motionless, looking all the world as if he were asleep, who was still warm to the touch when I blessed him and kissed his forehead. James was gone never to hug or be hugged, never to smile, and never to help another living soul.



One of the five no more and the rest of us are left to be four, alone, without James who made us five. How do we negotiate that? It's like cutting off a finger or toe. The realization that we are not a whole anymore and that we will never be again, is what makes me sit here late into the night (early into the morning) remembering that we were once five and now we are four.

Ellen McCarthy, FCJ August (3) 4, 2021





On Loss

When loss opens
a void in your life,
be it a death, an illness
or a change of any kind
with what will the void that is left
be filled?

Doug

Think about a loss you have experienced and its impact on your faith life.

We used this as part of our October CiM meeting. The theme was faith life and loss.

Doug and Laura Krefting, CIM Edmonton

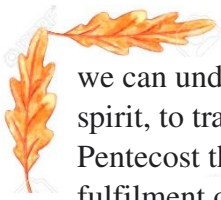


Pondering Thirst

Steve Angrisano's melody for Psalm 63 is a very lively one. The refrain has become a theme song for me the last three months as I walk outside and at many other times throughout the day. The week-long retreat at Mt. St. Francis (west of Calgary) in July was on thirst - our thirst for God but also God's thirst for us. In our large chapel at Sacred Heart Convent, Calgary, there is a tapestry that always reminds us of what Marie Madeleine heard Jesus saying from the Cross, "I thirst". My main way of hearing those words had always been that Jesus was expressing his heartfelt desire for all people to come to know, love and serve him and that as his faithful companions, we were being called to share that thirst. We are to reach out to people in countless directions and through our encounters, to convey Jesus' love.

That call to mission and expanding our circles to be more and more inclusive holds true but what I gained from my retreat is important too. My relationship with Jesus deepens by contemplating his thirst for me and mine for him. My director based much of the outline of the retreat on a book by Rev. José Tolentino de Mendonça who gave Pope Francis and his household a retreat in Lent 2018. The content of Fr. José's talks is in a book that is entitled *Thirst*. Now that I have a copy of that book, I am reading it slowly as each small section has something to ponder. I am very grateful to have the musical refrain to keep God's, my, our thirst awake.

One example of the author drawing out the fulness of what Jesus means by being thirsty is in the consideration of the Samaritan woman at the well as found in Jn.4. She mistakes Jesus' thirst for a physical thirst and yet he speaks about living water. That must have been confusing for her but



we can understand that the living water means the gift of the Spirit. "He thirsts to deliver the spirit, to transmit it, to communicate it. His thirst on the cross will have to be satisfied with the Pentecost that John presents at the supreme moment on the cross. Thirst is thus the seal of the fulfilment of Jesus' work and, at the same time, of his burning desire to give the gift of the Spirit, true living water capable of radically quenching the thirst of the human heart." (p. 61)

Perhaps you, the reader, will be interested in reading *Thirst* too.

Theresa Smith fcJ

The Question Box - A Case for Spiritual Direction

The following story captures how Spiritual Direction has been beneficial for my finding Christ in one my life's experiences.

I'd volunteered at a camp on the shore of Crowsnest Lake. The camp is in the Crowsnest Pass in southwestern Alberta. I had done this several times over the years and I enjoyed the peacefulness of the camp, and I was honoured to serve.

Some of my duties were, to establish a power source at the well, service the smoke detectors, and construct a roof on one of the cottages. I also worked in the kitchen assisting with preparing meals for the campers. All of this was fun, and I enjoyed being part of a team. Most important to me was to model Christ-like behaviour.

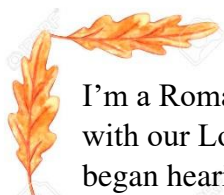
During these times, I was recovering from a life ordeal, and I was able to spend a lot of time with Jesus, healing. He had been speaking with me quite a bit over the past few months and years and He was working through me here as well.

The campers were amazing and from all walks of life. Some of these children were church-ed and others hadn't ever heard the bible stories. Boys and girls, mostly strangers, coming together for ten days of activities. There was canoeing on Crowsnest Lake, archery, hiking, and all kinds of games, and a lot of fun. There was a church service on Sundays and Family Camp always had a talent night.

The staff consisted of many families and many single people, some paid, but mostly volunteers. It took several people to operate a camp with one hundred and fifty campers, maybe upwards of twenty staff members. Often, there were guest speakers, and the camp sometimes would have a theme.

The campers were being introduced to Jesus Christ and His Word. This was done several ways and each evening there would be a bonfire with singing and laughter and a beautiful experience of community. As the number of days the campers were in camp grew, so did their comfort and trust with the camp experience. It was wonderful to see and a blessing to have an active role in it.

There was a question box in camp and the campers were encouraged to place any questions they had into the box. This is a story about this box and one of the questions that it contained, and my experience with Jesus Christ as a result of the answer given to one question, on two separate occasions, in two separate years, and given by two separate persons.



I'm a Roman Catholic and I practice my faith with vigor, and I have an amazing relationship with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It was my life's ordeal that awakened me to Him, and I began hearing Him and I began seeing Him. You need to know this to understand the situation I was in and how Christ spoke to me as a result of going through this lesson. This is my experience.

The first and second time began the same way, but the outcomes were very different.

At one of the bonfires a question from the question box was read aloud to the crowd gathered around the fire. Kids and adults were sitting tightly together on the multi-tiered benches, and some were sitting on blocks cut from trees and others were standing.

I was a bit late showing up and I found a place to stand. I joined in with the singing and enjoyed the questions that were being asked and answered. Some of the questions were about the old and new testaments and the bible stories and how does one become Christian, and such.

It was the answer to the question that came immediately after the question about how one becomes Christian? (The answer was to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour). Cool! That's the same teaching as the Catholic church and that's how I was awakened to Christ's love for me.

"Are Catholics Christian?"

Not only was the answer, "No." The facilitator went on to say that all Catholics are going to hell and carried on stating bizarre comments about Catholicism that I was opposed to, until I finally shouted out in my guard's voice, "Hey! I'm Catholic and you're offending me!" And I left the bonfire and went to my cabin and submersed myself in prayer. The experience was hurtful, and I was moved to tears.

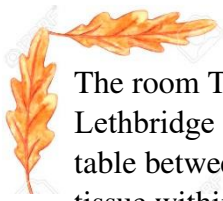
I considered going home the next morning when at breakfast, the facilitator who had made the comment found me and sat with me and he made a sincere apology and asked for my forgiveness. I remained for the rest of the camp, but the sting of rejection remained much longer.

The second time the question, "Are Catholics Christian?" was asked, again from the question box, and immediately after the question on how to become Christian, and the answer was not only a resounding, "No!", the camp administrator looked right at me and said, "I know you're Catholic, Wayne, but the truth is that all Catholics are going to hell, including you."

I got up from where I had been sitting, moved to tears, and not saying a word, I went to my cabin, packed my gear and drove three hours to my home in Lethbridge. I felt judged, and more than that, I felt rejected, and I was hurt by the people I loved, after all, I love Jesus more than anything, and He loves me even more, and I was truly rattled by the experience.

Four days later I hadn't been able to make sense of the experience and I was having trouble concentrating on anything else. I couldn't get complete with what had happened, and I took the experience to my Spiritual Director seeking answers to what had happened and why it happened, and what's the lesson, or lessons in the experience, and where is God in all of this?

Teresa is a skilled spiritual director and I've had many visions of Christ and many other things, including the first vision I had of an eagle's tail feather, and I've been connected to the spiritual world several times, if not every time, during our sessions.



The room Teresa uses as a sacred space is in her home located near the Old Man River west of Lethbridge and the space has a large picture window and two comfortable chairs. There's a small table between us where she has placed religious relics and a candle, and a cross, and a box of tissue within reach of my seat. She offers me water and I accepted a glass.

I recounted my experience with Teresa, and she tells me of a time when Catholics used to say the same thing about other Christian denominations. Only Catholics were going to heaven. Teresa and I began with some silence and prayer. She sang a traditional peoples' song, and I was simply being with, what's so. I noticed my thoughts and my feelings, I noticed what's going on with my body, my breaths, and my tensions. I breathed and I let life slip away, and I asked Jesus to, "show me", and I imagined being at the bonfire and reliving the experience. I felt the dagger-like words spoken and condemning me to hell, piercing my soul, and I was moved to tears. I remember wanting to bawl from the feeling of rejection, especially rejection by those I loved.

Teresa was simply being with me, continuing with the song, making strange sounds, like she's got a hair stuck in her throat and she's trying to clear it. She makes high pitched Indian shouts and coos like a pigeon, and I emptied myself and got as little as I could. I was oblivious to the physical world, and I had one toe in the spirit world. That's all He needed from me, and in that moment, there He was, and so was I.

I'm a child about seven years old and I'm walking with Jesus, holding His hand. I was on His left side, holding His hand with my right hand. We were walking on the shore of Crowsnest Lake. The water was calm, and everything was good, and I felt His incredible love for me as we walked in silence, hand in hand.

At some point, He simply said, in the gentlest voice, "Wayne, it wasn't you they rejected."

I stayed with Him for awhile weeping and smiling, understanding what He had said, and basking in His love for me. He showed me His family's rejection of Him, and His ultimate rejection on the Cross.

The spiritual direction session typically lasts an hour, but the impact of the session lasts forever. I often go back to the vision in my mind's eye and walk with Him, holding His hand.

I volunteered to work in the kitchen at the camp's September Family Camp not long afterwards and I never mentioned the experience again.

The camp administrator approached me when he saw me in camp and he said, "I'm so glad you've come back, Wayne. I didn't know if I'd ever see you again."

I smiled, remembering Christ's words to me, "Wayne, it wasn't you they rejected." And I loved the camp administrator, even more.

Wayne Lozier, CIM Calgary



Encounter with a Bird

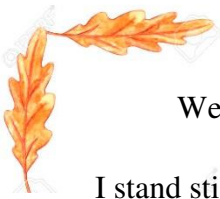


The sound is penetrating, drumming,
an electric drill boring a hole
interrupting my attention to a Zoom presentation.
From my upstairs window I see the source of the noise,
a beautiful woodpecker, a Northern Flicker,
speckled body, stripey back,
flash of scarlet on the head,
black bib, sharp beak, yellow undertail,
making a nest hole in my neighbours' tree.
Day by day, the nest hole grows, wood chips flying,
my garden covered in good mulch, I think.
I read about this woodpecker, how the nest is not just a hole, but a deep hollow inside the hole, a
place where eggs can rest safely from predators in a beautiful cup shaped
home.

Sadly no eggs are laid,.
Flickers mate for life, I am told, but
no female woodpecker has come to his call to grace this lovely home.
Flicker sits in there peeping out and calling his shrill, penetrating 'Kee-Rick'
call.

The summer days grow longer and the tree hole is abandoned.





Weeks later, Flicker appears, standing quite still
on the garden path.
I stand still for more than three minutes, take a photo, wait.
Flicker sits and meditates, inviting me to stillness.
We meditate together.
I thank him for his beauty.

Then, as if to complete the cycle
I am interrupted again in late September.
Flicker has returned to the backyard and is now
on the rail outside my upstairs Juliet window



(Image Audubon Society)

His Kee-rik call more gentle now attracts my attention.
bowing up and down, up and down, dancing along the rail,
gazing in, calling as if conveying a message.

I am enraptured by this encounter, this
farewell message before the long journey
to warmer climes.



What am I meant to understand by these meetings with a
bird?

A message from the 'Bird of heaven',
a call to perseverance?

A special gift of presence -
God found in a bird.

Ita Connery FCJ





Thoughts on a Saturday Morning before the Sunrise . . .

Speak Lord, I'm listening . . . I speak to you every day.

I show you my love in the sunrise . . .

you can see it . . .

you can feel it . . .

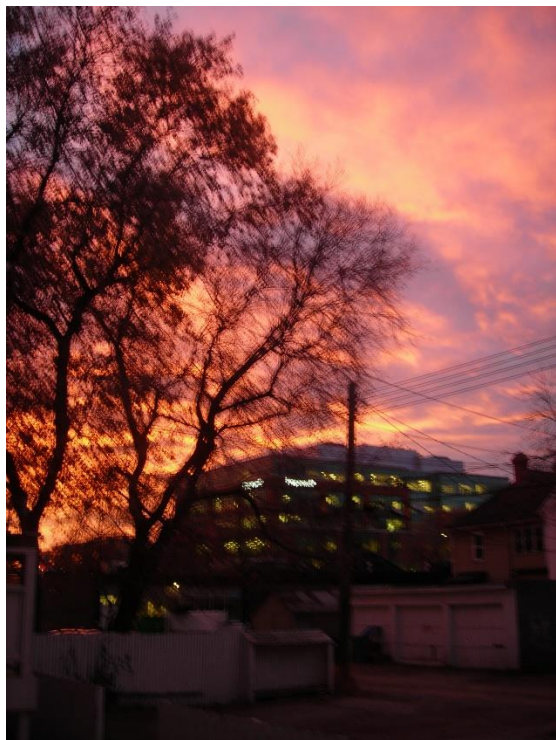
you can taste it in the food my sunrise brings to you . . .

you can hear it in the birdsong meeting a new day

You can smell it in the new scent of life renewed . . .

Yes, I speak to you as daily as the sunrises.

Look, see, observe, I am in it all . . .



Helen Kampel, FCJ





Words on the Death of My Father

In the early hours of July 6, two months short of his 96th year, Frederick Charles Harvey departed this life, giving himself into the arms of his Lord and joining his beloved wife of 66 years, Geraldine. His generosity, determination, and irrepressible wit will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

(From the memorial card)

His death was no surprise. In fact during the week before Dad died I pleaded with God that “enough was enough-let him go.” When I sat with his body waiting for the funeral home to arrive, I felt deep gratitude that my Dad finally became the man God created him to be. But after all the busyness of the funeral and the family events, I was surprised by how bereft I felt. I was an orphan; lonely, sad, and adrift.

This portion of a poem entitled *The Garments of God* by Jessica Powers became my anchor.

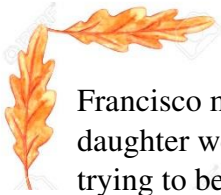
God is clothed in the robes of His mercy, voluminous
garments—
Not velvet or silk and affable to the touch,
Fabric strong for a frantic hand to clutch,
and I hold to it fast with the fingers of my will.
Here is my cry of faith, my deep avowal
to the Divinity that I am dust.
Here is the loud profession of my trust.

Laura Krefting, CIM Edmonton

The Sower and the Seed

Think of yourself
becoming a living seed
that has been cast into the Universe
In order to change the future.
Think of the Sower
as becoming infinite love
that is always asking you
to love God, your neighbour
and yourself
In the same way that
this Living Presence loves you.
Now become part of the Love
that the future can hold.

Icon written by Susan Zukiwsky, our “unofficial sister”



A Tribute To Francisco

Francisco my love, my life, had two loves--his family and his lifestyle. His two sons and his daughter were very special; Giovanni the Star that lit our journey when we were very young and trying to be adults. We travelled to different countries, building a solidarity network for the people of El Salvador. Ana Teresa, our Ninfa, was born in El Salvador when we went back after turmoil in our country, and we were looking to find a dream even though it was dissolving. We called her Ninfa because we were in the middle of a muddy situation, and she was keeping us clean and ethical. And finally, Manuel, the Rainbow, who was born in our new country Canada, who was leading the pathway to find the treasure of peace, calm and looking for a real dream.

Francisco was very special, not only with his children, but with our big and extended family. He was the uncle that would joke and play with everyone. But he was not only the party uncle, but he was also the listener and supporter and always giving opinions even though nobody was asking!

He was a brother who was always talking with his siblings. The 'doc', which is what he called his oldest brother; the second mother, his oldest sister, and his sister Gorda who he always took care of, with her daughter.

He was the greatest *abuelito* (grandfather) who was always playing with and planning trips for our three grandchildren, Cassie, Zoe and Mateo (Matty). We would sing on our trips, jump on him on the bed so that we broke a few air mattresses. He would drive long hours so as not to disturb their dreams. Our last trip was to Prince Edward Island. He enjoyed getting mud from Fundy Bay with his grandchildren and telling them that they were having a facial clean.

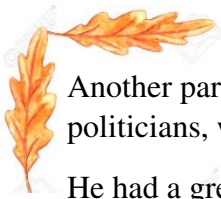
He is the love of my life, who taught me to look at life with other eyes; to find what is the injustice and speak up about it. He is my dreamer and every night in our bedroom we would dream and talk about what we would do the next day. He is the most handsome man I ever met with his romantic voice.

His second love was advocacy; his work was not a job from 9:00 to 5:00pm; it is our way of life. One of his policies was that people do not leave the office with empty hands. His dream was for a society in which people won't need to leave their families to find a better life, without exploitation.

He always had a smile or a big hug and welcomed everyone to our house as family. It is the second love because he was always vocal about injustices, about human rights violations; he was a person that always spoke in plain language and had a lot of patience until the person would understand.

His day at the FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE began with a coffee in the morning after his morning walk, bringing bread with cream cheese for the staff. This was community building with the staff, talking about the news, life and dreams.

He was always eager to pass on his knowledge, so part of the second love was teaching, which he enjoyed a lot. Talking and preparing his classes, bringing food at the end of the semester, bringing his students to the office to meet everyone, and teaching them to be an excellent social worker but first an excellent human being with a lot of sensitivity.



Another part of the sharing knowledge was all the presentations he gave in different arenas, with politicians, with bureaucrats and with colleagues in the refugee sector. He was a natural teacher.

He had a great love for the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), to which he gave and dedicated most of his life in Canada; even during his last days he was talking with Janet about advocacy and the beautiful times when they were going to talk with the IRB, UNHCR and IRCC. He believes that the CCR makes a lot of impact and he kept talking with Janet and the working groups even many years after he had been president of the CCR. I remember that he was saying to everyone that if you really want to do advocacy, participate in the CCR where your voice will be expanded and you can bring issues there which they will take on as positions for advocacy.

We believe that we can't do everything in isolation, so that is why he started the Coalition of Service Providers with the refugee houses, bringing updates and making the coalition stronger, travelling together through the whole of Southern Ontario.

He has been part of many new initiatives to continue opening doors to everyone, and the last one he was involved in is the Center for Refugee Children, which provides services for Children and Youth, either refugees or those without status.

Every night after we finished in the office we would go to our special living room which is full of souvenirs of our 40 years of life together and with a glass of rum we reviewed the day and continued dreaming.

I will continue dreaming and with this note I want to say on behalf of my children and grandchildren, and our FCJ REFUGEE COMMUNITY a big thank you for all your support, either with beautiful notes, flowers with which we set up an altar where he can continue his journey and the food. I want to say a big thank you to my FCJ community, who have been and continue to be our Canadian family. To all my colleagues for their support during Francisco's illness and even after, they continue to keep the door open and as Francisco would say, it is good to take time for reflection, but we need to continue keeping our doors open.

Loly Rico CiM Toronto



Francisco Rico-Martinez
1958-2021