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From the Editor

Welcome to our November 2025 edition of “Adelante Junt@s”! We hope that you will enjoy our submissions and should you have any comments, please send them to me at terry@fcjcentre.ca.

Blessings of peace and joy for Advent and Christmas!

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





Companionship

This reflection was written at the request of members of the theology school at Boston College for the initiative described here: “Spanning one week (October 6-11), *Flourishing Together: Addressing Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation* will comprise a launch event featuring a keynote presentation by renowned author, speaker, and Zen priest [Robert Waldinger](#), five analog library exhibits, one online exhibit, and a full slate of programs presented by a wide array of University departments. While tackling head-on the threat loneliness poses to human health and happiness, all components of *Flourishing Together* will emphasize such proven remedies to loneliness as authentic human connections, friendship, belonging, and community.”

This was my contribution:

“Here comes the sun/ doo doo doo doo
Here comes the sun and I say, it’s all right”
The Beatles

One of my novitiate apostolic experiences with the Faithful Companions of Jesus¹ meant engaging in our charism of companionship as a volunteer with a musical outreach program in London, England. Our group met in a small church hall every Saturday and welcomed houseless people in search of music and company. Robbie, a talented and cheerful character, gave music lessons to patrons on the piano or guitar. Other volunteers like me served tea and cookies and chatted with the visitors.

Our favourite part of the morning would come when we’d all gather around the piano and sing together. Volunteers would print the lyrics to favourite, requested songs, usually in the pop genre and often dating from the sixties and

¹ The Faithful Companions of Jesus are a congregation that takes its name from the women who travelled with Jesus during his ministry, remained with him in his suffering at the foot of the cross, and spread the good news of the gospels in the early days of Christianity. These women were companions to Jesus and to God’s people, and our congregation’s charism is to intentionally and authentically engage in companionship with the people we meet.



seventies. As Robbie accompanied us on the piano, volunteers and guests would enthusiastically sing as many golden oldies as we could jam into an hour.

We were a varied group: females and males, younger and older people, Christians and non-Christians, some with strong voices and others singing off-key, coming from a variety of continents and socio-economic backgrounds. However, our delight in singing well-worn hits ranging from the Beatles to Nina Simone, songs that have been sung millions of times worldwide, allowed us to enter into a space of connection and intimacy with one another. Any “long, cold, lonely” winters we were experiencing in our lives could be set aside, at least temporarily, as we sang “here comes the sun.” Just as our varied accents disappeared as we engaged in singing, so did any inhibitions about our vocal abilities.

In some volunteer positions, it can be easy to fall into an “us” and “them” way of thinking, ex. at a soup kitchen, “we with the food” are helping “those without the food.” This outreach program helped clarify for me what authentic companionship looks like, for it was in “companioning” one another that we were all nourished by our collective glimpse of what the world can look like after the winter: it is a space where all are welcome and all belong. Here comes the sun!

Michelle Langlois, FCJ





Finding Hope in the Fruits of the Holy Spirit

For the past several years, I've become enamored with the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis declaring this year of 2025 a Jubilee Year entitled **PILGRIMS of HOPE**, has kept me going, and realizing that the Holy Spirit has been keeping me hopeful even before his proclamation last December.

I believe it began during the Covid pandemic and the realization that the internet could be a gift to so many of us who felt isolated. We Learned how to ZOOM and Face Time. We were able to join online retreats, and keep in touch with friends and family. Seeing smiling faces and sharing concerns gave me hope. The internet opened up the world... but slowly, it became overwhelming. Each morning, my 'inbox' on my iPad has emails from a variety of religious organizations... some I subscribe to, others that somehow got my email address. Most are wonderful organizations...but often times you just can't read all the reflections. I've learned to rely on Living Faith (Daily Catholic Devotions/Bayard) and Loyola Press/America Media, which gives me a good start to my day. I've found a variety of Jesuit podcasts which are a good way to end my day..... or listen to while driving.

The last five years have been so tumultuous.... not only in the USA, but across the world. Trying to navigate the social and political unrest has been a challenge. Several years ago, a writer for Living Faith, Terri Mifek, wrote a lovely reflection on the passage from **Luke 4:32** “....*they were astounded by his teaching because he spoke with authority* “. In her reflection, Ms. Mifek opined that sometimes we're drawn to someone whom we think we'll agree with.... but after listening to the person, realize that their speech does not flow from the spirit of Jesus. Her suggestion was to “listen for the fruits...that is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**” to come from a person speaking. If you don't hear 'the fruits', it's time to move on! I've been looking for the fruits ever since!

Last May, while listening to the podcast **PREACH** (America Magazine) I listened to two Jesuit priests discuss a homily that Fr Paul Nicholson, SJ, had given many years ago when Fr. Ricardo da Silva, SJ was in the novitiate. The homily was given on the Feast of the Ascension...had stayed with Fr. da Silva, the interviewer, for many years. Fr. Nicholson gave the homily on the podcast and explained that he saves his homilies and adapts them to his audience. My favorite part of the homily was Fr. Nicholson explaining that on this feast, we remember that Jesus left

the disciples to return to heaven. Jesus didn't abandon us but promised He would send the Holy Spirit. Fr. Nicholson reminded his listeners to notice the Holy Spirit **is** with us today and we can recognize Jesus when we observe the "fruits of the spirit" evident in our world.

The Holy Spirit gives us **hope**, when we see joyful people who are kind and loving. We see the Holy Spirit at work with the organizations around the world who are accepting donations from generous people to provide food, water, health, safety and shelter to millions of people. We see the Holy Spirit at work in the messages of Pope Leo XIV, reminding the world that we need to treat people with kindness and decency... and his encouragement to world Leaders to work on bringing peace to Gaza and the Ukraine.

I have witnessed so many 'fruits' in my daily interactions with my family (I'm so proud of them!), my Companions in Mission friends, my St. Philomena friends and the people I've met at My Brother's keeper, a ministry of service to the poor. This group of people who were once 'strangers' give me joy as I watch their dedication to helping those in need. I marvel at the patience of teachers, the gentleness of doctors and nurses, and the faith of so many who have suffered the loss of a loved one without giving into despair.

I'm reminded of Marie Madeleine and how she modeled the 'fruits' of the Holy Spirit and how the Sisters' FCJ have been a gift to me... and bring me HOPE!

Jennie Abbate, CiM, Rhode Island, USA





Flag This Day!

“This has been a red-letter day!” I recently declared to my visiting ten-year-old granddaughter. Leonora, visiting from NYC this summer who had never heard the expression and had no idea what it meant. After explaining the meaning of the expression, in her logical mind, she dismissed it as making no sense. So much for passing on wisdom to the young!

Now, yesterday, despite Leonora’s dismissal, I do declare that my day constituted a “Red-Letter” descriptor! Three events contributed to this conclusion.

First, an unexpected, extravagant donation came to me in support of Our Lady of Kibeho Orphanage, which nurtures and educates one hundred girls. I have been a board member for the foundation for many years, and last year had the good fortune to visit all these precious children in Uganda. Regarding this current donation, there is a tragic yet redemptive backstory to this abundant philanthropic gesture. In 2011, Rodney and Jennifer O’Brien were struck by a horrific event; their five-year-old son, Nathan and his grandparents were brutally murdered. A year after this horrific tragedy, this courageous couple decided to create a foundation in their son’s name, the Nathan O’Brien Children’s Foundation, to which they would raise money and financially assist initiatives that would enhance the lives of disenfranchised children. Rodney came across the OLOKO website and was interested in our current project, fundraising to build a perimeter wall around the property, to ensure the safety and peace of mind for the community within. Rodney was intrigued and reached out to me. Once sufficient documentation and assurances that our organization is a credible and well-established charitable foundation, Rodney indicated his organization would be interested in supporting us financially, the amount to be determined at a later date. Upon opening my email yesterday morning, I nearly fell off my chair to learn that The Nathan O’Brien Children's Foundation would donate \$10,000 to the orphanage! Talk about a story of taking an unimaginable desolation and transforming it into an ongoing consolation benefitting so many. Incredible!





Second “Red Letter”! I love to play the drums; however, I typically stick to the basement and if truth be known, tend to experience some trepidation at the prospect of performing live music. However, last week I was contacted with the offer to sit in with a group I have never worked with, to perform at a restaurant featuring live music. Yikes! I immediately doubted my skill level until yesterday, when the leader of this group emailed me the set list. Much to my delight, the lineup contained songs which were familiar to me and truth be told, I started to get excited to explore this new adventure.

Third and final highlight of this day. I am currently engaged in the 19th Annotation of the Spiritual Exercises, under the virtual guidance of Katie Davis-Crowder from Philadelphia. Having completed my first week, exploring the daily schedule of delving into the Exercises using Kevin O’Brien’s The Ignatian Adventure. I know these are early days, the nine months ahead loom large on the horizon; however, I am already appreciating the daily reflective ritual of pondering my life in relation to the questions and scripture passages that stir so many ideas. Last night was the first scheduled meeting with Katie, as my father used to say, I had a keen sense of “sympatico”! In our discussion, we came to see similarities between us: married, kids, studied theology, share fan base with such folks as: Richard Rohr, Elizabeth Johnson, James Martin, Jean Vanier, Pope Francis, to name but a few. Katie brought enthusiasm to our discussion, sensitivity in asking thoughtful questions about my journal reflections and a palpable joy about companioning in this adventure together.

So, at the end of this day, I am at the cabin, venturing out for my evening walk in this winter wonderland that is totally silent, and above me a panoramic canopy of stars. I am struck by the relevance and blessings of the past week’s daily reflection. The nearness of God is tangible, the One who knows me through and through. This blessed, bountiful shepherd is beckoning me to trust and journey on for what lies ahead. Now, dear Leo, this is what constitutes a signature, “Red Letter Day”!

Julian Di Castri, CIM, Edmonton



Late Night Thoughts with Henri Nouwen

Unable to sleep, I grabbed a book out of back bedroom. Written by Henri Nouwen the title, Clowning in Rome, seemed a bit odd and I had no recollection of buying it. I opened it at random and found myself reading a chapter entitled “Celibacy and the Holy”. Hmm... This was not in my Top Ten Spiritual areas of interest. I almost closed the book and then the phrase “contemplative prayer is a key element” popped up and led me to keep reading, Below are a few points that Nouwen emphasized.



* Most simply, contemplative prayer is being empty for God.

*It is an attitude in which I recognize God’s ultimate priority by being useless in His presence.

*In fact, it is wasting time for God. I’ve been doing contemplative prayer for over thirty years but that night Nouwen’s words felt like a revelation. These phrases have stayed with me for several months and I keep returning to them. I guess they were a signal that my prayer life needs a tune-up. Thanks Henri.

Laura Krefting, CIM, Edmonton





Looking Back on Retreat Notes

Recently, I was looking through my notes from a retreat I led during Covid....while I was in Edmonton. Having no new insights of my own right now, I decided to share some of the input from that retreat. The title of the experience was “A Steady Heart in Time of Crisis”.... Perhaps some of the excerpts or prayers will be helpful ...

An excerpt from *Guerrillas of Grace* by Ted Loder:

O God, gather me now
to be with you
as you are with me.

Soothe my tiredness;
quiet my fretfulness...
relieve my compulsiveness;

Let me be easy for a moment.

Lord, release me
from the fears and guilts
which grip me so tightly;
from the expectations and opinions
which I so tightly grip.

O God, gather me
to be with you
as you are with me.



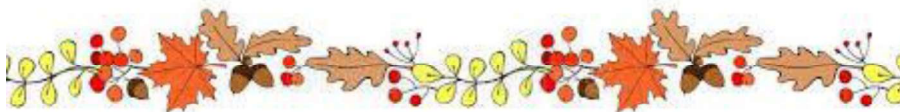


**Meditation about God as the Source of cosmic generosity:
an image from Brian Swimme**

“Every second, four million tons of the sun is being transformed into (this) light. That’s like a million elephants. So there’s another million elephants, another million elephants and if it weren’t for that ongoing bestowal of energy, we wouldn’t have any life on earth. So one way to think about the sun, every time you see it at dawn, is to think of it as an act of cosmic generosity. It’s this vast giveaway of energy that enables us to survive, enables all of life to thrive. So we are surfing around the source of ongoing cosmic generosity.” (from a TV series called “The Sacred Balance”)

Let Your Life Speak is a book I have found helpful over the years. Its author is Parker Palmer, a Quaker. In that book, he writes about a time when he was searching for the next step in his life. At that time, he did not find the following Quaker teaching very helpful: “Have faith....the way will open.” The way was not opening, and he was getting impatient. One day, an elderly Quaker woman told him that in her 60+ years of living “Way has never opened in front of me....but a lot of way has closed behind me, and that’s had the same effect.” They laughed together....and suddenly Palmer had a new way of looking at his vocational journey....that guidance can come from what does not happen (way closing) as what does happen (way opening).

Joanna Walsh, FCJ



Some Thoughts about Ecological Conversion

What does ecological conversion mean? Pope Francis called us all to ecological conversion in *Laudato Si'*, but how do we get beyond the simplistic mantra of “Re-use, re-cycle, reduce”? As with any conversion, the journey of ecological conversion is life-long. It aims to open us to receive more of God’s grace through an intentional choice of welcoming particular values and practices and rejecting others. At the same time, it bears witness



to people around us that God’s presence, power, and call in our lives is real and invites them to make a similar journey in their own lives. I want to share an episode in my own process of ecological conversion. There are many others, but this one well illustrates some of the ideas that have been informing my life in the past several months.

One part of ecological conversion is to deepen our awareness of what it means that we are part of creation. For too long, the mind-set that humans have “dominion” over the Earth has served to separate us from creation. Knowing that we are made in the image and likeness of God and entrusted with “having dominion” and “tilling” the garden that God gave us for our home, as a species, we have treated the world around us as merely a source of raw materials from which we can fashion anything our hearts desire.



As a little girl, my sister and I decided that we wanted to fly. We tried creating all kinds of mixtures to rub on our shoulder blades, trying to grow wings. Our recipes used various foods and products to which we added natural ingredients. I remember vividly one mixture of toothpaste and “bee powder”. We made the bee powder by stepping on bees as they collected nectar from clover. We would then lay the bees to dry on the curb of the sidewalk. When they could be crumbled into a powder, we stirred it into the toothpaste (or what ever we had chosen as a base). Sara would rub it on my should blades and I would rub it on hers. Then we would inspect our backs each night for a week to see if the recipe worked. We would also try to jump off the garage roof thinking that maybe we didn’t need visible wings for the recipe to

work. Needless to say, none of our concoctions produced flight. I never gave a thought to the hundreds, perhaps thousands of bees that we murdered in the course of our experiments. Only when I was on sabbatical a few years ago did I remember my careless destruction of so many beings, all of whom wanted to live as much as I do. My tears of repentance continued to many days. When I went to confession, I could hardly choke the words out.....

Pope Francis explained in *Laudato Si'* that the interpretation of Genesis as giving us complete freedom over the rest of creation is not accurate. Yes, we are a special kind of creation, endowed with creativity and intelligence, capable of co-creating with God. Yes, we have spiritual abilities deriving from the freedom God has given us. Yes, we have an eternal destiny. But all healthy ecosystems have limits and a major concern of humanity in recent decades has been to live and create and use resources as if we can transcend all limits. Yet, our creativity and intelligence do NOT mean we should be and do and become whatever is pleasing to us. Our freedom is not license. Our eternal destiny is, as Teilhard de Chardin explained, to tend and care for all of creation, helping to lead it to its fulness where God is all in all.

Madeleine Gregg, FCJ





Truth and Reconciliation

In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission presented their report which included 94 “Calls to Action” as a way to move towards reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. As a community we have been praying for reconciliation each evening after supper and some of us have participated in a number of events with Indigenous people over these last ten years. In our anti-trafficking work a few of us have visited the reserves within our diocese which covers Southern Alberta.

September 30 is called Truth and Reconciliation Day in Canada. It is often referred to as “Orange Shirt Day” and many wear orange T-shirts or other orange clothing. One person had spoken of the pain she experienced on her first day at residential school when the special orange shirt that her mother had bought for her to wear at school was taken away to be replaced by a uniform. Somehow that particular experience sparked the creation of orange T-shirts. Quite a few have “Every Child Matters” on them.



On this year’s September 30, one of the events offered in Calgary was by the Elders Wisdom Circle. (*Their website is found at circleofwisdom.ca.)* At a theatre downtown several women elders and about eight men sat in a semi-circle on the stage. In front of them were a young woman and a young man. These two seemed to be in the role of service.

One of the men elders was wearing his headdress and he spoke to the crowd. The evening would be in two parts. First, they wished to bestow a Blackfoot name on Mr. Werklund who, with his family, had donated \$75x10⁶ to the Calgary Arts Foundation. That money is being used to build and renew the Centre of the Arts along with what was Olympic Plaza. The Blackfoot name would be given during a tea ceremony. The young man took a peace pipe. I think that he probably prepared the pipe so that when he passed it to the chief, he could immediately smoke it. The pipe was passed to Mr. Werklund. The young woman mentioned as sitting facing the elders got up and soon had a tea pot for serving the elders. Once the tea had been drunk, everyone was invited to stand and dance in the aisles or even in the rows of seats. The second part of the program was for the elders to speak.

Some of the women spoke in gratitude for their Circle. After they had moved to the city, many felt isolated and alone. Having a centre where they can go regularly to chat with people of various First Nations and share stew and bannock makes them feel happy. One spoke of the suffering her family had endured when her oldest sister died at residential school but also said that seeing people in the theatre from many cultures dancing together was, in fact, reconciliation. Another woman agreed that dancing together was a way of celebrating reconciliation.

The whole evening gave me a sense of togetherness for which I am most grateful.

Theresa Smith, FCJ

