



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – Mary Anne McCarthy, CSJ

As I write this column in what is supposed to be dreary November, outside my window the sun is shining brightly and the temperature continues to be warm. However, Advent is coming, that beautiful season of light in the midst of darkness which reminds us of Jesus our light in this weary world. We light the candles of the advent wreath, the symbol of hope, in our world with what seems like increasing darkness.

During the in-person Federation Board meeting (Invermara, Sept. 28 - Oct. 1), we welcomed Sister Maria Cimperman who was introduced by Sister Mary Jo Radey. Maria is an assistant professor at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and her focus is on ethics, theology, and social justice. She is the author of *Religious Life for our World: Creating Communities of Hope*, which I know many of you have read.

Maria gave an overview of several themes, noting that "Religious life is at a moment." She emphasized the need to listen to one's internal energy and to notice what is heard together. She spoke about creating contemplative spaces to deal with the woundedness and violence in our world and the importance of the contemplative heart. She posed the question, are we still in areas of need or areas of great comfort? She highlighted in terms of sexual abuse, the curia, woundedness, women's issues, the climate crisis, the LGBTQ community, racism, and divorce and remarriage in our church. All of these areas call for reconciliation and

forgiveness. We live in a world of divisions and the call is for us to speak out on justice issues and go to the places of discomfort.

She noted the shifting composition in religious communities, especially in the area of interculturality. As she does in her book, she emphasized the importance of collaboration and partnering of groups within religious life. In all of this she stressed the importance of beginning with our charism - what is ours to be and ours to do since we can not do everything; where is the energy both personally and in the community. We need to be very intentional. She emphasized the need for collaboration across Congregations and all people of good will. She used the Emmaus story as an example of Jesus creating a space to listen to the story of the disciples.

How can we as Religious make spaces for the conversations that need to take place and create communities of hope?

During the September 30 morning prayer, the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we asked "for the grace to understand our work towards reconciliation, the truth of our history, and to move forward in hope."

As I think about our gathering and some of what I have been reading lately, the word 'hope' keeps popping up. I am reading Pope Francis' book *On Hope* and that together with the subtitle of Maria's book, 'creating communities of hope' is helping me to think more about this theological virtue and to find peace in



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Carole Umana

Christmas is a special and sacred time – often reminding us of fond memories with good friends... It was a dusty and hazy morning approaching Christmas in 1988 when our broken-down mini-bus, filled to the brim with boxes and suitcases of school and medical supplies, squeezed between members of a Canadian Religious delegation (including a Sister of St. Joseph), arrived in the recently repopulated village of Las Vueltas, Chalatenango. It was the height of the civil war in El Salvador and a dangerous place for any Religious to be visiting. The delegation had been organized by SalvAide, a Canadian Christian organization that had recently twinned the Las Vueltas community church with the CSJ (London). I was the in-country delegation leader, and it was the first time I had met a Sister of St. Joseph. Yet, throughout the week that we lived ‘with’ the community, I witnessed over and over the special CSJ charism of active and inclusive love: as we visited the humble school and dispensary, toured the cooperative corn fields and gardens supported by CSJ grants, and sat with villagers (mostly elderly widows and children) as they told unrepeatable stories. I remember so clearly the tenderness of the Sister who reached out to hold a hand, put her arm around a shoulder, and promised to continue to accompany the humble people of El Salvador. Over the next 30+ years, as my work took me to other humanitarian organizations such as Horizons of Friendship and the (former) Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, over and over again I witnessed the effect of this active and inclusive love - first imprinted on my memory in Las Vueltas; in the accompaniment of communities recovering from war as well as support for schools, training centres, micro-enterprises, food banks, community-run centres, and so much more. Most recently, at the KAIROS Blanket Exercise, I have seen first-hand the love and action of the Sisters in their work with Indigenous peoples to foster truth, justice, and reconciliation. In all that the CSJ does, your passionate living of a charism of active and inclusive love speaks to me of a hunger for real and lasting social justice with all peoples. As a lay-person, I feel honoured and humbled to be supporting

the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph through the Federation as I believe that your actions have both saved and given life. So, today, as the memories of that 1988 Christmas - my first with a Sister of St. Joseph - fill my heart, I feel blessed to be a part of this mission and charism and, at the same time, grateful that I am again amongst old friends. Wishing you all a safe and wonderful Christmas, Carole.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE – Continued

contemplating what it means to be a person of hope, a hope which is rooted in God’s vision for our world. Joan Chittister describes November as “beautiful for its bleakness...life changes drastically from the velvet days of early autumn....the things we love begin to die right before our eyes...it is a time of great life learning. We learn that we cannot control the passage of time in life. We learn to accept each of the stages of life with serenity. We learn to look to new moments in life with hope rather than despair. We learn that the opposite of life is not death; it is fear.”

One of the new moments for us as Federation was saying good bye to Loretta Manzara who has been the Executive Director for the past four years. We thanked her for her years of service and highlighted some of her many accomplishments and gifts including the Federation website, the Blue Community project, and her love for all things Federation. Another new moment for us was welcoming Carole Umana as our new Executive Director. Carole is the first lay person to hold this position and we are grateful to have her. (Learn more about her in her column.)

So as we live through the cold, grey days of November and the darkness in our world, may we continue to practice hope: “in the Christian life, we are called to spread hope by supporting and encouraging one another. May we always live in harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, and may we do so with the strength provided by the Lord, who is our unfailing source of hope, always and forever. (*On Hope*, page 97)

BLUE COMMUNITY - Mapping the Sacred Ground We Walk On **Paul Baines, CSJ Blue Community Coordinator**

In one of my recent internet searches, I came across the *Mapping the Ground We Stand On* workshop. Developed by the Anglican group PWRDF (Primate's World Relief and Development Fund), this project builds on the more familiar KAIROS Blanket Exercise. In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, PWRDF piloted this mapping work in 2015 as an "education for reconciliation" resource. Facilitated either in-person or online, this project "offers important sense-making and practical perspective. It lays out historical and contextual realities that Indigenous peoples in Canada face daily. It offers suggestions for taking action, for participants to journey further on paths of reconciliation, and for the creation of a better and more just country for all of us." (Facilitator's Guide, p.3)

So what does this giant map of Canada workshop look like? "As participants enter the space, invite them to remove their shoes in order to "step lightly on the Earth."

- ◆ *Part One* will be an interactive exercise offering opportunities to explore Indigenous people's presence in, and Settler migration to, Canada.
- ◆ *Part Two* will involve hearing a reflection on the concepts of "Terra Nullius" (Empty Land), the Doctrine of Discovery and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge.
- ◆ *Part Three* will offer a time for reflection, discussion, and debriefing with participants about what they have learned and experienced through the exercise." (Facilitator's Guide, p. 8)

The workshop is both spatial and temporal as participants move about the map to trace their connections to the land over time. We know from best practices that education is more meaningful when we

engage all of our senses. Rather than just reading about or watching a presentation about drinking water advisories, Indigenous place names, treaties, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, residential schools, Canadian law, etc., participants can make more connections through a facilitated experience. This approach connects people more directly to these critical issues and to the very lands and waters that are now called Canada.



Photo from: <https://pwrdf.org/mapping-exercis>

Would you be interested in this workshop? Contact me for more information.

Before closing with a prayer, the project ends with a simple question: "What is the map that you want to stand on, individually and together, as we move forward into the future?"

Paul Baines is the CSJ Blue Community Program Manager. Visit the website for more information on protecting water as a human right, shared commons, and sacred gift (at www.BlueCommunityCSJ.org).

Reach Paul at: info@BlueCommunityCSJ.org

FEDERATION OFFICE FOR SYSTEMIC JUSTICE - Finding Hope in Dark Places

Sue Wilson, CSJ

Some have called the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 26) a significant step forward in the struggle to limit climate change. Others have called it a frustrating failure. It's both. To use a baseball analogy, it is a solid single in the ninth inning when the world needs a home run, but at least it keeps the inning alive.

António Guterres, the head of the UN, used a much starker image, saying the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees was "on life support." But he also added that he would not give up because this was the fight of his life. And that creative tension, between devastating truth-telling and courageous hope-holding, is where transformation can emerge.

The same tension emerged in the speech of Vanessa Nakate, a young climate activist from Uganda, who challenged decision-makers to take strong action. She told the delegates that she and her peers don't believe their promises anymore, but they want to. "I'm actually here to beg you to prove us wrong. God help us all if you fail to prove us wrong."

During this Christmas season, the focus on Incarnation urges us to look for the light which breaks through darkness, the shoot which breaks through the hard ground. It evokes the question: How will people of faith hold the tension between devastating truth-telling and

courageous hope-holding in the wake of COP 26?

Pope Francis told members of Popular Movements that they are "social poets" because they "create hope where there appears to be only waste and exclusion."

He urged ordinary people to struggle against "deep-seated resistance to the changes we need and long for."

Canada needs to make significant changes over the next year if we are to meet and then exceed our current pledges. Canadians will feel these changes, sometimes in unwelcome ways, and there will be objections.

So, what does it mean, in this moment, for us to hold the tension between devastating truth-telling and courageous hope-holding in this context?

As a Federation, we will continue to join with Civil Society groups, and especially the 'For the Love of Creation' network, to press the government to make the changes that are needed. This will include opportunities for individual advocacy as well.

We also can bring any resistance or indifference we feel toward the climate emergency to prayer, that we might continue to open ourselves to transformation. We can engage in conversations that seek to hold the tension between truth-telling and hope-holding. And we can make individual choices to cut our carbon footprint. We can all be part of making sure that, at the next COP, Canada will be able to help keep the hope for 1.5 degrees alive.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT – The Essential Gift of the Family Farm

Mary Rowell, CSJ on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee

How many of us, I wonder, when driving recently in the countryside have looked out sadly on the urban sprawl, the mass of sub-divisions, where lush farmland flourished just a short time ago? Many farmers, often those whose farms have been a prevailing part of their family life for centuries, are now asking "will I

be the last?" So few see a viable future.

As reported in a feature in the *Toronto Star* on August 2, this year "Who will be the GTS's Last Farmer?", Ontario alone is losing 175 farm acres per day, the equivalent of five farms each week to housing development. All of this is occurring as the report states, "at a time when the

FOOD FOR THOUGHT – Continued

pandemic has shown the fragility of supply chains and the climate change crisis has highlighted the need for a smaller carbon footprint and the idea of local sustainable food has taken on renewed importance.” Regardless, and while not denying the need for housing,



unreflective and poorly conceived or inadequately researched urban planning is at the root of much of this encroachment into prime agricultural land. It is vital that we address this situation. Preserving fertile food producing land must become a priority.

Small farms, across the world, have often been labelled wrongly as inefficient unproductive obstacles to economic development. Large scale, mechanized, chemically dependent, corporate agriculture has been held up as the better approach to feeding the world’s population. Yet, this has been shown to be incorrect. Globally, small farms are central and essential to the production of staple foods. A recent report in the journal, *World Development* (June 2021), supports a generally and scientifically held understanding that family farms do, in fact, provide 80% of the world’s food in value terms.

Beyond simply food production, small farms also have multiple functions essential to the health of the land and of peoples. These functions must be valued over profit-driven models of commodification which, with their emphasis on monoculture and row cropping practices, result in highly destructive soil erosion and associated losses of nutrients. Such large-scale

agricultural practices are also heavily dependent on chemical fertilizers causing toxic runoff polluting surface and ground water supplies. By contrast, regenerative agricultural practices possible on small farms can significantly reduce soil loss and degradation by the use of crop rotations, meadow crops, and mulching. These practices result in diversity in crops in smaller fields, beneficial for the thriving of wildlife threatened by agri-business. Chemical threats to the environment, to the health of the food chain, and to wildlife are also eliminated or vastly reduced by small scale farming.

There is more - agriculture “transcends” itself through its contributions to healthy local communities, providing livelihoods, cultural and ecological services. As Dr. Peter Rosset, Executive Director of “Food First” says: “Ignoring these multiple functions of agriculture has caused untold suffering and ecological destruction. The time is long overdue to recognize the full range of contributions that agriculture and small farms, in particular, make to



human societies and to the biosphere. Farms are not factories that churn out sneakers or tennis racquets, and we cannot let narrow arguments of simple economic expediency destroy this legacy of all human kind.” As we respond in our own ways to environmental destruction and associated human suffering supporting local farmers is an essential part of our contribution to the wellbeing of all creation.

GREEN WINDOW - Windows of Hope **Priscilla Solomon , CSJ on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee**

When the Federation Ecology Committee first planned for its *Green Window* contributions to the Federation newsletter we were aware that we needed a title that would help our readers become aware of the need for a shift in consciousness. In March 2009 we introduced the *Green Window*. We certainly hope that a shift has taken place for each of us. It may have been a slow shift because it requires a change of heart, an ever-growing awareness of the beauty and the suffering of the created world around us, and a deep love for all of creation, but it also reflects a growing global consciousness.



This increased consciousness was recognized in an article about the recent COP 26: “For nearly three decades the UN has been bringing together almost every country on earth for global climate summits - called COPs (Conference of the Parties). In that time climate change has gone from being a fringe issue to a global priority.”

Since our first *Green Window*, much has changed. In 2015, Pope Francis wrote *Laudato Si'* and millions around the world responded, especially within the *Laudato Si'* Movement, formerly known as the Global Catholic Climate Movement. He also convened the Synod on the Amazon in 2019, promoted its final document and wrote the apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia* in which he speaks of four significant and beautifully articulated dreams for Amazonia.

One can easily see how these dreams can be applied to each and every biome in our common home, Earth. The first three dreams are very compatible with the principles of a just transition and with much - desired, effective, positive outcomes of COP 26. The fourth calls for an engaged, incarnated Church that works for the inner and outer transformation of ourselves and our world: in other words, living expressions of the perspectives articulated in the *Green Window* contributions.

In a *Sundays at CTU* program (March 18, 2021) theologian Elizabeth Johnson CSJ, says of *Laudato Si'*: “In my opinion this is the most important encyclical in the history of all encyclicals. In it, Francis writes that all creatures on this planet are loved by God who ‘enfolds with affection even the least of beings’.”

1. <https://www.csjfederation.ca/news/2019/7/31/green-window-introduction>
2. <https://ukcop26.org/uk-presidency/what-is-a-cop/>
3. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
4. Pope Francis: *Querida Amazonia: The Beloved Amazon* pp. 8, 9
5. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20200202_querida-amazonia.html
6. Elizabeth Johnson CSJ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Dw68LT3NRs>



Special Thanks to Sister Loretta Manzara

The Federation leadership extends heartfelt appreciation to Sister Loretta for her wonderful service as the Federation Executive Director. For the past 4 years, Sister Loretta has led many important initiatives including the development of a new Federation website and the creation of the Blue Community Project. At the recent leadership meeting in the fall, Sister Loretta was profoundly thanked for her many gifts to the Federation and especially for her “organization, sense of humour, and love for *all things Federation*.”

October 15 marks the anniversary of our founding in Le Puy, France. This year the Lifelong Formation Committee of the US Federation (which includes 2 Canadian Sisters – Sister Mary Rowell, In Canada and Sister Dotsy Schweitzer, Toronto) prepared a lovely video and prayer service which was enjoyed by many Sisters via Zoom.



We were invited to take a short journey to the early 17th century in celebration of the founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph on October 15, 1650. We were called to remember and revisit the historical context of how the story of the Congregation of the Great Love of God was born of its time, God’s time. In the midst of terrible desolation, illness, and poverty, God’s loving Spirit called forth ordinary women and men to move and act for God and for his people.

Jean Pierre listened intently to the desires of six women and heard how God was calling Françoise Eyraud, Anna Chalayer, Anna Vey, Claudia Chastel, Anna Brun, and Marguerite Burdier to live lives in the service of God’s dream for the world outside of the cloister. On October 15, 1650 with the approval of the church and Bishop de Maupas, the first six women gather in Le Puy to officially begin following the way of this new Little Design. The first six women of this new Congregation were given the care of an orphanage in Le Puy and began living into this new way of life.

From the beginning, the women were imbued with the love of God and of neighbour, using Father Medaille’s words: “the total double union of ourselves and the dear neighbour with God, and ourselves, and all others whoever they may be.”

Our founding women were portrayed by US and Canadian Sisters:

Narrator: Mary Diesbourg
Marguerite Burdier: MaryAnne Huepper
Claudia Chastel: Costanza Romano
Anna Brun: Joanne Fantini
Anna Chalayer: Carol Fitzsimmons
Anna Vey: Susan Sable
Francois Eyraud: Grace Rowland

We also spent time in small groups reflecting:

How can we leave a legacy for those who come after us? (*Learning from Our Roots*, Mary Diesbourg, CSJ)

As the family of St. Joseph, what is ours to offer in this moment? What is ours to receive, to let come, in this moment? (Margo Ritchie, CSJ)

Save the Date

FEDERATION VOCATION ANIMATION COMMITTEE

VIDEO CLUB

CURRENTS OF HOPE AND GRACE

<https://www.csj federation.ca/videos>

January 20 - Krista Trippet
January 27 - Angie Thurston
February 17 - Katie Gordon/Adam Horowitz
February 24 - Mary Jo Nelson

January 20, 27, February 17, 24, 2022
2 pm

To register: cromano@csjssm.ca
by January 15, 2022

*Many best wishes for a blessed Christmas
from the leadership team of the Federation*



New Federation Location

The Federation office has moved from London to a new office that has been graciously provided in the CSJ-Toronto administrative building. The new address and contact details are:

101 Thorncliffe Park Drive, Toronto, ON M4H 1M2 416.467.2649

info@csifederation.ca · www.csjfederation.ca

FEDERATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF CANADA

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

**United by a common story
and charism, we Sisters of
St. Joseph of Canada, form a
Federation to empower one
another in the passionate living
of our charism of active and
inclusive love.**

**Urged by God's spirit, we
collaborate with Sisters of
St. Joseph globally and
respond to the evolving
reality of our world,
bringing healing and hope
to all creation.**



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