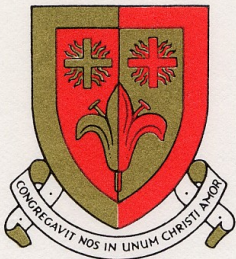


Volume 1, issue 3

December 2014



FEDERATION OF SISTERS OF
ST. JOSEPH OF CANADA

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President's Message

Loretta Manzara, CSJ

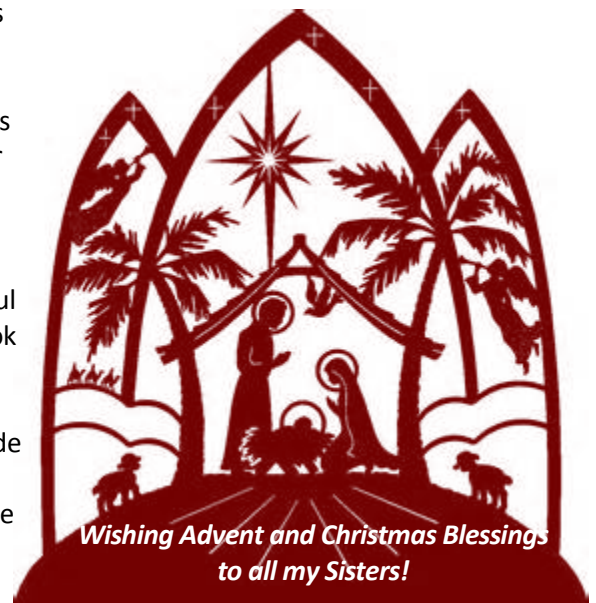
By the time this message reaches your email box or makes it onto your pile of “things to be enjoyed at a leisure moment”, we will be well into the Season of Advent. What makes this season a little different than Advent 2013 is that we have all stepped into a new way of gazing into the mystery of life with the lens of the call “Awake, awake the world”. **Pope Francis** has sounded the trumpet call. Wherever one of us mingles with our brothers and sisters, wherever we place one foot gently upon this earth, wherever we lift up our hearts in prayer, or offer a plate of food to the hungry, or write a letter of endorsement for systemic change, or open a door to welcome the newly arrived pilgrim into Canada – in all these actions God is alive and God’s love is being announced.

It humbles us to recognize that these same actions are being fulfilled by numerous people of good will. Yet at this time, the spotlight in Canada is being directed toward the 13,000 members of religious communities. Perhaps the distinct quality we CSJ’s infuse into this year of consecrated awareness is that initiative to tune our whole life to the spirit that ALL ARE ONE. Whether trumpets sound or not, our mission is clear – our whole life, thoughts, works, loving, giving are in union with the Incarnate Word.

Bernadette Gasslein penned a beautiful Christmas text for our national hymnbook “*In the Darkness Shines the Splendour*”. When I reflect on that text it draws me to see “the splendour of the Word made flesh”, welcoming shining light on the whole story of life evolving. Not just the story of the historic moment, but the

story that continues to unfold as indeed the universe continues to expand. As CSJ women, our journey enables us to be vessels for the Word of Life, ever unfolding. The Christ child of the manger is the cosmic Christ forever speaking Love in darkness. The Advent readings challenge everyone to care for the orphan, and widow, to share our daily bread, to make the rough paths smooth, to participate in the healing of our world. We in particular have a united voice to make a difference, to respond to those scriptural challenges. May we open ourselves to reveal the urgency of that Christic Oneness.

At the Fall meeting of the Federation Board we approved a new Mission Statement, this in itself is a sign of the ever unfolding creativity of the Word of Life among us. Expanding our mission to include a global perspective is one of the ways that we are being awakened to the reality of our world, and in turn will be energized to participate in awakening new partnerships, which just might be at the heart of Pope Francis’ call.



News from the Federation Office

Annual Meeting of the Federation Board

— The Federation Annual Board Meeting took place in Hamilton October 21-24, 2014. Members enjoyed the warm hospitality of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada Hamilton Neighbourhood, with the days spent not only in dealing with the business aspects of Federation, but also sharing time together and with the Sisters in Hamilton. **Sr Loretta Manzara** opened the gathering with a welcome to everyone and the introduction of all Board Members. She also was pleased to make the announcement that **Sr Nancy Sullivan** has accepted the position of Executive Director of the Federation, this following her time as Interim Director for the past 18 months. A special welcome was extended to **Srs Patty Johnson** and **Ginny Maitland** from the US Federation who came to hear of our work and to give an overview of the work being carried out by Sisters of St. Joseph in the US. Reports were shared on global issues, on the work of the Executive, and on the work of Federation Committees. Many of you may have enjoyed the teleconference opportunity to hear from our Vocation and Ecology Committees. The group enjoyed an inspiring and

informative talk entitled “We Cannot Wait for the World to Turn”, presented by guest speaker, **Sr Sue Wilson**. Please do get in touch with the Federation Office if you would like a copy of Sr Sue’s talk.

Federation Executive— The Board is pleased to announce **Sr Loretta Manzara’s** acceptance of the position of President of Federation. As Acting President since **Sr Sarah Quackenbush’s** term ended this past June, Sr Loretta capably stepped into the role, including chairing of the October Board. We also welcome two new Executive Members - **Sr Ann Delaney** from Toronto and **Sr Alice Greer** from Sault Ste Marie – who will join Sr Loretta. Grateful thanks must be expressed to **Sr Pat Boucher** for her dedication and energy as an Executive Member for the past four years.

US Assembly 2014— Several Canadian Federation Board Members travelled to San Francisco in November to attend the Annual Assembly of the US Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph. All appreciated hearing about issues which the US Sisters are concerned about, where the Holy Spirit and their hearts are leading them these days, and new initiatives. As is often the case, time

spent outside the formal meetings was as valuable as the time spent listening to presentations and in discussion. There was also the opportunity to expand our global partnerships. A warm welcome was received from the US Sisters who seemed glad to have Canadian

Sisters at their gathering and new bonds were forged.

Srs of St. Joseph Mexican Seminar

— We are delighted that **Sr Patricia Dowling** from our Toronto Congregation has agreed to represent Canadian Sisters at the 6th Seminar of Sisters of St. Joseph in Latin America, which will take place in Mexico City April 13-25, 2015. The theme of the Seminar will be in relation to **Marcia Allen’s** work on “Bearers of the Tradition” adapted to the current realities of working in Latin America. Given Sr Patricia’s years of experience of working in Honduras, it is wonderful that she is able to attend.

Federation Website— Talking of our Federation website, we are very happy to invite you to visit our revitalized site – www.csjfederation.ca Grateful thanks are due to members of the Communications Committee (**Srs Frances Carter, Dorothy Ann Howley, Mary Rose Marrin, Mary Mettler** and **Nancy Wales**) for their patience, generosity and creative ideas in working with Federation staff to improve the 10-year-old site! As well, we offer many thanks to our web master, **Duncan Hill**. Work is still to be done and this will continue slowly but surely in the months to come.

50th Anniversary of Federation in

2016— Looking towards 2015, a committee of Sisters and Associates/ Companions is being struck to look at ideas and plans to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Federation. In May 2006 a joyous gathering was held to celebrate the 40th Anniversary. For the 50th, the thought is to consider various different ways of celebration which may include, for example, offering of programs in each location. Many thoughts will likely emerge and we will keep you posted.



Annual Meeting of the Federation Board - October 2014

Our Global Connections—Sr. Nancy Sullivan

In October, Sr Anne Karges and I participated in the Global Coordinating Group meeting of twelve Sisters of St. Joseph from around the world which was held in LePuy. This is the group which considers what is happening in congregations around the world and ponders possible ways to collaborate. The new mission statement of the Federation reflects our desire to act more and more with global eyes.

We began by pondering the broader picture of religious life and what are considered essential elements. It was noted that some things which we have long considered essential are perhaps more cultural in nature depending on where in the world one is looking. The Justice and Peace Commission reported to the group on exciting new initiatives arising from their meetings, the International Centre update was received and a

progress report on the archives project was welcomed. The newly appointed CSJ UN/NGO representative, **Sr Justine Senapati** from India, was present and she shared her many hopes for the next year including a CSJ presence in Geneva to address human rights issues.

That meeting finished with the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the International Centre -with Eucharist at the local parish followed by refreshments at the Centre. Twenty eight CSSJ's from around the world were in attendance including **Anne, Nancy, Susan Davy,** and **Mary Diesbourg** who was part of the very first team at the Centre. The International Centre Board Meeting was held in the days following the Anniversary. It was wonderful to hear about the various programs conducted in 2014 and to plan for 2015. The "Mission Effectiveness: the Charism Alive"

Program at the Centre, which helps primarily lay people from our ministries to get in touch with the founding flavour of the congregation, is a particularly strong program to be encouraged. For more information and to see the programs being offered at the Centre in 2015, please consult the website:

www.centreinternationalssj.org

Greetings from the Federation Vocation Committee

—During this season of Advent as we anticipate the "silent night" of long ago, we are indeed summoned to proclaim the impassioned song of peace on earth. This Christmas and into the New Year, may we the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada, pray to be women who are models of outrageous hope, fervent faith and, boundless love. The Federation Vocation Committee wishes you many blessings this Christmas.

Thoughts from Le Puy—Sr. Susan Davy (Toronto Congregation)



Since August 22, 2014 I have had the great joy of being a member of the team at the Centre International St. Joseph.

Understandably, there is much to do

in our world of hospitality and I find the physical work of our ministry energizing and, yes, lots of fun. Each day brings surprises, challenges, learnings and countless blessings. There have been many moments which have deepened my understanding of our Charism, history and heritage. I have met wonderful people in France and I eagerly continue to learn about the culture and language of my host country. And, of course, Le Puy-en-Velay and the areas near and far offer endless opportunities to explore and experience (delightful!).

Yet, it has been a challenge to write

about my experience as mere words cannot easily express what it is like to welcome, meet and listen to our guests and visitors from around the world. In these experiences, I see the presence and movement of the Spirit of God in and among us, our Charism alive and in the hearts and works of those who claim these sacred roots in Le Puy. In deep faith, with all the challenges of today, we continue together, throughout the world, to respond to the needs of the dear neighbor in myriad and creative ways. It is truly humbling to witness; I am very grateful and filled with hope.

The Green Window—Part 17

Mary Rowell, CSJ on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee

In the Tradition of Joseph! An Ecological Reflection —

As we embrace this time of Advent and Christmas many of the traditional images of our Faith come to the fore, not least the figure of St. Joseph and the story of his role in Christian history.

The narrative is familiar; Joseph the quiet man, the protector of Mary and Jesus. Depictions of the story are ubiquitous in this season. It may seem to be a stretch too far to link the tradition of Joseph with our call to care for the earth today! But this is precisely the link made by Pope Francis in his inaugural homily given on the Feast of St. Joseph, 2013.

Pope Francis claimed the tradition of St. Joseph as protector. Joseph was a protector “By being constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God’s presence and receptive to God’s plans ... because he is able to hear God’s voice, is sensitive to those in his care. He can look at things realistically and is in touch with his surroundings.”

Francis, like his two predecessors, is acutely in touch with the realities of our current surroundings in which environmental destruction and human suffering are inseparable.

Therefore, he can take a radical leap when he invites us to imitate Joseph the protector. He says, “In him we also see the core of the Christian vocation, which is Christ! Let us protect Christ in our lives, so that we can protect others, so that we can protect creation!” An inseparable bond!

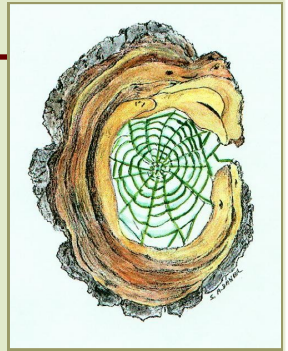
Francis continues, being a protector like Joseph “means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world It means respecting each of God’s creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people and showing loving concern for each and every person,” especially those who are most vulnerable. Today, some of the most vulnerable are those whose poverty and suffering are a direct result of environmental problems and whose fulfilment of basic needs, in turn, causes further environmental destruction in vicious cycles of depletion.

As we reflect on the gift of our vocation as Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates/Companions, the call to be “protectors” in imitation of St. Joseph, in the environmental and social realities of our time is perhaps especially personal. Our vocation has at its heart the call to

protect all of creation.

As we enjoy the images of Joseph in this special liturgical season

perhaps we can stretch our limited understandings of tradition, just as Joseph, in his time, was called to engage his deeper questions and listening, to find the courage to risk the next steps in a world of inevitable change and profound need. For as historian of Christianity, **Eamon Duffy**, has written, tradition is never static. It is “a source of confidence in launching into the uncharted future; a future that in all its complexity and contradictoriness, is abundant evidence that change is a sign of life.” This Christmas may we be filled with the life of Christ and of God’s ever-changing, good creation.



Ecology Committee— Passionate Promises Retreat

JUNE 2-8, 2015—Invermara

Once again in 2015, our Ecology Committee members will present “Passionate Promises: A Vowed Planetary Presence”.

The brochure may be downloaded from the Federation website – www.csj federation.ca – and we would be very grateful if these could be shared with anyone you might know who would be interested.

The Joy
of CHRISTMAS

We wish you peace at
Christmas time and
many blessings for the
coming year.

Sr Nancy & Margaret

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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.



Designed by Valerie Raftrey Lemieux

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

ADVENT PONDERINGS...ON THE STORIES OF SEEDS AND THE STORIES OF OUR SOULS

LINDA GREGG ON BEHALF OF THE ECOLOGY COMMITTEE

Here at the Villa in Cobourg, the garden has been "put to bed" and winter is settling in contentedly around us. The air is colder, seeping into the ground and readying the earth for its winter sleep. I was sorting some dried seeds the other day and was reflecting on the way seeds have stories, each unique to its own variety and type. Within the heart of seed lies a story about to be born, but before that time of birthing there is a journey that it must undergo.

I remember as a child being told, by a wise old gardener, the miracle of an oak tree seed. Holding the acorn with its little cap in my child's hand, I listened to the wondrous journey it would undertake – and it would do so by listening to the story written into its being, within that little acorn in my hand. For one day that acorn with its cap would become one of those towering oaks that offer majesty and strength to the forest grove, yet also lend gentle branches to cradle a fragile bird's nest and, in time, learn to wisely converse with the wind that ripples through the green cloak of its oak leaves.

But it would be a journey, a journey of listening to the story written within and learning to live that story. Not unlike the story of our souls. Inscribed in the seed of our souls is the story of what can be – if we listen to the wisdom written into our soul's journey.

Seeds all have a particular set of sequences necessary before the seed can be birthed. There are some seeds that have a very hard seed coat that serves to keep moisture

out. But over time, this coat is gradually worn down by the weathering effect of the elements, interaction with soil microorganisms, or through being taken up as a tidbit by birds. The inner seed remains safeguarded while the hard seed coat gradually wears down. This strategy is necessary for, in this way, the seed germination is being delayed for several months - timed by an unseen wisdom for when spring arrives and the right growth conditions for germination exist.

And seeds are individuals, as we are. Peas, beets, beans and spinach like a good soak before they germinate. Many seeds of perennials and woody plants absolutely will not germinate until they've had a good freeze-up. If you plant these immediately after harvest, they will not germinate. These include, Asters, Black-Eyed Susan, Pansy, Coneflower, Primrose and Lupine.

And as we know, in the wild this occurs naturally, in the time of deepening cold as winter visits upon the land and brings upon us the deepest, dark of waiting times. This deepest dark we ourselves journey through at times, a waiting upon what we cannot yet see, but believe will come, if we are faithful to the moment we are living through. The seed knows.

