



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – Mary Anne McCarthy, CSJ

I love holiday Christmas lights, always have. If I had my way, I would leave them up 'till June spring and then start again in November! I can remember many years ago taking my mom and a good friend in our community on a drive along the Lakeshore Road from Toronto to Oakville to see the spectacular displays on the huge homes that were along the route. I pretended not to notice that the two of them were too engrossed in talking to each other to notice what they were passing by. Nevertheless, I carried on!

The first lights I saw this year were in the front yard of a neighbour down the street and were visible to me from my bedroom window. A lovely combination of red and white. This year, because I have moved into one of our houses that has electrical outlets outside, I was able to have lights on the fir trees just outside our living room window. Lights are especially beautiful when there is snow, lots of snow and this year there has been lots of snow here in Toronto.

Perhaps it is the image of light shining in the darkness of winter that attracts me and gives me a sense of peace and comfort. A friend of mine, who knows my love of the Christmas/winter lights told me about an article entitled 'In Praise of Lingering Lights.' The author recounts that while driving home in late January she came upon a lone house with its Christmas lights still displayed and twinkling. She says: "I felt especially grateful for that

single home that stood out because its radiance pierced the darkness all around me on a lonely stretch of country road." She goes on to say how the symbolism of those lights spoke to her of "the thousands who have been lights to me, whose witness continues to illumine my way, especially in my most despairing and lonely hours. I was remembering the brave beacons who persist and endure... those who stay and shine."

She goes on to say, "surely we have all met them, those concentrated beams of light that punctuate our everyday living. They are the *luminaria* our bleak and darkened world waits and hopes and longs for."

And then as I write this article, we find ourselves as a world immersed in the horror, cruelty, the total lack of humanity and the suffering of the people in Ukraine. What is there to say? And how does what we are experiencing of the profound evil in our world connect with "concentrated beams of light"?

As I thought of all this, I received an article from the Global Sisters Report of March 7, 2022. What a joy to read about Sister Ligi Payyappilly, the 48 year-old superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Saint-Marc in Ukraine.*

She and the 17 Sisters of her congregation are giving shelter and food to foreign students and helping them cross the Ukrainian border to escape to countries including Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. A third-year student of

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medicine said: “We never thought we would be alive now” and he hails Sister Ligi as “God’s angel who came to help us when we were totally lost.” He and 45 other Indian students were stranded at the Polish border for 15 hours when Sisters Ligi and Christina came to help them.

He recounts “how the Sisters took us to their convent in their vehicles, hugged each of us with their love and warmth, gave us food, a warm hall to sleep in and escorted us in the morning to cross the Romania border.” Many of the students who came to them were in a desperate state: “They had not bathed for many days or eaten food. They were mentally shocked and physically weak.”

In addition to assisting foreign students, many Ukrainian refugees stay at the convent “which they consider a relatively safer place, instead of going to another country.” Sister Ligi said that about 100 Ukrainian fugitives are staying with them.

Reading about these Sisters and their heroic efforts,

does not take away for me the reality of the horror unfolding in Ukraine but it has reminded me that in the darkest darkness there can be “concentrated beams of light” and that is surely what those Sisters of St. Joseph are as well as the many people in our world who have responded to the suffering of the citizens of Ukraine by opening their homes and donating to relief efforts: “Brave beacons



Reprinted with permission of Global Sisters Report. Photo courtesy of Sister Ligi Payyappilly.

who persist and endure...those who stay and shine.” The “lingering lights.”

PS - The evening after I had submitted my article, there was a knock on our front door. When we opened it, a woman, whom we did not know, was standing there. She said she had driven past our house many times and decided to stop because she wanted us to know how happy it made her that we had left the lights on long after Christmas!

Mining the Now: *In Praise of Lingerin Lights* by Chris Koellhoffer, IHM, January 30, 2022
[Global Sisters Report](#), March 7, 2022

*These Sisters were established by Abbe Pierre Paul Banck in 1845



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Carole Umana

At a recent online meeting of various Congregations of US/Canadian Sisters, the comment was made that

“more than ever, today’s world needs the CSJ charism.” Indeed, over the past few months – as we face increasing global uncertainty – I’ve heard that same comment again and again from Sisters, Associates/ Companions, and CSJ staff.

Just turning on the news we are bombarded with images of war and suffering – of lives fractured in a second. It would be easiest to turn away, to just turn the channel. But, amongst all of this turmoil is one basic truth: *that everything is interconnected and that creation is a sacred trust given to the whole earth community.*

In this spring issue of the Federation newsletter, in

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which Sister Mary Anne reminds us to hold up the beacons of light and hope in these troubled times, you will read about the important work done by your Federation Committees in the areas of systemic justice, ecology, vocation animation, and water rights.

For example, in the article entitled '*A Just Transition: From The World As It Is To The World As It Could Be,*' the Office of Systemic Justice offers reflections and a sobering look at two history-making events -- the release of the 'Climate Change 2022 Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability' report and the war in Ukraine -- and proposes an alternative, just transition from the world as it is to the world that could be. From the Ecology Committee, we read about how to work towards that good transition in two articles: *Making Notes on Sugarcane* describes the benefits of using sugar-cane paper as a sustainable alternative to wood-based paper, and in *Food for Thought* we learn about the health and esthetic benefits of adding edible flowers

to our meals as an "ingredient [that] brings beauty with the potential to touch a person's soul and stir up a natural response of gratitude to God." In the Blue Community update, we read about the important work of collaboration and relationship-building in order to multiply the understanding of water as a sacred common and human right. And, in the *Vocations Alive* article, we learn about how the topical initiatives of the Vocation Animation Committee -- through webinars, video clubs and speakers -- all underscore the relevancy of the CSJ charism in the world today.

All of these works and the articles that describe them share both a candid portrayal of the complex challenges that we face as a global community as well as offer messages of hope for the future. Indeed, today's challenges are many, but through the CSJ charism of being "one with God, among ourselves and with all others' we can, together, create the *world that could be.*"

Today, more than ever, the world needs the CSJ charism...

FEDERATION OFFICE FOR SYSTEMIC JUSTICE - *A Just Transition: From The World As It Is To The World As It Could Be*

Sue Wilson, CSJ

*Below is an excerpt from a longer article published in the March 2022 FOSJ Newsletter reflecting on the publication *Impasse and Dark Night* by Constance Fitzgerald (scholar of Carmelite mysticism). You can access the FOSJ newsletter on the Federation website.*

Our Concrete, Historical Situation

One week and two history-making global events. The first a soul-searing tragedy; the second a mind-numbing report. Two critical nexus points between them: our dependence on fossil fuels and injustice.

In Putin's utterly horrifying and unprovoked launching of a war against Ukraine, we have witnessed attacks on

civilians, the heartbreaking movement of (to date) more than 2.2 million refugees from Ukraine to surrounding countries, and the reckless shelling of a nuclear facility. While dependence on fossil fuels was not the cause of the conflict, its presence is woven throughout, providing a main source of funding for Putin's war and being the reason European countries have been unable to ban oil and gas imports from Russia. As a result, fossil fuel dependence leaves European governments unintentionally subsidizing Putin's war.

Still, the war in Ukraine is shaking up the status quo by motivating western governments to begin transitioning

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away from fossil fuels from Russia, if not from fossil fuels themselves. Anything that presses against the inertia around fossil fuel dependence is welcome, especially given the release, of the second major news event of the week -- the release of the report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), "*Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*," written by 270 researchers from 67 countries.

The report gives a disturbingly detailed look at the threats posed by global warming, those already experienced and those still on the way. It concludes that climate change is already harming the planet more quickly than we adapt: Rising heat, floods, and drought are devastating crops, trees, species, and eco-systems. Millions of people worldwide, mostly in the Global South, are at increased risk of hunger and malnutrition. While approximately half the world's population currently faces severe water scarcity at least part of the year. As the earth experiences these intersecting crises, the need to shift away from a fossil-fueled economy has never been so clear.

A Just Transition is about moving from the world as it is to the world as it could be. It's about tackling climate change and injustice together since both require a new economic model – shifting from a model grounded in extraction and exploitation of the planet and people to one rooted in care for the planet, people, and all species.

The 'world as it could be' will forge new patterns and structures for our economic relationships:

- ◆ Phasing out fossil fuels, shifting government subsidies from fossil fuels to green energy, ramping up the production of green energy, implementing energy efficiencies in buildings, developing new green

technologies and skills training for high-quality employment.

- ◆ Strengthening labour standards and regulations to ensure all jobs are good jobs; increasing access to strong social protections to ease transitions between jobs for all workers.
- ◆ Respecting Indigenous environmental leadership and self-determination as they chart their own unique paths toward a decarbonized future.
- ◆ Developing a care economy rooted in both care of



- ◆ Acknowledging the responsibilities that come from our history of high per capita carbon emissions by welcoming climate migrants and funding tools to help

countries in the Global South reduce emissions, adapt to climate impacts, and rebuild after climate change damages.

- ◆ Creating a culture of solidarity which includes raising taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations while also eliminating tax avoidance and loopholes.

If Canada and other democratic countries can truly make a *Just Transition*, we would provide a beacon to people in authoritarian regimes of what can be.

The government of Canada has already committed itself to a *Just Transition* but so far, little action has been taken. Faith communities can be instrumental in ensuring Canada develops a robust plan.

The Federation's Office for Systemic Justice is partnering with many civil society groups in Canada to advocate for policies to create a strong plan for a *Just Transition*.

You can join in this work by going to <https://350.org/canada/> to add your name to a petition calling for Canada to make the Just Transition Act a priority.

BLUE COMMUNITY - Posters Inspiring Education and Action

Paul Baines, CSJ Blue Community Coordinator

It has been 2 years since the Blue Community Program of the Federation created a large and colourful poster called **One River, Two Futures: reflections on water.**

With the help of the Steering Committee, Jenna Kessler (artist) and I designed this poster for people of all ages

development of this group's Land and Water Acknowledgement.

The poster and video production were not only collaborative, but inspired more collaboration between groups and multiplied important reflections on water

and meaningful actions across groups.

Thanks to the direction and trusted school contacts of the Blue Community Steering Committee, I mailed 228 posters to 20 schools in 6 different school boards in time for World Water Day



and backgrounds to reflect upon their relationship with water. We printed 500 copies in March of 2020, but up until March of this year, I had only given out about 200. COVID-19 cancelled all the in-person events and made showcasing and distributing the posters difficult.

After several CSJ staff and Sisters received their copies in the mail, I made a 12-minute video featuring images of the poster and commentary (recorded safely over Zoom) with Sisters Janet Speth, Loretta Manzara, Bonnie Chesser, Anne Karges, Leah Watkiss (Staff), and Associates Jennifer Michel and Rita Pulice. This video now has 1,073 views on YouTube (314 in just the past 4 days) and has helped introduce the poster and our messages to larger audiences.

Left side of the poster states: When we respect water as the source of life, it invites our acts of gratitude and reciprocity.

In February, this video grounded a discussion event for about 20 Associates in the Sudbury area, thanks to Sister Bonnie Chesser's organizing. One of these

(April 22). There will be follow up with each teacher and school leader to assess how the posters were received by the students and to ask how our Blue Community Program could add value in the classroom.

Right side of the poster states: When water is a commodity, large corporations use and pollute it for almost free, while society's most marginalized are forced to go without.

I have already received deep thanks from several teachers with the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario making their own social media post with the poster. In addition, I received this message from Kathleen, a teacher with CDSBEO: *I just wanted to let you know that I received your wonderful and beautiful posters today! The online image simply does not do it justice. The schools will be delighted to receive these.*

If you would like a copy or know a school or organization that could benefit from the inspiration and beauty of this poster, please get in touch [BlueCommunityCSJ.org](https://www.bluecommunitycsj.org)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT – Garnishes of Beauty: Edible Flowers

Sister Kathy O’Keefe on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee



At Stillpoint House of Prayer we are blessed with Karen and Jasmine Hardy, a mother and daughter team, who prepare nutritious and appealing meals for our guests. Admiring their presentation of food, someone on retreat commented “They have a spiritual gift.”

This statement got me thinking. When someone takes a bit of extra time to add a garnish as a creative touch, this gesture shows that person cares. The added ‘ingredient’ brings beauty with the potential to touch a person’s soul and can stir up a natural response of gratitude to God. Edible flowers are garnishes that offer a delightful sensory experience. The thought of eating them may seem unnatural to some; however, for centuries, cultures around the world have brightened their recipes by adding flowers. When innovative cooks use flowers and artistically arrange them on a plate, they enhance our lives with a burst of colour, interest, taste, and texture. The flowers are meant to harmonize with the foods and accurately represent what is contained within the dish, give a clue to the flavour of the meal, complement the taste of the dish, enhance food’s aromatic qualities, and fill empty space on the plate.

There are many options for edible flowers that can be used throughout most seasons. Nasturtium, pansies, marigolds, tulips, cornflowers, verbena, geraniums, honeysuckle, johnny jump-ups, and calendula flowers are just some of the varieties available. When the anthers are removed, gladiolus act as lovely receptacles for sweet or savory spreads or mousses. Roses are sweet with subtle overtones, ranging from fruit to mint to spice, reminiscent of strawberries and green apples. Although all roses are edible, the darker varieties have a more pronounced flavour.

Always check to make sure a flower is edible and,

when in doubt, don’t eat it! Azaleas, buttercups, daffodils, delphinium, and wisteria are poisonous. Never use pesticides or other chemicals on any part of any plant that produces blossoms you plan to eat. Roadside flowers are not to be harvested because they may have been exposed to vehicle exhaust and salt runoff from the winter months. Anyone with allergies proceed with caution. When dining out, ask if a flower used as a garnish is edible.

Edible flowers are always best when picked fresh from the garden at a cool time of day; morning is often best. Be sure to wash the flowers and check to be sure that no insects are stuck inside your flowers. The petals are the best parts of many edible flowers so remove the heel at the base of the petal as well as the stamens, pistils, and calyx of larger flowers. Some, like pansies, however, can be eaten whole. After cutting the petals away from the bitter base of the flower, carnations can be steeped in wine, candied, or used as cake decorations.

Every year when planning the landscape of your garden, be sure to add varieties of edible flowers. These flowers not only add beauty to your landscape, but valuable nutrients as well. As perfect companion plants, they will naturally enhance your gardening success. Most edible flowers like roses and lavenders contain vitamin A, C, and E. Antioxidants also protect the body from damage linked to disease and ageing. Now, this is “flower power!”



Resources from Google:

The Ten Best Edible Flowers to Grow in Your Garden, Stephanie Rose

Mission on The Tabernacle: The Spiritual Gift of Creating Beauty, Becca Hermes

10 Benefits of Edible Flowers, Teleflora

Photo credits of 2 images -- Jasmine Hardy, Stillpoint

Sister Rosemary Fry & Julie Cachia (CSJ-Toronto, Vocation Animator)

Each person's path in life is guided by grace flowing from a loving Creator. As Sisters of St Joseph, Father Medaille, SJ urged us never to go ahead of this grace but when we perceive it to follow it assiduously.

(Maxim 84)

One of the graces that the Federation Vocation Animation Committee has perceived over the



last few years is that our lives at this time are not just about direct service to others in ministry but also about living in deep gratitude for all that we have been given as Sisters of St Joseph in our Church and sharing this with others.

Our way of doing this, over this pandemic time, included an online book club, with Maria Cimperman, RSCJ with her up to date book *Religious Life For Our World*. Important ideas that stayed with us from this experience were the value of our charism of all-inclusive love in our world today, the global nature of religious life today and the idea that there was a charism of religious life operative in the Church and the world beyond our own unique charism.

These realizations led us to plan and promote other programs within the Canadian and American Federations and beyond that highlighted the relevancy of our charism in the world today.

In January we organized a webinar with Sister Nathalie Becquart, xmcj, Undersecretary for the Vatican Office of the Synod of Bishops and a specialist in youth ministry to present and discuss with us the Synod for Synodality. One of her main points was that the Synod is inviting everyone to share, reflect and learn from each other about how God is calling us to be a new way of Church, living out the Gospel values in our world today. Surely our charism of inclusive love is found in and supports this synodal process.

Our next initiative was a 'video club' promoting discussion around the series of Federation videos

'Currents of Hope and Grace.' This series, archived on the [Federation website](#), was originally produced before the pandemic, in autumn 2019, as a way of bringing the members of the Federation together around topics which would open us up to the graces of the present time with the potential to lead us into our unknown future. A series of speakers invited us to look at major movements in our society today, the challenges that they present and the graces they invite us to embrace. We experienced a call to meet the present reality of our world and the current movements within it with our gift of all-inclusive love and to be open to where this would lead.

During this Lenten season we have embraced the concept of an online book club with reading, prayer, reflection and action to revisit the 2015 encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, On Care of Our Common Home. Our prayer and reflection with this beautiful inspiring document is organized around the three major pillars of our Lenten journey: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These themes can be found writ large in *Laudato Si* when we consider them in relation to creation and the need to care for all life not just human life and the human life journey.

The Church over the ages has considered Lent as a time of conversion. This year our rereading of *Laudato Si*, prayer, reflection and commitment to action is inviting us to a more expansive ecological conversion. As the family of Joseph, this path of ecological conversion is part of the call we are to bring to our world today. "It is God's call to all Christians together with others, to heal our Common Home, to build anew the community of life from cross to resurrection." (Sister Mary Rowell CSJ)

We are convinced that religious life has a future and that the seeds (graces) of that future are within us now and that we must listen to them within ourselves, within others and within our world as we move forward each day. In the outreach initiatives we have planned we are inviting others to walk a path of hope and loving discernment with us as we move into the future of religious life.

GREEN WINDOW - Making Notes on Sugarcane - Another way to get your copy

Linda Gregg , CSJ on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee

Recently, I have been doing some work away from home and only brought my laptop, thinking what a great opportunity to make do without paper. Then I found how much I needed paper! It was a lesson in reverencing and appreciating more deeply the gift of paper. Paper is everywhere in our everyday living, from notebooks to newspapers and from books to a thank-you card from a friend. Even the scraps that hold our grocery lists.

Trees are the main source for creating paper. Yet we have been rapaciously destroying this resource. We are clearcutting vast sections of our Canadian landscape and particularly now the boreal forest. Clearcutting is a practice of harvesting all the trees in a given area, leaving nothing behind. In the process it destroys the structure of soil, breaking apart the sensitive ecosystems of natural peatlands and wetlands.



With the loss of trees, all these vital carbon stores are disrupted, and vast amounts of carbon are released into the environment.

In the past, we have been

assured that our unique and beautiful boreal forest is an immense carbon sink that takes up more of the carbon and greenhouse gases that we produce. That is what the politicians and forest industry would like us to believe. But we can no longer rest in that assurance. The combination of clearcutting of old growth forests, slash burning, insect infestations and wildfires now change the figures to reveal that the boreal forest has not been a carbon sink or offset since 2001.

What about alternatives to clearcutting and destroying the boreal forest? We haven't always relied exclusively on trees for a paper source. Since early times humans have yearned to write their stories and share their experiences. We see this in the ancient cave drawings



in various parts of the world. Then we progressed to stone tablets, papyrus paper from reeds, vellum scrolls, onion skins, wood panels, slate tablets, and now laptops and photocopiers. These are a few of the sources humans have invented to share their thoughts and ponderings. Originating earliest in China, it wasn't until the Middle Ages that the paper making process from trees became developed and by the 13th century was the norm.

When it came to the moment when I had to submit my thesis in book form, I was seeking estimates when I chanced upon a copier business tucked away in a basement

level mall on Bloor Street, run by a little elderly man from India. The proprietor extolled the benefits of sugarcane paper and its similar price to regular tree paper. He was quite proud of the sustainable process used in his native India. I was intrigued and the price was right, so my thesis was printed on sugarcane paper. The experience led me to re-think what paper could be. Given the carbon cost of our forestry industry and the destruction it works on fragile ecosystems, might we consider options once more?

The University of British Columbia published a study on the use of sugarcane paper for the university, looking at carbon inputs, foreign investment and sustainability. Their study concluded that sugarcane was the best option environmentally and economically. The drawback is that it is imported, and workers conditions need to be monitored. Although I have purchased sugarcane paper easily from office supply stores, currently sugarcane paper is available in notepads and various compostable serving ware, Covid seems to have disrupted the supply.



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Join in Celebrating our 2022 Jubilarians!

From the Toronto Congregation, we celebrate Sister Rita Marie McLean who is celebrating her 75th jubilee as well as Sisters Betty Lou Knox, Ellen Leonard, and Gwen Smith - all celebrating their 70th jubilee. And, marking their 60th diamond jubilee are Sisters Jean Leahy, Rosemary McGinn, and Mary Mettler (Federation Board member).

From the Sault Ste. Marie Congregation, we celebrate Sister Annette Guerette on her 75th jubilee, Sisters Winnifred McLoughlin, Patricia Milks, Shirley Potvin, and Kathleen Roy who are all celebrating their 70th anniversaries, and Sister Mary Sammon on her 60th diamond jubilee.

From the in-Canada Congregation, we celebrate Sisters Paula Meyer (70th jubilee), Joyce Murray (60th jubilee), and Sandra Boyer (60th) of Peterborough; Pembroke Sisters Marie Meilleur, Kathleen Lyons and Nora Kelly - all celebrating their 75 jubilees; Hamilton Sisters Madeleine Graf and Doreen Kaminski celebrating their 70th jubilees and Sr. Audrey Burns marking her 75th anniversary; and, London Sister St. Bride Laverty celebrating her 80th jubilee, Sister Wilhelmina Van Herk marking her 70th jubilee, and Sisters Nora Reynolds, Mary Regier, Yvonne Parent and Veronica Cooke – all celebrating their 60th jubilee.

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There are options to tree paper and we can encourage seeking alternatives. Of course, asking the question “do I need to print this?” and printing both sides save more trees than we might imagine! But perhaps it is our awareness that each piece of paper is a gift, not only the tree but the whole earth community is most precious. For as Thich Nhat Hanh has said, “there is a cloud floating in each sheet of paper, as well as the rain and sunshine.” It takes an ecosystem to make a sheet of paper.

[“Canada’s Boreal Cutting Is A Climate Threat,”](#) Joshua Axelrod, Nov.1,2017, Accessed March 17, 2022.

[“Our managed forest land hasn’t been a net carbon sink since 2001,”](#) Robson Fletcher CBC News, Feb. 12, 2019, Accessed March 17, 2022.

[“The History of Paper,”](#) Wikipedia. Accessed March 18, 2002

“An Investigation Into Sugarcane Versus Wood Fibre Paper,” Ryan Carnito et al, APSC 262, April 4, 2013. UBC

FEDERATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF CANADA

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

Email: info@csjfederation.ca

Website: www.csjfederation.ca

Newsletter Layout: Theresa Murphy

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