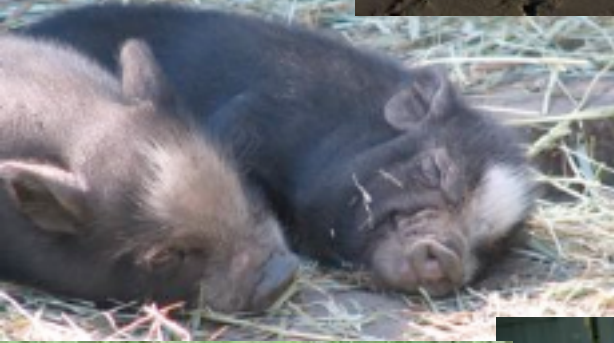




The Journal

July - September 2007



The Journal
July - September 2007
Vol. 10, No. 3

Editorial Team

Chris Diamond François Brassard
Arthur Menu Phil Little
Jim Noonan (NCR Regional Editor)
Emil Kutarna (SK Regional Editor)

The Journal welcomes submissions from small faith communities and individuals that share its vision of the Christian Church as one in which all are equal, decisions are made by consensus, healthy relationships are nurtured, justice is done, and the Good News of Jesus Christ is proclaimed.

All submissions to the Journal must be received by February 15, May 15, August 15, and November 15.

Address all submissions and correspondence to the **Principal Editor:**
Chris Diamond
4390 Kingscote Rd.
Cowichan Bay, BC V0R 1N2
Phone: (250) 743-5088
Email: diamondcnf@shaw.ca

Desktop Publisher:

Michael Irving
Email: ballinderry@shaw.ca

Assembling & Mailing:

Jim Doyle & crew

PUBLISHER

Xristos Community Society
35-10070 Fifth Street, Sidney, BC V8L 2X9
Canadian Publications Mail Sales Product
Agreement No. 40025971

Xristos Community Society, a non-denominational society incorporated in British Columbia, serves the Gospel of Jesus Christ through worship and the promotion and development of Christian small faith communities across Canada. Xristos Community Society is a registered charity in Canada. The Journal is distributed free of charge. Xristos Community Society needs and welcomes donations in support of its ministry.
See the back page for further details.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 The Creation
3 The Founding Of Narnia
C.S. Lewis
4 Joshua
Connie Kurtenbach
5 Are There Animals In God's Kingdom?
Jim Noonan
6-7 Stray Cats And The Oz
Phil Little
8 Sophia
Dianne Peck
9 My Udder Life
Gregg Shoop
10 Blessed Are The Animals
Ruth Irving
11 A Grandpa And His Basset Hound
Hank Mattimore
12 From The Archives: The Spirit In Seattle
Wilma Croisdale
13-14 Eating Together
Chris Diamond
14-15 Is Jesus Present In The Host?
Emil Kutarna
15 Theological Soapbox
Arthur Menu
16-17 In Celebration Of Mary Magdalene
Virginia Lafond
18 Report On The Corpus USA 2007 Conference
Jim Noonan
19 Post Ordination Reflection
Alice laquinta

FOCUS TOPIC

for the October - December 2007 Issue

Jesus and the prostitutes: Should the sex trade be legalized?

Note: Articles for this issue are due by November 15.

Reader's may send in items of interest to the Corpus Canada Forum at
www.corpuscanada.org

The Creation

Genesis 1

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth; the earth was an empty waste; darkness covered the deep. The breath of God stirred over the waters....

Then God said, "Let the water teem with an abundance of living things, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky." And so it happened. God created the great beasts of the sea and all kinds of swimming creatures and all kinds of winged birds. God saw that it was good. And God blessed them....

Then God said, "Let the land bring forth all kinds of living things: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals of all kinds." And so it happened. God saw that it was good. And God blessed them....

Then God said, "Let us make humans in our image and after our likeness." God created the humans in his image; in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them. And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.

Evening came and morning followed- the sixth day passed. Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed.

The Founding Of Narnia *by C.S. Lewis*

From "The Creation" *by James Weldon Johnson*

And God stepped out on space,
And He looked around and said:
I'm lonely- I'll make me a world.

Then God raised His arm and He waved His hand
Over the sea and over the land.
And He said: Bring forth!
And quicker than God could drop His hand.
Fishes and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings.
And God said: That's good!

This Great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till He shaped it in His own image;
Then into it He blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.
Amen. Amen.

Can you imagine a stretch of grassy land bubbling like water in a pot? For that is really the best description of what was happening. In all directions it was swelling into humps. They were of very different sizes, some no bigger than mole hills, some as big as wheel barrows, two the size of cottages. And the humps moved and swelled til they burst, and the crumbled earth poured out of them, and from each hump there came out an animal. The moles came out just as you might see a mole come out in England. The dogs came out, barking the moment their heads were free, and struggling as you've seen them do when they are getting through a narrow hole in a hedge. The stags were the queerest to watch, for of course the antlers came up a long time before the rest of them, so at first Diggory thought they were trees. The frogs, who all came up near the river, went straight into it with a plop plop and a loud croaking. The panthers, leopard and things of that sort, sat down at once to wash the loose earth off their hind quarters and then stood up against the trees to sharpen their front claws. Showers of birds came out of the trees. Butterflies fluttered. Bees got to work on the flowers as if they hadn't a second to lose. But the greatest moment of all was when the biggest hump broke like a small earthquake and out came the sloping back, the large, wise head, and the four baggy-trousered legs of an elephant. And now you could hardly hear the song of the lion; there was so much cawing, cooing, crowing, braying, neighing, baying, barking, lowing, bleating, and trumpeting.

Joshua

by *Connie Kurtenbach, Ladysmith, BC*



We drive into a circular driveway. At centre, the main door of the house welcomes us. The sign reads St. Francis Retreat House. For four days we are replacing Arthur and Alanna Menu, the chaplains that run the house, as they have a family emergency. Quick instructions inform us about the two women already in retreat and about those who would be arriving later Friday afternoon. We feel confident

in this task as we both have years of experience in chaplaincy and counselling. We only have to prepare one meal a day, keep the place clean and tidy and feed the bird.

“What bird?”

“There is a large cabinet at the end of the dining room. Joshua's cage hangs above it. Feed him, clean the cage and talk to him. He likes to sing when he hears voices.”

“O.K. sounds easy enough,” I say.

The bird job, for some reason quickly fell to me. My husband is off to greet the first arrival. I chat to the bird, check supplies and wander away.

The next day I decide to clean the birdcage, refresh the water and seeds. I hum and then talk to Joshua, now recognized by someone as a budgie. He has the most beautiful blue and grey feathers, not a large bird, but very pretty. True to form he trills and warbles as I tidy his little home. I close the cage and say farewell, turn and walk up two steps toward the kitchen.

“Blessings on you!”

I turn my head. Did that bird say what I think it said? No further sounds from Joshua until more people come by to greet him and he does his usual singing routine. Hm! Do budgies talk? Did Alanna say he talked? I must have imagined the words. At the end of a full evening we cover his cage as prescribed and all return to their private rooms.

Each day begins with lifting his cover, checking his supplies and eyeing him a bit more warily. “Do you talk or did I imagine it?” I say to Joshua. He warbles seemingly bemused by my tone. Later in the day I complete the paper change again, close the cage and back off more slowly, keeping my eye on him. Nothing. So I turn and head off to be followed by a distinct wolf whistle that guys do for good-looking girls. I whirl around to spy Joshua placidly cleaning his feet. I talk with my husband about Joshua and tell him my findings: that maybe that bird in an Anglican retreat house is a very special bird in a cage.

By the third day, I am intrigued. I clean his cage even earlier and spend time talking, humming and waiting. So does he. As I close the cage door I distinctly hear: “Thank you, my child.” I start to laugh and everyone gathers round. We sing our prayers and hymns and so does Joshua. At the end of the gathering, truly, he says: “Spiritual bird!” Everyone laughs and now I have witnesses. Well, we make his day! He continues between wolf whistles, warbling and laughing, yes, imitative laughing, chanting with regularity: “Spiritual bird, spiritual bird, ha ha ha ha. Warble, warble, whistle, whistle!”

Someone says: “He thinks he's the Holy Spirit!” We laugh at our discovery and gaze at Joshua in wonderment. It raises questions. As we close our time together and go about our private time in St. Francis House, I distinctly hear him say, as if for theological clarification: “Christian bird! Christian bird! Christian bird!”

Oh! I love Joshua. I always will. I still keep his beautiful blue feathers in a box. He is now long gone and warbling somewhere out there.

Mirror

by *Ruth Irving, Nanaimo, BC*

My dog is the mirror of my soul:

When my dog feels happy he jumps and shouts (barks), he waves (or wags), he lives it big, spreads the joy, celebrates.

When my dog feels hungry he paws at the cupboard, noses his dish, licks his chops.

When my dog feels sad, he cries.

When my dog feels loving, he snuggles, he kisses, he sits close and looks deeply.

When my dog feels scared he crouches and hides.

When my dog feels lost he finds me.

When I feel happy my dog jumps and shouts (barks), he waves (or wags), he lives it big, spreads the joy, celebrates.

When I feel hungry, my dog waits by the cupboard, noses my dish, licks his chops.

When I feel sad, he cries.

When I feel loving, he snuggles, he kisses, he sits close, and looks deeply.

When I feel scared, he stands beside me while I crouch or hide.

When I don't know who I am, he finds me.

Are There Animals In God's Kingdom?

by Jim Noonan, Ottawa, ON



The pivotal passage for examining the place of animals in God's kingdom is Romans 8:19-22, which reads: "For the eager longing of creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God. For creation was made subject to vanity...in hope,

because creation itself also will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. For we know that all creation groans and travails in pain until now."

The passage is speaking not only of animals, but of all creation, and what it is saying is something marvelous - that all creatures share in the brokenness and suffering of the human race, and that similarly they will share in the redemption and ultimate freedom of humankind.

And if we believe that human redemption and freedom are completed in a world after the sufferings of this world, we should believe that the rest of creation will somehow be completed in another world after this world ends.

We know very little of this next world. We do know that it is not a world limited by time and space as this one is, so there is no problem of it containing all that existed in this world at one time or another, or in one place or another. In fact, the fulness that is heaven has already begun on earth for much of creation in the evolutionary process just as it has already begun here for many human beings.

So when we apply this eschatology to animals, we can say that they too will share in the fullness of life that awaits all creation at the end of time.

It is easy for us to imagine this animal-filled heaven if we envision the presence there of animals and other creatures that we have loved on earth. For some of us it could be beloved cats, or horses, or dogs, or whales, or butterflies. Much attention has been lavished on dogs as worthy dwellers in the eternal kingdom, so I would like to direct your attention to remarks made by some people about this beloved creature:

1. In the Summer 2007 issue of Modern Dog magazine, University of



British Columbia psychology professor Stanley Coren wrote an article entitled *Are There Dogs In Heaven?*, in which he stated: "Certainly no loving God would

separate people from their canine friends for eternity".

2. In a recent column in The Ottawa Citizen (July 29, 2007)



Janice Kennedy described the experience of popular CBC broadcaster Kathleen Petty who felt compelled to put down her beloved seven-and-a-half-year-old German shepherd because of an ailment. In the article Petty has much praise for dogs: "Dogs make you a better person - more compassionate, more reflective, kinder, more empathetic. All of those things, they teach you."

When Petty shared her grief and her feelings about dogs with her radio listeners she received many sympathetic replies, and some memorable quotations about the worthiness of dogs (and by extension, other animals) to exist in a better world. One listener quoted Robert Louis Stevenson: "You think dogs will not be in heaven? I tell you, they will be there long before any of us."

Kennedy includes other quotations about dogs that you would think were paraphrases of the words of Jesus on how to live a perfect life. One is from the American humorist Josh Billings, who said, "A dog is the only thing on Earth that loves you more than he loves himself." And the late Gilda Radner spoke of dogs' "unconditional love," adding, "for me, they are the role model for being alive."

Should not such a creature exist in a future life? Indeed, since God loves all creation with an all-embracing love, should not all of it live on eternally with God and with dogs?

In the light of these comments, my answer to the final part of the focus topic for this issue of The Journal - Is the ethical treatment of animals a religious obligation? - is obvious, though I hope others will give it a more detailed treatment.



Stray Cats And The Oz

by Phil Little, Cedar, BC

A reflection on the influence of the little creatures



As related in the book "God's Broker" by Anton Gronowicz, there is a somewhat curious story of a dream as experienced by a Polish Cardinal visiting Canada in 1969. In the dream the travelling cleric visioned a brown mother cat with six little kittens that were homeless in New York City during the coldest time of the year. When he sought help for this desperate feline family he was turned away, even by the Jesuits. (Remember this was just a dream, but his feelings for cats and Jesuits developed further, just in opposite directions.)

However in 1986 John Paul II went to Assisi for a World Day of Prayer with leaders of other world religions, something which was at that time opposed by the Commander of the Holy Inquisition (now titled Benedict XVI). Then again in 1990, John Paul made surprising comments about the spirit of St. Francis and his love for the little creatures. With reference to such a key biblical passage as Matt 25:45, John Paul II

spoke of the need to provide "solicitous care" not only for fellow humans but also for animals, whose lives depended on the same spirit breath of the creator god. This pastoral concern was a diametrical flip from the position of a predecessor, Pius IX who sought to ban the S.P.C.A. from Italy. In Catholic tradition it was traditionally argued that animals did not have souls, but even Thomas Aquinas cautioned that we 'must use animals in accordance with the Divine Purpose lest at the Day of Judgment they give evidence against us before the throne' (reference unknown).

Well that alone should have us all eating veggie-burgers for life, but as usual some of these gems of Catholic social consciousness have not been widely circulated. At the same time we know that it is not usually the written word which so much inspires but rather the

experience. John Paul II wanted this dream about the stray cats recorded but we are not told if it was an epiphany event in either a personal or pontifical sense.

I grew up in a devout and typical Catholic family, with connections to rural Alberta. Animals were property, cared for with the same interest that one would care for the tractor and the barn. Sentimentality with animals was not encouraged, lest one discover that the pet lamb was now on the table as the basis of the evening stew. I do remember that we had a pet Labrador dog, but it was stolen (probably by hunters) and that was it as far as having a pet in the home.

In my high school there were Oblates (OMI) who were great fellows and were instrumental in my future life choices. Not being a disciplined student, I opted for my final high school year to attend a Franciscan boarding school (quasi seminary prep) where again I came to know some marvelous teachers and good solid priests. Among both groups I don't remember any animal stories, but I would guess that if I had opted for the Franciscan spirit my epiphany might have come sooner.

I joined the Oblates, did my "education" and received my degrees from universities in Ottawa, and then I was sent to Peru where I was ordained a deacon on Christmas Day 1972. I worked in parishes in the urban "barriadas" until 1980, and while I was sensitized to the "poor", my relationship with the animal world did not develop. We did have in one parish a rather vicious German shepherd called Sultan who helped protect our property from the poor, but he didn't relate to us as a pet. As "gringos" with more security than the people we lived with, our regular diet consisted not only of the usual meats but also tortoise, whale and guinea pig (a meal of honour in Peru).

For reasons not at all related to this story, I left the missions and the Oblates and married a beautiful woman in 1981. We settled in Toronto and were blessed with three children. I worked as a teacher and was most known as a union activist, which earned me an early retirement - again not related to this story. Of course the kids wanted to have a pet, but I was always opposed for the many logical reasons that would be too obvious to cite. When my eldest daughter moved out she went to a university far away on Vancouver Island. Now while she was having trouble paying her bills, she happened to be smitten by the proverbial "puppy in the window" of a pet store in a mall. We all know you can get a free puppy or kitten or a dozen at the city pound or the local animal shelter, but no - my daughter paid \$600 for a wee Yorkshire terrier puppy that could curl up in her hand. She named him Ozgoode, but family were allowed to call him "Ozzie".

To make matters worse, she soon discovered that her university and social life did not permit her to properly care for an animal, and after some incidents of displeasure with house mates, she came home to Toronto for Christmas by air along with her animal - except only one of them had a return ticket. The beast was by now 1 _ years old and totally undisciplined, an aspect of his character which has not changed.

Remember that everyone else wanted a pet, but when it came time to take him for a walk, guess who had to do it? Of course everyone reminded me to carry plastic bags to pick up his "doo-doo". Now -

Stray Cats And The Oz Continued...

changing diapers had been a step ahead in my humanization but my first stop in the park to “scoop the poop” almost made me vomit. But there I was amidst scores of other dog owners many of whom I would eventually come to know - my neighbours whom in previous years I had never met. The Oz got at least 5 daily walks around the park and would go for more if he could convince anyone that he was neglected. The Oz was reluctantly accepted as a responsibility but this little 8 lb. terrier soon wiggled his way into our hearts. Within days we found that he was sleeping on our bed, not that he was invited, but we were too tired to carry him to his own bed where he chose not to remain alone. (It took me 34 years to figure that one out for myself!)

In 2003 I took early retirement and moved to my parent's farm on Vancouver Island. One of our biggest concerns were the eagles who would look at the Oz as just a rather large and hairy rabbit. The eagles have gone after baby lambs, so our fears were not exaggerated. The Oz has learned not to go out into the open fields away from the buildings, and in the spirit of St. Francis he has had to make peace with the other animals of the farm.

That would be most of the story, but for the comments of others, especially my wife and children. They talk about how this little mutt has changed me. Perhaps they exaggerate, but he has caused me to meditate differently and has produced a need to repent of my past sins against the planet and its creatures. I have no idea what he thinks or really what he feels (deep down). But I do have a strong suspicion that if there is an afterlife, my entrance will somehow depend on a good word from this friend who was sent to be my “animal guide”.

Other than St. Francis, once called the last great revolutionary of the church, the Christian world has been pitifully negligent in recognizing the rights of other creatures who co-habit this world with us. It took the Catholic tribe almost two millennia to recognize that slavery was inconsistent with following the Galilean rabbi Yeshua. The new story of creation causes us to wonder at the complexity of the universe, and most of us can barely grasp the insights of modern prophets like Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme. Feminist theologians like Rosemary Radford-Ruether, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and the inspiration of the R.C.W.P. movement (including our own Michele Birch-Connery of Vancouver Island) help us to discover not only the feminine of the other but the feminine within and the feminine of the divine.

Where are the proponents of a theology that speaks not for the other creatures, but gives their voice our language so that we may understand them. (For those who read *Mirabile Dictu*, perhaps this is what William Clery attempts in his prayerful reflections rather than using animal caricatures to voice human concerns.) There are many who listen to the songs of the wolf and the whale, but so few who understand that their songs are an echo of the divine energy much like our sacred psalms and the hymns of different religions. To a species so violent to its own and capable in the last century of such atrocities as the genocides in Nanking, the Holocaust and Rwanda (and many more), there is also a blindness and deafness to species other than our own. To our own detriment and quite likely an omen of our own disappearance from the planet is the daily extermination of species in the animal world and the continual abuse of these “little creatures” for our own perverted pleasures.

In the early winter of my own journey on this planet I am able to recognize the many blessings afforded me throughout my life but in particular those that came later in life rather than in the early stages. I fear for the world, and frankly I do not have a lot of hope for the human project. I am sorry for our collective impact on the planet and its species, in a way that requires grief and repentance that would have been illogical with other earth shaping events such as the ice age or a meteor impact some 65 million years ago. I do think the creator might have thought that the contribution of the homo sapiens group might lead to something quite different. But freedom of choice was required and perhaps this species was just not up to it. In millions of years another species might fulfil the promise.

In particular I give thanks to my daughter who dumped the Oz into my reality, causing me to be forever different in a way I could not have chosen.



The Purpose of a Dog - from a 4 yr. old

I had been called to examine a ten-year old Irish Wolfhound named Belker. I examined Belker and found he was dying. I told the family we couldn't do anything for Belker. The dog's owners, Ron, Lisa, and their little boy, Shane, were all very attached to Belker and they were hoping for a miracle.

Shane seemed so calm, petting the old dog for the last time, that I wondered if he understood what was going on. Within a few minutes, Belker slipped peacefully away. The little boy seemed to accept Belker's transition without any difficulty. We sat together for a while wondering aloud about the sad fact that animal lives are shorter than human lives.

Shane, who had been listening quietly, piped up, "I know why." He said, "People are born so that they can learn how to live a good life- like loving everybody all the time and being nice, right? Well, dogs already know how to do that, so they don't have to stay as long."

Author unknown

Sophia
by Dianne Peck, Halifax, NS



A few years ago I was visiting a new grandbaby in Australia and took part in a reading by an intuitive.

She began the reading by telling me that I was surrounded by animal spirits. I had a very large bear standing upright behind me for protection, an owl on my shoulder for wisdom, and a dog at my side for companionship.

I am still comforted by this information, and have studied further into the wider role that

animals play in our lives.

I now know that Shamanism is the world's oldest healing tradition, and that it is found in all cultures on earth. Shamans work with their allies, the animal spirits.

In their book, *Medicine Cards*, David Carson and Jamie Sams say that the bear is the spirit of introspection, and the hibernation cave is the space of inner knowing. That "in choosing Bear, the power of knowing has invited you to enter the silence (cave)...so that your goals may become concrete realities." Pg. 57

Owl "is a symbol for wisdom because it can see what others cannot. Athena's owl revealed unseen truths to her, lit up her blind side. Owl sees through all deception. Owl can bring messages in the night. It can see in the dark." Pg. 121

Dog... "you are noble until the bitter end. Your medicine is the teaching of true and loyal friends." Dog energy is serving/others energy.

The authors press us to reclaim the power of loyalty to self and become our own best friend. Pg. 93

My sister fits my description of a dog lover, having at least two of her own and regretful that she can't house several more.

Because those were not my feelings, I always carried some guilt about not being "an animal lover." And then I went, as mentioned, to Australia.

Now I treasure my new relationship with animals. I still do not own a physical animal and may never. But my heart is now full of honor, love, and awe at their greatness.

I have a relationship with my animal spirits that enriches me as much as if they were a physical presence in my life.

It is several years since I walked through the stables at a farmers' exhibition and stared into the magnificent soul of one of the horses. I whispered softly, from my own heart, and I was the first to break our gaze. (Other spectators had come along and I had to keep moving.) The wisdom of the horse includes power, stamina, endurance, faithfulness, control of the environment, interspecies communication, expanding one's own potential, travel, guardian of travelers, and guide to overcoming obstacles. Whatever our interspecies communication was, it has stayed with me and I can still call up the power of those moments at will. I have often tried to articulate it for myself, but the closest I come is to describe it simply as a mutual soul-knowing.

North American Native Indians recognize the power of animal spirits and honor them as guides who may teach us their powers and life

lessons.

In March I attended the "I Can Do It" 2007 conference in Toronto, Canada, Dr. Stephen Farmer, a Shaman, told the man who couldn't take his business to the next level to call on the cougar for confidence and for help in finding his backbone. The woman who kept seeing birds every time she left her house was told to sing to loosen up, and we all were told that the message from bear is to stand our ground, to set boundaries, and to witness self-care, and the message from koala is to listen more, and to sit still.

The theories of quantum physics have also been a significant contributor to my new relationship with animals. The focus point for this edition of the Journal asks where the animals are in God's Kingdom, and if ethical treatment of animals is a religious obligation.

If there is only one creative mind, one creative ocean of electric magnetic particles vibrating in and out of existence, if not only metaphysically but also scientifically all creation is one entity, then these lines from a Netsilik Eskimo song (see <http://www.geocities.com/~animalspirits/>) give us a clear answer to where the animals are in the Kingdom...it is no more necessary to ask where they are than to ask where we are.

*In the very earliest time,
when both people and animals lived on earth,
a person could become an animal if he wanted to
and an animal could become a human being.
Sometimes they were people
and sometimes animals
and there was no difference.
All spoke the same language.*

For me the ethical treatment of animals is larger than a religious obligation, it is a spiritual obligation. Allowing the animal kingdom to give its gifts to us is a way to enter into spiritual abundance.

Sophia wisdom: "We are many...our wisdom will appear to you before we do."

To fund a bowl of food for animals sheltering in sanctuaries, go to <http://animalrescuesite.com> daily and click on Fund Food for Animals. It's free and they even have a free reminder service.

Malcolm Smith of Kelowna, BC has published a new book:

Thou Shalt Not Kill: Genocide In Central Africa.

A full book report will be published in the next issue of The Journal.

My Udder Life

by Gregg Shoop, Duncan, BC



I'm better known as 'the egg man' or 'the milk man' than for either of my formal vocations, so perhaps it's not surprising that I've been asked to reflect on thirty years of milking before work and collecting eggs of an evening rather than about teaching and preaching.

Shortly after we married in 1969, Linda and I thought about becoming vegetarians, but decided instead to be responsible for growing and raising what we could of our own food. At the time we were living in a house with a large overgrown garden in a suburb of London, England. While clearing an area to grow vegetables, we uncovered the foundation of an Elizabethan wall which had once surrounded the property, as well as brick paths, rose beds and a pedestal for a lost sun-dial. On the living room wall of our present home, we have a large painting from that earlier time which depicts our oldest daughters and ourselves feeding our hens, rabbits and goat all of which we housed in 'arks' on the front lawn. The image triggers many other memories, such as that of a fair-haired four year old child harmlessly trapping the head of a goose in the cookie tin when it had tried to 'steal' a treat! Or of myself butchering a small carcass with a knife in one hand and a 'how-to' book in the other. Or of transporting noisy cockerels on the London underground much to the amusement of fellow passengers.

In 1980 we moved from that relatively large property in a great metropolis to a much smaller one in the isolated village of Alert Bay, BC. With the exception of Smitty, who sold surplus potatoes from his kitchen garden, no-one there grew more than a few patio tomatoes and the local kids thought eggs were manufactured like Cadbury's Caramilk bars. So we had to buy geese, goats and Jersey Giants from distant places through the 'Buy, Sell and Trade'. I adapted the garage so that we could practice 'zero grazing' with all our animals and our growing family went foraging for 'greenstuff' everyday regardless of the weather. In that damp climate, it didn't take long for any hen-scratch that had been spilled in transport to sprout in the carpet of our old Pontiac. Or for fish fertilizer to 'boil over' from the barrels in which it matured. Long to be treasured is the image of our goats with assorted children dressed as shepherds on the Sunday School float in a Victoria Day Parade.

A brief sojourn in Montreal followed, where we all expected to be so engrossed in various courses of study that the only animals we took with us were a cocker spaniel and a hamster.

A year later we relocated to Victoria where the city bylaw officer put a stop to our attempt to re-create the 'urban farm' we'd enjoyed in London! One act of blessing he could not prevent, however, was a swarm of bees taking up residence in an empty hive I'd stored under the veranda. A generous parishioner also allowed us the use of a greenhouse which the aging members of the altar guild could no longer manage.

In 1993, my family and I moved to a semi-rural parish where we had access to an acre or more of good grazing, a small neglected orchard and room for a vegetable garden. This time it was not the 'city fathers' of whom we ran afoul, but a small group of parishioners who, despite the realism which a donkey, lambs and cackling hen lent to the nativity play, exercised their disapproval of farm animals being kept at the rectory. The crankiness of those elders does not erase the pleasure several youngsters got seeing a clutch of Muscovy ducklings drop forty feet from their nest in a tall oak and scamper off for their first swim, nor their wonder at watching one of the nanny goats give birth under the hawthorn hedge in the snow.

In the meantime, Linda and I had bought three acres on the Cowichan River. For several years we laboured, first clearing and fencing 'the property' as we referred to it, then choosing a house and well site and finally having a small wood heated house built in which we invested further sweat equity. Of course the spaniel, goats, hens, sheep, donkeys and bees came with us from the rectory and have been joined for various lengths of time by pigs, geese, a Jersey cow, a series of calves and most recently a border collie! We also brought with us a collection of 'old roses' which we'd accumulated over the years, a variety of heritage fruit trees grown from cuttings and a half dozen hazelnut seedlings given to us by a local farmer. An early project was to build a circular raised vegetable garden patterned on Bruno Barnhart's Christian mandala which encourages me to approach every act of husbandry as prayer. Current undertakings include re-building the stairs to the river, completion of a cottage in time for a wedding at Christmas and the construction of a larger barn, all of which is in addition to the daily chores of milking, feeding and moving the livestock before and after work.

Occasionally, the constant labour feels like a heavy burden which must have been apparent to my father because he asked me once, if 'the property' was going to kill me or if I was going to kill it? At the time, I said I didn't think it mattered, but now that sense of being engaged in a struggle is seldom felt. Instead, the daily and seasonal activities that happen in the barn, the garden and the field - even the need to fork manure every morning and be vigilant about pulling nettles as they appear - are very grounding. Similarly, the people we have come to depend upon for hay, feed, trimming hooves and shearing sheep are straight forward 'salt of the earth' types. Indeed, as I have been writing, I've realized that perhaps the goal of producing at least some of our own food has been my real vocation all these years. Certainly I have experienced more grace in the company of a cow or a collie than in that of a school superintendent or bishop and recently have come to think of the three acres as 'Gloria Deo'.



Blessed Are The Animals

by Ruth Irving, Nanaimo, BC



Animals are the ultimate connectors. They are beyond language, words, e-mail; without pen and paper and cell phones, their message breaks through. You don't have to be a cat or dog lover to understand this. Anyone who has bought dolphin-safe tuna, or who has stopped to gaze up at an eagle, or who has experienced the zest that rushes at you when whales surface quietly and majestically into view as you stand on the deck of the BC Ferry can appreciate the feelings we all know. We know, but have we stopped to think about it what it means and why?

People pay huge sums of money and go to great lengths to arrange holidays just to be in the presence of animals: African safaris, whale or bear watching tours, swimming with the dolphins, and Alaskan cruises. Our spirits seek out something that we know will come to us in these moments. We arrange our lives around inviting a special dog or cat to share our homes, our schedules, our couches, and our friends. Maybe even more than one, maybe for some, many-sometimes! We go to different lengths to arrange our pet's comfort, and expense to adopt that special furry guy in the first place, and then to settle in together, uniquely yet recognizably, soul to soul. Exactly: One soul with another, and all that comes with that! Countries worldwide unite to save and respect earth's creatures. Countries that are blocked in communication or understanding over politics or religion are on common ground when it comes to protecting our animals. We make company with strangers and we link with those who stop to gaze at a flock of geese flying south; we make a new friend while admiring a puppy at the park because those eager eyes and waving tail are all the unspoken invitation we need to connect human to human.

Animals have a depth of soul inviting attraction and attachment to come to life. In the halls of the nursing home, on the floor of the nursery, at the end of the leash, on the edge of an armchair, at our fingertips and within our sight, our spirits seek to make connections with others harboured in the souls of animals. Maybe they represent a purpose to us, a chance to dance with the good that lies within us, to

taste the sweetness of respect and sharing, a chance to try to be ourselves unconditionally as it is given. The deep sigh of contentment, the soft head on our lap, the approving and loving body language channelled finally up to us via deep and beautiful eyes may be witness to the secret or unrealized moments when we grow. Maybe animals, in all their realness and truth, show us the gamut of emotions God created us to embrace, to temper, to know. You may be thinking that while you can see these points in a moment with a Golden Retriever, you may have less clarity when it comes to moments with a snake or even a shark or a lion. Yes, but couldn't each represent a little of what is inside us? Most of us have a tiny bit of lion in us, or a Mama or Papa bear even, a hummingbird maybe, or a mouse or horse. Don't we have those times when we can identify with our animal cousins? Those moments when we are as timid as a mouse or as proud as a show horse?

Somehow, though, animals have it in them to bring forth our growth. Subtly, perfectly, naturally, and without words, animals get the messages to us. Are these messages those of Jesus? They teach us of lavish relationships, unconditional love, unselfish sharing and respect for others. They do this with an ease that takes humans years to refine. Blessed are the animals for they are part of God's kingdom, part of the gifts of this world, part of what we choose to see. Our time with animals represents the future in us. It teaches us about balance, about give and take. It moves us gently and surely to be closer to the words of Jesus. It encourages our connections and understanding, our generosity. Animals are a part of who we are if we open up to it and if we stop to think about what it means. Cherish this.



A Grandpa And His Basset Hound

by Hank Mattimore, San Jose, CA



Ten o'clock any night, I hobble to my bed nursing a sore ankle from a tennis injury. Oh! Finally getting in bed never felt so good. Then, I hear the sound of Penny, my basset hound at her water dish. Her collar rattles the metal container letting me know that she is out of water.

I groan. "No, I don't want to get up again, Penny. Can't you suck it up for one night without water?" No response except another rattle of the water dish.

It's a hot night. I can't let the poor dog go without water. So, uttering an expletive not fit for publication, I limp to the kitchen and fill her dish with water. As I put the dish back on the floor, Penny rewards me by licking my hand! I could almost hear her focus on Rule 2, Section 1 of the dog's "Training Your Master Manual": Make sure to give positive reinforcement to your master when s/he behaves appropriately. Good grief! I never even wanted a dog! But living as I do in the Children's Village, pets are almost a requirement for grandparents. So, here I am with this "sausage on mini legs" sharing my little one bedroom apartment. She made me laugh when I first saw her. Hells bells! With her ears that practically touch the ground, her big sad eyes, and the way she waddles when she runs, Penny would make an undertaker giggle. Penny is friendly! Omigosh! Is she friendly! A friend to humanity is what she is. Penny loves anyone with two legs. She is

perfect for a children's village. The kids love her- though I must admit, it has taken this Grandpa a little more time. How can I put this? Penny is not a low maintenance pooch. She howls rather than barks; she barely tolerates other dogs; she enjoys rolling on the ground wherever she happens to be which explains how she manages to retain a strong doggy smell no matter how often she is given a bath. Penny is legendary for the amount of excrement she produces. One of the kids

gave her what he calls her Indian name: "Penny Poop a Lot". She is not much for playing "fetch" That's way too much work! She will only occasionally come when called, and she has a stubborn streak that would make a mule look like a patsy. One of her favorite tricks is dragging leaves and various detritus home. And she snores like a 400 lb man with sleep apnea. So, for the first few months, I

seriously considered trading Penny in for a stuffed teddy bear. But, the old gal has won me over. She wooed me, as dogs have been doing for hundreds of years, by their loyalty and affection and unconditional love. Whenever I come home, she has a comical way of crawling several feet across the carpet (on her considerable stomach) to welcome me. Then she rolls over on her back for a belly rub. She taught me that trick early on. Then, she brings me a squeaky toy, which she loves to play with, and, if I let her, will join me on the couch (all 55 lbs. of her) for a little snuggle. She'd lay a wet sloppy kiss on me if I'd let her but, knowing some of the places she has visited with her tongue, I draw the line there.

I always knew that kids and dogs go together but I hadn't realized how an old hound dog could steal the heart of a grandpa. For better or worse, this odd couple has found one another. We are one family now, a passel of kids, Grandpa Hank and a basset hound named Penny. Hey God, stop laughing!



The Spirit In Seattle

by *Wilma Croisdale, Vancouver, BC*

From the May/June 1997 issue of The Journal

Truly, the river runs deep within my soul, rises, overflows. I felt so overwhelmed by the Spirit of God. I realized that I had been lead, in my mind, to build this city with high walls. "God the Father" lived only in the city, and outside these walls, it was dark and fearful.

Inside the city God the Father lived in order established by and for all men. There were rules for healthy city living:

- thou shalt stay in a marriage no matter what!
- thou shalt obey the men above you no matter what!
- thou shalt pray for those who stray outside the city walls lost in the darkness!

I felt that God would punish me if I looked outside the walls; worse yet that I would suffer in agony if I walked out. So I stayed in the city until my soul, racked in pain, could stand it no longer. In great fear I fled the walls. I became a divorced woman. And to my surprise I came out of the darkness into soft, warm light! Now I knew that God loves me. And she lead me to two beautiful couples, each filled with Her Loving Spirit. Oh how I longed for an intimate relationship like that! One couple, a married priest and a former nun, the other, two men, were surrounded in Light that warmed my heart and soul.

And that same warm Light was everywhere in that Convocation hall, and it surrounded that table of 10 sisters with whom I stayed and prayed for those two graceful days. Joan Chittister, OSB, the first of the Plenary Speakers, spoke on her experience at the 4th Annual Women's Conference in Beijing. She told the story of a 23 year old African woman who stood up and introduced herself to the president

of the World Bank: "Take a good look at me Mr. Wolfson, I am one of your 'structurally adjusted' youth who has grown up without the health, educational and nutritional programs that your bank withdrew from my country, so that we might maintain interest payments on loans your bank insisted we needed." Joan urged us to be watchful of those who pretend to help us and in the end destroy us all. She slammed the systematic violence that poses as the social order, the natural order, the will of God, and it legitimizes the domination of one group over another. Specifically, she critiqued a distorted theology of "headship" or domination of men over women which gives implicit permission for men to own women and do as they will with them.

That speech and the ones by Catherine Mowery Lacugna and Edwina Gateley, the other two Plenary Speakers, filled my heart to the brim, connected my heart-beat rhythm to those of my sisters. In that fulness I met two old friends who had lived in a Poor Clare monastery for 40 years and who had now chosen to move out. Twenty five years ago I had taken them to doctor/dentist appointments and hadn't seen them in 10 years. One said: "Honestly, I left for the same reason I entered- for love. I found out the rules were false absolutes. They were squeezing the life out of me."

I realized that we haven't journeyed much farther than the early christians in defining the rules of citizenship in the City of God. Was it only for Jews? What about the uncircumcised gentiles? the blacks?...women? If I remain inside the city walls, will I have to circumcise my soul?

Not so, for now I see beyond the city walls: a flower still grows, the breeze still blows, the river still flows. God is there, and she loves us.



Eating Together

by Chris Diamond, Cobble Hill, BC



Meals begin long before people sit down to eat. Often family and friends arrive home and are taken with the good smells of something savoury being made ready and they exclaim: "Wow! Something smells good!" The smells of tasty food ranges from

the turkey roasting, cakes and cookies baking, garlic and onions frying, coffee brewing outdoors over the early morning campfire, corn popping, hotdogs grilling at the ball park, bread baking in the oven... the list is long and familiar and we each have our favourites. Savoury smells are great sauce when you are hungry and the food is ready to eat.

Meals eaten together in community are intended to confirm security and solidarity. They are not simply a matter of convenience or economics. Meals create identity and celebrate togetherness in a community of equals where rank has no place. Meals keep everyone focused on the common good. There may be conversation and discussion but there is no room at the table for dissension.

In some gatherings, a meal with meat was particularly special. At one time, the Sunday roast was the thing to eat. At other times, a specific meat was chosen for the occasion. We still celebrate some feasts with turkey, others with lamb, and still others with a roast pig. Often these family festive meals are shared with larger groups of invited guests. The birthday party, the summer barbecue, the lobster fest, the crab boil, the salmon barbecue, the corn roast, they each have a ritual of their own.

Meals have a long history and some have taken on a religious significance. Hunters were given choice parts to eat. Some parts were eaten so that the spirit of the thing eaten would be passed on to the eater. Gatherers ate on the move. Then as agriculture developed, people settled in one place and food could be stored for longer periods. Threshing floors became holy places. Distinctions arose around shared meals: at first between kin and non-kin; then the family group was extended to include others; among the elite there were matters of when to eat, who could eat with whom, where to sit and what to wear at a gathering. Customs became rules of conduct. Conduct at a meal is still highly regulated; good table manners dictate what is acceptable and what is not.

The poor did not make many rules; generally they ate whatever and whenever they could. They had no need for appetizers, hors d'oeuvres (French for 'outside of the main work'), starters, antipastos (Italian for 'before you get to the main dish'), empanadillas (Andalusia), gustus (Roman), tapas (Spain), maza (Arabic), mezze (mid-Eastern), zakuski (Russian), dim sum (China), samosas (India) and so on. An aperitif was once the common bowl passed around so that everyone could take a swallow- no need for tid-bits, dainties, canapés, soul food, down-home food, ethnic pride, nor exotic cuisines.

"Three squares a day" was not always customary. For many people, there was one meal in the morning and one in the evening so as to

allow an uninterrupted time for work. Lunch was a ladies' meal. The ancient Greeks ate a light mid-morning breakfast and a big dinner in the evening. In Anglo-Saxon times a regular meal schedule was the sign of an ordered life: dine at noon and sup at vespers. ('sup' from 'sop' to soak bread in a liquid) By the 1500s the British were eating the big meal at midday, but with the passage of time, breakfast was made earlier in the day and dinner was made later, and a snack at bedtime. Tea, coffee, chocolate at the English breakfast did not come into use until the 1600s. Before that, it was beer, ale or wine to wash down bread and cheese and whatever else one could get and afford.

In the beginning, human beings worked and ate together for their mutual benefit. It was a way of life, a covenant. This led to expectations, rights, and duties- moral order and human rights. When homo religiosus brought in the interpretation of God's order and providence, certain meals eaten together were given new interpretations and significance. The holiness of the ordinary meal became a religious event with concomitant religious explanations. The two most important examples of this in the Judeo-Christian tradition are the Passover and the Eucharist.

I have written briefly about the Passover in the Spring 2004 issue of *The Journal* (p10-11). It is not necessary to repeat it here except perhaps to recall that the Passover meal as celebrated by Jesus and his friends had already a long historic development. The Israelites had combined two much older pre-Israelite family meals- a nomadic Spring lamb feast and an agricultural unleavened bread celebration. These two ancient family rituals were eventually blended into a Temple sacrificial rite. The Passover imagery provided early christians with a way of understanding Jesus; in particular, they saw Jesus' 'passover' to the Lord as beginning with the Last Supper and moving through his sufferings, death, resurrection, and exaltation.

The Jewish Passover is still celebrated with all the reality of a family meal. The christian Last Supper has not fared nearly as well. Perhaps it is because christians built Temples again and the Last Supper is not celebrated with all the reality of a family meal nor done only once a year. Jesus' practice of eating together in homes, thanking God (eucharist) for all of God's bounty in calling us into the Kingdom of God is buried from sight.

What the Church needs now is not rules about Latin Masses. Latin can be used to tie Catholic people to a Roman version of the universal Catholic Church. Language is part of the (political) action that holds a community together and gives it a distinct identity. Language can also be used as an instrument of power to keep people in a servile role. Vernacular languages on the other hand show the diverse identities of communities worshipping God within the universal Catholic Church. Vernacular languages compel the worshippers to come out of their personal worship, to listen attentively to what is being proclaimed, and to identify with the local community at worship.

What the Church does need now is to discern and interpret the scriptures, the liturgy, and the practice of celebration, and then to take a fresh look at the Mass. For millions, the Mass has become an act of personal worship of Jesus, the paradox of a community in which each one worships privately and the language of the Mass does not matter. Large cathedral or parish Masses in Latin *may be* fine once in a while, and they can be very inspiring for some, particularly for

Eating Together Continued...

those who enjoy grand spectacles. But the celebration of the eucharist is neither an act of personal piety nor a spectator event. At one time in the development of the Church grand celebrations were outpourings of faith. They have inspired great works of art. They can edify a large group of christian people. They can show cultural and ethnic differences in spiritualities. They are part of our christian heritage with beautiful hymns and chants, incense and bells, holy water asperges, and so on. Hors'doeuvres and tidbits are certainly delicious, but you can't live on them for they don't nourish you like a good meal. While the significance of all the liturgical tidbits can be taught, they don't in any way resemble the Last Supper nor Jesus' common practice of gathering a household for worship, conviviality, and discussion. They do resemble many other things that we would be better without. They do not image God's Kingdom as Jesus taught it. They do not resemble Jesus' "Do this in memory of me."

The Church has kept his memory but not his practice. We need to bring the eucharist and the Last Supper home again to families and friends where it belongs. Christians need to know that "Do this in

memory of me." was said to all the disciples without distinction. That was the way the first churches understood it for generations. We need to make the eucharistic meal a real family meal again that resembles and images how it is to live God's Way.

Let's get real again. Jesus knew what he was doing and so did his friends. We don't need to return to their time; we need to rethink our own. What are we afraid of?

Meals confirm and solidify communities. The Church has the capability of hosting large eucharistic meals when they are needed for some purpose. Dioceses and parishes do organize large suppers. There are leaders in the Church with the skills and strategies to re-evangelize the faithful and to restore to them Jesus' practice of open table gatherings. It is happening in small communities by people who have repossessed their christian heritage. More of the faithful need to know that it is sound practice to do this. There is more than one way of doing eucharist. The holiness of the real meal is aptly suited for imaging the Kingdom of God and for giving thanks to God in memory of him who chose to do it that way.

Is Jesus Present In The Host?

by *Emil Kutarna, Regina, SK*



I am seriously asking this question, and I think the answer has serious consequences for myself and for the Catholic Church.

In his book *Jesus For The Non-Religious* Bishop Spong writes:

"Clearly the old pattern of seeing the cross as the place where the price of the fall was paid is totally inappropriate. Aside from encouraging guilt, justifying

the need for divine punishment and causing an incipient sadomasochism that has endured with a relentless tenacity through the centuries, the traditional understanding of the cross of Christ has become inoperative on every level."

I think Spong is touching a major nerve here. Is not Redemption at the heart of our whole Theology? Since learning catechism in childhood from the nuns at school, I believed without question that Jesus died for our sins. As Spong wrote, it justifies the need for divine punishment. As for encouraging guilt, it is a dark joke that Catholics are riddled with guilt, and the long lines at the confessional seem to prove it. Believe me or not, but once upon a time I spent nine hours hearing confessions, in three languages, with a few breaks for refreshment and bathroom, of course. Imagine!

The problem I have with redemption-based theology is that it portrays a disturbing image of God. Is God such a severe judge that infinite justice must pay for infinite injury? Jesus said we should call God our Father. As a human father, I would not do that to my

children. If God is much better than me, why would God be that severe? It doesn't make sense.

It only makes sense if we start with the idea of Adam and Eve and Original Sin. But we know that this is an ancient myth used to explain our origin. It seemed to satisfy the minds of that era. But today we have other sources of information the ancients did not have. To me Darwin's theory of evolution makes much more sense. If I start with that then Original Sin does not exist. If there is no Original Sin, then there is no need for Baptism to wash away that sin? So the gates of Heaven are not closed after all, so why does Jesus need to die to open them? And then the Mass is no longer a sacrifice. Then what happens to other sacraments like Eucharist and Holy Orders?

It is like kicking a leg out from under a three-legged chair. The whole chair collapses.

So where is the truth?

In the movie *Water*, Ghandi once said:

"For a long time I believed that God is Truth. But today I know that Truth is God. The pursuit of truth is invaluable for me. I trust it will be the same for you."

In her book *The History of God*, Karen Armstrong wrote:

"In all cultures, human beings have been driven by the same imperatives: to be intelligent, responsible, loving and, if necessary, to change. The very nature of humanity, therefore, demands that we transcend ourselves and our current perceptions, and this principle indicates the presence of what has been called the divine in the very nature of serious human inquiry." (p.385)

In her other book *The Great Transformation*, she wrote:

"Today we are making another quantum leap forward. Our technology has created a global society, which is interconnected electronically, militarily, economically, and politically. We now have to develop a global consciousness, because, whether we like it or not, we live in

Is Jesus Present In The Host? Continued...

one world. Even though our problem is different from that of the Axial sages, they can still help us. They did not jettison the insights of the old religion, but deepened and extended them.” (p. 397)

So what am I to think? I'm inclined to the conclusion that there is no Original Sin as was proposed so strongly by Saint Augustine. We can still baptize, but let's be honest about it, and agree that the purpose is to introduce a new member into the community, not washing sin. I'll still go to Mass, but I am not going to imagine that Jesus is inside me after communion. I will see communion as a symbolic act of taking another small step in trying to be a better human by remembering again on the wonderful example of the giant of a man called Jesus. And it is not necessary for Jesus to be God in human form. He died because of the times in which he lived and the authorities decided to get rid of him. He did not die for my sins. The only way Jesus is present in the consecrated host, is as a beautiful symbol for me to contemplate. If others not of my faith would like to do the same, let them feel free to come up and join me.

Xristos Community Society Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting of the Xristos Community Society was held at St. Columba's Church Hall on June 27, 2007. Present were President, Arthur Menu, a quorum of Directors of the Society, and representatives from Oceanside Christos, Emmanuel Home Church, Christos Duncan, Corpus Mid-Island, and Corpus Sidney. The minutes of the previous annual general meeting ('06) were read, corrected and approved. Each of the Directors and the representatives of the affiliated communities gave a report of their activities. Jim Lauder also told of three meetings with approximately seven people towards the formation of a community in Victoria. The financial report was approved. The Journal report was also given to the gathering. The new slate of Directors was elected for the coming year. The Society's quarterly lunch gatherings at St. Columba's continue to be very enjoyable. The meeting was followed by lunch.

Requests for a copy of the complete minutes may be made to the Xristos Community Society Secretary.

Theological Soapbox: On Approaching Death (Part 1)

by Arthur Menu, Sidney, BC



As far as I can tell, there is no scientific evidence either for or against the existence of an afterlife. Barring some supernatural revelation of the existence of an afterlife, and applying the principle that one should not believe in the existence of anything for which there is no evidence, the rational person would live his or her life on the assumption that there is no

further life beyond natural death. The game ain't over till it's over, but when it's over, it's over.

We Christians, however, accept that there has been a supernatural revelation of the existence of an afterlife. That revelation consists in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The disciples of Jesus were convinced that Jesus had truly died. The Gospel of John makes a point of mentioning the spear thrust into the side (i.e., through the heart) of Jesus, who had already expired on the cross, and "blood and water" flowing from his opened side. And all the Gospels tell stories of Jesus returning to the disciples alive in the body (eating food with them, being touched by them, and so on).

The Gospel accounts and the subsequent history of Christianity are sufficient evidence for a rational person to believe in an afterlife, although the evidence is not so overwhelming as to make it irrational to disbelieve in an afterlife. As for me, I do believe.

Having said that, the next-and perhaps more important-question is, what kind of afterlife awaits us? If we believe in the resurrection of Jesus, we have good reason to believe what Jesus says about the afterlife. The teaching of Jesus as it has come down to us through Christian tradition is clear. The process of dying involves making a

definitive choice to be irrevocably united to God or to remain irrevocably separated from God. After this all people will experience resurrection of the body. (There is a popular conception among Christians that there is a period between death and bodily resurrection in which the soul exists in a disembodied state. But as we cannot imagine what it would be like to exist outside of a body, this conception seems to me to be quite meaningless.)

What then is the consequence of choosing union with God? The most that we can say is that we will be like Jesus. We will desire what God desires, love what God loves, will what God wills, know what God knows, do what God does, and share in God's joy, with this one difference: that whereas God does all these things infinitely, we will do them finitely. The life we live will be the same life, qualitatively, that God lives, within the limitations imposed by our finite capacity as creatures. Completely united with God, we will be incapable of changing our minds and choosing to separate ourselves from God because in order for that to happen God would have to change God's mind and choose to be other than who God is.

What is the consequence of choosing separation from God? This is easier to imagine. Such a one will remain the self-willed person he or she is in this present life, having the same goals and purposes and values, independent of God's goals, purposes and values, that he or she has in this present life. The only thing that will be different from his or her present life, is that he or she will no longer have the capacity to change his or her mind and choose union with God. The choice to be separate from God which he or she made in the process of dying was the choice to eliminate the very impulse or motivation to seek union with God. Having chosen to retain that part of himself or herself that wants to remain as he or she is, and eliminated that part of himself or herself that is open to change, the person has effectively become incapable of change.

In Celebration Of Mary Magdalene

by Virginia Lafond, Corpus-NCR, Ottawa, ON

In Celebration of Mary Magdalene: A Homily for 'Called by Name'/Celebrating Women in Ministry

As women we should not have to reject the Christian faith and tradition; we have to reclaim women's contribution and role in it. We must free the images of Mary Magdalene from all distortions and recover her role as apostle.

E.S. Fiorenza



Introduction

Greetings to each and everyone of you!

I want to thank Beth LaRocque for encouraging me to speak at this celebration of Saint Mary Magdalene. Her request both surprised me and had me feeling very nervous because unlike many of you, and many thousands upon

thousands of other women, some of whom we are naming in this celebration today, I have never given a homily before. I promise you that I will, though, get to the job of 'opening The Word' as, I understand, it is the job of all good homilists to do, and I will also emphasize what we are here about today- celebrating women in ministry- and at that point I would also like to invite at least a few of you to share a story of a woman you know or know of who has personified the face of Christ by her ministry.

But first, I am going to tell you why I am here.

I chose to come here not just because of my profound reverence for and admiration of Mary Magdalene- certainly that- but also because I am so radically against patriarchy wherever it shows its unjust, oppressive, arrogant head that I take whatever opportunity presents itself to add my opposing voice. Frankly, I am especially appalled and embarrassed by the continuing practice of patriarchy in the Roman Catholic Church together with its simplistic underpinnings, the so-called theology often just put in a nutshell as 'the teachings of the church.' Statements against women's ordained ministry made by bishops, priests, popes often point simply to "the teachings of the church" without explaining what these teachings really say. Now, I assume that we who are gathered here to honour Mary Magdalene this evening are aware of a great deal of what's contained in these teachings but I will remind us of two of these official teachings.

1. Men (males), merely because of their maleness, better represent the Persona Christi, because men, not women, are "a clear and unambiguous sign of the Person of Christ" (Paul VI)
2. In his Apostolic letter, "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis" (May 1994), citing first the constant tradition/practice arguments made by Paul VI, John Paul II declared "that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful."

So you and I have been told by the late pope that that's the end of it

and, really, don't think about this, just "definitively" hold it. Nevertheless, I will act in accord with my conscience and speak my dissent. My dissent arises from my observation that these pronouncements and others have been arrived at in spite of the following:

1. What we find in scripture:

- perhaps the most oft quoted is from St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians 3:28: "... there is no longer male or female for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."
- personally, every time I hear: "Take this, all of you" and "Do this in memory of me." I am sharply irritated by the practice of patriarchy as it plays out in the lives of many faithful. For example, two years ago my husband and I had arrived for our annual visit with my beloved old aunt, 64 years a Sister of Charity in Saint John, New Brunswick, now living in her order's nursing home, Ruth Ross Residence, along with at least fifty other aged sisters. At one point just after our arrival, her friend, Sister M, was taking a moment to let us know that we'd be welcome for lunch the next day and also that there would be Mass at 10 AM. Then, she corrected herself to say, "Oh, no. It's a long weekend. Father doesn't come on long weekends. Nothing happens on long weekends." Think of that! Here we have a house full of vowed religious with an average of at least fifty years in religious life, none of whom are officially sanctioned to conduct Eucharistic Celebrations and this simply because they are females and not males. And, I daresay, this is so simply because the relevant hierarchical officialdom has interpreted and keeps on interpreting what is found in scripture to reinforce its own purposes- in spite of the examples of the myriad women disciples of Jesus we find in the canonical scriptures.

2. the landmark position in 1976 of the Pontifical Biblical Commission that there are no scriptural impediments to the ordination of women.

Opening the Word

I am going to open the Word, first, by referring to the account of the resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John and then I am going to open the Word a bit further from the Gospel of Mary.

We have read John's account of the first witness to the Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. This is of Mary of Magdala who, along with Mary, his mother, another woman, named Mary, and John (i.e. "the beloved disciple" ed), had stood at the cross with the dying Jesus. We see her near the tomb, sorrowful and frantic, searching and asking the first person she sees for clues as to the whereabouts of the body of Jesus. And then we hear Jesus calling her by name. And, she immediately responds to him with "Rabboni" (which I have read recently means not just teacher but 'beloved teacher'). And then, perhaps the clear pinnacle point: Jesus commissions her to go and tell the others, that "I'm ascending to my Abba and your Abba, my God and your God." And, as that scripture reading from John tells us, Mary of Magdala went to the disciples, men and women, holed up together behind locked doors because of fear of the authorities, and she told them that she had seen the Teacher and what he had told her. (John 20)

I wonder now what happened next, that is, just after Mary had finished telling them. Now, in light of my study of the Gospel of

Mary Magdalene Continued...

Mary, I'm inclined to think that her words may well have fallen on protesting ears, protesting because Mary, in spite of her message of the Resurrection, was not a man but a woman.

A few years ago I became familiar with the Gospel of Mary through my reading of *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene* by Jane Schaberg. The Gospel of Mary which can be found in its entirety on the internet is but 10 pages long (all that has been found so far). Lost for centuries and only recently rediscovered- and this accidentally- it was found in 1896 and published only in 1955. Chapter 9 of the Gospel of Mary says

1. When Mary had said this (told what Jesus had told her), she fell silent, since it was to this point that the Savior had spoken with her.
2. But Andrew answered and said to the brethren, "Say what you wish to say about what she has said. I at least do not believe that the Savior said this. For certainly these teachings are strange ideas."
3. Peter answered and spoke concerning these same things.
4. He questioned them about the Savior: "Did He really speak privately with a woman and not openly to us? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did He prefer her to us?"
5. Then Mary wept and said to Peter, "My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I have thought this up myself in my heart, or that I am lying about the Savior?"
6. Levi answered and said to Peter, "Peter you have always been hot tempered."
7. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries.
8. But if the Savior made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Savior knows her very well.
9. That is why He loved her more than us. Rather let us be ashamed and put on the perfect Man, and separate as he commanded us and preach the gospel, not laying down any other rule or other law beyond what the Savior said."

What can be pondered about and learned from this passage? For perhaps obvious starters, that Mary Magdalene was told by Jesus the Christ things he did not tell the male apostles. And, a close second, that patriarchy and the struggle against it existed at the centre of Christianity from the beginning. Third, I, for one, can surely claim Mary Magdalene as one of my heroes in facing patriarchy and, from now on, she is to be regarded as a woman who stood up to the patriarchs and modeled for us participation in adult faith conversation, now so blocked in present day Christianity.

Mary of Magdala, your gospel shows us clearly that you and what you said were dismissed by men- Peter and Andrew no less- simply because you were female. Help us, women and the men who support us, to continue to realize and actualize the power of our baptism and to understand what it means that we, like you, are called by name.

Naming and Celebrating Women in Ministry

Before asking at least a few of you to name and share a short story about women you care to tell about, I'd like to mention 5 women:

1. Marie Bouclin and Michele Birch Connery, priests and active participants in the Roman Catholic Women Priests Movement. I celebrate their efforts to discern their callings to ministerial priesthood, their ordinations (two months ago and two years ago respectively) and the conscientious careful way they are now carrying out their priestly vocations.
2. Janice Sevre-Duszynska, an American, called to ordination in the

Roman Catholic Church. Recognizing that she is one of thousands of activists, tonight I want to celebrate her unfaltering courageous and generous commitment to make change happen. (For those of you who may not know of Janice, I have brought a few copies of a recent (June 22/07) article by her.

(http://ca.renewedpriesthood.org/page.cfm?Web_ID=944)

3. I also want to celebrate Thérèse of Lisieux, canonized saint, who has received of course much adulation far and wide for her "little way." She has been a model for me since my childhood because of her little way- i.e. of the importance of doing little things well for God/de. Tonight, however, I want to honour her for her profound longing for ordination to the ordained priesthood.

4. Finally, I celebrate Joanna Manning, teacher, author, fearless critic of the patriarchy. While I celebrate all of those things about her, tonight I want to particularly celebrate the magnificently constructive way she takes us beyond our necessary and justified rant against patriarchy to *The Magdalene Moment*. The fly-leaf of her latest book, called *The Magdalene Moment*, reads in part:

Drawing on Mary Magdalene as an inspirational model of 'justice from the heart,' Manning calls for the reinstatement of women in religious leadership, for the integration of the erotic and sensual into the spiritual, and for the acceptance of sexual diversity. She demands the reconciliation of Creation with the empirical truths revealed by the cosmology of our time, and she maps out a Magdalene vision for an equitable social and economic order which incorporates respect for religious pluralism.

The Magdalene Moment is a sweeping call for a new Christianity that points the way to worldwide peace, justice and love.

And, now I'd like to invite some of you to name a woman whom you'd like to honour for her ministry ...

Thank You and One Last Word

A few weeks ago on a Saturday morning at my parish church I, the lector, read from the book of Genesis the story of Abraham by the oaks of Mamre. That story always touches me profoundly. It's the one about how Abraham, when he noticed that he had three guests, ran and asked his wife Sarah to help him serve his guests. Their efforts worked so well that by the end of the meal one of the visitors prophetically pronounced that when he returned "in due season" Sarah would have a son. Sarah, a very post-menopausal woman, laughed and asked: "Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?" Then, we're told that God said to Abraham and Sarah about Sarah's laughing and her questioning:

"Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14)

Really is anything too wonderful for the Lord? I believe we ought to carry this God/de-spoken question in our Christian feminist tool boxes so that despite all manner of deliberate patriarchal efforts everywhere, including in the church, we can sustain our spirits and unleash our imaginations in our efforts to live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A report of a homily given in Dorval, QC, July, 2007

Report On Corpus USA 2007 Conference

by Jim Noonan, Corpus-NCR, Ottawa, ON

The 20th annual Corpus USA Conference was held on June 22-24, 2007 at the Rhode Island School of Design in downtown Providence, Rhode Island. The theme of the Conference was Prophecies, Dreams, and Visions: Keeping Hope Alive, and was attended by about 80 people. As the only Canadian at the Conference it was good to listen to the stimulating speakers, to take part in the discussions, and to meet again and chat with many of the regular Corpus members at the Conference.

The Conference actually began with a Pre-Conference Event on Friday afternoon entitled 'SpeakOut/Future Think', moderated by Linda Pinto and George Clements. Attended by about 30 people, it was an opportunity for participants to share their perceptions, dreams and concerns about Corpus and the Church. It was a wide-ranging discussion of many issues, including the fact that the membership of Corpus is growing older and there is a need to recruit younger priests who are leaving the active ministry. Russ Ditzel, President of Corpus, pointed out the difficulty of reaching out to younger priests because of the limited staff at Corpus, while others insisted that individual Corpus members need to reach out to newly married priests if we wish to survive as an organization.

After a welcome that evening from Allen Moore, coordinator of this and many other Corpus Conferences, the opening prayer service was led by Mary Jane and Joe McCool, who did a splendid job as local coordinators throughout the three days of the Conference.

One of the innovative items at the Conference was a panel of five young adults, all children of Corpus members, who discussed the topic 'Hope for What and Where to Find It?' Their discussion was interesting for various reasons: they did not attend Mass regularly, nor were they angry at the Church. They simply sought their spirituality elsewhere, including working for the needy and trying to preserve the integrity of the earth.

All four speakers were very good:

1) Jean Marchant, who was one of the women ordained on the St. Lawrence River in July, 2005, in addressing the topic 'Uprising of Hope', spoke of her difficult journey to get where she is now, and the painful family situation she lived in. She now feels fulfilled in that she can reach out to other women, including those who are grateful they can confess to a woman priest.

2) Robert Blair Kaiser spoke on 'Creating an Accountable Church: Why Not Autochthony in America?', in which he recalled his years as a journalist covering the Catholic Church, including the Second Vatican Council, and of the frustration he feels at trying to change the hierarchy. He is spear-heading a movement called 'Take Back Our Church', and has set up a website for his cause (www.takebackourchurch.org). He hosted a meeting on the afternoon the Conference ended to promote this initiative.

3) Paul Lakeland, Director of nearby Fairfield University's Center for Catholic Studies, had originally chosen as his topic 'Catholicism at the Crossroads: How the Laity Can Save the Church'. After hearing Kaiser's talk he changed it to 'Getting to Autochthony' - to reflect the next step in the process. (Autochthony could be loosely described as a separate Catholic Church united to the Roman Catholic Church.) He emphasized that it is lay people rather than clerics who are models of accountability in the Church, and outlined in an orderly manner many ways in which the laity, and especially women, can carry out this

necessary role.

4) Under the title 'Ambulando Solvitur' Daniel McCarthy, a native of Rhode Island, gave a moving illustrated lecture, using many personal slides, based on his four walks to date on the camino to the shrine of St. James at Compostella in northern Spain. He emphasized its spiritual effects on him and all who went on the pilgrimage. At the age of 73 he hopes to walk it again until he is 'unable to walk it any more'.

Sunday morning was dominated by the Liturgy of Hope and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the first the homilist was Bill Cleary, a Corpus member whose inspired poems appear in every issue of the tri-weekly Corpus email *Mirabile Dictu*. Summing up the Conference theme with the words 'Full of Joy and Hope' he gave many reasons for hope in a dark time, the most memorable of which was: our lives are incomplete in so many ways that there must be another life in which they will be fulfilled.

There were many other attractions in Providence before, during and after the Conference, including historic sites, fine churches, renowned art galleries, and distinguished universities. Most notable at this particular time was an event called WaterFire, which centres on a series of 100 bonfires just above the surface of the three rivers that pass through the middle of downtown Providence. This event takes place on several Saturday nights each summer, and just happened to coincide with the Corpus Conference in June. Along the banks of the rivers are crowds of people, music from around the world, singing and dancing and fine food. What a joyous way for members to end the formal sessions of the Conference!

The next Corpus USA Conference will be held on July 18-20, 2008 at the Hyatt Harborside Hotel at the Boston Logan International Airport. It will be a joint conference with Federation of Christian Ministries, Women's Ordination Conference, and Roman Catholic Womenpriests. The theme will be: Inclusive Ministry and Renewal in a Complex Age.

Modern Social Imaginaries by Charles Taylor

Now this fact, that the religious language, capacities, and modes of experience available to each of us comes from the society in which we are born remains true in a sense of all human beings. Even great innovative religious founders have to draw on a preexisting vocabulary available in their society. In the end, this shades into the obvious point about human language in general: that we all acquire it from the language groups we grow up in and can transcend what we are given only by leaning on it.

Post Ordination Reflection

by Alice Iaquina, Milwaukee, WI

The following is a post ordination reflection by Alice Iaquina who was ordained to the diaconate on May 27 in Toronto.



Since the ordination, I have taken a period of solitude to process and pray. Now I would like to share with you the single most important outcome of the experience. It may surprise you. I did not anticipate experiencing a consciousness raising so great that it parallels the one I had in 1962 when my feminist sensibilities were first forged and my life's path transformed, as I tried to live out those convictions in all aspects of my life. Now I am 62 and for me, this ordination has shattered my

myopic life of self-absorption as a Feminist Catholic Christian Woman. Several things occurred that I journaled on and only today in retrospect can I begin to see the future path of ministry evolving in a quite new and unexpected way.

Below are four entries from my journal during the days prior to and just after ordination.

1. Acting in accordance with one's informed conscience is loyal dissent and that is not just a right but a responsibility of every Catholic. Later: Since my ordination I have learned from Irshad Manji, participant at my ordination and author of "The Trouble with Islam Today", that in the Islamic tradition the same independent reasoning and thinking tradition is called 'ijtihad.' We are honoring that in our respective faith traditions, no matter the cost. Hers could be death, since there is a fatwah on her. What's a threat of excommunication compared to that!? Now I notice in one news report that Irshad has become the unnamed "Islamic woman." Does erasure ever cease?

2. Chance meeting in an elevator at the dorm with Clara, a Mideast woman from Calgary, who inquired as to what the conference was all about. I told her, "women's equality in the Catholic Church." She said, "women's ordination?" Yes, I replied. Do you think it should happen, she asked. Yes, since I will be ordained a Roman Catholic priest later this summer and am being ordained a deacon on Sunday. Her eyes widened, her mouth dropped open. Ohhh. She gasped and suddenly grabbed me and hugged me hard, all polite reserve evaporating, saying she was a Roman Catholic. Pulling away, she looked at me and tears were streaming down her face. She said, "Thank God! Thank God!" Shared that she had an M.Div. and used it as the foundation of ministry in her teaching of English Literature. I understood what she meant. Exploding opening minds to the pluralistic world and teaching acceptance is a holy ministry. Shared my own background as a college teacher. Exchanged information. Once again, clear reception by the community, this time a total stranger in a few minutes as we rode the elevator up and down several times while talking.

3. In a short conversation with Kennedy, the producer of the news

interview show for CBC TV done prior to the ordination. It came out that he was from Uganda, had been in a RC Jesuit seminary for seven years and left because of the celibacy requirement just before ordination. Still has a call. Young guy. Face was glowing. Said he wished he could stay for the liturgy, but only Vision TV could be there. Very excited by what we are doing. Again, clear reception of the movement by one of the people of God, a male, Kenyan, Catholic, intelligent, educated, open.

4. Irshad Manji, muslim woman, Canadian, TV personality, author of "What's Wrong with Islam Today," refusenik, lesbian, was at the ordination and connected deeply with what has going on spiritually for me. Talked to me about the Spirit being so evident in my face and eyes and smile. Thanked me for not being afraid to feel the joy and to share it, unabashedly. She and Gretta, the Protestant minister, unfurled the red velvet cloth for prostration and also both laid hands on me for the anointing. Wants to stay in touch, as does Gretta, the West Hill United Church minister. Talked of a need for a wider movement of women of all faiths unified in our efforts to end oppression and abuses. Am I seeing a pattern here of the movement of the Spirit? I think so. World wide, interfaith, ecumenical, woman driven change of the shape of Church and religion.....everywhere. This is not just an RC battle.

Canon 1024 is equivalent to the Roman Catholic Church requiring us to wear the burqa. The fire of Pentecost is burning in my heart as I continue to listen to the Spirit's direction for my future ministry as a Roman Catholic Christian Woman in solidarity with women of faith in Islam and the other world religions who are confronting and challenging religious and political oppression and abuse of women. I know I need to

focus not on what is being done to or said about me/us by the press or the church, and instead focus on what we need to do to keep advancing the gospel values of love, peace, equality, inclusion and healing in the larger world.



What about you? We RCWP are the feminists of faith that need to be in solidarity with all feminists of faith. We need a global vision. Feminism that excludes faith, family or men is being held accountable. It is a rich source of the many groups working for the same things we are.

Well, I am definitely off the mountain! Thanks be to our God/de! smiles, hugs, blessings and love,
alice

Corpus Canada

Who Are We?

We are a faith community of men and women empowered by our baptism in Jesus' Spirit to reach out to others in their need as Jesus did. We also provide support for married Roman Catholic priests, their family and friends.

Where Are We Going?

This faith community is dedicated to

- Renewal of ministries in the Church, including an ordained ministry open to men and women, married and unmarried;
- A vision of Church that includes all people who profess faith in Jesus Christ;
- Development of leadership among all the baptised in the Church;
- Promotion of a wholesome view of sexuality;
- Justice for all based on Gospel values.

Our message is a healing one and is directed to everyone, especially the marginalized in the Church. It is our hope to reach people through many ministries, and in a special way through the creation of small faith communities.

How Do We Get There?

Through a collegial approach based on consensus reached through communal discernment in the Spirit, we share our gifts that all creation might be transformed according to God's loving plan.

Corpus Canada
www.corpuscanada.org
Corpus-NCR (Canada)
www.ca.renewedpriesthood.org
Corpus USA
www.corpus.org

Corpus Canada National Coordinating Team

Coordinator

Joe Gubbels

Email: jgubbs@shaw.ca

François Brassard

(see box at lower right)

Chris Diamond

(see page 2 column one)

Emil Kutarna

113 Tibbets Road, Regina SK S4S 2Y9

Tel: (306) 586-2853

Email: emil@kutarna.net

Jim Lynn

Box 2702, Yellowknife, NT X1A 2R1

Tel: (867) 873-8529

Email: jjniteowl@hotmail.com

John Palardy

Tel: (403) 556-7855

Email: palardyj@telusplanet.net

Dianne Peck

208-3805 Mont Blanc Terrace, Halifax, NS B3K 6S3

Tel: (902) 454-2406

Email: diannep@ns.sympatico.ca

Leonard Schmidt

902 Borebank Street, Winnipeg MB R3N 1G6

Tel: (204) 487-3553

Email: adeline.leonard.schmidtl@shaw.ca

How Can I Join Or Show Support?

If you wish to join or renew your membership in Corpus Canada for the year 2007 (membership is open to all regardless of denominational affiliation), write to: Corpus Canada Treasurer, 35 - 10070 Fifth Street Sidney, BC V8L 2X9. Enclose a cheque for \$50 (individual membership) or \$75 (family membership) payable to "Corpus Canada." Corpus Canada will donate \$25 of your membership fee to Xristos Community Society in your name, and Xristos will send you an official tax receipt. At the request of Corpus Canada, Xristos Community Society distributes The Journal free of charge to the membership of Corpus Canada.

HOW TO GET THE JOURNAL

If you are not now receiving The Journal and would like to, please fill out this form and mail it to the Treasurer, Xristos Community Society, 35 - 10070 Fifth Street Sidney, BC V8L 2X9.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTAL CODE _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

The Journal will be sent to you free of charge. If you would like to support the free distribution of The Journal, please send a cheque to "Xristos Community Society" c/o the Treasurer, Xristos Community Society, 35 - 10070 Fifth Street Sidney, BC V8L 2X9. Xristos Community Society is a registered charity. All donors of \$10 or more will receive an official tax receipt. Thank you for your support of this Christian ministry.

Corpus Canada Treasurer

Alanna Menu

Corpus Canada Media Representative

François Brassard

422 Davis Rd., Ladysmith, BC V9G 1V3

Tel: (250) 245-3365

Email: ckfb@telus.net

Corpus Canada Web Site Manager

Michael Irving

Email: ballinderry@shaw.ca

Return Postage Guaranteed By
The Journal
422 Davis Road
Ladysmith BC V9G 1V3

