

President's Message

Trina Bottos, CSJ

*Maybe Christmas
doesn't come
from a store,
maybe Christmas perhaps
means a little bit more?*

Dr. Seuss

"The Grinch that Stole Christmas"

That little bit more is a lot more that the warm and fuzzy occasion the residents of Whoville celebrate in this classic Christmas tale.

Christmas celebrates God irrevocably joining the human race. As St. John's prologue puts it "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), and different translations of this passage help us to peel back some of the shattering truth of this central mystery of our faith. "The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth lived among us."

(Good News Bible) **Eugene Peterson's** translation "The Message" puts it this way: "The Word became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood". The original Greek is more vivid with the Word "pitching his tent among us". This reminds us of the presence of God dwelling with the Israelites in the Tent of Meeting in the desert. This God willed to embrace the fleshiness of our humanity, to become one with us in all things except sin (Heb. 4:15). Jesus is God's supreme self-communication to us and He takes on flesh. Flesh, all that is transitory, mortal and imperfect and, at first glance incompatible with God (Jerome Biblical Commentary) was

what God embraced and has never unembraced! Do we really believe this?

Remember Moses at the burning bush being told to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground? Since God came among us and walked on this ground, ate and slept upon it, all ground is holy.

All the colored lights, decorations, Christmas trees and carols, presents, special food, even Santa, Charlie Brown and his tree, Scrooge and Tiny Tim and, yes, even the Grinch who tried to steal Christmas are all part of what might help us, who are flesh and blood, body as well as spirit, rejoice in the mystery of the incarnation. Yes, there is a lot about Christmas that is just commercialism and consumerism but there is also Emmanuel - God-with-us, reminding us that we are loved, that God has come to us in all the vulnerability of a baby, that God has not given up on our world. Our hopes are grounded in this miracle.

*Best wishes for a Joyful
Christmas and many
blessings throughout
the New Year.*



Message from the Executive Director—Nancy Sullivan csj

It seems not long since the early fall issue of our Newsletter when we spoke of the glorious days of summer, and now as we approach Christmas time, we can be thankful for the many glorious fall days we have experienced this year. These days have flown by quickly here in the Federation Office, with activities in France, the US, as well as here at home. Towards the end of September, I travelled to Le Puy for the International Centre Board Meeting. A highlight of this gathering was the official opening of the Centre for the Living History of the Sisters of St Joseph. My hope is that many Sisters will be able to see the wonderful exhibit, if not in person, then when it becomes available online as a virtual tour. The International Centre, among its other programs, is hosting a series for people in formation and for those who work with them on the topic of Cultural Diversity which is so needed in our world today. **Sr. Eva Solomon** was instrumental as a member of the planning committee and **Sr. Linda Parent** was chosen as one of the participants.

Following the IC Board, **Sr Anne Karges** and I attended the annual meeting of the Global Coordinating Group, also in Le

Puy. A particular blessing of this meeting was the presence of a Sister of St Joseph from the congregation in Argentina, who spoke of the experience of being a Sister of St. Joseph in South America. Our UN/NGO representative, Sr Justine, gave her annual report and reminded us of the thirty Sustainable Development Goals being addressed at the UN and on which we need to focus in the years ahead. For more information about the work of our UN/NGO, please visit the website:

<http://csj-unngo.org>

In early November, **Sr Ann Delaney** and I travelled to Albany, NY to attend the annual Assembly of the US Federation of Sisters of St Joseph. I had the opportunity of going a few days earlier to be part of a day trip to the 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York City. This heart-rending experience brought to mind the horrors of that unforgettable day of September 11, 2001, but we were also reminded of the ways in which so many people reached out to others in need at that time. The Museum was respectful, interesting and touching.

The Sisters of the US Federation are in the throes of reviewing their Federation, its activity, its purpose, and how its

ministry might be structured in the years ahead – not an easy task with the many needs the Federation longs to address. Ann and I felt privileged to be among them at this time. We gave a report about the Canadian Federation and Ann - in her usual

creative way- read a blessing from an Irish poet.

For our own Federation here in Canada, discussions at our Annual Board meeting held in North Bay in October led to the decision that changes in our structure would come about during 2017. Following my election to leadership of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada, I had offered my resignation as the Federation Executive Director effective December 31, 2016.

The two staff positions (Executive Director and Administrative Coordinator) will be amalgamated into one and the new position advertised to Sisters in our congregations. **Margaret Magee** will continue to manage the Federation as usual until June, at which time the Toronto Office will close. This amalgamated position will be a wonderful opportunity for one of our Sisters to begin the legacy of Federation into the next fifty years!

The office will be a virtual one, for example a Sister can work from her home or perhaps from a congregational space. For me, these past three and a half years have been interesting and exciting as we celebrated our 50th anniversary and continued to explore ways of moving forward together both as three congregations in Canada and on the global scene with efforts through our UN NGO, the Global Coordinating Group and at the International Centre. It has been a pleasure to work with the members of the Federation Board, with special thanks to Executive members. A final special thanks to Margaret Magee whose continued dedication to the work of the Federation over these past many years has been a blessing to all of us. Thank you.

From our Federation Office we wish you many blessings and peace at this Christmas time and all good wishes for the coming New Year.



Federation Annual Board Meeting October 2016

Grand Opening in Le Puy —

Centre for Living History of the Sisters of St. Joseph by Sr Valerie Cauwenberghe, CSJ

The recent ribbon-cutting in Le Puy, France to celebrate the opening of the “Centre d’Histoire Vivante des soeurs de St. Joseph (Centre for the Living History of the Sisters of St. Joseph) was indeed a ‘dream come true’. I remember my first visit to Le Puy in the summer of 1998. My cousin, **Leon**, in Belgium suggested this trip since he knew it was where the Sisters of St. Joseph originated and I had never been there. When we arrived at the convent, the archivist took us to the archive room and this is where I saw the precious documents and books.

Some years later, as Executive Director of the Canadian Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, I was at a meeting in Le Puy of Sister archivists from the US and France as well as members of the Board of the newly created International Centre. This group discussed the archives and their preservation as well as what was needed to be done to update them more immediately.

Of course, this took time and an archivist, **Sr. Edna McKeever US**, came to work in Le Puy with the archivist there, to begin the process. This step highlighted the importance of a climate controlled environment as well as restoration of some of the manuscripts, books and paintings.

The Le Puy archives were also on the agenda of meetings of both the International Centre Board as well as the Global Coordinating Group. Money, of course was a large factor in the deliberations as well as the structure of the building which houses them.

A wonderful, one might almost say, miraculous opportunity came when a gentleman from the US arrived at the door of the International Centre. He had been taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph and was interested in the Centre as well as the history (archives) of the Sisters. One of the Sisters (US) working at the Centre at that time referred him to me as President of the International Centre Board. I followed up and by telephone spoke with **Mr. Joseph Rogers**.

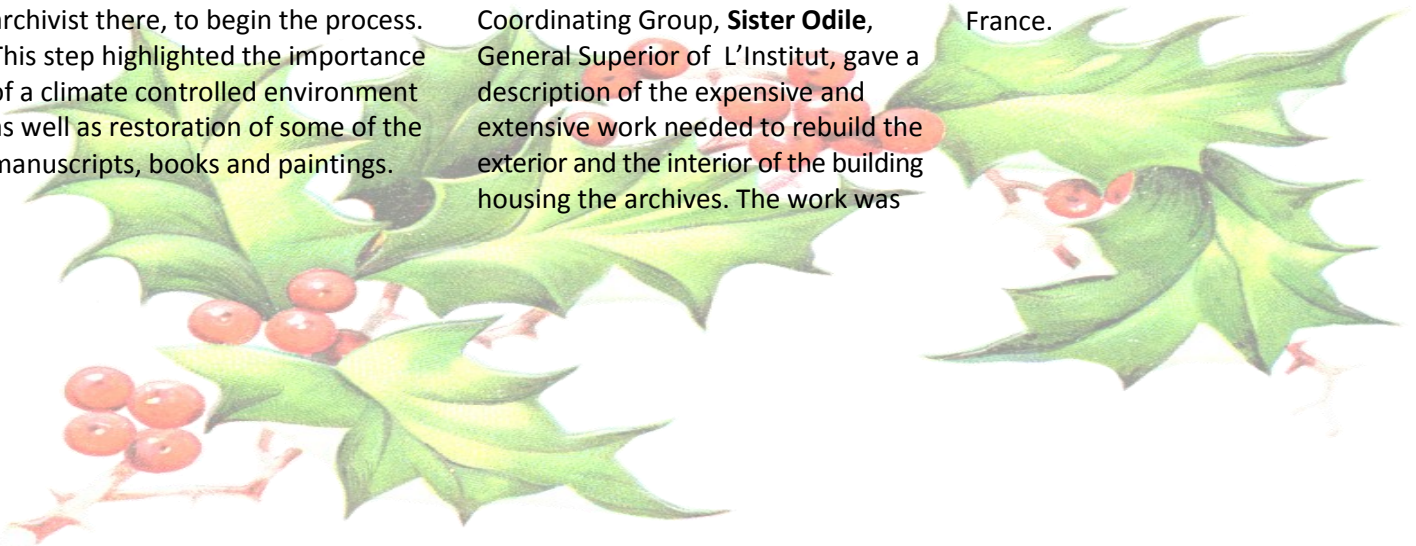
In 2012, at a meeting of the Global Coordinating Group, **Sister Odile**, General Superior of L’Institut, gave a description of the expensive and extensive work needed to rebuild the exterior and the interior of the building housing the archives. The work was



completed and it was suggested that I contact Mr. Joseph Rogers (US), director of the Anna Maria Moggio Foundation to apply for a grant for this work.

Now, several years later, because Sisters from many continents and countries had a dream to preserve our history, we have a magnificent Living History in six languages **interweaving the history of the Congregation with the history of France as well as Catholic Church history.**

It is indeed worth a visit to le Puy, France.



Food for Thought—A Failed Promise and God’s Promise

Linda Gregg, CSJ on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee

In the world of vegetable production, purveyors of genetically modified (GMO) seeds promised great things for the global community, trumpeting greater food production and reduced pesticide use in a relatively short time. GMO seeds were the answer for a starving world. This was in the late 80’s -90’s. Canada and United States bought into that message. Western Europe did not.

The twofold promise of GMO seeds was first, to make crops immune to the effects of weed killers and inherently resistant to many pests, and second, because the plants from these seeds would grow so robustly that GMO seeds would be heralded as indispensable in feeding the population of a growing world. This would also require less spraying of crops with pesticides.

It is a failed promise.

In the past twenty years the analysis of yields from both the U.S. and Western Europe reveals little difference between crops of non-GMO seeds in Western Europe and crops using GMO seeds in the U.S. and Canada. Overall pesticide use has increased in the U.S. while in France there have been major reductions in overall pesticide use. The vaunted abundance of crop yields has failed to materialize. One would assume similar statistics in Canada. This increase occurs despite GMO being the seed of choice planted for the major crops of corn and soybeans in North America. The reality is that herbicide use on corn and soybeans has soared. Making more profits for Monsanto. Farmers cannot save their own seed and are tied contractually to purchase GMO seeds. Although Western Europe is closed to GMO, Monsanto boasts of surging markets in other places of the globe.

One is reminded of the story of David & Goliath. Yet, resistance to corporate greed is not without effect. Although some markets are certainly soaring for Monsanto, there is resistance, notably in Africa, India and South America. And they are statistically significant. Just not reported as such. There are pieces of light in the darkness of corporate deceit.

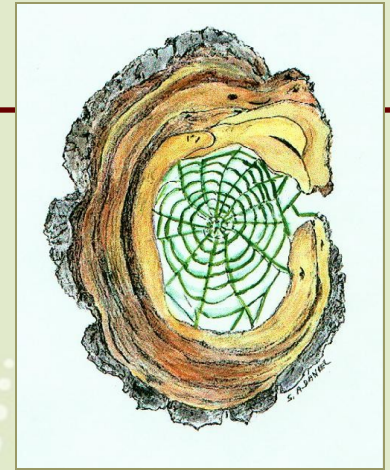
One is also reminded of a vulnerable child born in a stable, in a time of deep darkness. A light that could not be quenched. A promise that was and is fulfilled. It is to believe in the light that is stronger than any darkness of

heart. We are part of those pieces of light that pierce the darkness of corporate greed every time we pray for organic farmers, buy organic food and wherever we can plant heritage seeds, whether it be on a balcony or in a field. Sometimes these seeds will be planted in our home gardens, sometime they will be the seeds of hope planted in our prayers. We all are part of bringing to birth the promise of God’s kin-dom. All are needed to quench the darkness and bring the light of God’s love to birth in our world and in our time. One seed at a time.



The Green Window—Living into Sabbath

Mary Rowell, CSJ on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee



The season of Winter calls us to quiet waiting on life hidden in the dark earth. The liturgical season of Advent similarly invites stillness as we await the re-birth of Christ in our hearts and world; Christ ever-present and yet to come.

The Biblical Tradition echoes the patterns of Earth. **Wendell Berry** says the Tradition “elevates just stopping above physiological necessity, makes it a requirement, an observance of the greatest dignity and mystery”. It is called, Sabbath. Sabbath is an essential part of the evolutionary and spiritual process. It is a time set aside to honour creation according to the very patterns of creation. We humans must make a choice. Berry asks, “Will we choose to participate by working in accordance with the world’s originating principles, in recognition of its inherent goodness and its maker’s approval of it, in gratitude for our membership in it, or will we participate by destroying it in accordance with our always tottering, never-resting self-justifications and selfish desires?”

These are strong words and yet what a beautiful reflection for living winter and for entering fully into the season of Advent this year. Earth and Tradition call us into a time of rest and reflection – a time of joy. In his beautiful book, “Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight”, **Norman Wirzba** says, “Just as God’s *Shabbat* completes the creation of the Universe – by demonstrating that the proper response to the gifts of life is celebration and

delight – so too should our Sabbaths be the culmination of habits and days that express gratitude for a joy in the manifold blessings of God.”

Without a sense and practice of Sabbath how easy it is to forget the gifts of God and to enter into restless, joyless and destructive patterns of being. The personal, social and ecological costs of forgetting Sabbath, Norman Wirzba maintains are becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. They include stressful living to the point of breaking, a loss of meaningful relationship, a lack of peace, the destruction of Earth and its accompanying rise in human poverty and suffering.

So we are invited to reclaim a sense and practice of Sabbath. Winter and Advent, our waiting times, provide the best opportunities by calling us to rest in the rhythms of life. We are gently challenged to remember who we are and who we are called to be. Like plants that will yield fruit in the Spring only if they lie dormant in Winter we are invited to a fallow season. **Wayne Muller** writes of this most beautifully; “We must have a period in which we lie fallow and restore our souls. In Sabbath time we remember to celebrate what is beautiful and sacred; we light candles, sing songs, tell stories, eat, nap, love. It is a time to let our work, our lands, our animals lie fallow, to be nourished and refreshed. Within this sanctuary, we become available to the insights and blessings of deep mindfulness that arise only in stillness and time.

When we act from a place of deep rest, we are more capable of cultivating what the Buddhists call right understanding, right action and right effort.” May this Winter, this Advent be for us such a contemplative time; a time for God, a time for Earth, a time for one another, a time for gratitude that when Christmas comes we can once again birth Christ in the World in peace and joy. Earth teach us the way!



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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

KUDOS & THANK YOU

Much appreciation and love is expressed by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste Marie to the Sisters of St. Joseph Toronto (photographed). These sisters offered willing and helpful hands during the recent labour disruptions at the Motherhouse in North Bay.



L-R: Back— Nida Fe Chavez, Georgette Gregory, Mary Sibbald, Mary Fatta
L-R: Front—Patricia Boucher, Mary Mettler, Ann Delaney

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE FEDERATION VOCATION COMMITTEE

A reading recommendation for a new book on consecrated life comes to you all from the Federation Vocation Committee:

Religious Life in the 21st Century: The Prospect of Refounding.
Diarmuid O'Murchu; Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2016.

Celebrating Our Story!
1966 - 2016
The First Fifty Years