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Editor's Note

Welcome to our late May edition of "Adelante Junt@s"! From Lent to Resurrection time we have some thoughts to offer you that we hope you will enjoy.

Please write to terry@fcicentre.ca with your comments or suggestions. Thank you.

Terry Smith, f.c.J.





Liturgy Lite

Over the years I have taken part in most all the regular activities in the Triduum celebrations: helping arrange pews and chairs for the anticipated crowds, stalking pews for volunteers, reading the lessons, having my foot washed (in the days before my feet became a public health hazard to view), shouting as “part of crowd” during the Passion, Eucharistic minister, and holding the cross up on Good Friday. And I have been nourished by each of these activities.

My feelings this year were totally foreign to me. I don’t want to go church, I don’t want the ritual, the pageantry, the tradition, the crowded, overheated church even the thought of the lighting of the pascal candle made me feel flat. So how did I live out the Triduum this year?

On Holy Thursday our daughter from Nanaimo was here on a brief business trip. She was leaving early the next day. What to do? The Triduum finds Jesus spending his last evening with his friends over a meal where he gave his last big teaching (as Jesus that is). So Doug and I spent it with Lynne with chopsticks and a delicious Vietnamese meal, sharing stories. Lynne thanked her Dad for making all the sacrifices he had for the kids when they were young. Later I prayed with a poem from one of my favourite writers, Sr. Miriam Pollard, *The Foot-Washing*, parts of which are below.

He laid aside his garments,
laid aside the brazen moon, ...

Quietly
he folded up the rains,
cast from his shoulders
a web of stars.

Laying by his splendour
he reached out for the stink of history,
and dressed himself in nakedness ...

Who would recognize the Storm King
in his garment of dust?
Peter, did you?...
“Oh Lord, not my feet only
but my hands and my head.”

Good Friday arrived. This is the big day for many Christians to attend church, if only once a year. After driving Lynne to the airport, I drove right past the church and headed for home and the chesterfield. This time I prayed with *The Ballad of Easter*

His hands grew cold when the day grew dark
and the wind had things to say.
He saw no more, for his eyes ran blood
and the light had gone away.



He died when the day had died before
and the earth and the sky were still.
My love was God and my love was a man,
and he died on a high, high hill.

With good intention, I made plans to attend Easter Vigil with Sr. Liz and my CiM pals, the Di Castris. But I was a no-show. Whatever had been holding back all Triduum continued to keep me in my pew on the chesterfield.

Like the Triduum this story has a blessed ending. I was up and at the church early for the regular 9:30 am wearing my only dress and even pantyhose! But before I left, I finished praying with *The Ballad for Easter*

"I saw the tomb and the slab of stone
in a garden by the sea.
I saw my love in a long white robe
and a crown of jubilee."

"A world had lain in the shattered heart,
a world of blood and sin.
The blood burnt out with the morning sun,
and the world rose up with him.

In the hush of noon and the quiet dusk,
the touch of an evening breeze,
he holds my song on his wounded palms,
and he sings it back to me."

Poems found in *Neither Be Afraid and Other Poems* by Sr. Miriam Pollard O.C.S.C.

Laura Krefting, CIM (Edmonton)



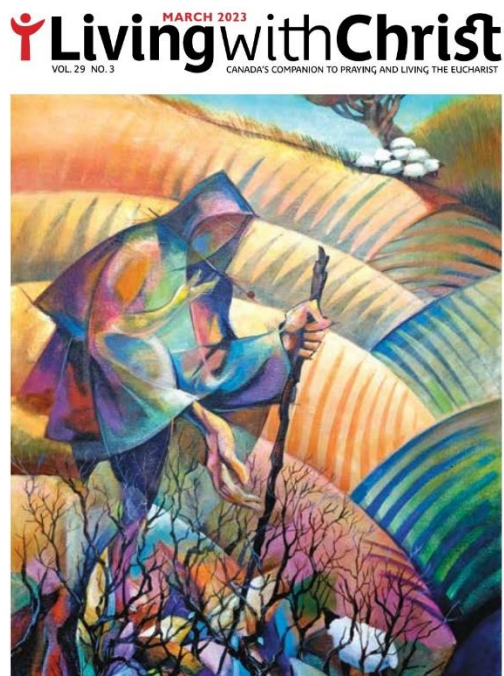
At One

During Lent our community read Finding God in a Leaf by Brian Grogan, SJ. It focused on the mysticism of Laudato Sí and led to a deeper level than studying facts about the depletion of the world's resources does. We read about ten pages each week and then shared our reflections. In one part the author ponders the words from the Offertory of the Mass. "May we become

sharers in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.” (p. 32) The gift of this union with Christ is something that the Western Church seems to take for granted. The Eastern Church, on the other hand, focusses on divinization and Pope Francis says, “In the bread of the Eucharist, Creation is projected toward divinization.” (L.S. #236)

The cover of the March missalette, “Living with Christ”, is a picture that portrays the oneness of God in Christ with creation for me. As I see it, the picture strongly emphasizes that because of the Incarnation, God has become one with us and we with God thanks to Jesus’ redeeming act of love. As we are well-reminded by Pope Francis, we are one with all of creation. *Although the painting for the artist, Mike Dywelska, is called “The Good Shepherd”, to me it is a representation of the truth of the sacredness of creation and of Moses approaching the burning bush ever so gently. The colours that the Lord is wearing blend into the colours of the fields in which he is standing.

May we grow in awareness of God-with-us.



Theresa Smith, f.c.J.

*From Novalis: “Our cover: Lost sheep. An illustration by Mike Dywelska, a graphic artist and a parishioner of St. Christopher’s Roman Catholic Church in Mississauga, ON. Mr. Dywelska specializes in religious art which is rich in Christian meaning and symbolism. Photo: Bill Wittman”



Cultivating Hearts of Hope

In “The Letter”, the most recent film release from Pope Francis on the topic of Laudato Sí and Care for the Earth, there is a moment where he pauses during his remarks about climate change, apologizes and acknowledges that he has been speaking in Spanish without meaning to. Why? He says it’s because “I’ve spoken from the heart. My heart is in Spanish.”



Our FCJ community house in Quezon City (Metro Manila) hosts monthly Taizé prayer services. The Scriptures are read in Tagalog (the most commonly spoken language in the Philippines, also known as Filipino) and the Christian chants that we repeat are sung in Tagalog, Indonesian and English. However, it is when individuals share their prayers of intercession that I am moved most deeply. Voices are soft and hushed. Each person speaks for one, two, or three minutes. They pour out the cares and concerns they want to bring before God. The gathered community listens without interruption, a sacred space of invitation for all who feel the need to connect to God here. With my limited knowledge of Filipino, I can understand only the occasional word, and yet I find myself touched by these intimate and sincere supplications. They are spoken from the heart.

When we share from the heart, we talk about things that we care about. We acknowledge the difficult circumstances that are hurting us or those we love. We are vulnerable. We know our weakness and need. We communicate about the things that matter. We are profoundly aware of our helplessness before God. When we speak with our heart, we connect with others in ways that go beyond the spoken word; at some level, we can be understood by anyone with a willing and open spirit.

I learned recently from my Tagalog teacher that there is no word in Filipino for ‘hopeless.’ It is only possible, she tells me, to encourage someone not to be without hope. I believe, that when we speak from the heart, hope is inherently present: in ways that go beyond human understanding, both God and our community can hear and understand us.



As I listen to Pope Francis plead again for the plight of the Earth and as I hear Taizé participants offer their prayers to God, I cannot be without hope, for any time that people have the courage to speak with their hearts, hope burns brightly. Let us continue to pray that more people will dare to do the same.



Michelle Langlois, FCJ





Farewell to the Linden Tree



When the townhouses were built in Toronto, a small linden tree was planted on the lawn between the Provincial House and the garage. Over time, it grew into a very large linden tree and it showed no signs of stopping. The roots were beginning to disturb sidewalks and foundations and the shade was making gardening difficult, although shelter from the hot summer sun was appreciated. At any rate, the decision was made to have it removed. The day before the men were to come, Audrey, Lois Anne, Madeleine, Anne and Susan gathered around the tree for a brief ceremony. Here is the sheet we used.

Morning Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving

Song: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad!
This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad!

Litany of Thanksgiving for the Ecological Services of the Linden Tree

Dear Linden tree, you have been growing here for 15 years. You were faithful in serving this small piece of Earth and the other living and non-living beings that have shared this space with you.

We thank you for your faithful companionship and the gifts you have given to us and to the life of this courtyard.

Your leaves have reduced air pollution and noise, provided habitat and shelter for other species, and reduced the force of falling rain, limiting erosion during heavy rains.

We thank you for the enhancements to our environment.

We praise you for your aesthetic value: you offered us opportunities for relaxation, attenuated the urban heat island in this courtyard and contributed both to the diversity of our landscape and to our sense of place.

We thank you for the beauty you have given us.

You labored on behalf of the soil: you brought up from deep in the soil minerals and nutrients for the other living beings in this space; you filtered soil nutrients and pollutants; you sequestered carbon from the atmosphere; you sheltered billions of bacteria, fungi, micro-arthropods, nematodes, earthworms and the other citizens of the soil.



We thank you for your slow, patient and faithful work in building the soil habitat for so many of our smallest brothers and sisters.

You have mitigated extreme weather, providing shade in summer and a canopy to catch fast-falling raindrops.

We thank you for modeling for us how to be generous in all circumstances.

You supported pollinators with habitat, nectar and pollen; you purified their air and water; you regulated the climate for them, too, in this small space; you helped moderate the temperatures that so affect the quality of their lives.

We thank you for your faithful companionship and the gifts you have given the myriads of insects and other small creatures over these past 15 years.



We praise you for participating in the miracle of photosynthesis, providing the planet with oxygen and nourishing living beings by turning sunlight into carbohydrates and lipids.

We thank you for the dance of transporting and transforming water, nutrients, and minerals.

We thank you for the spiritual connections you have offered over the years, reminding us, by your presence here, that we are all part of God's creation.

We thank you for your humility and silent witness.

We place our hands on the trees branches, roots or trunk and pray all together: We are saying good-bye to you today, dear Linden tree. You have now outgrown this space. Your roots and branches threaten the balance of life in this courtyard. We know it was our shortsightedness in placing you here, where you could only flourish for a short time. We bless you for all you have given us and ask God to make it possible for you to continue to contribute to the life of the planet as wood chips or wood or compost. May it be so-amen.

Madeleine Gregg, FCJ



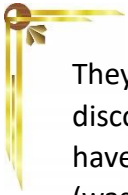


Spring

A day of spring's
brightness makes me
realize I have been
moping around
waiting, yes waiting,
for death's
darkness to
seize me,
when already
i am resurrected.

Doug Krefting, CIM (Edmonton)





House Story: A Journey of Prayers

They say God never gives you more than you can handle. In the selling of our home I've come to discover what threshold God believes I have in terms of what he thinks I can in fact handle. We have to move. A few years ago I had Achilles reconstruction surgery, making it difficult to walk (was worse without the surgery, for sure). That, combined with my asthma, makes navigating all the stairs in our home very difficult for me. We need to be in a one level home. We must sell our house.

We signed a contract with our realtor on February 4 of this year. It has been a wild ride ever since. I don't think I've prayed so much in my life. And I don't remember so many friends and coworkers praying so much for me either. Our realtor has been praying... our mortgage broker has been saying prayers for us in adoration... our home inspector has been praying... even our foundation repairman has been praying. Yes, along the way, we discovered we had a problem with the foundation of our home and had to have it repaired to continue the selling of our home.

Our first step in making the move was to purge our belongings (a somewhat painful process after living in our home for 19 years). I took photographs of items that meant something but had "served its purpose" in hopes of putting them into a book this year documenting the story of our home and our family. Friends from the church I work at came over and helped me go through most of my basement. I think we got rid of nearly 75% of what was down there. Next came painting the house inside and out, new carpeting, new bifold doors on closets. All this after getting a new kitchen sink and faucet last year, and a remodel of the master bath a few years earlier. Things looked so new and fresh. We had a stager come in who made us purge even more of our belongings, and rearranged our furniture and repurposed our rooms on the second floor. My best friend sent a professional organizer to my house to purge and arrange my pantry and our bedroom closets. Things were looking up and we were ready to put our home on the market.



We listed our home for sale on the evening of April 10. We had 6 showings the next day with two offers. The next day we had 7 showings. We accepted an offer for \$20,000 above asking price. The buyers asked us if we had ever had a stairstep crack on the front bricks looked at. Yes. About 6 years ago, we had a foundation company come out and look at it. They said it was normal settling for a home our age. We didn't think much of it. These were first time home

buyers. They said they wanted to pray about the house first. The next day, our 29th wedding anniversary, we received the news that the crack made them nervous and they were concerned some wildlife had been in the attic, so they backed out of the deal.

Our realtor reached out to the agent representing the buyers who had made the other offer on our home. They were still interested. We accepted their offer which came with a letter about themselves and a photograph. Could these be the buyers we have been praying for? In the

meantime, I made arrangements to have a foundation company come out and take a look at the crack. I also contacted a reputable company to come out and take a look at the attic. The attic was easy. There were signs that some squirrels and raccoons had been there at one time, so we had wildlife remediation work done on the whole house. However, the foundation company was difficult. The specialist spent three hours taking measurements and readings, and revealed to us that the slab foundation in our family room was unstable. It came with a \$50,000 solution. This was too much to bear. By this time our second buyers had just finished having a home inspection done on our house. We gave them two options. We would accept their offer "as is" and repair the foundation, or we could subtract the amount the repairs would cost from their offer and they could do the repairs. They wanted both... for us to fix the foundation AND offer us nearly \$80,000 less for the house. These were not the right buyers for us.



After crying all night in despair and spending a day away from reality, I got it together and pulled into action. I arranged to have two more foundation companies come to the house and offer their solutions. This cannot be where this story ends. We have to sell our house. We cannot give up. One company offered a solution that we could agree on with a price tag half as much as the first company. After some phone calls and pleading and praying, I was able to get them to come do the work on our home 4 days later instead of the projected start date of May 15. In the meantime, our house was being shown again. This time 8 showings on April 20, 5 the next day,

and 7 on that Saturday. We had to check into a hotel to have someplace to go while our home was being reviewed. A neighbor sent a photo of people lined up on our driveway waiting to see the house as if it were some sort of amusement park ride. We received two more offers. Both buyers knew of the foundation issue and did not run away. After some praying, we accepted the lower offer (which ended up being asking price) because we felt that they would most likely follow through with the deal. We made it through inspection without too many fixes that needed to be done. But we got a bad appraisal that was so out of alignment with the rest of the comps in the neighborhood, that our buyers changed lenders and will be getting a new appraisal. That's where we sat for a week - waiting on a new appraisal. In the meantime, two trees fell down in our yard crushing a portion of our wooden fence. We needed to get someone to remove it for us... and another someone to repair our fence (all before the next appraisal). The next day, a friend of a friend called and offered to come over and take care of both the tree and the fence, all free of charge. What a blessing.

We were supposed to have an appraisal done on the home we are trying to buy on May 3. But the appraiser didn't show up. Another appraisal was ordered and was scheduled to take place May 8, but the appointment was changed to May 9. Later on that Monday, we were informed that the appraiser had in fact gone to the property. The next day, our current home was appraised... again. Another waiting game began. And there we were still praying. Praying for strength. Praying for solutions. Praying that I am praying for the right things. Still wondering what plans God must have for us and this house we are trying to sell, and the house we are trying to buy. St. Joseph, pray for us. By 4:30 pm Thursday, the report on the house we were trying to purchase came in. It appraised at the exact amount we had offered to buy the property

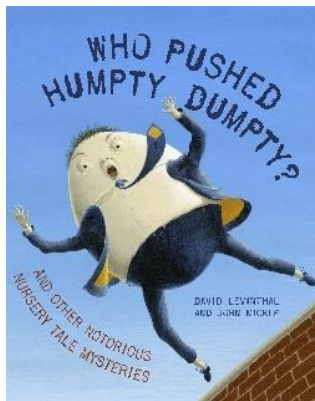
for. Four hours later, we received word that the appraisal on our current home was in. It appraised above asking price. So many people praying. So many prayers answered. I will never understand why our path was so difficult and brutal or why our faith was tested so intensely. But I do know our prayers as well as all the prayers of friends, family, and community were lifted to the heavens and answered in His time. We close on the house we are selling on May 23 at 10:00 am. We close on the house we are buying on May 23 at 2:00 pm. God is good.

*Dawn Leach
Southeast USA CiM (Roswell, Georgia)*



HUMPTY... SEEING BEYOND APPEARANCES

The nursery rhyme so familiar to us as children, had it's deeper meaning known to the poet and to those who were aware of the current political situation. But we, innocent of any hidden meaning, took it at face value. An egg fell off the wall and smashed. That was the end of it.



But there is so much we could ask. If we were good detectives we might find out a) what was Humpty doing on the wall b) what was the wall doing there and why was it so high that Humpty couldn't get down safely? c) who built the wall, and with what purpose? d) why did Humpty fall, or was he pushed? e) what took so long for the king's horses and all the king's men to arrive on the scene? f) were they blind to his plight, or did they just receive the SOS too late? g) what efforts were made, if any, to put Humpty together again? And, most importantly, WHO WAS HUMPTY?

Of course we took this poem at face value and didn't question the why and how of poor Humpty's demise. It might seem ridiculous to do so. In real life it is a big mistake to not ask the right questions.

Now, to apply this nursery tale to a situation that began many, many years ago: **to my perception of the effects of colonization on the indigenous population of Canada.**

I grew up in a hamlet, Millet, in the Province of Alberta where, I recently discovered, there are 136 Indian Reservations. Although I lived within 40 km of a large Reserve, I had only one brief encounter with indigenous youth when I was a teen, and then many years later as a teacher in Lethbridge. We knew that 'Indians' lived on Reserves, that all the adults received monthly 'pensions', that many of the men had a drinking problem, and that Reserve land was not exactly the best land in the Province. It never occurred to me to question the Reserve system and the

reason behind it. We didn't know about the Residential schools (nothing in the history books, and no one talked about them). We presumed that Treaties made with Indian tribes were fair to both parties and were kept. (Treaties were, after all, often mediated by priests like Father Lacombe OMI).



Now, coming back to live in Canada after a 36-year absence, I learn about the tragedy of the Residential School system – currently seen as an instrument of cultural genocide. The expression 'second and third generation trauma' is new to my vocabulary as it applies to the children and grandchildren of the survivors of Residential Schools. The effects of the generational trauma now help me understand why so many Indigenous parents were not equipped to be 'good' parents and why their children were taken into 'Care'. It also explains why so many Indigenous resorted to alcohol to deal with the traumatic memories. Many of the residential school children, most of whom had been forcibly taken from their families, spent up to seven years in boarding school without ever going home for

holidays. Where did they learn parenting skills? Many, although not all, of the schools were scenes of sexual, physical and psychological abuse. When did these children experience motherly tenderness and love, fatherly care and protection? No good modeling, no trauma counselling or healing. Survivors rarely talked about the experience.

(This beautiful piece of art (above) depicts the **Land** and its waters, the **Eagle** (Many Indigenous cultures believe the eagle is sacred because it flies closest to the Creator. It symbolizes respect, honour, strength, courage and wisdom); and the **Turtle** – representing Turtle Island. For some Indigenous peoples, Turtle Island *refers to the continent of North America*. The name comes from various Indigenous oral histories.

Now, after SO many years – ever since the Reserve and Residential School project was introduced by the government as a way to control the Indigenous population, the truth is surfacing. Healing and reconciliation are happening. The right questions are being asked. There is openness to listen to the Indigenous experiences that caused so much pain with such dire consequences. Apologies are offered and accepted; recompense also... although nothing can make up for the generations of damaged people and families. There is hope for healing. Those of us who lived so 'unconsciously', blinded by appearances and conditioned to accepting things at face value, are now looking for the truth and beginning the road of repentance and compassion.

As the sad story of Humpty Dumpty shows us: It is always a big mistake to not ask the right questions! Apparently NOW is the acceptable time!

Paula Mullen, FCJ





St. Paul's Understanding of Love in 1 Corinthians

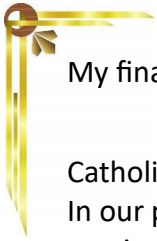
As part of my International Year in the Philippines, I have been auditing Theology courses at a Jesuit university called Ateneo. One of my courses was on the topic of Paul the Apostle. Here, I include some excerpts of my learnings from a paper I did on the topic of Paul's understanding of the virtue of love:

The concepts of love and knowledge are paired in three key passages in this letter (1 Corinthians), suggesting that the Corinthians showed a great affinity for knowledge that Paul felt the need to address. Paul is not interested in denigrating knowledge, but he does remind them that God's wisdom is not always easily identified: "[We] do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age....". In his first use of the word 'love' in this letter, he tells them that there is much that they do not know, using a writing from Isaiah that he modifies: "'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him'". Here, he impresses upon them a key connection between love and knowledge. There are things that we cannot know or understand without love; in particular, without the love of God. Love is necessary for deeper, divine knowledge.

Paul addresses the divisions in the church: some are identifying themselves as disciples of Apollos, some as disciples of Paul. Paul admonishes them but is quick to tell them that he does not want to shame them, that they are his 'beloved children'. Here, he suggests that the power of love is greater than forceful shaming: "Am I to come to you with a stick or with love in a spirit of gentleness"? That admonishment spoken with love might be more powerful than force is surely understood by him as wisdom consistent with the kingdom of God.

However, Paul also points out that the gifts of the Spirit, including the gift of knowledge, are meant to be used for the growth of the Christian community. In other words, "the gifts of communication and cognition are inseparable from the bonds of love". Paul is admonishing the Christian Corinthians not to use their knowledge to communicate in a way that does not account for the needs of those in their church. Paul explains to them that knowledge and its communication are relational because they are gifts from God. Eastman suggests that Paul's understanding here is that "it is not knowledge per se that is problematic; it is knowledge that is orphaned from the one true giver of 'all speech and all knowledge,' who is God". Knowledge, then, must be used in the service of love.

Allison suggests that this relational way of sharing gifts and talents forms part of Paul's understanding of love. God gives each person gifts which one can choose to use for oneself, or one can choose to share with others as part of the greater community. Sharing our gifts with others brings with it another dimension of knowing God: when we share our gifts with those in the community out of love, we encounter God, for "[the recipients] receive the gift as an encounter with God himself, who is revealing himself to the recipient in and through the gift and the giver for the recipient's benefit". Paul believed that God distributed the gifts of the Spirit to the different members of the community, but also that God was knowable by the giver and the recipient in the sharing of these gifts. What Paul describes is an intimate connection between God, the gift giver, the gift receiver and the gift of the Spirit itself; when someone attempts to keep a gift for themselves, an integral dimension of intimacy with God is then lost.



My final thoughts:

Paul wrote this letter to a new church nearly 2000 years ago, but one could ask if the Catholic Church of today might experience renewal in returning to Paul's insights in this letter. In our parishes do we see a place where all, equally, are invited to share the gifts they have received from the Spirit? When we speak to other members of the church about controversial topics, do we experience kindness, patience, modesty and humility in the other? Or in ourselves? Until we can answer 'yes' to these questions, we can not experience the fullness of love or the fullness of God. Thankfully, Paul's words continue to offer us hope for the church's future, for "[love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, [and] endures all things", and so we know that God will continue to accompany our Church into a hope-filled future full of love.

Michelle Langlois, fcJ

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Follow Up to Sister Paula and Loly Rico's Article
"Adelante Junt@s", November 2022



All of the people in this photo walked and/or arranged refreshments on April 30 in support of the FCJ-CIM project about which Loly Rico, CIM, and Sr. Paula Mullen, FCJ, wrote in the last edition of "Adelante Junt@s". The sponsored walk that was organized by our Calgary Companions in Mission and Sr. Paula received over \$1,000. Loly will be putting the money in the hands of the people who are providing help with the food, medical, clothing, and school needs of the young girls who were victims of sexual violence as well as reaching out to other victims of sexual abuse.

Sincere thanks to all our donors.

Terry Smith, f.c.J.





Conference of Vocation and Formation Directors in Canada



The National Association of
Vocation & Formation Directors

The annual conference of the National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors (NAVFD) took place by Zoom this year from April 17 to 19.

Archbishop Smith of Edmonton celebrated the Mass for the conference and focused his homily on being called. One important point to note was that while people are being called to service within the Church, that call is spoken in the midst of a culture

that is self-directed. “In broader Western culture, all sense of ‘calling’ is subjectively determined, a ‘sitting down’, if you will, wherever I choose, according to my own personal likes, dislikes and aspirations. . . . Yet it is precisely from such a culture that the people we accompany come to us; it is within such a culture that many of them have been formed. This underscores the need to be very clear in communicating to them the radical change of mindset and heart that must be undergone if one is accurately to discern a call from the Lord, and very patient with them as they undertake the journey.”

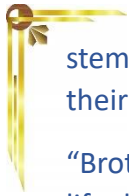
Archbishop Don Bolen of Regina, Saskatchewan and Deacon Harry Lafond from Muskeg Lake Cree Nation had a dialogue about Truth and Reconciliation and how there has been movement towards reconciliation with the Indigenous people of our country. Archbishop Bolen wanted us to focus on what Pope Francis actually said during his penitential pilgrimage to Canada last July. The media tended to highlight some points only. A few of the words that Archbishop Bolen selected were:

“To pray together, to help one another, to share life stories, common joys and common struggles: this is what opens the door to the reconciling work of God.” (in Maskwacis – a large Cree reserve SE of Edmonton)

“Let us ask ourselves: what do I do for those who need me? When looking at the indigenous peoples and thinking of their history and the pain that they endured, what do I do for indigenous peoples? Do I merely listen with curiosity, horrified by what happened in the past, or do I do something concrete for them? Do I pray, meet, read, support them, and let myself be touched by their stories? (at Lac Ste Anne, NW of Edmonton – a place of pilgrimage for many Indigenous people)

“It is painful to think of how the firm soil of values, language and culture that made up the authentic identity of your peoples was eroded, and that you have continued to pay the price of this.” (in Maskwacis)

At Lac Ste Anne Pope Francis said, “The waters give life. I think of the many dear grandmothers who are here with us: your hearts are springs from which the living water of faith flowed, and with it you quenched the thirst of your children and grandchildren. I am struck by the vital role of women in indigenous communities: they occupy a prominent place as blessed sources not only of physical but also of spiritual life. ...part of the painful legacy we are now confronting



stems from the fact that indigenous grandmothers were prevented from passing on the faith in their own language and culture.”

“Brothers and sisters, you have lived on these lands for thousands of years, following ways of life that respect the earth which you received as a legacy from past generations and are keeping for those yet to come. You have treated it as a gift of the Creator to be shared with others and to be cherished in harmony with all that exists, in profound fellowship with all living beings. In this way, you learned to foster a sense of family and community, and to build solid bonds between generations, honouring your elders and caring for your little ones.” (in Maskwacis)


“We need to be able to look, as the indigenous wisdom tradition teaches, seven generations ahead, and not to our immediate convenience, to the next elections, or the support of this or that lobby.... The values and teachings of the indigenous peoples are precious.” (at the Citadelle de Québec)

In Iqaluit the Pope said, “There is a beautiful and harmonious relationship between you and this land you inhabit, because it too is strong and resilient, and responds with brilliant light to the darkness that enshrouds it for most of the year.”

Throughout the conference there was an emphasis on the importance of Synodal listening. If we desire reconciliation with the Indigenous people of our land, we must truly listen to them. Sr. Elizabeth Davis, RSM from St. John’s, Newfoundland, gave a marvellous presentation on the present situation of the Church and vocations in Canada entitled “In These Disturbing Times God Calls Us to Dare New Paths with Surprising Companions”. She gave a synopsis of the results of the synodal sessions in the Americas which indicated the need for listening and cultural sensitivity. Words that appear in the working document of the Synod are “transparency, accountability, collective exile, welcoming diversity.” She said that radical inclusion is echoed in the document. Sr. Elizabeth reminded us of some key biblical figures and their calls. They were listeners and their call was in response to a relationship. They responded in mission. All of their responses were marked by amazement and wonder. When we ponder how God calls, we may feel puzzled because we cannot see the call. Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, speaks of the voice of God forever being found in paradox. For example, “The voice of God is recognized in what calls us to what is higher, sets us apart, and invites us to holiness, even as it is recognized in what calls us to humility, submergence into humanity, and in that which refuses to denigrate our humanity.” Regarding discernment of a call, Sr. Elizabeth gave these points:

- × Never an individual process – always personal and communal
- × Never a linear process, happening at one point in time – always iterative, in an unfolding spiral
- × Less and less tied to the four states of life (married, single, priestly, religious life) – more to the universal call to holiness, to the recognition that all are missionary disciples
- × About our giftedness and our brokenness

The main talks as well as opportunities to be in small groups were inspiring. Simple prayer with energizing hymns was provided at the beginning of each day. Entertainment by an Indigenous



singer and by Ukrainian Shymka Dancers was also offered. Phyllis Sinclair from Churchill, Manitoba sang some of her own compositions about a man in her home town, the Northern Lights and the North Star. Ukrainian dancers from Edmonton gave a taste of their culture and of how the first Ukrainian settlers were helped by the local Cree people.

The NAVFD Conference was a privileged time for sure. At the Annual General Meeting the membership chose to change the name of the organization to Vocations Canada so that is how you will be able to learn more about it now.

Theresa (Terry) Smith, f.c.J.

