

Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada Newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – Trina Bottos, CSJ

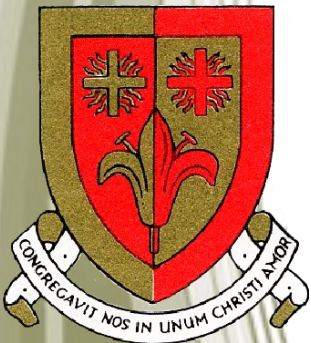
A title of a little book in our library caught my eye recently- *The Selfless Way of Christ* by Henri Nouwen but it actually was the subtitle “Downward Mobility and the Spiritual Life” that intrigued me. I think I understand what is meant by “upward mobility” but “downward mobility”- not so sure.

Our CSJ signature passage from Philippians describing the humility of Christ who though “his state was divine,” did not cling to his equality with God but “emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave” (Phil 2:6-8) might be a good place to start.

The Gospel is full of paradoxes that illustrate “downward mobility” – to be powerful one must accept weakness, to be rich in the things of God, we need to embrace poverty, to inherit the kingdom we must become like little children, if we want to be first we have to be willing to be last, if we want to live we must be willing to die.

And who are the heroes of our Scriptures? Little David, the youngest and least important of Jesse’s sons, Moses, an abandoned and adopted baby, Mary, a young Jewish girl from a small insignificant Jewish town, Joseph, a carpenter who took her as his wife even though the child she was carrying wasn’t his. Then there are Peter, Andrew, James, and John, lowly fisher folk, Matthew and Zacchaeus, hated tax collectors, the widow who gave her tiny amount, the publican who asked for mercy, the woman who shamelessly begged for the cure of her daughter. Not an upwardly mobile person among them!

Because of so many years spent in school, both as a student and as a teacher, September for me has the feel of a New Year. Each past September brought new situations and challenges. I think this year “Downward Mobility” will be mine.



*We remember and Celebrate the birth of our
Canadian Federation: September 20, 1966*

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Loretta Manzara, CSJ



On a rainy June 22nd Margaret Magee

and I moved artifacts, computer, files, and sundries in a 2 car convoy from Toronto to London. Well it wasn't really a convoy because I took the wrong turn on Queen's Park Circle and headed north. In spite of that we both arrived in London about the same time!

Margaret has been such a tremendous help, teaching me about the administrative aspects of the Federation Office, introducing me to banking and accounting personnel, showing me the ins and outs of the mysteries of communication that she has fine-tuned over the years. We will duly offer our gratitude at the October Board meeting in Hamilton.

One of the final projects Margaret completed was the compiling of our story of the past 50 years. Sister Jackie O'Brien (SSM) compiled the first 25 years. You probably have a copy of that little booklet on your shelf. At the October Board meeting we will launch the latest version. This is the last of the projects organized by the executive for the celebration of our 50th anniversary.

In this issue of the newsletter

- ◆ Sister Kathy O'Keefe shares significant learnings from the Vocation Committee meeting August 4-6.
- ◆ The Ecology Committee continues with its valuable submissions to our newsletter, following its May meeting in Cobourg.
- ◆ An announcement of who is attending the *Cultural Diversity and Conflict Management Program* in September, and a reflection by a past participant.

May was a busy month for Committee meetings.

- ◆ Our Federation Archives Committee met May 2nd, and reminded us that the Federation Biography Database Project continues to be updated. It is available on a thumb drive from your local Archivist. As well new projects are percolating!
- ◆ Our Associate/Companion Leaders Committee met in North Bay May 28 – 30th sharing information on how each group invites new members, and enjoying a day of reflection and prayer.

In July the Office for Systemic

Justice sent us a communication and a Submission Paper on **Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017**. This was sent to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Ontario Legislature.

May I encourage you to read this issue of the newsletter with the lens of our Mission Statement. How are we **empowering one another in the passionate living of our charism of active and inclusive love?**

Following the October meeting, I will be off to Le Puy for my first International Centre Board meeting. This is followed immediately by the Global Coordinating Group, where Sister Anne Karges (in Canada) will bring greater continuity, having served as our Canadian representative for the past few years. I imagine language will pose somewhat of a challenge for me, but what a wonderful opportunity to experience our charism in action from a global view! It is a privilege to be drawn so easily into this second aspect of our Mission Statement: **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.**



VOCATION COMMITTEE - VALUABLE VOICES

Kathleen O'Keefe, CSJ

It is always wonderful to take in the beauty of nature while travelling to Northern Ontario! Sister Loretta Manzara and I had an enjoyable drive to North Bay to attend the Federation Vocation Committee gathering on August 4th. We spent the weekend at the Sault Ste. Marie CSJ Motherhouse where we experienced warm hospitality. With the Le Puy kitchen as backdrop, we prayed about God's dream for us. Sister Costanza Romano chaired our meetings while Sister Mechtilde O'Mara acted as secretary. Sisters Bonnie Chesser, Mary Rowell, and I were also present. Unfortunately, Sister Rosemary Fry was unable to attend. Some of our newer members joined us to help us improve our approach to fostering vocations to religious life. Sister Mary Clare Seitz is a final professed Sister of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie. Sisters Donna Smith and Christine Carbotte are initially professed Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada. Sister Kristine Fernandez is a Toronto CSJ novice who will be partaking in the U.S. Federation Novitiate in Concordia, Kansas.

The newer members spent time together reflecting on their experience of becoming a Sister of St. Joseph. What they found positive about their time in vocation discernment includes: the

fact their inquiry was met with a prompt response from the Vocation Director; the invitation to pray with the Sisters; days of reflection and discernment retreat weekends including a *Come and See* weekend; meeting with a spiritual director and a counsellor were important for personal growth; spending a week with Sisters, sharing meals with them, and working alongside Sisters



Standing: Sisters Donna Smith and Christine Carbotte
Sisters Mary Clare Seitz and Kristine Fernandez

in ministry; resources such as *Nun's Life Ministry*, blogs, and *YouTube* were enriching; *Companions on the Journey* and *Theology on Tap* were great venues for meeting other persons who take their faith seriously; and, meeting other Sisters from across Ontario in their home areas was enjoyable.

The newer members would have liked more opportunities to regularly pray with the Sisters and join them for meals. This would give them the chance to develop relationships in an informal, safe

environment. They would like to see the Canadian CSJs listed on *Vocation Match*. It was stated that the CSJ websites could be improved by providing more information on the CSJ charism, more Sisters' life stories, and more descriptions of past and present ministries in which Sisters have been or are involved, with future possibilities for ministry included.

The women spoke of the importance of the visibility of our Sisters in our society. They thought that our CSJ history needs to be made more available to the public by having displays in prominent places. It was mentioned that it is helpful to make it known that CSJs are willing to look at each individual inquirer, regardless of age, before deciding whether or not that individual will be accepted into community.

Sister Jeanne Fortin joined us briefly to share her wisdom and insights about living religious life. She was a part of a group who met with Father Nepper, S.J. to translate early CSJ documents including *The Primitive Constitution*, *Maxims of the Little Institute* and *Maxims of Perfection*. Sister Jeanne is a wonderful witness to a life of joy. We were encouraged to become the person God wants us to be, to pray contemplatively, and to live mindfully, being present to the moment. Sister Jeanne continues to be a beacon of hope for us all.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Sister Mary Clare Seitz, from the Sault Ste. Marie Congregation will be attending the Cultural Diversity and Conflict Management Program for newer members to be held at the International Centre in Le Puy, France from September 10-20, 2017. Sister Mary Clare, who pronounced final vows in September 2014, is one of six North American Sisters and the only Canadian participant.

This wonderful opportunity to meet and share life and faith with other CSJs around the world at the birthplace of our St. Joseph Congregation is being financed by a grant from the Hilton Foundation which covers travel, accommodation, and course fees for all participants.

We ask you to pray for the Sisters taking part in this program and look forward to hearing how this adventure unfolds.

In the fall of 2016 Sister Linda Parent (in Canada) participated in this program. In May, Sister Susan Glaab had the opportunity.

Sister Susan writes: From May 9 – 19th, 2017, I had the privilege of attending a 10-day workshop at the International Centre in Le Puy en Velay on Cultural Diversity and Non-Violent Communication sponsored by the Global Coordinating Group of the Sisters of St. Joseph. This

program was facilitated by Sister Loraine Delaney (India) and Sister Elisa Zuanazzi (Brazil). The project was developed in response to what global leaders of the Sisters of St. Joseph describe as their most pressing concern, helping new Sisters incorporate into communities that are rapidly



Sister Mary Clare Seitz

becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse. Approximately 22 Sisters from various countries including Canada, Haiti, Mexico, Democratic Republic of Congo, France, India, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Italy, Norway, Senegal, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso, who are

involved in the work of initial Formation, participated. Our days were filled with thought-provoking presentations and small group discussions as we looked at the topics of cultural diversity and conflict management through the lens of our CSJ spirituality. We role - played various scenarios from

community life and experienced and celebrated each other's culture through song, dance, and the tasting of regional foods. Together we explored the various ways that our diversities complement and complete us, and the importance of welcoming the other as Other. Each evening as we gathered for prayer I would gaze out the window at the same rolling hills that Médaille and

our first six sisters would have looked at so long ago, and felt how delighted they would be to see the variety of ways in which each culture gave expression to our charism of inclusive love.

What I learned to appreciate was that in much of the developing world vocations to religious life are abundant but that in some countries, our Sisters are living in community with Sisters who are from other cultures some of whom are at war with one another. In such circumstances learning to appreciate diversity of culture and the practice of non-violent conflict management becomes vitally important. We also discussed sub-cultures that exist within our communities today and the challenge they present for

existing members and also for those who are presently entering religious life.

By the end of our 10 days together many shared that they had gained a better understanding of the nature of nonviolent and intercultural communication and felt not only better equipped

but more confident in using conflict resolution skills when they returned home in order to better respond to the needs of the people in their corner of the world. As the program drew to a close I was appreciative of the opportunity I had been given to visit our historical roots and to see how Médaille's Little Design continues to flourish and evolve in diverse ways.



Sister Susan Glaab

FOOD FOR THOUGHT - THE SPIRITUALITY OF CANNING

Janet Speth, CSJ on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee

These late summer days, I await the showing of those first red tomatoes in my small garden. I anticipate their delicious taste fresh off the vine and the enjoyment of preserving them for sauces and soups for cold winter nights.

Participating in the '4 P's of Local Food: Planting, Picking, Preparing and Preserving'¹ and following the 100 mile radius for purchasing local food continually raises our consciousness about care for Earth. We impact global warming by fostering relationships with local farmers, reducing long distance transportation; and by canning we provide local food year round, decrease food waste and reuse glass Mason jars. However, beyond the environmental impact how does preserving: bottling and canning, deepen our evolutionary spirituality? A few Sisters generously offered to expand my musings.

Julian of Norwich prayed, "Within us - as a sheer gift of God- is the capacity to bring forth what has never been before." Canning is a work of art and in this creative expression we participate in new unfoldings of the Universe. Graced with Earth's abundance we share in its cycles of dying and re-birthing as fruits are transformed into delicious jams and jellies and zucchini and cucumbers into zesty relishes and pickles. Our rootedness in Earth's values of diversity, inter-dependency and intimacy is embedded in these sacred relationships with the natural world.

Inter-relatedness is also enlivened as we recapture fond memories of our mothers and grandmothers lovingly putting down garden



produce. A sense of belonging to cultural identities and ancestral heritage is nurtured as we now carry forward generational wisdoms of the land. Even if we are not attracted to doing canning, we are steeped in these connections each time we enjoy tasty home-made preserves.

Essential to inter-dependency is community building. Nature manifests this in the intricacies of eco-systems. Canning embodies our charism of presence to the dear neighbour. Together, Sisters Sharon Miller and Pauline Guindon (SSM) make jelly from their crab apple trees for the community at North Bay's ecumenical "Gathering Place," which welcomes the homeless, disadvantaged, and

economically and spiritually challenged. Sister Gwen Smith (Toronto) makes preserves with the participants at the Mustard Seed Community Kitchen. The communion climax is, "Taste and See the Goodness of the Lord," with all sharing a dish made from the fruits of their labour. Sisters Linda Gregg and Mary Rowell (in Canada) ensure that food from the Community Gardens at the Villa is preserved and used to nourish the many retreatants that come throughout the year.

Mary Oliver in her poem, *Answers*, writes: "How she (her grandmother) poured confusion out, how she cooled and labelled all the wild sauces of the brimming year."

Preserving the fruits of the earth is a holy activity. It takes time, patience, and care and fosters joy. It invites us to attend the body of Christ with reverence and grateful heart. Even the simple act of giving a gift of preserves to family and friends is a reaching out in love. Most importantly it is an act of hope and optimism trusting in the providence of the Divine, bestower of fruitfulness, ever promising the flourishing of all life.

¹**Planting, Picking, Preparing and Preserving** These are the 4 P's of Local Food, as coined by Neil Tilley, an organic farmer and advocate for environmental stewardship from Newfoundland.

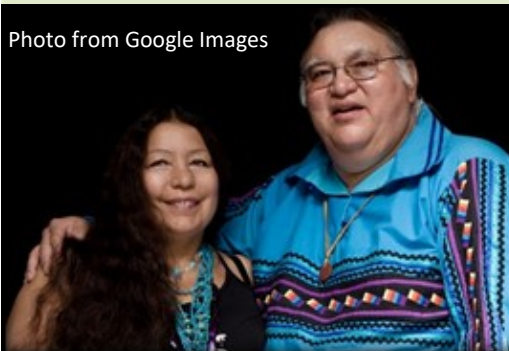
² Thank you to Sisters Betty Lou Knox, Pauline Guindon, Sharon Miller, Gwen Smith, Linda Gregg, and Mary Rowell.

THE GREEN WINDOW - BACKGROUND SETTING FOR CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

Nancy Wales, CSJ on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee



As we know, the various regional hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have concluded and the Royal Commission has released its final report. This comprehensive report



offered its potentially impactful and transformative recommendations as 94 Calls to Action. The Calls to Action provided "a general handbook on how to achieve reconciliation within Canada." Lenard Monkman, CBC NEWS

No doubt, our exposure to Survivors' stories opens our minds and softens our hearts to the unimaginable and horrendous experience of many of the Residential School attendees. However, coming to grips with the ongoing events of our shared Canadian history will require much more than just learning about the legacy of residential schools.

Owning our past calls us to create a shared future, which is "a multi-faceted process that restores lands, economic self-sufficiency, and political jurisdiction to First Nations and develops a respectful and just relationship between First Nations and Canada."

Centre for First Nations Governance

It is apparent that the task ahead

is monumental both in size and significance. However, it's important to keep in mind the words of Lao Tzu, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

An Important Step: Face to Face Conversations

Reflecting on what reconciliation means to me, and us, collectively, it seemed important to have a conversation with 2, local respected elders. Sister Margo and I met Dan and Mary Lou Smoke while working on a local T and R initiative.

In our visit with them, in their home, Sister Margo and I felt their hospitality and enjoyed Kana'talako Indian Cookies¹ and lemonade. I came away from our time together knowing a little more of their personal journey of discovering their cultural roots with its rich ceremonies and traditional wisdom.

Dan is encouraged that following the process of the Royal Commission and the release of its Calls to Action there has been an evident surge in interest among Canadians to become more familiar with the history, diversity, and richness of First Nations peoples.

It is significant to him that Western University's Senate, among other bodies, decided to include the naming of traditional territorial lands on which the group gathers for events. I came away realizing the importance of this simple act as a way to include, recognize, and honour our Indigenous Peoples.

However, Dan laments that 100+ native communities remain without access to clean drinking water.

Furthermore, in neighbouring Delaware, ON plans are underway to build a new waste water treatment plant which raises concerns for him about the future water quality from the Thames River. This is the source of drinking water for London's 3 neighbouring reserves, Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation, and Munsee-Delaware Nation.

Does this water crisis of which Dan spoke not raise our group conscience for the need for us to contact our local government representatives to apply public pressure to initiate concrete steps to rectify the intolerable situation faced by boil water communities? Our founding charism of unity and reconciliation urges us to assume our personal responsibility in bringing about the necessary healing of the rupture in relationships between individuals of First Nations or Settlers heritage.

Face to face conversations with our First Nations sisters and brothers offer us opportunities to see our mutual history and shared future from new perspectives.

Dan and Mary Lou encouraged us to visit nearby reserves assuring us that we would be most welcomed. Many communities have gift shops and restaurants where we could begin our conversations. Let us embrace Dan and Mary Lou's invitation and continue to walk toward reconciliation and right relationships.

¹Recipe for cookies at <http://oneidalanguage.ca/oneida-culture/oneidalanguage-recipes/kanatalako-indian-cookies/>

Since two of our Motherhouses rest on the shores of mighty waters, Sisters of St. Joseph were able to welcome the Canadian Canoe Pilgrims for an overnight stay, meaningful conversation, Eucharist, and a meal.

By July 31st eighty-six canoeists had participated in the month-long, 850-kilometre canoe trip. The Pilgrimage, was comprised of Indigenous, Jesuit, English and French Canadian paddlers, in response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The experience was created to help young adults and others, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to be immersed in each other's customs and traditions for an entire month, in order to foster deep respect, trust, dialogue, and hopefully friendships, the building blocks for reconciliation.

Fifty years ago, a group of Jesuits paddled this long journey, following a traditional First Nations canoe trade route, as part of Canada's Centennial. This summer a core group of 30 paddlers from across the country retraced that same route. The core group of paddlers changed at various stopping points.

The pilgrims began at Midland, Ontario, paddling up Georgian Bay to the French River into Lake Nipissing,

where our Sisters in North Bay warmly welcomed them, July 31st.

Sister Bonnie MacLellan, was quoted in the *BayToday*, acknowledging this trip as a 'significant moment in history'.



"A pilgrimage is a journey on land and this pilgrimage is a journey of the heart, a journey of openness, of reconciliation, of developing right and new relationships as we move

forward as partners. Not as one nation over another, but in true partnership."

From Lake Nipissing, the pilgrimage proceeded along the Mattawa River where our Sisters in Pembroke welcomed them August 6th.

Sister Lucy Germain: "On behalf of the Sisters of St. Joseph, I would like to welcome you to our home. ... We thank you for undertaking this great project to celebrate Canada and to further the reconciliation that has begun and continues to bring all peoples into oneness where all are loved and respected for who they are."



Travelling further down the Ottawa River into the St. Lawrence River, the paddlers arrived at their final destination in Montreal on August 15, 2017.

And notably, Sister Eva Solomon, SSM, was one of the paddlers! In her words "I paddled the whole journey from Midland to Montreal though we were sometimes asked to be part of the logistics team to make things a little easier for the rest of the paddling team. We paddled over 900 kilometers in total and probably closer to 1000 kilometers counting our trip to Kahnawake which was not technically part of the canoe trip. Two professional photographers will make a video that is expected to be released in about 4 months. They did paddling as well."

Thank you Sister Eva for such a tremendous witness.

Both our Sault Ste. Marie Sisters and our Pembroke Sisters have circulated wonderful photos in their congregational communications. For further viewing check out <https://canoepilgrimage.com/>



Images taken from www.canoepilgrimage.com



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ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL GATHERING OF S.A.I.L.



Sixty participants from all three Congregations gathered August 14-17 in Peterborough, for the 19th annual meeting of *Sojourners in Active and Inclusive Love*. Not a formal committee of the Federation, their undaunting initiative and steadfastness strongly proclaim our CSJ charism. A volunteer group of Sisters plan the program, book the location, engage the guest speakers, and handle all the financial arrangements. This year's theme was *I know the Plans I Have for You ... a Future Filled with Hope*. Presenters were: Sisters Mary Rose Marin and Mary Anne Larocque. As well a panel comprised of Sisters Linda Parent, Joan Driscoll, Pauline Guindon and Mechtilde O'Mara shared their passion, hope, and joy.

As a courtesy the S.A.I.L. Committee submit a report of their activities to the Federation Board each year.

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.