

Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada Newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – Mary Anne McCarthy, CSJ

Recently I went to the Christmas Market in Toronto which is located in the Gooderman and Worts distillery district. It is outdoors and features a very real, tall, beautiful, decorated Christmas tree. It is “old fashioned” in that the décor is similar to a Victorian Christmas complete with carollers in the appropriate dress of the time. They sing both holiday songs and traditional Christmas carols.

Walking around and seeing the happy smiles of people and children lining up to see Santa Claus, I couldn't help but feel a certain nostalgia for a past, that seemed to be simpler and less stressful. Things like tall snow banks, my grandmother's pudding, gifts, the tree, always the tree, lights and candles, turkey, relatives, visiting etc. As well, the two gentlemen for whom this old fashioned former distillery is named were “prominent Protestant gentlemen” who were donors to the House of Providence in the 1850's. One of them provided rail tickets so our Sisters could travel for free to the areas north of Toronto on their “begging tours.” Seeing their names, I felt gratitude to them for their generosity so long ago as I walked around their grounds in 2019.

All of this got me thinking about what the word ‘nostalgia’ means. It connotes a longing for something past and a wish that you could experience it again. This can become excessively sentimental, a yearning for a return to some past period or unrecoverable condition. Before one can feel nostalgia though or give in to its more negative traits, one has to experience one of the essential elements of nostalgia which is

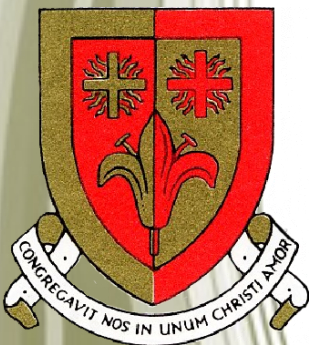
remembering and remembering is a beautiful gift for us.

During the season of Advent and Christmas we remember Jesus who was born so many years ago, we celebrate the presence of Christ who is with us now and we renew our belief in the future when Christ will come again.



Joan Chittister says, Christmas is always the feast of new life: “It isn't the strings of lights, warming as they are. It isn't the bells that make the season beautiful, however entrancing their majestic call. It isn't the tree and all the memories it conjures up of love and harmony that makes our image of Christmas complete. No, Christmas is not only more than those things, it is completely other than those things. Christmas is our image of life at its best. It is the symbol of the eternal giving of the self....Christmas is the call to give ourselves to everyone all the rest of the year....”

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Loretta Manzara, CSJ

As the Feast of Christmas fast approaches you may not have time to leisurely read through this newsletter. The words however hold wisdom

for Christmas time and well into the new year.

Our president in quoting Sr. Joan Chittister encourages us to let the glorious rhythm of Christmas bells nurture giving, giving, giving. Sr. Priscilla Solomon provides a glimpse into Amazonia and its Indigenous People in Voluntary Isolation, urging us to see the face of Christ so we might freely live and express our unity with all creation. Hearty vegetables stored for the winter signal a new awareness of earth care as related by Sr. Kathy O'Keefe, and Sr. Mechtilde O'Meara invites an exercise for this Advent/Christmas season of attentiveness to our decision making in the same way a mother determines what is good for her unborn infant. Paul Baines outlines a four-fold strategy for story telling – a structure that delivers challenging information in small bites.

So what do we have in this issue: giving, expressing unity, preserving goodness, exercising attentiveness, and making the story known. What an articulation of CSJ values!

While attending the International Centre Board meeting, the Global Coordinating Group meeting and the US Federation Leadership Assembly, information about our Blue Community pledge was well received. The interest is strong enough that a number of the congregations are interested in joining. One of the ways we can help is by sharing our own stories of collaboration and effectiveness. Paul Baines is always eager to hear from us. I encourage all to check out our Blue Community website regularly. Most recently Paul has posted a teaching video intended for students in Sudbury. <https://www.bluecommunitycsj.org>

We have been successful in producing our four video

series on *Currents of Hope and Grace: For What do We Yearn*. These are available now on our Federation website. www.csjfederation.ca

A recent publication of Sr. Amy Hereford offers this thought: our “life is deeply imbued with a sense of God, Community, and mission; a sense of calling in, blessing among, and sending out.” (page 48 *Beyond the Crossroads*) This season permits me to express gratitude for the many voices that lead us into deeper knowing of these three elements. Within this Federation each of our committees provide prayer services, educational articles, and advocacy actions. I would like to give them all a Christmas bonus, but on behalf of all our members let's ring out the bells of gratitude, and pray: May we see the face of Christ and share that knowing. May we harvest goodness and feed the hungry. May we listen attentively and be bold in advocacy. May we respond to unmet needs around us in new ways. May we narrate the water story with vigor and urgency. And may Christ-Love be born anew in our fragile world.



Radical Unity and Communion in our Common Home: “Casa Comûn” ***Priscilla Solomon, CSJ on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee***

“Christ is the image of God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, visible and invisible...all things have been created through him and for him... and He holds all things in unity.” (Col. 15-17)

“In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but in him. All that came to be had life in him...The Word was made flesh, he lived among us.” (John 1:1-4; 14)

I connected these two passages about unity from the feast of Christ the King and Christmas when I was reflecting on my experience at the *Tienda de la Casa Comûn* in Rome in October.

Such unity and interconnectedness were particularly apparent through the ways Amazonian people that I met communicated their oneness with their biome. They brought leaves, fruits of the land, a fishnet and a canoe, maps and images of their martyrs who had died protecting the land and water, using them in their prayer and presentations. Their joy and energy as well as their messages expressed their love and concern for life - all life - in Amazonia.

In one of our sessions Father Fernando Lopez, SJ, spoke of his experience as a member of an “Equipe Itinerante Amazonia” – an itinerant team whose work

includes protecting Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation (PIAV). The working document for the Synod on Amazonia describes these peoples and their vulnerability as follows:

57. In the Amazon territory, according to data from specialized Church institutions (e.g. CIMI) and others, there are between 110 and 130 different Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation or “free peoples.” They live on the margins of society or in sporadic contact with it. We do not know their proper names, languages or cultures. That is also why we call them “isolated peoples”, “free”, “autonomous” or “peoples without contact.” These peoples live in deep connection with nature. Many of them have chosen to isolate themselves because they previously suffered traumas; others have been violently pushed aside by the economic exploitation of the Amazon. The PIAVs resist the current model of predatory, genocidal and ecocidal economic development, opting for captivity in order to live in freedom (cf. Fr.PM).

56. Some “isolated peoples” live on exclusively indigenous lands, others on indigenous lands shared with the “contacted peoples”, others in conservation areas, and some in border territories.

Vulnerable peoples

59. PIAVs are vulnerable to threats from agro-industrial enterprises and

from those who clandestinely exploit minerals, timber and other natural resources. They are also victims of drug trafficking, infrastructural mega-projects like hydroelectric dams and international highways, and illegal activities linked to the extractivist development model.¹

Vulnerable peoples voluntarily isolate themselves from the ‘development projects’ of the destructive and invasive capitalist world. Their lives depend on their communities, on the natural Amazonian life around them, and on people of compassion who see and respond to their vulnerability.

I have often heard of the image of a fish in water knowing only its watery world, as an image of how we live and move and have our being in God. This image of voluntarily isolated peoples living, moving and finding their being in the vital and vibrant world they know speaks to me of what is essential. They live, conscious of each other and of that life-sustaining world, even in the face of violence.

St. Paul calls us to find our life in Christ – the One in whom we live and move and have our being – and to do so in as radical a way as the Indigenous Peoples who live in voluntary isolation. We are also being called to stand in solidarity with them and to respond to the suffering of the earth and its

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT - Winter Gardening?!

Kathy O'Keefe, CSJ on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee

"We cannot invent a new planet, but we can and must learn to use the resources of the current one more creatively." Roger Doiron

Looking out your window at the frost and snow, probably the last thing on your mind is gardening. Yet, I have discovered that there are an increasing number of gardeners here in Canada, who are extending the growing and harvesting

season through the cold months of the year, by using inexpensive and innovative techniques and structures. One such avid gardener is Niki Jabbour from Nova Scotia, Canada. Working with the seasons, along with careful planning, Niki produces a non-stop harvest all year long. In her fascinating book entitled "The Year-Round Vegetable



Gardener," Niki describes how she harvests cold-tolerant root vegetables in her garden which is located on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean.

It is important to choose hearty varieties that grow to maturity in short time periods before the onslaught of winter. These plants are grown for their roots, stems, leaves, or immature flowers: Some examples are radishes, winter lettuce, spinach and broccoli. Certain vegetables will survive frost and snow: It is the limited amount of light available that is at issue. These crops need to reach harvestable size before the amount of day light drops to less than ten hours a day, dramatically slowing growth. Vegetables, like carrots, parsnips, leeks and kale are even sweeter in winter because their starches turn to sugar as a natural form of anti-freeze. Ah, the wonders of nature!

To protect against frost and wind, many gardeners use

off-season gardening equipment. Fabric row covers made of spun polyester, bell-shaped cloches such as old milk jugs or glass jars, cold frames constructed with bottomless boxes hinged with clear glass lids, hoop houses or mini-tunnels covered with plastic sheeting, and adapted green.

One benefit of winter gardening is that it is possible to enjoy fresh salad such as mustard greens, spinach and bok choy. Vegetables like carrots and parsnips can be easily over-wintered when covered with an insulation made up of a thick layer of straw or a mulch of shredded leaves, topped with a row cover.

Several options are available for storing produce. Root vegetables can be kept in earth clamps. Cellaring keeps food in optimum condition for an extended period by controlling the temperature, humidity and light.

In preparation for the evening meal, I can remember gathering potatoes, carrots, cabbages and onions from the root cellar (an unfinished basement with a dirt floor) in our farm house. In our home in town, we had a cold room (a finished but unheated room). Most produce is best stored for three to six months in mesh bags, baskets or containers that allow for plenty of air circulation.

Gardeners are a hearty group! While some people choose to sit by a cozy fire place



during the cold winter months, others are outside gardening in order to enjoy nutritious, tasty, home-grown produce.

Mechtilde O'Mara CSJ on behalf of the Federation Vocation Animation Committee

Once when I offered Vanessa, my young co-worker, a cup of tea, she replied, "No thanks, it would not be good for the baby (she was expecting)." It struck me that every decision she made at that time, even such a small one as this, was determined by "what would be good for the baby."



Advent may be *our* time to be especially alert to what will foster the Christ-life within us. Many decisions could seem inconsequential, but in fact when we reflect on them we see that they are either strengthening our focus on the one thing essential or serving as a distraction from that objective.

To welcome Christ at Christmas, with the generous love that directs our actions towards greater fidelity, humility, charity we need to exercise the same kind of attentiveness to each decision and the same kind of care in serving our neighbour that directed Vanessa's choices as she awaited the coming of her son. Let us pray for one another as we foster the Christ-life within and among us.

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So, string the lights and follow the glow of them to those in need of you. Ring the bells and let their beauty draw you into the glorious rhythm that makes giving, giving, giving possible."

The Monastic Way, Vol.28 #12

As we gather with our communities, families and friends this Advent and Christmastide, I hope we can remember the beauty of "Christmases of long, long ago", both the first one in Bethlehem, or

the many personal celebrations over the years.

And we pray together as Sisters of St. Joseph: "God as we await the feast of the birth of the Holy Child, call forth the dormant child from within each of us; cause us to wonder and to rejoice again in this most ancient feast.

May we, this Christmas, gift one another with the gold of charity,

the myrrh of kindness and the incense of prayer.

With the Shepherds, we come to the birth of Christ seeking a simple celebration, where the greatest gift will be ourselves given to You, our God, and to each other.

May the star of Bethlehem which shone brightly over the first crib fill our homes and all the earth with light and peace."

Prayers for the Domestic Church, Edward Hays.

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...peoples in Amazonia. If we can see the face of Christ in the peoples of Amazonia and in Mother Earth, we might more freely live and express our unity with all creation.

The Working Document for the Synod of Bishops and a future document sharing the fruits of the synod will no doubt call us to live the unity and interconnectedness that our faith reveals to us.



1. INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS Working Document THE AMAZON: NEW PATHS FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR INTEGRAL ECOLOGY for THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE PAN-AMAZON p.23

A GOOD ENGAGEMENT STORY

Paul Baines, CSJ Blue Community Coordinator



When telling a new person about this Blue Community project, you likely only have a minute or two before they either “get it” and want to hear more or they withdraw.

I want to highlight one of the workshops in which I recently participated. **Engagement Organizing: harnessing people power** was facilitated by Lindsay Telfer from the Canadian Freshwater Alliance. This one-day workshop was in Sudbury and I was joined by Sr. Bonnie Chesser and Associate Rita Pulice. We went to meet others working on environmental issues in the area and to better think through our Blue Community strategy locally and across the Federation.

There were many topics and questions covered including:

- *Who are we trying to engage with?
- *What is our message?
- *What is our vision of change?
- *How would we like to invite people into this vision?
- *How can we assess and learn from our efforts?

One example of the many thoughtful tools we worked on was a worksheet called **Storytelling for Engagement**. While facts and figures appeal to our reason, most people make sense of problems and solutions based on a story. The general arch of our stories can follow a four part flow: the Challenge, the Choice, the Outcome, and the Ask.

Let’s try this out on the current ban on new bottled water permits. This Provincial permit allows companies (such as Nestlé) to access groundwater for almost free and sell it within and beyond the watershed for millions of dollars. The Provincial government is considering adding nine more months onto the current ban. What could an engaging story arch look like?

The Challenge: Water is being turned into a commodity all over the world and right here in Ontario. The rules for using groundwater were written before bottled water even existed. They were never designed to consider the social and ecological impacts of this extraction such as including community and Indigenous consent and long-term groundwater levels and plastics pollution.

The Choice: The Provincial government is currently looking for public comment about the bottled water permit policy. Now is the perfect time to learn and share how this industry works and the damaged relationships it creates. Water can continue to be managed like a resource or we can use this bottled water review to signal our commitment to stewarding water as a shared commons for all and sacred gift for many generations to come.

The Outcome: If the ban on new bottled water permits is extended by another nine months, then we have more time to build capacity and awareness for phasing out this

industry

over time. A world without for-profit bottled water affirms a global and Canadian commitment to provide water and sanitation as a human right, rather than for buyers only. More time creates more chances to weaken the social license of bottled water and inform policy that shares our values.

The Ask: We have until December 18th to have our voices heard through the Environmental Registry of Ontario. You can submit your letter through the mail to: Shari Sookhoo, Environmental Policy Branch, 40 St. Clair Avenue West, 10th floor, Toronto, ON, M4V 1M2. This is concerning ERO #019-0913. Alternatively you can submit your comments through this form set up by the Council of Canadians which is also on our Blue Community website: <https://secure.canadians.org/page/52602/action/1>

How was that story? It’s not easy taking a lot of values, details, motivations, and choices into consideration and converting them into a four-part story. With practice we can become more effective when engaging with people who are not already supportive of our cause and that’s how we can grow across the country.

Visit www.bluecommunitycsj.org email blue.communities.now@gmail.com or call 647-831-4525. *Paul is happy if you do.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND NEWS

*Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory,
because of your love and faithfulness. Psalm 115*



Sr. Isobel Gallotti received the Sisters of St. Joseph of Hamilton Legacy Award for her volunteer work with St. Joseph's Villa in Dundas. The award recognized Sr. Isobel's work with various programs offered by the Therapeutic Recreation Department and other special events.

Sr. Kathleen Lichti was nominated for an ATLOHSA PEACE AWARD, celebrating her contributions in the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation.

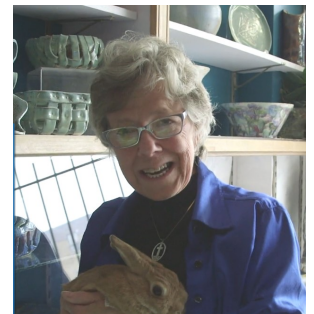


Sr. Maria van Leeuwen was named to the honour roll of the City of London for her work as a Refugee advocate. Notable quote "a community's success is always rooted in the efforts and generosity of its citizens."



News Items

Sr. Helen Kluke and Studio on the Hill are featured in a half-hour episode of Salt+ Light Media's *Behold*. Her segment runs from the 12:25 minute mark to the 18:00 minutemark. Please [click here](#) or type in <https://vimeo.com/373418892> to see it.



Sr. Rosemary O'Toole's book launch: *Words for Life*, November 9, was a smashing success.

More details can be seen on our Federation website news section: <https://www.csjfederation.ca>



Most recently Rosemary wrote: "It is starting to take a little life of its own ... an associate delivered a gift set of books to her local high school and is taking another gift set to the Diocesan Centre for their library. Another directee gifted a set to St. Paul University library. I believe Fr. Medaille would love this 'little way' of personally sharing the good news/books of his writings with others in their circle of influence!"

Paul Baines visit to Sudbury

Tuesday, December 3, Paul visited 2 classes at Bishop Alexander Carter High School in Sudbury. Not being able to visit the remaining 4 classes due to a "snow day" he later made this video to be shown at the schools. Thanks to Sr. Bonnie Chesser and her helpers for organizing this trip for Paul. Click here for the video: <https://youtu.be/cWwTmlG2LuI>

S.A.I.L. (Sojourners in Active and Inclusive Love)



This year the theme is “**Call to Action**” As some of the Sisters who attended SAIL 2019 recall we came up with a plan of action to become more aware of the injustices towards Indigenous Peoples. For SAIL 2020 we have decided that our call to action will be to educate ourselves and bring more light to the issue of water in the Indigenous communities. We plan to post information on other issues since our meeting time is so short. More information coming soon!

The SAIL Committee, Costanza, Kathleen, Justina, Christine and Donna

SAVE THE DATE and SPREAD THE NEWS August 17 - 20, 2020

Best Western PLUS Mariposa Inn & Conference Centre
400 Memorial Drive Orillia, Ontario

HARVESTING GOODNESS: The Sisters’ Vegetable Garden at 2 O’Connor Drive

In early 2019, staff and Sisters decided to pilot a garden project at 2 O’Connor. Sisters Marie MacNamara, Cecilia Barry, Mary Sibbald, Cecelia Tallack and Marie Kilcullen were involved every step of the way with other Sisters participating from time to time. Three raised garden beds built from untreated wood and filled with organic soil became home for the growing process. Some seeds were started indoors and later planted with other pre-grown plants.

They included: lettuce, tomatoes, zucchinis, rutabagas, onions, and herbs. Harvesting was a joyous occasion with the produce being put to very good use. Sisters used some of it to make their own meals in the kitchen. Over 8 pounds of fresh, organic vegetables was donated to the Daily Bread Food Bank and about 5 pounds to Mustard Seed for their clients.



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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