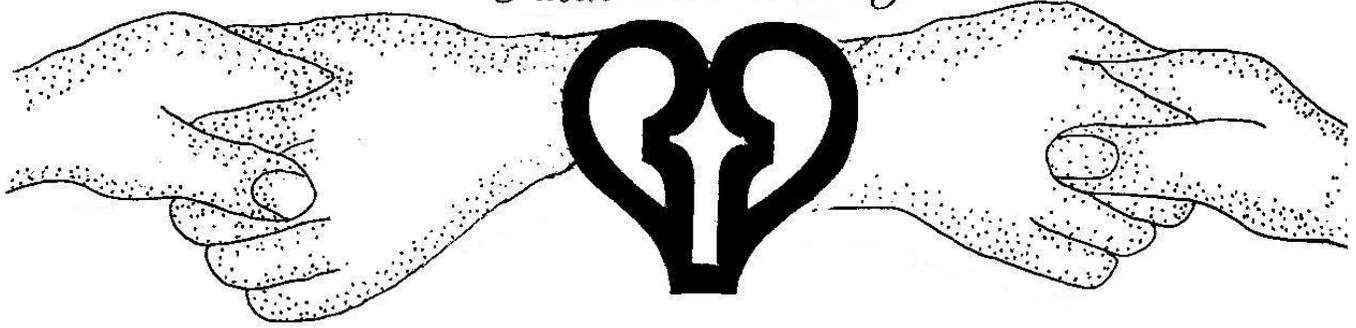


Faith and Sharing



Heart - to - Heart

North American Bulletin

October 2008
Volume 35, no. 1

Theme: Holiness, our call

Call to Holiness Nourished in our Faith & Sharing Communities



When I was growing up (many years ago!), Catholics considered the priests and sisters who dedicated their lives to God and who served the Church as the people God “called to holiness.” Then in 1964 the Pope and Bishops of the Church promulgated *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, which changed the image many Catholics had of holiness. (Although this was not something new since Paul in his letters often refers to Christians as “the holy ones” or “the saints,” Rm1:7 for instance).

Chapter Five of this Constitution is entitled “The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church.” The Bishops remind the faithful that Christ Himself calls us to holiness and that it is clear that everyone (lay, religious and ordained) is called to be holy! (#40) The principal way to holiness is Love! (#43) By our holy love, we nurture in the world a way of life that is more gentle, more beautiful, more human. (#40) In addition to love, this path to holiness also includes the sacraments, prayer, the Eucharist, self-sacrifice, service to others and virtue lived every day. (#42)

I can’t help thinking that this is exactly what we are all trying to do within our Faith & Sharing Communities, especially during the retreats. And because we believe that all are called to holiness, with our own weaknesses and strengths, everyone is welcome and encouraged to be a part of Faith & Sharing.

I can’t help thinking that our retreats provide all the elements of this “path to holiness” named by the Bishops: love and respect for each person, prayer, the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, exposition of the Eucharist and the sharing by Animators and attendees of the ways we are called to serve others and live virtuous every day.

I can't help thinking that the grace of Faith & Sharing is, as Fr. Bill Clarke, SJ, writes, in the "two-fold movement in Faith and Sharing: an inward movement towards God hidden in the depths of our own vulnerability, and an outward movement towards our brothers and sisters, especially those who are more poor and in need. Faith and Sharing calls us to a deeper sharing in the life of Jesus through prayer and through our reaching out in service and self-gift. In Faith and Sharing we talk together as communities of believers in God and God's creation, with one hand in the hand of Jesus and the other in the hand of the poor." (*The Grace of Faith and Sharing*, July 1988, Montreal, Quebec) And this grace awakens our awareness of God's call and nourishes our desire to be holy.

I can't help thinking that we all have been nurtured and sustained in holiness through our participation in Faith & Sharing. God bless you for your commitment and faithfulness to Faith & Sharing. God bless us all as every day and every where we respond to God's call to holiness!

Pat Mueller
North-American Coordinator

Heart-to-Heart

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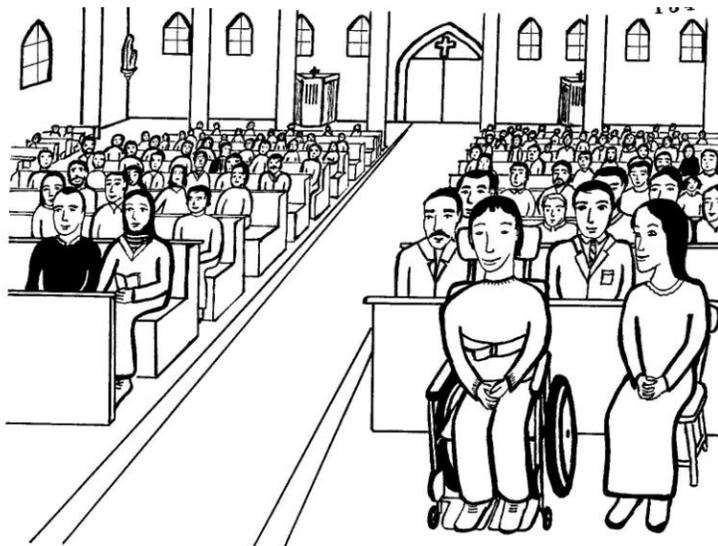
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Themes of upcoming issues

April 2009 (dead line: March 15, 2008):

October 2009 (dead line: Sept. 15, 2009):

The Word of God to be Treasured

Washing of the feet

Theme: Holiness, our call

Saints of the calendar

I have two calendars at home. One of them, made by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, indicates which saint is honoured daily: Saint Elphège, March 12; Saint Mathias, Apostle, May 14; Saint Arsène, July 19. Some of those names are known, however the majority are unfamiliar. Assuredly they are all “good people”, important people in the Church, but I can hardly say that they are “my people”.

My other calendar was made by my 13 year old nephew, with the use of a computer. Through the endless possibilities of technology, he was able to record the birthdays of each family member: his parents, sisters, grandparents, uncle, aunts, cousins,... And he added pictures of each person. Hence, I can find my name and face in the month of December. Surrounded by my family. These are “my people”.



The calendar hung on the wall of my room is the second. The people who are close to me. Not “acknowledged” saints, for sure. “Ordinary” people, but people who are precious in my eyes.

Which “calendar” has God our Father “hung” in his “room”? This is only an illustration, of course, but I would imagine that God’s calendar contains all the people of the past, present, and future. With names and pictures. Because God’s heart is so full of love that He can see the good in each person, his or her “saintly” qualities. “You are precious and honoured in my sight, and I love you” (Is 43: 4), says the Lord to each person.

My heart is not infinitely loving like God’s, but I feel called to love people that He put on my calendar. Thus to somewhat resemble Him...

Jean Roy
Sherbrooke, region 3

Theme: Holiness, our call

All Called to Holiness

In the July issue of "Prions en Église" (or “Living with Christ” in the English edition), I was struck by the advertisement of Jacques Gauthier's book *Tous appelés à la sainteté (or All Called to Holiness)*. It dawned into my mind that this was not sheer coincidence but rather directly in line with the *Heart to Heart* October theme. After having read his book, I would like to share with you the help it brought me.

When I was a kid, I have to avow that the word holiness was rather automatically itching my ears when someone was talking about Christians given alive as food to lions in Roman arenas or about martyrs in Canada tortured to death. On the other hand, I felt quite puzzled when my mother was full of admiration for someone and would say: “So and so is a real saint!” In my astonishment, I came to wonder if there were two different levels of sanctity, either the extreme one or the ordinary one.

"Many are called but few are selected" says a proverb. Although we are all destined to become saints, I am inclined to think that few of us, if ever some will, one day, be canonized. However, it does not mean to give up aspiring to that ideal or stop trying our best with the hope of reaching that goal. Now the question is: How to achieve it? Jacques Gauthier, in his book, has an excellent suggestion for us, what he calls the 5 trails, namely: God's Word, Prayer, Forgiveness, Bread of Life and Presence. Is it not part and parcel of the spirit at Faith & Sharing? Let us have a second look at each of them.

God's Word: We can become a saint if we, first, are grafted on God's Word as a branch to the vine, and God's Word, it's Jesus made flesh. We, then, should listen to it, ponder on it and apply it to our life. Indeed, each of our monthly Faith & Sharing gathering favors us with God's Word and our sharing in small groups of what has been meaningful to each us leads us thus, to deepen it.

Prayer: The individual prayer is, according to St. Therese of Avila, a friendly private encounter with someone who has given a true proof of his love for us. The Katimavik is the ideal place for this intimacy with the Lord. Therefore our prayer either individual or collective, be it of praises, supplication or thanksgivings, is no doubt indispensable to someone who believes.

Forgiveness: Jesus invites us to forgive "not seven times but seventy times seven times" (Mt. 18, 22), that is to say: without limits. Jacques Gauthier says that he cannot figure out a saint who would not have had opportunities of forgiveness all along his life. A pardon willingly offered opens to truth, humility and love and when duly accepted, strengthens the relationship and ever enhances it. Out of the 5 above trails recommended to us as a sure path for becoming a saint, forgiveness is obviously the most difficult as it means overcoming our touchiness which could have been deeply hurt sometimes.

Bread of Life: Where can we find the strength of living our faith, day after day, and face heavy difficulties at times unless we eat the Bread of Life and drink the Holy Blood of Christ ? How can we be closely united to our brothers and sisters of Faith & Sharing unless by the Eucharist? It is thanks to this great sacrament that we can repeat after St. Paul: "Yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me." (Ga. 2, 20)

Presence: Jesus is really present among us when we gather in His name but also in each one of us. "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him." (Jn. 14, 23) Whoever is convinced of God's continual presence is really blessed as he can consider Him as a real friend in whom he can trust and totally rely on.

You will agree with me that these 5 trails towards the path of holiness are accessible to us though we should admit that we cannot attain that goal out of our own merits and strength. Jean Vanier in his book *Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John* (p. 296) focuses on that truth as follows:

"No human being in himself or herself is holy or pure.
We become holy only through the holiness of God.

Holiness is not something we can achieve; it is *given*.

"Make them holy in the truth" (Jn. 17,17)

Holiness is for all those who are poor enough to welcome Jesus.
It is for people living ordinary lives and who feel lonely.
It is for all those who are old, sick, hospitalised or out of work,
who open their hearts in trust to Jesus
and cry out in healing love. "Come, Lord Jesus, come!"

Our path towards holiness is all indicated. Up to each of us to commit ourselves with perseverance with the help of the One who gently invites us to follow Him.

Hélène Babin-Otabé
Québec, region 2

Theme: Holiness, our call

100

Sanctity, a calling



Quite often, when we think of holiness, we think of people who have been officially recognized as saints by the Church: St- Francis of Assisi, Holy Marguerite-Bourgeois, etc. Sanctity may then seem like something out of reach, meant for an elite, not even to be dreamed about. And yet, Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, tells us "It is God's will that you should be sanctified" (1Th 4,3).

We think holiness means perfection. Far from it! Only God is perfect. We should remember what happened to Adam and Eve when they tried to become like God. It is my feeling that we access sanctity when we sincerely try to love our Lord and carry this love to our brothers and sisters. Our words and deeds, however unremarkable, can reveal genuine holiness, if carried out in true love.

No need for great talk. Here again, Saint Paul, writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13) tells us: "Were you a great speaker of superb intelligence, extremely knowledgeable and of profound faith, if you have no love, you are like a cymbal clanging in emptiness" (personal translation).

I dare say that someone baptized, truly living his baptism in daily life, participates in holiness right now. In fact, our purpose is to pursue sanctity one day at a time, our gaze constantly seeking Jesus Christ himself. In other words, we become saints by following Christ. Of course, it is extremely demanding to follow Christ up to the end: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt. 16,24). To let go of what enslaves us, so as to become available and abandoned is a sure way of attaining holiness. Nothing is impossible to whoever puts his or her trust in the Lord for he is the Way, Truth and Life.

Michel Last
Montreal, region 3

Holiness

Every body wants to go to heaven ... However very few aspire to become saints even if all Christians, you and I, are called to holiness; did you ever know that? I do remember that a friend of mine who was really a true Christian, was, one day, asked if he had ever wished to be a saint. I was quite surprised at hearing his spontaneous "NO". In another instance, an other friend while sharing in a group, simply revealed her deep desire of becoming a saint though she realizes that it is far from being fashionable nowadays but rather out of date. I was astonished that she was very well aware that such aspiration is vanishing to the point of future extinction. Her comments invited me to an examination of my personal aspirations.

How, on earth, have we reached such a reject of holiness while it should be the dream of our life? And then, it reminded me of my previous conception of holiness which lasted for about.... 40 years. Yes, for me, a saint was someone who was perfect, who would perform some extraordinary things and who even would exhale some "divine perfume". The numerous biographies of saints and what was said around their beatification had cooperated to create that mentality in me. In my youth and because I was rather attracted to great ideals and keen on raising up above the ordinary level of common sinners, I have to avow that I have tried to make some efforts towards living a good life.

A certain wisdom is attached to old age, it seems. Thus getting older, I had to admit that such a type of holiness did not suit me as I had to face the evidence of my limits, my wounds, and my sinful state. Therefore I had to give up my fancy dream much too high for me of becoming a saint.

However, I felt something tickling me. I have read out of the Second Vatican Council Documents, that all of us, God's children, are called to holiness. In other words, this state is accessible to everybody; from the smallest to the greatest of us, from the ex-prisoner to even a bishop, from a standstill to a religious, from the toughest non practisers to the most fervent church attendant, including the father and mother of all walks of life. It then dawned into my mind that I have been mistaken and because very smart theological theories can hardly match with my limited knowledge, I decided to scrutinize my heart, the holy Word of God and my daily life so as to feel again Jesus' call.

A saint is usually seen as a model duly acknowledged by the Church. I, personally, consider someone who, being known or not by the leaders of the Church, is enjoying God's kingdom out of God's sheer graces. In fact, it is far from being due to his own merits but for having relied entirely on God's love and mercy; it is therefore out of a real gift.

I am convinced that whoever firmly accepts the love God offers us for our salvation, is a saint thanks to his participation to this tremendous favor granted to him though it might be temporally. Yes, alas, when using our free will, we may possibly alter our initial choice up to the point of refusing His grace. In fact, nobody, while on earth, is guaranteed of the ultimate stability of his spiritual status. All along our life, we are endowed with this great gift of using our free will towards an increase of God's love for us and for others. As I have already said, a saint is someone who recognizes his misery and cries it to God with full trust in His infinite mercy that he will be accepted into His paradise as was the case of the good thief on his cross. Duly convinced of God's love and in spite of the failure of our life, it can turn out to be a stimulus for our conversion that can become a model to be copied if not out of at our tender age but out of

its maturity. Far from me the idea of denying the tremendous values of some great saints renowned all over the world. However there are others who deserved our great admiration. Heaven is not a stadium where only very selected ones are shining; it is rather a huge banquet room for guests of all types and all of us are cordially invited. It is not even compulsory to be born with a wedding garb but simply be ready to accept it and wear it when it is offered to us.

Shall we, one day, believe in the possible holiness of some ex-HIV victims, some ex-prisoners, some divorced people, some druggists, some homosexuals and prostitutes and other very common people who in spite of a very fishy behavior, have suddenly and thoroughly relied on the infinite love of God and made a "u-turn" in their lives. Such an intense love may give birth to a great hope that even the past life looks hopeless, some people have succeeded to believe in that God's boundless love and have tried to live accordingly. We have all heard or seen some of these new converts thanks to their unbelievable love. This special type of saints may attract our attention not because of their past regrettable mistakes but rather because of their new trends of mind which prove that there is no hopeless situation even when our own seems worst than theirs and of all those around us. It really highlights God's infinite love and can be much more beneficial to us than any outstanding reports on sanctity. One of the dangers of being familiar with only these highly ranked saints might lead some to a certain despair of reaching their highness and stop being concerned with the call to holiness and rather pretend that such an ideal is for others and not for them because of their countless misfortunes.

Therefore let us say that a saint is convinced of being born a sinner and will ever be till his last breath. However, he clings to the hope of being saved thanks entirely to God's boundless love for him in spite of his extremely poor feed back. Saint benedict recommended his colleagues in chapter IV of his rules, of never despairing of their salvation, thanks to God's infinite mercy. This saint did not allow himself to bathe into the illusion of what he would have liked to be but he rather concentrated joyfully on the unbelievable love God offered him and that nothing can ever separate him from such a marvelous Lover of him. He did not agree with the common saying that we have to buy our place in heaven. That real saint is rather determined to trample on his self love which may slip throughout his good deeds and accept to live his poverty in all truth. He is ever grateful for the abundance of graces he continually enjoys in spite of being as poor as he is. He does not succeed in spectacular performances but he desires to let his heart and his whole life be transformed by God's limitless love.

100

A saint is someone who reaches the level of believing more in God's love than the evil which inhabits him. He is convinced that God's love is infinitely heavier than all the wrong he has ever done or could ever do. Therefore a saint is not the one who has eliminated all sins from his life because every one remains a sinner till his death but happy the one who manages to use them as a spring-board for largely opening one's heart to God

and thus experiencing the infinite love and mercy of God. The deeper he succeeds in his discovery, the more he looks forward to intensify his love. Holiness, in fact, is a love story with God, with the others and with oneself which we covet and feel frustrated by its shortage. The greatest saints, to my opinion if we can talk in terms of degrees of sanctity, are those who



succeeded to focus on their lowliness and on the immeasurable highness and mercy of God. I think that there are plenty more saints than those proclaimed as such, up to date. Surely we will be thrilled at our arrival at the Father's eternal banquet, at facing such a crowd waiting for us! Among them, there will surely be some unexpected ones, including ourselves!.

Thus, whoever believes firmly that he is completely unable to save himself but who is depending exclusively on God's love, he is rich of a precious secret that will enable him to continually have recourse to this "foolish" love of God and ask for it at random.

It is very likely that we meet some people who are not the least interested in holiness or invent their own free way and say: "God will reward me according to what is worth while of all that I have done for Him" No doubt the Lord will take an account of the good will involved even if not always well directed.

As far as I am concerned, I do beg the Lord to intensify in me the great desire of benefiting of this great gift of holiness and the access to heaven He offers me. What a bliss for the efforts of having tried to collaborate to the coming of His kingdom in me and in the world. Through my life, I wish, one day, to testify of God's achievement in me thanks to His infinite love.

Jean Beloin, s.c.
Sherbrooke, region 3

Holiness is my Easter! Holiness is at the heart of conversion!

When the heart opens all its doors to God, all we have to do is let Him transform us. Jesus unveils. Jesus reveals directly who you are. He recognizes your truth. He also recognizes that you are able to further climb to a higher truth. The truth about yourself. The truth on what is essential. The real truth. By revealing his own Being, Jesus tells you who you are!

Your heart undergoes conversion, sanctity becomes your state of being. There is a Passage, it is your Easter. There is a passage from one state to another, in a radical way.

Excerpt from chap. La Samaritaine, from the book "Choral pour un coeur nouveau"
Father Luc Simard, ed. Anne Sigier 1989



40 years at Marylake

This year we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the retreat given by Jean Vanier in 1968 at Marylake which turned out to be the beginning of Faith and Sharing. Since that time there have been retreats every year. This year we had two retreats, a weekend and a week, and over 35 people attended each. We were very blessed to have Fr. Jacques Pelletier share the Word with us.

Jacques spoke to us about relationships and in particular our relationship with Jesus. Jesus loves us as we are. Jacques urged us to go deeper in that relationship. Going deep into the wound and finding God is where to start the loving relationship between God and ourselves. Open our hearts to His Presence and His Call. Enter into a daily conversation with God. Recognize the need for the food of God. Jesus feeds us. We must be patient as we nurture and nourish that relationship. Look at our limits as a place to meet Jesus. He is always there with us even in the darkest days. Jesus has been in the desert and faced temptation. We are also tempted to do things which will break our relationship with Jesus. We must remember that Jesus is always there with us to give us strength. His power is love; the love of the Father. Let God transform us to become a person of love. As we go deeper in our relationship with Jesus we bring that love to our brothers and sisters.

We remembered past retreatants with a display of photos from our retreats as well as those who have passed on but still live in our hearts.

Past animators were invited on the Thursday of our retreat. Susan Mosteller, Fr. Tom McKillop, Fr. Paul Lennon and Sr. Marie Parodise, Fr. Michael Traher, Fr. Michael Doyle, Fr. Bill Clarke, Mary Bastedo and Joe Egan were able to be with us to share in the celebration of the Mass, supper and to participate in the Happening. Sr. Sue of L'Arche related her experience of the first retreat. She told us of some of the wonderful fruits which resulted. At that time, Sr. Marie Parodise was asked by Jean Vanier to arrange for the handicapped and their families to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes. She had never done anything like this before but she and others managed to take two planeloads of pilgrims to Lourdes's. Sr. Rose Marie Donovan of Our Ladies Missionaries donated their house including all the furniture in order to start the first L'Arche home in Ontario. Fr. Tom McKillop along Sr. Marilyn Mangan, Monica Donovan and others started the Family Peace Weekends in Sharon, Ontario which invited families to camp on the property for 3 weekends during the summer and share in prayers, Mass, talks, small groups, activities for the children and a barn dance on Saturday night for the whole community. This lasted for over thirty years.

Sr. Susan Moran, who has been on our Faith and Sharing committee for over twenty years, started the "Out of the Cold" program in Toronto. This program allows the homeless in Toronto to have a place to go in the winter where they can have a meal and a place to sleep for the night. Different churches and synagogues open their doors one a week to accommodate our less fortunate brothers and sisters.

It was wonderful to hear the story of Faith and Sharing and to see that the Holy Spirit was still very much alive in these wonderful "Followers of Jesus" who continue to live out the Gospel as taught to us by Jesus. They teach us by their example. Fr. Bill Clarke closed the Happening with

a prayer of thanks for the gift of Faith and Sharing and the many graces received and urged us to continue in our daily lives to recognize Jesus in everyone we meet and show His love to all who come into our lives. Fr. Jim O'Donnell was unable to attend but he sent a message that he would be united with us in prayers and celebration of the Eucharist and "to give thanks to God for all the fruits of Faith and Sharing that began at wonderful Marylake, and thanks to God for the blessings of all these forty years".

Patrick Treacy
Toronto, Region 4

Faith and Sharing Valleyfield: 30th Anniversary



Our Faith and Sharing community has been celebrating its 30 years of existence in the Diocese of Valleyfield. To underline this anniversary, a special gathering was held. All of our members were invited and so were the Sherbrooke and Montreal communities who sent a few representatives, plus three delegates from Faith and Light Montreal. Furthermore, some fifteen members of L'Arche Montreal attended, which was a wonderful surprise.

Several people of our Diocese also joined us for the day. Altogether, some 100 people came together to give thanks to the Lord for the life of our community and for the numerous gifts bestowed on everyone of us. Thank you Lord.

In the morning, our six coordinators (Louise Larivière, Micheline Latour, Sr. Claire Paquette, Nicole Paquette, Manon Lafontaine, Julie Prigent) presented their testimony, telling us the story of our group, hence unveiling all the richness of our common experience. Then, Bishop Cyr honored us by celebrating the Holy Eucharist with Father Jean-Marie Côté, Gilles Desroches, our spiritual animator, and Michel Last, Regional Coordinator.

The joy and happiness of being together and meeting new friends became contagious during the shared meal. Joy was at the heart of our celebration when we underlined the birthdays of our members.

The afternoon started off with a time of adoration inspired by the Taizé hymns. Then our priests spoke of their experiences in our midst. (Hubert Julien, Richard Wallot, Claude Fluet, Gilles Desroches). Bishop Lebel added to our joy by his presence and kind words.

Finally, we had a time of team sharing and, above all, a moment of thanksgiving for this wonderful day.

Thank you everyone who contributed to the success of the day. Thank you Robin Dancause and Sr Christiane St-Amand for teaming up so beautifully in animating the music.

I want to thank God for those 30 years of welcoming, praying and sharing and for the nourishment of the heart that I receive from every person in my community.

After meeting with the living strength of our group, I was able to reach a decision: to renew my commitment as local coordinator, while sharing some of the responsibilities with people around me.

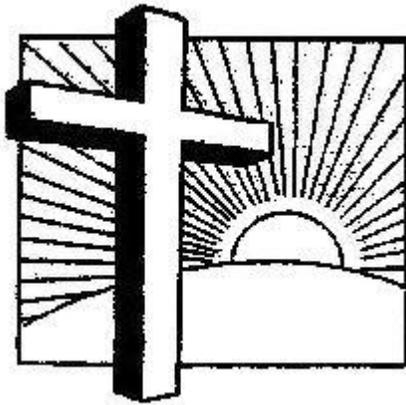
We will start the 2008-09 year under the theme "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink" (John 7, 37) May we, as we come together, quench our thirst at the real source, God, and may He continue to give us fresh, pure and clear water.

Thank you Lord for the grace of Faith and Sharing. Grant us the light of your Holy Spirit so that we may remain an open community, welcoming and supportive of the smallest amongst us.

Looking forward to meeting you and walking the same path together.

Julie Prégent, coordinator
Valleyfield, Region 3

Timmins: Death of Estelle Monderie



We just lost a very valuable member of our group. She passed away on July 14, at the age of 81. Estelle Monderie was a quiet, peaceful, discrete, profoundly pious, devoted, and artistic person.

She was a member of our group for more than 25 years. Widowed for about twenty years, she has raised six children, who remained devoted to her during her final illness.

Thanks to our Lord who has given us the gift of a person so charming, friendly, and dedicated to afflicted people.

Brother Antonio Robineault
Timmins (ON), region 3

A Long Journey!

Hello,

At times, bereavement comes to Faith and Sharing communities, and ours is no exception.

Indeed, on Friday, September 19, our sister Aurore Poisson passed into her eternal life. After several months of intense suffering, Aurore has found a profound peace in the Lord's Tenderness and His Mother Mary, to whom she has addressed so many prayers.

Goodbye Aurore and rest peacefully.

Lise Morin, Coordinator
Sherbrooke, Region 3

Québec Retreat Come, you are precious in my eyes

Note: Participants were invited to answer a question in line with the theme of the retreat : How precious do you think you are in Jesus' eyes? Here are some of the answers.

"I am the Way..." (Jn14,6)

My Worth

"Stop gazing at your littleness
and contemplate my highness.
Stop thinking about your errors and your strays
and discover my meekness and my mercy.
Stop looking at your ugliness and your limits
and admire my glory and my merits.

You are precious in my eyes and I love you.

You are worth
the tenderness of my Father,
the wisdom of my Holy Spirit
and the gentleness of my Sacred Heart.

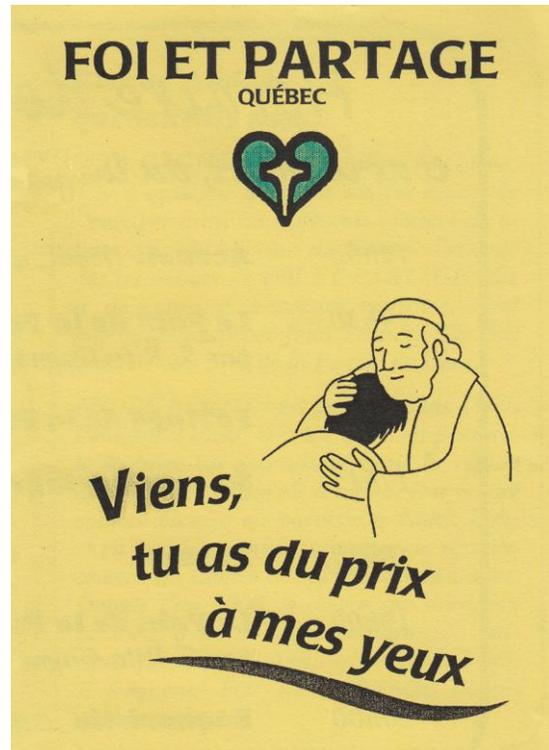
You are the fruit
of our passionate trinitarian love.

Come.

Come into our mystery.
We promise you peace and joy.

Then take another step forward,
a small step:
share your beauty
Our Beauty."

Lise Bégin



I am his child
and he was willing
to give his life to save me
and let me gain access to eternal life.

Anonymous

I am very precious for him.
He keeps loving me in spite of my failings.
He gave his life for me.
I am his beloved daughter.
He watches over me.

Anonymous

The Lord tells me: "You are my beloved daughter, I love you, you are precious in my eyes."
and I reply: "You are my beloved father, you are precious in my eyes and I love you."

Anonymous

I know that You gave your life for me
and You prove it by overwhelming me
with your graces day after day.
Anonymous

He is one's best friend, the one you can
confide in and love truly because He
never deceives you and supports you in
everything.
Anonymous

I am his child: from the very moment of my
conception, he gave me his name.
Anonymous

Jesus saved me through his death.
That's how precious I am in God's eyes.
I thank Him and I love Him.
C.

A lot.
Love and love and love: Amen!
That's the secret of Life.
Anonymous

May God's Spirit
and his grace be a source of more love
to become an apostle.
Anonymous

We are very precious in God's eyes. He
proved it to us so many times.
Anonymous

Unconditional love towards others...
Anonymous

I don't know!
J. B.

The grace of Faith and Sharing

Greetings.

In this beginning of our 2008-09 season of Faith and Sharing, we have been privileged to hold a corn-husking party where graces were numerous.

Some one hundred people were present in communion and mutual trust, helping one another to celebrate this joyful event in harmony. In addition, our generous friend Robert Level fed us abundantly through his "Word in Song", before, during and after the Eucharist. Needless to say that the corn and other dishes were simply delicious. And, Surprise!!! The weather was nice and sunny with a light breeze.

Our new theme "Believing and Discovering Together" is basic to all our meetings and I must admit that to me, each and everyone of our meetings carries its own taste of Gospel. Together, with our differences and our normal limits, we go to the source of our hearts to try and offer what we have best, while remaining authentic, that is imperfect and fragile. I believe this really calls for surpassing oneself and a regular touch of love and forgiveness is needed. Those are graces granted by Our Lord.

Even if I do not expect as many people to attend our next gatherings, I will be delighted to meet again with anyone who wishes to follow the path of Faith and Sharing.

Welcome to all.

Lise Morin, coordinator
Sherbrooke, Region 3

Corn Husking, a sign of brotherhood

Lise Morin has given me the great pleasure of announcing this event. I want to tell you what I have lived in these blessed moments. "Fraternity, Tenderness"; I have always believed in them, but now I believe, I believe, I still believe! I believe in the depth that these people, nourished by love, have inspired in me.

Would you like me to tell you something? I have been immersed in a stream of life that has been so powerful that I could finally be myself. What a discovery at 72 years old!

I have seen familiar faces of loved ones. And when we are happy we like everyone. We have talked, sung, loved and eaten together. The presence of Robert Lebel with his warm voice and his guitar has touched both my heart and Paul's.

I suggest that we go ahead together.

Blessed Faith and Sharing and its committee that have planned and established all that!

Blessed night of the end of summer with its refreshing breeze!

Blessed corn husking activity!

Blessed fraternity!

Blessed tenderness and friendship!

Blessed am I, Géraldine, for having had the opportunity to meet you. To have loved you!

"Blessed Paul"!

Gérardine Plourde Simard
Sherbrooke, region 3

SANCTITY

"Jesus, Lord, I believe in the infinite power of the Holy Spirit.

I believe that He can and wants me to be transformed in Thee.

Grant me strength to support with perseverance, His sanctifying action.

Grant me to reach the holiness to which you call me"

Prayer from the book "Source de vie, l'Esprit-Saint"
Armand de Montigny c.ss.r., ed. Spirimédia, 1996

Blessed are Thee O Lord, for he who walks with You, never stops: he goes, and goes from one beginning to another beginning, through commencements that never end.

Saint Grégoire de Nysse's prayer, Fourth Century

Becoming a saint is growing in Truth!

Do not stay where you are, it would be a shame!

The time is right, let us look the right way, let us look at ourselves in truth! To grow!

What is it in me that prevents the coming of Jesus?

Excerpt from the homily given by Christian Blanc a.a. about Mt 3, 1-12

Sanctity is precisely the fact of accepting to be loved by God, by Mary, by the person next to me.

Father Emile Brière, Madonna House

The Eucharist, Gift from God Par Excellence

The following publication is the first part of the testimony presented by Jean Vanier on Monday, June 6, 2008, at the International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec.

Our world is a deeply wounded world in which the gap between the rich and the poor is continually increasing. Not only the gap between the rich countries and the poor countries, but also the gap between the rich and the poor in our own countries. A wall seems to separate them. It is scandalous that today, millions of men and women in our world have neither access to drinking water nor do they have enough to eat, while others have too much, waste and live in the lap of luxury. The cry of the poor disturbs and calls for more justice and sharing.

There are also walls that separate different cultures and different religions and there are those walls of fear around our own hearts that cause us to shun and scorn others and that we think only of ourselves, with attitudes of comfort and sometimes superiority.

Therefore Jesus came to break the walls around our hearts and to make of us, his disciples, builders of peace. The great thirst of Jesus is unity: "May they be one as the Father and I we are one". Our communities of l'Arche, which gather people who are weakened by a mental handicap and people who have chosen to live with them, want to be the sign that love is possible, they want to be communities of peace and unity. I am privileged to have lived during 44 years this mission of Jesus: proclaim the Good News to the poor and the despised and to free them from the oppression of rejection and hatred by helping them discover that they are loved as they are, that they are precious, that they have their place in society and in the Church.

Our societies are marked by a culture of competition where some win, many lose and yet more are victims. A culture that glorifies the strong, the handsome and the proficient tends to reject the weakest and most vulnerable. How do we create a culture of hospitality where all are welcomed and honored and find a place of acceptance where they can develop their capabilities and their gifts towards a greater freedom and autonomy? Isn't this our challenge - we who are disciples of Jesus?

I would like to speak to you about Eric. We met him at the psychiatric hospital 40 kilometres from our community. He was deaf, silent, unable to walk, he was suffering from a severe mental handicap. I had never met a youngster with such deep anguish.

He had been abandoned by his parents who were distraught facing a child whose body and intelligence were so deeply injured. But like all of us, Eric had a heart, a heart wounded by the rejection. Because he didn't feel loved, he didn't feel lovable. We understand the suffering of the parents but we must also understand the suffering of those who feel they are a disappointment and a burden on their parents and on society, who don't feel accepted or loved as they are.

Eric not only needed capable and generous professionals to help him. He was thirsting for an authentic relationship, a communion of hearts that would reveal his worth, his importance, his kindness and his deep beauty. Friendship and communion of hearts are not the same as generosity. In generosity, I keep the initiative, I decide what I give. Friendship implies a certain equality; we become brothers and sisters, present to each other and vulnerable.

That life of relationships transforms the Erics, who discover they are loved, respected and appreciated as they are. They can therefore advance in life and develop physically and

spiritually. Those who live with them and become their friends are also transformed. They discover the culture of hospitality and of respect for each person, whatever their capabilities or their incapacities, whatever their religion or culture. They who often come from a culture of competition, where everyone tends to think only of himself, worry about their own success, discover their vulnerability and the ties of humanity that unite all men and women on earth. They discover that love and peace are possible through this openness to others; we are not all doomed to conflict, to rejection and to hatred of weaker and different people.

After a conference about handicapped people which I gave in Syria, the great mufti of Alep rose to thank me. He said: "If I understood well, the people with a handicap guide us toward God". Those words are in the heart of the Gospel.

A few years ago, a young boy with a handicap was making his first communion in a church in Paris. After the Eucharist, there was a family gathering. The uncle, who was also the child's godfather, told the mother: What a beautiful liturgy, how sad that he didn't understand a thing".

The child heard these words and his eyes filled with tears he said to his mother: "Don't worry Mom, Jesus loves me just as I am." That child had a wisdom that his uncle didn't yet attain: that the Eucharist is a gift from God par excellence. That child is a witness that the handicapped person - sometimes very serious - finds life, strength and consolation in and through the communion with Jesus in the Eucharist.

Isn't this a call that the whole Church must hear? In l'Arche and Faith and Light we have experienced that if we pay attention to the deepest needs of the handicapped person, we can discern their desire at the moment of the Eucharist. Isn't there a cry for the communion with Jesus in the Eucharist hidden in their cry for the communion of hearts?

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God is like a wedding feast. He tells a parable where rich people refuse the invitation to that meal. The master of the house, hurt by their refusal, tells his servants to go and get "the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind" (Lk 14), that means those who are marginalized. He invites them all to the banquet of love. Saint Paul says that God has chosen that which is foolish and weak in the world, the most despised to confuse the mighty and the wise. We discover that every day in l'Arche.

The simplicity of the weak is astonishing, their cry for relationship touches our hearts deeply. Sure, God loves us all, the rich and the powerful as well as the poor and the weak; but the people who are weak and vulnerable who are thirsty for relationships and a communion of hearts are more open to our God of relationship and love. Those who seek power first of all and human success can easily neglect the call to love.

(to be continued next issue)

Jean Vanier

